

Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
37 Quai d'Orsay
75351 Paris

Paris, 10 April 2014

Dear Foreign Minister,

Reporters Without Borders, an international organization that defends freedom of information, would like to draw your attention to the plight of professional and non-professional journalists in Cuba.

All independent media, both traditional and online, are censored in Cuba, which is ranked 170th out of 180 countries in our 2014 press freedom index. Even defending the right to information is obstructed by President Raúl Castro's government, which refuses to recognize NGOs, automatically treating them as accomplices to US hegemony.

Three Cuban journalists and bloggers are currently detained for disseminating information regarded as "counterrevolutionary" or defamatory of the Castro regime. Although the mass roundups of the 2003 Black Spring are over, arbitrary arrest has never ceased to be part of the daily life of journalists in Cuba.

More than a decade after the arrests of 75 journalists, librarians and human rights defenders, there has been no real improvement in the situation of these categories of people, as evidenced by the detention of Angel Santiesteban-Prats, a blogger held for the past 13 months, and José Antonio Torres, a former journalist with the official newspaper Granma, who was sentenced to 14 years in prison in July 2012. Since the start of 2014, more than 15 journalists have been arrested for short periods, supposedly for identity checks.

Reporters Without Borders was recently outraged to learn of several arbitrary arrests and acts of intimidation by Cuban officials affecting two journalists and their families.

Roberto de Jesús Guerra, a journalist who runs Hablemos Press, an online information and free speech advocacy centre, reported on social networks on 3 April that immigration officials at Havana's José Martí International Airport had just held him for six hours and confiscated several of his books and work documents. He was returning from a trip abroad in which he had reported violations of freedom of information in Cuba to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and had participated in a seminar in Mexico on independent journalism.

His sister, Sandra Guerra, his 12-year-old daughter and his seven-year-old nephew were detained by the police for several hours two days later. He told Reporters

Without Borders that he had no news of them throughout their arbitrary detention. These particularly shocking arrests are symptomatic of the oppressive climate of intimidation in which journalists in Cuba have to work.

A court in the central province of Sancti Spíritus sentenced Yoení de Jesús Guerra García, an independent blogger with the Yayabo Press agency, to seven years in prison on 13 March 2014. Held in Nieves Morejón prison since October 2013, she has been the repeated victim of violence by prison staff, which is unfortunately common in Cuban detention centres. The length of the period between her arrest and sentence, a year and a half, unquestionably violated the fundamental right of defence.

Your forthcoming meeting with your Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, cannot avoid the major challenges posed by the defence of freedom of information. The abusive treatment of journalists and netizens has been at the heart of the European Union's concerns since 2003 and must legitimately be raised during your talks.

France plays a leading role internationally, especially in the United Nations, as regards the issue of the safety of journalists. The renewal of bilateral ties between France and Cuba should not be at the expense of respect for the right to information.

I thank you in advance for the attention you give to this request.

Sincerely,



Christophe Deloire
Reporters Without Borders secretary-general