

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/colombia-wave-of-threats-against-01-02-2013,44012.html>

Americas - Colombia

Major threats

Wave of threats against journalists in northwest

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Reporters Without Borders is extremely concerned about a wave of threats against journalist in three coastal departments in northwestern Colombia, a region known for the presence of major criminal organizations.

"Journalists should not have pay because of the region's high level of organized crime-related violence," Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire said.

"The authorities must quickly investigate these acts of intimidation, which constitute grave violations of freedom of information. They must guarantee the safety of journalists and must make appropriate protective measures available to those who request them."

Crime reporter **Amilkar Alvear** and photographer **Jairo Cassiani** of the newspaper *Al Día* received a letter in Montería (Córdoba department) on 28 January containing death threats by the BCLU (Los Urabeños Criminal Band). It said they had "talked a lot" about the BCLU and now had 48 hours to leave the city.

The two journalists left Montería the same day and are now under police protection in another city.

Another *Al Día* journalist, **Jairo Contreras**, received threats by SMS message and mobile phone calls in Sincelejo (in neighbouring Sucre department) on 13 and 24 January.

Al Día is well known for its crime coverage and is popular in the northwest. Alvear and Cassiani had covered arrests of BCLU members on several occasions.

In Medellín (the capital of Antioquia department), reporters and cameramen with *Teleantioquia Noticias*, *Telemedellín*, *Caracol Noticias* and *Noticias RCN* were threatened repeatedly in the second half of January while covering events linked to acts of violence in various parts of the city (especially Districts 8 and 13).

On several occasions they were forced to stop filming and leave because they were being threatened by unidentified men. The journalists concerned preferred not to be named for fear of reprisals from "combos" (individuals acting on the orders of criminal gangs).

The wave of threats in the northwest was preceded by a case of intimidation in the capital on 11 January, when *El Tiempo* crime reporter and editor **Jineth Bedoya** also received a threatening message.

Several local organizations including the [Press Freedom Foundation](#) (FLIP), the Antioquia Journalists Association (APA) and the Sucre Association of Social Communicators and Journalists (ACPS) have condemned these threats as serious violations of freedom of information.
