

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/mexico-organized-crime-local-authorities-04-03-2013,44161.html>

Americas - Mexico

The dangers of reporting

Organized crime, local authorities threaten reporters and netizens

4 March 2013

Reporting on the realities of Mexican life still carries enormous risk. Against this backdrop, Reporters Without Borders submitted recommendations on 4 March to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (see document below), which will examine the case of Mexico during the 17th [Universal Periodic Review](#).

In the states of San Luis Potosí (north-center) and Tamaulipas (north-east), organized crime and local governments, the latter sometimes infiltrated by drug cartels, continue to threaten journalists and netizens who dare to report on violence and corruption linked to the drug trade, the press freedom organization reported.

In San Luis Potosí, several journalists from *Pulso*, a regional daily, have been targeted in recent months by an anonymous hate campaign on social networks. A state government agency is apparently responsible, the newspaper reported on 19 February.

Defamatory messages have been published on the anonymous Twitter accounts @zacahuilhuastec, @MaestraRevoluci, @EmprendedorSLP, @elena__morado, @grillopotosino. On 20 December 2012, **Jaime Hernández López**, the newspaper's editorial coordinator, was directly attacked on a [Wordpress blog](#), for allegedly deficient ethics.

Pulso has reported that the state Social Communication General Coordination Office, directed by Juan Antonio Hernández Varela, created the accounts. The aim was to discredit journalists, following the publication of articles that reported critically on the level of crime and other issues.

The newspaper documented its reporting with a video (see below) on which Hernández Varela can be heard ordering colleagues to create false social network accounts in order to exploit the disruptive power of social networking to hit back at critics.

Reporters Without Borders calls on officials to stop using social networks to discredit journalists. Media workers who investigate issues that can embarrass authorities are trying to carry out their responsibility to keep citizens informed. Social networks should be used for information – not for disinformation.

The press freedom organization also expresses grave concern over threats to the administrator of the ["Valor por Tamaulipas"](#) Facebook page. These were launched in retaliation for the page's work of informing readers about drug trafficking-linked violence that has ravaged the state since 2004, as cartels fight for territorial control.

Founded on 1 January, 2012, the page has been telling its 169,000 followers "what is going on in this state," the administrator told Reporters Without Borders. That information, according to the page, includes direct cooperation between state government and organized crime.

On 13 February, 600,000 pesos, or \$50,000, was offered for information that would identify the administrator or members of his or her family. The Facebook blogger told AFP that the threat may come from corrupt officials linked to the Zetas cartel.

The page's creator was already targeted by repeated threats carried on a Facebook page called ["Antivalor por Tamaulipas"](#), created on 11 July, 2012, apparently by the Gulf cartel.

For years, social networks have been the sole information sources on the cartel wars. Traditional media have declined – sometimes openly – to report on the atrocities growing out of drug trafficking. That policy, designed to protect journalists' lives, followed the murders of several media workers.

In Tamaulipas state, known in Mexico as a "zone of silence," bloggers can pay with their lives for breaking it. **María Elizabeth Macías**, whose blog, "La Nena de Nuevo Laredo" reported on drug trafficking, was [decapitated in 2011](#). Her remains were found on 24 September of that year.

In this climate, Mario Anguiano Moreno, governor of the Pacific coast state of Colima said in January that the [federal government had reached an agreement with state officials](#) to not report on episodes of violence. The aim is to lessen citizens' sense of insecurity.

Reporters Without Borders cited recent cases in recommendations that will be considered during the Universal Periodic Review. The organization calls for a thorough overhaul of the judicial system, in order to combat impunity and provide real protection to journalists and bloggers.

Authorities should also strengthen online security measures that protect personal information, so that social networkers do not put themselves in danger.

Recommendations submitted by Reporters Without Borders to the UN Human Rights Council, which will examine the case of Mexico during the 17th Universal Periodic Review :



Other images



JPEG - 11.6 kb
400 x 300 pixels
