



The Writers in Prison Committee - International PEN
Freedom to write in the Americas
Killings and disappearances (2004-2008)

International PEN has recorded the killings of 37 writers and print journalists in the Americas in the five years from January 2004 to December 2008. They were either directly targeted for their writing, or it is thought that this was or may have been the reason behind their deaths. In few cases have the persons who carried out the murders been brought to justice. Mexico remains the most dangerous country to be a writer or journalist in the region, and indeed one of the most dangerous in the world.

Killings

Killings (2004-2008)	
Country	Number
Brazil	4
Colombia	2
Ecuador	1
Guatemala	2
Haiti	1
Mexico	20
Nicaragua	2
Peru	1
Venezuela	4
Total	37

BRAZIL

31 March 2005:

Ricardo GONZALVES ROCHA, owner of the daily newspaper *Jornal Vicentino*, São Vicente, São Paulo state.

Gonzalves (72) was shot dead by an unidentified motorcyclist while driving his car on 31 March 2005. The journalist, who was reportedly a controversial local figure, had formerly

served many years on the city council. The motive for the murder was not clear but robbery was ruled out since nothing of value was taken at the time of the attack.

24 July 2006:

Ajuricaba MONASSA DE PAULA, freelance journalist and member of the Brazilian Press Association.

Monassa died on 24 July 2006 in Guapirimim, Rio de Janeiro state, reportedly after being beaten by a councilman whom the journalist had criticised in recent articles. Monassa, also a member of the local opposition, reportedly argued with a close relative of the councillor's, before the politician himself, a martial arts black belt, intervened and beat the journalist until he collapsed. It is not known if judicial action was taken.

20 July 2006:

Manoel PAULINO DA SILVA, director of the daily newspaper *Hoje Jornal*.

Paulino da Silva was shot at while driving his car in Guarujá, São Paulo state, on the morning of 20 July 2006. His vehicle reportedly crashed into a wall and burst into flames, killing the journalist.

5 May 2007:

Luiz Carlos BARBON FILHO, investigative journalist for newspapers *Jornal do Porto* and *JC Regional*.



Barbon (37) was shot dead by two masked men on a motorbike as he sat with friends on a bar terrace in Porto Ferreira, São Paulo state. He was shot twice at close range, wounding his leg and abdomen, and later died in hospital. It is thought that his murder was related to his reporting on political corruption. According to his widow, Barbon had been receiving frequent death threats by telephone and mail prior to his death.

The journalist had investigated numerous cases of corruption and crime involving state officials, including alleged police involvement in gangs that stole freight from trucks on the highway. In 2003 he had uncovered a child sex abuse ring, which led to the arrest and sentencing of ten people, including politicians and businessmen. Despite being given long jail sentences, most have since been freed. After his death, there were press reports that Barbon had attempted to blackmail local politicians, demanding money in return for not publishing insulting articles about them. However there was apparently no evidence to support these claims.

A month after his death, the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* reported that members of the local military police were involved in Barbon's murder, an allegation that was reportedly denied by a regional military police commander. The Department for General Enquiries was put in charge of the investigation.

In November 2008, an international free expression group reported that Cátia Rosa Camargo, Barbon's widow, and her two children were being threatened and harassed by people thought to be linked to her husband's killers. According to Camargo, she had been followed by men she recognized as off-duty policemen and cars and motorbikes were regularly driving past her house even though it is located in an area that is normally

very quiet. Camargo also reported that she had almost been run over in May 2008 by a woman she recognized as the wife of a police officer, and that shots had been fired outside her lawyer's office in October 2008. She says she had not reported these incidents to the police for fear of retribution. The police had previously advised Camargo and her family to leave their home for their own safety.

A few days after this report, Camargo was dismissed from her job as a secretary at a radio station. She believes that she lost her job because of her campaign for an investigation into her husband's killing.

COLOMBIA

12 October 2006:

Francisco BONILLA ROMERO, journalist and founder of the Association of Foreign Correspondents in Colombia.

Bonilla was shot dead by two unidentified men, in Cali, western Colombia, on 12 October 2006. The Metropolitan Police Commander stated that Bonilla's death occurred when he tried to prevent a robbery, however it was also reported that one of the killers identified Bonilla before shooting, saying "it's him".

4 September 2007:

Javier Darío ARROYAVE, contributor to the national daily newspaper *El Tiempo* and radio journalist.



Arroyave (41) was stabbed to death at his home in Cartago in the southwestern department of Valle del Cauca on 4 September 2007. Police said that although Arroyave's laptop was missing there was no sign of a forced entry. They later ruled out the possibility that the murder had been related to his journalistic work. However, Arroyave had suffered harassment in the past for his reporting on local corruption, particularly by a former mayor of Cartago. This had forced him to cancel his news program temporarily, but he had not reported any recent threats.

ECUADOR

24 February 2008:

Carlos NAVARRETE, editor of the daily newspaper *La Calle*, based in Guayaquil.

