

WORLDWIDE THREATS TO MEDIA FREEDOM

HEARING
BEFORE THE
TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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WORLDWIDE THREATS TO MEDIA FREEDOM

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2012

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,

Washington, D.C.

The Commission met, pursuant to call, at 1:00 p.m., in Room 2226, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. James P. McGovern [cochairman of the Commission] presiding.

Mr. McGOVERN: Good afternoon and welcome. I want to thank you for attending this important hearing on Threats to Media Freedom Worldwide. I want to thank Danielle Johnson and the staff of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for organizing this hearing. I also want to thank our witnesses for testifying and for everything they do to support the right to free expression.

I also want to acknowledge Aisha Naseem, who this is her last day with the Commission. We want to thank her publicly for all of her great work and dedication.

Media freedom is an invaluable component of an empowered democratic society. Our definitions of media are rapidly expanding, especially with the rise of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. No matter what kind of media they turn to, people are empowered when they have access to different sources of information and the ability to participate in a free exchange of ideas. People are also empowered when journalists and bloggers are allowed to expose injustices and abuses of power. Without these freedoms, people cannot hold their governments accountable and demand respect for their rights.

Unfortunately, the media is under attack in many places. Authoritarian regimes in countries including China, Russia, and Iran are developing increasingly sophisticated tools to keep the media under their control and to punish journalists who refuse to toe the official line. Even in some established democracies like Chile, Hungary, and Turkey, ruling parties have been cracking down on unfavorable press coverage. Simply for trying to report the truth, journalists are too often the targets of censorship, harassment, threats, unlawful detention, torture, and even murder. And too often, these violations go unpunished. In this hearing, we will examine threats to media freedom from a global perspective, and we will look in depth at three countries where journalists face especially difficult though varying conditions: Honduras, Russia, and Turkey.

I am deeply concerned about the escalating violence against journalists in Honduras. According to Freedom House, Honduras is the second most dangerous country in the world for journalists, with 19 journalists killed since the 2009 coup. Those who oppose the current government or offend powerful interest groups are consistently targeted with death threats and assassinations. A pervasive culture of impunity facilitates this violence.

In Russia, a lack of accountability for killings of investigative journalists is also a serious problem, as is state control and censorship of most of the mainstream media. While the Internet is touted by the Russian government as a forum for free discussion, the Kremlin has repeatedly manipulated it by censoring content, hacking accounts, and engaging in cyber attacks.

Against this backdrop, I am very troubled by Russia's new law on regulating the Internet, which gives Russian authorities even greater leeway to repress online oppression -- I am sorry, to repress online opposition.

Turkish journalists do not generally face the same deadly dangers as journalists in Honduras or Russia, but Turkey has one of the highest numbers of imprisoned journalists in the world. In April, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reported that 95 Turkish journalists are in jail. The threat of detention for criticizing the government has created a climate of self-censorship among Turkish journalists, undermining freedom of expression in a democracy that is often held up as a model for countries in the Middle East.

This hearing is an opportunity to examine the wide range of threats facing journalists and the media across the globe. Although journalists don't tend to think of themselves this way, they are among the world's most important human rights defenders, and the United States should strongly support their important but often dangerous work.

Mr. McGOVERN: And at this time, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey, who has been very active on these issues and a number of other human rights issues, Congressman Chris Smith.

Mr. SMITH: Thank you very much, Chairman McGovern, and thank you for convening this very important hearing, and I want to welcome Secretary Michael Posner back to the Lantos Commission and thank him for his work.

Mr. Chairman, I will be very brief, and I ask that my full statement be made a part of the record. Freedom of the media is an essential foundation for democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of all other human rights. It is not surprising that journalists so often become the first casualties in the fight to protect those rights. They are the ones who inform, ignite, and inspire other human rights defenders and democracy activists, thus they are at the gravest threat to any repressive government.

One way dictatorships protect their power is by controlling access to their journalistic work, especially on the Internet. In December, I introduced H.R. 3605, updating the Global Online Freedom Act, first introduced in 2006, the response to the growing global use of the Internet as a tool of censorship and surveillance. It is designed to help ensure that U.S. companies are not complicit in the repression of human rights. We cannot allow the Internet to be turned into a weapon of mass surveillance.

The new GOFA would keep the Internet open to journalists and everyone else through three key provisions: First, it requires the State Department to identify by name Internet restricting countries; second, the Global Online Freedom Act requires Internet companies listed on the U.S. Stock Exchanges to disclose to the Securities and Exchange Commission how they carry out their human rights due diligence, including how they collect and share personally identifiable information with repressive countries; finally, in response to the numerous reports of U.S.

technology being used to track down or conduct surveillance of activists on the Internet or mobile devices, this bill would prohibit the export of hardware or software that can be used for surveillance, tracking, blocking, and the like to the governments of Internet-restricting countries. I do hope that we get an opportunity to vote on it soon. I have already reported it out of my subcommittee, the Global Human Rights Subcommittee.

Another way dictatorships protect their power is by directly silencing journalists through imprisonment and violence. According to Reporters Without Borders, at least 38 citizen journalists and media workers have been killed in Syria alone by the Assad government since the start of the uprising there.

Finally, journalists investigating the government corruption are especially vulnerable. As we all know, Vladimir Putin has stepped up his efforts to investigate a decade-long string of mysterious murders of journalists. I am sorry to say there has been no meaningful progress on any of those cases. A climate of impunity continues to prevail. Russia is, by no means, the only country in the OSCE region where journalists face serious threats. The situation in much of central Asia remains grim as well, but Russia does stand out for the number of journalists who have died from apparent retribution for their incisive work. I thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for this hearing and yield back.

Mr. McGOVERN: Thank you very much for your statement.

Mr. McGOVERN: I would now like to turn to our witnesses for this afternoon's hearing. Along with their oral testimony, I would like to submit into the record any written testimony provided by our witnesses. I would like to welcome once again to this committee our first witness, Michael H. Posner, Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the State Department. Mr. Posner, you have been a strong defender of media freedom, and I am grateful to you and your colleagues at the State Department for your leadership on this issue, and we welcome your presence here and your statement. You may begin.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL H. POSNER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE,
BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
STATE**

Mr. POSNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Congressman Smith, thank you both for being here and giving me the opportunity to discuss both traditional and emerging threats to fundamental freedoms, both online and offline.

I want to begin by broadening the way we talk about the threats, new threats to free expression because the traditional terms, media freedom and censorship no longer reflect the full spectrum of what is happening around the world. I want to also step back and remind everyone that 200 years ago, James Madison, one of the principal authors of the U.S. Constitution, wrote that a popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or both.

The more globalized our world has become, the more critical is the free flow of information and news to our policies, our economies, and the ability of citizens in every country to make informed decisions about their own lives and to hold governments accountable. Recognizing the vital importance of information, the Obama administration has redoubled our efforts to track the broad

range of threats to media freedom today and to respond to these new challenges.

These threats include the use of criminal libel, defamation or incitement laws, misuse of terrorism laws to prosecute journalists, prosecutions designed to inflict crippling financial damage on news organizations, increase in government ownership of media outlets, shutdown of Web sites, social media sites, threats against, physical attacks on, assassinations of, disappearances of journalists, particularly those reporting on criminal activity like drugs and corruption. And the inability or unwillingness of governments to protect journalists or prosecute those responsible for attacks as, Mr. Chair, you raised the cases in Honduras.

We all remember the brutal murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl 10 years ago now in Pakistan. In the last decade, the use of violence to intimidate journalists and news organizations has worsened according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, who I know you will hear from in a few moments, 15 journalists have been murdered so far in 2012. That is in addition to 14 killed in the line of duty this year. The number of journalists under duress keeps growing and so must our work to protect them. At a moment when a number of important countries are in transition, both toward and away from democracy, we need to focus on threats to the free flow of information because these are threats to democracy itself.

This spring, we launched a Free the Press campaign in the run-up to World Press Freedom Day. Under Secretary of State Tara Sonenshine observed that media freedom is the moral equivalent of oxygen, it is how society breathes. When freedom of expression is cut off, economies stagnate, societies suffer, individuals grasp for breath. A global information infrastructure that supports free markets and prosperous societies cannot be built atop a foundation of censorship, repression, or intimidation.

And so we are deeply concerned, as you both are, about the worsening climate for media freedom, for example, in Russia. Earlier this month the Duma passed laws enabling Internet censorship and recriminalizing defamation. The Duma also discussed labeling news outlets that are funded internationally as foreign agents, a stigmatizing term that now applies to NGOs, and we can talk also about a new NGO law that has just passed.

We are also concerned when Bloomberg News Web site is blocked in China after reporting on the business interests of some members of the Chinese leadership. While each country has its political sensitivities, in our financially interdependent world, the ability to have diverse and independent reporting of business news is critical to the proper functioning of markets, companies, and international monetary institutions.

But it is not just governments that are threatening freedom of the press. It is also criminal gangs, terrorists, sometimes political factions. We see a rising threat to media freedom in an established democracy like Mexico, where eight journalists have been killed so far this year. Last month, unknown assailants sprayed bullets, threw grenades into the offices of El Norte and La Mañana newspapers. La Mañana announced it would no longer report on drug violence, joining other media which have quietly adopted similar self-censorship policies.

The government in Mexico is working to improve protection it provides to journalists and rights defenders, and we will continue to work with that government as it addresses such violence.

While the U.S. is eager to cooperate with other countries in combating terrorism, we will voice our

concerns when governments abuse anti-terrorism laws to suppress free speech. We made it clear in our human rights dialogues with a number of governments that media freedom is a fundamental element of a democratic society.

At the same time, rapid technological changes require us to adopt a broader conceptual framework for defending freedom in this digital age.

I want to highlight three broad trends we see emerging. The first trend is the changing nature of censorship itself. A decade ago, media censorship was based primarily on a system of prior restraints. Most governments that censored had a stable and predictable relationship with newspapers, magazines, TV stations, et cetera. Government red lines were known, so were the likely punishments for failure to practice self-censorship. Today it is a different story. Every individual with access to social media can be a publisher or broadcaster. Ordinary citizens with no journalistic training can send multimedia reports around the world at a production cost of next to nothing. When everybody is a news gatherer or publisher or broadcaster, prior restraint is far less feasible. Very few countries can delete every Facebook post that criticizes the government or every tweet calling for protestors to assemble. What they can do is punish expression after the fact.

So the second trend we are seeing is social media repression, governments prosecuting or persecuting Internet and social media users for what they blog, post, tweet or text. We have reported on more than 60 individuals in 17 countries who have been arrested for their online expression in the last 20 months. They range from journalists and webmasters to political activists to an ordinary Saudi woman sentenced to 50 lashes allegedly for using a swear word in a text message.

These individuals have been prosecuted under a dizzying array of existing laws being repurposed for use against digital expression, including libel, distortion, disrupting social order, incitement of protest or ethnic hatred, blasphemy, diversion, terrorism, defamation, inciting others to action under the pretext of freedom of expression.

Social media can be an invaluable tool for governments that want to understand the needs, views, and problems of their people and respond quickly, including cases of natural disaster. It must not become a new frontier for micro targeting repression.

Because much of the public debate now takes place online, the persecution of people for what they post online amounts to criminalizing conversation. The advent of the Internet thought police trolling social media for criminal forms of expression is a violation of human rights and a serious step backwards for freedom.

Third and finally, is the continuing threat to Internet freedom in individual countries and to global system of Internet governance. I have testified about this before, but I want to note that in most of the wired world, any threat to Internet freedom is, by definition, a threat to media freedom everywhere and, Congressman Smith, I very much appreciate your ongoing efforts in this regard.

On the positive side, I am very proud of the fact that 17 countries, including the United States, have now joined a coalition for freedom online to help defend Internet freedom. You have played a key role in that. We are also working collectively to keep advanced communications technologies from being deployed by the worst human rights offenders against their own citizens.

This spring, as you know, President Obama signed an Executive order restricting the export of technologies that can be used for Internet surveillance in both Iran and Syria. This was an important step, but we must and we will continue to be vigilant about evolving threats to freedom that are so vital to prosperity and democratic progress around the world. Thank you very much. I am glad to answer any questions.

[The statement of Mr. Posner follows:]

**Internet Thought Police, Offline Attacks:
Threats to Media Freedom in the Digital Age**

Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
Tom Lantos Commission on Human Rights
July 25, 2012

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss both traditional and emerging threats to fundamental freedoms, both online and offline. Mr. Chairman, I ask that these remarks be submitted for the record.

I want to begin by broadening the way we are talking about the new threats to free expression, because the traditional terms “media freedom” and “censorship” no longer reflect the full spectrum of what is happening around the world.

Two hundred years ago James Madison, one of the principle authors of the U.S. Constitution wrote: “A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy, or perhaps both.”

The more globalized our world has become, the more critical is the free flow of news and information to our policies, our economies, and the ability of citizens in every country to make informed decisions about their own lives.

Recognizing the vital importance of information, the Obama administration has redoubled the U.S. government’s efforts to track the broad range of threats to media freedom today and to respond to these new challenges. These threats include the use of criminal libel, defamation, or incitement laws, and the misuse of terrorism laws to prosecute journalists; prosecutions designed to inflict crippling financial damage on news organizations; the increase of government ownership of media outlets; the shutdown of websites and social media sites; threats against, physical attacks on, assassinations of, and disappearances of journalists, particularly those reporting on criminal activity, or corruption; and the inability or unwillingness of governments to protect journalists or prosecute those responsible for attacks on journalists.

We all remember the brutal murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl 10 years ago in Pakistan, where he had gone to report on Al Qaida. In the decade since that tragedy, the use of violence to intimidate journalists and news organizations has worsened. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 15 journalists have been murdered so far in 2012, in addition to the 14 killed in the line of duty this year. The number of journalists under duress keeps growing, and so must our work to protect them.

At a moment when a number of important countries are in transition both toward and away from democracy, we need to focus on threats to the free flow of information, which *are* threats to democracy. This spring, when we launched a “Free the Press” campaign in the run-up to World Press Freedom Day, Under Secretary of State Tara Sonenshine observed that media freedom is “the moral equivalent of oxygen. It is how a society breathes.”

When freedom of expression is cut off, economies stagnate, societies suffer, and individuals gasp for breath. The independence of news organizations, the diversity of information sources, and the quality of the information people get all matter, if citizens are to have genuine democratic and economic opportunity. A global information infrastructure that supports free markets and prosperous societies cannot be built atop a foundation of censorship, repression, and intimidation.

And so we are deeply concerned about the worsening climate for media freedom in Russia. Earlier this month the Duma passed laws enabling Internet censorship and re-criminalizing defamation. The Duma has also discussed labeling news outlets that are funded internationally as “foreign agents” – a stigmatizing term now also applied to NGOs.

We are concerned by the recent arrest of Mam Sonando, an independent radio broadcaster in Cambodia, who now faces up to 20 years in prison. U.S. officials, including President Obama, have spoken out about the case of Vietnamese blogger Dieu Cay, and I raised the case again this month on a trip to Vietnam.

We are also concerned when the Bloomberg News website is blocked in China after reporting on the business interests of some members of China’s leadership. While each country has its political sensitivities, in our financially interdependent world, the ability to have diverse and independent reporting of business news is critical to the proper functioning of markets, companies, and international monetary institutions.

It is not just governments that threaten the freedom of the press. It is also criminal gangs, terrorists, and sometimes political factions. We see a rising threat to free media in an established democracy like Mexico, where eight journalists have been killed so far this year. Last month, unknown assailants sprayed bullets and threw grenades into the offices of the *El Norte* and *La Mañana* newspapers, and in desperation, *La Mañana* announced that it would no longer report on drug violence, joining other papers which have quietly adopted a similar self-censorship policy. Last fall, four social media bloggers were murdered in Nuevo Laredo, with two hung from city bridges and two left decapitated—all bodies were found with notes from criminal organizations warning others not to report on their activities. The Government of Mexico is working to improve the protection it provides to journalists and rights defenders, and the United States will continue to be a partner with the Mexican government as it addresses such violence.

We have also repeatedly stressed the need to establish a firm commitment to free expression, assembly, and association in emerging democracies like Tunisia, where the owner of Nessma TV was fined in May for broadcasting a movie that some deemed blasphemous. The film had previously been approved by the Ben Ali government and had already been shown in Tunisian movie theaters. But charges were brought by the current government after angry protests by Islamists against the TV station.

We must send the message that every government has a duty to protect the universal rights of its vulnerable minorities. And as we promote democracy and freedom of expression around the world, the United States must stand up for the principle that popular majorities do not have the right to restrict the universal human rights of others, including freedom of expression and religion.

While the United States is eager to cooperate with other countries in combating terrorism, we will voice our concerns when governments abuse anti-terrorism laws to suppress free speech. We spoke out against the June conviction of Ethiopian journalist Eskinder Nega, a journalist and online columnist known for writing pieces that advocate for human rights, and one of more than 100 opposition political figures, activists, and government critics arrested last year. We have made clear in our human rights dialogues with the Ethiopian government that media freedom is a fundamental element in a democratic society.

Finally, we continue to raise press freedom cases in the most difficult countries. During our “Free The Press” campaign this spring, we spotlighted cases of journalists under duress in Vietnam, Cuba, Belarus, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, and China. I continue to raise cases in many other countries, publicly and privately, and will continue to do so.

Whether we are promoting Internet freedom, press freedom, or the safety of journalists, training independent media, or advocating for the role of civil society groups in building healthy societies, we are rooted in the same fundamental principles: that all individuals are entitled to the universal freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. These principles are enduring, but rapid technological change requires us to adopt a broader conceptual framework for defending freedom in the digital age. I want to highlight three new trends we see emerging.

The first trend is the changing nature of censorship. A decade ago, media censorship was based primarily on a system of prior restraint. Most governments that censored had a stable and predictable relationship with newspapers, magazines, and TV stations, whether state-owned or private. Government redlines were known to reporters and editors, and so were the likely punishments for failure to practice self-censorship. This kind of traditional censorship was physically possible because of the finite number of publishing or broadcasting outlets, and the ability of states to control access to newsprint or broadcast frequencies.

Today, every individual with access to social media can be a publisher or a broadcaster. Anyone with a laptop or even a smart phone can now basically operate as an investigative reporter, war correspondent, photographer, cameraman, columnist, newspaper delivery boy, or senior television executive. Ordinary citizens with no journalism training can and do disseminate information 24-7 from nearly every country in the world. They can do a 140-character Tweet, a 1,400 word blog post, or a 14-minute documentary film. They can use free software to send out 14,000 photos or text messages to cell phones. And they can do it all at a production cost of next to nothing. Some have died to report the truth in places like Syria, where most international news organizations have not been able to send staff and must rely on citizen journalists to cover the conflict.

When everybody is a news-gatherer, publisher, and broadcaster, prior restraint is far less feasible. Very few countries have the manpower or the technology to troll the social media deleting every Facebook post that criticizes the government or tweet calling for protestors to assemble – though more countries appear to be trying. A number of countries try to make websites do the censorship for them by instituting licensing requirements and rescinding the licenses of websites that do not sufficiently censor their users. Still, Internet users continue to find ways to gain access and post material, and we continue to fund tools and trainings to help them do so. What governments that cannot prevent posting of content they dislike can do, however, is punish anyone whose message “goes too far” – creating a chilling effect that discourages citizens from attempting to exercise their rights.

The second trend is social media repression – governments prosecuting or persecuting Internet and social media users for what they blog, post, tweet, or text. We have reported on more than 60 individuals in 17 countries who have been arrested for their online activities in the past 20 months. These individuals range from journalists, editors, bloggers, and webmasters to students and grandfathers arrested for their tweets; from people who have questioned their own religion to those who were accused of insulting people of other religions; from political activists to an ordinary Saudi woman sentenced to 50 lashes allegedly for using swear words in a text message.

These individuals are being prosecuted under a dizzying array of existing laws being repurposed for use against digital expression. Charges have included libel, “distortion,” “disrupting social order,” incitement of protest or of ethnic hatred, blasphemy, subversion, terrorism, defamation, and “inciting others to action under the pretext of freedom of expression.”

This phenomenon looks different in different countries, and there is no one-size-fits-all U.S. diplomatic response. At the same time, many of these cases have attracted widespread media attention because they are seen as arbitrary, overly harsh, or the result of sophisticated government surveillance of the Internet and social media, including communications such as text messages that many users assumed were private. It exemplifies the abuse of the same technologies that bring us advanced communications – neutral tools that can be used with benevolent or malevolent intent. Social media can be an invaluable tool for governments that want to understand the needs, views, and problems of their people and respond quickly, including in cases of natural disaster. It must not become a new frontier for micro-targeted repression.

Because much of the public debate now takes place online, the persecution of people for what they post online amounts to criminalizing conversation. The advent of Internet thought police trolling the social media for “criminal” forms of expression is a violation of human rights and a serious step backwards for freedom.

The third trend is the continuing threat to Internet freedom in individual countries and to the global system of Internet governance. In most of the wired world, any threat to Internet freedom is by definition a threat to media freedom. Last year China and Russia, with support from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, floated a proposal at the United Nations that would create a global code of conduct to enforce “information security,” including greater government control of the Internet. This is a very bad idea. At the UN and in other international bodies we are continuing our diplomatic efforts to counter these threats to internet freedom.

On the positive side, 17 countries, including the United States, have now joined the Coalition for Freedom Online to help defend Internet freedom. Together, we are working to advance diplomatic proposals to safeguard the Internet as a neutral and open space where citizens can exercise their rights of expression association, assembly, and religion.

In addition, we are working collectively to keep advanced communication technologies from being deployed by the worst human rights offenders against their own citizens. This Spring, President Obama signed an executive order restricting the export to Iran and Syria of technologies that can be used for Internet surveillance.

In the OSCE, the United States, joined by 38 co-sponsors to date, has pressed for adoption of a Fundamental Freedoms in the Digital Age declaration, reaffirming that human rights and fundamental freedoms do not change with new technologies and that States must respect the exercise of those enduring rights and freedoms online and offline.

