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Americas - Cuba

State of the media

When will Cuba improve relations with its own journalists?

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In the wake of the US and Cuban announcements of a resumption in the diplomatic relations severed more than half a century ago, Reporters Without Borders would like to draw attention to the lack of freedom of information in Cuba and to call for the release of imprisoned journalists.

"Now that diplomatic bridges are being built, it is high time that Cuba improved relations with its own independent journalists, and it could start by immediately releasing the two journalists and the blogger who are unjustly detained," said Claire San Filippo, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

"A thaw in relations also needs an end to threats and intimidation, and the possibility for news providers to carry out their activities freely and without being subjected to harassment. More than ever before, Cubans need pluralist, independent and diversified information."

This will pose a major challenge to the authorities in Cuba, where freedom of information is extremely limited. The government maintains a complete monopoly of news and information and tolerates no independent media aside from a few Catholic Church magazines.

Only state media are permitted (national radio and TV, two daily newspapers – *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde* – and their local versions). This drastically limits access to freely-reported and independent information.

The authorities also control the coverage provided by foreign journalists by cherry-picking who gets accreditation and by expelling those whose reporting is regarded as overly negative.

Internet access is very limited because of the prohibitive cost and because it is [closely controlled](#). Independent Cuban news websites that are based abroad, such as *Payo Libre*, *Hablemos Press*, *Cubonet*, *Cuba Encuentro* and *Martí Noticias*, cannot be accessed from within Cuba.

The authorities often blame the low Internet penetration rate on the US embargo but this excuse ceased to be valid when the ALBA-1 fibre-optic cable linking Cuba to Venezuela became operational, leaving a political desire to restrict access as the only possible explanation.

As well as preventing media pluralism, the authorities continue to persecute journalists and bloggers who criticize the regime.

The last of the journalists arrested during the 2003 "Black Spring" crackdown [was freed in 2011](#), but professional journalists, citizen-journalists and bloggers [have been subjected to threats, smear campaigns, arrests and arbitrary detention ever since then](#).

The authorities are currently holding two journalists – **Yoenni de Jesús Guerra García** and **José Antonio Torres** – and the blogger [Ángel Santiesteban-Prats](#), who has repeatedly reported being tortured.

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.

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