Navarrete was found dead in his home on the night of 24 February 2008. Reports indicated he had been stabbed seven times, had his hands tied and that he had been tortured. Robbery was initially ruled out as a motive as nothing was missing from the editor's home. However, in April 2008 the national prosecutors reported that they were again working on the assumption that Navarrete had been killed for refusing to give intruders the combination to his safe. On 21 March 2008, a warrant was issued for the arrest of a suspect who had yet to be located. It is not clear whether Navarrete's death was related to his work as a journalist.

GUATEMALA

23 January 2008:

Hugo ARCE BARRILLAS, journalist and writer.



Arce was found dead in a hotel room in Guatemala City on 23 January 2008. He had reportedly been shot through the heart. The official verdict was suicide, which Arce's family contested. In November 2008, Arce's lawyer and family accused the special prosecutor in charge of the investigation of distorting evidence in order to present Arce's death as suicide, and requested that the prosecutor be replaced. Arce is said to have written various articles against President Álvaro Colom and his wife in the run-up to the 2007 general elections, and some reports imply that the president had asked the editor of *La Hora* newspaper to stop publishing Arce's opinion pieces. The president's wife had reportedly filed criminal defamation charges against Arce in December 2007.

10 May 2008:

Jorge MÉRIDA PÉREZ, correspondent for the national daily newspaper *Prensa Libre*.



Mérida (40) was shot dead in his home in Coatepeque on 10 May 2008, reportedly while he was writing an article on his computer. He was shot four times in the head. The editor's 14-year-old son was in the house at the time but was not injured. Mérida had recently reported on local drug trafficking and government corruption and had received multiple threats in the weeks prior to his death, one of them after covering a massive cocaine seizure by police. National authorities in charge of the investigation were reportedly focusing on Mérida's journalism as the main motive behind his killing.

HAITI

10 July 2005:

Jacques ROCHE, cultural editor of the daily newspaper *Le Matin* and TV presenter.



Roche was abducted on 10 July 2005 and found dead on a Port-au-Prince street four days later. He had reportedly been tortured and shot by his kidnappers, who had demanded a ransom of US\$250,000. On 30 August 2007, two members of the local 'Solino' gang, were sentenced to life imprisonment for Roche's kidnapping and murder. They said that they had killed Roche when they did not receive the full ransom. Other gang members were detained later in 2007 in connection with the death. It is not clear whether Roche's death was related to his work as a journalist.

MEXICO

19 March 2004:

Roberto Javier MORA GARCÍA, editorial director of the newspaper *El Mañana* and editor of the weekly *North Mexico Business*.

Location of murder: Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas state, northern Mexico.



El Golfo cartel.

Mora (44) was stabbed to death near his home in the Mexico-US border town of Nuevo Laredo in the early hours of 19 March 2004. The motive for his killing is unclear. Mora had published articles about El Golfo (the Gulf) drug trafficking cartel, claiming that police and public officials were involved with the group. He also uncovered the work of "Los Zetas" (the Zeds), paramilitary criminal gangs linked to drugs traffickers, particularly

El Golfo cartel. It is understood that the police were initially looking at three possible motives for the killing. The first was Mora's journalistic work; the second that he had witnessed a robbery and was killed to stop him testifying; and the third that he had been the victim of mistaken identity. On 22 March 2004, the then President, Vicente Fox Quesada, stated that he had instructed the federal authorities to work with local bodies to carry out an investigation into Mora's murder and to bring those responsible to justice.

At the end of March 2004, Mario Medina, a US citizen, was arrested along with his male partner, Hiram Oliveros Ortiz, in connection with the crime. Medina claimed that the police had tortured him into confessing to the murder. He himself was later stabbed to death by his cellmate in prison on 13 May 2004. It has since been discovered that the weapon allegedly found by police at Medina's house was not the one used to kill Mora.

On 4 June 2008 various Mexican and international free expression organisations demanded a new investigation. According to the Mexican National Human Rights Commission (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, CNDH), the Tamaulipas authorities had been negligent, allowing serious irregularities in the investigation, and evidence and declarations had been altered. The crime remains unpunished.

22 June 2004:

Francisco ORTIZ FRANCO, deputy editor and legal columnist for the weekly magazine *Zeta*.

Location of murder: Tijuana, Baja California state.



Ortiz was gunned down in front of his children in Tijuana on 22 June 2004. He had just left a clinic when he was shot three times by unidentified men firing from a pick-up truck. *Zeta* has a reputation for its outspoken reporting on drug trafficking gangs in Tijuana, and it seems highly likely that he was murdered because of his work for the magazine.

Ortiz was the third *Zeta* journalist to be shot since 1988. *Zeta*'s co-founder Héctor Félix Miranda was killed in April 1988, while publisher Jesús Blancornelas survived several attempts on his life, including one in 1997 in which both his bodyguard and driver were

killed. In the weeks before his death, Ortiz had working to bring to justice those believed responsible for ordering Miranda's killing.

