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Americas - Mexico

Kidnapping

No progress in investigation into Veracruz journalist's abduction

21 January 2015

Reporters Without Borders is very concerned about the lack of progress and poor coordination in the investigation into the disappearance of Moisés Sánchez Cerezo, a blogger and online newspaper editor, who was kidnapped from his home in Medellín de Bravo, a municipality in the eastern state of Veracruz, on 2 January.

Nearly three weeks have elapsed without any light being shed on **Moisés Sánchez Cerezo's** fate or the identity and motive of his abductors.

Reporters Without Borders is particularly disturbed by the time taken by the Veracruz state authorities to launch a search for Sánchez. They were notified within 40 minutes of his abduction but waited four or five hours before beginning their search.

"We are worried about the lack of cooperation between Veracruz officials (the Procuraduría del Estado) and federal officials (the Fiscalía Federal de Atención a Delitos contra la Libertad de Expresión)," said Claire San Filippo, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

"We urge the different authorities to work together in a constructive manner and to do everything possible to find Sánchez safe and sound. This includes assigning more resources to exploring the possibilities that his abduction was linked to his journalistic work, that organized crime was involved, and that local officials may also have been complicit."

According to family members who were present at the time, four cars pulled up outside Sánchez's home at around 7:30 p.m. on 2 January and six heavily-armed men in civilian dress got out. Three of them then entered the house, seized Sánchez and drove off with him.

After the family reported his abduction, the Commission for Protection and Attention to Journalists took measures to protect the family. Reporters Without Borders urges the authorities to reinforce these measures.

The journalist's son, Jorge Sánchez, told Reporters Without Borders: "We know it was because of his work because they did not take any money, just all of his [journalistic] material." Sánchez's online newspaper was called La Unión de Medellín.

The local police and judicial authorities did not initially consider the possibility that his abduction was linked to his journalism because, they said, he earned his living as a taxi driver, not as a journalist, and "just posted on social networks."

The family told Reporters Without Borders that Sánchez ended up using Facebook as his main method of communication after his blog had been blocked three times. He covered organized crime, criticized Medellín de Bravo's high crime rate and accused the local authorities, especially mayor Omar Cruz Reyes, of not paying enough attention to this issue.

A few days before his abduction, a friend told him that the mayor was annoyed by his reporting and wanted to "scare" him.

Given the subjects he covered, those investigating his abduction must also consider other possibilities, including the involvement of organized crime. Sánchez was also a local activist who had organized a protest by the neighbourhood self-defence committee in an attempt to get the mayor's

attention.

One of Mexico's most dangerous states for journalists, Veracruz has a high crime rate that is fuelled by various kinds of trafficking. Since 2010, four journalists have gone missing and ten have been killed.

The victims include [Gregorio Jiménez de la Cruz](#), whose body was found six days after his abduction in February 2014. The Jiménez case was another example of the lack of coordination between local and federal officials that only too often hampers police and judicial investigations.

Several Veracruz journalists have reported being watched, harassed and threatened in connection with their crime coverage on social networks. The local authorities try to cover up the scale of violence.

Mexico is ranked 152nd out of 180 countries in the 2014 [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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