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Bolivia: Chilling attack on radio journalist

A radio journalist in southern Bolivia is said to be in critical condition after several masked men broke into his studio and set him alight while he was on the air on Monday.

The attack on Fernando Vidal, 78, who owns and is a presenter for Radio Popular in Yacuiba, near the Argentine border, also injured a studio technician. According to reports, the journalist had recently been criticizing an increase in smuggling in the area and had spoken out against local authorities on the air.

“This chilling attack is one of the worst instances of violence against journalists in Bolivia in recent years,” said Javier Zúñiga, Special Adviser to Amnesty International.

“The Bolivian authorities’ investigation into the incident must be independent and impartial and those responsible must be brought to justice without delay.”

“The recent Constitutional Court decision to strike contempt from the country’s Criminal Code is a positive step, but yesterday’s attack show that freedom of expression – including freedom of the press – remains under attack in Bolivia.”