



## **Freedom of expression observation mission warns of risks facing Honduran press one month before elections**

**Tegucigalpa, October 30, 2025**

One month before the general elections on November 30, the international organisations that make up the Mission for Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom in Honduras warn of judicial harassment, profiling and impunity that jeopardise the practice of journalism and the right of citizens to freely access information during the election period.

The international mission organised listening and observation sessions with journalists from ten departments across the country, as well as a meeting with the National Human Rights Commissioner (CONADEH), with the aim of documenting security conditions, access to information, and freedom of expression in the electoral context.

Journalists described an environment of surveillance, intimidation, and information control, including profiling, infiltration of chat rooms, lists of allied media outlets, and restrictions on access to political coverage. Added to this is a wave of stigmatising rhetoric and online attacks that fuel electoral polarisation and reproduce symbolic violence against the press.

Similarly, attacks against journalists belonging to historically discriminated populations, such as women and members of indigenous communities, include death threats, stigmatisation campaigns with sexual and racist connotations, and intimidation affecting their families, which constitutes a pattern of differentiated and structural violence.

State institutions responsible for protection — the Public prosecutor's office, the National protection mechanism (Decree 34-2015), the National police, and the Public prosecutor's office — have been accused of neglecting complaints and mistreating journalists once again. In some cases, employment contracts are required for complaints to be accepted, or protection is refused, leaving journalists defenceless against threats and attacks. The lack of institutional independence, combined with job insecurity and the discriminatory use of public advertising by all political forces, encourages self-censorship and undermines citizens' right to receive accurate information during the electoral process.

At the local level, journalism is particularly vulnerable in areas with less institutional presence, such as rural areas, border regions, or areas affected by land conflicts and environmental disputes. In these regions, the state's limited capacity to prevent and respond to attacks exposes journalists to increased risks. The presence of armed actors and illegal

economies, including drug trafficking networks and gang structures, increases tensions and limits the ability to cover events of public interest.

The mission also noted a worrying increase in direct violence against journalists. The murders of **Hércules Salinas** and **Carlos Gilberto Aguirre** this year remain unpunished and the motive for these killings has not been clarified, reflecting a structural pattern of violence. According to CONADEH data, more than 100 people linked to the media have been murdered since 2001, and only a dozen cases have resulted in a conviction. The institution has acknowledged that it has been subjected to political pressure, budget cuts and attempts to limit its role as an election observer, which exacerbates the state's lack of response to threats and attacks.

Local organisations defending freedom of expression in Honduras report an alarming deterioration of the civic space in Honduras due to punitive legal frameworks, the fragmentation of civil society, and self-censorship by journalists.

It should be noted that in its 2024 report, the Voces del Sur network of organisations ranked Honduras as the country with the highest number of murders of journalists in Latin America, and recorded 123 alerts of violence against the press.

The mission also documented the instrumental use of the judicial system by senior military officials and public servants, who resort to defamation lawsuits and court orders to intimidate journalists and media outlets investigating issues of public interest. These actions have a chilling effect and normalise hostility toward the press, sending a signal that censorship and violence is tolerated at a key moment for the country.

The organisations participating in the mission warn that the combination of militarisation, judicial harassment, impunity, and lack of institutional protection threatens the right to inform and be informed, which are essential pillars for guaranteeing free, transparent, and credible elections.

**The organisations participating in the mission urge the Honduran State and the international community to follow the six recommendations below.**

1. Guarantee equitable, rapid and transparent access to electoral information, ensuring safe and fair coverage conditions for all media outlets, without discrimination based on editorial line or territorial reach.
2. Refrain from stigmatising rhetoric or statements that discredit journalistic work, and promote public discourse that respects and recognises the role of the press in democracy.
3. Cease to use the judicial system and criminal defamation laws as a means of pressure or censorship, ensuring that any disputes are dealt with through civil and proportionate channels.
4. Strengthen the National Protection Mechanism and CONADEH, providing them with sufficient budget, technical staff, and autonomy to handle cases quickly and ensure a preventive response to all cases under equal conditions during election day.

5. Ensure an effective institutional presence in vulnerable regions, with specific measures for journalists in rural, border, or environmental conflict areas.

6. Promote international support and independent observation of the press situation during the electoral process, including technical assistance to prevent misinformation and protect journalists from digital attacks.