

Dangerous Work: Violence Against Mexico's Journalists and Lessons from Colombia

A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance

By Douglas Farah

April 11, 2012



The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), at the National Endowment for Democracy, works to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of independent media development throughout the world. The Center provides information, builds networks, conducts research, and highlights the indispensable role independent media play in the creation and development of sustainable democracies. An important aspect of CIMA's work is to research ways to attract additional U.S. private sector interest in and support for international media development. The Center was one of the of the main nongovernmental organizers of World Press Freedom Day 2011 in Washington, DC.

CIMA convenes working groups, discussions, and panels on a variety of topics in the field of media development and assistance. The center also issues reports and recommendations based on working group discussions and other investigations. These reports aim to provide policymakers, as well as donors and practitioners, with ideas for bolstering the effectiveness of media assistance.

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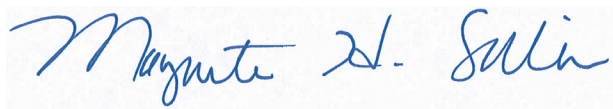
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Preface

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) at the National Endowment for Democracy commissioned this report on violent attacks against journalists in Mexico. The study compares the response of the government and media organizations in Mexico with those in Colombia, which also suffered a period of deadly violence against journalists in the 1980s and 1990s.

CIMA is grateful to Douglas Farah, a veteran Latin America correspondent, for his research and insights on this topic. We hope that this report will become an important reference for international media development efforts.



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Executive Summary

The job of Mexican journalists covering drug trafficking and organized crime along the Mexico-U.S. border has regularly been called the most dangerous job in the world. And the danger has spread from journalists for traditional media to bloggers and citizens who post reports on drug cartel violence through social media such as Twitter and Facebook. The danger is not just from drug cartels, however. Journalists often identified local politicians and police—frequently in the pay of the cartels—as the source of most of the threats.

In broad swaths of the border region, and increasingly in central and southern Mexico, there simply is no real news being reported. Basic rights to free expression and public information are being denied. As the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) noted in a September 2010 special report:

Pervasive self-censorship throughout vast areas of the country is the ruinous product of this lethal violence. As organized crime, corruption, and lawlessness spread, reporters and news outlets are abandoning not only investigative reporting but basic daily coverage of sensitive issues such as the drug trade and municipal malfeasance.

Despite repeated promises by the government of President Felipe Calderón to take concrete steps to mitigate the violence, almost none of the promises have been fulfilled. As noted in another 2010 report, this one for the Knight Foundation: despite dozens of visits by international media organizations to press the case, “violence [against journalists] is not on the public agenda, not even of the executive branch, the Congress or even the media outlets.”

In many ways the experience of Mexico today mirrors the experience of journalists in Colombia in the 1980s and 1990s, when much of that country was a war zone and reporters and editors were being killed or driven into exile by drug traffickers, paramilitary squads, and Marxist guerrillas. Some presidential candidates and union leaders also were killed. Journalists lived with constant fear and self-censorship, and drug cartels controlled or influenced much of the political and judicial structures.

Yet the response of the governments and media organizations in the two countries could hardly be more different, nor could the results. However, many of the successful steps taken in Colombia could be implemented in Mexico in a relatively short time.

While the media in Colombia, when attacked largely in the main urban centers, banded together both to publish investigative pieces and urge government action, media leaders in Mexico have

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remained virtually silent and have abandoned efforts to create a unified strategy, carry out common investigations, or highlight the plight of journalists.

In Colombia, the political power of the national media, mostly operating out of the capital, Bogotá, was brought to bear on the political process. In Mexico, where most attacks on journalists are carried out far from the capital, the response has been considerably more muted.

The Colombian government, with the backing and funding of the international community, began a program to physically protect journalists under threat; establish an early warning and rapid response system to relocate journalists and their families on short notice; create a special prosecutor's office to investigate crimes against the media; and establish an interagency group of senior government officials and leaders of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to review the security situation for threatened journalists every six months.

In contrast, the Mexican government has not yet made killing a journalist a federal crime, leaving investigations in the hands of often corrupt and compromised local officials; has not established a functional special prosecutor's office that will actively investigate crimes; and has failed to have senior government officials engage in a sustained way on the violence or work with media organizations on strategies and policies to mitigate it.

The lack of solidarity among the media and the lack of a unified front with the national government in the face of the crisis have been a significant obstacle to confronting the violence against journalists in Mexico.

This marks perhaps the biggest difference between the Mexican and Colombian responses in the early days of the threat. While there has been virtually no public, coherent statement or advocacy by the established media giants based in Mexico City, the powerful national media in Bogotá coalesced into an effective voice and lobbying group for media protection in Colombia.

One of the biggest steps in Colombia proved to be one of the most difficult: the decision among multiple news organizations not only to collaborate on stories to make silencing the press much more difficult, but also to jointly publish the same stories on the same day.

There are several reasons for the two countries' different responses, but perhaps the most important is that in Colombia the national media and the political elite (presidential candidates, attorneys general, labor leaders) were targeted by the Medellín cartel, drawing national and international attention and forcing these powerful groups to forge a common strategy in order to survive. Pablo Escobar and other cartel leaders were expressly at war with the Colombia state, in large part to halt the national policy of extradition.

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In Mexico, by contrast, almost all of the attacks have been against local targets far from the capital, drawing little sustained national attention and even less of an international response. As Mexican journalists acknowledge, the capital is so far removed in terms of political power, influence, and decision-making that it is almost a separate entity from the rural hinterlands. While organized criminal groups have co-opted or corrupted many state and local officials and thrive on local impunity, these groups have carried out few high-profile national assassinations near the seat of national power, in part because their goal is the control of specific geographic space for moving cocaine and other illicit products. Also, the federal government has many more resources and is less vulnerable to local pressure than are state and municipal authorities.

Only one joint investigation and publication appears to have taken place in Mexico. While more than 40 newspapers simultaneously published a story in April 2006 about the disappearance of a Mexican journalist investigating drug trafficking, follow-up plans for joint efforts under the so-called Phoenix Project evaporated.

The implications of the violence are now being felt beyond Mexico's borders. Expanding their range across Central America, Mexican drug trafficking organizations are the primary suspects in the deaths of 17 journalists in Honduras during 2010-2011. Reporters in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador say they exercise far more self-censorship now when reporting on drug trafficking and corruption than they did two or three years ago. Central American governments, even less equipped than Mexico to handle such violence, are likely to do even less than the Mexican government has done.

Turning the tide on the killing of journalists involves several steps, but primarily it is a matter of having the political will to acknowledge the issue as important and ending the impunity for those responsible for the violence. Resources are important but, as the Colombian experience shows, there are multiple ways to mitigate the threat to freedom of expression and the right to information in societies where journalists are targeted. Unfortunately, Mexico has taken very few of those steps.