As President Obama said on World Press Freedom Day this year, more than 60 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed the right of every person “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers,” that right remains in peril in far too many countries. We call upon all governments to seize that promise by recognizing the vital role of a free press and taking the necessary steps to create societies in which independent journalists can operate freely and without fear and all citizens can exercise their universal human rights.

Thank you.

Mr. McGOVERN: Thank you very much. Mr. Posner, the U.S. Government has allocated about \$300 million to foreign aid and exchange programs that support a free press and Internet freedom since 2009. What impact have you seen from these programs designed to support media freedom? What kinds of programs do the most to advance the cause of media freedom and how can the United States best marshal its resources in support of media freedom globally?

Mr. POSNER: Again, I am very proud of the efforts we have made in the last 3-1/2 years to address Internet freedom in particular, so let me take that as one example of where the money has been spent. We have spent now over \$70 million through an effort out of our office and others at State and AID both to work with online activists to protect them in their use of these new social media. We have trained more than 5,000 activist, trainers who are now training people in their own societies in countries all over the world, giving them a better sense of both how to use the Internet, cell phone technology, but to use it in a way that provides them the kinds of protections that they often don't know exist. We have also funded a range of entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs who are helping to devise new technologies to help protect these individuals, and we continue to be involved in various efforts to increase the capacity to circumvent the various firewalls and restrictions that governments like Iran and China put in place.

I think the second piece that I am very proud of is the fact that we are holding the line on the notion that the Internet is really the town square of the 21st century, and for us, these are human rights issues. The Internet is the place where free speech, free assembly, free association is playing itself out in 2012, and in a variety of ways -- I mentioned a couple in my testimony -- we are spending time and energy and diplomatic resources to fight off various efforts by governments like Russia and China and others who want to place burdensome controls or global restrictions on the Internet. The Internet is working fine, and our view is that the open space that has been created needs to be maintained, and I think we are taking a lead in that effort.

Mr. McGOVERN: Thank you. President Obama issued an Executive order this year restricting the export to Iran and Syria of technologies that could be used for online spying. Are you aware of any instances in which the technical means used by autocratic governments to repress freedom of expression are provided by U.S. companies? What is the administration doing to restrict such technology transfers not only to Iran and Syria, but also to other authoritarian governments, and how can we best ensure that technological advances enable independent media rather than serving as a tool of authoritarian State control?

Mr. POSNER: Well, I think this is also an important part of our, what we are calling 21st century

state craft. We are -- among the many things that American diplomats are now needing to do is to understand the nature of these new social media and how they are being used and misused. I was in Libya about 6 weeks ago, and in Libya, we discovered, after the fall of Qadhafi, the many ways in which he was using technology manufactured in the west, not necessarily in the United States, but in other countries, to spy on his own people, to repress his own people.

It is now part of our diplomatic portfolio that we need to be very mindful in repressive countries of what governments are doing both by laws and by the use of these new technologies in a negative way to both restrict access, to make it more difficult for people, citizens to communicate among themselves and with the rest of the world, but also the new technologies they are using and importing from countries that have advanced technology as tools to basically enhance their repressive techniques.

Mr. McGOVERN: You know, you may not know the answer to this right off the top of your head, but I am just trying to figure out whether there are any U.S. companies that are providing technical assistance to countries that are basically repressing the freedom of the media, and, you know, obviously we had an Executive order on Iran and Syria because we know that these technologies can be misused. I am just wondering whether there are other countries that U.S. companies may be assisting that they are using the technical means to basically restrict the freedom of the press.

Mr. POSNER: You know, I am not, on a day-to-day basis, monitoring the technology and where it is going and where -- we certainly have -- let me put it this way: The concerns that we have identified and acted on with respect to Syria and Iran, those are not the only two repressive governments in the world, and so we are constantly monitoring and mindful of both what U.S. and other companies are doing in other places where we know governments are violating human rights. I would be glad to go back and look into it and see if we have other examples, but I don't have them at the tip of my fingers.

Mr. McGOVERN: I would appreciate that. Because obviously, you know, one of the ways that we can be helpful here is to try to encourage U.S. companies not to provide that kind of technical assistance.

Just one final question from me, and that is on the issue of Honduras. I am wary that the human rights situation in Honduras in general is deteriorating. I had a meeting with a delegation from Massachusetts in my office in Massachusetts at the beginning of this week. They had just returned from Honduras and were very, very concerned about the human rights situation and the issue of the freedom of the press, and I am just curious, what types of assistance does the United States provide Honduras to help protect freedom of the press? And in your opinion, are Honduran authorities currently meeting the human rights conditions set out in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012?

Mr. POSNER: Well, let me say, first of all, that echoing your concern, we see a climate of violence and widespread impunity in Honduras, which makes it one of the most dangerous places in the region, and as you say, NGOs are saying that, along with Mexico, Honduras has become one of the most dangerous countries for media in the world. Seven journalists killed in the first 3 months.

So the problem is very real. We are very focused on the impunity, the lack of accountability for these and other crimes. We are very concerned about the need for greater discipline among the

Honduran security forces, the police in particular, and we are very concerned that there be international attention as well as domestic attention to these attacks on Honduran journalists, including a radio host who was killed in the country's northern coast. We very much are pressing this as a diplomatic matter, but we are also trying to do some work with the government to improve their performance. We have, as you know, created through the Central American Regional Security Initiative a special victims task force in our embassy in Tegucigalpa in January of 2011 began working with the national police and the prosecutors from the public ministry; U.S. advisors are working on a regular basis to investigate persecution of journalists as well as members of the LGBT community. Thus far the task force's work has led to six arrests, but there is much more that needs to be done.

So we are taking steps, we are very mindful of the enormity of the problem, and we are very concerned both about the impunity, but also about self-censorship. One thing that happens in a place where you have got this kind of violence is that journalists and others begin to say I better not write that article, I better not include that paragraph because I could be next. And so we are very mindful both of the need for accountability, the need to create a climate where journalists can speak and write freely, and a need also to work with the government to strengthen their institutions.

Mr. McGOVERN: Thank you. Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Secretary, thank you for your testimony and for your leadership. Let me ask you a couple questions first beginning with Russia. Obviously for years, as one of the members of the OSCE parliamentary assembly, we have raised the issue of Anna Politkovskaya, and I know there is some people who have been indicted but certainly nothing has happened in terms of convictions yet. You might want to speak to that issue in particular, some of the high profile cases.

I would just note parenthetically, I will never forget on a trip to Moscow back in the 1980s, we met with members of the Duma before the first free and fair elections occurred, at least democratic elections, and we met with members of the Duma, and we had a roundtable discussion about press freedom, and Mickey Edwards, who was a publisher at the time of a newspaper, a former Member of Congress, we were part of a panel, and our friends from the Duma asked us how we handle criticism, and all of us talked about writing op-eds, trying to do a letter to the editor, get the reporter and/or editor to understand that they got it wrong, and they broke out laughing, and one of them said Duma -- I mean, gulag, and just said that is how we handle it, we will send them to the gulag.

And all of us, you know, had a bit of a laugh, but it was, you know, it was a very heartbreaking moment in a way because so many people then were in the gulag.

My question is, you know, do you see the trend line at all improving in Russia? You know, they are ranked according to Freedom House 172nd out of 197 worldwide in terms of media environment. Russia is even worse at 187th out of 197, I should say China is. So the trend line in Russia and some of these high profile cases.

Mr. POSNER: I appreciate your raising that issue and your continued concern. We share the concern. Since the year 2000 at least 16 journalists have been killed in Russia, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. These are journalists who were critical of the government or

law enforcement agencies. You mentioned the case of, the Politkovskaya case we followed closely. We recently also publicly commented on the continued need for justice and accountability in two other cases, the Natalia Estemirova case, a courageous journalist who reported from Chechnya, and Paul Klebnikov, who was also a U.S. citizen. These are cases we continue to follow very closely, we continue to raise them with Russian officials. I did so last fall.

I also mentioned in my testimony, and we are very concerned about the recent changes in laws that the Duma has passed under President Putin, one enabling Internet censorship, another decriminalizing or recriminalizing defamation. There is new discussion now of laws labeling news outlets as foreign agents, which is of great concern, and over the weekend President Putin signed a law on civil society which we have been also extremely concerned about and which we have commented on. That law applies burdensome requirements on human rights advocates and democracy groups and misrepresents them as foreign agents when taking foreign funds.

This is also going to have an effect on the media, and so this is a very tough climate for not only the media, but civil society more broadly, and we will continue to raise our concerns and very closely monitor what is happening and how these laws are applied.

Mr. SMITH: Thank you. Robert Mahoney will testify later from the Committee to Protect Journalists that it is a dangerous time to be a journalist. That is a very obvious and a very profound statement. He noticed the killings, the imprisonment, 15-year peak in 2011, but he also talked about the exiled numbers and some 450 over 5 years who have fled. I wonder how many of those have come to the United States, sought and gotten asylum.

Mr. POSNER: I don't know that number, but judging from the number of journalists, exiled journalists that come to see me, the number is high, and, you know, I think this is a reflection, the world is changing in so many ways, but it is a reflection of the fact that as we have a more open space for not only traditional newspapers and news outlets, but we have the social media, governments that have something to hide are now finding it extremely threatening and difficult for them to leave these things within their borders or hide them from their own people.

Journalists are on the front lines along with human rights advocates and others in raising concerns about very legitimate grievances, and as they do that more frequently and with more -- with greater access to a broader audience, I think we are going to see this as a very troubling trend in the years ahead, and we have got to be responsive.

Mr. SMITH: If you could, for the record, maybe get back to us; if that is quantifiable, how many?

Mr. POSNER: I will try. We will talk to DHS and others and see if we can come up with a number.

Mr. SMITH: Just a few final questions because we do have a vote. I know the U.S.-China dialogue, human rights dialogue, you know, has happened, and maybe you might want to speak to the issue of the disappeared who happen to be journalists. Now, did they have any response to that? You know, Freedom House points out that China is the world's largest poor performer. We all know that. They have cracked down, they have sold and shared their Internet capabilities, which are huge in terms of finding people, and then ultimately incarcerating them or harassing them.

Secondly, if you could real quick on Africa, where are the worst spots there? We know Somalia and some of the other countries. If you could just speak to that very quickly. And Turkey, there seems to be significant regression there, but is that the case or not? You know, as pointed out in Freedom House's testimony I believe -- no, this would be the Committee to Protect Journalists, they estimate that there are up to 5,000 criminal cases open against reporters at the end of 2011, and certainly that has a chilling effect. Obviously to those who face that kind of action, it is awful. But everyone else takes their cue from that. What is happening in Turkey?

Mr. POSNER: First of all on China, we did complete the 2-day human rights dialogue yesterday. I briefed the press this morning. We had a very direct conversation on media freedom and Internet freedom, freedom of expression broadly. We raised a number of very specific cases, including Liu Xiaobo, the Internet activist, human rights activist who was the author of the Charter 08 Human Rights Manifesto is now serving an 11-year term. He has been in jail for 1,325 days for writing a statement that says human rights and democracy ought to be respected. We have called repeatedly for his release.

His wife, Liu Xia, is also under house, basically under house arrest. We raised a number of other cases which I am glad to share with you. But also concern --

Mr. SMITH: What did they say on Liu Xiaobo's case?

Mr. POSNER: We raised the case --

Mr. SMITH: No, what did they say? Thank you for raising it.

Mr. POSNER: We have, you know, in general a back and forth, I am not going to get into every detail, but we will continue to press the case. I think it is fair to say I am not satisfied with the response on that. But we got into it in quite a bit of detail.

We also raised the case of journalists, including Melissa Chan from Al Jazeera who was forced to leave China, and the English language service of Al Jazeera shut down. A number of foreign journalists are having a very difficult time now as well as Chinese journalists and bloggers, and so we will continue to press those cases as we have in the past.

I would say in the case of Africa that we could go through lots of countries. The one in particular that I would say we are having a very difficult time with is Ethiopia. I was going to say something about it in my testimony, but we are deeply concerned about the trial, conviction, and sentencing of an Ethiopian journalist named Eskinder Nega, and there are a number of other cases where the government has used anti-terrorism laws to jail journalists and opposition parties.

We have got a range of problems in Eritrea, in the DRC, and a range of other places. The list is too long, and you have got a vote. But I would say that we are, again, trying to do everything we can to raise these issues, and I don't raise them alone. Secretary Clinton is terrific. In every meeting I am with her, the human rights issues are raised prominently, and she pays a great deal of attention to freedom of expression and Internet freedom.

On Turkey, again, we share your concerns, again, both about the overly broad definition of terrorism, the overly broad application or the disproportionate use of terrorism laws against journalists and writers, we are concerned about the extent to which journalists are under attack.

Rob Mahoney, who is about to testify, was just there and can give you chapter and verse, but CPJ and others report many, many cases of harassment, violence, and imprisonment. Those are things we are very concerned about.

And the third thing I would say is there is a growing trend in Turkey of the government blocking sites. We have a statistic here as of December 31st, they blocked 15,000 Web sites over the last several years. So we are talking about both direct attacks against journalists, against self-censorship as a result, but also a real effort to curtail freedom on the Internet.

Mr. McGOVERN: Well, thank you very much, appreciate your testimony, and there is some things we have control over and some things we don't, and votes we don't, so the bad news is we have 10 votes, so this may mean probably about an hour or even maybe more of a delay. I hope everybody can stay with us. Go have lunch, and then come back. If you can't, let the staff know, but this is something we have no control over. So I apologize, but we will reconvene this after the last vote. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Posner.

[Recess.]

[3:05 p.m.]

Mr. McGOVERN: The hearing will recommence, and again, I apologize profusely for the delay. But we had votes and there is no control over that. Before I introduce the next panel, I want to insert into the record a statement provided by Alexander Main, the senior associate for international policy at the center for economics and policy research.

Mr. McGOVERN: And I would now like to welcome our second panel of witnesses. They are Robert Mahoney, Deputy Director, Committee to Protect Journalists; Karin Deutsch Karlekar, Project Director of Freedom of the Press at Freedom House; Reverend Ismael Moreno Coto, Director of Radio Progreso in Honduras; Vladimir Kara-Murza, Washington bureau chief, Russian television international, RTVi.

So I welcome you all here and we will begin with Mr. Mahoney. And again, I apologize for having kept you here so long, but look forward to you testimony.

STATEMENTS OF ROBERT MAHONEY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS; KARIN DEUTSCH KARLEKAR, PROJECT DIRECTOR, FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, FREEDOM HOUSE; REVEREND ISMAEL MORENO COTO, DIRECTOR, RADIO PROGRESO, HONDURAS; VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA, WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF, RUSSIAN TELEVISION INTERNATIONAL, RTVI

STATEMENT OF ROBERT MAHONEY

Mr. MAHONEY Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to testify on behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

You will have heard of Marie Colvin, perhaps, the famous American war correspondent killed in Syria this year, and you have probably heard of photographers Tim Hetherington and Chris Hondros who were killed in Libya a year earlier. But I wonder if you heard of Farhan Jeemis Abdulle, a radio reporter in Somalia, or Byron Baldeon, a freelancer in Ecuador. These are just

two of the names on the committee's list of 31 journalists who have been killed this year so far in the line of duty.

Very typical of most of the journalists deaths that CPJ documents, they were local journalists working in their own country, and they were deliberately murdered, targeted because they got too close to the truth for someone's liking. The killers may never be found. That is the distressing pattern in most of the media slayings. Impunity is the norm.

Of the 647 journalists murdered in the past 2 decades 579 have been killed with impunity. That is almost 9 out of 10 journalists whose families and colleagues will never receive justice. The reality is that combat and crossfire casualties have long been a relatively small subset of all the journalists killed, about 1 in 6 cases.

And these murders do not take place in a vacuum. They occur in societies experiencing war and conflict, although many of them like Russia, Colombia, and the Philippines have democratic forms of government. Countries where impunity is the norm range from big ones like Russia to tiny ones like Honduras. In Russia, 16 of the 20 cases of journalists murdered since Vladimir Putin first came to power 12 years ago remain unsolved. Honduras, which is suffering from the fallout from a coup 3 years ago, coupled with drug violence, has one of the highest murder rates in the world, and at least 14 journalists have been killed since President Lobo took office in January 2010.

Such levels of impunity globally send a terrible signal that media lives are cheap and they force journalists into self-censorship. It really is a dangerous time to be a journalist. Over the past 5 years, we have seen an unprecedented expansion in the range of attacks and challenges faced by journalists and bloggers around the world.

Violence has not only claimed lives; it has forced hundreds of journalists into exile, particularly in east Africa. Meanwhile, sophisticated online censorship, coupled with punitive laws that suppress the reporting and dissemination of news are robbing peoples around the world of the information that they need to be true citizens.

If reporters are spared death or exile, they are likely to end up behind bars. Last year, the number of journalists in jail reached a 15-year high, nearly 200 worldwide. Their continued imprisonment sends the same silencing method as the murder of journalists.

Despite the release of 70 journalists with the assistance of CPJ last year, our research shows that the number of journalists in jail remains persistently high. Most are held on state security charges. In fact, the abusive use of national security was the single greatest charge invoked to justify journalist imprisonment last year, followed by violation of censorship rules. The vast majority of those journalists are local journalists and they are held by their own governments. 65 journalists, or over a third of those included in our census, are being held without any publicly disclosed charge.

Iran and China have long had the dubious distinction of heading our top jailers list, but recently they have been joined by a country that may surprise many in the west: Turkey. After several years of legal and constitutional reform prompted by Turkey's application to join the European Union, the moves to lighten the dead hand of the law on journalists are beginning to fade.

The United States seems wary of calling out Turkey on its human rights and press freedom record.

Turkey is a NATO member and a crucial U.S. ally. It is a progressive secular democracy and a model of free speech compared with its neighbors Iran, Iraq, or Syria. But for journalists, particularly Kurdish and leftist journalists, progress and freedom of expression has not kept pace with political and economic advances.

Turkish journalists and press groups estimate that there were 5,000 criminal cases opened against reporters at the end of 2011. The cases involved charges such as criminal defamation, influencing the outcome of a trial, and particularly, spreading terrorist propaganda. The bulk of these cases have not resulted in convictions, but the endless court proceedings and legal costs have had a severe chilling effect according to reporters that we know. Prosecutions have intensified since 2007 when the details of a conspiracy called Ergenekon, a conspiracy by their ultranationalist militaries to overthrow the government first emerged.

The Turkish government disputes the level of imprisonment, but nevertheless, we believe that our exhaustive research on individual cases and legislation show that there are many dozens of journalists in jail in Turkey who are there in direct relation to their work, and we will be issuing a report on this this fall.

Some of the most prominent journalists and writers are being targeted. Take, for example, the case of Ahmet Sik, who I interviewed in Istanbul just a few weeks ago. He was released from more than a year in pretrial detention in March. He has been charged with aiding the coup plotters, but his real crime was writing a book on the political influence of the Muslim community headed by Fettullah Gulen, a religious scholar who lives here in the United States.

Criticizing the government, Sik said, and drawing attention to the dangerous network of people in the police and judiciary who are members of the Gulen community is enough in today's Turkey to get you indicted as an Ergenekon suspect.

Mr. Chairman, if pro-western democracies like Turkey can lock up journalists for critical reporting, then what are we press freedom defenders to say to the more repressive states? If increasingly powerful and wealthy countries like Brazil, Russia and India do little or nothing to bring journalist killers to justice, what message is sent to the rest of the developing world? We who enjoy the benefits of a free press have a duty to protect and defend those journalists who every day face death or imprisonment just for doing their job. Thank you very much.

Mr. McGOVERN: Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. Mahoney follows:]

**TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION HEARING
WASHINGTON, DC | JULY 25, 2012**

**TESTIMONY BY:
ROBERT MAHONEY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS**

PRESS FREEDOM: A GLOBAL OVERVIEW

It is a dangerous time to be a journalist. Over the past five years, the Committee to Protect Journalists has seen an unprecedented diversification in the range of attacks and challenges faced by journalists in many countries around the world. Violence and repression have morphed into impunity and exile. Meanwhile, sophisticated online censorship tactics are coupled with punitive laws that suppress the reporting and dissemination of news and fact-based commentary.

An un welcome development in the past year is the surge of press freedom violations and attacks on journalists covering conflict and political unrest. CPJ has documented this phenomenon particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. Libya was among the deadliest places for journalists in 2011. CPJ research shows that at least 16 journalists have been killed since November 2011 while covering the Syrian conflict, at least nine in circumstances that raise questions about government culpability. More than half of those killed are citizen journalists, who play a key role in covering the conflict and whose footage is used by international news organizations.

As clearly shown in the case of Syria, the use of technology, which has been transforming the ways that information is gathered and disseminated, means journalism itself is changing, giving more people the ability to participate. Consequently, CPJ has also seen that many of the journalists under attack are freelancers and online journalists, who are responsible for their own preparation, equipment, and safety. Anti-state charges and “terrorist” labels have become commonplace and are used to intimidate, detain, and imprison journalists. Media blackouts and limited access to war and conflict zones have become routine, along with the uninvestigated killings of journalists.

Regardless of the medium or circumstance, one thing is certain: It is overwhelmingly local journalists working on local stories who are targeted and censored, whether with violence or intimidation or by the use of laws meant to punish and silence critical information.

Since 1981, it has been our mandate to take action when journalists are censored, harassed, threatened, jailed, kidnapped, or killed for their work, without regard to political ideology. In doing so, we document cases, publish in-depth reports, conduct high-level advocacy, and provide individual moral and material support. CPJ’s work is based on its research, characterized primarily by the following areas, which provide a global snapshot of obstructions to a free press worldwide.

KILLINGS

On average, more than 30 journalists are murdered every year, and the murderers go unpunished in nearly nine of 10 cases. Among the countries leading in journalist killings that evade justice are established democracies where the rule of law should function yet a culture of impunity prevails. The absence of justice in journalist murders deters the rest of the press from critical reporting and leaves the public with a shallow understanding of their world. Journalists reporting on corruption, organized crime, conflict, and politics are the most targeted for exposing vital truths.

The reality is that the combat/crossfire casualties have long been a relatively small subset of all journalists killed (about 1 in 6 cases). The leading causing of death is targeted murder.

