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Americas - Guatemala

Violence

Two journalists attacked during vice-president's news conference

19 September 2014

In the latest display of government hostility towards the *elPeriódico* daily, security agents roughed up two of its journalists, reporter **Pavel Vega** and photographer **Alex Cruz**, during Vice-President Roxana Baldetti's news conference yesterday at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Guatemala City.

After being denied access to the news conference without explanation, Vega and Cruz managed to sneak in anyway. When Vega began asking questions, the vice-president left and her security agents attacked the two journalists verbally and physically, breaking Cruz's camera equipment.

This latest incident came just two days after *elPeriódico* accused the government of spying on it.

Editor **José Rubén Zamora** said the government had to be spying on his newspaper because it issued an official response to an *elPeriódico* report about the vice-president's acquisition of a luxurious property before the newspaper had published its report.

The government's response had accused *elPeriódico* of waging a smear campaign against the president and vice-president.

"We condemn this assault on elPeriódico's journalists," said Camille Soulier, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk. *"Representatives of a government that claims it is being systematically attacked by a news media cannot legitimately respond by denying access to information or by acts of intimidation."*

This is by no means the first time that *elPeriódico* has been [subjected to government intimidation](#) attempts.

President Otto Pérez Molina and the vice-president have brought many libel suits against Zamora, who was banned from leaving the country and had his bank accounts frozen last January. *ElPeriódico* gets no state advertising and its reporters are denied access to the presidential palace.

In a separate development, police arrested *Prensa Comunitaria* journalist **Norma Sut Sansir** yesterday as she was going to cover a demonstration in Camotán, in the southern department of Chiquimula. Her news organization said she has been falsely accused of attacking police officers.

Guatemala is ranked 125th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).
