

8-28-1991

Guatemala: Journalists Protest Harassment & Death Threats

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Guatemala: Journalists Protest Harassment & Death Threats." (1991). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/5983>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Guatemala: Journalists Protest Harassment & Death Threats

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, August 28, 1991

Aug. 11-17: Journalists from daily newspapers Prensa Libre, El Grafico and La Hora and five local radio stations reported that they were warned against covering stories related to the murders of US citizen Michael Devine and Guatemalan anthropologist Myrna Mack, the attack against journalist Byron Barrera, and pending extradition cases. Aug. 19: Police deactivated a bomb on the ninth floor of a Guatemala City office building which houses the offices of Notimex, Reuters, Deutsche Press Agentur, Inter Press Service, Spanish news service EFE, the Guatemalan magazine Critica, and the international press club. Aug. 22: Mutual Support Group (GAM) activists occupied the national congress building to pressure legislators into appointing a committee to investigate the disappeared. Congress president Catalina Soberanis accused journalists covering the occupation of instigating the event. ACAN-EFE reported that several persons, believed to be military intelligence agents (G-2), were observed video-taping and photographing journalists covering the incident. Aug. 24: Two armed men conducted an illegal search of Notimex offices, and threatened correspondents Miguel Angel Lopez and Maricel Dieguez. Notimex is the Mexican government's international news service. Aug. 25: Dieguez and Lopez left the country and returned to Mexico. The Guatemalan Journalists Association (APG) condemned threats against "the right to inform and be informed [and] freedom of expression." Aug. 26: Pablo Hiriart, regional Notimex director for Central America, asserted that the Guatemala office had not been closed down. He said the two correspondents had been recalled to Mexico to report to the agency on the incident. The office, he added, will be reopened in the near future. Reuters temporarily closed its office after correspondent Juan Gaudenzi received anonymous death threats. Gaudenzi said conditions for journalists in Guatemala were becoming very precarious. In a letter to President Jorge Serrano, the Costa Rica-based Foreign Journalists Association (APEX) condemned intimidation of the press, and called for an exhaustive investigation of the illegal search of Notimex offices. In an interview with ACAN-EFE, APG president Tomas Cacella said, "It is a shame we are returning to the practices of the past, when...journalism was one of the most dangerous professions." Archbishop of Guatemala Prospero Penados del Barrio called on President Serrano to guarantee the safety and work of journalists. He said, "It is not possible that the ghosts of the past will return to our country." Aug. 27: In a communique, Reuters correspondent Juan Gaudenzi said the agency will continue work in Guatemala. For security reasons, he added, the Reuters office had been moved. National Police director Mario Paiz said that a special security plan was being organized to protect international press agencies. Government spokesperson Gonzalo Asturias condemned intimidation against journalists, and promised an investigation. The Inter-American Press Society (SIP), the Association of Foreign Journalists in Panama (ACOPEP) and its counterpart in Honduras (ACOHPE) issued communiqués condemning acts of intimidation and harassment of journalists in Guatemala. The three organizations demanded that the government investigate recent incidents, and adopt measures to protect journalists. (Basic data from Cerigua Weekly Briefs, 08/11-17/91; EFE, 08/25/91, 08/26/91; ACAN-EFE, 08/26/91, 08/27/91; AFP, 08/27/91)

-- End --