These murders do not take place in a vacuum. They occur in societies experiencing war and conflict, although many of them—like Russia, Colombia, and the Philippines—have democratic forms of government.

The generalized violence and the breakdown of law and order provide the backdrop for criminal, militant, sectarian, and paramilitary forces to carry out these killings. Most journalists killed in conflict zones are not covering war—they are local journalists covering local issues like human rights and corruption. In about a third of the cases, according to CPJ research, government links are suspected, thus reinforcing the cycle of impunity.

IMPRISONMENT

In 2011, the number of journalists imprisoned for their work reached a 15-year peak. Their continued imprisonment sends the same silencing message as the murder of journalists. CPJ research points to a general trend: Where journalists are being silenced through imprisonment, they are often not being assassinated, but the result is the same— the perpetuation of fear leading to self-censorship or to exile, particularly in countries where it is clear that the rule of law barely exists.

Despite the release of 70 journalists with CPJ assistance in 2011, our research shows that the number of journalists in jail has remained persistently high. To put it starkly, 81 journalists were in jail around the world at the end of 2000. By the end of 2001, that number shot up to 118. Today, there are 179, most held on state security charges. Abusive use of national security was the single greatest charge invoked to justify journalist imprisonments in 2011, followed by violation of censorship rules. The vast majority of those jailed were local journalists held by their own governments. Sixty-five journalists, or over a third of those included in the CPJ census, were being held without any publicly disclosed charge.

Iran, consistently among the world's leading jailers of journalists, maintains a revolving prison door with furloughs and new arrests; subjects prisoners to inhumane treatment; and targets their legal counsel. A relentless crackdown on the press has led 68 journalists to flee Iran since 2009, CPJ research shows.

EXILED

Journalists facing imprisonment and other threats for their work are being forced into exile worldwide, with more than 450 fleeing their countries in the past five years, CPJ research shows.

In the past year, more than a quarter of the 57 journalists who fled their homes came from East Africa, reinforcing a trend from previous years, CPJ research shows. This has resulted in a journalist refugee crisis in East Africa that has drastically affected the region's ability to maintain media institutions that provide reliable, vital information. After enduring violence and threats, these journalists fled abroad, only to land in a state of prolonged uncertainty as governments and the U.N. refugee agency process their cases.

During the past five years, the greatest number of journalists fled violence in Somalia, where six journalists have been killed in 2012 and no journalist murders have been prosecuted since 1992. Eritrea and Ethiopia, East Africa's worst jailers of journalists, also lost many to exile. Journalists also sought refuge from targeted attacks and threats in conflict-ridden Syria and Pakistan.

CPJ's annual survey of journalists in exile counts those who fled due to work-related persecution in the past 12 months and provides an overview of the past five years. Dozens of journalists seeking asylum without the legal right to work nor access to basic services live in desperate, insecure, and impoverished conditions, CPJ research shows.

ONLINE CENSORSHIP & SURVEILLANCE

As journalists increasingly use social media to report breaking news and the number of people with Internet access explodes worldwide, governments are employing sophisticated new tactics to suppress information, according to CPJ's 2011 special report "The 10 Tools of Online Oppressors."

CPJ's assessment of the prevailing strategies for online oppression and the leading countries utilizing such tactics shows that traditional mechanisms of repression have evolved into pervasive digital censorship. The tools utilized include state-supported emails designed to take over journalists' personal computers in China, the shutting down of anti-censorship technology in Iran, monopolistic control of the Net in Ethiopia, as well as synchronized cyberattacks in Belarus.

The techniques go well beyond Web censorship. The Internet is being used to spy on writers and sabotage independent news sites where press freedom is most threatened. The aim is not only to censor but also to block or disrupt the reporting process and the dissemination of news and information.

The digital offensive is often coupled with physical intimidation of online journalists. Recent developments in

Honduras, Russia, and Turkey, which we shall focus on below, demonstrate the broad range of repression, coerced censorship, impunity, and outright violence faced by journalists today.

HONDURAS

The Honduran press continues to suffer from the violent fallout of the 2009 coup that ousted President Manuel Zelaya. Due to political and drug-related violence as well as widespread impunity, Honduras, a nation of 7.5 million people, is one of the most dangerous countries in the region for journalists, CPJ research shows. It is also important to note that Honduras is one of the world's most violent countries. A 2011 United Nations report found that it has the world's highest per capita homicide rate, with 82.1 murders per every 100,000 inhabitants.

At least 14 journalists have been killed since President Porfirio Lobo took office in January 2010. The systematic failure of Honduran authorities to investigate these crimes has frustrated any attempt to solve the murders, CPJ said in a letter sent to President Lobo in December 2011. A 2010 CPJ special report, "Journalist murders spotlight Honduran government failures," found that the government has been slow and negligent in pursuing journalists' killers. As a result, many journalists fear the murders have been conducted with the tacit approval, or even outright complicity, of police, armed forces, or other authorities.

The climate is so intimidating that reporters told CPJ that they don't dare probe deeply into crucial issues like drug trafficking or government corruption. Many print reporters have removed their bylines from their stories. *Tiempo*, a San Pedro Sula-based daily newspaper that consistently criticizes the government, has shut down its investigative unit due to safety concerns. Some reporters claim the only safe way to tell the truth about Honduras is to write a novel.

Besides damaging the country's democracy, the June 2009 military-backed coup that ousted leftist former President Zelaya fractured the national press corps into opposing camps. Journalists in favor of the coup or who work for media outlets that supported Zelaya's ouster are known in Spanish as "golpistas" or "coup-backers," while those who opposed it have been pigeon-holed as "resistencia," or part of the political resistance. Local journalists state that when "resistance" journalists are attacked or killed, the news receives scant attention or comment from pro-coup media—which includes most of the country's major television, radio, and print outlets.

By contrast, the May 15 killing of Ángel Alfredo Villatoro, a prominent radio host and close friend of President Lobo, was headline news for days.

If the Honduran government is to be treated as a responsible international partner, it must move immediately and aggressively to correct these failures. It must assign disinterested and trained investigators to these cases; investigations must be transparent and free of conflicts of interest. President Lobo and top officials in his government must begin to speak out, in a forceful and timely way, against anti-press violence. His government must respect its obligations to the Organization of American States and enforce orders of protection for journalists. The international community must demand that the Honduran government immediately undertake these meaningful, measurable, and lasting steps.

EMBLEMATIC HONDURAS CASE

NAHÚM PALACIOS ARTEAGA

TV Channel 5

March 14, 2010, in Tocoa, Honduras

Hit men lay in wait at the home of Palacios, 34, a well-known anchor for Channel 5, the main TV station in the Tocoa area, according to news reports and CPJ interviews. Palacios arrived at about 10 p.m. with a cousin in the backseat of a double cabin 4-by-4 pickup, and his girlfriend, a doctor, in the passenger seat. Neighbors told local reporters that a few shots were initially fired, apparently by a lookout, followed by a fusillade of gunfire as other assailants joined in. Palacios died at

the scene. Dr. Yorleny Sánchez, badly injured, died two weeks later. Palacios' cousin was not injured, local press reports said.

Several work-related motives emerged in a July 2010 CPJ investigation. Palacios had opposed the 2009 military-backed coup that ousted President Manuel Zelaya, and he had turned the TV station into an openly opposition channel, his colleagues said. Military personnel appeared at his house and detained him and his family for several hours in June 2009. That episode, along with other threats from the military, was strong enough that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued an order to the government of Honduras to protect Palacios. According to the commission, it was one of more than 400 such orders issued for journalists and activists in Honduras in 2009 and 2010.

The Honduran government was required by an international treaty to follow the directives, but it appeared to have ignored most of them. The government asserted that it never received an order in the Palacios case, although the Inter-American Commission noted that it had a signed receipt from the Honduran Supreme Court.

In the months before his slaying, Palacios campaigned on behalf of a group of several thousand peasants who had been demanding vast tracts of land they said rightfully belonged to them. They claimed that a few large landowners, in violation of agrarian reform laws, had greatly underpaid them for land many years earlier. Some of the land was retaken by the peasants—simply stolen, according to the landowners—and there were occasional armed encounters. Peasant activists said some of their leaders had been abducted and disappeared, or singled out and killed.

Aside from the wide belief that Palacios' killing was politically inspired, some CPJ sources said he could have angered a local drug gang with a recent news story about a cartel-linked kidnapping. Sources also said that Palacios, like other Tocoa journalists, had been accused of extorting money from sources. Palacios' father, José Heriberto Palacios, denied that his son could have been dishonest. "They killed him because he was honest and was not corrupt," he told CPJ.

The case was marked by a series of investigative failures. Almost three months after Palacios was gunned down, a team of investigators came to his grave in his hometown of Rigores, dug up his body, and at the graveside, in the open, conducted an autopsy. The coroner never examined the body after the murder; it had gone straight from the murder scene to the funeral home. Investigators also started asking news photographers if they had any pictures of the crime scene because police had no photographs of their own. The prosecutor in charge of the case, Arody Reyes, conceded to CPJ that although the gunmen had lain in wait for hours at Palacios' house, police had not been able to retrieve any evidence from the scene.

Reyes said the exhumation and autopsy were suddenly important because the Honduran government had enlisted the help of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Local investigators, Reyes said, needed to show their U.S. counterparts something.

RUSSIA

As Russia enters into a third term of government under President Vladimir Putin, a convergence of violence, impunity, and constraining legislation severely limits the space for public debate, dissent, and press freedom in Russia.

Impunity in attacks on the press remains high in Russia, CPJ research shows. Despite high-level promises of justice, including by former President Dmitry Medvedev, Russian investigators have yet to apprehend those responsible for vicious attacks. A CPJ delegation met with Aleksandr Bastrykin, chairman of Russia's Investigative Committee (a body responsible for probing serious crimes), to discuss this record of impunity in September 2010. Most recently, Bastrykin made headlines for threatening the life of a journalist and subsequently apologizing. He remains in charge of the country's chief investigative body.

Failure to prosecute the masterminds perpetuates impunity, even in cases where significant initial progress is made. The heart of the problem is a lack of political will and an apparent link between political power and criminality.

With 16 unsolved murder cases, Russia's rating is stagnant in CPJ's Impunity Index, a list of countries where journalist's murderers evade justice. The most recent victim was Gadzhimurad Kamalov, founder of the independent Dagestani weekly *Chernovik*, who was gunned down while leaving work in December 2011. The newspaper had received frequent threats for its

coverage of government corruption, human rights abuses, and Islamic radicalism.

Authorities have made modest progress in some cases: Several suspects have been indicted in the 2006 killing of Anna Politkovskaya, but authorities have yet to bring the case to trial or identify the mastermind. “The impunity the masterminds enjoy—this is the main part of the mechanism, which breeds new murders,” said Sergey Sokolov, deputy editor of Politkovskaya’s newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*.

Russia’s parliament moved quickly this month to pass a new Internet bill that will create a blacklist of websites. The law is one in a recent slate of repressive measures, all rushed through the State Duma, aimed at reining in dissent. The steps call into question President Putin’s commitment to democracy.

A key pending bill would re-criminalize defamation, while two other ones—just approved by the parliament’s upper house—impose limits and labels on NGOs and enable the government to block websites. These bills follow the introduction last month of excessive fines for unauthorized protests.

The Internet statute Duma Bill 89417 is one of several provisions that would create a blacklist of websites which all Russians Internet service providers (ISPs) would have to block and refuse to host. Internet technologists had warned that 436-FZ was too broad, and would require individual comments and home pages to be marked with age-appropriate ratings in the style of American movies.

The defamation bill is a step backward for Russia. In November, parliament voted to decriminalize libel and insult in a move widely perceived as part of then-President Dmitry Medvedev’s liberalization policies. According to the independent news agency Regnum, the new bill allows for imprisonment of up to five years, and a fine for moral damages up to 500,000 rubles (US\$15,300) for those found guilty of defamation. The restrictive NGO bill requires that organizations receiving money from international sources carry the label “foreign agents”—a particularly negative term in a society where the Kremlin sustains and nourishes deep suspicion of foreigners. At the time of this writing, all three bills were awaiting President Putin’s signature.

To stem the escalation of media repression and counter impunity, U.S. legislators should immediately consider an expansion of the “Magnitsky Bill”—which would place Russians connected with human rights abuses on a blacklist, denying them U.S. visas and freezing their assets—to include officials implicated in the murders of journalists.

The United States and the international community should continue to engage with Russian leaders on press freedom and hold authorities publicly accountable for crimes against those who expose misdeeds, as journalists regularly do.

EMBLEMATIC RUSSIA CASE

NATALYA ESTEMIROVA

Novaya Gazeta, Kavkazsky Uzel

July 15, 2009, in between Grozny and Gazi-Yurt, Russia

Four men forced Estemirova, 50, into a white Lada sedan in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, as she was leaving her apartment for work, Reuters reported. Witnesses said the journalist shouted that she was being kidnapped as the car sped from the scene, according to press reports. Later the same day, her body was found in the neighboring region of Ingushetia, according to international news reports. She was shot in the head and the chest; no belongings were reported missing.

Estemirova was a frequent contributor to the independent Moscow newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* and the Caucasus news website *Kavkazsky Uzel*. She was also an advocate for the Moscow-based human rights group Memorial and a consultant for the New York-based international rights group Human Rights Watch (HRW). She was the fifth *Novaya Gazeta* journalist killed since 2000. Estemirova’s colleagues told CPJ that her relentless reporting on human rights violations committed by federal and regional authorities in Chechnya put her at odds with regional officials.

Three years after Estemirova was abducted and found murdered, her killers walk free. The investigation into the July 15, 2009, killing started off on the right track only to get derailed, her colleagues at *Novaya Gazeta* and Memorial told CPJ. At a July 2011 press conference in Moscow, they presented the results of their independent investigation, which revealed numerous apparent flaws in the official inquiry.

At the time of the murder, Estemirova was investigating the possible involvement of Chechen police officers in the July 7, 2009, public execution of Rizvan Albekov in the village of Akhkinchu-Borzoi. She was the first journalist reporting on the case. The Investigative Committee initially focused on the story as the likeliest reason Estemirova was murdered, colleagues said. In their report, "Two Years After the Killing of Natalya Estemirova: Investigation on the Wrong Track," *Novaya Gazeta*, Memorial, and the International Federation for Human Rights found that lead investigator Igor Sobol had sought information from the local prosecutor's office about Albekov's killing and local police abuses.

But investigators inexplicably stopped pursuing the lead in early 2010. The current inquiry, the report's authors said, has focused on Alkhazur Bashayev, a rebel leader whom Chechen authorities say was killed in a 2009 special operation. Bashayev was allegedly angered by Estemirova's investigation into accusations that he and other separatists were recruiting young men in a Chechen village. But the report by Estemirova's colleagues raised dozens of questions about the official theory.

How could the car allegedly used to kidnap Estemirova contain no sign of a struggle? How was the unsophisticated suspect able to falsify the police identity card that Chechen police claim to have found in the Bashayev home, along with the murder weapon? What happened to the genetic material collected from under Estemirova's fingernails that likely contained the DNA of her killers? The material, the report said, showed that Estemirova struggled with at least three attackers, one of whom was a woman. But investigators ordered only one type of DNA testing, which could neither categorically confirm nor disprove the involvement of Bashayev. In the process of testing, the report's authors said, the DNA samples were depleted, making further testing nearly impossible. It is possible, however, to compare the completed test results against other potential suspects—such as the police officers implicated in the Albekov execution. Why hasn't this been done?

The Investigative Committee did not respond in detail to the report, instead issuing a statement that said the findings "are not based on facts but are simply the subjective opinion of persons who do not possess the necessary competence, do not have information, and do not have access to all of the materials of the criminal case." The Investigative Committee did not explain what it found concerning the possible link to Estemirova's reporting on the extrajudicial killing of Chechen resident Albekov. The committee did not respond to CPJ's written request for comment on the Estemirova investigation. In July, CPJ learned through a source at the Investigative Committee that the Estemirova case was being transferred from lead investigator Igor Sobol—who had been in charge of the probe since the beginning—to another, yet to be named, investigator, due to Sobol's "heavy workload." In Russia's context, this translates into burying the case for good.

TURKEY

A critical journalist in Turkey these days needs a lawyer on standby. The press is laboring under a creaking judicial system and a panoply of antiquated and vague legislation that officials and politicians of every stripe find irresistible as a weapon against muckraking reporters and critical commentators.

The extent of journalist imprisonments has been disputed by the Turkish government, which asserts that independent assessments have been exaggerated. CPJ is currently carrying out exhaustive research on individual cases, legislation, and online censorship, all of which are choking press freedom in Turkey. Our research thus far indicates that there are dozens of journalists imprisoned in direct relation to their work. A report with our findings and assessment will be published in the fall of 2012.

After several years of legal and constitutional reform prompted by Turkey's application for European Union membership, moves to lighten the dead hand of the law on journalists are running out of steam. The United States seems wary of calling out Turkey on its human rights and press freedom record. Turkey, a NATO member and crucial

U.S. ally in the region, is a progressive, secular democracy and a model of free speech compared with its neighbors Iran, Iraq, and Syria. But for journalists, particularly Kurdish and leftist ones, progress in freedom of expression has not kept pace with political and economic advances.

Journalists and press groups estimate there were up to 5,000 criminal cases open against reporters at the end of 2011. The cases involve charges such as criminal defamation, influencing the outcome of a trial, and spreading terrorist propaganda. The bulk of these cases have not resulted in convictions historically, but the endless court proceedings and legal costs have had a severe chilling effect, according to reporters, media analysts, and lawyers interviewed by CPJ throughout 2011. Prosecutions have intensified since authorities in 2007 first detailed the "Ergenekon" conspiracy, an alleged ultra-nationalist military plot to overthrow the government.

EMBLEMATIC TURKEY CASE

AHMET SIK, FREELANCE

Imprisoned: March 2011-March 2012

Sik, a prominent reporter who had written for the dailies *Cumhuriyet* and *Radikal* and the weekly *Nokta*, was charged with aiding the Ergenekon conspiracy, an alleged nationalist military plot to overthrow the government.

Sik, co-author of a 2010 book on Ergenekon, had been known throughout his career for his critical writings about the "deep state," the purported secular, nationalist forces operating within the army, security agencies, and government ministries. Before being arrested, Sik was writing a new book with the working title, *The Imam's Army*, which was to allege the existence of a shadowy organization operating within police and other government agencies and said to be populated by members of the Sufi Muslim religious community known as Fettullah Gülen.

A draft of the new book was deleted from the computers of his publishing house and that of a colleague during police raids, *Hürriyet Daily News* reported. The interrogations of Sik focused almost exclusively on the unfinished book, according to the paper. The government's indictment, which appeared months after the arrest, focused on Sik's journalistic activities, especially in regard to the book, the local press freedom group Bia said.

"Criticizing the government and drawing attention to the dangerous network of people in the police and judiciary who are members of the Gülen community is enough in today's Turkey to become an Ergenekon suspect," Sik told CPJ. Amid international outcry, authorities granted temporary release to Sik in March 2012. However, the charges against him remain and he can be rearrested upon conviction.

In a disturbing development, Special Authority Public Chief Prosecutor Muammer Akkas launched a new investigation against Sik shortly after his release. The new investigation accused Sik of allegedly "threatening and identifying judges and prosecutors as targets for terror organizations" in his statement to journalists upon his release from prison, the independent news portal *Bianet* reported. Sik had told the press that day: "Incomplete justice is not going to bring justice and democracy. About 100 journalists are still in prison. The police officers, prosecutors, and judges who plotted and carried out this complot will go to prison. Justice will come when they enter this prison," according to news reports.

In July, an Istanbul prosecutor demanded that Sik serve up to seven years in prison for "insulting" and "threatening" state officials, the Dogan News Agency reported.

Mr. McGOVERN: Ms. Karlekar.

STATEMENT OF KARIN DEUTSCH KARLEKAR

Dr. DEUTSCH KARLEKAR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify before the Commission today. I will try and be very brief and jump through some of my testimony since you already have the written testimony in front of you. I am mainly drawing from finding from our freedom of the press index which we have been producing over 30 years. And as many people

know, for the past 8 years or so, we have shown declines in the level of media freedom worldwide on an annual level, and this phenomenon has affected almost every region of the world.

In contrast, the latest edition which we released in May and covered calendar year 2011, although it was positive in showing a potential reversal of this trend, and we did see gains in a number of countries in the Middle East in particular. These gains remain very precarious. We have already seen setbacks to democratic prospects and media freedom occurring towards the end of 2011 and into 2012 as some of the revolutions have faltered in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, and continued civil strife has led to increasingly severe restrictions on freedom of expression in other countries in the Middle East, such as Bahrain and Syria.

At the same time, press freedom is continuing to face considerable obstacles and reversals in many parts of the world. China, which boasts the world's most sophisticated system of media repression, stepped up its drive to control both old and new sources of news and information through both censorship and arrests.

And we have other influential authoritarian powers such as Russia, Iran, and Venezuela who continue to resort to a variety of techniques to maintain a tight grip on the media, including detaining some press critics, closing down media outlets and blogs, bringing libel and defamation suits against journalists. These states are also notable for their attempts to restrict media freedom and influence the news agenda beyond their borders, not just within their borders.

Another disturbing trend identified by Freedom House in recent years is the decline in media freedom in a number of democracies, some of them somewhat established at this point. As a result of status downgrades in a number of previously free countries in the past few years, including Hungary, South Africa and South Korea, the proportion of the global population that we consider that enjoys a fully free press has fallen to its lowest level in over a decade. And currently, only 14.5 percent of the world's people, roughly 1 in 6, live in countries where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures.

I will try and point to a few sort of ongoing threats and issues of concern. Rob has already talked a little bit more about the murders and the use of legal cases and laws against journalists, so I won't delve into that too much, but I will highlight in addition to these two very important issues, the use of licensing and regulatory frameworks to ensure control over particularly the broadcast media by a number of authoritarian countries. So this includes shutting down of radio or television stations or denying licensing to stations altogether.

