

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/colombia-governor-s-arrest-does-not-resolve-16-10-2013,45335.html>

Americas - Colombia

Open letter

Governor's arrest does not resolve threats to four journalists

16 October 2013

Paris, 15 October 2013

Dr. Juan Manuel Santos
President of Colombia

Mr. Eduardo Montealegre Lynett
Prosecutor-General

Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Palomino López
National Police Director

Dear President Santos,
Dear Prosecutor-General Montealegre,
Dear National Police Director Palomino,

Reporters Without Borders, an international organization that defends freedom of information, urges you to intervene quickly to guarantee the safety of four journalists – **Claudia López, Gonzalo Guillén, León Valencia** and **Ariel Avila**.

This appeal concerns not only their physical safety but also, and above all, a judicial resolution of the grave allegations they brought to the public's knowledge in the course of their work, namely the disturbing infiltration of certain areas of the state apparatus by paramilitaries and drug traffickers.

The National Protection Unit (UNP) warned these four journalists on 25 September that they were liable to be targeted by a so-called BACRIM (criminal gang formed by former paramilitaries) in the northeastern department of La Guajira.

Because of the imminence of this threat, the UNP gave them a police escort and armour-plated car on 26 September. Fearing for her safety, López (pictured) announced on 1 October that she was leaving the country, and she is now abroad. Guillén also announced that he was going into self-imposed exile on 12 October.

In a joint letter to the prosecutor-general, national police director and interior minister on 1 October (attached), the four journalists noted the protection that had been offered them but pointed out that it could not be regarded as a viable long-term solution.

Guillén, Valencia and Avila had already received threats in May, which led to their [fleeing abroad temporarily](#) in June. The threats increased in intensity in September, when López was added to the list.

López and her colleagues shed light on the tenuous links between La Guajira governor Francisco "Kiko" Gómez and a BACRIM linked to the drug trafficker Marcos Figueroa. Gómez's arrest on 12 October in connection with an unrelated matter has not eliminated the risks to these journalists.'

We urge the prosecutor-general's office to continue the investigations into all officials suspected of links with organized crime and all persons suspected of being responsible for threats and acts of violence against journalists.

I thank you in advance for the attention you give to this letter.

Sincerely,

Christophe Deloire
Reporters Without Borders secretary-general

Slideshow: Andrés Torres - El Espectador
Photo: FLIP



Carta RSF



Carta periodistas

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 45.3 kb)
-