

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/honduras-police-try-to-hush-up-shooting-of-16-03-2011,39803.html>

Americas - Honduras

"No fuss, please"

Police try to hush up shooting of community radio station's president

16 March 2011

[*La Voz de Zacate Grande*](#), a community radio station based on the southern island of Zacate Grande, has again been the target of persecution for siding with local peasant groups in their land disputes with biofuel manufacturer Miguel Facussé Barjum.

In the latest aggression, **Franklin Meléndez**, the president of the board that oversees the station, was shot in the leg on 13 March by two critics of its editorial policies. The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) said Meléndez was hospitalized for the gunshot wound to his leg and was in a stable condition.

The police and judicial authorities have taken no action in response to the shooting, although the identity of the assailants is known, and neither Meléndez nor the staff of *La Voz de Zacate Grande* have been given any protection. Worse still, the police called the station and asked it "not to make a fuss."

"Military occupation, a ridiculous control order on two of its correspondents, repeated acts of intimidation and now a shooting that is deliberately left unpunished," Reporters Without Borders said. "The failure of the authorities to act is clearly the result of bias rather than negligence. They never acted on the station's complaint against Miguel Facussé and continue to defend his interests in violation of fundamental freedoms including media freedom."

The press freedom organization added: "Such a flagrant breach of constitutional principles demands an urgent reaction from the government in Tegucigalpa and the highest judicial bodies. Facussé and his allies must be made to answer publicly for this persecution of a rural community and its radio station."

Meléndez was with two of the station's reporters and the representative of a recent international human rights observation mission when two men, Jorge Sánchez and Porfirio Medina, accosted him and criticised his support for the attempts by peasant groups to recover land from Facussé. Sánchez made a death threat then Medina pulled out a gun and shot him. Relatives of Medina subsequently called the station several times and threatened its staff.

Community radio stations are very exposed to the possibility of reprisals by local despots, who often have support in high places. The political violence that followed the June 2009 coup d'état increased the dangers.

In order to defend media pluralism, Reporters Without Borders will continue to support community radio stations such as *La Voz de Zacate Grande* and *Radio Faluma Bimetu*, a Garifuna (Afro-Honduran) radio station on the Atlantic coast that is also known as *Radio Coco Dulce*.

Reporters Without Borders again points out that no concrete measures have been taken to protect opposition radio and TV stations or stations regarded as sympathetic to the opposition. Media such as *Radio Uno*, *Radio Globo* and *Canal 36* continue to be the targets of [attacks, sabotage or censorship attempts](#). The protective measures for *Radio Progreso's* journalists that were ordered

by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights were never implemented.

Reporters Without Borders also deplores the hostility which Arturo Echenique Santos, commissioner of the Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP), recently displayed inside the parliament building towards a journalist working for the news website [Revistazo](#), whom he threatened with prosecution. Revistazo is another media that has been in the government's sights ever since the coup.