We also see increasing attempts to control sort of new means of news dissemination. This includes Internet-based media, social media, and also transnational media.

Efforts to block transnational news has become particularly common during and following the Arab Spring uprisings where the power of these media to effect political change became even more apparent. So we saw authoritarian governments employing techniques ranging from information blackouts in the state media -- that happened in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe -- as well as sophisticated Internet and text messaging filtering as in China.

Finally, I will point to a region of particular concern, Latin America. We have seen declines in Latin America in each of the past 5 years, and this has shown the greatest decline of any region

according to our index. While some countries such as Mexico and Honduras have been plagued by violence by criminal groups and nonstate actors, in other countries journalists have been targeted by governments that are opening hostile to media criticism, such as Argentina, Bolivia and Venezuela.

In particular, I would like to highlight significant backsliding in Ecuador over the past few years. Two countries of particular concern, which I know one of which we wanted to highlight at this hearing, are Russia and China. And the media environment in Russia remains particularly closed and was characterized by sort of control over the broadcast media, the use of a judiciary to prosecute independent journalists, and as Rob has mentioned, almost complete impunity for physical harassment and cases of murder of journalists.

We did see that there was some positive breaks in Russia due to the relatively open social media and the use of these media, particularly last year in the elections. But these media are not where most Russians get their news and information, so most people are still getting information from pro-government media.

In recent weeks, we have seen several bills that are likely to become law that would further threaten the media environment in Russia, including potentially having more control over the Internet as well as the recriminalization of libel, which was decriminalized last year. So there has already been backsliding on something which was a sort of positive step in Russia.

In China, we have seen a range of continuing controls, particularly after the Arab Spring uprisings. And I would also add in terms of China as well as what is going on within China in terms of jailings, things like that, China's influence in the media environment can also be felt far away from its borders as the government extends its reach over the global media environment through the placement of Chinese-produced news on channels in Africa and other parts of the world.

So I hope these remarks have given you just a flavor of some of the threats faced by independent media. Please contact us for more information, and we would like to submit our entire recent report for the Congressional Record.

Mr. McGOVERN: We would love to have it. Thank you.

Dr. DEUTSCH KARLEKAR: Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Deutsch Karlekar follows:]

Testimony of

Dr. Karin Deutsch Karlekar
Project Director, *Freedom of the Press*
Freedom House

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
Hearing on Threats to Worldwide Media Freedom

July 25, 2012

Mr. Chairman, Honorable Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Commission today and provide my thoughts on current threats to media freedom around the world. I would like to share brief observations on the issue, drawing primarily on the data and analysis contained in Freedom House's most recent *Freedom of the Press* report, and will then conclude with some thoughts on the implications of these findings for the policy and media development communities.

Our *Freedom of the Press* index, which has been produced since 1980, rates each country on a numerical scale based on a set of methodology questions that seek to measure the entire enabling environment for media freedom, as well as categorizing them as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. The report has for the past 8 years shown annual declines in the level of media freedom, a phenomenon that has affected practically every region in the world.

In contrast, the latest edition, which covered the calendar year of 2011, showed a potential reversal of this trend, with gains seen in a number of countries. Unsurprisingly, the most dramatic gains occurred in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa that had previously been among the world's most repressive before longtime dictators were removed after successful popular uprisings—Libya and Tunisia.

Nevertheless, these gains remain precarious, with important setbacks to democratic prospects occurring toward year's end and into 2012 as the revolutions have faltered. Elsewhere in the Middle East, continued civil strife has led to increasingly severe restrictions on freedom of expression in Bahrain and Syria.

At the same time, press freedom continued to face obstacles and reversals in many parts of the world. China, which boasts the world's most sophisticated system of media repression, stepped up its drive to control both old and new sources of news and information through arrests and censorship. Other influential authoritarian powers—such as Russia, Iran, and Venezuela—resorted to a variety of techniques to maintain a tight grip on the media, detaining some press critics, closing down media outlets and blogs, and bringing libel or defamation suits against journalists. These states were also notable for their attempts to restrict media freedom and influence the news agenda beyond their borders.

Another disturbing trend identified by Freedom House in recent years is the decline in media freedom in a number of well-established democracies. As a result of status downgrades in a number of previously Free countries over the past few years—including Hungary, South Africa, and South Korea—the proportion of the global population that enjoys a fully Free press has fallen to its lowest level in over a decade. Currently, only 14.5 percent of the world's people—or roughly one in six—live in countries where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures.

Overall, of the 197 countries and territories assessed during 2011, including the new country of South Sudan, a total of 66 (33.5 percent) were rated Free, 72 (36.5 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 59 (30 percent) were rated Not Free.

Key Threats to Media Freedom

Here, I'd like to highlight several ongoing issues, regions, and countries of concern.

- **Many governments appear unwilling to reform or eliminate the array of laws used to punish journalists and news outlets, and some have been applying them with greater determination.** Both governments and private individuals continue to restrict media freedom through the broad or disproportionate application of laws that forbid “inciting hatred,” commenting on sensitive topics such as religion or ethnicity, or “endangering national security.” Libel and defamation laws are also commonly used to muzzle the independent media. For example, Turkey has one of the largest numbers of jailed journalists worldwide, as critics are jailed under anti-terrorism and insult laws.
- **The misuse of licensing and regulatory frameworks has emerged as a key method of media control in a number of semidemocratic and authoritarian settings.** Authoritarian regimes have increasingly used bogus legalistic maneuvers to narrow the space for independent broadcasting, effectively countering an earlier trend of growth in the number of private radio and television outlets. Broadcast media are key because in many countries, they reach the largest audience. In Venezuela, for example, the denial or suspension of broadcast licenses or closure of outlets on spurious grounds have become essential methods for suppressing unwelcome views.
- **Control over new means of news dissemination, particularly internet-based social media, has become a priority for authoritarian governments.** As media delivery systems have expanded from traditional print formats and terrestrial broadcasting to satellite television, the internet, and mobile telephones, authoritarian governments have intensified efforts to exert control over the new means of communication as well as the news outlets that

employ them. Efforts to block trans-national news became particularly common during and following the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, when the power of these media to effect political change became even more apparent. Among other cases, authoritarian governments employed techniques ranging from information blackouts in the state media, as in Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, to sophisticated internet and text-message filtering, as in China.

- **Worsening violence against the press is forcing journalists into self-censorship or exile, while continuing impunity for such crimes encourages new attacks.** The level of violence and physical harassment directed at the press by both official and nonstate actors remains a key concern in a number of countries. Countries with high murder rates are not necessarily those with the world's most repressive media environments, but are generally places where private or independent voices do exist and some journalists are willing to pursue potentially dangerous stories. In media environments ranging from conflict zones to struggling democracies with a weak rule of law, the press is facing increased intimidation or outright attacks. These attacks have a chilling effect on the profession, encouraging self-censorship or exile, and the failure to punish or even seriously investigate crimes against journalists has reached scandalous proportions.
- **Fragile Freedoms in Latin America:** While many regions have seen mixed trends over the past few years, Freedom House is particularly concerned about Latin America, as this region has seen the most sustained declines over the past 5 years. While some countries, such as Mexico and Honduras, have been plagued by violence by criminal groups and nonstate actors, in others journalists are targeted by governments that are openly hostile to media criticism, as is the case in Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela. In particular, I'd like to highlight significant backsliding in Ecuador over the past few years.

Key countries of concern—due their size as well as their influence beyond their own borders—are Russia and China.

- The media environment in **Russia**—which ranked at 172nd place out of 197 countries worldwide—is characterized by the use of a pliant judiciary to prosecute independent journalists, impunity for the physical harassment and murder of journalists, and continued state control or influence over almost all traditional media outlets. While the relatively unfettered internet, social media, and satellite television are increasingly used to disseminate and access news and information, as was seen particularly during the December 2011 parliamentary elections and subsequent protests, new media users have yet to achieve a real breakthrough in reaching the general public in Russia, and face an uphill battle against a range of political, economic, legal, and extralegal tools at the disposal of the authorities. In the coming weeks, several bills likely to become law—including provisions that would place further curbs on the internet, under the guise of banning “harmful” content, as well as the re-criminalization of libel—will further curb freedom of expression in Russia.
- In **China**, the world's largest poor performer, ranked at 187th place of 197 countries worldwide, the authorities employ a robust system of censorship and control over both traditional and new media to curb coverage of sensitive domestic issues—including political developments as well as topics related to public health and the environment that affect millions of Chinese citizens—as well as foreign news considered to be a threat to stability, such as the Arab Spring uprisings. In 2011, dozens of writers and activists with significant internet followings were forcibly disappeared, abused in custody, and in some cases sentenced to long prison terms after anonymous messages that circulated online in February called for a Tunisian-style revolution in China. However, I would add that on the positive side, despite the robust censorship apparatus, Chinese journalists and millions of internet users continued to test the limits of permissible expression by drawing attention to incipient scandals or launching campaigns via domestic microblogging platforms. China's influence can also be felt far away from its borders, as the government extends its reach over the global media environment through the placement of Chinese-produced news on channels in Africa—recently, for example, an agreement provided for CCTV news to be shown on state-run television in Zimbabwe. Attempts at censoring news by independent outlets aimed at Chinese audiences are also regularly seen throughout Asia.

I hope that these remarks have given a flavor of just some of the varied threats faced by independent media worldwide. For more details or information, please contact us at Freedom House.

In terms of responding to these threats, we would advocate for continued efforts in the following areas:

- Ongoing diplomatic engagement by all branches of the United States government to raise concerns regarding press freedom violations as and when they occur.

- Sustained funding to be devoted to equipping local journalists and press freedom advocacy organizations to better respond to these threats—be it through training in investigative reporting, cyber- and physical security, or effective monitoring and advocacy techniques.
- Continued efforts to be devoted to advocating for systemic legal and regulatory reform, to create a positive enabling environment for independent media to be able to operate freely and without fear of repercussions.

Given the importance of media freedom as a fundamental component of a strong democracy, as well as a lead indicator of the health of the democratic system in general, United States government support is essential to help protect this threatened right in a variety of settings around the world. We have found that a combination of international pressure, coupled with efforts by local advocates, to promote media freedom can create the necessary dynamics that can lead to positive reform.

Again, thank you again for this invitation and opportunity to share these observations.

Mr. McGOVERN: Next, Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza. I should point out, Mr. Kara-Murza, and I am sure you will explain in your testimony, 2 weeks ago the Russian government revoked your media credentials, which I think is a blatant act of media repression. So we very much regret that the Russian government took that action, but we are very glad to have you here and look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA

Mr. KARA-MURZA: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. That is actually very mild compared to all the other situations we have been discussing. But I thank you for holding this important and timely hearing and for giving me this opportunity to present my views on the media freedom situation in my country.

Lech Walesa once observed that the attitudes of authoritarian regimes towards the independent media fit into the formula: Break the thermometer and you will not have fever. For Vladimir Putin, breaking the thermometer was an early priority. One of his very first actions in office, in fact, has been the destruction of NTV, at that time Russia's largest independent television channel which provided uncensored news and analysis to millions of Russian viewers. It was known for its hard-hitting live political talk shows, satirical programs. And NTV had fiercely criticized the Kremlin over its wars in Chechnya and government corruption. And President Boris Yeltsin used to say that when he did not like something on NTV, he switched off his television set. President Putin had a different approach. He switched off NTV itself.

And as the last chapter of this prolonged confrontation in the early hours of the 14th of April 2001, security guards from Gazprom, the state energy giant, physically took over NTV's offices in Moscow's Ostankino television center taking the channel under its control. And later attempts by journalists from NTV to continue their work elsewhere were thwarted with similar efficacy. In 2002, the Russian authorities switched off the transmission of TV6, and finally in 2003, TVS, which was Russia's last nationwide independent television station, was cut off the air by the order of then Press Minister, Mikhail Lesin. And the official reason offered for that was "the interests of the viewers."

So for the past 9 years, Russia's national television has been a discussion-free zone as has already been mentioned by my colleagues here. With the rarest of exceptions, no opposition leaders are allowed on the air. No alternative viewpoints are offered. No criticism of the regime is permitted.

There was a study in 2007 during the parliamentary election campaign in 2007 conducted by a Moscow-based NGO, the Center For Journalism in Extreme Situations. And that study was devoted to the news coverage on channel 1, which is Russia's principal state-run television station. And the study found that 87 percent of the news coverage was devoted to President Putin, his administration, his government agencies, and his United Russia Party, 87 percent. The two democratic opposition parties at that time, the Union of Right Forces and Yabloko, received 1.6 percent of airtime between them.

For years, Russian television has had to deal with the so-called stoplists, the informal list of politicians who cannot be shown on the air. In fact just last year, Vladimir Pozner, who is a leading talk show host on channel 1 publicly admitted that, "There are people whom I cannot invite on my program because these people cannot appear on Federal television." And among them he named, for example, opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov and Mikhail Kasyanov.

I think it is important to stress that even the privately-owned media outlets in Russia are by no means immune to government pressure and political pressure. Among the recent examples are, for instance, the raids in February on the offices of Alexander Lebedev who is the publisher of Novaya Gazeta, the newspaper of the late Anna Politkovskaya, who was mentioned many times at this hearing today. And the freezing of bank accounts from which the newspaper was financed.

Or also in February the prosecutorial investigation of Dozhd, a small satellite Internet TV channel which had extensively covered the anti-Putin protests in Moscow. Just two weeks ago, Dmitri Solopov who was editor in chief of Kommersant FM, a top radio station in Moscow, resigned from his post citing, among other reasons, his unwillingness to "compromise" with his conscience. And he confirmed that the station's owner was, in fact, unhappy with the independent editorial line.

And as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, I have myself the opportunity to witness the extent of the Russian government's control over the media just in the past couple of weeks. Two weeks I was stopped at the gates of the Russian Embassy here in Washington and told that I am no longer allowed inside because Ambassador Sergei Kislyak had ordered to annul my media credentials. And the official explanation is that I am "no longer a journalist."

But the puzzling detail was that the order from the ambassador came before it was publicly announced that I am being dismissed from RTVi -- which is also a privately owned television network -- effective September the 1st.

Former Russian Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov has learned from sources in Moscow that the directive to place me on a media blacklist came from Alexie Gromov, who is President Putin's first deputy chief of staff in charge of relations with the media, press, and television. And the blacklist apparently extends not just to RTVi, but to other Russian media outlets, thus making me in effect unemployable. This is what the Germans call Berufsverbot -- a ban on profession.

The same sources indicated that the reason for the blacklisting was that I, along with many other representatives of Russian civil society, political opposition, and independent media have been a vocal supporter of the Sergei Magnitsky Act, which proposes to sanction corrupt Russian officials and human rights violators --

Mr. McGOVERN: I feel really bad because I am the author of that bill.

Mr. KARA-MURZA: No -- I was just coming to that. I was coming to that. Blackmail should not be allowed to succeed and certainly in this case. And I think, in fact, the Kremlin reaction which has been widespread, and mine has just been one case, there have been a lot of similar things happening. But this shows that this legislation hits them precisely where it hurts. And this is the missing and the much-needed measure of accountability for those who continue to violate the rights and freedoms of Russian citizens. And I think it is a very pro-Russian bill, and so do many of my colleagues.

And I actually want to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership on this issue. You have been the lead sponsor of this in the House, both in the last one and this Congress, and I do hope that before the end of this year it will be passed and signed into law.

Mr. McGOVERN: I believe that it will be.

Mr. KARA-MURZA: If that is possible, the environment for civil society in Russia is getting worse. That has been indicated in the last few weeks. The State Duma has rubber-stamped a series of repressive measures directed against the already besieged civil society, which include the 150-fold increase in fines for "violations at public rallies," the recriminalization of defamation, as you mentioned, or the new order forcing Russian NGOs which receive funding from abroad to tag themselves as "foreign agents." And this law has been signed by President Putin in the last few days.

Yet in spite of all of this, of everything that I have talked about, I remain myself very much optimistic about my country's future because while national television may still be censored, it no longer matters as much. In April of this year for the first time ever, a private Internet search engine, Yandex.ru, registered a larger audience than any of the national television channels. And according to TNS Russia Research Group, the gap between the total daily television audience and the number of daily Internet users has narrowed to just 900,000 people. It is 31.4 million for TV and 30.5 million for the Internet, respectively. And it will not be long until the Internet replaces television as the main source of information for Russian citizens.

And, in fact, as you know, last December after the flawed and rigged parliamentary elections, thanks to the Internet and the social media, the news of the mass election fraud quickly spread around the country leading to Russia's largest pro-democracy demonstrations in two decades. Tens of thousands of people came out in the streets of Moscow and other cities to demand political reforms and to protest against authoritarianism.

I am optimistic because young middle class educated Russian are no longer willing to tolerate Mr. Putin's authoritarianism. They are tired of being politically voiceless. They are tired of the lies in the official media. They don't want to be told who is going to rule over them for the next 6 or 12 years.

In short, they want to be citizens in their own country. And this in my view is the best guarantee that, despite the efforts of Mr. Putin, Russia will one day return on the path of an open, modern, and democratic society. I thank you very much.

Mr. McGOVERN: Thank you very much for your testimony.

[The statement of Mr. Kara-Murza follows:]

Prepared Testimony by **Vladimir V. Kara-Murza**
Washington Bureau Chief, Russian Television International (2004–2012)

Co-Chairman McGovern, Co-Chairman Wolf, esteemed Members of the Commission. I want to thank you for holding this important and timely hearing, and for the opportunity to present my views on the situation concerning media freedom in Russia.

Lech Wałęsa once observed that the attitude of authoritarian regimes toward independent media fits the formula: “Break the thermometer, and you won’t have fever”. For Vladimir Putin, breaking the thermometer was an early priority. On the fourth day after his inauguration in May 2000, masked gunmen from the Federal Security Service and the Prosecutor-General’s Office stormed the headquarters of Media Most, at that time Russia’s largest privately owned news media group. Its flagship was NTV, a national television channel that provided uncensored news to millions of Russian viewers. Known for its hard-hitting live political talk shows and satirical programs, NTV had fiercely criticized the Kremlin over its wars in Chechnya and government corruption. President Yeltsin used to say that when he didn’t like something on NTV, he switched off his television set. President Putin had a different approach. He decided to “switch off” NTV.

The Kremlin’s war on NTV lasted almost a year. The channel’s founder, Vladimir Gusinsky, was briefly put in prison; a part of NTV’s shares were frozen by a court order; its minority shareholder, the state-run energy giant Gazprom, moved to replace its management. Around 3 a.m. on April 14, 2001, Gazprom-installed security guards seized NTV’s offices at the Moscow Ostankino television center, taking control of the channel. Attempts by former NTV journalists to continue their work elsewhere were thwarted with remarkable efficiency. In January 2002, the Russian authorities cut off the transmission of TV6, once again using a minority shareholder as proxy. In June 2003, TVS, Russia’s last nationwide independent television station, was switched off the air by the order of then-Press Minister Mikhail Lesin. The official reason offered by the minister was “the interests of viewers”¹.

For the past nine years, Russia’s national television has been a discussion-free zone. With the rarest exceptions, no opposition leaders are allowed on the air. No alternative viewpoints are offered. No criticism of the regime is permitted. During the 2007 parliamentary election campaign, the Moscow-based Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations conducted a seven-week study of the news coverage on Channel One, the principal state television station. The study found that 87 percent of coverage was devoted to President Putin, his administration, his government agencies, and his United Russia party². The two democratic opposition parties, the Union of Right Forces and Yabloko, received 1.6 percent of airtime between them³. For years, Russian television channels have had to deal with the so-called “stop-lists”: the informal lists of politicians who cannot be shown on the air. Last year, Vladimir Pozner, the leading talk show host on Channel One, publicly admitted that “there are people whom I cannot invite on my program... because these people cannot appear on federal television”⁴. Among them he named opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov and Mikhail Kasyanov⁵.

¹ Минпечати заменило ТВС на «Спорт» «в интересах зрителей» (NEWSRU.com, 22.06.2003)
Press Ministry Replaces TVS with “Sport” “in the interests of viewers” (NEWSRU.com, 06/22/2003)

<http://www.newsru.com/russia/22jun2003/sport.html>

² Деятельность СМИ по информированию избирателей (Национальный центр мониторинга демократических процедур. Бюллетень № 5, 03.2008)

The Media’s Activities in Informing Voters (National Center for the Monitoring of Democratic Procedures. Bulletin # 5, 03/2008)

<http://www.vibory.ru/Regs/GD/part-6-4.htm>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Владимир Познер в «Разговоре без правил» (О2ТВ, 24.01.2011)

Vladimir Pozner in “Talk without Rules” (O2TV, 01/24/2011)

<http://o2tv.ru/Владимир-Познер-в-Разговоре-Без-Правил>

⁵ Ibid.

Russia's print media scene is markedly more pluralistic than television. There are several publications, such as *The New Times* magazine and *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper, that continue to adhere to the best standards of independent and professional journalism. To put things in perspective, however, the total circulation of independent news publications, both national and regional, is estimated at 700,000 copies – in a country of 140 million people⁶.

The privately owned media outlets in Russia are by no means immune to political pressure. Just two weeks ago, Dmitri Solopov, the editor-in-chief of Kommersant FM, a talk radio station, resigned from his post, citing, among other reasons, his unwillingness to “compromise” with his conscience⁷. He confirmed that the owner, Alisher Usmanov, was unhappy with the station's independent editorial policy⁸. In the last few weeks, I have had the opportunity to personally witness the extent of the Russian government's influence over the media. On July 12, I was stopped at the gates of the Russian embassy in Washington and told that Ambassador Sergei Kislyak had ordered to annul my media credentials. The official explanation was that I am “no longer a journalist”⁹. The puzzling detail was that the ambassador's order came *before* it was publically announced that I am being dismissed from RTVi, a private television network, effective September 1. Former Russian Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov has learnt that the directive to place me on a blacklist came from Alexei Gromov, President Putin's first deputy chief of staff¹⁰. Two separate sources have confirmed the same to me. The blacklist extends not only to RTVi, but to other Russian media outlets, thus making me unemployable. This is, in effect, a *Berufsverbot* – a ban on profession.

