

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ecuador-weekly-unable-to-publish-after-06-08-2012,43167.html>

Americas - Ecuador

Hounded media

Weekly unable to publish after equipment seized

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This week's issue of the weekly *Vanguardia* will not go on sale today because its computers and other equipment were seized in a raid carried out six days ago on the labour ministry's orders.

Reporters Without Borders has been told that editor **Iván Flores** still hopes to be able to bring out the issue at some point in the future but does not know when that will be.

The 31 July raid was not the first of its kind at *Vanguardia*, which often covers alleged corruption involving government officials. There have also been [repeated closures](#) of radio and TV stations that criticize President Rafael Correa's government.

As in the other cases, officials have cited administrative grounds for intervening. They claim that *Vanguardia* has 27,000 dollars in unpaid debts, that it ignored legislation about hiring handicapped workers and that it failed to display its internal regulations in a visible place.

Vanguardia **Juan Carlos Calderón**, who was on vacation when the raid took place, called it a "political reprisal."

"The list of closed or embargoed media has been growing dangerously since the start of the year," Reporters Without Borders said. "Even if *Vanguardia* failed to fulfil certain legal obligations, was silencing it necessary? This draconian measure has coincided with other grave reprisals against critical media. A presidential order banned cabinet ministers from giving them interviews, they no longer get state advertising and the president has repeatedly [attacked their representatives](#)."

"The most outspoken privately-owned media are also partly to blame for the current social polarization. But in this case, *Vanguardia* just did some investigative reporting under its right to freedom of information, as news media are supposed to do. Media criticism or revelations must not be portrayed as attempts to overthrow the government."

Reporters Without Borders added: "From the outset we have been saying that the future [communications law](#) – on which a parliamentary vote is still suspended – should promote a pluralistic balance between the various kinds of media (state, community and privately-owned) while guaranteeing their independence. The closures of radio and TV stations and now *Vanguardia* do not in any way help to achieve this goal."