On 17 August 2006, Arturo Villarreal, a member of the Tijuana drug cartel, was arrested as part of an anti-narcotics sweep by US security services. A Mexican prosecutor later identified Villarreal (known as "El Nalgón") and Jorge Briceño (known as "El Cholo") as the masterminds of Ortiz's shooting. The Tijuana cartel was said to have been upset by a report in which Ortiz identified 71 members of their members. The actual gunman, Jorge Eduardo Ronquillo Delgado, was killed by fellow cartel members on October 2004. As of October 2007, no one had been brought to trial for Ortiz' murder.

31 August 2004:

Francisco ARRATIA SALDIERNA, columnist for four newspapers in Tamaulipas state.

Location of murder: Matamoros, Tamaulipas state.



Arratia (55) was abducted in Matamoros on 31 August 2004 and was found wrapped in a sheet outside the offices of the Red Cross later that day. He had been severely beaten and his body showed signs of torture. He was taken to the hospital but later died of his injuries. In September 2004, Raúl Castelán Cruz was arrested in connection with the crime. Police claimed that Castelán, allegedly a member of "Los Zetas" (the Zeds), paramilitary criminal gangs linked to drugs traffickers, particularly El Golfo (the Gulf) cartel, admitted to murdering Arratia because he took exception to what the journalist wrote in his columns. Castelán also pointed to El Golfo head Jorge Eduardo Costilla as the person who ordered the murder. Police have not detained anyone else and the case is still open.

8 April 2005:

Raúl GIBB GUERRERO, owner and director of the newspaper *La Opinión*.

Location of murder: Papantla, Veracruz state.



Gibb died in a hail of bullets while driving to his home in Papantla, Veracruz state, on 8 April 2005 following the launch of a new edition of *La Opinión*. His assailants were reportedly four unidentified men who fled the scene in two cars. In the days leading up to the newspaper launch, Gibb reported having received several anonymous death threats. The police suspected that his killing stemmed from articles he wrote about El Golfo (the Gulf) drug cartel. On 5 July 2005, Martin Rojas, the leading suspect in Gibb's murder, was arrested in the United States on money-laundering charges, but there have been no formal charges and the crime remains unpunished.

31 October 2005:

Hugo BARRAGÁN ORTIZ, journalist with the daily *La Crónica de la Cuenca* and radio presenter.

Location of murder: Tierra Blanca, Veracruz state.

Barragán (73) was found dead in his home in Tierra Blanca on 31 October 2005. He had reportedly been beaten and stabbed. The motives behind his murder are unknown.

8 August 2006:

Enrique PEREA QUINTANILLA, crime reporter for local papers *El Heraldo* and *El Diario*, Chihuahua state and editor of *Dos Caras, Una Verdad*, a magazine covering unsolved murders and drug trafficking.

Location of murder: Chihuahua, Chihuahua state.



Perea was killed in Chihuahua on 8 August 2006 and his body discovered the next day ten miles south of the city. He appeared to have been tortured before being shot dead. Perea had written on corruption in the state government, for which he reported being harassed by local government officials. He had also recently published an interview with an unnamed head of a local drug gang. On 17 October 2006, TV Azteca reportedly received a video in which two visibly tortured men respond to questions and explain they were asked to kill Perea by drug traffickers.

10 November 2006

Misael TAMAYO HERNÁNDEZ: Editor and publisher of the newspaper *Despertar de la Costa*.

Location of murder: Zihuatenejo, Guerrero state.



Tamayo was found dead in a tourist motel in the Pacific coastal resort of Zihuatenejo on 10 November 2006. Tamayo reported on government corruption and drug trafficking, which his family suspects was the motive for his murder. On the day of his disappearance, Tamayo was writing an editorial about corruption within the Zihuatanejo water authority

Tamayo reportedly left his office at 9am on Thursday 9 November 2006 for a meeting with the manager of a bus company who was also a former local police commander. An hour and a half later he called to give instructions to a reporter regarding an article on water quality. That was his last contact. At 3am the following Friday, his family reported him missing to the police. A few hours later his body was found.

According to his family, Tamayo had received a threatening telephone call two months before his death. Three days before his murder, *Despertar de la Costa* had reported on the explosion of two grenades in an Ixtapa Zihuatanejo neighbourhood.

An autopsy suggested that Tamayo had died of a heart attack, a conclusion that was not accepted by many in the local community, particularly because Tamayo was known to have disputes with drug dealers about his paper's coverage. In addition, Tamayo's breakfast companion on the day of his death - a prominent local businessman - disappeared. According to one of Tamayo's relatives, family members suspected foul play but were keeping quiet for fear of reprisals.

In December 2007, the Mexican National Human Rights Commission (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, CNDH) expressed concern about serious omissions and irregularities in the Guerrero state authorities' investigation into Tamayo's death. It called for an internal investigation within the public ministry and the police.