According to the same sources, the reason for my blacklisting was the fact that I, along with other representatives of Russia's civil society, political opposition, and independent media, have been a vocal supporter of the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act, a U.S. Congressional initiative which proposes to sanction corrupt Russian officials and human rights violators by denying them U.S. visas and freezing their U.S. assets. It is, in my view, a pro-Russian bill which provides a much-needed measure of accountability for those who continue to violate the rights and freedoms of Russian citizens. The Kremlin's reaction to this legislation shows that it hits them precisely where it hurts. I want to take this opportunity to thank Co-Chairmen McGovern and Wolf for their leadership on this issue. I hope the Magnitsky Act is signed into law before the end of this year.

If that is possible, the political environment in Russia is getting worse. In recent weeks, the State Duma rubberstamped a series of repressive measures aimed at the already besieged civil society. Among these measures are a 150-fold increase in fines for “violations” at public rallies; the reinstatement of “defamation” into the criminal code; and the requirement that Russian NGOs which receive funding from abroad be tagged as “foreign agents”.

⁶ «Журналистика приобрела женское лицо и ушла в гламур» («Новые Известия», 04.06.2007)
“Journalism has Acquired a Female Face and Descended into Glamour” (*Novye Izvestia*, 06/04/2007)

<http://www.newizv.ru/politics/2007-06-04/70352-zhurnalistika-priobrela-zhenskoe-lico-i-ushla-v-glamur.html>

⁷ Дмитрий Солопов: Усманов действительно считал, что мы критикуем власть за его деньги (Телеканал «Дождь», 17.07.2012)

Dmitri Solopov: “Usmanov Really Thought that we are Criticizing the Authorities on his Money” (Dozhd TV, 07/17/2012)

http://tvrain.ru/articles/dmitrij_solopov_usmanov_dejstvitelno_schital_chno_my_kritikuem_vlast_za_ego_dengi-328179/

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Евгений Хоришко: «Господин Кара-Мурза не аккредитован при посольстве» (Slon.ru, 13.07.2012)

Yevgeny Khorishko: “Mr. Kara-Murza is not Credentialed with the Embassy” (Slon.ru, 07/13/2012)
http://slon.ru/russia/kara_murza_mladshiy_govorit_chno_uvolen_iz_za_spisoka_magnitskogo-811013.xhtml

¹⁰ Борис Немцов: «В. Кара-Мурза-младший. Запрет на профессию» («Эхо Москвы», 13.07.2012)

Boris Nemtsov: “V. Kara-Murza, Jr. A Ban on Profession” (Ekho Moskvy, 07/13/2012)
http://echo.msk.ru/blog/nemtsov_boris/908852-echo/

Yet, in spite of all this, I remain optimistic about my country's future. Television may still be censored, but it no longer matters as much. In April of this year – for the first time ever – Yandex.ru, a private Internet search engine, registered a larger audience than any of the national television channels¹¹. According to TNS Russia research group, the gap between the total daily television audience and the number of daily Internet users has narrowed to just 900,000 (31.4 million and 30.5 million, respectively)¹². It will not be long before the Internet replaces television as the principal source of information for Russian citizens. Overall, 47 percent of Russians are now online; in Moscow and St. Petersburg this figure is around 70 percent¹³. Thanks to the Internet and social media – and despite the silence on national TV – the news of mass fraud in last December's parliamentary elections quickly spread around the country, leading to Russia's largest pro-democracy demonstrations in two decades, as tens of thousands of people came out on the streets of Moscow and other cities to demand political reforms. According to a recent survey by the Levada Center polling agency, 38 percent of the Russian population supports the pro-democracy protesters¹⁴. Young, middle-class, educated Russians are no longer willing to tolerate Mr. Putin's authoritarianism. They are tired of the lies in the official media. They are tired of being politically voiceless. They do not want to be told who will rule over them for the next six or twelve years. They want to be *citizens* in their own country. And this, in my view, is the best guarantee that, despite Mr. Putin's efforts, Russia will one day return on the path of a modern, open, democratic society.

McGOVERN: Finally, we have Father Ismael Moreno Coto, who is the director of Radio Progreso in Honduras. And I want to thank Father Moreno for being here. I want to thank him for making the trip from Honduras to testify at this hearing. And I appreciate all that he has done in promoting the issue of freedom of the press, and also his real courage in defending freedom of the press in Honduras. So we are grateful are you being here and we welcome your testimony.

[The following testimony was delivered through an interpreter.]

Rev. **MORENO COTO:** Thank you very much for having us here and thank you also for tolerating the fact that I will be sharing with you in my own language.

I work at a radio station called Radio Progreso and of the 24 employees at the station, 15 of us now are under protectionary measures of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

This is an expression by the international community of their concern for the human rights situation in Honduras, but it doesn't seem to correspond to -- there doesn't seem to be a corresponding concern for the state of the institutions in the country of Honduras.

And so I want to be very clear. The right to freedom of expression in Honduras has been crushed because the institutional structures of the rule of law have been crushed or have been alienated from their true functions and put at the service of those who have power.

¹¹ Internet Shows Signs of Challenging TV for Attention (*The Moscow Times*, 05/27/ 2012)
<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/internet-shows-signs-of-challenging-tv-for-attention/459337.html>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Развитие интернета в регионах России (Информационный бюллетень Яндекс.ру, 03.2012)
The Development of the Internet in Russia's Regions (Yandex.ru Information Bulletin, 03/2012)
http://company.yandex.ru/researches/reports/internet_regions_2012.xml

¹⁴ Социолог Лев Гудков - об угасании протестного движения в России и перспективах его роста (Радио «Свобода», 03.05.2012)
Pollster Lev Gudkov – On the Decline of the Protest Movement in Russia, and the Prospects for its Growth (Radio Liberty, 05/03/2012)
<http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/24568870.html?s=1>

The fact that in 3 years, 25 social communicators have been killed in Honduras means that Honduran democracy has deep problems and it needs in-depth solutions.

There is no political or ideological pattern that emerges in terms of the origins of these murders. The pattern is simply that in all of these cases these murders have happened because of the lack of -- because the institutions of the state are not functioning. So in a word: Impunity.

The seriousness of the reality of this pattern of impunity resides in the fact that those who are sustaining this impunity and backing up this impunity are people and groups who say that they represent or defend democracy, and many of them do so through the media that says that they are defending the freedom of expression and truthfulness in news reporting.

The people that maintain the system are people that are considered honorable. They are very active in society. They represent political leadership, business leaders. But they have concentrated enormous resources, wealth, and power both in the media and political power and they enjoy recognition and backing of the various entities of the government of the United States and of the international community.

The institutionality of Honduras is lacking and that is what is conditioning the possibility of having freedom of expression in the country, and this is leading to censorship. So in Honduras, we need to support the construction and recovery of the institutional structures of the rule of law and of democracy, and to do that, I have the following recommendations:

First of all, and as a prior condition, we need to put in place some support mechanisms that will protect social communicators, human rights defenders, leaders of social organizations, people who are trying to pave the way to make sure that this freedom of expression can be exercised.

Second, we must demand and support efforts to purge the Ministry of Security, the Public Ministry, and the Supreme Court.

We should also condition all international aid on efforts to do this purging of the institutions and accompany that with a demand to try everyone in these institutions, including the Armed Forces and other sectors of Honduran state, that are tied to human rights violations.

We cannot have new institutions nor can we reestablish the rule of law without first confronting impunity.

Fourth, we must demand that the current Honduran government implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, especially those concerning the respect for freedom of expression, free access to public information, and the democratization of the access to media.

Fifth, it is important to support the Inter-American human rights system of the OES because it is an entity that we can go to when a state, as in the case of Honduras, has lost its capacity or shows itself to be negligent in compliance with the law or when it covers up or protects violators of human rights.

Number six, we must demand that the state comply with all those commitments made as signatories to international agreements on human rights and freedom of expression.

And number seven, finally, we must support and protect the various efforts to build networks of community, radio stations, and other community media outlets, especially since it has become evident now that small media oligopolies have control over the flow of information.

And finally, there is an additional one. We need to make sure that we overturn the law of telephone conversation interception. There is a law that makes it harder for us to operate as communicators and makes this situation even more precarious.

Mr. McGOVERN: Thank you.

[The statement of Moreno Coto follows:]

**The Grave Risks for Journalists and Those Who Stand
for Freedom of Expression in Honduras
Testimony of Rev. Ismael Moreno Coto, S.J.
for the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
July 25, 2012**

Standing up for freedom of expression is, without a doubt, one of the most uncomfortable experiences in life; and in a country like Honduras, it means living with anxiety, insecurity, suspicion, distrust, demands, warnings, and threats. It also means having to come to grips with the idea of death.

How can opinions be freely expressed, news and information given, and analysis shared in a country where the very institutions of the state have been distorted? How can freedom of expression be exercised in a country where all of the rules have been broken and we have been left with violence and death as the only criteria and parameters to guide ourselves by?

In the last three years, 25 journalists and social communicators have been murdered in Honduras. The names and further information about them are included at the end of this report. Why were they murdered? What is the common pattern in these crimes? It is not an ideological or political pattern, because the dead include people who were part of the resistance to the coup, but also those who worked for media outlets that supported the coup. Some had not sided with any of the various ideological currents of our very polarized political sectors. What is the pattern, then, of so much death?

It is true that in the murders of journalists and social communicators, express political or ideological patterns do not emerge as the major pattern. However, the murders do show a clear pattern; they have all occurred in a place where institutional state structure that has been deformed and adulterated, where the government has stopped being an expression of the rule of law, and has chosen instead to represent and channel the interests and decisions of those who believe in rule by the strongest.

And this is the most terrible thing about these deaths: in Honduras today, a person who works in front of a microphone (or a computer or a camera) only has to publish or disseminate some news that negatively affects the interests a powerful person with money and influence in the community, municipality, or province for the life of that news reporter to be endangered. The risk increases when these journalists and social communicators touch on unresolved controversial issues, such as the defense of—or demand for—land, natural resources, health, or education; or when they talk about having a tax policy where everyone contributes to the government according to their profits, income, and property; or about the need for impartiality in the law; or simply the need for a justice system that works; or the fact that people are demanding democratization, access to public information, and access to the media.

The institutions of the state have been so crushed that it is easy to manipulate them in favor of groups that already have power, money, and other privileges. The Honduran state is being used as an instrument to strengthen the impunity of the most powerful. If social communicators in a municipality decide to publish news that impacts the interests of a person or a family with power and money, that person or family can easily hire a couple of hit men to eliminate whoever had the temerity to mention them on the radio or in the local media. The government knows this is happening, but its institutions and officials have become a shield that protects the strong and makes sure they are immune to prosecution so they can act with complete impunity.

The situation is the most serious at the level of a community or a municipality, because those who benefit from “the law of the strongest” there know that the state will not touch them no matter what. People with power and money have protection from policemen, prosecutors, and judges. Public officials enjoy the relationship with these “strong” groups because of the economic benefits and perks they receive, which end up being much higher than the wages they earn. And those who exercise “the law of the strongest” know for sure they can act with complete impunity because the most a state will ever do is arrest and try someone who has executed a crime; it will never touch those who actually gave the orders, because those people are protected by the state. In some cases, a powerful few actually take the place of the state itself in certain localities.

In the system of “the law of the strongest,” power may be wielded by a policeman, a lumber magnate, an agro-industrialist, a congressman, a mayor, an owner of a national media outlet, a cattle rancher, a businessman, or a drug trafficker. It doesn’t matter what the person’s affiliation is. They are all protected under the shadow of illegality, which knows how to move down the halls of legality and official institutions. Most of the powerful few have tourist visas to come in and out of the United States. Not a few of them are prominent businessmen or politicians. Some are invited on an ongoing basis to celebrate Independence Day in the residency of the American ambassador in Tegucigalpa.

The primary protectors and promoters of impunity in the Honduran state are: 1) the current justice system, from the local judges to the magistrates of the Supreme Court of Justice; 2) the Public Ministry, headed by the Attorney General; 3) the Ministry of Security; particularly the Police, both preventative and investigative; and 4) the Armed Forces. Many people who operate with impunity have some protection in one or all of these institutions, and these institutions look to the National Congress, starting with its president, to find a kind of political backing where everything is negotiated, calculated, and decided upon to ensure different levels of impunity to protect people with power and money.

In this highly precarious context and environment of arbitrary actions by government institutions, the death of journalists and social communicators will continue to be cloaked in impunity, because impunity is part and parcel of a society like Honduras that props itself up using the law of the strongest. Even today, in the agreements signed after the coup d’état, political matters have been touched on, and politicians have maneuvered so that their conflicts so they can be played out in the political electoral sphere. But impunity remains intact and it continues to be untouchable, because we are talking about the intimate conspiracy between the state and those who exercise the law of the strongest.

This explains why the work of journalists and social communicators has become the most dangerous of all jobs in Honduras. I want to speak clearly without beating around the bush: the deaths of journalists and social communicators represent the most sophisticated of all political crimes in Honduras today. According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Freedom of Expression and Opinion, Frank La Rue, “in proportion to its population, Honduras has the most alarming violation of the freedom of expression in the world, and is the country in which the most journalists have been killed in the least amount of time.”

How can we reach a place where the press is independent and autonomous when so many and diverse powers are pressuring, blackmailing, threatening, and seducing the media and its journalists? How can a journalist act with independence in an environment that conditions his/her salary and job security on loyalty to the interests of the proprietor, particularly in a society like ours where having a stable job is a luxury? How can the media become independent in a society where democratic institutions are subordinated to the arbitrary decisions of those who abide by “the law of the strongest”? How can freedom of expression be defended in country like Honduras where the biggest violators of this fundamental freedom are the friends and partners of a “democracy” backed by policies and agencies of the United States government?

It is also clear that, in Honduras, no system exists to monitor threats to journalists, and none of the protective measures provided actually guarantee the safety of threatened journalists, a situation aggravated by the weakness of the Honduran state. Drug trafficking and political violence are defining the patterns of violence. And the sectors that are able to intimidate others with their power or to threaten the freedom of expression have at least tacit protection from the government of the United States.

At Radio Progreso, we are committed to building a democratic, inclusive, and participatory society with an institutional structure and functioning that translates into real rule of law. As long as the international community—and the United States in particular—channels its support to the current Honduran institutions, such as the Ministry of Security, the Public Ministry, the Supreme Court of Justice, and the Armed Forces, impunity will continue to be a macabre expression of the Honduran landscape, and we will continue to see journalists die, as we ask ourselves anxiously when

it will be our turn. We need new institutions that grow out of a deep questioning of the current system. The commitment to a new set of institutions and to the rule of law must grow out of a confrontation with those who are operating with impunity in today's institutions, and it can only come from bringing diverse sectors of society together to create a social pact based on basic common agreements. This is the only way we can create conditions that will guarantee freedom of expression.

In Honduras we do not reach for the "maximum," because our entire institutional system is broken, and because the human, social, ethical, political, and institutional fabric of our nation has been torn. In Honduras, the maximum is found by seeking consensus around "minimum" shared agreements. As long as we do not build those minimum shared agreements, freedom of expression will always be a precarious reality. In that struggle, we are on the side of the communities and populations whose voices are seldom heard in the diverse forums and spaces that exist today. We do our work accompanied by the spirit of Monsignor Romero, who told us that "no matter what is happening politically, no matter who has power, the poor are the most important group to keep in mind."

Journalists Murdered in Honduras

This is a list of Honduran journalists and social communicators who have been murdered since 2009, according to information from the files of Radio Progreso and ERIC-SJ.

2009

Gabriel Fino Noriega (July 2)

Executed in the community of San Juan Pueblo by men who fired on him from a moving vehicle. Preliminary information indicated that he had received threats earlier after covering the activities of the organized popular resistance on local radios after the coup d'etat, and after having expressed his personal repudiation of the coup.

2010

Nicolas Asfura (February 18)

This journalist, aged 42, was found dead in his apartment in Colonia Santa Barbara in Tegucigalpa. He graduated with a degree in Communication Sciences in 1988 from the National Autonomous University of Honduras. He worked as a journalist on Channel 45 and was also a radio announcer for stations in Comayaguela and Tegucigalpa.

Joseph Hernandez Ochoa (March 1):

This television journalist, age 26, was shot to death as he was traveling by car in Tegucigalpa. His colleague Karol Cabrera was also wounded in the attack, which she blamed on the followers of former-president Manuel Zelaya. She is now in exile in Canada.

David Meza Montesinos (March 11):

51 years of age, he was shot to death in La Ceiba (Honduran Atlantic Coast), the third largest city of Honduras. He was a correspondent for the Channel 10 TV news show "Abriendo Brecha," broadcast from Tegucigalpa, and he also worked for local radio stations.

Nahúm Palacios Arteaga (March 14):

Dead at 34 years of age. Murdered while driving home in the municipality of Tocoa in the department of Colón. He worked for Channel 5 and Radio Tocoa. The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights had asked for precautionary measures for him in 2009 after he received threats from members of the military after the coup d'état.

Bayardo Mairena y Manuel Juárez (March 26):

Journalist Jose Bayardo Mairena Ramírez, 52, and his assistant Manuel Juárez, 54, were shot to death as they were driving near Juticalpa, 200 km east of Tegucigalpa. Mairena was the host of program called "Asi es Olancho" on Radio Excelsor, and he worked on Channel RZ, Channel 4, and "Super 10" Radio.

Luis Chévez Hernández (April 11):

Radio announcer Luis Chévez Hernández, 23, was murdered in San Pedro Sula. He did musical programming at Radio W105, a station aimed at a young audience. He was murdered along with a family member.

Jorge Alberto Orellana (April 20):

The journalist popularly known as “Georgino,” 48 years of age, was shot and killed as he left the television station where he was working in San Pedro Sula, the second largest city in Honduras. He was the host of the program “Live with Georgino.” He worked for many years for the television station, Televicentro, a business that supported the coup d’état, but he had stopped working for that organization before his death. He was a professor of journalism at the UNAH in its San Pedro Sula campus.

Luis Arturo Mondragón (June 14):

This communicator, age 53, was reported dead in eastern Honduras. He was murdered at 10 pm on June 14 in the community of Santa Clara in the municipality of Danlí, department of El Paraiso, some 150 kilometers from Tegucigalpa. He was the News Directors on Channel 19.

Israel Días Zelaya (August 4):

Known popularly as “Chacatay,” he was found dead on a sugar cane plantation in Villanueva, Cortes, 30 minutes from San Pedro Sula. He worked on the program “Claro y Pelado,” under the direction of journalist Carlos Rodríguez Panting on international radio. He also worked on the program “Comentando la Noticia” directed by Jesus Vélez Banegas. He was a collaborator on the television program “Tele-Diario” directed by Gabriel García Ardón.

Henry Suazo (December 24):

A correspondent of HRN, he worked for the company Cable Vision del Atlántico (CVA) which owns Channel 9 in Santa Ana and Channel 29 in San Juan Pueblo. He was also a correspondent for Channel 6 in San Pedro Sula. For two years he was a correspondent for Radio Progreso. He was murdered in San Juan Pueblo, 20 minutes from La Ceiba, Atlántida, in the northern part of the country.

2011

Hector Francisco Medina Polanco (May 10):

This social communicator lost his life at Mario Catarino Rivas Hospital in San Pedro Sula after being shot three times in the back as he was leaving his workplace at Omega Vision in Morazán, Yoro by presumed hit men who were riding a motorcycle. He was born March 5, 1974.

Luis Mendoza (May 19):

The owner of a media outlet in Danil, El Paraiso, Mendoza was murdered in eastern Honduras by several heavily armed men shot at him at close range. This happened near the Manuel Adalid Gamero school, a half-block from the station where he worked. He was an agricultural engineer by profession, having graduated from the Zamorano Agricultural School in 1992. He was the owner of a business called Microsistemas, which owned the rights to Channel 24. The vehicle carrying Luis Mendoza’s murderers was burned by the police.

Adán Benítez (July 4):

He was killed on July 4 in La Ceiba, Atlantida on the Atlantic Coast of Honduras. This murder happened at night when he was on his way home to his place of residence in the city of La Ceiba on the street that goes by Hospital Dantoni, the main care center in the city. He worked for several media outlets: radio Mackintosh, and Channel 14 (local channel and closed circuit). He had also worked at Channel 36, Tele Ceiba, Channel 7, and on other radio programs. One week

earlier, he had reported being threatened by a band of robbers. But the police maintain that his murder was a result of common crime. He was 42 years old and had worked in journalism for more than 15 years.

Nery Jeremías Orellana (July 13)

Communicator and correspondent for Radio Progreso in Candelaria, Lempira. General Administrator of Radio Joconguerra. On July 13, 2011 he was assassinated on his way to work, intercepted on the highway by hit men who murdered him while he was on his motorcycle. A week before his murder, he made several reports on the Radio Progreso news shows about the problem of healthcare in his area.

Medardo Flores (September 8)

On September 8, Flores, 62, was ambushed in his car and killed as he was travelling back from a property located near Puerto Cortes. He died of nine gun-shot wounds. He was a very well-known communicator in the northern city of San Pedro Sula, and was part of the cultural collective of Radio Uno.

Luz Marina Paz and Delmer Canales (December 6, Journalist and Cameraman)

Murdered in Comayagua, as they were riding in their car on December 6, 2011. Paz died alongside cameraman Delmer Canales, who was also her cousin, in the Colonia San Francisco de Comayagua in the capital city of the country. She worked on the program “Tres en la Noticia” which is broadcast through Radio Globo. Then she began to work at the Cadena Hondurena de Noticias (CHN) radio station. The vehicle they were riding in had 47 bullet holes in it, according to information provided by the police.

2012

Fausto Evelio Hernández (March 11)

Murdered March 11, 2012 in the department of Colón. He worked for 15 years in Radio Alegre. He led the radio news team along with his colleague Holver Velásquez. At the time of his assassination, he was riding a bicycle in the municipality of Saba, Colón. He died at the hands of an unknown man who killed him with a machete. He was 54 years old when he died.

