

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/peru-decriminalization-urged-after-28-09-2011,41064.html>

Americas - Peru

Overdue decriminalization

Decriminalization urged after suspended jail terms for two journalists

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Reporters Without Borders today urged Peru to quickly decriminalize press offences after a court in the southern city of Arequipa passed two-year suspended prison sentences on 22 September on **Fritz Du Bois** (photo), the editor of the daily *Perú21*, and **Gessler Ojeda**, one of his reporters, in a libel case. The court also fined them 30,000 soles (10,700 dollars).

"This sentence contradicts the promise that President Ollanta Humala gave at a forum organized by the Press and Society Institute (IPYS) on 29 April, during the election campaign, to refrain from bringing any prosecution against journalists in connection with their work," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We are also still awaiting [promulgation](#) of an amendment to the criminal code eliminating prisons sentences for defamation. Peru must respect the Inter-American system's judicial decisions, which rule out imprisonment for media offences. Decriminalization must be implemented without delay."

The libel suit against *Perú21* was prompted by a [story](#) by Ojeda last March about Ana María Solórzano Flores, the leading parliamentary candidate of Humala's party, Gana Perú, in Arequipa. It claimed that relatives of Solórzano, above all her aunt, Rosario Flores Bedregal, were linked to prostitution.

In a [column](#) in the same issue, Du Bois accused Solórzano of lacking experience and suggested that her relatives were financing her campaign.

It was the aunt, Rosario Flores Bedregal, who brought the libel suit against the two journalists. The suspension of their jail sentences is conditional on their complying with judicial controls that restrict their movements. Press reports quoted their lawyer, Augusto Loli Carrillo, as describing the sentence as "arbitrary," "illegal" and "biased." He said they would appeal.

Reporters Without Borders takes this opportunity to reiterate its call for the immediate release of [Paul Garay Ramírez](#), a programme producer for *Visión 47 TV* and a correspondent for Radio *La Exitosa*, who was sentenced to three years in prison on 19 April for allegedly defaming a prosecutor although no evidence was presented against him. The sentence was subsequently reduced to 18 months.
