

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/venezuela-media-still-under-attack-two-11-06-2013,44756.html>

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Americas - Venezuela

Continuing hostility

## Media still under attack two months after presidential election

11 June 2013

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The situation for freedom of information continues to be extremely tense two months after Nicolás Maduro's election as president on 14 April.

### Pluralism under threat

One of the most high-profile cases is that of [Leocenis García](#), the editor of the weekly [Sexto Poder](#), who began a hunger strike outside the headquarters of the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) in Carabobo on 6 June in protest against privately-owned *Ate! TV*'s suspension in Maracaibo (in the northwestern state Zulia) on 21 May (see video below).

Although denied by CONATEL, the closure was reportedly the result of CONATEL pressure because *Sexto Poder* opened [negotiations](#) several months ago with a view to buying *Ate! TV* and ["turning it into an independent TV news channel"](#).

With the suspension dashing any hopes of the station's acquisition by *Sexto Poder*, García began his hunger strike with the aim of defending "the right to inform freely, without pressure."

He was arrested outside the CONATEL building by members of the National Bolivarian Guard and was brought before a national court in Caracas on 7 June. After being released in the evening, he resumed his hunger strike outside the Caracas offices of the Organization of American States.

García's protest is emblematic of the tension currently prevailing in the media sector, in which the already very limited pluralism is under attack yet again.

*Ciudad TV*, a privately-owned TV station based in Ciudad Ojeda (in Zulia state), was closed on 23 May. According to officials, it was closed for administrative reasons but this is disputed by the [National Association of Journalists](#) (CNP).

The change of ownership on 13 May at *Globovisión*, Venezuela's main opposition broadcast media, has been followed by the departure of several of its executives and journalists. **Francisco Bautista**, the presenter of the programme "Buenas Noches," was fired on 25 May, one day after broadcasting passages of a speech by opposition leader Henrique Capriles.

### **Access to information restricted**

Many curbs on access to information have been reported in the past two months, especially at the National Assembly. Ricardo Durán, the parliament's media chief, issued orders at the start of May for journalists' access to the chamber to be [restricted](#).

The rule nonetheless seems to have been applied selectively, varying according to the media for which journalists work. *Globovisión's* **Jeanelie Briceño** and journalists with other privately-owned media were denied access to the parliament building when an opposition legislator gave a news conference on 14 May.

Selective restrictions are not just been applied at the National Assembly. Officials barred reporter **Faviana García** and photographer **José Nava** of the privately-owned daily *La Verdad* from a news conference organized by the environment ministry in Maracaibo on 3 June although they had been invited.

### **Physical attacks**

Most seriously of all, there has been several physical attacks on news media in recent weeks. An explosive device was thrown at the headquarters of *Panorama*, a privately-owned daily based in Maracaibo, on 27 May without causing any damage.

Unidentified individuals tried to set fire to a *Ciudad TV* vehicle in Ciudad Ojeda on 15 May, causing minor damage. This followed several months of threats against the station's CEO, **Helí Romero**.

Previously, many journalists were attacked during the [outbreaks of violence in April](#) that followed Maduro's election victory. Maduro has meanwhile resorted to the same kind of verbal attacks as his predecessor on privately-owned media – both national and international – accusing them of "destabilizing the country."

"This climate threatens freedom of information and Venezuelan society in general, which is already very polarized", Reporters Without Borders said. "There is a greater need than ever for dialogue between the government and the media in order to defuse the tension".

Reporters Without Borders added: "We therefore welcome the meeting that government officials organized with various privately-owned media on 21 and 22 May and we urge them to have more meetings of this kind".

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