

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/mexico-terror-continues-on-eve-of-29-06-2012,42920.html>

Americas - Mexico

Disputed result

Candidates in post-election standoff over vote fraud allegations

4 July 2012

Reporters Without Borders is alarmed at the growing controversy surrounding Mexico's federal election on 1 July.

Right up to the eve of election day, the campaign was marked by numerous attacks on journalists and also on observers, bloggers and campaigners for electoral transparency such as members of the #YoSoy132 collective.

Much of the violence has been attributed to supporters of the three main candidates, starting with backers of the man who has been proclaimed the winner, Enrique Pena Nieto, leader of the Institutional Revolutionary Party that led the country continuously from 1929 to 2000. The fact that the candidate of the left, Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador, has asked the Federal Electoral Institute for a recount could further increase tension.

"A huge demonstration is expected to take place in the Federal District on 7 July. Support is already gathering for the campaign against electoral fraud and vote-buying, which has been reported in the international media," Reporters Without Borders said.

"This creates an explosive atmosphere in a country already exhausted by years of violence, including a six-year [offensive by the federal authorities against drug trafficking](#).

"On behalf of the safety of journalists and all those who work to inform the public, and on behalf of constitutional freedom at such a critical moment for Mexico's democratic life, we call for the following:

- A major inquiry into the obstructions, censorship and intimidation that may have affected the coverage and observation of the electoral process.
- A genuinely fair and transparent national debate on how the election was conducted, to which the mass media will contribute in the overriding interests of balance and pluralism.
- A stand by the journalistic profession against escalation and partisan attacks that could polarise still further a bruised and divided society."

In addition, the organization hopes for the early clarification of the circumstances of the death of the 22-year-old American journalist **Armando Montaño**, whose body was found in an elevator shaft at his apartment building on 30 June. Among the stories covered by Montano, an intern in the Mexico City bureau of the *Associated Press* news agency, was the killing of three federal police officers at the capital's Benito Juarez airport on 25 June.

The Federal District public prosecutor's office told Reporters Without Borders that a murder investigation had been launched. In the past decade, 85 journalists have been killed and 15 others have disappeared in Mexico.

29.06.2012 - Terror continues on eve of election but civil society vigilance peaks

There has been absolutely no let-up in a decade-old wave of terror against journalists in the final run-up to the presidential election on Sunday (1 July). The [federal offensive against drug trafficking](#) of the past six years has only increased the danger posed by the drug cartels and by their infiltration of virtually all branches of the state.

In addition to the toll of 85 journalists killed and 16 disappeared in the past 12 years, the Mexican tragedy raises a crucial question: how much real democracy is left when basic constitutional rights including the right to report and receive the news are constantly flouted, when journalists, human rights activists, bloggers, civil society activists, local officials and ordinary citizens are gunned down every day with complete impunity, and when governmental, judicial, police and military institutions are often complicit?

It will be up to the winner of Sunday's election to provide concrete responses to this question. They must include implementing the protective measures envisaged by a new law that makes attacks on freedom of information a federal crime; ensuring that such crimes are investigated thoroughly and with complete transparency; and carrying out a complete overhaul of the judicial system, without which these demands will be in vain.

The next government will also have to accept close scrutiny from a new generation of activists centred on #Yosoy132, a movement of student origin that now represents a promising source of pluralism and debate. Some of its members have been the target of serious threats and acts of intimidation during the election campaign. We will regard any manoeuvre or attack against them as an act of censorship.

As regards threats to journalists, the news of [Stephania Cardoso](#)'s reappearance at the start of June was unfortunately quickly followed by reports of two other disappearances dating back to May – those of [Federico García Contreras](#) in the north-central state of San Luis Potosí and **Zane Alejandro Plemmons Rosales** in the northeastern state of Tamaulipas.

A freelance journalist who used to be crime reporter for the daily *La I*, Plemmons, 30, has US and Mexican dual citizenship and normally resides in San Antonio, Texas. He has not been seen since 21 May, when he was staying in a hotel in the Mexican border town of Nuevo Laredo and went out a night with the aim of photographing a shootout taking place nearby.

The same night, two individuals went to his hotel and managed to remove all of his personal effects. The hotel has since closed.

In the eastern state of Veracruz, where the police have failed to shed light on the latest [murders of journalists](#), there has been an outrageous development in the investigation into *Proceso* reporter [Regina Martínez](#)'s murder in April. Veracruz officials are now claiming it was crime of passion on the sole grounds that a bite mark was noticed on her neck during the autopsy.

It is by no means the first time that the authorities have denied that a murder was linked to the victim's work as a journalist. A few days before her murder, Martínez had written in *Proceso* about Veracruz state police collusion with the drug cartels.

Finally, Reporters Without Borders Rafael wishes **Rafael Said Hernández** of the *Revista Tucán* a speedy recovery from the serious stab wounds he received in an attack on 24 June in the southern city of Oaxaca. Three suspects arrested shortly after the attack have been named by the police as Ernesto Gerardo García, 44, Daniel Amador Martínez, 34, and Emilio Martínez Cortés, 29.

According to the Centre for Journalism and Public Ethics (CEPET), a Reporters Without Borders partner organization, Said's mother said she heard his assailants threaten him in connection with his work before stabbing him in the chest and leg as he stood in the doorway of their home. He was hemorrhaging badly when hospitalized.

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