

# Honduras: The “media war” and the polarisation of the media

*Report of the international press freedom and freedom of expression mission to Honduras – November 1-7, 2009*

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the overthrow of President Manuel Zelaya in a military coup on June 28, 2009, after members of the opposition led by Roberto Micheletti accused him of trying to change the constitution to allow the re-election of the president, Honduras has been mired in the worst political crisis that Central America has experienced in years.

From November 1-7, 2009, a mission for press freedom and freedom of expression, composed of representatives from seven international organisations, visited Honduras to analyse the situation of journalists and the media in the country.

The International Mission found that the main obstacles to the free exercise of journalism in Honduras are:

- The collusion between the media, some political leaders, the government in power and some journalists, to adapt reality to the economic and political interests that they defend.
- A heightened state of insecurity and self-censorship fomented by a “media war” among media institutions.

Freedom of the press in Honduras is practised in a hostile environment and in conditions of insecurity. This is not a new situation; nevertheless, the political crisis which was unleashed on June 28 has given new force to the threats and the risks facing those who exercise the right to freedom of expression through the media. The multiple pressures from both sides of the political conflict trying to influence the editorial lines of the media, including physical attacks against workers, are the distinguishing characteristics of the prevailing environment for the press in Honduras.

The crisis that erupted in June of last year has its origins in deeper political and social divisions that have existed in Honduras for some time. During the crisis that exploded at the end of June, journalists and editors from across the political spectrum were faced with interrelated challenges around issues of safety and censorship.

The Mission was able to collect testimonies which report on the many situations and actions which result in a context of uncertainty, which in turn gives rise to direct and indirect human rights violations against those who exercise freedom of the press and the right to communicate. Between June 28 and November 15 of last year, at least 127 cases of violations of freedom of expression were registered.

The censorship of certain media outlets that began at the end of June has continued since the elections on November 29. The media have had a strong effect on

international public opinion, which is not being informed about a situation that might worsen depending on the direction taken by the current institutional political crisis.

The Mission was concerned by the manipulation by authorities of the budget reserved for official advertising for the purpose of controlling information, in an old form of cooptation which has long been established in Honduras as a component of the relationship between the press and the government, as this encourages self-censorship and limits a free and plural press. Another problematic element is the high concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few people or business groups with connections to different branches of the economy and to sectors with enormous political, business and religious power. This is something which also occurs in other countries of Latin America.

Both of these issues work against informative pluralism and the collective right to information. The Mission holds that the Honduran government has the obligation to promote regulation in this area. For the Mission it is imperative to work on developing solidarity among journalists and the media and to build a strong media base that can fight against insecurity and self-censorship. This report contains a series of recommendations for state and legislative powers as well as for the media and civil society.

## **2. PRESENTATION**

The International Mission

A group of seven international organisations met in Honduras to form what was called the International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Honduras:

- ARTICLE 19
- World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA) / Argentine Association of Journalistic Entities (Asociación de Entidades Periodísticas de Argentina) (ADEPA)
- World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)
- International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
- Free Voice
- International Media Support (IMS)
- Reporters Without Borders (RWB)

For five days, the members of the Mission travelled to the capital, Tegucigalpa, and to the cities of San Pedro Sula, El Progreso and Santa Rosa de Copán.

The main objective was to use international influence to (1) support local and national media; (2) provide evidence of the challenges currently facing journalists and the media; and (3) to propose long term mechanisms for strengthening and consolidating freedom of the press and of expression in Honduras.

The International Mission visited four cities, where its members were able to hold a total of 22 meetings with groups of journalists and editors and four meetings with freedom of

the press, freedom of expression and human rights organisations. These meetings made it possible to obtain a general picture of the conditions surrounding the exercise of freedom of the press in the country.

The work of this Mission focussed on two core areas:

1. Censorship and self-censorship
2. Protection for the practice of journalism

From these two topics were derived specific interventions for immediate action, oriented towards addressing the most pressing needs, thus making it easier for the media not to be forced into a position where they have to take on an adversarial role in the current situation of growing tension and the polarisation of Honduran society.

In this respect, the Mission hopes that the media can bridge the gap between the different political positions and interests that are present and the Honduran people.

### **3. INTRODUCTION**

#### **3.1 Structure of the report**

This report includes different topics related to freedom of expression and of the press in Honduras. This document is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all relevant topics.

