

Third Quarterly Report on Aggressions Against Freedom of Expression in México

2005-11-13 13:48:19



México D.F., november 13th 2009 (ARTICLE19 / Cencos).- ARTICLE 19 in conjunction with CENCOS launches the [Third Quarterly Report on Aggressions against Freedom of Expression in Mexico](#). The report covers the period from July to September 2009. It shows some worrying trends that suggest the situation of freedom of expression continues to deteriorate in the country. It also suggests that the authorities remain the principal perpetrators in aggressions that are registered and that impunity continues to prevail.

The ever increasing number of aggressions against this fundamental right in Mexico remains a serious issue. The total number of aggressions registered against journalists and the media this quarter is 59, which amount to a total of 201 so far this year^[1]. Three more journalists have been killed, bringing the total number of assassinations so far this year to eight. Since the beginning of the Calderón presidency there have been a total of 19 assassinations, five of which took place in 2007 and six in 2008. Furthermore, eight journalists remain missing since the year 2000.

Name	State	Date
Jean Paul Ibarra Ramírez	Guerrero	13-Feb-09
Luis Daniel Méndez Hernández	Veracruz	22-Feb-09
Juan Carlos Hernández Mundo	Guerrero	27-Feb-09
Carlos Ortega Melo Samper	Durango	03-May-09
Eliseo Barrón Hernández	Durango	26-May-09
Martín Javier Miranda Avilés	Michoacán	12-Jul-09
Juan Daniel Martínez Gil	Guerrero	28-Jul-09
Norberto Miranda Madrid	Chihuahua	29-Sep-09

Fig. 1 Assassinations of Journalists Registered in 2009

An assassination constitutes the most severe form of aggression and is an indicator of the adverse environment in which journalists and media workers are currently being forced to operate. The situation of freedom of expression in a country is also a measure of the state of democracy and respect for the rule of law. Many of these cases have not been effectively investigated or resolved; impunity prevails in so many cases of aggressions against the right to freedom of expression.

Usually the most serious violations, such as assassinations and forced disappearances, can be attributed to organised crime. However, our figures continue to point to state authorities as the principal aggressors in the majority of cases. 71.19% of cases this quarter were allegedly perpetrated by state authorities.

It is important to take into account the context in which journalists are currently working in Mexico. The influence of drug traffickers and organised crime and their collusion with authorities often place journalists in a vulnerable position. The military operations and the deployment of police forces in many parts of the country, have not only produced poor results in terms of public security, but in many cases have resulted in new human rights violations, some of which are very serious and affect the right to freedom of expression. Some of these cases are detailed in the report, such as; attacks with explosives on a number of media organisations; the harassment of the political magazine *Proceso* by the Ministry for Public Security; and the aggressions against journalists that have taken place during the aforementioned military operations that were presumably perpetrated by military personnel.

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The report also emphasizes the increased number of aggressions committed by supporters of political parties. This is a result of the recent elections at state level and in Congress.

Sinaloa, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Coahuila, Chihuahua and Guerrero are, along with the Mexico City, the states which have recorded the highest number of aggressions in the third quarter of 2009. These have to do mainly with the previously mentioned problems and with abuses of power at the municipal level, where those allegedly responsible are local police forces and government officials.

At the end of September, the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) reiterated the need for the Mexican State to “resolutely advance existing investigations into crimes against journalists, and to act as soon as possible to adopt urgent measures to protect persons working with the media, such as strengthening the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Journalists, making crimes against journalists federal offenses; and implementing permanent, specialized protection measures to guarantee the life and integrity of journalists who are at risk.”^[2]

ARTICLE 19 and Cencos detects a clear pattern of violations of the right to freedom of expression by state authorities in Mexico. A serious effort to tackle these violations of fundamental human rights must be undertaken immediately to bring Mexico into line with international standards. This includes development of prevention policies among which would be adequate and effective human rights training for security forces, at the three levels in government and with local authorities is essential.

ARTICLE 19 and Cencos reminds the Mexican State that the right to freedom of expression, which is established in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights implies a double obligation. The state is not only obliged not to violate the right, but also to protect it and promote an environment in which it is allowed to flourish.

ARTICLE 19 and Cencos reiterates its call on the Mexican State to tackle the impunity that is being allowed to prevail in the majority of cases of violations of the right to freedom of expression. This can only be achieved through the effective investigation of such crimes and the sanctioning of those responsible, as well as the strengthening of the bodies that are responsible for dealing with crimes against freedom of expression.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- Full report: [A19 CENCOS Third Quarterly Bulletin](http://www.libertad-expresion.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/A19-CENCOS-Third-Quarterly-Bulletin.pdf)
(<http://www.libertad-expresion.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/A19-CENCOS-Third-Quarterly-Bulletin.pdf>)

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.

- The Social Communications National Centre (Cencos) was the first organisation documenting attacks against the media in Mexico. Its work focused in promoting freedom of expression and press freedom as an individual right of all journalists and as a collective right of society to be informed.

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[1] 2006 has been widely considered the worst year for aggressions against the right to freedom of expression to date. However, the total number of aggressions against journalists registered that year was 131, some seventy cases less than the number of cases registered in the first nine months of this year.

[2] Press Release N° R70/09 Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression Condemns Killing of Journalist in Mexico



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