



Mr. Enrique Peña Nieto
President of Mexico
Official Residence of Los Pinos
Mexico City, Mexico

26 May 2017

Mr President,

We are writing to you today in an unprecedented show of solidarity between national and international freedom of expression organizations concerned with the safety of journalists in Mexico, to register our dismay at the murder of our friend and colleague, Javier Valdez Cárdenas, founder of Riodoce magazine in Sinaloa.

We call on you to take precise, effective and immediate action to halt the downward spiral of violence undermining journalists' safety in the country, and urge your government to invite the special rapporteurs for freedom of expression at the United Nations and the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to investigate the increasing number of attacks against journalists in Mexico. They have made an official request to visit your country that remains so far unanswered.

For a number of years, journalists in Mexico have faced increasing levels of violence, intimidation and murder. The organizations we represent have repeatedly and forcefully condemned the lack of protection that journalists have been afforded to do their work safely and freely, whether covering organized crime, political affairs, or corruption.

The May 15, 2017 murder of award-winning reporter Javier Valdez has shocked journalists in Mexico, throughout the Americas, and around the world. But tragically, his case is only the latest in a long litany of journalists who have been silenced by death, and an even greater number who have been censored by other forms of intimidation and that authorities - at every level of the Mexican government - have systematically failed to prosecute.

Indeed, each year since 2013 has seen a rise in journalists killed. We have repeatedly highlighted the growing urgency of this situation and the need to strengthen the legal framework to protect freedom of expression. We have all worked closely with Mexican journalists supporting their efforts to improve safety, and have been forthcoming in our commendation of the Mexican government's efforts to create institutions that similarly strive towards this goal.

At the same time, however, we have been vocal in our condemnation of how those institutions are not working adequately.

Mr. President, the violence must stop. Mexico is regarded as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists in the world, surpassed only by states ravaged by war. It is an intolerable situation for a country that takes great pride in its efforts to promote political, economic, and social development.

Over recent days, the organizations we represent have separately condemned the murder of Javier Valdez and the lack of guarantees for press freedom in Mexico. Today, we speak with one voice in asking your government to step up its efforts to end the impunity for those who wish to silence journalists and rid the country of the pervasive mentality that believes intimidating an editor or a reporter carries no consequences.

To accomplish this will require a monumental effort from everyone who believes Mexican journalists deserve a safer environment in which to work. To help accomplish this, we respectfully call on you to open the door to the above-mentioned special rapporteurs to examine the rising level of violence and propose solutions that tackle impunity, once and for all. In light of such expertise, we would urge your government to sincerely commit itself to engaging in meaningful dialogue and implementing effective solutions on behalf of the profession of journalism, before the environment for freedom of expression worsens any further.

We respectfully submit to you this request in the hope that your government recognizes the goodwill of international organizations, and look forward to working with you to protect journalists and uphold freedom of expression.

Kindest regards,

Vincent Peyrègne, CEO, World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)

Christophe Deloire, Director-general, Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Thomas Hughes, Executive Director, Article19

Joyce Barnathan, President, International Center for Journalists (ICFJ)

Jaime Abello, Executive Director, Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano Gabriel García Márquez (FNPI)

Bruce Shapiro, Executive Director, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, Columbia University

Tina Carr, Director, Rory Peck Trust

Carlos Lauría, Program Director & Senior Program Coordinator, The Americas, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Carlos Ponce, Regional Director, Latin American & the Caribbean, Freedom House