

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/dominican-republic-investigative-journalist-s-murder-03-08-2011,40742.html>

Americas - Dominican Republic

Kidnapped and executed

Investigative journalist's murder probably linked to his work

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Reporters Without Borders condemns yesterday's murder of TV presenter **José Agustín Silvestre de los Santos**, who was kidnapped in the eastern city of La Romana and was later found dead in El Peñon, on the road from La Romana to San Pedro de Macorís. He had been shot three times.

"We urge the authorities to quickly identify those responsible for José Silvestre's murder," Reporters Without Borders said. "Those in charge of the investigation that is already under way should focus on the probability that his death was linked to his investigative coverage of crime and alleged links between drug traffickers and police and judicial officials."

Also known as "Gajo," Silvestre, 59, hosted the programme "La Voz de la Verdad" (Voice of Truth) on regional TV station *Caña Teve* and edited a magazine of the same name. Local newspapers reported that four unidentified individuals forced him into a car in La Romana at about 8 a.m. yesterday. Witnesses said they heard shots fired.

Silvestre had reported being followed a few days before his murder. According to the newspaper *Diario Libre*, he had been forced to leave La Romana temporarily after making allegations on the air on 30 July about a recent murder.

On the orders of President Leonel Fernández, attorney-general Radhamés Jiménez yesterday created a special team led by national police chief José Armando Polanco Gómez to investigate Silvestre's murder. Police said they had already arrested seven suspects but they have not yet identified any alleged perpetrators or masterminds.

A criminal defamation charge was brought against Silvestre last May for accusing La Romana prosecutor José Polanco Ramírez on the air of links with drug trafficking. Shots were fired at Silvestre's home and he spent six days in detention before being released on bail of 100,000 pesos (2,600 euros).

The investigation of this murder should be a top priority for the authorities in a country where the press freedom situation is, on the whole, fairly satisfactory.
