

## **Mexico and Freedom of Expression Under Threat**

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### **Abstract**

*Freedom of expression in Mexico has been in a state of crisis for the past twenty years and has gotten particularly worrisome during the past decade. The media is being censored by both organized crime and a corrupt government, to the point that most publications have chosen to self-censor for fear of retaliation. While the right to freedom of expression suffers, so do other rights – particularly the right to freedom of information, which has crippled the country's democracy. Even ordinary citizens are at risk when speaking out. After the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), increasing corruption caused by the growth and division of drug cartels means that criminals rule with impunity. Though there has recently been new legislation enacted to protect members of the media and to prosecute perpetrators, there hasn't been much success. The country has much to learn from other countries that have gone through similar situations, as well as from the international community as a whole. Though the process will be a slow one, it is important that the Mexican government commits itself to protecting freedom of expression and, therefore, democracy.*

Mexico's story has not necessarily been a very peaceful one. The situation regarding its lack of freedom of expression has worsened in the past twenty years, especially in the past decade. The country is going through a serious crisis due not only to corruption, but also to organized crime, which has taken control of parts of the country. Corruption has made it nearly impossible for the media to report on violence, and among the general population it has nearly eradicated the Mexican people's ability to trust

either the government or the media. The increasing lack of freedom of the press is hurting the country's democracy, since transparency is needed in order for citizens to make educated decisions. According to Reporters without Borders, Mexico is one of the top five deadliest countries in the world for journalists, who fear assassination. Mexico ranks among countries like Egypt, Syria, Libya, and the Ivory Coast in this regard (Molzahn et al., 2012). According to the 2013 World Press Freedom Index, which is released by Reporters Without Borders, Mexico maintains its status as “the hemisphere's most dangerous country for the media” (Reporters Without Borders, 2013).

Freedom of expression is limited in Mexico by criminal activity and government restrictions, and the challenges faced by reporters are violations of human rights. When the rights to freedom of opinion and information are violated in such ways, other rights are also at risk. The right to personal security and the right to not be tortured, among others, are threatened constantly when individuals try to express themselves in Mexico. More and more, journalists feel that the government doesn't care about them, and this was noticeably true under former president Felipe Calderon, who publicly blamed the media for giving the country a bad name by reporting on its ongoing violence. By doing this, his administration essentially gave organized crime a free pass to attack the media (Farah, 2012). Without a strong watchdog presence in the country, both the government and organized crime are free to do as they please (Edmonds-Poli, 2013). Unfortunately, “investigative journalism is going extinct in Mexico,” according to Carlos Lauria, the head American coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists (Farah, 2012, p. 17). This situation is due to the violence against those who try to report on crime and corruption properly.

Though the situation is an extremely complicated one, it is important for the government and the international community to protect the human right of expression. The Mexican government has much to learn from other governments who have gone through similar situations; for example, Colombia during the 1980s and 1990s (Farah, 2012). During the last ten years, the Mexican government

has passed legislation and even created a special prosecutor office under the Attorney General to deal with this violence, but these actions have failed to improve the situation. In order to come up with a tangible plan of action, the government must fully understand the roots of the situation, including how it has evolved and what has fueled the violence and corruption. An analysis of what the government has already done and why it doesn't seem to be working is an essential part of the puzzle. At this time, the Mexican people suffer from violations of international human rights law due to restrictions on freedom of expression. It's time for the international community to begin applying real force to the situation, including assistance and support for law enforcement.

### **Overview of the Situation**

After former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 with the United States and Canada, Mexico found itself increasingly vulnerable and unable to compete within the international market (Andreas, 1998). The story doesn't begin there, however. During the late 1980s and early '90s, de Gortari established a set of liberal reforms that would encourage foreign investors to engage in business in Mexico, with hope that it would revive a weak economy. Unfortunately, the investments had "high risk adjusted returns," which affected the value of the peso (Walsh, 2011). Investors had left by 1994, due not only to the crisis but also to civil unrest in the south. The same year, the U.S. gave Mexico \$20 billion USD in aid. There are critics on both sides of the fence regarding whether NAFTA was beneficial for Mexico. On the bright side, the country's exports quadrupled, household costs were cut in half, and the economy grew – even if not as fast as the other two countries. On the negative side, unemployment in Mexico went up due to the explosion of subsidized farming in the U.S., and half the Mexican labor force is working unofficial jobs (Teslik, 2009). Around the signing of NAFTA, illegal drugs also started becoming a more popular export. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Mexico earned about \$7 billion USD

yearly from the drug trade starting as early as 1994. At this time, there were about 200,000 individuals making a living from growing drugs (Andreas, 1998).

