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Americas - Colombia

Assaulted for his writings?

A journalist and writer, victim of a violent assault, suspends his writing activities

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Reporters Without Borders strongly denounces the violent acts, that can be considered barbaric, endured by **Germán Uribe**, a Colombian journalist and writer. The incident occurred on February 28, 2013 at his home in Subachoque in the region of Cundinamarca. He has since suspended his writing activity but hopes to work again once he recovers from his injuries. The organization calls on the authorities to shed light on the attack, fight against impunity and guarantee the freedom of information.

Germán Uribe was born in 1943 in Colombia. He was influenced by the writer and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, and studied philosophy and literature at the Sorbonne in Paris. He wrote a dozen books and has published articles in several newspapers and magazines in Colombia, France, Mexico, and Cuba. He was ambassador (E) (in the absence of the post holder) in Germany, and also British Consul in Berlin from 1974 to 1977. Until this attack, Germán Uribe was working for the magazine [Semana](#) and the information website [Rebelión](#).

Reporters Without Borders: As a journalist, what topics to you primarily cover?

Germán Uribe: In my columns in *Semana* and *Rebelión*, I often strongly criticized former President Uribe, his entourage, the dangerous right wing, as well as those who are opposed to peace talks with the guerrilla.

What has exactly happened February 28, 2013?

While I was alone at my home in Subachoque, I was detained for about a half hour. A man who has his face covered, pointed a gun at me. I suffered a head injury when he hit me with a revolver and I bleed profusely. He locked me up in my bedroom and tied my hands and feet. He blindfolded me and put a scarf in my mouth to gag me. The Subachoque Police discovered afterwards that the scarf had the inscriptions "Columbian Army - Batallon Contreguérilla." He violently struck me - punched and kicked me - insulted me, and threatened to kill me, but he didn't ask for anything. To save my life, I told him that he could take all the money I had in my safe. He went to look for the money. Luckily, I heard through an internal speaker that the property manager was coming to my house which scared my attacker. He placed the gun against my head and said he was going to kill me before leaving. While I was lying on my bed in a pool of blood with my hands and feet tied, I decided to scream as loud as possible to call for my employee which made my aggressor flee. At that moment, I think I heard a vehicle leave quickly. Even though I have not seen anyone else, I heard the man speak in a confused manner to someone else, probably an accomplice who was guarding the door. So I assume there were several people involved in the attack, and they had a car ready to go. Afterwards, managers of neighboring buildings who became aware of what had happened to me, called the police who arrived quickly on the scene.

Do you know who is behind the attack?

I have no idea and I do not know the reason of the attack. My aggressor didn't come to steal. He did take money but only after I told him so that he would let me live. It is surprising that they left behind the military scarf they used to gag me. I don't think the army would make such a blunder. The scarf could be a message from a fanatical and uncontrollable army faction to

stop my critical writings in *Semana* and *Rebelión*. Or the scarf could also be a strategy of distraction from a paramilitary group or some organized criminal gang with a completely different goal.

Is there a link between the investigations you have worked on and your aggression?

I can neither confirm nor rule out this possibility. I guess it will never be elucidated. This is also because of this impunity that all sort of crimes are being committed every day in Colombia. It is certain that this man came to teach me a lesson and send a clear warning.

Have you complained to an investigation launched by the authorities?

As I do not know who is behind the attack, I cannot report anyone. I did file a complaint with the Police Commander of Subachoque – who came to rescue me after the attack and is now leading the investigation at the local level. Aside from this complaint, as my wife is the Secretary General of Ecopetrol, the security department of her company has conducted its own investigation and collected evidence with the police, SIJIN (Criminal Investigation section) and other regional authorities. I didn't think I'd file a complaint with other authorities because of the slow speed of the justice system in Colombia and its Kafkaesque tendency. But in the end, I did file a complaint with the General Prosecutor of the Nation.

Did you ask for protection from the authorities?

There are so many people in my country, including presidential candidates, who have been murdered with the collusion of their "escort" while under the protection of the State. I choose to stay alive and that is why I don't want shelter or protection from the National Protection Unit or any authority whatsoever.

Did you stay in Subachoque after the attack?

No. My main concern is to protect my life so I had to leave my house and I can't imagine ever going back there. Today, I try to be invisible, just like millions of other displaced Colombians.