The report is divided into the following two focus areas:

1. Censorship and Self-Censorship
2. Protection

For reasons of safety, throughout the text the names of some of the people who met with members of the Mission have been intentionally omitted, in order to protect their identity.

### **4. FOCUS AREAS**

#### **4.1 CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP**

##### **Censorship and the abuse of government advertising**

Media censorship has long existed as a polemic issue in Honduras. During the mandate of President Manuel Zelaya, government practices for awarding official advertising to the Honduran media included reward and punishment policies, payments to individual journalists, and even the denial of access to public information: mechanisms that interfere with freedom of expression and the right to information.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In September 2008, a report by the non-governmental organisation National Anti-Corruption Council (Consejo Nacional Anti Corrupción - CNA), revealed a host of practices for buying off and silencing media workers that have been practised by successive governments but were particularly

In 2008, the levels of abuse of government advertising and other forms of censorship were extremely high; to get advertising contracts from the Zelaya government, it was necessary to have good contacts among the authorities and to accept the imposition of certain conditions on news and information content. Government advertising contracts included clauses which committed journalists and the media to providing only positive coverage about the administration, leaving criticism aside.

Honduras has four national daily newspapers, as well as one monthly and one weekly magazine, both of which have limited circulation. In addition, the first on-line publications have appeared in the past five years, including two newspapers, a fortnightly publication and a weekly magazine. There is a heavy concentration of ownership of the media, with the vast majority of local radio and television stations and print publications owned by just six families.

Although the media owners do not need government advertising to survive, they do depend on the state and government for their other enterprises, such as banking, fast food restaurants, pharmaceuticals, insurance companies, “maquiladoras” (for-export assembly plants), coffee plantations, hardware stores, importing meat, ranching and crocodile farms.

Media imbalance is well documented prior to June 28 of last year and has helped to fuel the climate of ungovernability in Honduras. Censorship involves the whole media system, which comprises the three sectors of private, public and social-community media in their written, radio, television and digital forms.

The first actions of **censorship** taken by the de facto government of Roberto Micheletti were the closure of and attacks on media outlets, scare tactics, beatings and arbitrary detentions of journalists, the expulsion of foreign correspondents, compounded by the use of “dirty war” tactics and threats.

The growing censorship during the government of Zelaya continued after his overthrow through the indiscriminate use of control mechanisms on the Internet and for the distribution of electricity, the arbitrary application of the system for granting licences for radio and television frequencies and the termination of public campaigns for media institutions that had not supported the military coup. These actions were complemented by coercive measures such as hindrances to the importation of paper and obstacles to the distribution of the written press; the deciding power involved in the control of advertising by associations of businesses and transnationals should also be taken into consideration.

In an interview with directors and editors of the national chains Radio América, HRN and Radio Cadena Voces, they admitted that the majority of the media are owned by the large and powerful business families of Honduras. However, certain stations like Radio

Cadena Voces also emphasised the fact that they faced both censorship and security problems during the former presidency of Manuel Zelaya and that they came under serious attack by resistance groups during the weeks following June 28 of last year.

The national daily newspaper El Tiempo, owned by Jaime Rosenthal, acknowledges that there has been increasing self-censorship and multiple forms of indirect censorship since June 28 as a pressure tactic for the concession of commercial advertising, in spite of the fact that, as the manager states, sales have increased by 58% to date since the coup.

In an interview with editors and journalists from one of the principal newspapers in San Pedro Sula, they asserted: *“Sometimes we self-censor because of pressure for advertising. We would like to say more than we can... to produce more hard information and connect the facts is a great development of the interpretive genre. In editorials we make known our position of opposition to the military coup, but it is not enough”*. In the opinion of these professionals media discourse does not link freedom of the press and of expression with democracy.

The authorities refuse this newspaper access to government sources and do not renew their credentials, exacerbating the situation of informative secrecy.

### **A growing culture of insecurity and self-censorship**

**Self-censorship** is circuitous and hidden; it operates in a climate of fear and often of terror. It is imposed through exemplary actions of direct coercion. It is linked to the subjectivity of people working in communications, to their idea of what their jobs entail and of their duty to inform. It has to do with the ethical dimension of the practice of journalism and communications.

In Honduras, self-censorship has resurfaced with vigour in recent years to plague the media, particularly in reporting on sensitive subjects concerning big business interests, the military and national security. Journalists tend to exercise self-censorship to avoid offending the political or economic interests of media owners, and there have been cases of journalists who have accepted bribes from officials.<sup>2</sup>

According to interviews with a range of media representatives, there continues to be a scarcity of investigative journalism in Honduras and when it does occur, the focus is primarily on non-controversial subjects. If a journalist does try to do an in-depth report, he or she is faced with external pressure to halt the investigation, with restrictive deadlines, and often with a lack of access to government documents or independent sources.