Growing corruption wasn't far behind. Jobs became scarce, and many people found a lucrative business in the drug trade. According to the Interior Ministry, by 1995 there were already about 900 armed criminal groups. Among these, about 50% were members of law enforcement. Between 1992 and 1995, 10% of the country's federal police were fired for drug-related charges (Andreas, 1998). This recent history of corruption makes it easier to understand the gravity of the situation today. The muddy relationship between organized crime and law enforcement makes politics extremely difficult in Mexico, as well as intimidating for people to speak up on behalf of their human rights. By 2000, it was estimated that anywhere from \$10 to \$30 billion USD made it to Mexico every year. Unlike the case in Colombia where the impact of the drug trade was traceable in the state economy, in Mexico it's concentrated in certain regions. Once deeply tied to a local economy, it becomes harder to fight because a community will protect the drug trade as a source of economic welfare (Zill & Bergman, 2000). From 2009 to 2011, there were 565 attacks against journalists and over half (54%) were reported to be committed by police or other members of law enforcement (Edmonds-Poli, 2013). What this essentially shows is that the law isn't a strong enough deterrent in most cases. According to Article 19, an organization that works to protect freedom of expression, the Mexican police and armed forces have been responsible for about 60% of attacks on the press during the past four years (Gonzalez, 2012).

Another factor that has allowed violence to reach its seemingly unstoppable state is the "democratization" of corruption (Farah, 2012, p. 16). For 70 years, while the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, or PRI) held power over the country, rampant corruption was mainly top-down and almost entirely within the party. When Vicente Fox from the National Action Party (*Partido Accion Nacional*, or PAN) won the election in 2000, it ironically led to more violence. One of the party's major platforms was to fight organized crime, which they started doing right away. As the

government cracked down on territory, this drove criminal groups to fight for drug routes. “In Mexico, crackdowns likely reduce rents from criminal activities, but by weakening the incumbent criminal group they also reduce the costs of taking control of a municipality. Controlling the municipality is likely to offer substantial rents from trafficking and a variety of other criminal activities once the crackdown subsides” (Dell, 2012, p. 2). The new administration also enabled the creation of more political parties, which increased corruption within those new parties. Now cartels don't just bribe one group, but instead have to bribe a number of political parties varying by state and region. It also separates organizations into smaller cartels and creates more violence. The more cartels there are, the more players there are in the game to fight each other. By the next elections, there was an apparent loss of hope regarding the violence, the press, and the government (Farah, 2012).

Mexico has lost incredible numbers of people – including members of the media – to violence as a result of corruption and drug trafficking. From 2006 to 2011, organized crime killed 47,515 people. In just the first nine months of 2011, 12,903 individuals were murdered. The 11% rise in violence from the year before can be interpreted as criminals getting bolder (Farah, 2012). Another possible reason for the increase in murders may be that as organized crime grows, cartels continue to break apart into smaller sections and fight against each other. The increase in the splitting of cartels also leads to an increase in bribes for officials, more civilians trapped in the crossfire, and more threats to the press. The fear within the country must be taken into consideration when looking at these statistics; it is possible that some murders even go unreported out of fear retaliation, meaning that many more murders may be happening in Mexico than crime statistics reflect (Farah, 2012).

The threats to journalists are severe. In 2011, one of the hardest years for reporters in Mexico, eight members of the press were killed. Though only three of those deaths were undeniably linked to the drug trade, it is suspected that they were all related to organized crime (Molzahn et al., 2012). Members of the press are often killed without evidence of threat, or in situations that seem accidental,

so it's often not clear whether they were targeted for speaking out or not. A vivid example is the case of *El Diario de Juarez*. In September 2010, after a photographer was murdered by the Juarez Cartel, an editor published an editorial asking the cartel to let them know what they could publish. The editor sadly admitted that the cartels “are at this time the de facto authorities” in Juarez (Farah, 2012). This case demonstrates the level at which the media is practicing self-censorship in order to stay alive. At the same time, these public statements by the press let criminals know that they are in control. Such is the case in Veracruz, a coastal state facing the Gulf of Mexico, which has been one of the most dangerous states for the Mexican press. In the summer of 2011, three members of the media were murdered along with one’s spouse. In July, reporter Yolanda Ordaz de la Cruz was decapitated after being threatened. The following month, reporter Miguel Angel Velasco and his wife were killed along with their son, a photographer (Molzahn et al., 2012). According to Reporters without Borders, “Veracruz is one of the most dangerous places in the world for practicing journalism” (Reporters Without Borders, 2013).