16 November 2006

José Manuel NAVA SÁNCHEZ, author, director and editor of the newspaper *Excélsior* from 2002 to 2005 (previously its Washington DC correspondent for 22 years); from 2006 columnist for *El Sol de México*.

Location of murder: Mexico City.



Nava was found dead in his apartment in Mexico City on the morning of 16 November 2006. He had apparently been stabbed at least seven times in the neck and chest. It was reported that some of his belongings were missing, including his personal computer. The General Prosecutor of Mexico City was reportedly investigating the possible connection between Nava's death and his work as a journalist.

Ten days earlier, on 6 November 2006, Nava had launched his book entitled *Excélsior, el asalto final (Excélsior: the Final Assault)* (Libros para Todos Editorial, 2006), in which he referred to irregularities in the sale of the newspaper. Until it was sold to Grupo Imagen, which owns several Mexican radio stations, in late 2005, *Excélsior* had been run by its journalists and employees. Nava's book was said to be critical of government officials, *Excélsior* employees and members of the Mexican business community for their role in the demise of *Excélsior* as a cooperative.

Nava's colleagues were reportedly not aware of any threats against him prior to his death. The crime remains unsolved.

21 November 2006:

Roberto Marcos GARCÍA, reporter for *Testimonio* in Veracruz and local correspondent for the weekly *Aralma* in Mexico City.

Location of murder: Veracruz state.

García was found dead on 21 November 2006. He had reportedly been driving his motorcycle from Veracruz to Alvarado when he was run down by a car near La Motoza. One of the journalist's colleagues said that prior to his death, García had published a detailed article on the activities of a band of thieves operating in Veracruz. García had allegedly also received death threats on his mobile phone. Police reportedly arrested those responsible for the murder, but let them go because of lack of evidence. The crime remains unpunished.

30 November 2006:

Adolfo SÁNCHEZ GUZMÁN, journalist and editor of the web site *Orizaba en Vivo*.

Location of murder: Veracruz state.



Sánchez (31) was found dead on 30 November 2006 after having been reported missing for two days. His body was found close to the road where his car had been discovered the previous day, between Ciudad Mendoza and Rio Blanco. On 4 December 2006, brothers Julian Rosas Palestino and Juan Carlos Rosas Palestino were arrested as the prime suspects in the murder. Police alleged that their target had not been the journalist, but a man he had gone to meet, who was also killed, and who the alleged killers thought had stolen their truck. On 18 December 2007, Juan Carlos Rosas Palestino was sentenced to 23 years in prison. Julian Rosas Palestino was set free due

to lack of evidence. It is not clear whether Sánchez' death was related to his work as a journalist. Around the time of his death, he had reportedly been investigating the activities of a local gang of robbers and the theft of merchandise from trucks.

8 December 2006:

Raúl MARCIAL PÉREZ, editorial columnist for the regional newspaper *El Gráfico*.

Location of murder: Juxtlahuaca, Oaxaca State.

Marcial was killed by armed men at the newspaper' office in Juxtlahuaca on 8 December 2006. The lawyer he was talking to at the time of the attack was also injured. Marcial had worked for *El Gráfico* for around 10 years, during which time he was reportedly critical of the government of Oaxaca. The editor of *El Gráfico* alleged that the police were not handling the investigation into Marcial's death properly because of his position as an indigenous leader.

16 April 2007:

Saúl Noé MARTÍNEZ ORTEGA, crime reporter for newspapers *Diario de Agua Prieta* and *El Escorpión* and *Interdiario* magazine in Agua Prieta, Sonora State.

Location of murder: near the Chihuahua-Sonora state border.



Martínez (36) was reportedly abducted from outside the Public State Security headquarters in Agua Prieta by unidentified armed men on 16 April 2007. His body was found in a ravine near the Chihuahua-Sonora state border a week later. Martínez' murder was thought to have been connected to a recent investigation into the kidnapping and murder of one of his sources, a police informer and former policeman. His death was reportedly attributed to organised crime.

8 December 2007:

Gerardo Israel GARCIA PIMENTEL, journalist for the daily newspaper *La Opinión*, based in Michoacán state.

Location of murder: Uruapan, Michoacán state.



García Pimentel was shot dead while driving his motorcycle in Uruapan on 8 December 2007. Realising that he was being followed, García Pimentel pulled up at the hotel where he was living with his family, but on arrival in the car park he was shot approximately 20 times by unidentified men wearing hoods. The journalist had reported on agricultural issues for several years. The General Prosecutor's Office was in charge of the investigation of the case. On 5 March 2008, the Mexican Senate agreed to ask federal authorities to investigate García Pimentel's murder. As of late 2008, there was reportedly no progress in the investigation. Another *La Opinión* reporter, **Mauricio Estrada Zamora** went missing on 14 February 2008.

5 February 2008:

Francisco ORTIZ MONROY, correspondent for the daily newspaper *El Diario de México*, Camargo, Tamaulipas state.

Location of murder: Camargo, Tamaulipas state.

