

# Colombia: Threats against investigative journalists escalate despite government response efforts

Since September 2024, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has documented an increase in threats against journalists investigating paramilitary groups and organised crime in Colombia. Despite the government's efforts to respond to the most urgent cases, following the President's commitment made to RSF and FLIP, the threatened journalists continue to fear for their lives and those of their families. RSF strongly condemns these threats and calls on the Colombian authorities to go further and take concrete measures to guarantee the safety of these journalists.

Colombian journalists face recurrent threats from paramilitary groups and criminal gangs. In the last two months, journalists from at least five different media outlets across the country have received a series of very serious threats, including death threats, sometimes leading to self-censorship. President Gustavo Petro has received the most urgent cases directly and has [publicly requested](#) that these journalists be placed under state protection, a positive response that follows on from the [commitment](#) he made to RSF and the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) in August 2024. However, as threats continue, many journalists remain in fear for their lives.

*"An important step was taken when President Petro made a commitment to RSF and FLIP to create a direct alert channel to deal with critical cases of violence against journalists. While the president's public response is a positive development, it is clear that violence and intimidation against these professionals is spreading faster than the government's protections. Urgent and robust measures are now needed to ensure that journalists can carry out their work without fear of threats, harassment or violence."*

Artur Romeu

Director of RSF's Latin America Bureau

## Journalists and media under threat

On 23 October, RSF [reported](#) that journalist **José Ignacio Arango**, founder of the digital media *Noticias Cúcuta 75*, had received death threats from at least three criminal groups if he did not share messages requested by the groups. A month ago, Arango had already requested [support](#) from the National Protection Unit (UNP Colombia) after receiving threats because of his investigations into corruption. According to the journalist, the protection offered so far is insufficient to guarantee his safety.

Journalist **Nicolás Sánchez Arévalo**, of the digital media [Vorágine](#), whose investigative work has focused on the relationship between businessmen and the country's current narco-paramilitary groups, has received [death threats](#) from an anonymous Instagram account. The threats, received since 9 October, have also affected his family, which the journalist considers a form of psychological intimidation. Due to these threats, the media has temporarily suspended investigations to protect its team.

Since 2023, **William Stiven Rojas Rincón**, a freelance journalist who collaborates with digital media such as *La Reacción Prensa*, *Colprensa Colombia* and *El Nudo Colombia*, has been the target of constant death threats from criminal gangs, motivated by his investigations into extortion and organised crime. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted precautionary measures in his favour on 13 October 2023. However, despite this intervention, the

Colombian state has not implemented effective protection mechanisms. In September 2024, the IACHR [reiterated](#) the urgency for the Colombian government to adopt concrete measures to safeguard Rojas' life and to comply with its recommendations.

On 20 September, journalist **Leonardo Aguilar Arias**, director of the online local media *Noticias Doradita Regional*, reported [death threats](#) after publishing a story about the arrest of seven police officers allegedly linked to narco-paramilitary groups.

[Revista RAYA](#), a critical investigative magazine, faces constant judicial harassment with multiple lawsuits seeking to delegitimise its work and hinder the dissemination of information on corruption and human rights violations in the country. The magazine has managed to document and expose cases of corruption involving local authorities and criminal groups, which has led to reprisals and threats. On 19 September, *Revista RAYA* [stated](#) that it continues to receive threats from the narco-paramilitary organisation Clan del Golfo.