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Americas - Mexico

MEXICO - Endangered Internet

## Online coverage of drug-trafficking under threat in Tamaulipas

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**The authorities in Mexico's northeastern border state of Tamaulipas are said to behind smear campaigns and acts of intimidation targeting journalists and bloggers in this region.**

A blogger who is one of the leading users of #Reynosafollow, a Twitter network where a great deal of information about organized crime is posted, reported on 21 July that he has become the target of threats and smears on social networks.

The bloggers, who tweets as @MrCruzStar and uses the blog name of **"Chuy News"** to protect his identify, is being accused by anonymous social network users of being a leader of the "halcones" or hawks – people who report police activity to the drug traffickers.

He is also being accused of arranging organized crime meetings in Reynosa, the state's largest city.

Someone posted @MrCruzStar's alleged photo online on 22 July, risking the anonymity he had enjoyed until then. He told Reporters Without Borders that these threats are a result of his criticism of the anti-drug-trafficking operations of the Tamaulipas and federal authorities.

**Julia Le Duc**, a reporter for the news website *La Jornada*, is also one of the targets of the same online smear campaign by the same users. A series of threats has meanwhile forced the closure of #VigilantesM, a Twitter account that provided information about public safety in Tamaulipas.

*"We condemn this intimidation,"* said Camille Soulier, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk. *"The free flow of independently reported information is the first step in combatting corruption. It is essential that the Mexican government should take measures to protect those who circulate such information."*

Journalists have already been reduced to silence in Tamaulipas, a state badly hit by drug trafficking. As a result of grave threats to the local media, most of the information available about the activities of drug traffickers is now to be found online. But the threats have followed this move, and now netizens are being targeted.

The murder of **María Elizabeth Macias**, [an influential blogger found decapitated in the Tamaulipas city of Nuevo Laredo on 24 September 2011](#), is illustrative of the extreme tension in drug-trafficking hubs. Her killers left this message beside her body: "Look where my and others' reporting led me."

Reporters Without Borders has registered six murders of journalists in the past two years in Mexico, which is one of the world's deadliest countries for media personnel and is ranked 152nd out of 180 countries in the 2014 [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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