

“Media Outlets in Nicaragua Must be Returned,” says Rapporteur’s Office

Havana Times, June 29, 2019

Office of the Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression is “worried” about the persistence of confiscated newsrooms



The building of 100% Noticias remains closed and occupied by the Ortega Police.
Photo: EFE / Confidencial

Edison Lanza also urges the regime to hand over to the national newspapers the paper and ink retained by Customs.

Por Wilfredo Miranda Aburto ([Confidencial](#))

HAVANA TIMES – After the release of journalists Miguel Mora and Lucia Pineda Ubau, the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American system continues “worried” by the fact that the dictatorship of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo has not yet returned the newsrooms confiscated from “100% Noticias” and “Confidencial.”

“The Rapporteur expressed great concern about the occupied media. Returning these is a prerequisite for any democratic transition,” recommended the rapporteur

Edison Lanza. “First, the media outlets should be compensated because of an arbitrary usurpation, and second, be returned to the people who use those media to exercise freedom of the press and expression.”

The total amount of confiscated property has not been quantified and there is no established mechanism for the return of these.

Rapporteur Lanza participated in the official and parallel events of the General Assembly of the OAS, held June 26-28 in Medellin, Colombia. Lanza met with journalist Lucia Pineda Ubau, released by the regime, but whose judicial process remains open.



Edison Lanzas

Lucia Pineda y

Lanza said that in addition to the return of confiscated newsrooms and equipment, the Ortega government must deliver the paper and ink belonging to the national newspapers held up in customs.

“In our reports, we make a permanent call to restore guarantees of freedom of speech and the press, and not to exercise indirect measures to censor. When a newspaper has no paper, the sustainability of the newspaper itself is affected,” Lanza criticizes.

The rapporteur said that the media outlets should also consider “guarantees of non-repetition.” “That they will not suffer this type of brutal censorship again, like being stripped of their assets and forced to go into exile,” Lanza said.

Currently, more than 60 independent journalists have gone into exile. The main destinations have been Costa Rica, United States, Spain and Mexico.

A clear diagnosis

Lanza said that one year after the arrival of the rapporteur's office to Nicaragua together with the Special Follow-up Mechanism for Nicaragua (MESENI), they have managed to consolidate a clear diagnosis of the situation of freedom of expression and press, especially the criminalization of journalism.

"It is a stifling climate and there is an absolute control of the media. It government is hard on critical media and the situation is maintained," Lanza describes. "What the rapporteur's office has denounced has not changed. Not only for the media and journalists who cannot operate in Nicaragua and are in exile, but for the dozens of media outlets controlled by the government, by friendly businessmen and a partisan regulatory entity."

Lanza refers to the Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Postal Services (TELCOR), whose director is Orlando Castillo, was recently sanctioned by the United States and Canada. Castillo is accused of executing the censorship to "100% Noticias" during the first days of the April Rebellion, and in December of pressuring Channel 12 to take the programs "Esta Semana" (This Week) and "Esta Noche" (Tonight) off the air, both produced by the journalist Carlos Fernando Chamorro.

"The regulatory entity is an element to take into consideration in this transition. [Nicaragua needs] an independent entity so that a media outlet can operate without being afraid that its license will be revoked or it will be taken off the air," the rapporteur affirmed.