Saira Fabiola Almandaries Borjas (March 1)

A 22-year-old journalism intern, murdered with two other companions in San Pedro Sula, March 1, 2012. She was murdered in a sector of Rio Blanquito, Choloma in the department of Cortés. She was completing her degree at the Metropolitan University of Tegucigalpa. She worked on the sports program “A ras de Cancha” and on the sports program for Radio Cadena Voces.

Noel Valladares (April 23)

Better known as “el Tecolote” (the owl), he was presenting a forecast program on the local lottery in Tegucigalpa. He died April 23 when four unknown men shot at him at the gates of the Maya TV Channel. This communicator was very tied to entertainment through a TV program. He was 28 years old.

Erick Alexander Martínez Avila (May 7)

32 years old, and a member of the group KUKULCAN, a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender group in Honduras, he was kidnapped May 5 two days before his death. His lifeless body was found in the community of Guascalile on the highway from Tegucigalpa to Olancho. According to forensic experts, his body did not show signs of any injuries. It is presumed that his death was caused by asphyxiation. He was last seen in public at the May 1st march. He was part of one of the factions of the Libertad y Refundacion (LIBRE) Party.

Angel Alfredo Villatoro Rivera (May 15)

He was kidnapped on May 9, 2012 on his way to his workplace for his usual presentation at the Radio HRN News Program where he was News Director. Married to journalist Karla Fonseca, he had been a journalist for more than two decades and was very tied to the ruling party and at one of the channels with the most influence on the political and social life of Honduras. A native of a northern area of Honduras, in the former banana fields of El Progreso, Yoro, he was found dead May 15 in the southern part of the capital city. When his body was found, he was dressed in the uniform of the “cobras,” which is military and police attire.

Adonis Felipe Gutiérrez Bueso (July 8)

Murdered July 8 along with two of his cousins, identified as Francisco Iraheta López and Miguel Angel Gutiérrez, both 18 years of age. They were kidnapped by several individuals who shot at them repeatedly on one of the streets of the Colonia Siboney of Villanueva, Cortes.

Adonis Felipe lived in Colonia Jefry in Sonaguera in the department of Colón. He had been working in the media for more than six years. Until a few months ago he had been working for Radio Naranja, where he had a program called “Noticias de la Tarde” from 6 to 7 pm. Since 2007, he had been working for Radio Songuera, which belongs to a network of community, popular, and alternative radios in Honduras. He was buried in his hometown Arenas, in Sonaguera, Colón.

According to information gathered by Radio Progreso and by ERIC, 25 people linked to journalism and communications have been killed since the June 2009 coup d’état. Eight were under the age of 35, two were women, and one belonged to the LGBT movement. Several of them worked on news shows, were hosts for entertainment or sports programs, or they administered media outlets.

The following number of journalists have been killed, by year: 2009 (1); 2010 (11); 2011 (7); and 2012, to date (6).

National Human Rights Commission statistics. The National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH) has records of the violent death of several members of the field of journalism between 2003 and the 2009 coup d’état. They include: German Rivas, Carlos Salgado, Rafael Munguía, Osman Rodrigo López, and Bernardo Rivera Paz. CONADEH reported more than two dozen journalists who have lost their lives during the government of Porfirio Lobo.

Journalists killed violently

2007

1. Germán Rivas (Corporación Maya Visión Channel 7) Copán, firearm.
2. Carlos Salgado (Radio Cadena Voces, RCV), Francisco Morazán, firearm.

2008

3. Fernando González (Radio Mega FM 92.7), Santa Bárbara, firearm.

2009

4. Bernardo Rivera Paz (Copán)
5. Rafael Munguía (Radio Cadena Voces, Cortés) firearm.
6. Osman Rodrigo López (Channel 45), Francisco Morazán, firearm.
7. Gabriel Fino Noriega (Correspondent of Radio América), Atlántida, firearm.

2010

8. Nicolás Asfura (Construction company), Francisco Morazán.
9. Joseph Hernández (Channel 51), Francisco Morazán, firearm.
10. David Meza (correspondent of “Abriendo Brecha” program), Atlántida, firearm.
11. Nahún Palacios (Channel 5 of Aguán), Colón, firearm.
12. Bayardo Mairena (Channel 4 of Juticalpa), Olancho, firearm.
13. Manuel de Jesús Juárez (Channel 4 of Juticalpa), Olancho, firearm.
14. Luis Chévez Hernández (host on W105), Cortés, firearm.
15. Georgino Orellana (Cable TV Honduras), Cortés, firearm.
16. Carlos Humberto Salinas Midence (sports writer), Francisco Morazán, firearm.

17. Luis Arturo Mondragón (Channel 19), El Paraíso, firearm.
18. Israel Díaz Zelaya (Radio Internacional), Cortés, firearm.
19. Henry Orlando Suazo (correspondent for HRN), Atlántida, firearm.

2011

20. Héctor Francisco Medina Polanco, Yoro, firearm.
21. Luis Mendoza (owner of company called Macrosistema and Channel 24), El Paraíso, firearm.
22. Adán Benítez (televisión producer), Atlántida, firearm.
23. Nery Geremías Orellana (Radio Joconguera), Lempira, firearm.
24. Medardo Flores (volunteer for Radio Uno), Cortés, firearm.
25. Luz Marina Paz (Honduran News Network), Francisco Morazán, firearm.

2012

26. Saira Fabiola Almendares Borjas (Channel 30 and Radio Cadena Voces), Cortés, firearm.
27. Fausto Elio Hernández Arteaga (Radio Alegre), Colón, arma blanca.
28. Noel Valladares.
29. Erick Martínez (Spokesperson for the Kukulcán group), Tegucigalpa. May 7, 2012
30. Alfredo Villatoro (Radio HRN), Tegucigalpa, May 15, 2012.
31. Adonis Felipe Gutierrez Bueso.

Mr. McGOVERN: Let me begin with Dr. Karlekar and Mr. Mahoney. Kind of a similar question that I asked Mr. Posner. I am always trying to figure out what is it that we can do here that can actually be helpful? How can we be most effective? How can we -- you know, how can we try to change the sad reality that in a lot of places around the world, journalists are being persecuted or being jailed or tortured or, in some cases, are losing their lives?

So how would you rate the U.S. Government on the issue of promoting media freedom overseas? What do we do well? What can we do better? What is the most important thing that the U.S. can do to promote press freedom overseas?

Dr. DEUTSCH KARLEKAR: Well, I think some things are being done well, and I advocate for continued efforts, diplomatic efforts, efforts like this hearing to raise attention to the issues and to draw attention to specific cases. I think things like the Magnitsky bill are very effective ways to address some of these issues. So I would advocate for efforts like that.

I think in terms of funding and programmatic efforts, there is a fair amount of money being given to media development and to promoting press freedom by various branches of the U.S. Government, but I am for continued and more funding. Particularly, I think, in a more long-term and systematic way. A lot of the funding is for year-on-year, and it is difficult for the people who implement these programs to implement them well when a lot of the funding is piecemeal, and you only get a certain amount at a certain time.

Particularly, I would highlight sort of helping programs that help train journalists in investigative reporting in terms of protecting themselves via physical security and cyber security efforts. And also, helping local advocates to be effective -- do effective monitoring and advocacy in their own countries.

We have found, I think, the combination of international pressure from the U.S. Government side, from international NGOs such as ourselves and the Committee to Protect Journalists, and in addition, to helping provide support to help equip local advocates is really the best way to help, for example, promote sort of legal and regulatory reform. And some of these systematic efforts, it is

good to put in place for particular countries because that is really where you build foundations.

Obviously, dealing with some of the more authoritarian and repressive governments is a whole other ball game, but I think we have seen a lot of positive developments. For example, in certain countries in Africa with regard to passing Freedom of Information legislation, with regard to decriminalizing libel. I think continued funding for programs like that is very, very important.

Mr. MAHONEY I think when it comes to the repression of press freedom and violation of human rights, silence is the enemy. And therefore, I think that the United States and the western democracies generally must speak out every time there is the death of a journalist or every time a piece of repressive legislation is proposed or pushed through.

And I think that the United States, both bilaterally and within the multi-lateral organizations of which it is a member, must have press freedom as one of its concerns. And I think that the State Department has been pushing on that front.

I would say that whilst training of journalists and improvement of professionalism of journalists is an important element, we would say that without the ability to write, it doesn't matter how well you write. So we must push for the climate of repression to be rolled back. And one area where I think the United States can be particularly effective is in online repression. We are seeing Internet censorship growing. We are seeing dual-use technologies being exported. We are seeing countries that are pushing back against the progress that journalists have been able to enjoy because the cost of reporting has come down with new technologies.

This is particularly important in a continent like Africa where companies are exporting technologies for Internet surveillance and filtering. Countries like China are doing particularly well in this regard. And U.S. allies such as Ethiopia are extremely adept at implementing these new Internet censoring and filtering technologies.

So that is an area across a whole sea -- a whole subject area the United States could push because it is the world's leading country for Internet and Internet technology.

Mr. McGOVERN: Father Moreno and Mr. Kara-Murza, a similar question to you. What could the United States do that would be the most help to improve the climate for press freedom in your home country? You know, are there things that we are doing now that are helpful that we should do more of? Are there things that we should be doing that we are not doing?

We are looking for suggestions obviously to try to go beyond this hearing and figure out ways that we could actually help try to reverse this trend.

Rev. MORENO COTO: I think anything you can do to listen to sectors with whom you have not traditionally had alliances would be good. What is being done now is not enough.

And I can say it in a more negative way. I think you need to stop -- the Government of the United States needs to stop listening as much to its allies in Honduras, because those are the very people that are the enemies of democracy right now.

I think another positive step is to support the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and our experience in the radio station that I work at, that is where we have found the most support.

Mr. McGOVERN: Just to follow up, you mentioned the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. What is your assessment -- protective orders have been given to try to protect journalists. How effective are they and how can we make them more effective? I know the Inter-American Commission ordered the government of Honduras to protect journalists in the face of the fact that many journalists are being killed. I am just trying to figure out is the government of Honduras doing what it is supposed to do?

Rev. MORENO COTO: It is protective measures are symbolic largely. Perhaps I can tell you my personal story. I had a meeting with a police official who was responsible for our geographic area. And when I told him that we had these protective measures, he responded in the following way: He said what bad things are you involved in that you have to have those kinds of measures?

So the protective measures are indeed important but they need to be accompanied with more information, more training, and mechanisms to make sure they actually function.

Mr. McGOVERN: Mr. Kara-Murza, if you could give me your kind of analysis of what how we could be of help and what we could do better. If there are things that we are doing that are helpful, I would be curious to get your guidance to this.

Mr. KARA-MURZA: First of all, I would concur that drawing attention to these issues and keeping them in the spotlight are extremely important.

Mr. McGOVERN: Is your mic on?

Mr. KARA-MURZA: I think so. I would concur that drawing attention to these issues and keeping them in the spotlight are extremely important. And, you know, we always say that bringing democracy and freedom to Russia is our own task, the task of Russian civil society. Nobody can or should do it for us from outside. But having said that the United States is a full member of the OAC, together with the Russian Federation. And as such the OAC mechanism directly provides for the fact that human rights cannot be considered an internal affair. The Russian foreign ministry likes to issue these statements about interfering in internal affairs. With the democracy document of the OAC clearly states, as you well know, that human rights and rule of law in democracy issues are not internal affairs. So you have a full right to be concerned about them as an OAC member state.

And I think as important as just drawing attention and making statements and passing resolutions is, I think you really hit the spot there with the Magnitsky Act and considered the by hysterical reactions coming from the Kremlin. And this is why a large segment of Russian civil society supports this. Because for now, that might well be the only disincentive for human rights violations and for corruption for officials in the present Russian regime. Especially important is, I believe, article 4 of this bill which widens the provisions not just to those involved in the Magnitsky case, but also other human rights violators. So I think that is very important.

So this bill serves not just a way to bring justice to Sergei's killers and those implicated in his case, but also as a preventative measure against future human rights violations. Because, you know, these people in the current Russian regime rule in the style of Zimbabwe or Belarus. They like to keep their money and assets in the west. They want to vacation in the west. They want to send their kids to schools in the west. And personal accountability may well be the only thing that will

make them think twice.

And that article 4 which, for instance, includes the freedom of expression that we were talking about, as well as democratic elections and rights of fair trial, for instance, that would include those who actively aid and abet censorship. The heads of the state-run television or other people. That is the beauty of this bill. And that is why it is most important, I think.

Mr. McGOVERN: Let me ask you, going back to your individual case. You talked about that President Putin's first step his chief of staff ordered that you no longer be allowed to work as a journalist.

Mr. KARA-MURZA: That is what we heard. Two sources have confirmed the same information.

Mr. McGOVERN: More broadly, is it known how high up in the Russian government that decisions on media censorship tend to be made? I mean, how high up does it go? All the way up? Or?

Mr. KARA-MURZA: For instance, when the Kremlin was destroying NTV, which I mentioned, everybody knew that Putin was personally involved in that. That was very much personal. Just as he was personally involved in the persecution of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Russia's most famous political prisoner. These big cases he usually gets involved himself.

But kind of the point man for controlling TV for the past decade has been a man called Vladislav Surkov who used to be the deputy chief of staff at the Kremlin. Although officially he resigned, he was dismissed or whatever, the word we choose to use at the height of the antigovernment protests in December. He was dismissed as the most odious figure, the symbol of the authoritarianism and the media censorship and the repression. He was moved to a lesser position in the Russian cabinet rather than the Kremlin.

So I don't think there is a single replacement to Mr. Surkov, who, of course, would be a prime candidate for the Magnitsky bill sanctions. As, in fact, he was discussed in this context many times. But his formal replacement is Mr. Volodin, who is now the deputy chief of staff responsible for internal politics, but it looks like this Mr. Gromov whom you mentioned, it looks like he is the one responsible for their media censorship now. He could be a candidate for that as well.

Mr. McGOVERN: Okay. Good. Well, I believe that the Magnitsky bill is going to pass the House and Senate, and I believe it will be the law in this country.

Mr. Mahoney, do you believe that the Turkish Prime Minister and other leaders have been or are likely to be responsive to domestic and international criticism regarding the repression of media freedom? I am trying to think here what means are most effective to communicate kind of the UI views on these issues? Because again, we are hearing more and more complaints about the situation in Turkey and I am trying to get your sense on that.

Mr. MAHONEY I think a clear statement from the United States would be very, very effective. I think that Turkey is a pro-western country and it cares very deeply about its image in the west because of its interests in the west. It has applied to join the European Union. It is a NATO member. And therefore, what we say to Turkey really matters. And I think that what has

happened so far is that Turkey has gotten a pass on this. It has been able to imprison journalists and repress legitimate reporting and no one has really called them out on it.

Mr. McGOVERN: This is a question for maybe one of you or all of you, I guess. Do you think that the international mainstream media is doing enough to highlight the plight of journalists who are being oppressed in different parts of the world? I mean, it seems to me that given the severity of the situation, we ought to read more about it.

I love the press. We are here in Congress. I guess -- you know, one of the ways to put pressure on countries is when you pick up the major newspapers or major international networks and you read about or you see about not just the most horrific cases, but there are a lot -- I mean, preparing for this hearing, there are lots and lots and lots of cases all over the world. And I am not quite sure how much the average person in this country quite appreciates that.

Mr. MAHONEY I have been a professional journalist all of my life, and I can tell you that my colleagues, my former colleagues and my present colleagues, are deeply concerned about this and take every opportunity that they can to write about it.

But if I could go back to a point that I made in my presentation, which is most of the journalists who are killed are local journalists working in their own country and we fall into the problem of foreign news reporting. And many outlets in the west have shrunk their international correspondents networks, closed foreign bureaus. So we as consumers of news in the west, I think, are deprived of foreign news generally, and therefore, of news about press freedom violations in foreign countries in particular.

Dr. DEUTSCH KARLEKAR: I think, as Rob said, there is a fair amount of coverage of the bigger cases. I think what is harder or harder to sell as a news story are some of these more systematic issue. Such as things like licensing and regulatory framework. They may not be as sexy or attention-grabbing, but which are very, very important mechanisms to control the press.

And I think the other thing that could be maybe done better is drawing the connection between what is happening when a journalist gets killed how that affects the society as a whole. It is not -- obviously, it is horrible for the journalist, for their family and the profession, but it can also lead to widespread self-censorship. It can lead to citizens of the country not getting news about very important social and economic issues.

So getting journalists and the media to draw those linkages and to make sure when they write stories, it is made clear this is not just an issue for the media itself, but affects everyone in the country. I think that would do a lot to sort of build public awareness of some of these issues and make people realize how important the issue is.

I know in Russia, for example, many Russian citizens don't really think press freedom is an important issue. They don't really care, you know. So I think to try and draw those linkages and make citizens more aware of how it affects them and it is not just affecting the journalistic and media profession is also very important for the media to do and for other advocates to do as well.

Mr. KARA-MURZA: I think on Russia, the world press has generally presented an adequate picture. I think that the impression that people here in the western world about the situation with media freedom in Russia, or the absence of media freedom in Russia, is pretty accurate. But I

would certainly concur that the bigger cases with the bigger names, or tragedies such as Anna Politkovskaya and others, naturally draw more attention than kind of the --

Mr. McGOVERN: I think you are right on Russia. But I don't pick up The Washington Post and read about Honduras every day or every week.

Mr. KARA-MURZA: Oh, absolutely.

Mr. McGOVERN: And so -- and again, obviously you can't cover -- everything cannot be covered in a single newspaper or on a single TV, but nonetheless, in areas where the situation seems to be kind of on a downward swing, a little added attention might actually reverse that trend.

Mr. KARA-MURZA: And more and more Russians now do care about issues of political freedom and press freedom as we have seen this trend in the past few months. It is important to keep the coverage going, and keep the issue in the spotlight.

Rev. MORENO COTO: I think the coverage does not correspond really with the seriousness of what is happening with journalists in any given situation.

I think it is also very important that journalists can reach a level of freedom and ability to organize that go beyond the interests of the owners of the media outlets. So I think the vital problem for humanity in this case is what is happening with the journalists. But in Honduras and many other places, what I think is covered in the news corresponds more to the interests of the owners than the interests of the journalists themselves, and that is what we would have to try to change.

Mr. McGOVERN: Well, I appreciate you being here and I appreciate your incredible patience, and I apologize again for the interruption of the hearing. But this is a very important issue for this Commission. And as all of you have mentioned, it is beyond just the individual journalists that we are concerned about here. That when you arrest somebody, or somebody is disappeared because of what they write, it does have a chilling impact on society, on democracy, on freedom of expression.

Nobody wants to go to jail. Nobody wants to go through what some of these journalists have gone through. And one of the things I hope that you will do, in the weeks and months ahead, if there are specific things that you think we can advocate that we are not currently advocating, I hope you will feel free to contact this Commission.

Our job is about upholding human rights. This is an important part of human rights. A free press, journalistic freedom, people being able to say what they want and write what they want.

And, you know, again, I don't always agree with everything that is written about me, but the fact of the matter is, that is what a free society is all about. And people can say whatever they want and there is nothing unpatriotic about that.

So in anybody event, I appreciate all the work that you do. I thank you for your courage and I thank you for continuing your work on these issues, and hopefully, we will be able to work together. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:01 p.m., the Commission was adjourned.]

[Written testimony of Alexander Main has been submitted for the record.]

Testimony of Alexander Main
Senior Associate for International Policy, Center for Economic and Policy Research
before the
United States Congress
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
July 25, 2012

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present written testimony to the Lantos Human Rights Commission regarding the state of media freedom in Honduras. In my work as an analyst for the Center for Economic and Policy Research, I focus on political, economic, and social developments in Latin America and on the impact of U.S. policy throughout the Western Hemisphere. For the past three years, I have devoted a great deal of my professional life to monitoring and analyzing the human rights situation in Honduras. I have traveled to Honduras to speak to survivors, witnesses, experts, officials and analysts regarding abuses against such rights, including attacks on freedom of the press.

Over the past three years, Honduras has become one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist. According to Reporters Without Borders, of the 29 journalist killings in Honduras in the past decade, 24 have occurred since the unconstitutional military coup d'état that removed democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya from office – at gunpoint – at the end of June 2009.¹⁵ Numerous experts and analysts agree: this decline in journalists' safety and freedom of the press is due in large part to a break down in law and order, and a deterioration of institutions, following the coup. The immediate post-coup period - from July to November 2009 - saw a number of brazen assaults on the media, which included the murder of a radio correspondent, raids and shutting down of radio and television stations by Honduran military and police, threats, kidnappings, and other abuses. The pattern continued up to election day, November 29, 2009, when opposition broadcasters repeatedly had their signals jammed and a TV station, Channel 10, was bombed just days before the election – incidents condemned by the Organization of American States.¹⁶ The Washington-based human rights organization Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) described "a climate of harassment, violence, and violation of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly" on election day.¹⁷

The coup government gave way to the administration of President Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo, winner of the elections managed by the coup government, but the attacks on the media did not stop. Since Lobo took office on January 27, 2010, 23 journalists have been murdered, according to international monitors.¹⁸ Others continue to receive threats. Meanwhile, the Lobo government has taken no real steps to address these abuses. To date, it has failed to prosecute a single murder of a journalist. When two men, Marco Joel Álvarez Barahona and Mario Roberto Guevara were brought to court in connection with the murder of radio journalist David Meza Montesinos, for example, they were each released after only a single hearing.¹⁹ The only journalist killing to receive significant attention from Honduran authorities in the form of notable steps to apprehend and indict alleged perpetrators appears to be that of Alfredo Villatoro, a pro-

15 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalist still fears for safety although suspect held for his attempted murder." July 20, 2012. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-radio-reporter-gunned-down-and-tv-13-07-2012,43022.html>] See Appendix.