There is a surprising consensus among journalists interviewed for this report, the available literature, and press freedom groups on what steps have a significant impact on protecting the lives of journalists, ending the cycle of impunity, and changing society's attitudes toward the attacks on the media and the parallel loss of freedom of expression and access to information.

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These steps include:

- Following through on making attacks on the media, particularly murders, a federal rather than a state or local crime, in order to remove the investigations from often corrupt or intimidated local law enforcement groups. This fundamental legal change would be significant in ending the cycle of impunity and the botched investigations that currently feed the violence.
- Strengthening the special prosecutor's office, with additional funding and staff, to more effectively go after those accused of these crimes.
- Forming a common front in the media to tackle the problems of security for journalists and the risks of reporting on transnational organized crime.
- Persuading national opinion leaders to speak out about the violence and its impact on society.
- Targeting international aid specifically for the protection of journalists.

A Spreading Danger

Mexican journalists covering drug trafficking and organized crime along the Mexico-U.S. border for years have walked a thin line between reporting the news and courting danger and death on their beats. In recent years their jobs have become among the most dangerous in the world.

Drug trafficking organizations routinely threaten journalists with kidnapping, torture, and death if they do not follow the “narco code” of conduct in disseminating or withholding information in accordance with cartel interests. The traffickers often carry out their threats in gruesome and public ways designed to reinforce the terror and further silence the media.

The danger has spread from journalists for the traditional media to bloggers and citizens who report on drug cartel violence through social media such as Twitter and Facebook. And the danger is not just from the cartels. Journalists have identified local politicians and police—often in the pay of a cartel—as the source of most of the threats.¹

As the narco violence has spread, traditional constraints on it have disappeared. Certain parameters that once were understood by journalists and others, and certain codes of conduct that were respected—for example, families were not targeted, beheadings were not carried out, journalists were warned before being silenced permanently—have all been erased by the new violence.²

In some cases this has led to a complete and public surrender of journalistic decision-making to the drug trafficking organizations. In one noted editorial after the September 2010 killing of one of its young photographers, *El Diario de Juárez* begged the Juárez cartel, engaged in a bloody war with the Sinaloa cartel, to tell the newspaper what it could and could not write, given the reality that the drug groups “are, at this time, the de facto authorities” in the city.

“We are social communicators, not seers,” the editorial said. “As such we ask you to explain to us what you want from us, what you want us to publish or not publish, so we can adhere to that.”³

Unfortunately, the danger to journalists who do anything more than parrot government and narco communiqués is growing rapidly in much of the rest of the country as well. Violence against journalists, carried out with near total impunity, has spread to almost all parts of Mexico.

The dozens of deaths⁴ and kidnappings of journalists over the past decade, and the steady stream of journalists seeking political asylum in the United States and elsewhere, are only a small part of the overall toll the violence is taking on society and the fundamental democratic structures of Mexico.

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Official government statistics, widely viewed as significantly lower than reality, put the drug-related death toll since the start of the administration of President Felipe Calderón in December 2006 at a staggering 47,515 through September 2011. The toll from the first nine months of 2011 was placed at 12,903, an 11 percent increase from the same period a year earlier.⁵

The cartel-inspired homicides and other attacks on journalists are now spilling over into Central America, as the Mexican criminal organizations push south. Honduras, for example, has witnessed a rash of murders of reporters, particularly radio reporters, outside the capital of Tegucigalpa.

“The danger we all in Honduras are experiencing is intensifying in an important part of society, namely the media, which are suffering threats, attacks, and murders,” said Honduran Human Rights Commissioner Ramón Custodio.⁶

In broad swaths along Mexico’s northern border region, and increasingly in central and southern Mexico, no real news is being reported. Basic rights to free expression and public information are being denied. As the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) noted in a 2010 report titled *Silence or Death in Mexico’s Press*:

Pervasive self-censorship throughout vast areas of the country is the ruinous product of this lethal violence. As organized crime, corruption, and lawlessness spread, reporters and news outlets are abandoning not only investigative reporting but basic daily coverage of sensitive issues such as the drug trade and municipal malfeasance.⁷

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In the face of the unrelenting attacks on the media, the Calderón administration and Mexico’s national political establishment and media leaders have remained relatively passive while mired in internal political disputes about the seriousness of the issue and viable responses.

Although there have been repeated promises to take concrete steps to mitigate the violence, little has been done. A 2010 Knight Foundation report titled “Killing the News: Stories Go Untold as Latin American Journalists Die” noted that, despite dozens of visits by international media organizations to press the case, “violence [against journalists] is not on the public agenda, not even of the executive branch, the Congress or even the media outlets.”⁸ This may finally be starting to change. In March 2012, Mexico’s Senate passed a bill that would amend the constitution to allow federal prosecutors to pursue cases involving attacks on journalists. But the measure must be passed by a majority of state legislatures before it can take effect.

In many ways the experience of Mexico today mirrors the experience of journalists in Colombia in the 1980s and 1990s, when that country was a virtual war zone and reporters and editors were

killed or driven into exile by drug traffickers, paramilitary squads, and Marxist guerrillas. Some presidential candidates and union leaders also were killed. Journalists lived with constant fear and self-censorship, and drug cartels controlled or influenced much of the political and judicial structures.

This report looks at some of the lessons Mexico could learn from Colombia's experience, as well as some reasons these lessons have not yet been taken to heart. In addition to conducting a literature review, the author interviewed more than a dozen Colombian and Mexican journalists, in person and by e-mail, to learn more directly about the experiences of those who have lived or are now living on the front lines, in situations of significant risk.

There are undoubtedly significant differences as well as similarities in the two situations, and these need to be taken into account. One primary difference is the changed nature of cartels

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themselves and the types of violence they are generating, along with the different realities driving that violence.

Another is the nature of the attacks the cartels carried out in Colombia—against media in Bogotá owned by politically and economically powerful families—compared with Mexico, where the vast majority of attacks have occurred far from the capital and were aimed at media with little following beyond their town or state.

As in Colombia, there are serious issues of corruption and payoffs within the Mexican media, with some reporters and editors also working for organized crime groups, passing on information about the cartels or informing on other reporters.⁹

This internal corruption has multiple effects, greatly complicating official as well as media investigations of drug-related crimes (whether intra-cartel disputes or crimes against journalists) and giving the government and investigating authorities an easy excuse not to carry out investigations.