Ortiz was reportedly leaving the municipal offices in Camargo, near the US border, on 8 February 2008 when armed men opened fire. He ran but was chased by his assailants. His body was found with eight gunshot wounds. The reason for his death was unknown; the Tamaulipas Attorney General was investigating the case.

7 February 2008:

Bonifacio CRUZ SANTIAGO, director of weekly newspaper *El Real*.

Location of murder: Chimalhuacan, Mexico state.

Cruz was shot dead along with his son **Alfonso Cruz Cruz**, the editor of *El Real*, outside Chimalhuacan town hall on the morning of 7 February 2008. The shooting reportedly happened as the two were waiting for the town hall's legal advisor, with whom they had an appointment. Some reports suggest that the double murder was a case of mistaken identity; that the two men who shot the journalists were instead intending to kill the legal advisor, who had recently received death threats in relation to a land dispute. The case was being investigated by the Mexico state prosecutor.

7 February 2008:

Alfonso CRUZ CRUZ, editor of the weekly *El Real*.

Location of murder: Chimalhuacan, Mexico state.

See entry for Bonifacio CRUZ SANTIAGO

23 June 2008:

Candelario PÉREZ PÉREZ, journalist and editor for crime magazine *Sucesos*.

Location of murder: Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state.

Pérez (32) was shot dead by men armed with AK-47 assault rifles in Ciudad Juárez, while driving to visit relatives on 23 June 2008. According to investigators, around 15 bullets were fired. The motive for his murder was not known, although according to Pérez' father, the publisher of *Sucesos*, his son had had an argument in a bar not long before the shooting and another car had followed him when he left the bar.

25-26 July 2008:

Miguel Ángel GUTIÉRREZ ÁVILA, anthropologist, linguist, author of a number of books on the indigenous people of Guerrero state and activist for the rights of the Amuzgo people.

Location of murder: San Marcos municipality, Guerrero state.



Gutiérrez's body was found covered in bruises and cuts by the side of the Acapulco-Pinotepa highway near La Caridad community in the municipality of San Marcos on the morning of 26 July 2008. He had been driving towards the capital of Guerrero, Chilpancingo de los Bravo. Although initial police reports seem to have suggested that Gutiérrez (53) died as the result of a car accident, it is now thought that he was beaten to death. He had been working on a documentary on indigenous cultures and traditions but had reportedly also been documenting human rights violations by the authorities. According to his family, the vehicle in which Gutiérrez was travelling was untouched and only his filming equipment had been stolen.

A few days before his death, between 23 and 25 July, Gutiérrez had visited the Suljaa' and Cozoyoapan communities in Costa Chica, Guerrero, for a documentary film he was making on indigenous cultures and traditions, entitled 'La Danza del Tigre' (The Dance of the Tiger). During his visit, Gutiérrez had also documented alleged human rights violations by the authorities against the staff of the community radio station Radio Ñomndaa/ La Palabra del Agua (The Word of the Water), including an interview with Ñomndaa founder David Valtierra Arnago, which Gutiérrez reportedly intended to include in his documentary.

According to local press reports, one lead pointed to the involvement of Aceadeth Rocha Ramírez, mayor of Xochistlahuaca municipality in Costa Chica. Rocha is allegedly one of a number of local political leaders opposed to indigenous movements and Radio Ñomndaa. Another lead suggested that Gutiérrez may have angered the authorities by filming members of the Federal Investigations Agency (Agencia Federal de Investigación, AFI) as they raided the radio station.

Gutiérrez had carried out research on the indigenous people of southern Guerrero for more than 20 years, particularly in Costa Chica. He had been involved in various cultural projects there, including Radio Ñomndaa and the establishment of the first Amuzgo community library.

His publications include: *La tradición oral afromestiza en México* (1985), *Nabor Ojeda Caballero, el batallador del sur* (1991), *La conjura de los negros – cuentos de la tradición oral afromestiza de la costa chica de Guerrero y Oaxaca* (1993), *Danzas y música de origen africano en la Costa Chica de Guerrero* (1993), *Déspotas y caciques – una antropología política de los amuzgos de Guerrero* (2001) and *La historia del estado de Guerrero a través de su cultura – una perspectiva antropológica* (2008).

9 October 2008:

Miguel Angel VILLAGÓMEZ VALLE, editor and publisher of the daily regional newspaper *Noticias de Michoacán*.

Location of murder: Guerrero state.

Villagomez (29) was kidnapped after leaving his newspaper's office in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán state, after 10pm on 9 October 2008. He was found in a rubbish tip near La Unión, just inside in the neighbouring state of Guerrero, during a routine police patrol in the early hours of 10 October. The editor had been repeatedly shot in the back and neck at around midnight the previous night.

Villagómez had reportedly received a threatening phone call from a member of "Los Zetas" (the Zeds), paramilitary criminal gangs linked to drugs traffickers, particularly El Golfo (the Gulf) cartel, about a month before his murder, and had warned his family to be alert. *Noticias de Michoacán* often reports on organised crime, corruption and drug trafficking.