16 Organization of American States, "Special Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression expresses its deep concern regarding the situation of freedom of expression in Honduras." Press Release, November 26, 2009. [<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/showarticle.asp?artID=774&IID=1>]

17 Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional, "CEJIL condena represión durante elecciones en Honduras." November 29, 2009. [<http://cejil.org/comunicados/cejil-condena-represion-durante-elecciones-en-honduras>]

18 See Appendix.

19 Reporters Without Borders, "Leading suspect cleared of killing journalist, "clean-up" of police announced ." November 2, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-leading-suspect-cleared-of-killing-02-11-2011,41328.html>]

government reporter for radio station HRN and reportedly close to President Lobo.²⁰

Despite the number of journalists killed and other attacks against media workers, senior government officials have downplayed the problem. Following a number of vicious attacks, murders, and kidnappings this spring, National Police spokesman Hector Iván Velásquez Mejía was asked what he would do to offer greater protection to journalists. He replied that journalists who are threatened should report the threats to the National Commissioner for Human Rights or the Office of Human Rights, and effectively blamed the victims, warning journalists to do their “job responsibly, professionally, without much emotion that threatens the rights of another person, to avoid the likely consequences of revenge.” He added that “the press is suffering the problem suffered by most sectors. There are dead journalists because there are a large number of journalists as a part of the population.”²¹

All of this has led the Committee to Protect Journalists to conclude that “The [Honduran] government's stance on media killings has worsened the situation. Authorities have minimized crimes against journalists and been slow and negligent in pursuing the culprits.”²²

Reports from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other organizations underscore that attacks on journalists in Honduras are part of a broader and even more disturbing pattern of abuse targeting vulnerable minority groups, or those who challenge Honduras’ power structure in some way, most notably women, the LGBT community, African descendants, indigenous communities, and especially those who opposed the 2009 coup.²³

Several media outlets and journalists known to have been highly critical of the 2009 coup have suffered repeated attacks. Radio Uno, described by the Committee to Protect Journalists as “a cooperative AM station known for its outspoken criticism of the 2009 coup that ousted President Manuel Zelaya and for its investigations of corruption and irregularities of the current government of President Porfirio Lobo” has “often been the target of harassment and raids by the police and army since the coup,” according to Reporters Without Borders,²⁴ has been subject to various incidents of equipment sabotage, and was temporarily forced off the air on August 30, 2010.²⁵ Radio Uno journalist Medardo Flores was murdered on September 8, 2011.

The *La Tribuna* newspaper – which has also published articles critical of the 2009 coup – has also come under attack, with a gunman firing 10 shots into its offices on December 5, 2011, injuring a security guard, and general manager Manuel Acosta Medina having been shot and wounded four times on May 23, 2011.²⁶

20 John Otis, “Amid violence, lack of unity among Honduran journalists” CPJ Blog, June 12, 2012. [<http://cpj.org/blog/2012/06/amidst-violence-lack-of-unity-among-honduran-journ.php#more>]; Reporters Without Borders, “Unprecedented wave of arrests in radio journalist’s murder.” May 29, 2012. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-unprecedented-wave-of-arrests-in-29-05-2012,42685.html>]

21 *El Tiempo*, “Practicar periodismo responsable aconseja el portavoz de Seguridad.” May 10, 2012. [<http://www.tiempo.hn/index.php/honduras/10558-practicar-periodismo-responsable-aconseja-el-portavoz-de-seguridad>]

22 Committee to Protect Journalists, “Attacks on the Press in 2011: Honduras.” February 29, 2012. [<http://cpj.org/2012/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2011-honduras.php>]

23 Amnesty International, “Annual Report 2012: Honduras.” May 24, 2012.

[<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/honduras/report-2012>]; Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2012: Honduras.” January 22, 2012. [<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/world-report-chapter-honduras>]

24 Reporters Without Borders, “Journalist who supported ousted president becomes 15th killed in 18 months.” September 10, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalist-who-supported-ousted-10-09-2011,40964.html>]

25 COFADEH, “Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras.” July 20, 2012.

26 *La Tribuna*, “SIP condena asesinato de periodista y atentado contra LA TRIBUNA.” December 6, 2011 [<http://old.latribuna.hn/2011/12/06/sip-condena-asesinato-de-periodista-y-atentado-contra-la-tribuna/>]; Committee to Protect Journalists, “One media executive killed in Honduras,

In 2011, Global Media Forum and Reporters Without Borders awarded **Karla Rivas**, news editor for the embattled Jesuit outlet Radio Progreso (which was occupied by Honduran troops the day of the coup) the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism.²⁷ Reporters Without Borders noted in December 2010 that “the [Honduran] government has never complied with an IACHR order to provide protection for the staff of *Radio Progreso* and its director, Father Ismael Moreno.”²⁸ Journalists for TV Globo have been the target of repeated attacks and threats, including Julio Ernesto Alvarado, Mario Castro Rodríguez, Ivis Alvarado, Noel Flores and Uriel Rodríguez.

The Honduran military raided the Radio Globo station on the day of the coup, June 28, 2009, assaulted several Radio Globo journalists, and temporarily closed the station for "sedition", and "spreading slander and insults against the honor of the fatherland," thereby committing the offense of “violating public order and peace of the nation.”²⁹ Radio Globo nevertheless continued to air criticism of the coup. In the years since, Radio Globo journalists such as Gilda Carolina Silvestrucci have reported receiving threats.

Channel 36, Choluteca, has been the target of repeated attacks by Honduran authorities, including a bomb attack on September 12, 2009 by a group that calls itself the “Frente Armado Nacional General Álvarez Martínez,” in reference to a deceased senior military officer linked to paramilitary activity in the 1980s. Channel 36 journalists report ongoing, regular threats. Nevertheless, no one has been punished for these incidents.³⁰

Hanging over all of these human rights violations is a cloud of impunity and corruption. Honduras’ police are largely corrupt and are themselves allegedly implicated in numerous human rights abuses, according to Honduran human rights defenders.³¹ Former Police Commissioner Maria Luisa Borjas, an outspoken critic of the police, famously announced in November 2012, “It’s scarier to meet up with five police officers on the streets than five gang members.” Alfredo Landaverde, another prominent critic of corruption and drug trafficking by the police, was assassinated on December 7, 2012. According to Marvin Ponce, vice president of the Honduran Congress, 40 percent of Honduran police are involved in organized crime.³² There have been over 10,000 complaints against the Honduran state security forces since the coup, most of them since Lobo came into office, according to both the government itself and COFADEH (the Committee of Families of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras). Impunity is “pervasive,” the United Nations found in February, 2012.³³ The Honduran judicial system is largely dysfunctional, and interlaced with what the Minister of Defense calls “narcojudges.” Former president Manuel Zelaya has said, “The police are the drug traffickers.

another wounded.” May 25, 2011. [<http://cpj.org/2011/05/one-media-executive-killed-in-honduras-another-wou.php>]

27 Reporters Without Borders, “Karla Rivas Named 2011 Winner of Peter Mackler Award.” August 22, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-karla-rivas-named-2011-winner-of-22-08-2011,40816.html>]

28 Reporters Without Borders, “Opposition media criminalized, two journalists arrested while covering eviction.” December 17, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-opposition-media-criminalized-two-17-12-2010,39073.html>]

29 COFADEH, “Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras.” July 20, 2012.

30 COFADEH, “Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras.” July 20, 2012.

31 Gustavo Veiga, “La impunidad es fuerte en Honduras.” (Interview with Bertha Oliva). Defensores en Línea, March 20, 2012.

[http://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1926:la-impunidad-es-fuerte-en-honduras&catid=37:mem-y-imp&Itemid=150]

32 Dana Frank, “Honduras: Which Side Is the US On?” *The Nation*, June 11, 2012.

[<http://www.thenation.com/article/167994/honduras-which-side-us>]

33 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Statement of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya, on the conclusion of her official visit to Honduras.” February 14, 2012.

[<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11830&LangID=E>]

If you fund the police, you fund the drug traffickers."³⁴

Writing for the Committee to Protect Journalists, John Otis reported:

The climate is so intimidating that reporters told CPJ that they don't dare probe deeply into crucial issues like drug trafficking or government corruption. Many print reporters have removed their bylines from their stories. *Tiempo*, a San Pedro Sula-based daily newspaper that consistently criticizes the government, has shut down its investigative unit due to safety concerns.³⁵

While the Honduran government has formed three successive review commissions since October to address corruption by state security forces and, most recently, the judiciary as well, none of them has produced significant results. The most recent commission still lacks an office after four months. The current chief of the National Police, Juan Carlos "El Tigre" Bonilla, appointed May 21, 2012 and charged with cleaning up the police, was recently revealed to have allegedly led police death squads between 1998 and 2002, documented by a subsequent police investigation.³⁶

The Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) has repeatedly called on the Honduran government to provide police protection to threatened journalists, issuing some 400 such orders in 2009 and 2010.³⁷ United Nations human rights experts have also urged the Honduran government to protect threatened journalists.³⁸ Despite these repeated appeals, many of the journalists the IACHR wanted placed under protection were attacked and sometimes killed.³⁹ In some cases, the threatened journalists complained about their lack of police protection.

The Honduran authorities' inability, or unwillingness, to take action to hold rights abusers accountable – including from within their own ranks – and to deter such crimes from recurring, has led many members of the U.S. Congress, prominent media outlets such as the *Los Angeles Times*, and others to suggest that continued U.S. support for the Honduran police and military should be linked to demonstrated improvements in these areas.⁴⁰

Attacks on journalists continue in both large urban areas, such as Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, and in more rural, provincial areas, such as in the Bajo Aguán valley, site of an intense land conflict between peasants and large land holders. Reporters and human rights monitors covering the violent conflict, which has resulted in some 60 killings as

34 Dana Frank, "Honduras: Which Side Is the US On? *The Nation*, June 11, 2012.

[<http://www.thenation.com/article/167994/honduras-which-side-us>]

35 John Otis, "Amid violence, lack of unity among Honduran journalists" CPJ Blog, June 12, 2012.

[<http://cpj.org/blog/2012/06/amidst-violence-lack-of-unity-among-honduran-journ.php#more>]

36 Martha Mendoza, "New Honduras top cop once investigated in killings." AP, June 2, 2012.

[<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/10267975>]; Dana Frank, "Honduras: Which Side Is the US On? *The Nation*, June 11, 2012. [<http://www.thenation.com/article/167994/honduras-which-side-us>]

37 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Nahúm Palacios Arteaga."

[<http://cpj.org/killed/2010/nahum-palacios-arteaga.php>]

38 UN News Service, *UN human rights experts urge Honduran authorities to protect journalists*, May 10, 2010, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4bf0ef9617.html> [accessed 23 July 2012]

39 See, e.g. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "IACHR DEPLORES MURDER OF JOURNALIST IN HONDURAS." March 16, 2010.

[<http://www.cidh.oas.org/Comunicados/English/2010/31-10eng.htm>]

40 CNN, "U.S. legislators threaten aid cut to Honduras over deaths." March 14, 2012.

[<http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/14/world/americas/honduras-journalist-killings/index.html>]; *Los Angeles Times*, "Holding Honduras accountable." January 2, 2012.

[<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jan/02/opinion/la-ed-honduras-20120102>]

well as numerous reported rapes, burnings of buildings, threats, and other violence, have been especially vulnerable.⁴¹ When Fausto **Elio Hernández** was killed in a vicious machete attack in March, 2012, for example, Reporters Without Borders linked the murder to the impunity in the region, the 2009 coup, and the ongoing land conflicts:

“This particularly foul murder is the latest example of the chaotic security situation in Honduras, marked by the still open wounds of the June 2009 coup, the current attempts to purge the police and the violent land disputes that affect the department of Colón in particular.”⁴²

In May 2012, Reporters Without Borders declared Miguel Facussé Barjum, head of the Dinant corporation that claims ownership of much of the disputed land, and one of Honduras’ most wealthy and powerful individuals, to be a “predator of press freedom.”⁴³ Reporters Without Borders has noted that in the Aguán Valley, “The small community radio stations that carry the local [campesino] movements’ message are the target of censorship of every kind.”⁴⁴

When a Reporters Without Borders team visited La Voz de Zacate Grande, a community station operating in the Pacific-coast Gulf of Fonseca, where Facussé is hoping to develop major tourism projects, in June 2011, it found that the station – its journalists also the subject of frequent threats and attacks - was banned from the airwaves.⁴⁵ Honduran human rights watchdog COFADEH describes the station as having “suffered harassment, persecution, illegal detention of their broadcasters, militarization, police harassment and power outages.”⁴⁶

Recommendations:

Time and again, Honduran human rights defenders have stressed to us how important it is for our government, which provides critical assistance to Honduras, to strongly and publicly express its concern regarding human rights abuses and the lack of effective response on the part of Honduran authorities. The Obama administration should systematically denounce attacks on media workers, and call on Honduran authorities to investigate and prosecute these attacks, and to enact protective measures in favor of those facing threats. Furthermore, our government should clearly and publicly acknowledge that Honduras is one of the nations where media freedom is most at risk as a result of continued killings, violent attacks and acts of intimidation on a level currently unseen in the rest of the world. Unfortunately, Obama administration statements regarding media freedom in Honduras have been rare and far too discreet. For instance, a statement from President Obama on World Press Freedom Day this year referred to alleged attacks on media workers in several countries – including two Latin American countries – but failed to make any mention of Honduras. The voice of the U.S. carries great weight in Honduras, and it is incumbent upon us to use it to raise attention regarding the grave and intolerable threats to press freedom in a country with which we have had close ties for many decades.

Our government provides critical funding and training to security forces in Honduras through direct appropriations to the Honduran government as well as indirect appropriations through mechanisms such as the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). This funding should be curtailed if attacks against journalists and other vulnerable sectors continue unabated and with impunity. It should be noted that many of those killed and facing threats and attacks have been critics of the government and of police corruption and it is therefore highly likely that government authorities are implicated in these heinous acts. The Honduran government should not be provided with a blank check to allow abuses to continue through unconditional funding of security forces. Instead, the Obama

41 Rights Action, "HONDURAS - MORE FORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN THE AGUAN." July 5, 2012 [<http://rightsaction.org/action-content/honduras-more-forced-disappearances-aguan>]

42 Reporters Without Borders, "Regional radio journalist murdered by assailant with machete." March 12, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]

43 Reporters Without Borders, "Miguel Facussé Barjum." May 2, 2012. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-miguel-facusse-barjum-02-05-2012,42452.html>]

44 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists and civil society activists caught up in new wave of threats." March 2, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]

45 Reporters Without Borders, "Community radio stations still denied access to air-waves." June 28, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-community-radio-stations-still-28-06-2011,40537.html>]

46 COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

administration should make clear that continued funding should be predicated on the Honduran government taking strong, effective measures to combat attacks against the media as well as other vulnerable sectors.

Appendix: Incidents of Assaults on the Media Since the 2009 Coup

Repression of independent journalism was important to the 2009 coup d'état's success. As the Committee to Protect Journalists described, "Honduran security forces shut down local broadcasters, blocked transmissions of international news networks, and briefly detained journalists in the aftermath of the coup."⁴⁷ Several brazen attacks on journalists and media outlets occurred simultaneous with the coup:

- Honduran authorities blocked broadcasts of international networks CNN and Telesur and raided and/or shut down many national and local television stations.⁴⁸ Telesur journalist Adriana Sivori reported that she and her colleagues were briefly detained and mistreated by Honduran soldiers.⁴⁹ Reuters reported that "the few television and radio stations still operating on Monday [June 29th] played tropical music or aired soap operas and cooking shows," and "made little reference to the demonstrations or international condemnation of the coup."⁵⁰
- The Honduran military raided the Radio Globo station on the day of the coup, and assaulted three journalists (David Romero, Rudy Diaz and Martinez Lidieth), three technicians (Orlando Villatoro, Franklin Mejía and other unknown person) and station owner Alejandro Villatoro. The military temporarily closed down the station for "sedition" and "spreading slander and insults against the honor of the fatherland," thereby committing the offense of "violating public order and peace of the nation."⁵¹
- Troops occupied the Radio Progreso station, beginning in the morning. The troops left after a large crowd surrounded the station.⁵²
- Troops shot at the Radio Juticalpa station and attempted to seize its transmitter.⁵³
- Honduran troops detained Channel 5 anchor Nahúm Palacios Arteaga and his family for several hours in June 2009. Palacios "opposed the 2009 military-backed coup that ousted President Manuel Zelaya, and he had turned the TV station into an openly opposition channel, his colleagues said," CPJ stated.⁵⁴

47 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Honduras must allow pro-Zelaya broadcasters to reopen." September 28, 2009. [<http://cpj.org/2009/09/honduras-must-allow-pro-zelaya-broadcasters-to-reo.php#more>]

48 *El Mundo*, "Ejército hondureño congela medios de comunicación." June 29, 2009. [<http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/608234.html>]

49 CNN, "Police clash with demonstrators in Honduran capital." June 29, 2009. [http://articles.cnn.com/2009-06-29/world/honduras.president.arrested_1_demonstrators-honduran-supreme-court-military-action?_s=PM:WORLD]

50 Reuters, "Honduran army smothers media after coup." June 29, 2012. [<http://mobile.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE55S5W120090629?src=RSS-TOP>]

51 COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

52 COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

53 COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

54 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Nahúm Palacios Arteaga." [<http://cpj.org/killed/2010/nahum-palacios-arteaga.php>]

- The military prevented Eduardo Maldonado, a commentator on Channel 66, from broadcasting . Maldonado, opposed to the coup, went into hiding and his show was forced to stay off the air for days.⁵⁵
- Channel 36, also opposed to the coup, was forced off the air for a week after the coup.⁵⁶

This began a pattern which continued in the months before the elections. For example:

- July 3, 2009 - Gabriel Fino Noriega, correspondent of the national radio station Radio América and reporter for Radio Estelar was shot and killed in San Juan Pueblo, in the Caribbean coast province of Atlántida.⁵⁷
- July 13, 2009 – 11 journalists for Venezuelan public television channels Venezolana de Televisión (VTV) and Telesur were detained, threatened and then forced to leave the country.⁵⁸
- August 12, 2009 - **Alfredo López**, station manager of Garifuna (Afro-Honduran) radio station Faluma Bimetu, aka Radio Coco Dulce, was arrested by the military and police due to his participation in resistance to the coup.⁵⁹
- September 28, 2009 – Honduran authorities raided and shut down Radio Globo and Canal 36 television, both known for being opposed to the coup, seizing equipment and assaulting two Guatemalan journalists covering the raids. The Honduran military and police acted under a decree suspending constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties for 45 days. The Committee to Protect Journalists noted that “Article 4 of the decree, authorizes the National Telecommunications Commission to suspend any broadcaster that “attacks peace or public order,” or that broadcasts messages that “offend the human dignity, officials, threatens the law or government resolutions.”⁶⁰

Election day, November 29, 2009, saw attacks on journalists along with attacks on demonstrator and critics of elections overseen by the unelected coup government. Violent assaults on the media continued in the weeks leading up to Lobo’s inauguration:

- December 5, 2009 - Gunmen raided the offices of opposition online newspaper *El Libertador*, whose editor, Jhony Lagos, had been repeatedly threatened since the coup.⁶¹

55 Juan Forero, "Honduran Media's Coverage of Crisis Criticized as One-Sided." Washington Post, July 9, 2009. [<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/09/AR2009070902820.html>]

56 Juan Forero, "Honduran Media's Coverage of Crisis Criticized as One-Sided." Washington Post, July 9, 2009. [<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/09/AR2009070902820.html>]

57 Reporters Without Borders, "Radio journalist killed in Caribbean coast town." July 6, 2009. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-radio-journalist-killed-in-06-07-2009,33716.html>]

58 Reporters Without Borders, "Eleven Venezuelan journalists held and forced to leave the country as the press “remains under curfew”." July 15, 2009. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-eleven-venezuelan-journalists-held-15-07-2009,33818.html>]

59 Reporters Without Borders, "In new wave of violence against media, de facto regime “reaps what it sowed”." August 17, 2009. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-in-new-wave-of-violence-against-17-08-2009,34216.html>]

60 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Honduras must allow pro-Zelaya broadcasters to reopen." September 28, 2009. [<http://cpj.org/2009/09/honduras-must-allow-pro-zelaya-broadcasters-to-reo.php#more>]

61 Reporters Without Borders, "Human rights and anti-coup activist gunned down on Tegucigalpa street." December 16, 2009. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-human-rights-and-anti-coup-16-12-2009,35351.html>]

- December 13, 2009 – Walter Tróchez, anti-coup activist, LGBT rights activist, and researcher and spokesman for the Center for Human Rights Research and Promotion (CIPRODEH) was shot to death by a passing motorist. He had previously been arrested, beaten and humiliated and then kidnapped in separate incidents following the coup.⁶²
- December 28, 2009 - César Silva, a reporter for Radio Globo and Channel 36 who had documented post-coup repression by the police and military, was kidnapped by three men armed with guns who took him to a secret detention center and interrogated him for 24 hours, before leaving him on the street.⁶³
- January 6, 2010 – Garifuna (Afro-Honduran) radio station Faluma Bimetu, aka Radio Coco Dulce, was ransacked and then destroyed in an arson attack.⁶⁴

Murders and other attacks on journalists have continued throughout the Lobo administration:

- March 1, 2010 - Journalist and host for Channel 51, Joseph Hernández Ochoa, and colleague Karol Cabrera were shot several times. Hernández died on the scene; Carbrera was injured but survived.⁶⁵
- March 11, 2010 – Radio journalist David Meza Montesinos was gunned down in La Ceiba after receiving threats connected to his coverage of drug-trafficking on Honduras’ Atlantic coast.⁶⁶
- March 13, 2010 - Franklin Meléndez, director of the Voz de Zacate Grande community radio station in southern Valle province, was shot and injured by assailants who complained about his coverage of local land disputes. Meléndez reported that station staff received death threats at the station in the days following the shooting.⁶⁷
- March 14, 2010 - Nahúm Palacios Arteaga, anchor for Channel 5 in the Aguán and well-known as an anti-coup journalist, was shot and killed along with his girlfriend, Dr. Yorlenny Sánchez (she died from her injuries two weeks later). Honduran troops came to the station on the day of the coup, and threatened Palacios and detained him along with three other Channel 5 employees.⁶⁸ Following this and other incidents, the IACHR had ordered Honduran authorities to provide him protection.⁶⁹
- March 26, 2010 – Local journalists **Bayardo Mairena** of Canal 4 TV, and **Manuel Juárez**, of Radio Excélsior, were ambushed and shot to death by gunmen in Olancho, eastern Honduras.⁷⁰ In a separate incident the same day in the