Acknowledging that many journalists—especially those in isolated, rural communities—are in the pay of drug traffickers, Alfredo Corchado of the *Dallas Morning News*, who has covered the border from both sides for years, described the impact this has on investigations:

When you kill a journalist in Mexico, you kill him/her twice. The first bullet takes your life away, and even before they dump the body in the ground they kill your reputation: “He must have been on the take for this or that, or sleeping with so-and-so.” The investigation goes nowhere.¹⁰

Cartel Penetration of Colombia's Media: A Personal Tale

In December 1989, the Medellín cartel blew up a commercial airliner in mid-air, killing more than 100 people. I rushed to Bogotá for the *Washington Post*, my first trip to Colombia. During my stay, the influential weekly magazine *Semana* invited the visiting foreign press to lunch at its offices to exchange our points of view and findings. Each of us was asked to give a brief summary of what we had learned, who we thought was responsible for the violence, U.S. attitudes, and other aspects of coverage. Assuming we were among colleagues, we gave rather blunt assessments and shared what we knew of U.S. thinking on the matter.

As the lunch was ending, a small, white-haired lawyer who had been sitting in and taking notes pushed through the crowd to introduce himself as Santiago Londoño White. He said he was impressed by the *Post* and my command of Spanish, and made other generally flattering remarks. Assuming he was with the magazine, I confided to him that I was going to Medellín to acquaint myself with the city and the situation there. He immediately produced a card and, as a resident of that city, offered to help me.

Within a few days, Kenneth Freed of the *Los Angeles Times* and I visited Medellín and called Londoño who immediately set up interviews for us with top political and military leaders, as well as inviting us to dinner at his luxurious apartment perched atop a condominium overlooking the city. There, over a sumptuous meal, he continued to ask questions about what we were seeing, to whom we were talking, and about U.S. policy. Grateful for his help, and assuming he was legitimate because of his association with *Semana*, we were less reserved in our comments than we normally would have been.

It wasn't until I moved to Bogotá a few months later that I saw the lawyer's picture in the newspaper, identifying Londoño as drug kingpin Pablo Escobar's chief lawyer. Only then did the magnitude of our recent meetings sink in: Colombia's leading news magazine had invited Pablo Escobar's lawyer to sit in on a private lunch with foreign correspondents and take notes on what each one said, without ever telling us who he was. To the contrary, senior editors at *Semana*, viewed by most of us as an ally in covering the cartel wars, had encouraged us to talk to him.

Over time it became clear that there was a band of courageous journalists one could trust and collaborate with, and I did for many years. They ran far greater risks than I did, and more often than not they gave more than they received from me. Our friendships, forged in those struggles for news and survival, continue to this day. But the realization of how deep the Medellín cartel had penetrated Colombia's respected national media was both sad and sobering, teaching an important lesson about whom one could trust and the dangers of trusting too much.

However, in Colombia, a series of significant national, international, and media responses directly contributed to improving the safety of journalists. Assassinations, which averaged more than seven a year from 1998 through 2003, have dropped to fewer than three a year since the new security measures were implemented.¹¹

The responses—while taking significant time, perseverance, and resources—have become institutionalized both in the government and in the media, and stand in stark contrast to the almost total lack of response in Mexico. The effectiveness of the two strategies is reflected in the death toll for journalists: Colombia’s has dropped sharply, while Mexico’s continues to climb.

While threats and intimidation tactics by state and non-state actors remain, the pervasive climate of fear and self-censorship in Colombia during the 1980s and 1990s has largely dissipated. Journalists there told the author this was true despite the rocky relationship with many media outlets during the presidency of Álvaro Uribe (2002-2010), who regularly attacked some

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journalists as being communists and guerrilla sympathizers.¹² Under the administration of the current president, Juan Manuel Santos, the climate has improved considerably.

So far, neither the government of Mexico nor the media as a whole has taken any of the successful steps that successive Colombian governments and media did; instead, they have remained relatively impervious to the pleas to do more coming from international media watchdog groups such as the Inter American Press Association (IAPA), CPJ, Reporters Without Borders, and Human Rights Watch.

In some cases, the Mexican government and media establishment have seemed determined *not* to learn the lessons of Colombia.

In one particularly disillusioning event in 2009, the IAPA took former Colombian president César Gaviria; Enrique Santos Calderón, editor of *El Tiempo*, Colombia’s largest newspaper, as well as IAPA president; and Gen. Oscar Naranjo, the internationally respected chief of the Colombian police, to Mexico to discuss how Colombia had dealt with issues of journalist safety. “Not a single member of the Mexican government attended” the event, Santos Calderón recalled. “The sad truth is that they [the Mexicans] haven’t assimilated our history. It hasn’t translated into action by the newspapers.”¹³

Robert Rivard, a member of several IAPA delegations to Mexico, summed it up: “Mexico is code red. We’re not doing enough there. There is nonstop coverage, communiqués, missions and meetings, but at the end of the day the cases are not being investigated and solved, and killers continue to act with impunity.”¹⁴

The international community played a crucial role in funding protection for journalists in Colombia, with both U.S. aid (as part of Plan Colombia, a 10-year, \$1.6 billion program of military, police, and economic aid) and support from the European Union. International groups such as the IAPA also have funded efforts to draw attention to threats against journalists and have advocated for full investigations.¹⁵

Only now in Mexico is international aid set to flow for the protection of journalists and human rights workers. The Mérida Initiative contemplates a \$5 million budget over four years in an arrangement with Freedom House; a baseline study of the plan is to be completed this year. Some of the aid will be given through Article 19, an international human rights organization that has programs in several nations to protect journalists.¹⁶

In Colombia, in part for cultural and geographic reasons that will be discussed later, the media owners, unions, and working groups were among the prime movers in pressuring for the legal framework to protect journalists. They spoke with a unified voice to put safety above competitive interests.

The Mexican media have taken none of these cooperative measures; instead, they remain, as “Killing the News” pointed out, “riven by disunity and a weak press association.”¹⁷

“The bottom line is that criminals attack journalists because they can and because in the great majority of cases [the attacks] are carried out with impunity,” said Javier Garza, editorial director of *El Siglo de Torreón* newspaper in Sinaloa, one of the hardest-hit states in Mexico with violence in general and violence against journalists in particular. “The biggest step that the federal and state governments could take would be to rapidly investigate any attack, arrest and punish the guilty party, and use that action to dissuade other attacks. But that has not happened.”

Instead, Garza said, his staff publishes less than 20 percent of the information that it could under normal circumstances, and each word of each story is scrutinized by at least four people before going to print. Just as important as knowing what to say is knowing what not to print, he said.