### **Security and self-censorship before June 2009**

After he took office in January 2006, the centre-left Manuel Zelaya had a tense relationship with the Honduran press, which he criticised for failing to provide coverage

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cna.hn/index.php?documento=556&hl=medios>

of what his government was doing. He resorted to nationwide broadcasts, and created his own weekly newspaper, radio programme and, more recently, television station, to counteract what he called “disinformation by de facto power groups”.

In particular, the murder in October 2007 of Carlos Salgado brought the worsening climate between the government of Zelaya and the media to a climax. This led to the director of Radio Cadena Voces (RCV), Dagoberto Rodríguez, having to leave Honduras with his family in November after receiving a police warning that hit-men had been hired to kill him.

During this period, RCV was highly critical of the Zelaya government and many of its journalists were harassed and intimidated, resulting in ever-increasing levels of self-censorship.

### **Self-censorship in large media outlets after June 2009**

After June 28, 2009, in the first days after the new government came to power, its strategy and that of the media linked to its policies was simply to fail to inform: the mainstream radio and television station showed cartoons or military marches and played light music. Unprecedented levels of violence and intimidation by both national security forces and resistance groups led to both editors and journalists increasingly restricting coverage of both sides of the emerging crisis. Intimidation, threats, blacklisting and violence not seen since the 1980s and early 1990s returned in force.

The implementation of concepts such as “Constitutional or presidential succession” to describe the military coup of June 29, 2009, the reiteration of arguments to justify the coup, and the denigration of President Zelaya and his government are the editorial trends which underlie self-censorship in the production of information. The situation is one of a discourse polarised by the situation of political crisis.

During interviews held by the Mission with members of the television station Telecentro, the editors emphasised their efforts to give airtime to all groups including the resistance. Several journalists acknowledged that the elections would only work to “put a cap on the crisis” but would not be a solution. Journalists from the station added, “Honduras has reached a breaking point and 2010 will be the beginning of the problem and not the end”. They added that the role of the media in fostering a sense of reconciliation from January 2010 onwards would be key.

Several radio stations such as **Radio Globo** and **Canal 36** have been affected by interference with their broadcasts, blackouts and changes of voltage which have damaged their equipment, in addition to threats, scare tactics and the shutdown of their broadcasts. Both radio stations have been victims of shutdowns as a result of their editorial position. This situation, in force in the days leading up to and during the November 2009 elections, has continued since the elections. The organisations participating in the Mission were able to confirm that there was interference with the frequency of Canal 36 in the days prior to the election. Although this event was denounced before the Public Prosecutor’s Office for Human Rights, it has not been possible to identify the perpetrators nor the origin of the interference signal. The judicial

procedure is ongoing; Public Prosecutor Sandra Ponce announced at the beginning of January that the hearings on both cases—Canal 36 and Radio Globo—will be public. Nevertheless, the terms and time period for beginning the legal proceedings have not been established.

Violence and the adverse environment for the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and of the press continue in spite of President-elect Porfirio Lobo's promises to head a government of reconciliation which would spearhead a national dialogue. The organisations participating in the Mission are able to confirm at least seven direct or indirect actions of censorship against journalists and/or their families since November 25, 2009, as examples of the continuing situation of adversity for the Honduran press.

Prior to the elections:

- 1) A media blackout against employees of Radio Globo and Canal 36, and against the journalist Modesto Acosta of Canal 50. (25-11-2009)
- 2) The detonation of an explosive device in "Torre Blanca", where the transmitters for Canal 10 are located, without injuries to any person. (25-11-2009)

During the elections:

- 3) The national police detained the Spanish journalist, Mario Gazcón Aranda, who was accused of calling for a refusal to vote. (29-11-2009)

After the elections:

- 4) Catherine Nicolle Rodríguez, daughter of the journalist Carol Cabrera of the state television station Canal 8 and who at the time of the assault was eight months pregnant, was the victim of an attack perpetrated by a group of armed and unidentified persons. (29-11-2009)
- 5) The national police made another attempt to break into the premises of RadioDos. (29-11-2009)
- 6) The journalist Cesar Silva of Canal 8 was abducted and held for almost 24 hours. (29-12-2009)
- 7) Communicators from the western region have been subjected to death threats in the past weeks. (13-01-2010)
- 8) A group of unidentified persons entered the premises of Radio Faluma Bimetu (Coco Dulce), removed the broadcasting equipment and set fire to one of the station's broadcasting studios. (6-01-2010)

### **Censorship and self-censorship in radio stations outside Tegucigalpa**

It is important to emphasise that the uncertainty and insecurity which threaten freedom of expression are exacerbated in the case of community radio stations, due to two basic factors: the lack of recognition in Honduran legislation of these media outlets and the fact that many of them are located outside the capital, Tegucigalpa, in areas where there are more incidences of abuse of power.