62 Reporters Without Borders, "Human rights and anti-coup activist gunned down on Tegucigalpa street." December 16, 2009. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-human-rights-and-anti-coup-16-12-2009,35351.html>]

63 COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

64 Reporters Without Borders, "Arson attack on community radio previously targeted by coup supporters." January 7, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-arson-attack-on-community-radio-07-01-2010,35968.html>]

65 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Joseph Hernández Ochoa." [<http://cpj.org/killed/2010/joseph-hernandez-ochoa.php>]

66 Reporters Without Borders, "Leading suspect cleared of killing journalist, "clean-up" of police announced ." November 2, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-leading-suspect-cleared-of-killing-02-11-2011,41328.html>]

67 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Honduran community radio director shot; staff threatened." March 14, 2011. [<http://cpj.org/2011/03/honduran-community-radio-director-shot-staff-threa.php>]

68 COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

69 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Nahúm Palacios Arteaga." [<http://cpj.org/killed/2010/nahum-palacios-arteaga.php>]

70 Reporters Without Borders, "Rule of law and civil liberties founder in year since coup." June 28, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-rule-of-law-and-civil-liberties-28-06-2010,37820.html>]

western town of San Marcos de Ocotepeque, gunmen fired on the house of José Alemán, correspondent for Radio América and the *Diario Tiempo* newspaper and then pursued him in the streets. Alemán fled the country after police told him they would not be able to protect him.⁷¹

- April 11, 2010 - Radio W105 presenter **Luis Antonio Chévez Hernández** was shot dead in San Pedro Sula.⁷²
- April 20, 2010 - **Honduran television anchor for Televisión de Honduras, Jorge Alberto Orellana was shot to death by an unidentified gunman in San Pedro Sula as he was leaving the station.**⁷³
- June 3, 2010 – On order of the Court of Amapala, department of Valle, at the request of the Attorney General of the Republic, some 300 soldiers and police raided and shut down La Voz de Zacate Grande 97.1 FM, a community radio station in the southern peninsula of Zacate Grande.⁷⁴
- June 14, 2010 - **Luis Arturo Mondragón Morazán**, head of the Canal 19 TV station and producer of its “Teleprensa” TV news program was shot to death in the southern town of El Paraíso.⁷⁵
- August 24, 2010 – The body of **Israel Zelaya Díaz**, Radio Internacional presenter and former *La Tribuna* reporter, based in San Pedro Sula, was found on the roadside, shot three times in the head.⁷⁶
- September 16, 2010 – Honduran troops and police raided Radio Uno, beating and tear-gassing journalists inside.⁷⁷
- December 15, 2010 - **Elba Yolibeth Rubio** and **Elia Xiomara Hernández**, two reporters for community radio La Voz de Zacate Grande, were arrested, despite identifying themselves as reporters, while covering a family’s eviction from land on the southern island of Zacate Grande by police and marines.⁷⁸
- December 28, 2010 - Henry Suazo, reporter for Tegucigalpa-based radio HRN in La Ceiba and local TV station Cablevisión del Atlántico, in the north coast department of Atlántida, was shot to death.⁷⁹

71 Reporters Without Borders, "Sixth journalist killed since start of year, robbery ruled out." April 13, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-month-of-violence-turns-honduras-02-04-2010,36850.html>]

72 Reporters Without Borders, "Sixth journalist killed since start of year, robbery ruled out." April 13, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-month-of-violence-turns-honduras-02-04-2010,36850.html>]

73 Committee to Protect Journalists, "TV host slain; 6th Honduran journalist killed since March." April 21, 2010.

[<http://cpj.org/2010/04/tv-host-murdered-6th-honduran-journalist-killed-si.php>]

74 Reporters Without Borders, "300 soldiers and police storm community radio in continuing coup against media." June 4, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-300-soldiers-and-police-storm-04-06-2010,37673.html>]; COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

75 Reporters Without Borders, "Another journalist gunned down, eighth since start of 2010." June 16, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-another-journalist-gunned-down-16-06-2010,37748.html>]

76 Reporters Without Borders, "Another journalist killed, ninth this year, motive not yet known." August 25, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-another-journalist-killed-ninth-25-08-2010,38201.html>]

77 COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

78 Reporters Without Borders, "Opposition media criminalized, two journalists arrested while covering eviction." December 17, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-opposition-media-criminalized-two-17-12-2010,39073.html>]

79 Reporters Without Borders, "Another journalist gunned down, tenth this year, motive not yet known." December 29, 2010. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-another-journalist-gunned-down-29-12-2010,39182.html>]

- January 5, 2011 - **Esdras López**, of Canal 36-Cholusat, a TV station critical of the coup, was reportedly threatened by an army lieutenant-colonel "Méndez," who also photographed him.⁸⁰
- January 26, 2011 - Radio Coco Dulce, Garifuna (Afro-Honduran) community radio station in Triunfo de la Cruz, in the Atlantic coast municipality of Tela, resumed broadcasting after being forced off the air for 12 days by threats from local authorities and security forces.⁸¹
- March 13, 2011 - Franklin Meléndez, head of community radio station La Voz de Zacate Grande, was shot and wounded by a man who identified himself as an ally of businessman Miguel Facussé Barjum.⁸²
- March 28, 2011 - Miriam Miranda, president of the Fraternal Black Organization of Honduras, which created Radio Faluma Bimetu (Coco Dulce), was beaten by police and soldiers, arrested, held for 12 hours and charged with sedition.⁸³
- March 31, 2011 - Radio Progreso journalist **Pedro López** was arrested and held for four hours while covering a protest against privatization of the education sector, fuel price increases and poor work conditions in garment factories.⁸⁴
- April 7, 2011 – The home of Alfredo López, the head of Garifuna (Afro-Honduran) community radio station Radio Faluma Bimetu (Radio Coco Dulce), was torched in an arson attack.⁸⁵
- April 16, 2011 - **Pedro Canales**, journalist with La Voz de Zacate Grande, discovered that his car had been sabotaged, and reported death threats and physical and judicial harassment afterwards.⁸⁶
- April 27, 2011 - Radio Uno Director Arnulfo Aguilar reported that a group of men armed with rifles and wearing ski masks stormed his house in San Pedro Sula as he was returning from work. He was able to scare the men off, but reported that police did not arrive until an hour after he phoned them, and that he generally was not provided the police protection the Honduran government is required to provide by order of the IACHR.⁸⁷

80 Reporters Without Borders, "Minister insists no journalist was murdered in connection with their work." January 6, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-minister-insists-no-journalist-was-06-01-2011,39230.html>]

81 Reporters Without Borders, "Resolution could threaten minority radio access to broadcast frequencies." February 3, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-afro-honduran-community-radio-01-02-2011,39450.html>]; Reporters Without Borders, "Restrictions imposed in absence of any guilty finding ." January 20, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-torched-radio-station-forced-off-18-01-2011,39344.html>]

82 Reporters Without Borders, "More attacks on opposition media in San Pedro Sula." May 9, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-another-attempted-attack-on-29-04-2011,40184.html>]

83 Reporters Without Borders, "Joint appeal for end to persecution of community and opposition media." April 1, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-joint-appeal-for-end-to-01-04-2011,39931.html>]

84 Reporters Without Borders, "Joint appeal for end to persecution of community and opposition media." April 1, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-joint-appeal-for-end-to-01-04-2011,39931.html>]

85 Reporters Without Borders, "More attacks on opposition media in San Pedro Sula." May 9, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-another-attempted-attack-on-29-04-2011,40184.html>]

86 Reporters Without Borders, "More attacks on opposition media in San Pedro Sula." May 9, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-another-attempted-attack-on-29-04-2011,40184.html>]

87 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Honduran radio director ambushed by gunmen." April 29, 2011. [Honduran radio director ambushed by gunmen]; COFADEH, "Casos de periodistas bajo amenaza en Honduras." July 20, 2012.

- May 5, 2011 - **Noel Flores** and **Uriel Rodríguez** of Globo TV and **Silvia Ardón** of Radio Uno reportedly were harassed by police when they tried to find out what had happened to detained protesters.⁸⁸
- May 6, 2011 - Globo TV cameraman **Uriel Rodríguez** sustained head and chest injuries at the hands of the police during student protests and his camera was destroyed. Police later attempted to arrest him at the hospital.⁸⁹
- May 11, 2011 - Héctor Francisco Medina Polanco, producer and host of the TV9 news program for local cable company Omega Visión was shot and killed on May 11 in the northern province of Yoro by unknown assailants who followed him on a motorbike. Medina Polanco had reportedly covered corruption in the local mayor's office, and regional land disputes, and his brother claimed that Polanco had received prior threats.⁹⁰
- May 20, 2011 – Three men armed with AK-47s shot and killed Luis Ernesto Mendoza Cerrato, owner of the Channel 24 television station.⁹¹
- May 23, 2011 - Gunmen shot and wounded Manuel Acosta Medina, general manager of Honduran newspaper *La Tribuna*. The gunmen fired 30 bullets into Acosta's car, hitting Acosta four times.⁹²
- July 4, 2011 - **Adan Benítez**, reporter for local TV stations 45TV and Teleceiba Canal 7 in the northern port city of La Ceiba, was shot in the head and killed by unknown assailants.⁹³
- July 14, 2011 - **Nery Jeremías Orellana**, manager of *Radio Joconguera* in Candelaria, in the western department of Lempira, which works with civil society organizations and covers human rights issues, and also correspondent for Radio Progreso, was shot and killed.⁹⁴
- In September 2011, Mario Castro Rodríguez, producer of "El Látigo contra la Corrupción" (Lashing Corruption) for Globo TV and supporter of the Broad Resistance Front, reported receiving some 100 death threats in two weeks.⁹⁵

88 Reporters Without Borders, "More attacks on opposition media in San Pedro Sula." May 9, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-another-attempted-attack-on-29-04-2011,40184.html>]

89 Reporters Without Borders, "More attacks on opposition media in San Pedro Sula." May 9, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-another-attempted-attack-on-29-04-2011,40184.html>]

90 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Provincial TV news host gunned down in Honduras." May 11, 2011. [<http://cpj.org/2011/05/provincial-tv-new-host-gunned-down-in-honduras.php>]; Reporters Without Borders, "Local TV journalist gunned down in north, motive almost certainly linked to work." May 12, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-local-tv-journalist-gunned-down-in-12-05-2011,40271.html>]

91 Committee to Protect Journalists, "One media executive killed in Honduras, another wounded." May 25, 2011. [<http://cpj.org/2011/05/one-media-executive-killed-in-honduras-another-wou.php>]

92 Committee to Protect Journalists, "One media executive killed in Honduras, another wounded." May 25, 2011. [<http://cpj.org/2011/05/one-media-executive-killed-in-honduras-another-wou.php>]

93 Reporters Without Borders, "La Ceiba TV reporter is second journalist murdered in Honduras in two months." July 7, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-la-ceiba-tv-reporter-is-second-07-07-2011,40617.html>]

94 Reporters Without Borders, "Young radio station manager gunned down on eve of community radio station meeting." July 15, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-young-radio-station-manager-gunned-15-07-2011,40642.html>]

95 Reporters Without Borders, "One opposition journalist threatened, another pursued by coup general." September 26, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-one-opposition-journalist-26-09-2011,41054.html>]

- September 8, 2011 - **Medardo Flores**, a Radio Uno journalist in San Pedro Sula, who supported former President Manuel Zelaya, was shot and killed.⁹⁶
- September 22, 2011 - Edgardo Escoto, of Canal 13 TV's program "Themes and Debates" was stopped by two men on motorbikes, armed with guns, who took his laptop computer. Escoto said the computer contained "confidential information about the coup that had been passed to me and other journalists several months ago..."⁹⁷
- In November 2011, **Arnulfo Aguilar**, the head of Radio Uno in San Pedro Sula, and **Luis Galdamez**, program director at Tegucigalpa-based Radio Globo, both reported receiving threats and requested protection from the Honduran authorities.⁹⁸
- November 9, 2011 - Gabriel Álvarez Padget, son of Televisión journalist **Renato Álvarez**, was threatened by individuals who put a gun to his head when he was leaving home.⁹⁹
- November 20, 2011 - Unidentified assailants in a car followed a reporter for newspaper *La Tribuna* and fired at him. The attack followed *La Tribuna*'s publication of reports in October linking local police to the murders of two university students, one of them the son of Julieta Castellanos, the rector of the National Autonomous University of Honduras.¹⁰⁰
- December 5, 2011 – Gunmen fired on *La Tribuna*'s offices, hitting security guard José Manuel Izaguirre three times.¹⁰¹
- December 6, 2011 - Luz Marina Paz Villalobos, host of the morning news program "3 en la noticia" on the Honduran News Network radio station and formerly a Radio Globo journalist, was shot and killed, along with her driver, Delmer Osmar Canales Gutiérrez.¹⁰²
- December 13, 2011 - Journalists themselves took to the streets to protest the ongoing attacks and impunity. The "Journalism for life and free expression" demonstration against impunity was violently dispersed with tear gas and

96 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalist who supported ousted president becomes 15th killed in 18 months." September 10, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalist-who-supported-ousted-10-09-2011,40964.html>]

97 Reporters Without Borders, "One opposition journalist threatened, another pursued by coup general." September 26, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-one-opposition-journalist-26-09-2011,41054.html>]

98 Reporters Without Borders, "No real protection for opposition journalists from threats blamed on military." November 15, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-no-real-protection-for-opposition-15-11-2011,41392.html>]

99 Reporters Without Borders, "No real protection for opposition journalists from threats blamed on military." November 15, 2011. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-no-real-protection-for-opposition-15-11-2011,41392.html>]

100 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Honduran daily attacked by gunmen." December 5, 2011. [<http://cpj.org/2011/12/honduran-daily-attacked-by-gunmen.php>]

101 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Honduran daily attacked by gunmen." December 5, 2011. [<http://cpj.org/2011/12/honduran-daily-attacked-by-gunmen.php>]

102 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Radio journalist gunned down in Honduras." December 7, 2011. [<http://cpj.org/2011/12/radio-journalist-gunned-down-in-honduras.php>]; Reporters Without Borders, "Journalist killed, paper attacked as violence against media grows" December 8, 2011 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalist-killed-paper-attacked-08-12-2011,41532.html>]; ACAN-EFE, "Periodistas de Honduras condenan asesinato de colega Luz Marina Paz." December 6, 2011 [<http://old.latribuna.hn/2011/12/06/periodistas-de-honduras-condenan-asesinato-de-colega-luz-marina-paz/>]

batons by the army and the presidential guard outside the presidential palace.¹⁰³ In the weeks following the demonstration, collective members **Gilda Silvestrucci** and **Itsmania Pineda Platero** reported receiving death threats.¹⁰⁴

- January 6, 2012 - Independent journalist and head of the Xibalba human rights organization, **Itsmania Pineda Platero** reported receiving multiple death threats on her phone January 6, 8 and 9. Pineda walked at the head of the “Journalism for life and free expression” march on December 13.¹⁰⁵
- February 19, 2012 – Some 20 journalists in six vehicles present at the International Gathering for Human Rights in Honduras in Tocoa were intercepted by troops when they tried to determine the reason why the occupants of one of the other cars, being driven by a local peasant leader, had been detained. One of the journalists, **Giorgio Trucchi**, of Rel-UITA, said soldiers waved weapons in their direction.¹⁰⁶
- February 22, 2012 – In the aftermath of the fire at Comayagua prison, which killed 361 people, journalists **Luis Rodríguez** and **Javier Villalobos** of local cable television station Catedral TV, who were investigating questions relating to prison authorities and guards’ behavior related to the fire, received a threatening message: “Stop talking about the fire or we will set fire to you!” Station owner Juan Ramón Flores, and Ramón Cabrera, manager of Digicable, the cable contractor for Catedral TV, reportedly received similar threats. In a separate, unrelated case, Canal local 32 program director and C-Libre vice-president **Danilo Osmaro Castellanos** reported receiving death threats against him and his family.¹⁰⁷
- February 29, 2012 - Journalism student **Saira Fabiola Almdares Borjas** was found dead in Choloma. She had worked on programs on Canal 30 TV and Radio Cadena Voces. In an unrelated incident, San Pedro Sula-based Radio Libertad journalist **Mavis Cruz** reported that she and her family received death threats.¹⁰⁸
- Also in February, **Ivis Alvarado**, program director of Globo TV and Radio Globo, targeted several times since the 2009 coup, reported the targeted theft of two computers from his home and that his car had been broken into.¹⁰⁹

103 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists and civil society activists caught up in new wave of threats." March 2, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]; Reporters Without Borders, "'Journalism for life' demonstrator receives four death threats in three days" January 10, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-soldiers-use-clubs-to-disperse-14-12-2011,41548.html>]

104 Reporters Without Borders, "Women journalists terrorized, peasant spokesman gunned down in Aguán." January 24, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-women-journalists-terrorized-24-01-2012,41761.html>]

105 Reporters Without Borders, "'Journalism for life' demonstrator receives four death threats in three days" January 10, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-soldiers-use-clubs-to-disperse-14-12-2011,41548.html>]

106 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists and civil society activists caught up in new wave of threats." March 2, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]

107 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists and civil society activists caught up in new wave of threats." March 2, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]

108 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists and civil society activists caught up in new wave of threats." March 2, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]

109 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists and civil society activists caught up in new wave of threats." March 2, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]

- On March 2, 2012, Reporters Without Borders wrote that “Not a day has passed since the start of the year in Honduras without a journalist, local media owner or social commentator receiving a phone call to say his or her life is in danger.”¹¹⁰
- March 11, 2012 - **Fausto Elio Hernández**, presenter of news program “La Voz de la Noticia” on Radio Alegre de Colón, was hacked to death by a man armed with a machete in Sabá, Colón department.¹¹¹
- April 14, 2012 - Journalist for the Defensores en Línea website and human rights activist **Dina Meza reported receiving new threatening calls on her mobile phone.**¹¹²
- **April 23, 2012** - TV presenter Noel Valladares, host of “El show del Tecolote” on Canal 66 Maya TV, was gunned down in Tegucigalpa.¹¹³
- In April 2012, several journalists in the San Pedro Sula area came under attack. Canal 6 TV reporter **Elder Joel Aguilar** survived a submachine-gun attack by two men on the road between La Entrada, in Copán department, and San Pedro Sula. On April 26, 2012 - Canal 6 journalist **Santiago Cerna** received death threats on his mobile telephone, and the same day gunmen shot up the Omoa, Cortés department home of **Selvín Martínez**, correspondent for the station JBN Televisión.¹¹⁴
- May 5, 2012 – Journalist, anti-coup activist, LIBRE opposition party member and spokesman for Kukulcán, an organization that defends LGBT rights, Erick Martinez ‘s body was found dead, apparently from strangulation, in Guasculile, north of Tegucigalpa.¹¹⁵
- May 15, 2012 - Radio journalist Alfredo Villatoro of HRN, who had been kidnapped on his way to work, was found dead.¹¹⁶
- July 8, 2012 - Adonis Felipe Bueso Gutiérrez, a reporter for Christian radio station Radio Stereo Naranja, was shot dead with two of his cousins in Villanueva in the northern Cortés department.¹¹⁷

110 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists and civil society activists caught up in new wave of threats." March 2, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]

111 Reporters Without Borders, "Regional radio journalist murdered by assailant with machete." March 12, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalists-and-civil-society-02-03-2012,41987.html>]

112 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalist and human rights activist Dina Meza threatened again." April 27, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalist-and-human-rights-27-04-2012,42392.html>]

113 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalist and human rights activist Dina Meza threatened again." April 27, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalist-and-human-rights-27-04-2012,42392.html>]

114 Reporters Without Borders, "Attacks and threats aimed at provincial media reach alarming level." May 4, 2012 [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-attacks-and-threats-aimed-at-04-05-2012,42565.html>]

115 BBC, "Missing Honduran journalist Erick Martinez found dead." May 8, 2012. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-17990638>]

116 Reporters Without Borders, "Kidnapped radio journalist Alfredo Villatoro found shot dead." May 16, 2012. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-journalist-and-rights-activist-09-05-2012,42590.html>]

117 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalist still fears for safety although suspect held for his attempted murder." July 20, 2012. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-radio-reporter-gunned-down-and-tv-13-07-2012,43022.html>]

- July 12, 2012 – JBN TV station reporter **Selvín Martínez** was shot at for the second time in less than two months, also in the Cortés department.¹¹⁸

118 Reporters Without Borders, "Journalist still fears for safety although suspect held for his attempted murder." July 20, 2012. [<http://en.rsf.org/honduras-radio-reporter-gunned-down-and-tv-13-07-2012,43022.html>]



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC) Hearing

Worldwide Threats to Media Freedom

Wednesday, July 25, 2012

1:00 PM– 3:00 PM

2226 Rayburn HOB

Please join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for a hearing on threats to media freedom around the world.

The free press plays a vital role in advancing democratic governance and promoting respect for human rights. However, in many countries journalists and media outlets are forced to work in a climate of fear and censorship. Repressive governments impose severe legal restrictions and exert economic pressure on media outlets that do not support the government position. Journalists who criticize authorities or expose crime, corruption, or human rights abuses risk harassment, intimidation, unlawful detention and even death.

In addition to assessing these issues from a global perspective, this hearing will examine restrictions on freedom of expression and violence against journalists in Honduras, Russia and Turkey.

The following witnesses will testify:

Panel I

- Michael H. Posner, Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State

Panel II

- Robert Mahoney, Deputy Director, Committee to Protect Journalists
- Karin Deutsch Karlekar, Project Director of “Freedom of the Press,” Freedom House
- Rev. Ismael Moreno Coto, Director of Radio Progreso, Honduras
- Vladimir Kara-Murza, Washington bureau chief, Russian Television International (RTVi)

If you have any questions, please contact the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission at 202-225-3599 or tlhrc@mail.house.gov.

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, TLHRC

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, TLHRC