In addition to murder, criminals use many other techniques to intimidate the press. Threats are widespread around the country; up to 70% of journalists who report on organized crime, human rights violations, or the government have been threatened, and up to 96% know colleagues who have received threats. Twenty percent of journalists reported being threatened in person, with significant numbers also being threatened by phone or through hacking into their personal computer accounts. When asked what their biggest concerns were, 31% of Mexican journalists said their personal, physical security; second was their families’ safety and third were concerns about the security of their information. A significant concern is cyber attack; thirty-five percent chose getting their personal accounts hacked as their biggest digital worry. More than half of these journalists have little to no knowledge of the encryption technology available that could keep them safer. Only 15% said they had a “good” understanding on how to maintain anonymity online (Sierra, 2013).

A good example of the corruption in the country is the case of Javier Duarte, governor of Veracruz – one of the most dangerous places for journalists in the world. On April 2, 2013, Duarte was given a Mexican Association of Newspaper Editors award for his alleged support of freedom of the press. Though it is hard to openly criticize a government official, a significant number of journalists have spoken out against the award. Since Duarte's term began in 2010, there have been about 10 murders, several disappearances, and approximately 20 journalists have been forced to flee from his state (Pastrana, 2013). Members of the media accuse the governor of hindering their freedom of expression. In September 2012, he incarcerated two individuals for a month for posting something he didn't agree with on Twitter. Just a couple of weeks before receiving the award, he revoked a photographer's press credentials for capturing images of a group of "self defense forces". Not only is Duarte being accused of directly violating his citizens' rights to freedom of expression, but there is also talk about him bribing members of the media in order to maintain power. It is said that he has given expensive gifts to famous journalists and has offered to pay the expenses of threatened journalists who fled the country for their silence until elections were over (Pastrana, 2013).

Lack of support for freedom of expression was seen during Mexico's past national election, as well as through interactions within the country's justice system. During the inauguration ceremony for President Enrique Pena Nieto, dozens of people were arrested for protesting his legitimacy as president. About 70 people were arrested and many of them were held in custody for a full week. At least four of those arrested reported being tortured. Among the protesters arrested were two journalists (Gonzalez, 2012). Further complaints from journalists stem from the fact that the State Attorney General has blamed the murder of some Mexican journalists on other murdered journalists (Gabriel Hugué, Esteban Rodríguez, and Guillermo Luna) based on no hard evidence. The only piece of evidence against the accused men was the testimony of a man who some suspect was actually involved in the murders himself. He said that the journalists were killed because they killed other journalists (Pastrana, 2013). It

seems a bit convenient and confusing to accuse murdered journalists of the deaths of their colleagues. The gravity of the situation can easily be seen in the numbers of journalists killed in the past two decades. In 1994 there were three journalists murdered, then four murdered in 2004. After 2006 the situation became consistently worse with no less than six assassinations a year from then on. The worst year was 2010, with 10 deaths (Molzahn et al., 2012).

Fear helps to explain why the exact numbers of murdered journalists remains unknown. The number of killings reported by the government and those reported by trade organizations such as Reforma (The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking) often don't match. In 2011, the government reported more killings in 10 states than Reforma. For example, the government's tally for Tamaulipas (1,108) was more than double those of Reforma's, and its tally for Veracruz (595) was nearly four times greater than Reforma's (138) (Molzahn et al., 2012, p.11). In many cases, organizations may be too intimidated to dig deep into the situation, or the people themselves don't want to report deaths for the same reason (Molzahn et al., 2012).

Newspapers in the central and southern part of Mexico have almost ceased to publish any real stories regarding the violence. The cycle of fear is then perpetuated when people see the attacks against the media; they feel even more helpless and don't speak out on behalf of journalists. The effect is a lack of internal pressure towards the government (Farah, 2012). Those who live in areas where violence is rampant don't speak out against it for fear of retaliation, and those who live in areas unaffected are often oblivious to what is going on in the rest of the country. As if the situation facing freedom of expression wasn't bad enough, more people are targeted as criminal organizations gain more power. While, at the beginning of the violence, journalists and those who were directly involved in criminal activities were most threatened, now those at risk include anyone who reports on the violence. Even regular citizens who post opinions through social media like Twitter and Facebook are threatened (Farah, 2012).



