

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/colombia-spanish-photographer-missing-in-29-01-2014,45797.html>

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Americas - Colombia

Alarming disappearance

## Spanish photographer missing in dangerous northeastern department

29 January 2014

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Reporters Without Borders urges the authorities, and in particular the GAULA elite units that combat abduction and extortion, to deploy whatever resources are needed to locate **Borja Lázaro**, a Spanish freelance photographer who disappeared in northeastern Colombia, near the Venezuelan border, three weeks ago.

Lázaro, 34, who is from Vitoria in Spain's Basque country, was doing a series of photo-reportages on indigenous cultures. He went missing in Cabo de la Vela, a fishing village in the department of La Guajira, on 8 January. He last communicated with his family eight days before that.

"Without taking a position on the theories offered by Colombian and Spanish investigators, we think the possibility of abduction should be taken very seriously," Reporters Without Borders said.

"La Guajira is a drug trafficking hub dominated by the feared 'Bacrim,' criminal gangs that had their origins in the paramilitary movement. These gangs operate with the support or complicity of certain local officials. La Guajira's now jailed former governor [Juan Francisco 'Kiko' Gómez](#) was known for having close links with the Bacrim and for using them against troublesome journalists.

"A campaign in support of Lázaro is needed even if the circumstances of his disappearance have yet to be established. A Spanish couple were kidnapped by Bacrim in the same region in 2013 and were held for a month before being released. Whatever the circumstances, we hope Lázaro will soon reappear safe and sound."

Lázaro's disappearance was reported to the Colombian and Spanish authorities on 23 January. According to witnesses, he spent the evening of 7 January with a group of people and returned to his hotel at around 1 a.m. on 8 January. He was no longer in his room at 5 a.m. on 8 January.

A close relation of the photographer told Reporters Without Borders: "One of the theories is that he drowned in the sea after getting up early but I think it is unlikely. His mobile phone, backpack and flashlight were all missing. None of these items was found on the beach and it is hard to see how he could have left without them. Another theory is that he got lost in La Guajira's nearby desert."

A journalistic source told Reporters Without Borders she thought Lázaro was being held by a La Guajira-based Bacrim.

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### Other images



JPEG - 31.8 kb  
633 x 222 pixels

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