The Mission had the opportunity to hear the testimonies of contributors to Radio Marcala, Radio Progreso, Radio Duruguti and Radio Uno, who gave accounts of the direct and indirect pressures used on them since June 28 by public officials from Conatel (the National Commission of Telecommunications) and by the Armed Forces to bring them into line with the new authorities. Iselma Mejía, the coordinator of Radio Duruguti in the Atlantic region, indicated that in the last days of October, persons who identified themselves as agents of the General Direction of Criminal Investigation visited the radio premises, asking questions about how the radio station worked, and about its contributors and organisations that it works with. Radio Duruguti is a broadcasting station which is managed by organisations linked to the Garifuna community of Honduras.

**Radio Progreso** (of the Company of Jesus in Honduras, of the Catholic Church) has been an emblematic radio station in its opposition to and rejection of the military coup from the very start. They also face a focalised confrontation with Roberto Micheletti, who owns an AM radio station and who has now granted a licence for an FM station in the region, located in the middle of a region where many peasant farmers live in extreme poverty. When Presidente Zelaya returned to Honduras, the decision was made to broadcast for fewer hours to avoid reprisals from the authorities. *“It is a complicated equation which has to be resolved day by day when a media outlet is in the direct line of sight of the leader of the coup”*.

To the direct threats and the power cuts to **Radio Uno** (San Pedro Sula) should be added the termination of the government subsidy for its Children’s Radio Workshop which is sponsored by UNICEF. The girls and boys who act as announcers have been subjected to insults in the streets from supporters of the military coup. The station, and particularly its programmes which have educational content for sexual minorities, have also been affected by the change of policy regarding sexual and reproductive rights. The radio station is prevented from carrying out educational campaigns which may “harm” the image of the fast food industry as this is considered to constitute a disloyal competition; in addition, the station must assume responsibility for all opinions expressed by listeners which are broadcast and which may be critical of the new de facto authorities. They have received inspection visits from ANATEL (National Telecommunications Agency) and they are prevented by law from employing foreign personnel.

### **Restrictions on civil society broadcasters**

In Honduras numerous social and human rights organisations used to have space on radio broadcasters with national coverage. This is the case of the COFADEH (Committee of Families of “Disappeared” Detainees of Honduras) whose radio

programme was cancelled by the Radio América chain. Feminist groups faced a similar situation with Radio Cadena Voces of the INVOSA group, which is linked to the National Party and to ex-President Ricardo Maduro. Teachers' unions have also suffered a similar fate with HRN of the Emisoras Unidas chain.

## **Conclusions**

Journalists live in a state of job insecurity which means they are forced to work at a number of jobs. Many of them work for local and regional media which are critical of the coup and at the same time for large media chains which are sympathetic to the de facto government. For this reason, journalists must accommodate their language, self-censor and provide information in accordance with the media outlet for which they are working.

Working conditions outside the large cities are especially critical, as these tend to be more vulnerable populations which are exposed to arbitrary decisions by the authorities and in some cases to the pressures of the drug traffic. Little attention is paid by authorities to complaints about these abuses.

Journalists' organisations are weak and compliant to the de facto authorities. Press professionals, as well as communicators and media workers, have been offered no protection in the face of threats, scare tactics and attacks, a situation which has an intimidatory effect and establishes fear and lack of confidence as a way of life.

To this can be added the lack of effective links between journalists and communicators and human rights organisations, which makes their working conditions even more fragile.

Self-censorship is rooted in fear, scare tactics, coercion, and a closed media system in which advertising works as a straitjacket. To these factors can be added the close links between the media, politics and business.

The large media are sustained by cross-ownership and integration among financial conglomerates, resulting in an imbalance in social diversity and in the interests represented in the media system.