It is essential that the Mexican government fight against organized crime. Their violent activities cause suffering within Mexico and those concerns are now bleeding into countries in Central America. In the past three years, the violence against journalists has spread to Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador as cartels expand to those territories. From 2010 to 2011, 17 Honduran journalists were killed. It is Mexico's responsibility to control the violence that began in their country and keep it from spreading into other countries, especially since Central American countries have even fewer resources to fight back (Farah, 2012). As if matters weren't alarming enough, the past couple of years have seen the conflict go from an internal issue to an international one.

### **Responses by the Mexican Government**

Though there have been some attempts to protect freedom of the press in Mexico during the past decade, they have been relatively ineffective and critics often question the sincerity of government efforts. Two years after his presidential victory, Fox supported the passage of the country's first Freedom of Information Act in June 2002. This was seen as one of the Fox administration's biggest achievements, even though the act was drafted by forces outside the government (Bookman & Amparan, 2009). The initiative was drafted by a group of lawyers, journalists, editors, and nonprofit organizations such as *Grupo Oaxaca*, or Oaxaca Group (Freedom Information, 2006). A global movement focused on the protection of freedom of information helps explain why the Mexican act was viewed as such an important step. At this point, most countries in the developing world had not adopted such laws (Bookman & Amparan, 2009). On one hand, passing freedom of information legislation can be seen as a positive and innovative step. On the other hand, the intentions behind passing such legislation can be questioned by critics. It's difficult to know whether the law was truly passed to make strides towards transparency, or whether it was a purely political move that didn't reflect genuine goals of the Fox administration. Either way, the Federal Transparency and Information Law was approved by Mexico's

Congress. A year later, the government enacted a law allowing citizens access to information (Freedom House, 2012).

There are four principles central to Mexico's freedom of information laws. First, government information belongs to the people. Second, there is information that may be held from the public, though this is only supposed to be for a limited period of time and this is difficult to regulate. The third principle goes along with the second and speaks of the need for information to be accessible at a certain point to the public, even if it may take some time. Finally, states must allow everyone to see information. This means that anyone, even non-citizens, should have access to information (Bookman & Amparan, 2009).

Zachary Bookman and Juan Pablo Amparan (2009) study the vocabulary behind the freedom of information laws passed in Mexico in an attempt to assess the intentions and limitations of the legislation. They acknowledge that though the word "transparent" seems to present the idea that everything would be public and accessible, yet they also make the point that it is difficult to actually measure transparency. When it's difficult to assess such an important part of the law, it also becomes difficult to pinpoint when it's being violated. "Access to information" may seem like a narrower concept, but it is still challenging to define (Bookman & Amparan, 2009). Even if we were to assume that there is better access to information in the country, we would also have to consider that a significant amount of people in Mexico can't take advantage of these reforms. For example, the under-educated, those living in remote areas, and those who don't have Internet access may have difficulties accessing information (Freedom Information, 2006). Regarding freedom of information through the Internet, the Mexican government has an obligation to provide a network of communication for communities that don't have access to the Internet yet. By failing to provide an effective system, the country violates its international and national human rights and constitutional commitments (Peacock, 2012).

Federal initiatives have been encouraged at the state level within Mexico. In November 2005, the National Transparency Congress (NTC) took place in Guadalajara in order to bind Mexican states to basic standards of the federal information law. Out of 31 states, only three governors signed the Declaration of Guadalajara. Nevertheless, it was an important step because the three governors were from the three major political parties: PAN, PRI, and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (*Partido de la Revolucion Democratica*, or PRD). A year later, at the second NTC, states drafted a constitutional reform that came to be known as the Chihuahua Initiative. In March 2007, the initiative was passed by the senate with the approval of the three major political parties. The reform was meant to encourage the use of electronic and anonymity tools when it came to freedom of information. By the end of the year, all 31 states had passed transparency laws. Unfortunately, major players like the Central Bank, the Federal Electoral Institution, and the National Commission on Human Rights failed to participate. When President Felipe Calderón came to power later that year, faith in the transparency of the Federal Electoral Institution plummeted. The public's suspicions about the legitimacy of the election didn't help establish and legitimize the new reforms (Bookman & Amparan, 2009).

