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Americas - Colombia

Justice

After seven years, Colombia drops charges against TV reporter

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Reporters Without Borders hails the withdrawal of charges against William Parra, a TV reporter wrongly accused of abetting Colombia's rebels, and urges the Colombian authorities to compensate him for his long legal battle to prove his innocence, during which he fled to Venezuela.

The Colombian prosecutor-general's office finally abandoned the seven-year-old proceedings against **Parra** on 11 March. They date back to the dark days of Alvaro Uribe's presidency, when illegal phone taps known as "chuzadas" and threats presumably made by paramilitaries or the intelligence agency known as DAS drove many journalists into exile.

"We welcome this decision, even if it has come much too late," said Claire San Filippo, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk. "In view of all the harm that Parra suffered as a result of these proceedings, he should be awarded fair compensation."

The Colombian authorities had turned their sights on Parra since 2006, when he joined *Telesur*, a Caracas-based pan-Latin American TV station.

[The head of the Colombian police, Gen. Oscar Naranjo, accused Parra in 2007 of "manipulation and complicity" with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia \(FARC\) in connection with the June 2007 abduction of Capt. Guillermo Javier Solórzano](#), who was interviewed by Parra while held hostage.

In 2010, an international warrant was issued for Parra's arrest on charges of criminal association, financing terrorism and "rebellion" in connection with his alleged links to the FARC.

Parra's name was said to appear in emails found in the laptop of FARC deputy commander Raúl Reyes, who was killed by the Colombian military while in Ecuador in March 2008.

[The prosecutor responsible for the charges was a retired military officer who was later removed from the case.](#) At no point were Parra's lawyers allowed to see the alleged evidence against him.

Reporters Without Borders asked Parra if he now plans to return to Colombia from Venezuela, where he has resided since 2007.

"I want to go back but, for the time being, I don't know if sufficient guarantees and the necessary conditions are in place. I don't know if the establishment will let me go back. This is a very special moment in Colombia's history. I hope it will provide an opportunity for journalists who have always wanted the peace they need to work."

Colombia is [ranked 128th out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
