

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/cuba-independent-journalist-arrested-09-09-2014,46921.html>

Americas - Cuba

Harassment

Independent journalist arrested, pressured to leave Cuba

9 September 2014

A former political prisoner, Bernardo Arévalo is being threatened with another jail term if he does not leave.

Bernardo Arévalo Padrón, an independent journalist based in Cienfuegos, 250 km southeast of Havana, said the police of pressured him to leave Cuba when they arrested him on 6 September because of his reporting for the opposition newspaper *El Cubano Libre, de Hoy*.

Arévalo told Reporters Without Borders that the Cienfuegos police threatened him with a four-year jail sentence if he did not leave the island.

"I don't want to leave Cuba, I don't want to," Arévalo said. "My decision is irrevocable. I would rather go to prison than leave the country. I want to die in Cuba."

Arévalo spent six years as a [political prisoner](#), from 1997 to 2003, after being convicted of insulting Fidel Castro and then Vice-President Carlos Lage. Between then and last weekend, he had only been detained once – for eight hours in February 2010.

"*We condemn the pressure being placed on Arévalo*," said Camille Soulier, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk. "*Cuba is [reestablishing](#) relations with the European Union and EU member countries but its treatment of independent journalists [has not changed](#). Exile or prison, that's freedom of information in Cuba today.*"

In its latest [monthly report](#), the Havana-based Hablemos Press independent information centre said there were a total of 609 politically-motivated arrests in Cuba in August, bring the total to 6,805 since the start of the year.

One of the latest victims, independent journalist **Miguel Guerra Pérez**, was released on 1 September after being held for a week. Several *Hablemos Press* reporters have been the targets of threats. They include **José Leonel Silva Guerrero**, who was briefly detained and threatened with reprisals against his family if he did not stop working as the *Hablemos Press* correspondent in Holguín.

After the *Hablemos Press* monthly report was slammed by a recent "Mesa Redonda" programme on state television, the centre's director, **Roberto de Jesús Guerra García**, demanded the right to respond to the criticism on 1 September without holding out any hope of his request being granted.

Four journalists are currently detained in Cuba. One of them, [Juliet Michelena Díaz](#), is still waiting for a court decision. Cuba is ranked 170th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#) – the lowest position of any country in the Americas.
