



Plenary sitting

B9-0154/2022

8.3.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on **The situation of journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico**,
(2022/2580(RSP))

Miguel Urbán Crespo
on behalf of The Left Group

B9-0154/2022

European Parliament resolution on The situation of journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico, (2022/2580(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998;
- having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979),
- having regard to the joint statement issued on 28 January 2022 by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Office in Mexico of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the IACHR Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, condemning the murder of journalist Lourdes Maldonado,
- having regard to the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States of 1917,
- having regard to the regional dialogues to generate a General Law Initiative for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists promoted by the Ministry of Interior,
- having regard to joint commitments by the EU and Mexico at the IX High Level Dialogue on Human Rights (2020) regarding the “importance of continued cooperation and mutual understanding for effectively addressing human rights challenges” including those facing human rights defenders and journalists,
- having regard to EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline, the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, as well as commitments in the Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas, in recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of killings and other forms of violence against journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico; whereas at least 47 journalists have been killed between December 2018 and September 2021; whereas Mexico ranked one of the deadliest countries for journalists in 2021; whereas as for February 2022, at least four journalists have already been murdered within the year: Alfonso Margarito Martínez Esquivel, José Luis Gamboa Arenas, Lourdes Maldonado and Heber López;

B. whereas Mexico is the second most dangerous country in the world for human rights defenders, with 42 defenders killed in 2021; whereas more than 30 of those killed were working to defend land rights, the environment or indigenous peoples’ rights, such as José de Jesús Robledo Cruz, María de Jesús Gómez, and indigenous Chatino community members Fidel

Heras Cruz and Jaime Jiménez Ruiz of Paso de la Reyna; whereas the latter two had worked to oppose the exploitation of the Río Verde by political and economic powers;

C. whereas apart from killings, one of the most dangerous threats that journalists and human rights defenders face are disappearances; whereas 21 journalists were reported missing between 2005 and 2019; whereas human rights defenders disappeared in 2021 include, among others, Grisell Pérez Rivera, women's rights defender, ten members of the indigenous Yaqui community in southern Sonora who were resisting a mining company's attempt to dislodge them from their lands, and Irma Galindo Barrios indigenous rights defender defending forests in the Mixteca region from illegal logging operations; whereas efforts and investigations to find them remain insufficient;

D. whereas journalists and human rights defenders are also subjected to judicial harassment, arbitrary detention, and long prison sentences based on groundless charges; whereas other forms of violence against them include violent attacks, threats and rapes; whereas these acts are mainly carried out by criminal and paramilitary groups; whereas those seeking justice for victims are also exposed to high risks of violence;

E. whereas attacks against women human rights defenders and migrants rights defenders are particularly frequent; whereas the 9N Victims Committee recorded a substantial increase in the number of acts of against its members in the weeks previous to the trial of 14 police officers charged with exercising violence during a November 2020 protest against femicides in the state of Quintana Roo; whereas on 12 October 2021, eight armed men broke into Casa Betania Santa Martha transit Shelter in Chiapas, and threatened migrant rights defenders inside, while uniformed police officers and agents of Civil Protection present at the scene did not intervene;

F. whereas women journalists are subjected to a higher degree of harassment and violence, and that this is particularly severe when reporting about gender equality, social protests, corruption cases and COVID management; whereas psychological violence is the most frequent violence they endure, in the form of blocking of information, threats and the use of campaigns to smear journalistic work; whereas there is an increase of physical violence against women journalists reflected in arbitrary arrests and illegal deprivation of liberty, dispossession of work material and the disproportionate use of public force; whereas there is an alarming increase of physical violence exercised by the civil population and an increase on digital violence used to discredit their work and to humiliate them for their status as women;

G. whereas 345,000 Mexicans are internally displaced due to conflict, including an increasingly high number of journalists and human rights defenders; whereas they are unable to go back home and conduct their work safely, even those who are beneficiaries of the Protection Mechanism; whereas many of them live in extreme poverty without governmental safeguards for adequate access to economic and social rights during their displacement;

H. whereas in Mexico almost 100,000 people have been forcibly disappeared according to the Mexican National Search Commission, which keeps records back to 1964, of which the best-know example is the disappearance in 2014 of 43 students from a rural teacher training college in the town of Ayotzinapa; whereas there are also many cases of reported disappearances of human rights defenders, people in migratory transit and journalists;

I. whereas violence and crimes against journalists and human rights defenders is perpetrated with overwhelming impunity; whereas in eight years, the FEADLE (Fiscalía

