

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/syria-families-reveal-two-spanish-10-12-2013,45586.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Syria

More abductions

## Families reveal two Spanish journalists kidnapped three months ago

10 December 2013

The families of Spanish journalists **Javier Espinosa Robles** and **Ricardo García Vilanova** revealed at news conferences in Beirut and Madrid today that the jihadi group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) kidnapped Espinosa and García in Syria's northern province of Raqqah on 16 September.

Reporters Without Borders condemns their abduction, which has again highlighted the ISIS strategy of trying to end the presence of all foreign journalists in the regions it controls or aspires to control.

"After the [United Nations General Assembly's adoption of its first resolution on the safety of journalists](#) on 26 November, the international community must quickly intervene to prevent ISIS from extending its hold over all the so-called 'liberated' areas in northern Syria," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Urgent action is needed to end this nightmare for the Syrian population in general and news providers in particular, who are being targeted by both the regular army and armed groups that support Al-Qaeda."

The Spanish daily *El Mundo*, for which Espinosa works, [said](#) he and García were about to leave Syria after two weeks of covering the war's impact on civilians in the eastern Deir Ezzor region when they abducted at a checkpoint in Tel Abiyad along with four members of the Free Syrian Army who were supposed to be protecting them. The four FSA members were freed 12 days later.

Espinosa's wife, Monica Pietro, [said at the Beirut press conference](#) that the current situation seemed to have reached an impasse and she announced a [campaign for their release](#).

"We appeal today to the Syrian people and to all the armed groups to help in the release of Javier and Ricardo, who have always strived to show the humanity and the suffering of the Syrian people in these difficult times," she said.

Both Espinosa and García are seasoned reporters who have been covering the uprising against the Assad regime since it began in March 2011.

Espinosa, 49, has been based in Beirut as *El Mundo's* Middle East correspondent since 2002. He was previously its South Africa correspondent, its Mexico City-based Latin America correspondent (1995 to 1999) and its Rabat-based Africa correspondent (1999 to 2002).

From his Beirut base, Espinosa distinguished himself in his coverage of Iraq during the US-led military intervention in 2003 and the years that followed, and has been covering the popular uprisings in the Arab world since 2011.

In February 2012, he was imprisoned with fellow journalists Edith Bouvier, William Daniels and Paul Conroy in the [Bab Amr](#) district of the Syrian city of Homs after its media centre was the target of a regular army bombardment. He has won many awards including the [Bayeux-Calvados Prize in 2012 in the print media category](#) for a report headline "Bab Amr's last battle."

García is a freelance photographer and videographer who has been covering wars and humanitarian crises for more than 15 years, drawing attention to violations of human rights and children's rights in particular.

After covering the uprising in Libya in 2011, for which he and Alberto Arce shared the [2012 Rory Peck Trust Award in the features category for "Misrata, victory or death,"](#) he has done a lot of reporting in Syria in the past two years, winning many awards in 2013.

The news media he has worked for include Channel 4, APTN, Reuters and Euronews. He has also worked for the United Nations and for humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières and Human Rights Watch.

According to [Reporters Without Borders' tally](#), a total of 18 foreign journalists are currently kidnapped, detained or missing in Syria while 22 Syrian news providers are missing, kidnapped or held by armed groups in northern Syria.

Reporters Without Borders is a partner in the ["Free Press for Syria" campaign](#) that was launched on 2 December to denounce a "deliberate strategy [by ISIS] to suppress media freedom and impose new generalized censorship on the Syrian people."

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