

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/mexico-more-attacks-on-media-targets-just-15-05-2012,42624.html>

Americas - Mexico

Violent spring

Crime reporter is fourth journalist to be killed in less than a month

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Marco Antonio Ávila García, a newspaper reporter based in Ciudad Obregón, in the northwestern state of Sonora, has become the fourth journalist to be murdered in Mexico in the past month, following two news photographers and a magazine reporter in the east-coast state of [Veracruz](#).

Ávila's body was found wrapped in a plastic bag in Ciudad Obregón yesterday, a day after he was reported missing. It bore the marks of torture and strangulation. Aged 39, he had been covering crime for the past 15 years for two local dailies, *El Regional de Sonora* and *Diario Sonora de la Tarde*, and recently covered [anti-drug operations](#).

"We again urge those investigating this murder to work on the hypothesis that it was linked to the victim's work," Reporters Without Borders said. "Ávila's colleagues have told us that he had not reported being threatened but they nonetheless think his murder was connected to his journalism. As a crime reporter in a region that is a drug cartel bastion, he did a dangerous job that required a lot of courage.

"A total of 84 journalists have been killed in the past decade and 14 have disappeared. Will we have to wait for this toll to rise even further before the decision to put the [federal authorities](#) in charge of investigating crimes against freedom of information is implemented in an effective manner and with adequate resources? The elections taking place in July do not affect the urgency of the need to begin combating impunity."

Masked men with large-calibre firearms kidnapped Ávila on 17 May from the car wash to which he had gone with a car he used for his work. Witnesses said his abductors asked him if he was a journalist and forced him to get into their pickup when he said he was. A message found near his body is thought to have been left by drug traffickers.

Ciudad Obregón is the theatre of an all-out war between the Gulf Cartel and a new crime organization called "H." The city has an appalling level of crime, with an average of 25 execution-style murders a month for the past two years and many kidnappings.

Outside picture: AFP

15.05.12 - More attacks on media targets just six weeks before federal elections

Not a day goes by without some new horror in Mexico. The media have again been targeted in with armed attacks on two newspapers in the past four days and, a week ago, the murder of a former reporter who was supporting a presidential candidate's campaign. Will it be possible to hold normal elections on 1 July amid such violence?

"With just a month and a half to go to federal elections to choose a president and fill other important posts, we call for an immediate end to [the federal offensive against drug trafficking](#), in which the toll currently stands at more than 50,000 dead," Reporters Without Borders said.

“The only thing that this undeclared war has achieved is to increase the endemic violence. To continue the offensive will just jeopardize the electoral process and the necessary public debate that depends on the participation of journalists and civil society actors.”

[Self-censorship](#) seems to have become the only defence for news media that are more exposed than ever to bombings and armed attacks. The latest target was *El Mañana*, a newspaper based in Nuevo Laredo (in the northeastern state of Tamaulipas), which was attacked on the night of 11 May. Shots were fired at the building’s facade and car park, and a small explosive device was thrown at the building, the paper reported.

A member of *El Mañana’s* staff confirmed to Reporters Without Borders that at least six vehicles in the car park received bullet impacts. The interior ministry announced the next day that the newspaper would get federal protection. The newspaper and its staff have been the target of [armed attacks in the past](#) and the 2004 murder of its editor, [Roberto Mora](#), is still unpunished.

In Reynosa, also in Tamaulipas state, the premises of the newspaper *Hora Cero* were evacuated on 8 May after an anonymous caller warned that an attack was imminent. A few minutes later, six hooded gunmen open fire on the empty building. Incomprehensibly, the Tamaulipas State Attorney-General’s Office (PGJE) initially denied that any attack had taken place.

From journalism to politics

Former reporter **René Orta Salgado’s** body was found in the trunk of his car in Cuernavaca, in the central state of Morelos, on 13 May, three days after his family reported him missing. His face was covered by a cloth and his body had the marks of blows from a blunt object. The cause of death is thought to have been suffocation.

Aged 43, Orta had worked for 20 years for the crime section of the daily *El Sol de Cuernavaca*. He took leave from the newspaper last December in order to support the presidential campaign of Institutional Revolutionary Party presidential candidate Enrique Peno Nieto.

No fewer than 83 journalists have been killed in Mexico in the past decade and 14 others have disappeared. The overwhelming majority of these cases are unsolved and unpunished. The east-coast state of Veracruz is the latest [epicentre of attacks on the media](#). A Veracruz journalist employed by the daily *La Jornada* recently fled the country.

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