

Human rights groups expose Mexican government's complicity in violence against journalists

PEN Canada and the International Human Rights Program at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law call on Canada to exert pressure on key economic partner

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In a report released today, *Corruption, Impunity Silence: The War on Mexico's Journalists*, PEN Canada and the International Human Rights Program (IHRP) at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law expose the Mexican government's repeated failure to protect the human rights of journalists, its complicity in a number of rights violations against them, and the web of Mexican laws that limit freedom of expression and effectively gag journalists who seek to expose government corruption. The report is authored by Master's students at the Faculty of Law and is based, in part, on interviews with Mexican human rights defenders and journalists conducted during a fact-finding trip in November 2010.

Mexico is one of the deadliest countries in the world to be a journalist; media workers are regularly targeted for murder, kidnappings, threats, and judicial harassment. In the past decade, nearly 70 journalists have been killed. Less than two months ago another journalist was killed in Monterrey. While violence against Mexican journalists has been widely documented in the media, government officials are widely quoted as placing the blame squarely on drug trafficking organizations. *Corruption, Impunity, Silence* exposes the central role of the Mexican state in perpetuating the problem by ensuring impunity and creating a culture where exposing government corruption and collusion is next to impossible.

Along with a host of recommendations for the Mexican government, the report calls on Harper's new majority government and, in particular, incoming Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird to place the human rights protection of Mexican media workers on the foreign policy agenda, and recommends that it condition future foreign aid and government investment on implementation of effective mechanisms to protect journalists, ending impunity for crimes against them, and fostering a free and open press. "This isn't just the right thing to do," says Clayton Ruby, a member of PEN Canada's Board of Directors, "it is essential if Canada is going to continue to invest and trade heavily with Mexico. A free and open press is essential to democracy and economic growth, especially in countries like Mexico where corruption is a serious issue."

In an op-ed published today in the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's largest-circulation national newspaper, John Ralston Saul, the President of PEN International, references *Corruption, Impunity, Silence* and questions the mutual self-congratulation by western governments when it comes to Mexico's human rights record: "Until the governments of Canada and the United States and bodies such as the European Parliament question the façade of reassuring rhetoric, Mexico's lethal war on journalists will continue. This war, commonly described as a struggle against drug lords, has a great deal more to do with decades of

government corruption; police, military and political links to organized crime; and institutionalized limitations on freedom of expression..” In short, it is time to hold the Mexican government accountable.

Luis Najera, 2010 press freedom reward recipient and Mexican journalist who obtained refugee status in Canada as a result of death threats made in retaliation for his journalism states: “The Mexican government will not act without external pressure to do so. If the global community does not take up our cause, there will be more dead journalists.”

Read the executive summary of *Corruption, Impunity, Silence: The War on Mexico’s Journalists* (PDF) in English at: <http://tinyurl.com/6cle46f>

Read the full report in English at: <http://tinyurl.com/6bmcdqk>

Read the executive summary of the report in Spanish at: <http://tinyurl.com/5tt5gpy>

Read the full report in Spanish at: <http://tinyurl.com/6zsl6zd>

Read John Ralston Saul’s op-ed in the *Globe and Mail* at: **ADD**

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