“As a society we have permitted them [the drug traffickers] to castrate us,” said Garza, whose newspaper facilities have been bombed twice. “We keep watching a movie we hope will end, but it never does. No one is indignant anymore, just terrified.”¹⁸

The question of how to protect journalists is of pressing importance, first to save lives, but also to save what is left of the rule of law and a political process not totally contaminated by narco interests. As the 2010 Knight Foundation report noted: “The drug traffickers have extended

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their tentacles so deeply into all levels of Mexican society that what's happening there has gone beyond the drug war to begin to threaten the functioning of civil government in ways hauntingly reminiscent of the terrible times Colombia has suffered.”¹⁹

The Colombian experience was indeed terrible, yet that nation slowly but steadily moved on to better times, demonstrating that national political will, societal pressure, resources to initiate protection, and a unified media response can make a significant difference.

Deadly Ground

32 journalists and media workers have been killed or have disappeared since president Felipe Calderón took office on December 1, 2006, in Mexico.



Source: *Silence or Death in Mexico's Press: Crime, Violence, and Corruption Are Destroying the Country's Journalism*, Committee to Protect Journalists Special Report, September 2010, http://cpj.org/reports/cpj_mexico_english.pdf.

Mexico Today: Growing Violence and Deep Distrust

As violence against journalists has sharply increased, members of the working press (as opposed to media owners, who often maintain close ties to the political parties) have grown increasingly skeptical of the Mexican government's repeated and usually unfulfilled promises to help protect them. This is particularly true of journalists who cover events outside the capital.

As the distrust has grown, so has the geographic region in which journalists are being targeted. As CPJ found:

A decade ago, drug violence was concentrated along the U.S.-Mexico border, but it has now spread from one end of the country to the other, particularly in the last three years. The fierce battle between drug cartels for smuggling routes, agricultural land, and domestic markets has moved south to the states of Michoacán and Guerrero, along with Tabasco, Veracruz, and Quintana Roo. The state of Chihuahua was the most violent in 2009, followed by Sinaloa, Guerrero, Baja California, Michoacán, and Durango.²⁰

Garza in Sinaloa said this spread was inevitable as the cartels and other criminal groups spread their influence into ever-increasing parts of the national economy and life.

“All roads lead to the narcos,” he said. “They are involved in football [soccer], cars, agriculture, every business. You either have to write about narcos or retire. It is no longer ‘good versus bad,’ because being a narco is a way of life. It is a danger just to live. Being a journalist is just an added danger.”²¹

The spreading violence is not solely the result of the narcos' expanding economic interests, but is also a consequence of the evolution of drug trafficking patterns in Mexico. It appears to be directly tied to the fragmentation of the cartels into small, less centralized structures and the resulting fight for control of specific geographic territory, leading to increased threats to local media.

This fragmentation, in turn, has led drug trafficking organizations to begin to pay for local protection in kind—with cocaine rather than cash—forcing local groups to sell the cocaine locally to generate cash. The result has been constant battles over local plazas, specific street corners, and even small crack houses in which to sell the product.²²

This internal market is crucial if the local groups are to make any profits, so there is a great deal of violence surrounding control of strategic selling points. The need to control the local information and the desire to intimidate all enemies, real or imagined, are both magnified. This affects the overall population in any disputed plaza, but particularly the media.

It also affects the overall pattern of corruption in ways that make journalism more dangerous. Under the seven decades of one-party rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or PRI) that ended in 2000, corruption was largely top-down: Senior officials who were bribed distributed the money down the chain of command.

With the advent of multi-party rule, most states and towns have several parties that must be paid off, forcing criminal organizations to pay less to each party but more overall to ensure continued freedom of operations. This “democratization” of corruption, along with the fragmentation of cartels, have combined to make state and local corruption of political structures and law enforcement agencies a priority. Given that killing a journalist is not a federal crime but a state or local matter, this has significant effects.²³

In Colombia, by contrast, for many of the worst years for journalists, the cartels (first Medellín, then Cali, then the Northern Valley organization) were relatively monolithic, with somewhat coherent central command-and-control structures. They seldom tried to create internal markets for their product, and while they paid Mexican organizations in cocaine in the 1990s to smuggle the product into the United States, they generally did not pay their local workers in cocaine.

This led to a violence directed largely at the state—often with a strong political message (e.g., end extradition, negotiate leniency agreements with the government, and legalize ill-gotten assets)—and at the national media that reported on the conflict. This did not preclude violence by different non-state armed actors against local journalists covering local issues and events. In regions around Montería, Barrancabermeja, and other conflict zones, all sides in the multifaceted conflict coerced, bribed, and killed journalists.

As the violence in Mexico has spread, so has journalists’ distrust of the government and the security forces, amid an overall feeling of isolation.

There is the broad perception that the Calderón administration is more worried about its international image than the safety of journalists, and the government has regularly accused both the Mexican and international media of fostering a negative image of the country built on the belief that the cartels are invincible. It is worth noting that a similar attitude was once common in Colombian administrations, whose attacks on media coverage centered not on the accuracy of the information but on the fact it made the nation look bad.

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“The Calderón administration blames the media for fomenting a national image of violence and of only reporting negative news,” said Dolia Estévez, senior adviser for the U.S.-Mexico Journalism Initiative at the Woodrow Wilson Center, who works in Washington, DC, and writes for several Mexican outlets. “They say we help criminal groups by painting them as invincible. This official hostility towards the media is interpreted by organized crime and corrupt officials as *carte blanche* to assassinate, torture, kidnap, or intimidate reporters or place explosives in newsrooms.”²⁴

At the same time, the impunity of past murders, coupled with the rampant corruption within the security forces and local and state governments, are a recipe for deep suspicion.

Corchado, of the *Dallas Morning News*, described journalists’ relationships with Mexican authorities as “deeply distrustful” and related the following example to illustrate how bad the situation is:

One journalist told me the story of riding in a convoy with soldiers on their way to Ciudad Mier, a small town across the Texas border that had been taken over by the Zetas [drug cartel]. On their way, the commander got a call from the Zetas threatening to blow up their vehicle. The soldiers grew nervous because this was supposed to be a secret mission. They all began eyeing each other, including the journalist, trying to figure out who the mole was, who leaked the plan. They grew so paranoid that midway they turned the convoy around and headed back to the barracks. Corruption is so vast, the journalist told me, that even when you believe in good intentions, suspicion and paranoia take hold. He returned to Reynosa and immediately got on a plane, afraid that the Zetas had identified him and would come after him. “Imagine,” he said, “I was with soldiers who are out to protect us, and I was more afraid of the Zetas finding out.”²⁵

Just as disheartening to journalists on the ground is the pervasive sense that society at large is suffering from significant violence fatigue after almost six years of “war” against the drug trafficking organizations, and that people are generally too terrified themselves to care about the plight of journalists. Because of that terror, said Carlos Lauría, CPJ’s senior Americas program coordinator, there is no political pressure internally on the government to take action, and “investigative journalism is going extinct in Mexico, and the real life and reality of Mexico are not reflected in the news that Mexicans receive.”²⁶

Steps to Turn the Tide

There is broad consensus among journalists and media watchdog organizations, partly based on the Colombian experience, that there are several steps the Mexican government could take that would significantly reduce the threats by criminal groups.

