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Americas - Bolivia

Sentence overturned

Bolivian editor's 30-month jail term quashed but other journalists are being prosecuted

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Reporters Without Borders welcomes the Bolivian supreme court's decision to overturn the 30-month jail sentence that **Rogelio Peláez**, the editor of the monthly *Larga Vista*, received two years ago for allegedly defaming a lawyer, Waldo Molina, by accusing him in the magazine's April 2010 issue of illicit enrichment.

The ruling, handed down on 28 April, ends years of legal wrangling and judicial harassment for Peláez, but other Bolivian journalists are currently the targets of legal proceedings.

"While pleased by the quashing of Peláez's prison sentence, we have not forgotten the arbitrary proceedings against two of the daily La Razón's journalists, Claudio Aguilar and Claudia Buenavente," said Camille Soulier, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

"The authorities have accused them of spying and revealing state secrets, and want to violate the confidentiality of their sources. The Bolivian justice system must respect the inviolability of journalists' sources, which is guaranteed by the 1925 press law."

Aguilar and Buenavente have been charged in connection with a 13 April article about a complaint that land-locked Bolivia brought against Chile before the International Court of Justice in The Hague as part of its historic campaign to recover access to the Pacific Ocean, lost in a 19th century war.

As well as accusing them of spying, the prosecutor-general ordered them to reveal their sources. According to the government, the information they reported in *La Razón* was a state secret. But in Chile, all documents related to Bolivia's complaint are available to the public.

The current climate is hostile to investigative journalism. In one recent example of this, a teargas grenade was thrown into the Canal 33 TV studio during the recording of the current affairs programme "Lo que se ve se anota" on 17 June, as Chamber of Deputies human rights commission president Rodolfo Calle was about to be interviewed.

The grenade was preceded by a series of anonymous phone calls during the morning demanding the programme's cancellation.

President Evo Morales fuelled the tension at a news conference the same day, when he said he did not trust the independent media. The independence of each so-called "independent" news outlet was sacrificed to its editorial policies and to private interests, he said.

The daily *Página Siete* and the news agency *Fides* are among the other news media that are currently the target of proceedings by the Bolivian authorities.

Bolivia is ranked 94th out of 180 countries in the [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