Other reform measures specifically focus on the rights and protections of journalists. In 2006, a year before leaving office, Fox created the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Journalists (*Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos contra Periodistas*, or FEADP) under the Attorney General's office. A limitation of this new post was that it only focused on protecting journalists and other media workers who unveil information and may suffer significant harassment (Edmonds-Poli, 2013). Once in power, Calderon changed the FEADP to Attention to Crimes Against Free Expression (*Atención de Delitos Cometidos en contra de la Libertad de Expresión*, or FEADLE). Though this may sound better than the previous post, since it includes more people than just journalists, there are still many problems with it. The office isn't permanent and doesn't have a reliable budget. From 2006 to 2010, FEADLE was able to prosecute only one case (Edmonds-Poli, 2013). It has shown improvement lately, however; from 2010 to

2011 it investigated 81 cases, identified 55 suspects, and issued 23 subpoenas – yet “still no investigation has lead to justice” (Edmonds-Poli, 2013, p. 22). Furthermore, the Law to Protect Human Rights Defenders and Journalists (*Ley para la Protection de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas*) was passed in June 2012 to promote better dialogue between the state and federal government, without requiring states to participate with federal activities (Camara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Union, 2012). The law says it was made to “protect the integrity, freedom, and security of those at risk,” but doesn't specify exactly who would fall under this category. The law needs more cooperation from states, which is hard to get because many states feel that the reinforcement of this law infringes on states' rights (Edmonds-Poli, 2013).

Yet another attempt to stem violence against the media was the passage of the *Procuradía General de la Republica*, or PGA. This provision creates a new prosecutor, also under the Attorney General. This addition is still new, however, and lacks organization and a consistent chain of command (Edmonds-Poli, 2013). Nevertheless, this is a very big step toward improving the situation. A similar development in Colombia helped that government combat freedom of the press violations in the country about two decades ago (Farah, 2012). Still, there is much work to be done; in October 2012 a bill that would have made crimes against journalists a federal crime was proposed but didn't pass (Freedom House, 2012).

### **Responses from the International Community**

From an international human rights perspective, the repressive environment in Mexico violates basic rights laid out by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media” (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). The 1993 Vienna Convention on Human Rights states that “democracy is

based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social, and cultural system and their full participation in all their aspects of their lives” (Peacock, 2012). Similar sentiments were expressed in 2003 and again in the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society regarding freedom of expression (Peacock, 2012). In 2011, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Frank LaRue, reported to the UN's Human Rights Council that “facilitating access to Internet for all individuals, with as little restriction as possible should be a priority for all states” (Peacock, 2012, p.1). And more recently, in 2012, the Council adopted a resolution regarding Internet freedom, inviting the “human rights community to develop methods of monitoring and evaluating digital inclusion” (Peacock, 2012, p.22).

The United Nation's Universal Periodic Review is a system that allows all UN members to give suggestions regarding human rights responsibilities. The last time Mexico was reviewed by its peers was in 2009. At that time, the UN made some of the same recommendations that this article offers the country four years later (see next section). The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights suggested that the FEADP be strengthened and that lawyers and human rights defenders be protected as well. This may have something to do with the transformation of the FEADP to the broader FEADLE. The High Commissioner also reminded Mexico of its ratification of the Convention Against Torture. They brought up concerns about confessions being used as evidence, since these confessions were often products of torture against civilians at the hands of the military, among others. Unfortunately, many recommendations from other countries barely touched upon the issue of freedom of expression – focusing mostly on women’s rights and torture – yet any forward movement on human rights protections will surely benefit the country as a whole, including its journalists. Bolivia, Guatemala, Spain, Turkey, and Uruguay all urged the Mexican government to “harmonize federal and state laws” with human rights. Others mentioned impunity and only Norway and the Netherlands explicitly mentioned freedom of the press and violations against the media (United Nations General Assembly, 2009).

## **Analysis and Recommendations**

The situation in Mexico today is actually very similar to the situation in Colombia two to three decades ago, and maybe Mexico can learn from the Colombian experience. Both countries suffered violence against the press at the hands of organized crime, although there were key differences between the two cases. In Colombia, the government and the media were being targeted by the Medellin Cartel, which united victims in a common cause. The media under attack was mainly owned by powerful families, which is different than in Mexico; there are a large number of media organizations and many don't hold much political power. As opposed to Mexico, where violence against the media is spread around the country, in Colombia most of the main media outlets were centralized in the capital of Bogota. This made it easier for the media to unite against the perpetrators and to rally attention from the government (Farah, 2012). Despite these differences, Colombia's experiences point to possible solutions for Mexico.

