

Honduran army smothers media after coup

By [Global Research](#)

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** Main Honduran newspapers accused of supporting coup*

** Reporters Without Borders slams "news blackout" (Adds details of Twitter use to beat information blackout)*

TEGUCIGALPA, June 29 (Reuters) - Honduras has shut down television and radio stations since an army coup over the weekend, in a media blackout that has drawn condemnation from an international press freedom group.

Shortly after the Honduran military seized President Manuel Zelaya and flew him to Costa Rica on Sunday, soldiers stormed a popular radio station and cut off local broadcasts of international television networks CNN en Espanol and Venezuelan-based Telesur, which is sponsored by leftist governments in South America.

A pro-Zelaya channel also was shut down.

The few television and radio stations still operating on Monday played tropical music or aired soap operas and cooking shows.

They made little reference to the demonstrations or international condemnation of the coup even as hundreds of protesters rallied at the presidential palace in the capital to demand Zelaya's return and an end to the blackout.

"The spurious government is violating our right to information, blocking the signals of channels like CNN," Juan Varaona, a protest leader at a barricade, said as burning tires sent plumes of black smoke into the sky.

CNN en Espanol is the Spanish-language channel of the U.S.-based 24-hour news network CNN.

Others blasted the two main Honduran newspapers and said they were still online because they supported the coup.

"El Heraldo and El Tribuno are two papers that were part of the coup plot, them and some television channels controlled by the opposition," said 27-year-old Erin Matute, a government health worker.

"This morning, they were the only ones with signals, the others were shut down," Matute said at a barricade on a side street in the capital.

El Heraldo's website ran one headline saying "Semblance of normality across Honduras."

Some Hondurans used Internet social networking site Twitter to urge on demonstrators and spread news about the protests.

“Down with the coup! Brothers of Honduras break the information blackout and watch the repression on Telesur on the Internet,” one message said.

Some protesters burned and smashed El Heraldo newspaper stands and others used them as barricades to block streets around the presidential palace.

PRESSURE ON OAS, WEST

Paris-based press freedom group Reporters Without Borders criticized the media shutdown.

“The suspension or closure of local and international broadcast media indicates that the coup leaders want to hide what is happening,” the group said in a statement.

“The Organization of American States and the international community must insist that this news blackout is lifted.”

The coup — triggered by a dispute over Zelaya’s push to extend presidential terms — is the biggest political crisis to hit Central America in years.

It followed a week of tension when Zelaya, an ally of Venezuela’s socialist President Hugo Chavez, angered the Honduran Congress, Supreme Court and army by pushing for a public vote to gauge support for changing the constitution to let presidents seek re-election beyond a single four-year term.

Before he could hold the poll on Sunday, the Honduran military seized Zelaya and flew him to Costa Rica in Central America’s first successful army coup since the Cold War era of dictatorships and war in the region.

The Supreme Court, which last week overruled Zelaya’s attempt to fire the armed forces chief, said it had told the army to remove the president. (Reporting by Mica Rosenberg and Gustavo Palencia in Tegucigalpa and Armando Tovar in Mexico City; Writing by Robin Emmott)

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