These, mentioned by every Mexican respondent the author spoke with, include:

1. Make the killing of journalists a federal crime, rather than a state or local crime, so that investigations are carried out by authorities who are not tied to the local power structure and, presumably, are less subject to coercion and corruption. This may come about if a majority of Mexico's state legislatures ratify a constitutional amendment that cleared the Senate in March 2012.
2. Implement a robust program to protect journalists and human rights workers from organized criminal groups and government officials linked to them.
3. Strengthen the office of the special prosecutor that was created to handle crimes against journalists by giving it additional resources, including more staff.
4. Successfully prosecute at least one case involving violence against a journalist to end the cycle of impunity and the perception that there are no consequences for killing a member of the media.

As Mike O'Connor, CPJ's representative in Mexico, noted, President Calderón committed his government to each of these tasks, and "all have failed."

"The most important two steps would be to increase the federal government's reach in cases of murders of journalists and to take seriously the commitment to really strengthen the office of the federal special prosecutor for crimes against journalists," O'Connor added. "Journalists are killed because there is no consequence to their murder. State police don't solve the crimes. Federal police would have far better results if they had the authority and the resources."²⁷

The failures stem from a number of factors, which were also present in the Colombian crisis but were at least partially overcome.

Political and Institutional Responses

Until recently, the lack of political will in Mexico, by both the presidency and the Congress to prioritize the passage of necessary legislation and funding for different initiatives to tackle the issue of violence against journalists had left the initiatives to languish in legislative limbo.

One of the few bright spots is a law enacted in November 2011 decriminalizing libel, slander, and defamation. The IAPA called the step a “notable advance for press freedom and democracy” because journalists no longer could be jailed for what they wrote, but instead would face civil charges.²⁸

One of the few bright spots is a law enacted in November 2011 in Mexico decriminalizing libel, slander, and defamation.

Other important steps underway are too new to be effectively evaluated but offer the possibility of some progress.

As noted earlier, the Mexican government has promised rapid action to protect journalists, saying after a September 2010 meeting with a CPJ-IAPA delegation that the program would include an early warning system and other “best practices” to protect journalists.²⁹ Little has been done since, but the U.S. money to help support the program through the Mérida Initiative is finally flowing, and U.S. officials said getting the program up and running is a high priority.

It remains to be seen exactly what form the new program will take and how it will be implemented. U.S. State Department officials say they have carefully studied the Colombia case to learn lessons, both positive and negative, for the Mexico program.

But the situation remains dire. The program to offer security to at-risk journalists has so far offered “laughable ‘protection’” to eight journalists, according to O’Connor and others. Besides lacking resources, the program was based on the assumption that journalists would allow state or local police to protect them. Given the growing violence, O’Connor and others noted, this is irrational “since journalists rightly believe the state police can be assumed to work for the narcos, or if the source of the threat is a politician, the state police will work for him,” O’Connor said.

There are multiple other issues still to be addressed.

There have been few successful investigations or prosecutions of those responsible for the multiple crimes; and in the few cases where the alleged perpetrator was apprehended, there were often charges that confessions were exacted under torture and duress. Freedom House, whose annual ranking of press freedoms in Mexico has showed a steady decline since 2004, noted this in a 2010 litany of issues relating to press freedoms:

The Office of the Special Prosecutor for Attention to Crimes Against Journalists was weak by design and produced no significant advances in investigations after several years of work. The Chamber of Deputies disbanded the Special Commission on Aggression Against Journalists after passing legislation to federalize investigations and prosecutions of crimes against journalists that lacked the statutory authority to make it effective. Under pressure, the chamber later reconstituted the commission with a chairwoman but no membership. State prosecutors were similarly ineffective during the year. In the few local-level cases that yielded convictions, the suspects were allegedly tortured or strong exculpatory evidence was overlooked.³⁰

Other investigations into the government response came to similar conclusions, arguing that the national government has constitutional and legal international treaty obligations to protect journalists that it is failing to uphold.³¹

As CPJ concluded in its 2010 report:

The problem is rooted in widespread corruption among law enforcement, the judiciary, and the political system, especially at the state level. Complicity between police and drug gangs is so common that it routinely undermines justice and creates the widespread perception that the system is controlled by the criminals. In case after case, CPJ has found botched or negligent detective work by state prosecutors and police, many of whom complain they lack training and resources.³²

In Colombia, the government reaction was significantly different over time, but not immediately. It is important to remember that, while there were significant ad hoc steps taken to protect journalists at the height of the war between the state and the Colombian drug cartels in the early 1980s through the 1990s, the official program to protect journalists did not begin until 2000.

Prior laws, in 1995 and 1997, had begun the process to protect journalists from violence that stemmed from multiple non-state armed actors: right-wing paramilitary groups often with close relations with the military; various Marxist guerrilla groups; and drug traffickers.

The Foundation for Freedom of the Press (Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa, or FLIP) was formed by journalists and others in 1996 to push for greater measures to protect journalists. Numerous journalists were under threat, including Ignacio Gómez, the current president of FLIP, for reporting on military involvement in the Mapiripán massacre, one of the worst of Colombia's civil conflict.

The media in Colombia already had a history of working together in the face of adversity, so the step was important but not revolutionary. The foundation drew immediate notice and credibility because its co-founders included Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez, an icon in Latin America; Enrique Santos Calderón, the editor of *El Tiempo* and member of an influential

political family; and Francisco Santos Calderón (cousin of Enrique), who would later serve as the nation's vice president for eight years.³³

A key ally in the government of President Andrés Pastrana was Vice President Gustavo Bell, who engaged on behalf of the administration, lending weight to government interaction. Mexico has yet to have a senior government official act as a permanent advocate for the protection of journalists.³⁴

In 2000, the Protection of Journalists and Social Communicators Act was passed, and journalists in Colombia were officially recognized as an “at-risk” group, along with 15 other categories of individuals deemed essential to defending the human rights of Colombian citizens. This gave FLIP a seat at the interagency committee of senior government and NGOs to monitor and review protection requests, assess threats, and work with the government. Initial funding was provided in part by international press advocacy groups. (FLIP receives support from the National Endowment for Democracy).

In 2000, the Protection of Journalists and Social Communicators Act was passed, and journalists in Colombia were officially recognized as an “at-risk” group.

