

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ecuador-young-photographer-gunned-down-03-07-2012,42942.html>

Americas - Ecuador

Photographer murdered

Young photographer gunned down near Guayaquil after witnessing theft

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Byron Baldeón, a freelance photographer who worked for the daily newspaper *Extra*, was gunned down as he arrived at his home in El Triunfo, about 60 km north of Guayaquil, on the night of 1 July. Information provided by the newspaper and the Ecuadorean free speech NGO Fundamedios offers strong grounds for thinking that the murder was linked to the victim's work.

"We hope that a thorough investigation will quickly lead to the arrest of Baldeón's murderers," Reporters Without Borders said. "It is rare for journalists to be the victim of this kind of tragedy in Ecuador. Investigators should give priority to the possibility Baldeón was murdered because of his knowledge of certain criminal activity."

Witnesses said Baldeón was returning home at around 6 p.m. when he was intercepted by two individuals on a motorcycle, who shot him nine times at close range. The number of gunshots was confirmed by the autopsy.

Baldeón had recently covered the theft of a container full of TV sets, which he had happened to witness. Armed with the photos he took of the theft, he gave a statement to the public prosecutor's department. The ensuing investigation led to the arrest of three police officers and two other people in May.

The possibility that his murder was a direct result of this case cannot be ruled out. *Extra* editor **Juan Manuel Yépez** nonetheless said he was not sure that they were connected. The relevant authorities have not as yet provided any information about the investigation.
