

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/guatemala-disturbing-threats-against-two-10-10-2012,43517.html>

Americas - Guatemala

Dangerous topics

## Disturbing threats against two Prensa Libre op-ed writers

10 October 2012

Reporters Without Borders is very concerned for the safety of two journalists – **Carolina Vásquez Araya** and **Jorge Jacobs** - who have been getting threats during the past week or so after writing op-ed pieces about sensitive issues for the daily *Prensa Libre*.

Vásquez's piece was about the children of agricultural workers being sexually abused by farm owners and administrators, while Jacobs wrote about commercial rivalry in the food and drink distribution sector.

"Vásquez and Jacobs showed journalistic courage by tackling risky subjects and now all their colleagues should rally to their support in the name of the duty to report news and information," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The police and judicial authorities must also act quickly to identify and punish those responsible for these threats and provide these two journalists with proper protection. Solving this case would send a strong signal and help to reverse the self-censorship trend."

Vásquez was the first to receive threats after writing her [article](#) about the frequent rape of farm workers' daughters for publication on Children's Day, celebrated on 1 October in Guatemala.

She cited a case that she and the writer **Ilka Oliva** had investigated in which girls between the ages of 7 and 14 were systematically raped for decades on a farm in the southern department of Escuintla. The article accused Guatemala's government agencies and institutions of being partly to blame for the fact that the rape of minors is so widespread, although rarely reported.

According to the Guatemalan Centre for Reports and Information (CERIGUA), Vásquez has been getting threatening emails ever since the article appeared: "We'll hack your family to pieces and send them to you in a cotton sack," one said, adding "You know we have enough money to make them all disappear, we have tentacles everywhere."

Another said: "Leave the past where it is or you will regret the present; don't play at being a righter of wrongs because you will have problems, you and that other slut of a journalist." Oliva, who lives in the United States, has received similar threats originating in Guatemala.

Vásquez told Reporters Without Borders she was determined to continue her journalistic activities but had refused police protection because she did not think the police were reliable. The threats have been reported to the public prosecutor's office and the human rights ombudsman.

Jacobs, who presents the programmes "Todo a pulmón" and "+ negocios" on *Radio Libertopolis*, reported on the air on 5 October that he had received death threats as a result of writing an op-ed piece headlined "[Pepsi bye?](#)" for the previous day's issue of *Prensa Libre* about a rumour that Cabcorp, a distributor of Pepsi Cola and other soft drinks, could be taken over by another regional company.

He said he received an initial phone call threatening him and his family and ordering him to leave the country within 24 hours. Additional threats were made in a text, a second phone call

and then an email.

CERIGUA also reports that the daily *La Hora* was recently deprived of state advertising after publishing articles about corruption allegedly involving the present government. Guatemalan journalists tend to steer clear of stories about corruption, drug trafficking or the aftermath of the 1960-96 civil war as they know they can pay dearly.

---