A volunteer network of journalists across the country monitored and reported on potential or actual attacks on journalists, who were to seek safety immediately through a rapid reaction evacuation. FLIP also published manuals on how journalists could protect themselves, cover conflict, and collaborate when necessary to cover dangerous stories. The slogan of the media participating is: “We would rather miss a piece of news than lose a life.”³⁵

Some of the money was inserted into the nonmilitary components of Plan Colombia at the insistence of human rights organizations and press advocacy groups, who got Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont) to help champion the cause and earmark funds for the protection of human rights workers.

Over the past 11 years, the program has grown and shown an important resilience, with an early warning system where threatened journalists can request help, an interagency group of government and nongovernment groups to review the requests for protection (the Committee to Evaluate Risks), and post-trauma stress counseling. According to FLIP officials, no requests for protection have been denied. Security details are reviewed every six months, and decisions about whether to continue to offer protection are made by the committee.

A key element of the program is the ability to respond rapidly to crisis situations. In one case in Arauca, a remote region where journalists often were under threat, FLIP coordinated the charter of an airplane to fly a threatened journalist and his entire family out of the region. The program paid for accommodations for the family until it was safe to return.³⁶

“There is no doubt that the program saved lives,” said FLIP President Gómez, who has spent two years in exile under threat and still has official bodyguards, a driver, and a vehicle under the protection program. “Just look at the numbers and you can see the dissuasive power of these actions.”³⁷

The possible protective measures span a range of options, from assigning bodyguards and armored cars to the person under threat, to having police make scheduled rounds to check on potential victims at home or work, to providing alternative transportation and more discreet surveillance.

“The difference between what we have here and what happens in Mexico is that here we have a program that works with the National Police and the Ministry of Interior,” said Gómez. “Through the FLIP we have a direct contact. This federalization of the program is the fundamental difference. In addition, our local programs where journalists are at risk—such as Arauca, Barrancabermeja, and Nariño—have very effective programs.”

This protection has come at considerable cost, both financially and emotionally.

It is difficult, given the existing data, to determine exactly how much of the protection money has been spent to protect journalists, and how much has been spent on other “at-risk” populations such as union workers and human rights activists.

Overall, the U.S. government spent \$9.6 million on both “hard” (physical protection, bodyguards, armored vehicles) and “soft” protection from 2001 through 2006. Most of the foreign money was from USAID under Plan Colombia and from the European Union, while the Colombian government assumed most of the overall costs. As of 2009, the Colombian government took over all the “hard” protection aspects of the program, at an estimated cost of \$56 million a year.³⁸

While Colombian journalists who spoke to the author—as well as several who have written about their experience—said they the program overall had been key to reducing journalists’ deaths, they noted the cost of having police monitor their every move. Several recounted instances of finding notebooks kept by their guards detailing the time and place of each of their activities, leaving open the possibility that they were both being protected and spied on.

Daniel Coronell, a well-known columnist and TV news director who spent nine years with government protection before moving to Miami to work for Univision, said that having a police escort “was the best of the bad options we have. If you don’t have them, you are dead. If you do have them, you are in the uncomfortable position of having government workers monitoring who you meet with, where you go, and reporting to who knows what intelligence services. But overall, one has to recognize the program has saved our lives.”³⁹

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The Media Response

The lack of solidarity among the different media groups and the lack of a unified front in the face of the crisis have been a significant obstacle to confronting the violence against journalists in Mexico.

This marks perhaps the biggest difference between the Mexican and Colombian responses in the early days of the threat. While in Mexico there has been virtually no public, coherent statement or advocacy by the established media giants based in Mexico City, in Colombia it was the powerful national media in Bogotá that coalesced into an effective voice lobbying for media protection.

One of the biggest steps in Colombia proved to be one of the most difficult: the decision among news organizations not only to collaborate on stories to make silencing the press much more difficult, but also to jointly publish the same stories on the same day.

There are multiple reasons for the different responses, but perhaps the most important is that in Colombia the national media and national political elite (presidential candidates, attorneys general, labor leaders) were targeted by the Medellín cartel, drawing national and international attention and forcing these powerful groups to forge a common strategy in order to survive. Pablo Escobar and other Medellín cartel leaders were expressly at war with the Colombia state, in large part to halt the national policy of extradition.

By contrast, almost all of the attacks in Mexico have been far from the capital city, carried out against local targets and thus drawing little sustained national attention and even less of an international response. As Mexican journalists acknowledge, the capital is an entity whose political, economic, and social structures are almost separate from those of the rest of the nation. While organized criminal groups have co-opted or corrupted many state and local officials and thrive on local impunity, these groups have carried out few high-profile national assassinations. This could be part of a deliberate strategy not to draw the wrath and resources of the national government into the fray and to dilute the national reaction. It also could be, as described earlier, recognition that local and state authorities are easier to corrupt than are federal officials in order to obtain the desired result.

“The capital is one thing, and the rest of the country is another,” said Estévez of the Woodrow Wilson Center. “The national media in Mexico [are] very elitist. It hasn’t been attacked, so there has been little reaction. There is a huge distance between the capital and the rest of the country.”⁴⁰

The lack of solidarity among the different media groups and the lack of a unified front in the face of the crisis have been a significant obstacle to confronting the violence against journalists in Mexico.

Just one joint investigation and publication appears to have taken place in Mexico. Following the April 2005 murder of photographer Alfredo Jiménez Mota in Sonora state, the IAPA organized a meeting of top Mexican editors. They agreed to a joint effort, dubbed the Phoenix Project, to investigate the murder, in part because no one suspected Jiménez Mota of being on anyone's payroll. But most of the participating newspapers did not provide reporters or resources. Most of the investigation was carried out by Ricardo Trotti of IAPA and journalists from *El Universal* in Mexico City.

While some 40 newspapers simultaneously published the single story that the Phoenix Project produced, the follow-up plans evaporated.⁴¹

In Colombia, such tactics were used multiple times, eventually defusing the threat to any single newspaper or journalist. The key factor in uniting the country's media and political elite, even as the Medellín cartel ramped up its war on the state, was the December 17, 1986, murder of Guillermo Cano, the crusading editor of *El Espectador*, Colombia's oldest newspaper. His murder came in the aftermath of a series of high-profile killings of public officials.

María Teresa Ronderos, a well-known Colombian journalist who participated in events at the time, described the reaction:

Right after Cano was killed, the entire Colombian press corps protested. In the following 24 hours, the country received no news of any kind, in print, on radio, or on television. This blackout was a sign of mourning, yet it was also a way to seek support from society and emphasize the importance of journalism in a democracy threatened by the intimidating and brutal power of drug traffickers. To show that it would not be so easy to censor the press, *El Espectador* joined with its main competitor, *El Tiempo*, and other media outlets in the following months to investigate and publish stories about drug trafficking and its many tentacles in society. The message sent to the Medellín cartel bosses: The press would not be silenced.⁴²

The key factor in uniting the country's media and political elite was the December 17, 1986, murder of Guillermo Cano, the crusading editor of El Espectador.

