



Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
7. juniplassen 1, N-0032 Oslo

Cc:
Deputy Director General Kjersti Rødsmoen,
Latin America Section,
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Deputy Director General Ingrid Mollestad,
Deputy Director Mattis Raustøl,
Senior Advisor Kristin Hefre ,
Section for Human Rights and Democracy,
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Bergen, 27.01.2016

Dear Minister Børge Brende,

On behalf of the Rafto Foundation, I thank you warmly for receiving Rafto Laureate 2015 Ismael "Padre Melo" Moreno Coto at the Ministry in November last year.

We had the experience of an informative and encouraging talk with State secretary Morten Høglund and representatives of the Latin America Section, and also with the President of Parliament and with Members of Parliament Christian Tybring-Gjedde, Sylvi Graham and Trine Skei Grande. The support from Norway is of decisive importance, and very highly appreciated, by Padre Melo and his colleagues.

We would like to bring to your attention a communication of concern we have received from Padre Melo, which he interprets as an underhanded response to our presentation of our award to him, and the related attention to problems afflicting Honduran society and the system of governance in Honduras:

Padre Melo claims that since his return to Honduras in early November 2015, the access of the important independent medium Radio Progreso, his main employer, to cover public events has been conspicuously constrained.

At the opening of the third term of the Congress on January 25, with the selection of fifteen judges of the new Supreme Court on the agenda, Radio Progreso was denied entry to the

Chambers of congress, despite possessing the formal credentials required to be present, the argument justifying this decision being that only forty journalists would be allowed access “to prevent the entry of people who endanger the lives of persons attending”. Padre Melo claims that Radio Progreso has been excluded from public events in a similar fashion on several occasions since his return from Norway.

Melo also notes that in recent months there has been an unusually intense governmental activity presenting state projects to the public in Progreso, the home town of Radio Progreso, accompanied with the denunciation of “bad Hondurans”.

Given the coincidence of these experiences and our recent presentation of the award to Padre Melo, which also praised the work of Radio Progreso, and considering the abysmal record of threats and murders of journalists and other media workers in Honduras, including the killing of two of Padre Melo’s colleagues, we think this message gives cause for concern.

On the request of Padre Melo, we will make our concern known to the press and relevant relations of the Rafto Foundation. We would appreciate if the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs could also make our concern known to relevant parties with which you communicate.

The letter we have received from Padre Melo is attached.

Sincerely yours,

Director Jostein Hole Kobbeltvedt,
Rafto Foundation for Human Rights