

Reporters Without Borders

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Americas - Brazil

First death of 2012

Motive unclear after journalist is shot dead in Bahia

4 January 2012

After a year marked by the deaths of five journalists, three clearly linked to their work, the Brazilian press has already suffered its first fatality of 2012, that of **Laércio de Souza**, who worked for the radio station *Rádio Sucesso* in Camaçari, in the state of Bahia.

He was shot dead yesterday by two gunmen in the town of Simões Filho after receiving threats on his mobile phone, believed to be from local traffickers, over the preceding hours and days.

"At this stage there is nothing to link the murder of Laércio de Souza with his activities as a journalist," Reporters Without Borders said.

"In any event, this tragedy should be a signal to the authorities to step up their fight against impunity after a bad year for the Brazilian press, particularly in the north and north-east of the country where it is not healthy to condemn corruption and trafficking of various kinds.

"We hope, therefore, that this latest case will be solved quickly. We express our full support for Laércio de Souza's family and colleagues."

De Souza was overseeing a social infrastructure project for a local community on land that he owned in Simões Filho when two gunmen opened fire in his direction just as his brother, who was accompanying him, was momentarily absent.

He received three bullet wounds, in the hand and the head, and tried to take cover in a nearby house where he was killed, according to eyewitnesses quoted in the press.

Investigators believe the victim's social projects could have irritated some people with links to organized crime. An examination of his cell phone might confirm some of their suspicions.

However, according to **Aline Marques**, a *Rádio Sucesso* producer quoted in the press, no threats linked to de Souza's work at the station had been reported previously. At this stage, therefore, investigators do not favour the theory that the murder was linked to his work as a journalist.

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