



Press release, Paris, the 20th of May
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On 7 May, the self-proclaimed Bolivian President, Jeanine Áñez, signed the Supreme Decree 4231 which allows the State to criminally prosecute any person who shares information that could create uncertainty in the population or endanger public health. [As indicated by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists](#) (CPJ), this decree modifies the decree of 25 March which "criminalized defiance of the country's COVID-19 lockdown or spreading misinformation about the coronavirus". Press cartoonists are concerned about this decision, which opens the door to censorship. They fear the possibility of punishing cartoons critical of the government and its policies. Cartoonist Javier Menchaca, who works for the online newspaper Opinión, said the decree criminalises and endangers free expression and the right to information. On 14 May, the CPJ [noted changes to the original text](#) following his objections but called for a comprehensive review to ensure that the text does not restrict press freedom.

In a May 14 [statement](#), the NGO Freedom House joined the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in denouncing the "clear and imminent risk" this decree poses to freedom of expression in Bolivia.

The signing of this decree comes at a time when freedom of expression and of the press in Bolivia is already under threat. On 2 December 2019, the well-known cartoonist Al-Azar was [forced to leave the editorial staff of the newspaper La Razón](#) after receiving numerous threats and insults over several days on social networks. The IACHR called on the state to investigate these attacks on freedom of expression.

More recently, cartoonist Abel Bellido Córdoba (Abecor) received [death threats](#) on social networks. He has been criticized for his cartoons about recent political controversies and anti-drug operations in a region that produces much of the country's cocaine. The cartoonist expressed concern about government inaction.

Like the above-mentioned organizations, Cartooning for Peace is concerned about the threats to freedom of expression in Bolivia and particularly to cartoonists. The association calls for full respect of this fundamental principle enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.