

October 2, 2009

via fax: 011 504 239 3298
Mr. Roberto Micheletti
De facto President of Honduras

Dear Mr. Micheletti:

We are outraged at the recent attacks on media workers that is part of the violence being caused by the *de facto* government in Honduras. Their Decree PCM-M-016-2009 allows newspapers or broadcasters which "insult...public officials" or "threaten peace and public order" to be closed.

On September 23 a correspondent and three other staff of Radio Progreso received a threatening text message: "The sons of Micheletti in El Progreso offer half a million Lempiras (US\$26,500) for the head of Padre Melo, Rene J." The next day when Radio Progreso staff confronted six men loitering around the building, the men fled in a minibus. After Padre Melo left the Radio Progreso office on September 25, a red car followed him for seven blocks. Graffiti has also appeared in the town over the past several weeks, with slogans such as "Get out priest."

On September 28 at 5:20am soldiers and police came to the Radio Globo offices in Tegucigalpa, shouted at the staff to get out, shot the lock off the door, entered, and confiscated all of Radio Globo's equipment and destroyed other material. Outside, security forces photographed and harassed journalists. Other media workers present were arrested and beaten. The security forces closed down TV station Canal 36 the same day.

On his way to cover events at Radio Globo and Canal 36, photographer Delmer Membreno, working for El Libertador, was forced into a red pickup truck by four men in balaclavas who put a hood over his head and drove off. They stopped after an hour and a half and put a gun to his head. One of the men shouted, "...I want to see his eyes when you kill him." Another said, "No...leave him alive so he gives the message to the director [of El Libertador, Johnny Lagos] that we will treat him even worse." The men then beat him, burned his face and torso with cigarettes and left him outside Tegucigalpa. On September 30, Delmer Membreno received a phone call at his house from a man who said only, "You dogs."

Because of these and similar incidents addressed in our letters of September 24 and October 1, we **strongly urge** that you

- immediately rescind Decree PCM-M-016-2009 in its entirety;
- publicly instruct the police and army to act in accordance with international human rights standards and disregard the provisions contained in Decree PCM-M-016-2009;
- allow media workers to carry out their work free from attacks, threats and intimidation.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Mr. Eduardo Enrique Reina, Embassy of Honduras in the US ~ via fax: 1 202 966 9751
Ambassador Hugo Llorens, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via fax: 011-504-236-9037
Rebecca Valerin, Desk Officer for Honduras, US State Department ~ via fax: 1-202-647-2597
Christopher Webster, Director of Office of Central American Affairs, US State Department ~ via fax: 1-202-647-2597
Paolo Carozza, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 1-202-458-3650
C-Libre, human rights organization in Honduras ~ via fax: 011 504 239-8246
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Sutton, Wilson, Space ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: