



International organizations send report to the UN Honduras UPR with warnings and recommendations on freedom of expression and the press

Seven international and local organizations have warned in a report submitted to the United Nations on April 7 about the systematic violations of freedom of expression and press freedom in Honduras within the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) fourth cycle.

Article 19 Mexico and Central America, Committee to Protect Journalists, Free Press Unlimited, PEN International, PEN Honduras, Reporters Without Borders and Asopodehu (Association for Democracy and Human Rights in Honduras) sent a report to the UN UPR Working Group to warn about laws that restrict freedom of expression and press freedom in the country; murder cases, harassment and intimidation of journalists and community and indigenous media; threats to academic freedom and the limitation of women journalists and authors participation in media management positions.

According to the organizations, Honduras has one of the most complex and unstable human rights contexts in Latin America, which requires the international community's attention. Conditions for the exercise of freedom of expression and the press have deteriorated in Honduras with the ongoing political polarization, rising impunity rates, and, given the extended state of emergency, the scenario for the general elections in November is worrisome.

The report highlights that the violence against freedom of expression and press freedom is related to the lack of guarantees by the National System for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators to promote the necessary conditions for the exercise of journalism in Honduras. The lack of institutions committed to improving the current situation fuels the cycle of impunity that emerges from the lack of investigations, reparations and justice, and it worsens when it involves the same authorities who attack Honduran journalism. As of 2024, a total of 600 complaints were filed against security forces for illegitimate use of public power during the state of emergency, according to the National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH).

The report presented by the civil society organizations made 13 recommendations, among which the following stand out:

- Strengthening the monitoring of violence -especially against women and community journalists- and the adoption of effective prevention and accountability policies, through the joint action of bodies such as the Attorney General's Office, the Special Prosecutor's Office for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social

Communicators and Justice Operators (FEPRODDHH), the Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes against Life and CONADEH;

- The revision of the Protection Law and its regulations for the institutional strengthening of the protection mechanism, guaranteeing its own budget, autonomy and administrative and decision-making independence.
- The immediate repeal of crimes against honor to avoid further violation of media and journalists. The implementation of lawsuits for libel and defamation violate the journalistic practice of those who promote a diverse debate;
- The strengthening of analysis with a gender approach in aggressions against women media and journalists or those who cover and/or are part of the LGBTQI+ community, for better attention and non-revictimization. The organizations ask the State of Honduras to ratify the Inter-American Convention against all forms of Discrimination and Intolerance;
- That the State carry out a campaign to recognize the work of journalists and not discriminate against the press through its advertising policy, to favor certain media over others, for political or commercial reasons;
- And that CONADEH promotes a dialogue with universities, academics and students, so that university authorities avoid practices that violate free expression and that the university is a guarantor of human rights.

In the previous evaluation cycle to which Honduras was submitted in 2020, the country received 223 recommendations, 203 of which were accepted by the country and took note of 20. According to the organizations' report, the recommendations relating to freedom of expression have not been respected by the Honduran State. The UN Human Rights Council will pronounce itself on the situation in Honduras in November.

The Universal Periodic Review is a mechanism for evaluating the human rights situation in the 193 UN member states, through which countries receive recommendations from their peers. In this process, civil society makes suggestions for recommendations to be considered by members of the UN Human Rights Council.