

UN Watch

**Agenda Item 6, UPR on Ecuador
Human Rights Council, 21st Session
UN Watch Statement delivered by Mr. Norbert Pal**

Thank you, Madam President.

Ecuador made world news when its London embassy gave asylum to the founder of Wikileaks. Today we ask: Was this act consistent with Ecuador's own record on freedom of expression and freedom of the press?

We note that only days before, riot police in Ecuador raided the offices of Vanguardia, one of the country's leading magazines. They confiscated journalists' computers and prevented its publication for a week.

This was the second time in less than two years that Vanguardia was raided. Its journalists received death threats after being denounced by President Correa during his weekly TV show. The president sued the newspaper for 10 million dollars after it alleged corruption by his brother.

According to Fundamedios, a domestic watchdog group, Ecuador has been waging a low-intensity war against its own journalists. More than 17 radio stations have been shut down this year. In 2011, there were 151 cases of physical aggression against reporters. Constant abuse is directed at journalists by the president during his weekly TV broadcast, which is carried by almost every channel.

And according to a joint NGO submission in this UPR, sweeping changes in laws, government policies, and new regulations have turned Ecuador into one of the region's most restrictive countries for the press. The Government's alarming record of official censorship and anti-press harassment includes the use of criminal and civil defamation suits to silence critics; and a growing state media operation that broadcasts government opinions and discredits critics.

Madam President, we ask: If Mr. Assange were a journalist in Ecuador, would he not be silenced and harassed like all the others?

Thank you, Madam President.