

IPYS/TILAC AWARD JURY STATEMENT

The jury for the fifth edition of the Prize for Best Investigative Journalism Report on Corruption, organised annually by Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS) and Transparency International for Latin America and the Caribbean (TILAC), under the auspices of the Open Society Institute, declares:

1. We have reviewed numerous high-quality investigations among 175 entries received, a sign that the press in Latin-America has improved in fulfilling its monitoring role. At the same time, there is a broader range of themes, including new topics such as corruption in unions and the use of public funds to manipulate the media.

2. After reviewing the materials submitted (articles published in 2006), the jury decided unanimously that the first prize of US \$25,000 will be shared by two winners: a series of investigative articles from “*Semana*”, a Colombian newsmagazine and another series published in “*Correio Braziliense*”, a daily newspaper in Brazil. Its authors are:

—**Lúcio Vaz**, from “*Correio Braziliense*” whose investigation exposed a scheme to divert millions in public funds through the fraudulent procurement of ambulances in several Brazilian states. The process was managed- per further investigations by the authorities- by a criminal organisation with the complicity of several members of congress and public officials. Vaz’s initial stories, based on his own research, helped to expose one of the biggest cases of parliamentary corruption in the history of Brazil.

—**Marta Ruiz, Tadeo Martínez, Ricardo Calderón, Carlos Eduardo Huertas, Adriana Echeverry, Alejandro Santos, Alfonso Cuellar, Cristina Vélez, Elber Gutiérrez, María Alejandra Villamizar and Armando Neira**, from “*Semana*”, who persistently investigated and reported to disclose the links between Colombia’s paramilitary and the country’s political sectors as well as its crimes and influence over important public institutions. This jury wishes to highlight “*Semana*’s” initiative and follow-up on the phenomenon known as “parapolitics”, which has had multiple severe consequences and caused upheaval in Colombia.

3. The jury grants second place, with a prize of US \$5,000, to the persistence and investigative excellence of Miguel Ramírez, a journalist with “*El Comercio*”, a daily newspaper in Lima, Peru, for his exposure of a drug-trafficking network led by Fernando Zevallos, currently in jail largely due to the 12-year investigation undertaken by Ramírez.

4. Third place went to Martín Rodríguez and Jennifer Paredes, from “*Prensa Libre*”, a daily newspaper in Guatemala, for exposing vote-buying in exchange for public works carried out between the government and most of the 158 deputies in congress. Their investigation brought to light the deputies’ share of public works worth millions, which were awarded directly without a bidding process.

5. The jury gave special mentions to the following work by other finalists listed by country, in alphabetical order:

ARGENTINA

“El hombre del millón de pesos” (The man worth 1 million pesos), by María O’ Donnell, from *“Noticias”* magazine, which showed that the Argentine government used official advertisement to favour one of President Néstor Kirchner’s friends — his former driver— who with public financing, managed to establish a media company for government advertisement and personal enrichment.

“Venta de órganos en el mercado negro” (Sale of organs on the black market), by Claudio Savoia, from *“Clarín”*, a daily newspaper, whose reporting discovered at least two surgeons who illegally sold and transplanted the kidneys of poor people to patients paying fortunes to receive them. Health authorities and public officials were involved in the organ trafficking scheme.

“La fraudulenta privatización de la seguridad vial en la comuna de Luján de Cuyo” (The fraudulent privatization of road security in the town of Luján de Cuyo), by Jorge Fernández Rojas, from *“Diario Los Andes”*, a daily newspaper, uncovered a scheme to directly award road security service to the Ecom Chaco, a state-owned company. Ecom Chaco was in fact a front for third party enterprises which were awarded public service concessions without going through bidding processes, as required by law.

“Así soborna Macri a la prensa con plata de todos” (How Macri bribes the media with everyone’s money), by Roberto Caballero and the investigative team at *“Veintitrés”* magazine, which disclosed the process through which a candidate’s campaign staff tried to bribe one media outlet by offering it advertising from a municipal bank in exchange for favourable coverage.

“El Caso Skanska” (The Skanska Case), by Carlos Russo and Damián Glanz, from *“Perfil”*, a daily newspaper, for their work revealing a fraudulent system of tax evasion, concealment of illegitimate payments and overcharging, as was the case with the Swedish company Skanska, which was involved in a project to expand an oil duct grid.

BRASIL

“Horário eleitoral”, by Eduardo Faustini and Guilherme Azevedo from *“Fantástico”*, a programme airing on the *TV Globo* network. The report showed that Osvaldo Pereira, a candidate for governor in the state of Goiás, tried to sell TV time which was freely granted to him by the state according to the electoral finance legislation in the country.

“Una investigación sobre la lista de las 10 mil obras de dos gobernadores” (An investigation about the list of 10,000 works by two governors) by Fábio Vasconcellos and Carla Rocha, from the daily newspaper *“O Globo”*, which revealed that the former governor of Rio de Janeiro state, Rosinha Garotinho, and former governor Anthony Garotinho announced 10,000 public works presumably finalised during their terms, although many never left the planning stage on paper, were badly executed or remained unfinished.

COLOMBIA

“El Gran zarpazo” (The Great Paw), by Carlos Eduardo Huertas and Fabio Posada, from *“Semana”* magazine, which revealed that the “Caja Nacional de Previsión Social” (the national fund for state pensioners) was awarding millions in illegal pension and indemnity payments. Public officials, judges, lawyers and pensioners were involved in this fraudulent process.

COSTA RICA

"El fondo fantasma de las compañías reaseguradoras y los pagos a una empresa del ex presidente Miguel A. Rodríguez" (The ghost fund of re-insurance companies and payments to a company of former president Miguel A. Rodríguez's), by Gianinna Segnini, Vanessa Loaiza and Mauricio Herrera, from *La Nación*, a daily newspaper, showed how companies that act as intermediaries in the allocation of re-insurance from the "Instituto Nacional de Seguros" (National Insurance Institute) increased, without explanation, the amount of the premiums to insure the infrastructure of the Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad. This was done by creating a capacity-building 'ghost' fund without state supervision and cheques that were paid to an investment firm controlled by then Costa Rican President, Miguel Ángel Rodríguez.

ECUADOR

"Los jugosos negocios de la cúpula de la Iglesia Católica" (The juicy businesses on the cusp of the catholic church), by Arturo Torres and Jean Cano, from *El Comercio*, a daily newspaper, which exposed the undervalued purchase of 135 properties from the "Conferencia Episcopal Ecuatoriana" (Ecuadorian Episcopal Conference) by a state bank undergoing liquidation, Filanbanco. The deal benefited the ecclesiastic community and private parties, at the state's expense.

PARAGUAY

"Publicitaria presidencial en Paraguay" (Presidential advertisement in Paraguay), by Mabel Rehnfeldt and Sandra López, from the daily newspaper "*ABC Color*", uncovered the existence of an advertisement agency — in which Paraguay's President Nicanor Duarte is a shareholder. The agency manages all publicity related to Paraguay's First Lady and other important public accounts thanks to direct awarding of the accounts by making exceptions to rules and without applying any controls.

PERÚ

"Estafa en la Carretera a Cabana" (Theft on the road to Cabana), by Graciela Villasís, from "*La Ventana Indiscreta*", a television show on "Frecuencia Latina" channel, which disclosed corruption and illicit fees charged by the military in relation to construction of a road leading to Cabana, the hometown of former president Alejandro Toledo.

Río de Janeiro, 18 June, 2007

Tina Rosenberg
Marcelo Beraba
Gustavo Gorriti
Michael Reid
Gerardo Reyes