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Reporters Without Borders

Contact: Jean-François Julliard

Tel: (33) 1 4483-8484

E-mail: julliard@rsf.org

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**Evidence of Reporters Without Borders, an NGO with special consultative status, about
press freedom in BRAZIL**

Press freedom

Journalist Luiz Carlos Barbon Filho, 37, a columnist for the weekly *Jornal do Porto* and the daily *JC Regional*, was murdered on 5 May 2007. He had strongly criticised local politicians, had many enemies and had received telephoned death threats. The daily *Folha de São Paulo* reported on 8 June that military police in Porto Ferreira (São Paulo state) were involved. The murder investigation was handed over to the General Investigations Department (DIG) to avoid political pressure on Porto Ferreira police.

Freelance photographer Robson Barbosa Bezerra was murdered in Rio de Janeiro on 8 February, a few days after he had received threats and been physically attacked. Police did not rule out that this was because of his work, but also noted he had a police record.

Journalist Amaury Ribeiro Junior, of the daily *Correio Braziliense*, was shot and wounded on 19 September 2007 while investigating organised crime near Brasilia. Four suspects were arrested eight days later. Police think it was an ordinary crime.

Reporters Without Borders noted an increase in 2007 of frequently excessive legal orders restraining media reporting, mainly by local courts whose decisions were usually overturned on appeal but still creating a threatening atmosphere and encouraging self-censorship.

Free flow of information online

The social networking service Orkut, half of whose members are in Brazil and which is owned by the Brazilian branch of Google, was accused by the São Paulo state prosecutor of carrying racist, paedophile and homophobic messages. The authorities threatened on 27 October 2007 to shut down the Brazilian branch of Google if the problem was not cleared up.

A São Paulo court ordered ISPs to block access to the video-sharing website YouTube on 4 January 2007 after a complaint by two prominent Brazilians about a steamy video posted on the site. The order was lifted on 9 January.

Government efforts to improve the situation

The 1967 press law inherited from the military dictatorship is still on the books and allows imprisonment for press offences, but the federal government has promised to expand freedom of expression and President Lula signed the IAPA Chapultepec Declaration on freedom of expression and information on 3 May 2006.

The president vetoed a bill on 26 July 2006 to oblige journalists to have a diploma and join a journalists' institution. The debate divided the press and the two top federal legal bodies contradicted each other over the diploma requirement, with the High Court declaring in favour on 8 November 2006 and the Federal Supreme Court, which takes precedence, unanimously rejecting it two weeks later.

Cooperation with NGOs

The Rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Council, Philip Alston, visited Brazil in November to investigate police brutality in Rio de Janeiro. Fourteen human rights organisations handed him a report criticising public security policy in Rio state. Alston will pass report back to the Council with recommendations.

Methods used

The material in this update was gathered and checked by Reporters Without Borders, which has a worldwide network of correspondents (in 130 countries) and partner organisations (in about 20).

Journalists in some countries can be sent to prison for several years just for a word or a photo that offends. Jailing or killing a journalist eliminates a vital witness and threatens the right of each of us to be kept informed. Reporters Without Borders has been fighting day-by-day for press freedom since it was founded in 1985.