On 13 November 2008, it was reported that the authorities were working on the assumption that an organised crime group was responsible for the murder. The Guerrero state attorney general's office was in charge of the investigation but had not reported any progress.

13 November 2008:

José Armando RODRÍGUEZ CARREÓN, crime reporter for local daily *El Diario*, based in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state.

Location of murder: Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state.



Rodríguez (40) was shot at least eight times by an unidentified person as he was about to drive his daughter to school on the morning of 13 November 2008. He died at the scene. His daughter, who was also in the car at the time, was uninjured. An investigation was begun, with Rodríguez' journalism as a possible motive.

The journalist, who had more than 10 years of experience of reporting on crime, in particular murders, had been the target of several death threats in the year prior to his death. For example, he received a telephone call where the caller told him "you are going to die if you keep on talking" (*te vas a morir si sigues hablando*) in January 2008 and a text message telling him to "tone it down" in February 2008. At that time he was reportedly covering drug-related violence and organized crime in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua state.

Following these threats, Rodríguez temporarily left Mexico for the United States. However, he refused to stop covering crime stories. According to local press reports, the journalist had received further death threats in recent months and had been offered security measures by the state authorities but he had considered them unnecessary.

In the weeks following Rodríguez' murder, death threats were received by other journalists for *El Diario* and other media in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua state. On 6 November 2008, a decapitated head had reportedly been left at Journalists' Square in Ciudad Juárez. Rodríguez' wife, also a journalist, reportedly feared for her safety and that of her children.

The state prosecutor and the federal Special Prosecutor on Crimes against Journalists (Fiscalía Especial de Delitos Cometidos contra Periodistas, FEADP) are in charge of the investigation into Rodríguez' murder.

NICARAGUA

9 November 2004:

María José BRAVO, correspondent for the daily newspapers *La Prensa* and *Diario Hoy*, Juigalpa, Chontales province, to the southeast of Managua.



Bravo (26) was shot dead while covering a recount of votes in Juigalpa, Chontales department, on 9 November 2004. She was shot at close range by former Constitutionalist Liberal Party (PLC) mayor Eugenio Hernández González.

Supporters of the PLC and the Alliance for the Republic (APRE) coalition were involved in clashes over the results of the elections which had taken place on 7 November 2004. Bravo, who had reportedly received death threats prior to the attack, was apparently talking to people outside the centre when she was shot. She died before

reaching hospital. Police arrested Hernández González close to the scene of the crime as he tried to make his escape.

The first hearing in the case took place on 17 November 2004. Proceedings were soon mired in controversy, with numerous different versions of events. As a result, the Prosecutor General announced that a special commission comprised of Public Affairs Ministry experts was being sent to Juigalpa to investigate the killing.

On 26 January 2005, after a 20-hour trial, Hernández González was found guilty of premeditated murder and perjury with regards to the evidence against him and the testimonies of 18 individuals. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

According to a report in *La Prensa* in March 2008, the Supreme Court was allegedly seeking to commute Hernández González' prison sentence. It was presumed that, motivated by political interests, the intention was to reduce the charge from murder to manslaughter, which would carry a lighter sentence and lead to Hernández González' early release.

14 August 2005:

Rony Adolfo OLIVAS OLIVAS, correspondent for the newspaper *La Prensa* and President of the Union of Nicaraguan Journalists (UPN).



Olivas was murdered in Estelí, 150 kilometres north of Managua, on 14 August 2005. Allegedly, a taxi driver identified as Santos Roberto Osegueda Palacios – who gave himself up to the authorities on 18 August 2005 – shot Olivas whilst the journalist was in his taxi. The journalist had received death threats on three occasions, immediately after a series of articles written for *La Prensa* which alleged links between wealthy individuals in Estelí and drug traffickers. It was believed that the murder may have been related to these threats. On 31 October 2005, Osgueda was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

PERU

20 October 2005

James OSCCO ANAMARÍA: poet, university professor and social reformer.



Oscco (35) was found murdered in Quitasol, near Abancay, on 20 October 2005. His body reportedly showed signs of torture including the loss of an eye and finger nails. The police and the Interior Ministry (Ministerio Público) apparently showed very little interest in pursuing the individual or individuals responsible for Oscco's torture and murder, initially stating that he had committed suicide, then suggesting that it was a crime of passion. Oscco's lover was arrested in October in connection with the murder. However, she was released after 24 hours. The motive behind the killing remains unclear and the authorities reportedly never carried out a proper investigation.

Oscoco taught at the Universidad Nacional de Abancay and contributed to the Peruvian literary magazines *Poesía en el Perú* and *Revista Peruana de Literatura*. He also led poetry and theatre groups and was a member of the Abancay branch of the National Writers Congress (Congreso Nacional de Escritores – Abancay).

