



Paraguay UPR Pre session

Presentation by Santiago Ortiz, Sindicato de Periodistas del Paraguay (SPP)

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Greetings, my name is Santiago Ortiz. I am the deputy secretary general of the *Sindicato de Periodistas del Paraguay* (Paraguayan Journalists Union, SPP). In this UPR cycle we want to present a series of recommendations to the state of Paraguay in order to guarantee that democracy and human rights, especially freedom of the press and freedom of expression, are given full force in our country.

Censorship continues to be an obstacle for freedom of the press in Paraguay. Many journalists and colleagues have had to omit information, or soften or exaggerate the tone of a story, in accordance with the editorial stance of their media outlet, for fear of losing their jobs. For us, this is a very serious restriction on freedom of the press.

In that sense, we want to promote the following recommendation: that guarantees be provided for prevention and protection against censorship and all other limitations or infringements on freedom of expression and press freedom, in accordance with provisions established by international human rights standards.

Another significant problem we have had in recent years has been the illegal and arbitrary mass layoffs of journalists and press workers by media owners. They (journalists and press workers) have also seen their union activity limited, since many who engaged in such activities have been persecuted for this reason without being given the necessary protection from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

Given this situation, we propose the following recommendation to the state of Paraguay: The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security must ensure compliance with the rights of press workers, in accordance with constitutional and other legal provisions, including freedom of association and labour union rights. Additionally, the situation involving workplace harassment, violence and discrimination against women journalists must specifically be addressed, with the implementation of effective measures in accordance with international standards.

Finally, it should be noted that the concentration of the media and the persecution of community media is also an ongoing trend by the Paraguayan government and state. At least 36 mass media outlets are in the hands of just four players, of which three are entrepreneurs with businesses in different sectors, and one a former president of the country. This situation prevents many sectors of society from accessing the press, therefore silencing or distorting their voices.

At the same time, discrimination against community media has meant that many of these media actors cannot obtain licenses, cannot go on the air, and cannot broadcast. As a consequence, many communities themselves have also been silenced. We propose a recommendation that the Paraguayan State amend the Telecommunications Law, guaranteeing participation by the sectors and players involved in community broadcasting, with the objective of ensuring that the modifications provide assurances for the survival of community radio stations. In addition, adequate measures must be implemented to avoid excessive media concentration and ensure media diversity.

We are very grateful for this space and are confident that freedom of the press and expression will be reinforced with the support of all the stakeholders that accompany us today, making it possible to strengthen our democracy in Paraguay.