

# Violencia contra la prensa en México

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**México D.F. 26 de febrero de 2010 (Cencos)** .- En este artículo Dolia Estévez, periodista e integrante del *Mexico Institute del Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars*, relata su viaje en México dónde, a través de entrevistas con periodistas agredidos, organizacioens de la sociedad civil y otros actores da cuenta del incremento de la violencia contra los periodistas en nuestro país. Este artículo es parte de una investigación más amplia sobre la colaboración en materia de seguridad entre México y EU que realiza el *Wilson Center* y el *Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego*.

## Shooting the Messenger

### - Violence Against the Press in Mexico. A trip summary from Dolia Estévez

Washington D.C., 26 de febrero de 2010 (Dolia Estévez / Woodrow Wilson Center).- The Organization of American States reports that at least ten journalists were assassinated in Mexico in 2009, but the actual murders and disappearances are just the tip of the iceberg. Lurking below is a journalistic world rife with fear, intimidation, and impunity, leaving little doubt that journalism has been negatively impacted and democracy weakened as a result.

From editors to journalists, NGOs to government agencies, all interviewees agreed that the problem is widespread. Jorge Zepeda Patterson, managing editor of *El Universal*, talked about Mexico's "abysmal media geography," referring to the huge difference between the relatively strong press freedom in the capital and the lack thereof throughout much of the country. The combination of corrupt state governments and powerful organized crime networks leaves local reporters with little recourse when they are pressured to censor their work or as they seek justice following an attack. In fact, several sources concurred that the attacks do not only come from criminal organizations, but also from the military and government itself.

Reporters and advocates for their protection told stories about local correspondents all over the country being intimidated and attacked. They told about Marta Cáceres, *Reforma's* correspondent in Nuevo Laredo, who was beaten and hospitalized, and Mónica Hernandez of *El Universal*, who recently received death threats for her work in Durango. Mike O'Connor, a former New York Times reporter now working with the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), told about María Esther Aguilar of *Cambio de Michoacán*, who has been missing since last November. Aguilar reportedly refused bribes that representatives of organized crime had offered in exchange for censoring her reports. Fearing for their lives many editors and journalists in regions overwhelmed by drug violence have engaged in wide spread self-censorship. Sensitive issues such as drug trafficking, organized crime, and political corruption are not being covered.

## Campaña Permanente de Protección a Periodistas

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In response to an international demand for direct involvement by the federal government to protect journalists, the Special Prosecutors Office for Crimes Against Journalists (FEADP) was created in 2006 with the mission of directing, coordinating and supervising investigations against journalists. While a step in the right direction, the consensus among those interviewed was that the Special Prosecutor's Office has, so far, been

largely ineffective. Even Octavio Orellana<sup>1</sup>, the special prosecutor himself, admitted that his office lacks the legal authority to investigate and prosecute the attacks. He pointed out that, given current law, the majority of crimes against reporters fall within the jurisdiction of local and state government.

Brisa Maya Solis of the National Center of Social Communication (CENCOS) spoke about the proposal to federalize crimes against the press. She described how the bill was introduced but not acted upon during the previous session of congress, but it remains to be seen whether the new congress will reintroduce it. Maya Solis joins her voice with others in the press and executive branch in calling for its approval, but she does not stop there.

Maya Solis calls on NGOs and the media to make a scandal out of the lack of justice and security afforded to the press. Looking at Colombia and Peru as an example, she hopes a foundation for the defense of the press can be created. Other interviewees similarly noted the need for greater solidarity among journalists throughout Mexico. Internationally renowned TV and radio journalist Carmen Aristegui talked about a previous effort, called Proyecto Fénix, which was also based on the Colombian example. Each time that a journalist was killed, harassed or attacked the rest of the group would, based on a prior agreement, join together in covering the story that the victim was working on. Aristegui went on to point out that, over time, impunity breeds apathy, and after a couple of rounds the project ceased. The failure of federal and local authorities to effectively prosecute crimes against reporters, media and NGOs interviewees agreed, has resulted in almost total impunity.

**NOTE:** In early December 2009 journalist and Mexico Institute Senior Advisor Dolia Estévez traveled to Mexico City to conduct a series of interviews about the dramatic increase in violence against journalists in Mexico. The interviews are part of a chapter Estévez is writing for a publication on organized crime and U.S.-Mexico security collaboration. The publication, due out in Fall 2010, is part of a joint project between the Wilson Center's Mexico Institute and the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego. The following is a brief summary of her findings to date.

*Dolia Estévez is a Senior Advisor with the Journalism Initiative, at the Mexico Institute and Journalist with MVS Radio Noticias, Poder and El Semanario. Mexico Institute Intern, Chris Wilson, assisted with the preparation of this report.*

1 On Feb. 15, 2010, Orellana was replaced by Gustavo A. Salas.



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