

IFJ Carries Out Solidarity Mission in Mexico

Mission States that “Attacks Against Journalists are Attacks Against Democracy”

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has called for authorities in Mexico to improve mechanisms of protection for journalists and media workers and to ensure that those responsible for crimes against journalists answer for their crimes.

The IFJ has issued the call following the completion of its two-day solidarity mission to Mexico from 9-11 September to the Federal District and the state of Guerrero.

"Attacks and assaults against journalists are attacks on democracy," said Celso Schroder, vice president of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and president of the Federation of Journalists in Latin America and the Caribbean (FEPALC), adding that the IFJ only takes missions to countries with high rates of risk for journalists as in the case of Iraq, Sri Lanka and Somalia. "We are in Mexico because it is part of this group of countries," he said.

He continued: "The problems exist in regions inside the country, but answers to the problems are also emerging there."

Mission delegates highlighted the positive work that is being done in Mexican regions to try and tackle the issue of impunity. "During its time in Mexico the mission heard of the positive protection mechanism Mexican authorities have introduced as they work to improve the precarious situation for journalists, said IFJ Treasurer Wolfgang Mayer. "As in the case of the state of Guerrero, which has a fund to provide assistance to reporters.

Mayer added: "The worst result of the violence is the fear that prevents the professional practice."

Following the mission, delegates were in no doubt that the biggest issue for the journalism profession in Mexican is impunity for crimes against journalists and media workers.

"There are no cases of murdered journalists resolved. Mexico has a rate of about 98% impunity. A crime unsolved does always end in self-censorship. Journalists are silent because they fear for their safety and of their families, "said Zuliana Lainez, Vice President of FEPALC.

Luis Menendez, of the Federation of Associations of Journalists in Spain and member of the IFJ Executive Committee, explained that Mexico is one of the most developed countries in south America when it comes to legislation, but crimes against journalists are on the increase. "So what is failing?" he asked,

continuing: “We must not only act when attacks occur, but our priority must be a commitment to prevention.

During the course of the mission, the IFJ delegation held a series meetings with officials from the Chamber of Deputies of the Federal District, the Senate, the Attorney General of the Republic, the Mexican State Government, the Human Rights Commission of the State of Guerrero, the Chamber of Deputies of the same state and Government of Guerrero.

Following these meetings, the delegations has acknowledged that there are mechanisms to protect journalists in place, however they believe that they are disjointed, are insufficient and inefficient in the magnitude of the problem nationwide.

Officially, there were 114 attacks on journalists from 2000 to 2014, but the mission has stated that those numbers are just what you see – the problem is even greater.

The IFJ mission believes it is necessary to accelerate the existing mechanisms of protection for journalists and initiate an immediate fight against precarious conditions in which the profession is exercised in Mexico.

Having established this background, the recommendations of the IFJ mission are:

- Directs directly to the Presidency of the Republic and demands to assume, at that level of government, the coordination of the various actors, instruments of protection, research and the fight against impunity for crimes and attacks on journalists and media communication.
- Demands from the Mexican State, as a clear sign of political will to solve this situation, to allocate financial resources to enable the fully fund of public institutions and the mechanisms of protection for journalists and media workers.
- Calls to promote a national awareness campaign for society to understand the work of journalists and the journalism as an essential public good and an essential bulwark of democracy. This campaign should be promoted by the mechanisms of protection, the Attorney General's Office, the National Union of Press Editors (SNRP in its Spanish acronym) and other organizations that defend and promote freedom of expression.
- Urges media entrepreneurs to take responsibility to ensure protection, wages and working conditions for journalists.

The mission calls on Mexican authorities to convey a willingness to fight impunity, stating that they must urgently solve at least one journalist murder case to show their commitment to the fight against impunity.