## **4.2 SECURITY**

Freedom of the press in Honduras is practised in a hostile environment and in conditions of insecurity. This is not a new situation; nevertheless, the political crisis which was unleashed on June 28 has given new force to the threats and the risks facing those who exercise the right to freedom of expression through the media. The multiple pressures from both sides of the political conflict trying to influence the editorial lines of the media, including physical attacks against workers, are the distinguishing characteristics of the prevailing environment for the press in Honduras.

The Mission was able to collect testimonies which report on the many situations and actions which result in a context of uncertainty, which in turn gives rise to direct and

indirect human rights violations against those who exercise freedom of the press and the right to communicate.

These emphasise, on the one hand, the stigmatisation, intimidation and harassment by the authorities of media outlets and journalists who express criticism, by using legal and administrative procedures to prevent them from operating, and at the same time, the constant threat from radical groups opposed to the military coup against media outlets or journalists who are identified as supporters of the coup. In addition to this, the unjustified dismissal of journalists whose opinions did not follow the editorial line, as well as financial pressure from public and private advertisers, have resulted in a context of insecurity which acts in detriment to the physical integrity, the legal certainty and the job stability of those who work as journalists in the country.

Coverage of the protests in favour of or against the restitution of President Manuel Zelaya presents a serious risk. Several regional human rights organisations and agencies reported on the attacks to which reporters and photographers working for both national and foreign media were subjected during the months before and after the coup. Nevertheless, the Mission was able to confirm the degree of vulnerability to police actions of those covering the repression of the protests. The illegal arrest of Alfredo López, director of Radio Coco Dulce, took place on August 12, and of Gustavo Cardoza, a reporter with Radio Progreso, on August 14; both of these human rights violations occurred when they were covering the repression of demonstrations in Tegucigalpa and Choloma respectively.

The media have not only reflected the political polarisation in the country since June 28, but they have also been playing an active role in this polarisation, with the result that objective information is scarce. Different testimonies indicate the existence of “blacklists of journalists”, drawn up by presumed supporters of the restitution of Manuel Zelaya and by supporters of Roberto Michelletti, which circulate on the Internet and have produced uncertainty among those working in journalism.

Dagoberto Rodríguez, News Director for Cadena Radio Voces, who was forced to leave the country temporarily in 2007 when he received death threats, explained to the Mission that “the risk which existed before June 28 has increased considerably with the polarisation.” The degree of vulnerability is high for media outlets connected both to Roberto Michelletti and to Presidente Manuel Zelaya; however, it is important to note that threats against the latter come from state authorities and agents, thus increasing the potential risk and danger that a threat may become reality. The cases of threats against Renato Álvarez, host of the programme Frente a Frente (Face to Face) of Televisión Centroamericana and Jhonny Lagos, editor of the newspaper *El Libertador*, are proof of this.

During the interview, Álvarez, a journalist well known for his opposition to Zelaya, showed the Mission messages he had received on his cell phone with death threats for himself and his family, and he told of others he had received by e-mail. The testimony of Jhonny Lagos bears witness to a growing and systematic harassment against him and the other contributors to *El Libertador*.

Lagos' testimony gives an account of the increase in violence in attempts to censor him. During an interview with Lagos on November 5, the director of *El Libertador* confirmed that he had received an offer of money from Honduran businessmen if he would change his editorial line. Later he was threatened with a lawsuit for defamation, and last September 28 the reporter Delmer Membreño was abducted by a group of unidentified persons. Membreño was released after having been tortured, and his captors sent a message saying: "Worse is waiting for Yonicito (Jhonny Lagos)".

During the interview with Lagos in an open-air café, the Mission noticed that at least four men were trying to listen in on the conversation that was taking place, in a threatening manner. When they saw this, some members of the Mission tried to take photographs of the men, for which reason the men suddenly moved away. One of them left the area in a grey Toyota Corolla car whose licence plate number was recorded by the Mission.

The Mission confirmed that as a measure of self-protection, some of the media outlets identified with the de facto government have decided that their journalists and vehicles will not carry any visible identification during coverage of protests and public events. At the same time, journalists and media who are critical of the government have to take it upon themselves to manage the risks they face through self-censorship, the adoption of rudimentary measures of self-protection, and by trying not to infringe the unwritten rules on criticism and opposing points of view.