Other acts of solidarity grew from that. When Escobar's forces bombed the printing presses of *El Espectador* on September 2, 1989, its main competitor, *El Tiempo*, offered its presses for use until repairs could be made, and the newspaper didn't miss a single day of publishing.

The process of deciding what to publish, how to credit investigations, and how to tame the overall competitive process was often contentious, with debates among editors from different media frequently turning angry and aggressive, particularly in the early days.

"There would be lots of yelling, a lot of disagreement, lots of interests involved," said Coronell, who participated in some of the meetings. "But in the end it was worked out, and that was very important."⁴³

Colombian journalists, particularly from the national media, often worked closely with foreign correspondents as well. In the 1990s, reporters from the major newspapers (including the author of this report, then working for the *Washington Post*) would trade information and documents on sensitive stories, then coordinate publication of the stories for the same day.

If a story was too sensitive for the Colombian papers to publish as their own, they would reprint the story from the *Washington Post* or another medium and attribute it to the U.S. paper, reducing the chances of retaliation. It was clearly understood that while Colombian journalists could be killed with relative impunity, killing a foreign reporter, especially a U.S. citizen, could bring the cartels significant and unwanted trouble. Many of the best stories had to be printed without proper acknowledgement of the brave contributions of Colombian colleagues, but getting the story out was deemed more important than getting the credit.

The precedent had already been established. On February 8-11, 1987, Colombia's largest newspapers jointly reprinted a four-part *Miami Herald* series titled "The Medellín Cartel: World's Deadliest Criminals" that was the most extensive publication to that time of the internal structure of the cartel, identifying its leaders, their trafficking routes, and some operations in the United States. Medellín's two largest newspapers initially declined to participate in the joint publishing venture, but eventually did so at the urging of colleagues.⁴⁴

The joint efforts were driven not only by journalists in the newsroom but by the newspaper publishers association known as Andiaros. More recently, the publishers in 2004 jointly authorized an investigation into paramilitary infiltration of the lottery and other dangerous topics, publishing the results simultaneously in 19 newspapers and magazines. There have since been multiple other collaborative projects, all designed to reduce the risk to local journalists by spreading the investigative effort among numerous bodies, including those in the capital.⁴⁵

Mexican journalists interviewed for this report said they could not imagine such a level of collaboration and solidarity. There is almost no contact among the local and national media in Mexico, no coordinated efforts by publishers and editors to develop a common strategy to protect their journalists. There appears to be almost no discussion of producing joint manuals on how to deal with danger, no pressure by the large media corporations on the government to develop a coherent policy, and almost no way for a journalist under threat for his or her work to escape death or exile. As CPJ noted, "The Colombian press ultimately spoke as one in pressing the government for these solutions. Mexico's press community, long polarized, has yet to coalesce around a set of principles that would promote greater security for journalists."⁴⁶

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Conclusions

The attitude of the Mexican government and media leaders in the face of mounting violence against journalists stands in stark contrast to the actions and attitudes that developed in Colombia under similar circumstances. The Colombian solutions were far from perfect but over time became relatively effective and institutionalized within the state and media establishments, even as political power changed hands in succeeding administrations. The consensus among those who benefited from the programs is that while the price of police protection was extremely high professionally and personally, it saved journalists' lives and were the best of the bad options available.

The Mexican government and major media companies do not appear to have made any systematic effort to learn from the Colombian experience and to adopt and adapt the lessons learned and the techniques applied in Colombia to the situation on the ground in Mexico. At the same time, the international community, particularly the United States, through the Mérida Initiative, has been slow to provide funding for programs to protect journalists or press the Mexican government to fulfill its national responsibility in this regard.

There are significant differences in the structure and nature of the violence against journalists in Colombia and Mexico, but the basic steps taken in Colombia, usually at the instigation of a united front of national media leaders, have broad applicability in Mexico. These include the willingness of media competitors to join together for a higher value than the latest scoop, and a willingness of the government and society at large to put the issue of journalists' murder on the public agenda as a matter of a basic defense of democracy.

As those Mexican journalists interviewed repeatedly emphasized, there is almost no visible support for journalists suffering an unprecedented wave of violence—not by the government, by society in general, or by other journalists. This sense of isolation is widely believed to contribute to the perception by drug cartels that killing a journalist is of little consequence.

In contrast, the willingness of some high-profile Colombians (such as a Nobel laureate, some leading politicians, and some celebrities) to demand an end to the violence and impunity was a tremendously important factor in Colombia. As Nora Sanín, director of Andiaros, said, this helped Colombian society understand that “when you kill or kidnap a journalist, it’s not just a crime against that person but an attack on freedom of expression.”²⁴⁷

Turning the tide on the killing of journalists is possible. But as Colombia has shown, such action requires courage, radical new thinking about how the media compete and cooperate, and economic resources.

The spillover effects of the lack of protection for journalists in Mexico and the almost total impunity for killing them are already being felt in Central America. Mexican drug trafficking organizations, expanding across that region, are the primary suspects in the murders of 17 journalists in Honduras in 2010-2011. Reporters in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador say they exercise far more self-censorship when reporting on drug trafficking and corruption than they did two or three years ago. The Central American governments, even less equipped than Mexico to handle such violence, are likely to do even less than the Mexican government has done.

Turning the tide on the killing of journalists is possible. But as Colombia has shown, such action requires courage, radical new thinking about how the media compete and cooperate, and economic resources. In Colombia there was sustained political will; specific government action and public statements; significant, unified efforts and resources from media companies and individual journalists; and public denunciations of the murders by citizens of high national stature. The Colombian experience shows that these steps bring measurable, clear results.

