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Targeted by Mexico's Deadly Drug Cartels, Journalists at a Tijuana-based Newsweekly Risk Their Lives to Report the Truth in POV's 'Reportero,' Premiering Monday, Jan. 7, 2013 on PBS

Forty-eight Journalists Have Vanished or Been Murdered in Mexico Since December 2006.
Will the Free Press Be Silenced?

"The heroes of Bernardo Ruiz's *Reportero* are the journalists for *Zeta*. . . . The courage of *Zeta* writers . . . cannot be overestimated."—Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Dates: Bernardo Ruiz's **Reportero** premieres on PBS on **Monday, Jan. 7, 2013** at 10 p.m. (check local listings.) as a special broadcast of **POV (Point of View)**. The film will stream on POV's website, www.pbs.org/pov/reportero, from **Jan. 8 – Feb. 6, 2013**.

Now in its 25th season, POV is American television's longest-running independent documentary series and the winner of a Special Emmy for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking, two IDA Awards for Best Continuing Series and the National Association of Latino Independent Producers Corporate Commitment to Diversity Award.

The Film: **Reportero** follows veteran reporter Sergio Haro and his colleagues at *Zeta*, a Tijuana-based independent newsweekly, as they stubbornly ply their trade in one of the deadliest places in the world for members of the media. In Mexico, close to 50 journalists have been slain or have vanished since December 2006, when President Felipe Calderón came to power and launched a government offensive against the country's powerful drug cartels and organized crime. As the drug war intensifies and the risks to journalists become greater, will the free press be silenced?

In 1980, Jesús Blancornelas and Héctor Félix Miranda founded *Zeta* as an independent voice, different from the rest of the nation's largely government-controlled media. At the time, reporting the truth about the country's leaders was unprecedented—and risky. To secure the fledgling paper's survival, the co-founders located its printing operation across the border in California. The paper's uncompromising stand against corruption would bring it 30,000 readers—and anger from the country's leadership.

Miranda was murdered in 1988, shocking Blancornelas and the rest of the country. But the dangers *Zeta's* staff would face were only beginning. In the 1990s, the paper began reporting on Mexico's deadly drug cartels and the public officials secretly working for them. *Zeta* reporters' brave stance—and that of like-minded journalists throughout Mexico—has since cost dozens of lives, making Mexico one of the world's most dangerous nations for reporters. The Committee to Protect Journalists reports that 48 journalists were murdered

or disappeared during the portion of Felipe Calderón's tenure as president from December 2006 to the close of 2011.¹

Reportero is a co-production of Quiet Pictures, LLC, ITVS and Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. A co-presentation with LPB.

Embed a trailer, download press materials and learn more at www.pbs.org/pressroom.

Online: POV's Webby Award-winning website, www.pbs.org/pov/reportero, offers a broad range of exclusive online content to enhance the broadcast of **Reportero**. Watch the full film online for free following the broadcast (Jan. 8-Feb. 6, 2013), view a video interview with the director, download a discussion guide and other viewing resources, read excerpts from Ioan Grillo's *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* (Bloomsbury Press) and take an interactive challenge to see what it takes to be a Mexican newspaper editor.

Outreach: POV works with educators, public television stations and national and community groups across the country to foster dialogue around the issues presented in our films. For a list of upcoming screening events, go to www.pbs.org/pov/outreach. POV and nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow develop discussion guides with background information to help event organizers facilitate conversations. The **Reportero** discussion guide includes background information on the Mexican drug war, prompts for dialogue on the role of the press, as well as a list of further educational resources. Cari Ladd, M. Ed., has developed a lesson plan to accompany the film.

Filmmaker's Statement:

"The film is Sergio's story, but it is also the story of his colleagues at *Zeta*," says Ruiz. "Jesus Blancornelas, founder, who survived an attack by 10 hired killers, is also the *reportero*. The murdered columnist and co-founder of the paper, Héctor Félix Miranda, is also the *reportero*. Sergio's friend and collaborator, Benjamín Flores, gunned down just days after his 29th birthday, is the *reportero*. Adela Navarro, Sergio's boss and the outspoken and driven co-director of the paper, is the *reportera*."

"Why persist when the risks are many, the benefits few?" Ruiz continues "**Reportero** poses the same question that serves as the title of the collection of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya's final dispatches before she was murdered in 2006: Is journalism worth dying for? For me, **Reportero** is an act of remembrance. The film is an act of celebration, for Sergio Haro and his many colleagues, who stubbornly persist."

Bio: [Bernardo Ruiz \(Writer/Director/Producer\)](#)

Reportero is Bernardo Ruiz's first documentary feature. He is currently serving as executive producer of two one-hour documentaries examining the nation's dropout crisis, as part of the public-media initiative American Graduate. Previously, he was the director/producer of *American Experience: Roberto Clemente* (PBS 2008), winner of the NCLR ALMA Award for Outstanding Made-for-Television Documentary. He was the co-producer of POV's **The Sixth Section**, a depiction of the transnational organizing efforts of a community of Mexican immigrants in New York. The film, which premiered on PBS in 2003, won the top short documentary prize at the Morelia International Film Festival in Mexico.

Ruiz is the recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in film, and his work has been supported by grants from the Ford Foundation, the Sundance Documentary

¹ Committee to Protect Journalists. "Calderón Fails, and the Mexican Press Is Dying." <http://tinyurl.com/arsccag>

Institute, Cinereach and ITVS, among others. In 2007, he founded Quiet Pictures in order to produce aesthetically innovative and socially relevant documentary films for all platforms. He was born in Guanajuato, Mexico and grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Related Stories: “For War Reporters, Safe Passage Always a Gamble,” by David Filipov, *The Boston Globe*, Jan. 6, 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/bhkqevs>

“141 journalists killed in 2012, study finds,” *The Telegraph*, Jan. 3, 2012. <http://tinyurl.com/a4743sr>

“Mexico’s freedom of expression crisis,” by Carlos Lauria, *The Miami Herald*, Jan. 2, 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/bhym7fa>

“2012 one of “bloodiest years” for journalists—media body,” Reuters, Dec. 31, 2012. <http://tinyurl.com/awoq7yf>

“The FP Top 100 Global Thinkers: #76, Adela Navarro,” *Foreign Policy*, December 2012. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/11/26/the_fp_100_global_thinkers

“Journalist missing for nearly two weeks in Mexico,” Committee to Protect Journalists, Nov. 8, 2012. <http://www.cpj.org/2012/11/journalist-missing-for-nearly-two-weeks-in-mexico.php>

“A Death Threat to Freedom: A Report on Violence Against Mexico’s Press,” World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), September 2012.

Credits:	Writer/Director:	Bernardo Ruiz
	Producer:	Bernardo Ruiz
	Co-Producer:	Patricia Benabe
	Director of Photography:	Claudio Rocha
	Editors:	Carla Gutierrez
	Original Music:	Leo Abrahams
	Running Time:	56:46

POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer:	Simon Kilmurry
Co-Executive Producer:	Cynthia López
VP, Production and Programming:	Chris White
Series Producer:	Yance Ford
Coordinating Producer:	Andrew Catauro

Awards/

Festivals: Ambulante Documentary Film Festival, Mexico, 2012
International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, 2012
Human Rights Watch Film Festival, 2012
Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, 2012
Los Angeles Film Festival, 2012
San Diego Latino Film Festival, 2012

Pressroom: Visit POV’s pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

POV:

Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 25th season on PBS in 2012, the award-winning POV is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today's best independent documentary filmmakers. POV has brought more than 325 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV's Borders*. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. Visit www.pbs.org/pov.

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