His publications included: 'Waqcha gaviota', 'Mamacha del carmen', the short story collection *Siempre seré águila* (1996), the poetry collection *Relámpagos de amor* (2000), an essay entitled 'Nuevo enfoque para producir y comprender textos' (2003), 'La oratoria del lider' (unpublished) as well as articles on linguistics.

VENEZUELA

23 August 2006:

Jesús FLORES ROJAS, editorial co-ordinator of the Anzoategui edition of the newspaper *Región*, and columnist for other print media in the area.



Flores was shot dead by an unidentified individual at his home in El Tigre, Anzoategui province on 23 August 2006. His daughter was present at the time of the attack. Flores had reportedly received several death threats prior to his murder. He wrote a weekly column in which he often criticised local government officials and had written articles reporting alleged acts of corruption by the local administration.

7 October 2006:

Pedro BASTARDO, journalist working at the Municipality of Bolívar.

Bastardo was shot dead in a shop in Cumaná, Sucre state, on 7 October 2006. The investigation authorities believed the motive was robbery, but none of the journalist's belongings were taken.

19 May 2007:

Nelson ÁLVAREZ NARVÁEZ, columnist for the daily newspaper *El Siglo de Maracay*.



Álvarez was at a birthday party at his mother's home in Maracay, Aragua state, on 19 May 2007 when an unknown person entered the building and shot him six times. The hitman then fled in a car with another man. The criminal investigations unit was said to be looking into the matter and was not ruling out any motive, including political..

2 June 2008:

Pierre Fould GERGES, vice president of the daily newspaper *Reporte Diario de la Economía*.

While on his way to visit his mother on 2 June 2008, Gerges stopped at a petrol station in Caracas where he was approached by two unidentified men on a motorcycle who shot him at least a dozen times in the neck and torso. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

It was thought that the killing may have been linked to *Reporte Diario de la Economía's* criticism of the government.

Gerges had been travelling in a car owned by his brother Tannous Gerges, president of *Reporte Diario de la Economía*. Several senior staff members, including Tannous Gerges, had reportedly been receiving telephone and e-mail death threats since June 2007, one of which specifically mentioned Tannous Gerges' family. The threats were thought to be linked to the newspaper's editorial line, which had been very critical of government corruption. The authorities stated that they were conducting an investigation and were reportedly looking into Pierre Fould Gerges' journalistic work as a possible motive.

At a news conference on 9 June 2008, *Reporte Diario de la Economía's*, lawyer Yisel Soares, said that Gerges' murder was not a political crime and that the investigation was focusing on a powerful network of five bankers. On 25 June 2008, Soares reported having received telephone and e-mail threats warning her to stop commenting on the murder and that she would be the next victim if she did not. She was also reportedly told that the newspaper's headquarters might suffer an arson attack.

After lodging a complaint with the Institute for Scientific, Penal and Criminal Investigations Soares and Tannous Gerges were given police protection. As of the end of 2008, the murder of Pierre Fould Gerges remained unsolved.

Disappearances

Disappearances (2004-2008)	
Country	Number
Mexico	4
Total	4

MEXICO

2 April 2005

Alfredo JIMÉNEZ MOTA: crime reporter for the Hermosillo daily newspaper *El Imparcial*.

Location of disappearance: Hermosillo, Sonora state.



Jiménez (26) has not been seen since 2 April 2005. That evening he was due to meet a source whom he had earlier described to a colleague as “very nervous”. The journalist had recently published articles on local drug traffickers. He had also broken major stories about the alleged links between drug traffickers, police, prosecutors and state officials in Hermosillo, which had reportedly made him a number of enemies.

In the days before his disappearance, Jiménez Mota, a former boxer, reportedly appeared upset and said that he thought he was being followed. On the evening of 2 April 2005, he went to a local restaurant to meet a source, reportedly the deputy director of the local prison, Andres Montoya Garcia. Montoya says that he drove Jimenez to at a local convenience store, dropping him off around 10.30pm.

According to *El Imparcial*, Jimenez’ mobile phone records showed three phone calls: one to Montoya, another to local deputy prosecutor Raul Fernando Galvan Rojas, and a third person that the newspaper could not trace. Montoya and Galvan were later cleared by federal authorities. Both resigned shortly after Jimenez’ disappearance and have disappeared from the public eye.

On 25 April 2005, the Sub Procurator’s Office Investigation Unit Specialising in Organised Crime (Subprocuraduria de Investigación Especializada en Delincuencia Organizada, SIEDO) opened an investigation into the disappearance. A year later, in April 2006, it was reported that the SIEDO’s two lines of investigation involved Jiménez’ coverage of the families running the drug trade in Sonora, and possible unlawful activities by government officials. Jiménez was now presumed to have been killed.

In January 2007, it was reported that a municipal police officer of Navojoa, Sonora state, had given statements to the National Commission for Human Rights (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, CNDH) and the Attorney General (Procuraduria General de la República, PGR) implicating local authorities in Jiménez’ disappearance. The officer named a former Navojoa Police Chief, two criminal investigation police officers, two local prosecutors and a brother of the governor of Sonora. He then reportedly went into hiding

after receiving repeated threats. In April 2007, it was reported that none of the named suspects had been questioned about the case.

