

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/brazil-journalist-gets-judicially-insane-08-07-2013,44904.html>

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Americas - Brazil

Absurd sentence

## Journalist gets “judicially insane” jail term for fictional short story

8 July 2013

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Reporters Without Borders has learned with incredulity and dismay that the journalist **José Cristian Góes** (picture) was sentenced to seven months and 16 days in prison on 4 July in connection with a short piece of fiction mocking local political corruption that he posted on his blog, [Infonet](#), in May 2012.

Entitled “Me, the colonel inside me,” the story criticized the clientelist methods used by people in positions of power and influence, known as “colonels” in Brazil (see the [Brazil report](#)). The story was told in the first person by an imaginary colonel, without any names, dates or public positions being identified.

It nonetheless prompted Edson Ulisses, a high court judge in Aracaju, in the northeastern state of Sergipe, to bring civil and criminal proceedings, claiming that story defamed both him and his brother-in-law, Sergipe governor Marcelo Dedá of the Workers Party (PT), who [did not file any lawsuit](#).

“This case speaks volumes about the political practices that Góes criticized in his story,” Reporters Without Borders said. “It is true that this prison sentence has been widely reported and the court that issued it was a low-level one. But it is a judicial insanity that insults the basic principles of the 1988 democratic constitution.

“This precedent must be overturned on appeal because no judicial system can be allowed to trample on fundamental freedoms just to satisfy political interests and indulge those in positions of power.”

Ever since the 2009 repeal of a 1967 media law inherited from the military dictatorship, judges – especially local ones – have shown a growing readiness to use so-called “preventive” censorship against media and individual journalists, in particular, in order to protect the politicians on whom they depend.

Blogs and websites have increasingly been the targets of such censorship of late.

In this regard, Reporters Without Borders welcomes *TV Bandeirantes* journalist and blogger **Fábio Pannunzio**’s recent legal victory. In response to a lawsuit by São Paulo public security chief Antônio Ferreira Pinto, a judge initially ordered Pannunzio’s to close his [blog](#) without considering the substance of Ferreira’s suit.

But after examining the suit, a São Paulo court recently rescinded the order and rejected Ferreira’s request for damages.

“The many cases of censorship affecting freedom of information in Brazil rarely have such a fortunate outcome,” Reporters Without Borders said. “This freedom needs to be shored up on all sides. The ‘[Brazil Spring](#)’ protests highlighted both glaring security problems for journalists and a grave lack of media pluralism, which many members of the public criticized.

“These challenges must be addressed. The same goes for the challenge of impunity because, with four journalists killed so far this year, Brazil is now South America’s deadliest country for media personnel.”

