

IFJ Mission to Mexico Finds that Journalists are Overwhelmed by Violence

"The state of Guerrero is still one of the five most risky places for the practice of journalism in Mexico," a mission by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has stated.

The IFJ mission made the statement during its two-day fact finding visit to Mexico, from 9-11 September, where they met with journalists and government officials to learn more about the issues affecting journalists in the region including self-censorship, a lack of government intervention, and impunity for attacks against journalists.

During the visit to the state of Guerrero mission delegates heard the testimonies of journalists from the cities of Chilpancingo, Iguala and Acapulco. In their accounts the journalists highlighted the issue of self-censorship among journalists, a dangerous phenomenon which they said is on the increase in the country.

The mission expressed their deep concern regarding the proliferation of self-censorship, stating that these actions are producing a deceptive drop in the rate of attacks on journalists. Due to intimidation and fear journalists have chosen to silence sensitive issues in order to protect their security.

The mission then met with Ramon Navarrete, president of the Commission on Human Rights, State House representative, Deputy Jorge Salazar Marchán, and Beatriz Mojica Morga, Secretary of Social Development for the Government of Guerrero.

During the meeting, the IFJ expressed its concern about the high rates of impunity in the region for crimes and attacks against journalists. They said that operations being carried out by the state governments and its House of Representatives must produce results and bring the perpetrators of these crimes.

In response, the officials in attendance advised that they had not been provided with the resources they need to carry out this work effectively. "We must move from words to action," said the members of the mission.

On a more positive note, the support programme for journalists in Mexico was highlighted during the meeting, a project which is unique in Mexico. The IFJ learnt that Guerrero state provides life insurance for journalists upon request as well as support with medical and legal issues and access to housing.

The mission believes this support structure is of great value and support to journalists faced with the ongoing issue of job insecurity.

During the meeting, Ramon Navarrete said that between 2000 and 2014 there had been 114 documented cases of attacks on journalists including homicides, restrictions and complaints against their professionalism.

He said he recognised that there is a global trend of rising crimes against journalists, but the situation in Mexico is among the worst in the world.

The IFJ mission delegates recalled being part of an international mission to Mexico in 2008, and stated that after six years it is clear that the security landscape has worsened.

At the end of the second day of its work the mission reiterated the need to raise public awareness about the work of journalists. "It's terrible that the murder of a journalist -with the seriousness that this implies- is only highlighted for a day or two in the media. Afterwards nobody talks about it," said the mission.

"This mission is aiming to be a wake-up call to politicians, officials and Mexican society that they should demand: Enough is enough! End the violence against journalists."

Mission delegates were: Celso Schroder (Brazil), Vice President of IFJ, Wolfgang Mayer (Germany), Treasurer of the IFJ, Zuliana Lainez (Peru), Vice President of the Federation of Journalists in Latin America and the Caribbean (FEPALC), Luis Menéndez (Spain), Federation of Associations of Journalists in Spain (FAPE) and colleagues of the National Union of Press Reporters in Mexico (SNRP).