Endnotes

1. Mexican journalists and human rights workers, in interviews with author, November 2011-January 2012. See: “Mexico,” *Freedom of the Press 2010*, Freedom House, http://expression.freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom_of_the_press/2010/mexico.
2. Mexican journalists and human rights workers, in interviews with author, November 2011-January 2012.
3. “¿Qué Quieren de Nosotros?” *Diario de Juárez*, September 19, 2010, <http://www.diario.com.mx/notas.php?f=2010%2F09%2F19&id=ce557112f34b187454d7b6d117a76cb5>.
4. By almost any measure, the number of journalists killed in Mexico over the past decade is among the highest in the world. However, there are differences in how the death toll is counted, leading to discrepancies. The most significant difference is in trying to determine whether a journalist was killed for the work he or she was doing, or whether the killing was unrelated to the person’s professional activities. Hence, while the Inter American Press Association counted nine journalists killed in Mexico in 2010, the Committee to Protect Journalists counted one work-related murder and eight murders with unconfirmed motives. For a more detailed discussion, see: Tyler Bridges, “Killing the News: Stories Go Untold as Latin American Journalists Die,” *Reporter Analysis*, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, October 29, 2010, http://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/Reporter_Analysis_Impunity_Project_English_lite.pdf.
5. As Eric Olson of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars notes, given the almost complete lack of investigation into the murders, the figures are, at best, guesstimates. See: Damien Cave, “Mexico Updates Death Toll in Drug War to 47,515, but Critics Dispute the Data,” *New York Times*, January 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/12/world/americas/mexico-updates-drug-war-death-toll-but-critics-dispute-data.html>.
6. “Honduran Journalists Face ‘Growing Threat,’” BBC World News, December 7, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-16070817>.
7. *Silence or Death in Mexico’s Press: Crime, Violence, and Corruption Are Destroying the Country’s Journalism*, Committee to Protect Journalists Special Report, September 2010, http://cpj.org/reports/cpj_mexico_english.pdf.
8. Tyler Bridges, “Killing the News.”
9. This theme was touched on repeatedly in the author surveys with Mexican and international journalists, as well as in the literature. As CPJ noted in its 2010 report, “Reporters and editors have also been corrupted by the same drug cartels that have infiltrated nearly every sector of society. In dozens of interviews conducted by CPJ over several years, journalists acknowl-

edge that criminals routinely bribe them to act as cartel publicists or to buy their silence. In some instances, journalists themselves pass along bribes to their colleagues. Corruption among members of the media raises sensitive questions about whether certain journalists are killed as a result of their work or because of involvement with drug cartels, complicating the work of press advocates and tainting the reputation of the media as a whole.”

10. Alfredo Corchado, in e-mail interview with author, January 10, 2012.
11. These numbers are taken from the CPJ website, and include both confirmed (killings directly related to journalism) and unconfirmed (motive unproven or unknown). See: “43 Journalists Killed in Colombia since 1992/Motive Confirmed,” <http://cpj.org/killed/americas/colombia/>.
12. As an example, see: “Uribe Labels Journalists ‘Terrorism Sympathizers,’” August 24, 2011. <http://cpj.org/2011/08/uribe-labels-journalists-terrorism-sympathizers.php>.
13. Tyler Bridges, “Killing the News.”
14. Ibid.
15. One of the most extensive and sustained has been IAPA’s “Impunity Project,” designed to bring attention to journalists’ murders, primarily in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. Since 1995 the project has spent \$7.6 million to help investigate and pursue cases as well as coordinate a media campaign to jointly publish, in newspapers across Latin America, information about cases. For a fuller look at the project, see: Tyler Bridges, “Killing the News.”
16. Officials at USAID, U.S. State Department, and Freedom House, in interviews with author.
17. Tyler Bridges, “Killing the News.”
18. Javier Garza, in e-mail interview with author, January 10, 2012.
19. Tyler Bridges, “Killing the News.”
20. *Silence or Death in Mexico’s Press: Crime, Violence, and Corruption Are Destroying the Country’s Journalism*, Committee to Protect Journalists.
21. Javier Garza, remarks at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, November 18, 2011.
22. This conclusion is based on the author’s field trips to Ciudad Juárez and Mexico City, as well as the author’s extensive experience in Colombia.

23. For a more comprehensive look at the spread of corruption at state and local levels, see: Douglas Farah, “Money Laundering and Bulk Cash Smuggling: Challenges for the Mérida Initiative,” *Shared Responsibility: U.S.-Mexico Policy Options for Confronting Organized Crime*, Eric L. Olson, David A. Shirk, and Andrew Selee, eds., Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and University of San Diego, October 2010, 141-204, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Shared%20Responsibility--Olson,%20Shirk,%20Selee.pdf>.
24. Dolia Estévez, in e-mail interview with author, January 25, 2012.
25. Alfredo Corchado, in interview with author.
26. Carlos Lauría, remarks at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, November 18, 2011.
27. Mike O’Connor, in e-mail interview with author, January 16, 2012.
28. “IAPA Welcomes Move to Decriminalize Defamation,” IAPA/IFEX, December 2, 2011, http://www.ifex.org/mexico/2011/12/02/defamation_decriminalisation/.
29. “Mexico Aims to Protect Reporters from Cartel Violence,” MSNBC.com, September 23, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39318581/ns/world_news-americas/t/mexico-aims-protect-reporters-cartel-violence/.
30. “Freedom of Expression,” Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/issues/freedom-expression>.
31. CPJ and others argue that articles 6 and 7 of the Mexican Constitution, guaranteeing individual rights to free expression and freedom of the press, obligate the federal government to assume responsibility for the protection of journalists; and as a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the government also has an international obligation to do so.
32. *Silence or Death in Mexico’s Press: Crime, Violence, and Corruption Are Destroying the Country’s Journalism*, Committee to Protect Journalists.
33. For a more complete discussion of FLIP by its former president, María Teresa Ronderos, see: *Silence or Death in Mexico’s Press: Crime, Violence, and Corruption Are Destroying the Country’s Journalism*, Committee to Protect Journalists.
34. Colombian journalists, in interviews with author, January 2012.

35. This chronology of events is taken from journalists and congressional aides directly involved in setting up the program, as well as publications on the topic. As an example, see: “Programa de Protección y Monitoreo: Programa de Protección a Periodistas,” Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP), http://www.flip.org.co/protection_home.html.
36. Ignacio Gómez, president, FLIP, in interview with author, January 12, 2012.
37. Ignacio Gómez, in e-mail interview with author, January 12, 2012.
38. The figures were provided by congressional sources who asked not to be publicly identified.
39. Daniel Coronell, in interview with author, January 26, 2012.
40. Dolia Estévez, remarks at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, November 18, 2011.
41. For more details on the murder of Alfredo Jiménez Mota and the formation of the Phoenix Project, see: Tyler Bridges, “Killing the News.”
42. *Silence or Death in Mexico’s Press: Crime, Violence, and Corruption Are Destroying the Country’s Journalism*, Committee to Protect Journalists.
43. Daniel Coronell, in interview with author, January 26, 2012.
44. Jeff Leen, co-author, *Miami Herald* series; and currently assistant managing editor for investigations; *Washington Post*, in e-mail interview with author. See also: Guy Gugliotta and Jeff Leen, *Kings of Cocaine: Inside the Medellín Cartel*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989).
45. Interviews with author. See: María Teresa Ronderos in *Silence or Death in Mexico’s Press: Crime, Violence, and Corruption Are Destroying the Country’s Journalism*, Committee to Protect Journalists.
46. *Silence or Death in Mexico’s Press: Crime, Violence, and Corruption Are Destroying the Country’s Journalism*, Committee to Protect Journalists.
47. Tyler Bridges, “Killing the News.”

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