

Mesoamerica, April 6, 2017.

**Edison Lanza**

**IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression**

We, of the **Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM-Defensoras)**, made up of 754 defenders from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México and Nicaragua, are writing to share our concern with you over the closure in Nicaragua of the **Onda Local** radio program, broadcast every Friday for the last 17 years on the **La Primerísima** radio station. The program is now conducted by **Patricia Orozco**, a journalist and human rights defender who belongs to the **Nicaraguan Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders and IM-Defensoras**.

On the morning of Monday, April 3rd, with no advance notice, the Board of Directors of the **Nicaraguan Radio Broadcasting Professionals Association (APRANIC)**, owner of La Primerísima radio, gave written notice to the program director *that “as of this date, a decision has been made to cancel broadcasts of the Onda Local program”*; the cancellation occurred arbitrarily without any additional explanation despite the long and varied history of the program.

**Onda Local** is an exemplary digital and radio communication space known for its in-depth research with a focus on human rights, which has worked in alliance with local news media and civil organizations. There have been two main stages in the program’s history. From 2000 to 2015, it was produced by the **Communications Research Center (CINCO)**. In the second stage, from June 2015 to the present, it has been a digital and radio space, self-managed by a team of five persons.

As of August 2000, the program has developed as a pluralistic, independent space with an informational policy that represents no state, party, religious or corporate interests. Its aim has been to inform and foster debate on local problems from the perspective of the actors; encourage autonomous citizen participation based on a critical analysis of reality; and promote the rights of groups historically excluded, such as women and ethnic groups from the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast. It has engaged in affirmative actions in favor of human rights and the construction of critical, purposeful thinking in the society.

It is important to note that the promotion and defense of women’s rights has been an ongoing practice in the program from the beginning, with debates on matters such as abuse, abortion, work and violence.

Among the issues addressed on the program are the Interoceanic Canal, mining, citizen participation, the loss of local autonomy, violations of freedom of expression, and governmental authoritarianism.



While engaging in journalistic coverage, the program's reporters have suffered police attacks, as in the case of **Julio López** during the farmers' march against the Canal on November 29, 2016. At that time, the journalist was beaten and robbed of his work equipment by the National Police, even after he identified himself.

In recent years, the Onda Local team had been recognized five times with the national **Excellence in Journalism Award, PJCH**. Last year it won first place for the best Latin American history of adaptation to climate change, and third place in the **Latin American Initiative for Investigatory Journalism** in the category of the use of new technologies, organized by **Conectas**, an initiative of the **International Journalists Center (ICFJ)**, which promotes investigatory journalism in the region.

In Nicaragua, as in other countries, radio has become an authentic forum for debate and opinion, one that lays out reality in a way that facilitates interpretation and a greater acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, radio continues to be a strategic medium for the promotion of the rights of women due to the fact that the broadcast range is now greater in Nicaragua, particularly in rural areas and on the Caribbean Coast. Media consumption habits have changed in Nicaragua, and radio has become increasingly significant.

Nevertheless, we have seen that there is an increasing concentration of media in the hands of actors who closely follow the official government line, while there is a loss of independent radio spaces that foster a plurality of voices. As noted by the **Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Organization of American States (OEA)**, media concentration encroaches on the freedom of expression.

For all of the above, we believe that the closure of **Onda Local** represents an infringement of freedom of expression and the right to information of the Nicaraguan people, and we seek the attention and intervention of the **Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression** that you represent in order to:

- Consider the information disclosed and carry out all due follow-up and monitoring of the situation and the exercise of freedom of expression and communication in Nicaragua.
- Include the closure of **Onda Local** upon addressing the situation and exercise of freedom of expression and communication in Nicaragua in your next annual report.
- Undertake a visit of the **Office of the Special Rapporteur** to our country in order to verify and monitor in situ the situation and exercise of the freedom of expression and communication in Nicaragua.



**INICIATIVA MESOAMERICANA  
de Mujeres Defensoras  
DE DERECHOS HUMANOS**

Best regards,



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