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Americas - Dominican Republic

Surprising acquittal

Court surprisingly acquits three men of murdering cameraman in 2008

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Reporters Without Borders is stunned to learn that a court in the northern city of Santiago de los Caballeros has acquitted three men of the 2008 murder of [Normando García](#) (photo), a cameraman employed by the Santiago-based TV station *Teleunión*.

Those acquitted on 1 March were businessman Jaime Flete García and the two men Flete allegedly hired to gun García down on 7 August 2008 in Santiago, [José Amauris Santiago and José Agustín Espinal](#). A taxi driver García was talking to at the time was also fatally injured in the shooting.

"We are unpleasantly surprised by this decision as Flete's motive for murdering García seemed to have been established," Reporters Without Borders said. "If there was insufficient evidence against the three defendants, why did the court not hear the testimony of the police officer who led the investigation? Was pressure put on the judges? These questions alone are sufficient grounds for the appeal that the prosecution plans to file."

At a previous hearing on 28 August 2010, the three defendants were released on 130,000 dollars in bail on condition that they did not leave the country and presented themselves regularly to the judicial authorities in Santiago.

Prosecutor Luisa Liranzo has announced his intention to appeal against their acquittal on the grounds that testimony was not taken during the trial from the police officer who was in charge of investigating the murder, Col. Roberto Salcedo.

According to the prosecution, Flete had a motive because García had produced a video proving Flete's direct involvement in a physical attack on a client in dispute over money and because Flete had made one of his security guards take the blame for the injuries inflicted on the client. García went to the judicial authorities with the video and testified against Flete. This led to incidents at Flete's business and to Flete being attacked by his own security personnel.

The Dominican Republic is ranked 95th out of 179 countries in the latest Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. Another journalist was [murdered in 2011](#).
