

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bolivia-five-journalists-physically-19-04-2011,40054.html>

Americas - Bolivia

Violence against journalists

Five journalists physically attacked by police or protestors

19 April 2011

Reporters and photographers working for several news media were attacked by police at Apacheta (20 km outside La Paz) on 15 April while covering clashes between police and members of the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB), which is demanding a wage increase.

Red Uno cameraman **Israel Gutiérrez**, *Bolivisión* cameraman **Carlos Saavedra** and *Página Siete* photographer **Henry Ponce** were attacked by police officers. The cameras of Gutiérrez and Saavedra were broken, while the memory cards of Ponce's camera were seized. *Associated Press* reporter **Juan Mamani** and *Universal de Televisión* reporter *Vladimir Rojas* were attacked by demonstrating teachers, who accused them of being police informers.

Interior minister Sacha Llorenti promised the Federation of La Paz Press Workers to investigate these attacks and ensure that confiscated equipment was handed back. He also promised to consider distributing vests that would identify journalists when they are covering street clashes. Reporters Without Borders supports this proposal and urges both police and demonstrators to respect the media.

These physical attacks come at a time when the judicial authorities are also treating journalists badly. **Luis Zabala Fareli**, the manager of *Radio Soberanía de Minero 97.5*, a station based in Minero, in the eastern department of Santa Cruz, spent nearly three months in pre-trial detention on various charges brought by Minero's police chief, including inciting a mob attack on a police station on 6 January. He was finally freed and allowed to resume working on 14 April but has been banned by a judge from talking about his trial.

At the same time, a judge in the southern city of Potosí said he was not competent to hear the complaint that a government official has brought against *Radio Kollasuyo* journalist **Mario Caro**, accusing Caro of insulting him. The judge ruled that only a specialized judge could hear complaints brought by officials against journalists.

Reporters Without Borders finally points out that there is a real danger that the March 2008 murder of Carlos Quispe, a journalist working for a municipal radio station in Pucarani, a town 50 km west of La Paz, will go unpunished and will be forgotten. "Neither the climate of political violence prevailing at that time nor the many changes in judicial personnel since then justify the failure to make any progress with this investigation," [the press freedom organization said](#).
