

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/colombia-journalists-meet-to-protest-11-12-2014,47374.html>

Americas - Colombia

Community outlets targeted

Journalists meet to protest threats from criminal gangs

11 December 2014

Journalists threatened by the paramilitary group "Bloque Capital - Águilas Negras" were holding a meeting in Bogotá today to publicize the dangers they face. The group has given news outlets a deadline of 1 January to leave the cities where they operate, but the government has yet to respond. Reporters Without Borders is concerned about the dangers to freedom of information and pluralism in Colombia.

Águilas Negras issued three blacklists in less than four days in early December, a clear sign that it wants to silence journalists that they find troublesome. It describes the targets as "terrorists directed by FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and the ELN (National Liberation Army)" whom the group vowed to "silence with lead".

They comprise 14 journalists and 12 media organizations, most of them community-based or alternative outlets that cover the peace talks or investigate human rights abuses, organized crime and corruption.

The allegations by Águilas Negras bear a disturbing resemblance to those made by the former president, Senator Alvaro Uribe, during a debate in September this year in which he accused the public television station Canal Capital of being "an accomplice of terrorism".

"Reporters Without Borders deplores the threats directed by Águilas Negras at community media outlets," said Claire San Filippo, head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

"Attempting to silence them is an attack on media pluralism and is aimed at aggravating the climate of fear and self-censorship, thus preventing journalists from covering sensitive subjects such as corruption and organized crime. In view of the seriousness of the situation, it is unacceptable for the Colombian authorities to remain silent. By failing to condemn such threats or to make the fight against impunity a clear priority, the government is effectively giving criminal gangs a free hand".

[With 56 journalists killed since 2000](#), Colombia remains a highly dangerous country in which to carry out any journalistic activity, especially for alternative and community news outlets that report on sensitive subjects.

The country has a large number of armed criminal gangs that sow terror, with or without the complicity of the local authorities, with almost total impunity. Águilas Negras remain one of the country's leading "Predators of Press Freedom".

They previously organized campaigns of intimidation and violence against local media in 2006 and 2007 and issued a list of five journalists targeted to be killed in March 2011. In August this year, Águilas Negras issued death threats against the freelance photographer [Juan Pablo Gutiérrez](#). At the beginning of December, [the group threatened](#) the TV stations *Canal Capital*, *Telesur*, *Nelson Arnesto*, the creator of the news programme *Patio Bonito Al Día* as well as 'Agencia de Reporteros Sin Fronteras' - a news outlet Reporters Without Borders has no relation with.

Colombia is ranked 126th of 180 countries in the World [Press Freedom Index](#) published by Reporters Without Borders in February this year.
