

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/guinee-bissau-rtp-bureau-chief-deported-amid-02-11-2012,43630.html>

Africa - Guinea Bissau

U-turn

Government reverses decision to expel RTP bureau chief

5 November 2012

Reporters Without Borders is pleased to learn that the government has reversed its decision to expel *Radio-Télévision Portugaise* bureau chief **Fernando Gomes** and has promised *RTP* to guarantee his safety in the face of all the threats that have been made against him by soldiers.

The media freedom organization hopes that this decision will also mark the end of the harassment to which all the media have been subjected in Guinea-Bissau.

02.11.2012 - RTP bureau chief deported amid army threats against journalists

Reporters Without Borders condemns Guinea-Bissau's expulsion of **Fernando Gomes**, the Bissau bureau chief of Portugal's state-owned *Radio-Télévision Portugaise (RTP)*, and voices alarm about the current poisonous environment for the media in this West African country.

A Portuguese national, Gomes was due to return to Lisbon today after being told he was no longer welcome and after a high-ranking military officer threatened to personally kill troublesome journalists at a news conference three days ago.

Gomes' expulsion comes at a time of tension between Portugal and Guinea-Bissau's transitional government, which has accused the former colonial power of orchestrating an attack on a military barracks in Bissau on 21 October with the aim of restoring ousted former Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior.

RTP's bureau chief is accused of "hostile coverage" of the transition government, which was installed in the wake of a [12 April military coup that toppled the Gomes Junior government between the first and second rounds of a presidential election](#).

Reached by Reporters Without Borders, Gomes said he was not notified of his expulsion directly but was told by *RTP's* management, which received a letter to this effect on 29 October from government spokesman and communication minister Fernando Vaz.

Agence France-Presse quoted a fellow *RTP* journalist as saying: "Gomes just did his job. He was berated and insulted several times while out reporting." *AFP* said Gomes was particularly harassed by soldiers during the arrest of Capt. Pensau NTchama, the 21 October attack's alleged mastermind, on 27 October in Bolama, on one of the Bijagos islands.

"We are sick with fear," a Bissau-based journalist told Reporters Without Borders. During a news conference on 30 October at the armed forces high command, the chief of staff said: "Any journalist who asks questions about former President Nino Vieira's assassination will not leave this barracks alive. I will kill him. We are at war."

Reporters Without Borders is shocked by these direct threats and the climate of terror they create, and calls on the authorities to immediately end this policy of intimidating journalists.

"Inciting fear with the aim of obtaining muted and uncritical media coverage is completely

inappropriate from a government that is preparing to hold elections in April 2013," Reporters Without Borders added. "Media pluralism and independence must be respected, and journalists' safety must be guaranteed."

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- ["Muscling in on the media" – a Reporters Without Borders look at organized crime](#)
- [Cocaine and coups haunt gagged nation](#)

Photo : Defence minister Celestino de Carvalho berates Fernando Gomes in Bissau on 21 October.

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