



SOCIEDAD INTERAMERICANA DE PRENSA
INTER AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION
SOCIEDADE INTERAMERICANA DE IMPRENSA

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Honorable
John Kerry
Secretary of State
United States of America

Mr. Secretary of State,

The Inter American Press Association, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to watching over freedom of expression and of the press, expresses its concern at the situation that is being faced by the newspapers *El Siglo* and *La Estrella de Panamá*, important news media of Panama and active members of our organization immersed in a situation of uncertainty that could lead to their shutdown.

Mr. Secretary, our organization turns to you to request of you the immediate withdrawal of the two newspapers from the "Clinton List," considering that there does not exist evidence that they are involved in money laundering activities, as was described by the current ambassador of your country in Panama. Under this premise our request is based on the fact that the closing down of these news media represents a violation of the principles of freedom to do business, as well as seriously affecting freedom of expression and of the press, and the Panamanians' right to access to information.

Since May this year *El Siglo* and *La Estrella de Panamá* have been granted by the United States Treasury Department a license of temporary exception after the commercial group to which the publications belong was included in the "Clinton List." The expiration of the license, scheduled for January 6, would leave the newspapers financially adrift, making impossible their ability to operate and if would affect even more their relations with suppliers, advertisers and ad agencies, having furthermore as an outcome the cessation of work of the hundreds of the companies' employees.

On the understanding that without freedom of expression and of the press there are no free people or societies and that the exercise of these freedoms is not a concession of the

authorities but an inalienable right of the people, we ask the Department of State that you head to be good enough to take the necessary actions to come up with a definitive solution to this situation which affects two news media with a long history and whose possible disappearance would create a serious informative rupture.

We reiterate – as we expressed in our recent resolution adopted in Mexico in October by the General Assembly in representation of more than 1,300 publications in the Americas – that “while the Inter American Press Association is respectful of the legal investigations conducted with full clarity and transparency what concerns it is the possibility of restricting the newspapers' ability to publish.”

Matt Sanders
President
IAPA

Roberto Rock
Chairman
Committee on Freedom of the Press and Information

Cc. Isabel de St. Malo de Alvarado, Vice-President of the Republic of Panama
and Minister for Foreign Affairs