Especial para la Atención de Delitos cometidos contra la Libertad de Expresión) has only achieved four convictions in 803 cases investigated, that is, 0.4%; whereas, as the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the IACHR has reiterated, the lack of accountability for such crimes in Mexico generates a permissive environment for perpetrators, and results in the self-censorship of journalists and human rights defenders, severely damaging freedom of expression;

J. whereas the Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists (2012) includes the Mechanism for Protecting Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, which provides special protection to persons under threat, such as bodyguards, armoured cars and temporary shelter; whereas in 2021, 467 journalists and 988 human rights defenders benefitted from this protection scheme;

K. whereas, however, the mechanism faces substantial obstacles, including a vast increase in the number of persons seeking protection, inefficient coordination between federal and state officials and insufficient funding; whereas 7 journalists and 2 human rights defenders who were killed in Mexico between December 2018 and July 2021 were under this protection program; whereas in October 2020, the Congress voted to eliminate the independent fund that financed the protection mechanisms, transferring it to the Ministry of Interior;

L. whereas in January 2022, the Ministry of Interior started a process to promote the bill on National Prevention and Protection System for human rights defenders and journalists, which would also contemplate the creation of a “National Prevention Model”, a “National Registry of Aggressions”, and a “National Protection Protocol”; whereas dialogues with relevant stakeholders have already started within the framework of drafting the bill, including civil society organisations;

M. whereas, in parallel, there is concerning evidence that suggests that the Mexican Government is contributing to the stigmatization of journalists and human rights defenders;

N. whereas the EU-Mexico human rights dialogue in 2020 culminated in an agreement on joint work in Mexico to step up protection for human rights defenders;

1. Condemns the killings, disappearances, consistent threats and other human rights violations against journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico; extends its sympathy and solidarity to the families and friends of the victims;
2. Supports the journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico, who carry out their legitimate and necessary work, despite working in one of the most dangerous environments in the world; recalls that due to the nature of their work, when journalists and defenders cannot conduct their work in a safe and peaceful environment, the human rights of all citizens are jeopardised;
3. Expresses deep concern over the high levels of impunity for the killings, disappearances and other acts of violence against human rights defenders and journalists; calls on the Mexican federal and state authorities to address unresolved cases, to promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigate these crimes regardless how politically sensitive the cases are, and to strengthen its efforts to guarantee access to effective and expeditious justice and reparation;

4. Calls on the State to strengthen institutional mechanisms to protect journalists and human rights defenders, and to prevent killings, disappearances and other acts of violence against them; urges the Mexican authorities to increase the human resources for the efficient functioning of the existing protection mechanisms, to improve coordination notably with federal law enforcement officials, and to ensure that the mechanisms count on sufficient funding;
5. Calls on the Mexican Government to urgently strengthen protection of journalists and human rights defenders who are currently under threat, including by implementing the recommendations made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in her 2019 evaluation of the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists; calls on Mexican authorities to protect the young journalist Guillermo Garcia, who has been intimidated, assaulted and threatened to death;
6. Calls for attacks against women's rights defenders and migrants rights defenders to immediately cease, notably against those providing emergency assistance to migrants from Central America; within the framework of the coming International Working Women's Day, calls on the Mexican authorities to ensure that feminist marches in Mexico can be carried out safely;
7. Welcomes the recent discussions about a General Law Initiative for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, promoted by the Ministry of Interior; welcomes that civil society, notably human rights defenders and journalists themselves, are included in the process and their participation is active; urges the Mexican State to ensure that the new bill is in line with international human rights law and standards;
8. Calls on the Mexican Government to refrain from contributing to the stigmatization of journalists and human rights defenders, and to publicly recognize and value their fundamental role in safeguarding democracy and human rights;
9. Urges the Mexican authorities to, to the greatest extent possible, resort to civilian rather than military authorities, refraining from passing laws and regulatory frameworks which could worsen the militarisation of public security and the impunity for human rights violations committed by the armed forces;
10. Urges the EU to provide all the necessary support to journalists and human rights defenders victims of violence and to those who remain under threat; calls on the EU delegation in Mexico and the Member States to ensure the full implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and of the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline, in cooperation with civil society organisations, including by issuing emergency visas for journalists and human rights defenders at risk and in need of temporary relocation outside of Mexico;
11. Calls on the EU and its Member States to ensure that the human rights clauses of the current Global Agreement with Mexico are respected, and calls to ensure the full involvement and effective participation of civil society in their implementation;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Member States, and the President and Congress of Mexico.

