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Americas - Paraguay

Drug cartels

Organized crime's hand seen in border town radio station owner's murder

7 February 2013

Reporters Without Borders hopes for quick results from the police investigation into yesterday evening's murder of local radio station owner and manager **Marcelino Vázquez** in Pedro Juan Caballero, the capital of Amambay, an eastern department that borders Brazil.

A marijuana-growing region with a reputation for being dangerous, Amambay is also a leading hub in the trafficking of so-called hard drugs to the Southern Cone countries. Its journalists are constantly exposed to [threats](#), as are their [Brazilian colleagues](#) on the other side of the border.

Reporters Without Borders devoted a fact-finding visit and [report](#) to this subject in 2011.

"Organized crime was probably behind this murder, especially as the method bears its hallmarks," Reporters Without Borders said. "Quick results are needed from the investigation, which must look for a link to the victim's work and must not yield to pressure or obstruction in region where the drug cartels unfortunately exercise a great deal of influence over the local authorities.

"This murder recalls the 1991 murder of *Radio Mburucuyá* manager **Santiago Leguizamón**, which is still unpunished."

Vázquez was slain at around 7 p.m. yesterday as was leaving *Sin Fronteras 98.5 FM*, of which he was the owner, to go to a nearby discotheque that he also owned. He was intercepted by two men on a motorcycle, one of whom got down and shot him several times with a 38 mm revolver. One of his sons came out of the discotheque and saw the two killers as they left on the motorcycle.

Sin Fronteras FM was mainly a music station but it also carried news and opinion programmes that were ready to broach any subject. Vázquez almost certainly paid the price for this audacity.

President Fernando Lugo's removal in a [parliamentary "coup"](#) last June has had a negative impact on freedom of information in Paraguay, which fell 11 places in the latest Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#). Reporters Without Borders intends to closely follow the campaign for next April's general elections.

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