First, Colombia's history shows that Mexico must give law enforcement the power to uphold existing legislation. In the case of FEADLE, there are several steps the government needs to take in order to give the prosecutor teeth. President Calderon needs to show a new level of seriousness; for instance, by providing incentives to promote state cooperation (Edmonds-Poli, 2013). Prosecutors need more funding and a full staff in order function properly. This FEADLE office should also look at the special prosecutor established by Colombia under similar circumstances for guidance. The goal of this office in Colombia was to learn about individuals at risk as soon as possible, to commence investigations, to relocate those at risk as soon as possible, and to prosecute criminals (Farah, 2012).

Second, more international cooperation is needed to remedy the situation in Mexico. One of the tools used in the case of Colombia was networking among non-profit organization leaders and top government officials. The job of this group was to review the situation in six-month periods (Farah, 2012). In 2009, the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) hosted an event for Mexico to learn from

Colombia. The association brought Colombia's former president Cesar Gaviria, journalist Enrique Santos Calderon, and other members of the press together for dialogue and solution-seeking. "Not a single member of the Mexican Government attended," said Calderon (Farah, 2012, p. 12). Besides large events like this one, the IAPA regularly throws youth conferences for high school and college students in Mexico. The conferences normally focus on repressive press laws and impunity. Besides that, the association also works toward giving scholarships and promoting interest in journalism among young people. The Merida Initiative, along with Freedom House, began organizing in 2012 to provide the organization Article 19 \$5 million USD over a four-year time span to help the cause.

Third, help from immediate neighbors will be essential for solving these critical problems. The United States should change how they prosecute drug offenders, for instance. Instead of spending large amounts of resources charging citizens for small offenses, the government should invest in looking for traffickers and safe houses within the U.S. This would slow down the revenue going back into Mexico, which would slow traffickers back into the U.S. When speaking about the relationship between the drug market in the U.S. and violence in Mexico, Mike McDonald from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service stated clearly: "They generate these dollars that in Colombia and in Mexico are turned into power, turned into extortion, turned into homicide, turned into corrupting foreign governments, arms dealing, and expanding criminal enterprises around the world" (Dell, 2012).

Fourth, the media itself must unite against violence. This is difficult for the Mexican media because attacks are spread out throughout the country (unlike in Colombia). Nevertheless, the media in Mexico has something that Colombia didn't have 20 to 30 years ago: the widespread ability to connect through the Internet. The media can now use this tool to organize themselves and gain strength together. Of course this isn't as easy as it sounds because widespread cooperation would be needed to make this successful. In any case, it is essential for journalists to maintain anonymity online. Journalists working in this dangerous environment must take all precautions. Media outlets and journalists need to

join forces and help those who don't know enough about encryption technologies. Less than 5% of reporters in the country use encrypted e-mail providers. Many have the same social networking accounts for private and professional use, which is an easy way to get family involved in conflicts. In order to stay safe, all precautions should be taken and media companies, especially those abroad, could help by training journalists in cyber security (Sierra, 2013).

A tactic used by the Colombian press that would be very useful in Mexico is for networks of publications to publish the same stories about organized crime and violence against the press on the same days. This would overwhelm the perpetrators and make the stories national news. Unfortunately, the press in Mexico has been reduced to a disconnected network and it would take a lot of noise and communication to get publications to rise up in this way. When this tactic was attempted in Mexico in 2006, it failed to materialize into noticeable activity or change. About 40 newspapers published the same story about disappearances in April of that year, leading to quite a bit of attention. Unfortunately, there really wasn't any follow-through and the attention died down (Farah, 2012).

The issue of freedom of expression in Mexico is a very complicated one, and we can't expect it to be solved immediately. Even if Mexico learns from Colombia, it probably won't completely fix the situation. Decades later, journalists are still being murdered in Colombia – although the situation is noticeably better, and since 2003 there haven't been more than three journalists murdered in a year and the media isn't nearly as intimidated by organized crime (Farah, 2012). With the understanding that in reality it will probably take decades to remedy the situation in Mexico, it is even more important to focus attention on protecting human rights and moving forward with positive solutions.



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