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<http://www.rsf.org/philippines-local-broadcaster-s-premises-set-27-10-2011,41295.html>

Asia - Philippines

Radio burned down

Local broadcaster's premises set on fire, attacks on media remain unpunished

27 October 2011

Reporters Without Borders condemns the arson attack yesterday on the Catholic Church-owned radio station *dzVT* in San Jose, in Oriental Mindoro province on the Island of Luzon. Unidentified men set fire to the premises, destroying transmission equipment and causing damage estimated at 10 million pesos (230,000 dollars).

"We are outraged by the violence directed against a growing number of media organizations in retaliation just for broadcasting or publishing commentaries locally," the press freedom organization said.

"The authorities in Luzon should have ensured the safety of the staff of *dzVT* in view of the fact that the station had been the target of attacks a few days earlier. They must now carry out an in-depth investigation to find the perpetrators and those behind the crime.

"There are 50 or so radio stations on the island and hundreds throughout the country. The government can no longer economise on security measures for media workers, without which hired killers, private militias and terrorist groups such as the New People's Army (the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines) continue to act with impunity."

According to the station's caretaker, who was injured as she tried to put out the blaze, the fire broke out about 1 a.m. Most of the equipment, including transmitters and computers, was destroyed. Police found a petrol can at the scene, evidence of criminal intent.

According to a local journalist, the station might have been the target of retaliation for commentaries it broadcast that were critical of a local politician.

During his election campaign, President Benigno Aquino made commitments to freedom of the press and the protection of media workers, but a year after he took office there has been no let-up in intimidation and violence against them, while the legal system appears to be as slow-moving as ever.

On 7 October, **Johnson Pascual**, editor of the local newspaper *Prime News*, was shot at by two men on a motorcycle while he was driving in the north of Luzon island. He lost control of his vehicle, which then crashed into a ravine, killing its occupant. An investigation is under way.

A week later, radio presenter **Datu Roy Bagtikan Gallego**, known as a critic of mining activities and a campaigner for tribal rights, was shot dead in the town of Lianga in the south.

On Palawan Island in the south-west, the daughter of radio presenter **Louie Larroza**, was kidnapped on 15 September and held for eight hours. The journalist was forced to give up his programme, which dealt with corruption and other illegal activities in the province.

On 22 August, **Niel Jimena**, a presenter on *DYRI-RMN Radio*, was shot dead by two men on a motorcycle near his home on Negros Island. Before his death, he received threats from a politician he had criticised.

On 14 July, **Ronnie Waniwan**, a presenter on the radio station *dxCo Radyo Asenso* in Mindanao, received death threats in text messages and anonymous phone calls twice while he was broadcasting programmes in which local political issues were brought up.

Almost two years after the [Maguindanao massacre](#), in which 32 journalists were killed, [press freedom in the Philippines](#) has seriously deteriorated. It lies in 156th place of 178 countries listed in the Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index for 2010](#).
