

Summary of interview with Karla Rivas, news editor of *Radio Progreso*

(Conducted by H el ene Roux on 19 November 2013)

-Four years after the coup and the virtual collapse of law and order, how does Radio Progreso manage to cover the news and safeguard its staff?

Karla Rivas: The station's purpose changed after the coup. For almost six months our main goal was to give airtime to the whole movement calling for a return to democracy. At the same time, it allowed us to forge closer ties with other news organizations, locally, nationally and internationally. This cohesion spurred us to do all we could to consolidate the credibility that *Radio Progreso* already enjoyed.

On a daily basis, this means that we tackle important issues and make news choices that change from day to day. Of course, when we touch on sensitive topics we do so from the perspective of helping to restore law order, which was destroyed after the coup. To that extent we put in a word for reconstruction, strengthening law and order and exposing government actions that threaten it.

We believe we have a responsibility to create time and space in our reports and interviews, because we believe that democracy thrives precisely on openness to other ideas. It's not always easy because Honduras remains a highly polarised country, but we are trying.

-Some people have been arrested in connection the murders of journalists. How, then, do you explain why these cases have got nowhere, and the failure to track down those behind the crimes?

In a country whose institutions are no longer functioning, people have no access to justice. The public is defenceless and, as journalists, we are even more so because we are more exposed by exercising a right that refers to other rights, not only for journalists but also for Hondurans as a whole.

The level of impunity that prevails in the country does not allow for progress in such cases. Since President Porfirio Lobo took office, almost 30 journalists have been murdered. The best known were **Alfredo Villatoro**, a renowned journalist for a national radio station, and, more recently, **Anibal Barrow**. Today the trial opens in El Progreso of one of the alleged killers of **Hector Medina Polanco** in 2011. Less than a month ago, we referred again to the murder of **Georgino Orellana**, which had already been before the courts. We journalists know that the person convicted had nothing to do with Georgino's murder.

-Do you have support from outside?

That's where we get our greatest support. So far, the security measures imposed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) have been working. Fifteen of us at *Radio Progreso* have benefited from them. Less than a month ago, the IACHR held a meeting to review the security measures and two days later the police came here to request the names and addresses of those who benefited from such protection.

-What is your response to President Porfirio Lobo who said there were no resources to carry out an investigation?

There is no political will to do so. For outside consumption, the government gives out the message that it respects human rights, but in practice that doesn't apply to peasants, journalists, the LGBT community, women, or young people.

-What would be the cost of establishing genuine pluralism in Honduras in the present circumstances?

The main issues to rebuild law and order need to be worked out and all parties must agree to discuss them. As things stand, there won't be much change in the country and it won't matter who wins the election, given that its structures have collapsed and its institutions have been corrupted. In the world of communications, we are committed to diversity but remain true to our principles, which means giving a voice to the sectors that have historically been marginalised.

-Will the atmosphere after the election be conducive to such a dialogue?

We must seize the opportunity to call for dialogue. I believe news organizations, protest movements and human rights campaigners all have their own agendas. And this year they will be able to find common ground around these issues. There is no need for constitutional change or to shut themselves away for 40 days. Justice and a clean-up of the police are among the main issues, as are access to land and the resolution of current land disputes. The responsibility of landowners must be established. Hondurans must be able to have their say on the subject if progress is to be made. Now is the time. The Honduran government cannot carry on much longer in this mess.