On 1 April 2008, on the third anniversary of Jiménez' disappearance, the PGR issued a report on the measures that had been taken to investigate the case to date. All had proved inconclusive. The PGR pledged to continue the investigation until the facts have been established. Free expression organisations noted that no advance had been reported regarding the implication of local authorities, despite the leads mentioned above.

In June 2008, Sonora governor Eduardo Bours made public a letter that sought to link his government to the Jimenez case. Allegedly written by one of Jimenez' abductors, the letter details the reporter's supposed kidnapping, torture and murder, and implicates several local officials as well as the governor's brother. Bours denied any involvement and called for a new investigation.

20 November 2006

José Antonio GARCIA APAC: editor of the newspaper *Ecos de la Costa*, Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán state.

Location of disappearance: Michoacán state.



García was on his way from Tepalcatepec to Morelia on the evening of 20 November 2006, when he was reportedly intercepted by three people in a pick-up truck, who took him with them. His car was not found. According to his family, García had reported being followed earlier that year. He was covering cases related to drug trafficking in Michoacán at the time. He was also widely known to have compiled a list of allegedly corrupt officials before he disappeared.

On 20 November 2007, Garcia's wife, Rosa Isela Caballero, reported that she had sent a letter to the General Prosecutor's Office in July 2007 enquiring about the results of the investigation into her husband's disappearance, but had not yet received a clear response. According to Caballero, three representatives of the prosecutor's office had been called to the investigation, and the federal justice ministry had also intervened, but without any results.

As of December 2008, no substantial progress in the investigation had been reported. Caballero continues to publish *Ecos de la Cuenca* in memory of her husband.

20 January 2007

Rodolfo RINCÓN TARACENA, journalist for the regional daily *Tabasco Hoy*

Location of disappearance: Villahermosa, Tabasco state.



Rincón (54) was last seen leaving his newspaper's office in Villahermosa, south-eastern Mexico, on the night of 20 January 2007. He had reportedly told his colleagues that he would return shortly. It seems highly likely that his disappearance is linked to his reporting on organised crime.

The journalist had reportedly just completed an article on a criminal gang

preying on cash-machine customers in Villahermosa which specified the locations of the criminals' safe houses. The previous day, *Tabasco Hoy* had run a major story on illicit 'drugstores' (*narcotiendas*) run by traffickers, which named several suspects and showed the location of the stores. Rincón had reportedly received regular threats since 2006. One made about a month before his disappearance had particularly alarmed him.

The Rincón's family reported the case to the Office of the General Prosecutor of the state of Tabasco (Procuraduría General de la Justicia del Estado de Tabasco, PGJE) on 23 January 2007. However, as of December 2008 the authorities had still not reported any substantial progress in the investigation.

Tabasco Hoy has continued to face harassment. In May 2007, the severed head of a local councillor was left outside the newspaper's offices in Villahermosa. The paper has also received threats from "Los Zetas" (the Zeds), paramilitary criminal gangs linked to drugs traffickers, particularly El Golfo (the Gulf) cartel.

Rincón's long term girlfriend, also a journalist, has reportedly stated that she believes that that corrupt officials as well as drug traffickers are behind his disappearance.

14 February 2008

Mauricio ESTRADA ZAMORA: reporter for newspapers *La Opinión de Apatzingán* and *La Opinión de Michoacán*

Location of disappearance: Michoacán state.

Estrada was reported missing on 14 February 2008. On that day, *La Opinión de Michoacán* stated that the reporter had last been seen on 12 February, when he left the newspaper's premises for home, and that he had not answered calls to his mobile phone. According to the newspaper, on the morning of 13 February the journalist's vehicle was found by a local public safety official, parked with its doors open and the engine running. Estrada's laptop and camera, along with the car's stereo, were missing. The newspaper requested the intervention of the Michoacán state Attorney General's Office, which reportedly sent its anti-kidnapping team to the region in order to search for the reporter.

La Opinión de Michoacán believed that Estrada's disappearance may have been linked to a problem he had in January 2008 with a Federal Investigations Agency (Agencia Federal de Investigación, AFI) agent in the area nicknamed 'El Diablo' (the Devil). The investigation was being conducted by the local office of the federal attorney general that stated that it could not identify an AFI agent known as the Devil, or make any connection between Estrada's disappearance and a federal agent. They dismissed any links to a criminal group.

As of July 2008, the Michoacán state prosecutor had reportedly not provided any information or update on the investigation. The case was still being treated as a disappearance.

As of December 2008, Estrada's whereabouts were still unknown and there had reportedly been no progress in the investigation. The same month it was reported that the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Journalists was of the opinion that Estrada's disappearance has only tenuous links to his work as a journalist.

Another journalist for *La Opinión de Michoacán*, **Gerardo Israel García Pimentel**, was murdered in December 2007.