

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 702

Condemning violence against journalists in Mexico and expressing support for strengthening deterrent, protective, and accountability measures to prevent violence against journalists and safeguard the freedom of the press in Mexico.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 12, 2022

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. KAINE, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BENNET, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Condemning violence against journalists in Mexico and expressing support for strengthening deterrent, protective, and accountability measures to prevent violence against journalists and safeguard the freedom of the press in Mexico.

Whereas the United States and Mexico share extensive economic, security, cultural, and democratic ties, especially a mutual commitment to respecting and promoting universally recognized human rights, democratic values, and the rule of law;

Whereas freedom of the press is an essential component of democratic governance, as recognized in the Inter-Amer-

ican Democratic Charter, done at Lima September 11, 2001, and journalists should have the right to report the news objectively, in safety, without retribution or threats thereof;

Whereas attacks against journalists and other media workers is a significant concern for freedom of the press and human rights in Mexico, especially among journalists and other media workers who report on public corruption and illicit activities and are frequently subject to threats, coercion, intimidation, surveillance, forcible relocation, violence, and even death;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, more than 150 journalists have been killed in Mexico since 2000;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, Mexico was the most dangerous country in the world outside a war zone for journalists for the third consecutive year in 2021 and ranked 127 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index in 2022;

Whereas, as of 2022, the Committee to Protect Journalists has documented 15 cases of missing reporters in Mexico, the highest number of any country in the world;

Whereas, in 2022, at least 12 extrajudicial killings of journalists have occurred in Mexico, including the killings of—

- (1) José Luis Gamboa Arenas on January 10;
- (2) Alfonso Margarito Martínez Esquivel on January 17;
- (3) Maria Guadalupe Lourdes Maldonado López on January 23;
- (4) Roberto Toledo Barrera on January 31;
- (5) Heber López Vásquez on February 10;
- (6) Jorge Luis Camero Zazueta on February 24;

- (7) Juan Carlos Muñiz on March 4;
- (8) Armando Linares López on March 15;
- (9) Luis Enrique Ramírez on May 5;
- (10) Yessenia Mollinedo Falconi on May 9;
- (11) Sheila Johana García Olivera on May 9; and
- (12) Antonio de la Cruz on June 29;

Whereas at least 9 of the 12 journalists murdered in Mexico in 2022 were killed in direct connection with their work, according to Reporters Without Borders;

Whereas the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has sometimes demonstrated hostility towards the free press and enabled an unsafe working environment for independent journalists by regularly, publicly disparaging and intimidating journalists who are critical of the policies of or investigate corruption related to associates of his administration;

Whereas perpetrators of violence against journalists in Mexico are rarely held to account, with Mexico ranking among the countries with the most unsolved murders of journalists per capita and more than 95 percent of crimes against journalists in the country going unpunished, according to the International Federation of Journalists;

Whereas initiatives taken thus far by the Government of Mexico to address violence against journalists, namely the creation of the Federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists (referred to in this preamble as the “Federal Protection Mechanism”) in 2012, have not achieved stated goals and have been marred by significant implementation issues, according to a March 2019 report by the Washington Office on Latin America, including—

- (1) insufficient financial and human resources;

- (2) inadequate risk analysis and protection protocols;
- (3) limited transparency and oversight; and
- (4) limited coordination between local, State, and national entities;

Whereas the decision by President López Obrador to eliminate independent funding for the Federal Protection Mechanism in October 2020 has the potential to further exacerbate the resource constraints of the Federal Protection Mechanism and undermine the ability of the Federal Protection Mechanism to protect at-risk journalists and other human rights defenders;

Whereas, as a result of a failure to rectify recognized issues with the Federal Protection Mechanism, at least 9 journalists have been killed while receiving protection in Mexico, with the majority of such journalists killed during the tenure of President López Obrador, according to Human Rights Watch;

Whereas the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico have expressed concerns about violence against journalists in Mexico, asserting that “impunity in attacks against journalists fosters further violence against reporters and may inhibit the exercise of freedom of expression”, and offered recommendations to address such concerns;

Whereas, on March 10, 2022, the European Parliament passed a resolution on the situation of journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico; and

Whereas the United States Government has expressed concern about violence against journalists in Mexico and

demonstrated a willingness to assist the Government of Mexico in strengthening human rights protections and freedom of the press: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) expresses unwavering commitment to and
3 support for strengthening deterrent, protective, and
4 accountability measures to prevent violence against
5 journalists and safeguard the freedom of the press
6 in Mexico;

7 (2) condemns consistently high levels of violence
8 against journalists in Mexico, including recent and
9 ongoing spikes in extrajudicial killings and high lev-
10 els of impunity for such violence;

11 (3) encourages the Government of Mexico—

12 (A) to strengthen efforts to protect the
13 free press and journalists, including by—

14 (i) committing sufficient resources to
15 address threats to the free press and jour-
16 nalists; and

17 (ii) tailoring protection measures to
18 account for the specific challenges of con-
19 ducting journalistic work;

20 (B) to ensure a thorough and impartial in-
21 vestigation into all threats of violence reported
22 by journalists and the provision of immediate

1 access to protective measures for journalists
2 who make such reports;

3 (C) to refrain from actions and statements
4 that create a more hostile environment for the
5 free press and journalists;

6 (D) to pursue public awareness campaigns
7 to recognize and elevate journalistic work and
8 the freedom of the press;

9 (E) to pursue effective measures, in close
10 coordination with local and State entities and
11 civil society organizations, to strengthen deter-
12 rent, protective, and accountability measures to
13 address violence against journalists; and

14 (F) to conduct comprehensive and trans-
15 parent investigations into the deaths of journal-
16 ists to ensure all responsible parties are pros-
17 ecuted to the fullest extent of the law;

18 (4) encourages further efforts by the Govern-
19 ment of Mexico—

20 (A) to address deficiencies within the Fed-
21 eral Mechanism for the Protection of Human
22 Rights Defenders and Journalists (referred to
23 in this resolution as the “Federal Protection
24 Mechanism”);

1 (B) to bolster the capability of the Federal
2 Protection Mechanism to achieve its stated pur-
3 pose; and

4 (C) to develop additional measures that in-
5 corporate relevant recommendations by civil so-
6 ciety groups, the United Nations Office of the
7 High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the
8 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
9 to safeguard journalists and the free press;

10 (5) supports efforts by civil society groups, the
11 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for
12 Human Rights, and the Inter-American Commission
13 on Human Rights—

14 (A) to monitor violence against journalists
15 and media workers in Mexico;

16 (B) to provide technical assistance and
17 other support to the Government of Mexico to
18 address concerns about such violence; and

19 (C) to disseminate accurate information on
20 the state of freedom of the press in Mexico; and

21 (6) calls on the Department of State and
22 United States Agency for International Development
23 to prioritize the protection of the media and efforts
24 to prevent, investigate, and prosecute cases of vio-

- 1 lence against journalists in diplomatic engagement
- 2 with, and foreign assistance to, Mexico.

