

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/argentine-attacks-on-journalists-a-tangible-08-06-2012,42757.html>

Americas - Argentina

"Clockwork Orange" violence

Attacks on journalists a tangible symptom of growing polarisation

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At least 10 journalists from various media organizations have been assaulted, some seriously, in and near Buenos Aires in recent days. Such an outbreak of violence is unprecedented in a country where there is traditionally less physical risk to journalists than elsewhere in the region. However, it is a symptom of a growing climate of polarisation, which needs to be aired and resolved.

"We strongly condemn this brutality and hope that exemplary punishment can ensure there is no repetition," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We welcome the protective measures announced by the federal government and the authorities in Buenos Aires province, mindful of the attacks on journalists outside the Claudio Zin Hospital.

"Those who work in the media are encountering increasing hostility, according to whether they work for organizations that are state-run or privately-owned, pro- or anti-government, we believe rules for the safety and protection be established for the benefit of the profession as a whole.

"The job could be entrusted to Congress with the support of journalists' organizations and unions, in a spirit of consensus and to ensure pluralism."

Mariano Vega, a photographer with the daily *Tiempo Argentino*, **Adrián Subelza** of the newspaper *Crónica*, **Julio Mosle**, **Federico Molinari** and **Florencia Downes** of the state news agency *Télam*, and **Ignacio Vaschetto** of the website *Malvinoticias* were the main victims of the attack on 5 June in the Malvinas Argentinas district of Buenos Aires.

The journalists were covering a demonstration outside the Claudio Zin Hospital over the death of a young girl through medical negligence when they came across a hostile group. The assailants claimed to be supporters of the mayor of the district, Julio Cariglino, who belongs to President Cristina Kirchner's Justicialist Party, although a rival faction.

A police patrol that arrived at the scene took no action, according to journalists who spoke to Reporters Without Borders. Mosle was thrown on to the hood of a police car and beaten with sticks. He lost two teeth and suffered multiple injuries.

His colleagues Vega and Subelza were also roughed up and had their equipment smashed before they were forced to flee. Subelza told us: "They came after me when I went into the hospital to speak to the young girl's uncle. They were well organized. As my colleague and I were leaving we were attacked outside by at least 40 people who asked us who we were. I replied that we were journalists and they started beating us."

On 1 June a similar attack took place on a crew from the highly controversial programme "6,7,8" on the state-run television station *Canal 7*, during an anti-government "cacerolazo" (pot-banging) march in the capital's Barrio Norte district).

Half an hour after the journalists arrived, protesters who had been shouting insults at them started beating **Sergio Loguzzo, Lucas Martínez** and **Ezequiel Schneider**.

The latter told Reporters Without Borders that his colleague Loguzzo was pushed to the ground. "He got up and they pushed him back down on the ground then beat him," he said. "Lucas was also beaten."

The next day, the same group of protesters was waiting for the journalists as they left the hospital, trapping them there until 1 a.m. The three were also assaulted in similar circumstances on 22 May outside the Buenos Aires courthouse. Schneider said he believed they were targeted because they worked for a state media organization.

"This must encourage the profession as a whole to reflect on its practices and also any programmes or views that might put at risk reporters who come into direct contact with the public," Reporters Without Borders said.

"What the '6,7,8' team suffered is borne out by colleagues working for privately-owned media groups that take a critical position who have been insulted and sometimes assaulted by government supporters. This polarisation, for which the media themselves must assume much of the responsibility, represents a significant danger for freedom of news and information."

The press freedom organization hopes for a swift outcome to the investigation into the death threat made against the radio journalist **Gustavo Tinetti** on 29 May in the town of 9 de Julio in Buenos Aires province as he was preparing to broadcast his regular programme on Cadena Nueve radio via its online network online and the station *FM 89.9 Máxima*.

An unidentified man armed with a pistol ordered him to stop broadcasting "the rest of the information we know you have", then referred to the journalist's daughters before leaving. Tinetti is responsible for revelations that have embarrassed the mayor of 9 de Julio, Walter Battistella.
