

## **Police uprising against President Correa leads to censorship and violence against media**

Justice must be rendered to the journalists working for national and international media who were the collateral victims of yesterday's police mutiny in Ecuador. In the course of a 12-hour crisis that nearly became a coup against President Rafael Correa, media freedom was repeatedly violated and journalists were attacked by policemen protesting against the elimination of their bonuses.

The Ecuadorean press freedom organisation Fundamedios had registered around 20 acts of repression against the media by 9:30 p.m. yesterday, when soldiers rescued President Correa from the hospital where he was being held by the protesting police officers. In almost all of these cases, policemen tried to prevent news photographers and cameramen from covering the day's events by smashing their equipment.

Most of the violence took place in the capital, Quito, and peaked when the mutineers overran the National Assembly at midday. Other cases of violence were reported in Ambato, Santo Domingo de Los Tsáchilas, Manta and Portoviejo.

Both state and privately-owned media were affected. Among the state-owned media, crews working for Ecuador TV and Radio Pública were particularly targeted by the rebels. Radio reporter **Ramón Bravo** had to be rushed to hospital after being overcome by tear gas. Among the privately-owned media, journalists working for two TV stations – Ecuavisa and Teleamazonas – and the daily El Comercio suffered most. In Ambato, a thrown bottle injured Teleamazonas reporter **Edith Jácome**'s ear.

The international media were also targeted. Representatives of the pan-Latin American satellite TV station Telesur were detained for several hours by mutineers, while Agence France-Presse reported that two of its photographers were physically attacked and had their cameras smashed outside the hospital where the president were being held. Many journalists including the Reporters Without Borders correspondent were denied entry to the hospital.

After a group of police officers overran the headquarters of state-owned Ecuador TV at around 7 p.m., its broadcasts were interrupted until transmission of its signal was resumed by Gama TV, a privately-owned station that is under provisional state control. The staff of the privately-owned TV station Ecuavisa reported that their station was the target of a sabotage attempt.

Reporters Without Borders joins other NGOs including the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) in expressing unreserved condemnation of this attempt to overthrow the democratically-elected authorities, just as we did after the coup d'état in Honduras on 28 June 2009. The defence of press freedom requires respect for the rule of law.

There was a significant difference between yesterday's events in Ecuador and the Honduran coup, in addition to the fact that the latter succeeded. Certain media actively supported the coup in Honduras but that was not the case yesterday in Ecuador.

Reporters Without Borders therefore regrets that, as the situation was in the process of being resolved yesterday, the authorities ordered all of the broadcast media to carry the signal being transmitted by state-owned Ecuador TV. That was a violation of media diversity and free expression.

**Fonte: Reporters Without Borders, 1 October 2010. [Portal]. Disponível em: <<http://en.rsf.org>>. Acesso em: 4 out. 2010.**