

Politicians in Brazil Respond to Criticism by Burning Journalist's House

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Criticism by Brazilian journalist Jeso Carneiro to local politicians was answered with fire by those he criticized. Sunday night, July 20, unidentified individuals set fire to the home of Carneiro in Santarém, a city in the northern state of Pará.

Carneiro and his wife were at the beach at the time of the attack but the couple's daughter, her husband and the journalist's mother in law were at home. No one was seriously injured but the house suffered considerable damage. Carneiro said neighbors were able to stop the fire and call the police.

Brazil's Committee to Protect Journalists called on Brazilian authorities to investigate the attack and provide the necessary protection to allow Carneiro to continue working without fear of reprisal.

Two unidentified men on a black Bros motorcycle circled Carneiro's home for several minutes at around 2:30 am on Sunday before stopping in front of the house, witnesses told the local news website Portal na Hora.

A security camera inside the journalist's house filmed one of the men getting off the motorcycle and pouring an unknown liquid on the front walls and roof of the house and setting it on fire, according to local news reports. Witnesses said one of the assailants was injured by the fire before fleeing on the motorcycle with the other man, according to Portal Na Hora.

Carneiro, a reporter for weekly Gazeta de Santarém and local blog Jeso Carneiro (www.jesocarneiro.com), and the host of the daily political interview show "Opinião" on TV Bandeirantes, told CPJ he believes the motivation for the attack was his critical coverage of local politicians. He said he was unable to point out a specific story that could have triggered the attack.

It wasn't the first time Carneiro was victim of an attack. According to him, twice before he suffered this kind of threat. First people tried to set on fire the building of A Gazeta newspaper, which belongs to his brother. Then they set his car on fire.

"We are alarmed by the arson attack against Carneiro's home, which could have turned fatal," said CPJ Americas Program Coordinator Carlos Lauría.

"Brazilian authorities must immediately investigate this attack and provide the journalist with the protection he has requested to ensure that he can continue working."

Investigators found a gallon-sized diesel container, a lighter, and a pair of sneakers at the scene, Carneiro told CPJ. Police also took the security tape as part of the investigation. Authorities have not made public further information on the attack.

CPJ is a New York-based, independent, nonprofit organization that works to safeguard press freedom around the world.