In an interview held by the Mission in the offices of Radio América, Luis Edgardo Vallejo and Mauricio Ortega stated that they are upset about no longer being able to work and to travel in peace: "We had to hide the identification on our mobile units because people who are on one side attack journalists who are on the other side". They commented that they have been the victims of sabotage and even that a bomb had been placed on the premises of the radio station. They feel that the atmosphere had been heating up and that this complicated the restitution of Zelaya before the elections. "If the Deputies vote now for restitution they will be acknowledging that when they voted for destitution they committed a crime," they warn, "Here we support the electoral process and are seeking reconciliation." They comment with a tone of fatigue: "We have already lived through these divisions in the 1980s, when we were the sanctuary for the struggle against terrorism".

It is clear that uncertainty not only hampers the work of journalists, but it also presents serious threats to their physical integrity.

During the visit of the Mission, the media reported on November 5 about the detonation of an explosive device on the premises of the radio station HRN. These events are added to the list of attacks against media outlets: Canal 36 and Radio Globo (August 23); Canal 11 (July 6), El Heraldito (August 15). However, it should be noted that for the first time a person was injured in the explosion on the premises of HRN.

In spite of this situation, none of the media businesses has offered any type of training in security for its employees. This state of affairs is even worse in the case of community and indigenous radio stations and Internet-based media, as their operation is already

limited by the lack of economic and material resources. The majority of journalists opt for self-censorship as the only available means of protection.

Another factor which has a determining effect on safety conditions for journalists and the media in Honduras is the generalised impunity in cases of attacks, both in those which took place before the military coup and those which have been perpetrated in the past months. This situation has resulted in a feeling of uncertainty and defencelessness among journalists and those who exercise freedom of the press in the country.

## **5. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Mission team was a heterogeneous group which, as representatives of press organisations from different countries, carried out interviews with members of community radio stations, business people from print, radio and television media, union members and press workers. The purpose of the mission to Honduras was to observe the conditions in which journalists carry out their work, the editorial independence of the media, their impact on society and their relationship with the government.

After carrying out interviews with journalists, editors and media directors, it is clear to us that when asked about the events occurring since June 28, all acknowledge that they have not been completely objective. In some cases this subjectivity is an automatic consequence of their political beliefs; in others it is a result of how they were affected by prior events or by the actions of the government of Manuel Zelaya. Of course it should also be considered that this subjectivity, on one side or the other, is in harmony with the editorial line, the political preference, or the business interests of the directors of each media outlet. There is, however, clear evidence of the toxic mixture of self-censorship and insecurity which results from this.

Based on the information and the testimonies which were collected, and keeping in mind the collective commitment in the medium and long term of the organisations participating in the International Mission to make substantive improvements to the situation facing the exercise of freedom of the press in Honduras, we call on:

### **THE STATE OF HONDURAS:**

**TO ADOPT** clear, positive and effective measures to stop the threats and physical attacks from different official and non-official actors, who try to censor those who exercise, promote and defend the right of freedom of expression and freedom of the press;

**TO STOP** all those practices by the authorities that restrict freedom of expression and freedom of the press, in particular when these practices seek to influence the editorial independence of the media through the inappropriate and discretionary use of funds reserved for buying space for publicity;

**TO GUARANTEE** unlimited access for journalists and the media to all government information, in accordance with the spirit of the principles in the Constitution and the Law

on Transparency and Access to Information, and with international agreements and standards on the subject;

**TO GUARANTEE** the right of the media, be they commercial, public or community-based, to have their work and independence protected by the law through the ruling of an independent institution.

#### **THE HONDURAN PARLIAMENT:**

**TO REFORM** those laws and regulations dealing with all kinds of media to strengthen diversity, independence and pluralism, and to guarantee transparency and equity in the procedure of granting concessions and licences;

**TO RECOGNISE** community and indigenous radio stations, as well as the alternative media, in the Telecommunications Law;

**TO ABOLISH** articles in the Penal Code which criminalise defamation, slander and libel, in particular Article 155.

#### **JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA and to CIVIL SOCIETY:**

**TO PROMOTE** a dialogue between editors, journalists and communicators on democracy and freedom of expression and to promote coordination between journalists and communicators and human rights organisations;

**TO STIMULATE** a debate about the potential value that the reconciliation of political tensions and confrontations and the exercise of an independent, professional and objective journalism represent for Honduran society.

#### **Both THE STATE OF HONDURAS and THE MEDIA:**

**TO GUARANTEE** the protection and the timely and effective aid for journalists and media necessary for them to be able to carry out their work without being affected by threats and attacks. In the same way, media owners and directors should take steps to improve safety conditions for their contributors and employees.