

## **Joint Statement**

### **Serious International Concern over the Climate of Harassment Against the Press in Honduras**

The Inter American Press Association (IAPA), together with various international, regional, and national organizations defending freedom of expression and human rights, expresses its deep alarm over the climate of harassment, stigmatization, and threats faced by journalists and media outlets in Honduras in the weeks leading up to the general elections on November 30.

The recent attacks originating from high-ranking military authorities, combined with a trend of judicial harassment, digital surveillance, and administrative pressure, create a hostile environment incompatible with international standards of press freedom. In this context, authorities have an obligation to guarantee the safety, independence, and free exercise of journalism — the cornerstone of any democratic process.

### **An Alarming Context of Intimidation and Attacks**

In recent weeks, the high command of the Honduran armed forces has issued public statements of extreme gravity, accusing media outlets and journalists of leading supposed “media campaigns disguised as journalistic coverage” against the military institution. These statements, accompanied by insinuations of an alleged “network in which public and private actors are mixed with organized crime structures” in the electoral context, amount to acts of stigmatization aimed at discrediting professional journalism.

These expressions add to several incidents throughout the year. In February, high-ranking officials announced their intention to pursue legal action against at least 12 Honduran media organizations to force them to reveal their sources. In May, the official media outlet of the Armed Forces referred to journalists as “assassins of the truth,” reinforcing a systematic pattern of institutional intimidation contrary to the State’s international obligations on freedom of expression.

In this same context, the digital outlet Criterio.hn has reported an escalation of attacks that includes intervention in its social media accounts, public attempts to discredit its investigative work, and judicial harassment promoted by the Public Prosecutor’s Office, which has requested the disclosure of sources used in reports on alleged links between public figures and networks of drug trafficking and corruption.

These incidents are not isolated episodes, but worrying signs of an increasingly hostile, stigmatizing, and dangerous environment for the practice of independent journalism in Honduras, especially at a crucial electoral moment for the country’s democratic life. They occur in a climate of mounting electoral tension, where journalists covering corruption, organized crime, or political processes face heightened risks of physical aggression and institutional retaliation.

The International Mission for Freedom of Expression in Honduras —comprising organizations such as Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Article 19, Free Press Unlimited, the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP), and PEN International, among others — recently documented “a pattern of surveillance, intimidation, and harassment by state and

military sectors,” as well as the “lack of guarantees for the free exercise of journalism in the context of elections.”

The IAPA and the undersigned organizations categorically reject the statements by General Roosevelt Hernández and any attempt to criminalize, intimidate, or discredit the independent press. The Armed Forces must act within the constitutional framework that establishes their subordination to civilian authority and must refrain from issuing political or disqualifying statements against journalists or media organizations.

We also recall that the National Electoral Council (CNE) had already instructed General Hernández not to make statements on political or electoral matters, noting that the military institution operates under the coordination of the electoral authority precisely to avoid undue interference or political interpretations.

We reiterate that press freedom is not a privilege but a fundamental right, and that the use of official discourse to delegitimize or target journalists constitutes a direct violation of the international obligations assumed by the Honduran State under the American Convention on Human Rights and the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the observations of the International Mission, the undersigned organizations make the following recommendations to the State of Honduras and relevant authorities:

1. Guarantee press freedom and access to information

- Ensure that all media outlets, without distinction, can cover elections, campaign events, and matters of public interest without restrictions, censorship, or reprisals.
- Comply with and enforce national and international standards protecting professional secrecy and the confidentiality of sources.

## 2. Urge the Armed Forces to refrain from any act of stigmatization

- Military high command must refrain from making statements or publications that discredit or endanger journalists.
- Remind them of their obligation of political neutrality and respect for freedom of expression, in accordance with democratic principles and the Constitution.

## 3. Investigate and sanction attacks and threats

- Initiate independent and transparent investigations into verbal and digital attacks against journalists, defamation campaigns, and judicial harassment.
- Administratively and criminally sanction officials or agents who engage in threats, surveillance, or harassment of media outlets or communicators.

## 4. Strengthen protection mechanisms

- Provide the National Protection System for Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators, and Justice Operators with adequate resources, autonomy, and immediate response capacity.
- Implement early-warning protocols and urgent response actions in cases of threats during the electoral process.

## 5. Promote dialogue and transparency

- Establish a formal dialogue channel between the Government, the CNE, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and press organizations to address specific risks and coordinate preventive measures.

- Ensure that public institutions provide equitable access to information, avoiding blockages, discrimination, or arbitrary exclusion of critical media outlets.

#### 6. Call to the international community

- We urge electoral observation missions, the Organization of American States, the United Nations system, the European Union, and the diplomatic community to include in their reports specific monitoring of the situation of press freedom and journalist safety during and after the electoral process.

On the eve of an electoral process that will test the country's institutional strength, press freedom remains the most essential guarantee of Honduran democracy. The discrediting, intimidation, or surveillance of journalists threatens not only the media but the right of the entire citizenry to be informed.

The undersigned organizations will remain in permanent observation and monitoring, committed to continuing to provide support and accompaniment to Honduran journalists and media outlets who, with courage, defend the right to truth and freedom of expression.

#### **Signatory organizations:**

Alianza de Medios MX

ARTICLE 19 México y Centroamérica

Asociación Colombiana de Medios de Información (AMI)

Asociación de Entidades Periodísticas Argentinas (ADEPA)

Asociación de Medios de Comunicación de Honduras (AM)

Asociación Nacional de la Prensa (ANP) Bolivia

Asociación Nacional de la Prensa (ANP) Chile

Associação Nacional de Jornais (ANJ)

Asociación de Periodistas de El Salvador (APES)

Asociación por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos  
(ASOPODEHU)

C-Libre Comité por la Libre Expresión

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Consejo de la Prensa Peruana (CPP)

Foro de Periodismo Argentino (FOPEA)

Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP)

Fundación por la Libertad de Expresión y Democracia (FLED)

Fundamedios

Inter American Press Association (IAPA)

Instituto Cubano por la Libertad de Expresión y Prensa (ICLEP)

Instituto Prensa y Libertad de Expresión (IPLEX)

Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS)

Instituto Prensa y Sociedad Venezuela (IPYS Venezuela)

International Press Institute (IPI)

PEN International

Press Freedom Center at the National Press Club

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Voces del Sur

World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)