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Americas - Paraguay

Censorship and threats

Censorship at Radio Nacional, threats and violence from president's inner circle

19 September 2012

In a [continuing purge](#) in the state-owned media, **Carlos Goncalves**, the producer of the *Radio Nacional* programme "Redpública," was notified on 17 September that his contract will definitely be terminated at the end of the month, while two other programmes could also be affected, Reporters Without Borders has learned.

The situation has been further exacerbated by the direct threats that two women journalists have received from people close to Federico Franco, who took over as president after parliament ousted President Fernando Lugo on 22 June.

"The dismissal of journalists and other employees from *TV Pública* was the first evidence that the new government is not going to keep its promises and now this is being confirmed at *Radio Nacional*," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Six days after the parliamentary coup against President Lugo, **Judith María Vera** was put in charge of *Radio Nacional*, supposedly [to guarantee](#) continuity and independence. Goncalves' dismissal proves that this is not true. The Franco government is in the process of assuming complete control of the state-owned media and its hostility is now affecting journalists with the privately-owned media as well.

"Together with the Paraguay Journalists' Union (SPP), we will support any judicial initiatives that are taken in response to incidents involving threats and violence against journalists. Combined with the censorship, they suggest that pluralism is likely to deteriorate seriously in the run-up to next April's general election."

Before being notified of his dismissal, Goncalves was told by the government's Information and Communication Secretariat (SICOM) that "Redpública," which is broadcast at noon on weekdays, would be the subject of a "special evaluation." Known for his opposition to the June coup, Goncalves quickly realized that no other programme was, for the time being, getting this treatment.

Sources say two other programmes are nonetheless getting attention that could signal their imminent end. One is "Ape ha Pepe" ("Here and There" in Guaraní), in which Paraguayans abroad take part. It has been interrupted repeatedly since 22 June. The other is the current affairs and media review programme "Sununu Guyryry," which interviewed relatives of the victims of the 15 June massacre in Curuguaty.

Outbursts

The worsening political climate and its impact on freedom of information have also been reflected in incidents involving two journalists with the daily *La Nación*, **Nilza Ferreira** and **Ana Antúnez**.

When Ferreira asked Liberal Party senator Julio César Franco, the new president's brother, why his maid is on the Superior Electoral Court's payroll although she does not work there, he told her that she would be sued if any story on the subject were published.

Ferreira's story was nonetheless published on 16 September and Antúnez was manhandled by

presidential bodyguards at a news conference the next day when she asked President Franco what he thought of his brother's behaviour towards Ferreira.

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