

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/brazil-supreme-court-urged-to-overturn-23-03-2015,47719.html>

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Americas - Brazil

Ruling awaited

## Góes case prompts call for decriminalization

23 March 2015

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**Reporters Without Borders hopes that, in a decision due shortly, Brazil's Federal Supreme Court will overturn journalist José Cristian Góes' criminal defamation conviction over a fictional tale about political corruption that he posted on his blog in May 2012, for which he received an initial jail sentence.**

**Góes** was [sentenced on 4 July 2013 to seven months and 16 days in prison – a sentence that was immediately commuted to community service](#). He was also ordered to pay 25,000 reais (7,200 euros) in damages and 5,000 reais (1,440 euros) in costs.

Entitled "Me, the colonel in me," the story criticized the clientelist methods used by those in positions of power and influence at the local level in Brazil, where they are known as "colonels." The story was told in the first person by an imaginary "colonel" who complained about the current democracy. No names, dates, places or public positions were identified.

Edson Ulisses, the vice-president of the high court in Aracaju, the capital of the northeastern state of Sergipe, nonetheless bought civil and criminal proceedings against Góes, claiming that story was insulting.

*"Sentencing José Cristian Góes to a jail term in 2013, even if it was commuted to community service, was a slap in the face for freedom of information and opinion,"* said Claire San Filippo, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

*"We hope that the Federal Supreme Court will now correct this aberration and send an encouraging signal to Brazil's journalists. We also urge the Brazilian authorities to decriminalize media offenses, because the possibility of criminal charges has a strong deterrent impact on freedom of information."*

Ever since the repeal in 2009 of a 1967 media law inherited from the military dictatorship, journalists have often been the victims of abusive judicial proceedings on charges of insult or defamation, especially at the local level. Courts are also showing a growing readiness to use preventive censorship, especially against websites.

[Brazil is ranked 99th out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.](#)

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