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2 May 2017

Mr. President,

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum (WEF) express their deep concern at the current insecurity and impunity crisis threatening the lives and work of Mexican journalists.

The killing of four journalists over the course of this year has caught the attention of the international press. These atrocious crimes reflect a security crisis for the profession, especially in areas with important presence of organized crime and with weak institutional presence from the State. It is also of particular concern the revelation that half of the attacks on journalists are directed by public officials of the Mexican State. And it is not a recent problem. For at least a decade, international organizations have warned of the deterioration of press freedom conditions in Mexico.

Last April 14, Maximino Rodríguez Palacios was shot to death in La Paz, Baja California Sur. His work on the blog "Colectivo Pericú", a digital medium focused on local politics and security, exposed him to threats after publishing information about criminal groups operating in the region. Although the event is already being investigated, the perpetrators are free, which threatens other members of the "Colectivo Pericú".

Journalist Miroslava Breach Velducea was murdered in the city of Chihuahua, Chihuahua on March 23. For decades, Breach covered topics of relevance to the state for La Jornada and Norte de Ciudad Juárez, gaining renown as one of the most prominent journalists of the entity. Days later the body of his supposed murderer was found.

On March 19, journalist Ricardo Monlui Cabrera was shot in the state of Veracruz. Monlui was a prominent local journalist, reporting from the city of Córdoba and covering issues related to the the local sugar industry. Veracruz is one of the most dangerous states for journalists. A few days later, on March 29, the head of news for the newspaper La Opinión de Poza Rica, Armando Arrieta, survived an attack on his life.

In the state of Guerrero, Cecilio Pineda Birto was killed on March 2. Pineda served as director of the newspaper La Voz de la Tierra Caliente and wrote for national daily El Universal. He had received several threats related to his profession in the past, especially for denouncing the links between organized crime and local government officials.

These deaths add up to the other 26 murders of journalists during your administration, coupled with hundreds of aggressions and attacks. This reigning impunity is constitutes the best protection for anyone wanting to silence a journalist through violence, as no punishment follows the perpetrators of such crimes.

The facts described show a very serious security crisis for journalists. We respectfully remind you that is the obligation of the Mexican State to watch over and protect for the rights of journalists, guaranteeing their safety and freedom to inform. The frequency of assaults, attacks and murders seriously questions the effectiveness of precautionary and protection measures implemented by the government. It is clear that protection mechanisms for journalists and human rights defenders do not have the capacity to stop these crimes and are not sufficient to guarantee freedom of the press.

We would like to request a meeting to discuss these issues personally, in order to explore ways to strengthen mechanisms to protect journalists in high-risk situations as well as the legal proceedings against the intellectual and material authors of these crimes, and to eradicate any type of attack on media professionals by state authorities.

Kindest regards,

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World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers

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This letter is supported by the following members of WAN-IFRA's World Editors Forum:

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