

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-new-spate-of-threats-and-attacks-24-03-2011,39867.html>

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Americas - Honduras

Violence and persecution

## Two journalists attacked, injured by police while covering teachers' protest

28 March 2011

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As teachers continue to strike and protest in several of the country's cities, a TV crew with opposition station *Canal 36-Cholusat Sur* said it was attacked by police while covering a protest on 25 March in Tegucigalpa in almost exactly the same way as a crew with the same station and a radio reporter were attacked a few days earlier.

Reporter **Richard Casulá** and cameraman **Salvador Sandoval** were covering a heavy-handed police operation at the College for Honduran Secondary Education Teachers (COPEMH), when the police fired teargas at them at close range. Sandoval was injured in the face while Casulá was overcome by gas. Both had to be hospitalized.

The journalists attacked by police in a similar fashion on 21 March were **Lidieth Diaz** and cameraman **Rodolfo Sierra** of *Cholusat Sur-Canal 36* and **David Romero** of *Radio Globo*.

"These repeated abuses by the security forces against news media opposed to the June 2009 coup d'état – which left still unhealed wounds – are aggravating an oppressive political climate that is not conducive to pluralism," Reporters Without Borders said. "The authorities need to give some evidence of a readiness to honour their international obligations."

The press freedom organization added: "The attacks on the news media during the recent demonstrations should be the subject of both an administrative and a criminal investigation. At the same time, the most vulnerable and exposed media should be given some protection."

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### **24.03.11 - New spate of threats and attacks on journalists: "The coup d'état's original goals are still being pursued"**

Reporters Without Borders is worried by the alarming increase in threats and violence against journalists in Honduras. There have been seven cases in the space of 10 days and all the media involved are ones that spoke out against the June 2009 coup d'état.

The first in the latest spate of cases was the 13 March shooting of **Franklin Meléndez**, the head of the community radio station *La Voz de Zacate Grande*. According to the Committee for Free Expression (C-Libre), the alleged assailant, Porfirio Medina, publicly threatened one of the station's correspondents, Ethel Correa, in the hours following the attack, saying she would be "the next to die."

The complete impunity enjoyed by Meléndez, the presumed perpetrator of a murder attempt, has compounded the repeated harassment of this [small radio station and its personnel by the authorities](#).

The situation is hardly any better for national media. **Lidieth Díaz**, a reporter with *Cholusat - Canal 36*, and her husband, **David Romero**, the head of *Radio Globo*, were attacked by riot police

while covering a protest by teachers in Tegucigalpa on 21 March. Díaz tried to negotiate with the police but they responded by setting off a teargas grenade right in front of her. The incident was filmed.

Police fired rubber bullets at *Radio Gualcho* director **Sandra Maribel Sánchez** and *Globo TV* cameraman **Uriel Rodríguez** during the same demonstration, hitting Rodríguez in the leg. The police also tried to snatch Sánchez's camera.

"Are the Honduran government's promises to the UN and OAS to improve the situation of the media being used as a smokescreen for targeted attacks on outspoken or opposition media?" Reporters Without Borders said. "We have every reason to suspect this, given the latest events and the total absence of protection for the most exposed and vulnerable media."

The press freedom organization added: "The systematic violation of pluralism shows yet again that the coup d'état's original goals are still being pursued. This situation requires the firmest possible reaction by international and Inter-American bodies. The Honduran authorities must be held accountable without delay for their failure to adhere to their obligations."

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