
Brazil Police Suspected of Shooting Journalist Covering Police Corruption

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Paris-based freedom of press organization Reporters Without Borders is urging Brazilian authorities to lose no time in solving a shooting attack on Brazilian reporter Edson Ferraz of TV Diário (a station affiliated to the privately-owned Rede Globo network) on May 15, 2008, in Mogi das Cruzes, an outlying suburb of São Paulo, in which Ferraz was not hurt.

The 25-year-old journalist had been covering a case of corruption and money-laundering involving 19 local policemen and had been warned of possible reprisals.

"In some respects, Ferraz's case recalls the murder of Luiz Barbon Filho, a reporter for the Jornal do Porto weekly, the JC Regional daily and Radio Porto FM, a year ago in São Paulo state, in which members of the military police were involved," the press group said.

"Given the circumstances of the attack on Ferraz, it could well have been linked to his work and the authorities should investigate within the police."

Ferraz was driving home in Mogi das Cruzes in a car with TV Diário's logo on the night of May 15 when, at around 10 p.m., two masked men in a black car blocked his way and the driver opened fire twice without hitting Ferraz. They did not try to rob Ferraz, who had received an anonymous call on his mobile the previous day advising him to "take care."

"They wanted to intimidate me," Ferraz told the daily newspaper "O Estado de São Paulo". "If they had wanted to kill me, they would have got out of their car and would have fired from closer range."

Ferraz immediately reported the attack to his TV station and the local military police. He left the town the next day with his family. The car used in the attack was found on the outskirts of Mogi das Cruzes on 17 May.

Ferraz had just done several reports on cases involving the police. One was the arrest of 13 members of the Armed Group for the Repression of Robberies and Attacks (Garra) in April on charges of extorting money from pimps, trafficking in stolen car parts and theft of slot machines. Garra chief Eduardo Peretti Guimarães, who was one of those charged, denied any role in the attack on Ferraz.

Ferraz had also been covering the case of two Mogi das Cruzes police officers suspected of stealing equipment from a pirate radio station, and he had exposed an attempt by four local police officers to extort money from a bakery.

The authorities in charge of investigating the attack on Ferraz promised to carry out an internal investigation. The National Federation of Journalists and the São Paulo Union of Journalists called it an "attack on press freedom."