



24 September 2010

STATEMENT

**México: Newspaper's Call for Truce  
Sign of Government Failing to Protect**

**Due to the recent assassination of Luis Carlos Santiago Orozco, photographer of *El Diario*, in Ciudad Juarez, ARTICLE 19 undertook an emergency mission to assess the situation and to express solidarity with journalists working in the city.**

Ciudad Juarez is one of the largest cities on Mexico's northern border with the United States. Since 2006, organised crime groups have been fighting for control of the city due to its strategic location for smuggling goods and migrants. The conflict has resulted in an exponential increase in violent deaths: according to official figures, more than 500 murders have taken place so far in 2010, the majority of which were of women and young people. The majority of people killed are women and adolescent, and journalists and human rights defenders also targeted due to their work.

Over the last three years, ARTICLE 19 has documented the deterioration of freedom of expression in Ciudad Juarez, highlighting violence against the media in the city, and in the wider state of Chihuahua, in its 2009 report on attacks against freedom of expression, *Attacks on Freedom of Expression in Mexico*.

Josefina Reyes, a human rights defender working on the disappearance of women in Ciudad Juarez, was shot dead in January 2010. In November 2008, Armando Rodriguez, a veteran crime reporter from *El Diario*, was shot in front of his daughter. In both cases, the criminals remain unpunished, without attackers remain without any significant development in the investigations. In September, two photographers working as interns for *El Diario*, Luis Carlos Santiago Orozco and "Carlos" were shot in a shopping centre car park just 200 metres from the newspaper headquarters, and Orozco died. During ARTICLE 19's visit, a small device exploded outside the offices of the newspaper *Norte*. Fortunately no one was injured.

The local authorities are responsible for investigating all the above cases. In 2010, the state government of Chihuahua adopted a series of actions to protect journalists, such as the creation of an emergency protection system and legal reform to better tackle attacks

against the media. However, such achievements are being consistently undermined by local members of the local authorities spreading misinformation, delaying investigations and denying that journalists and human rights defenders are targeted because of their work.

President Felipe Calderon's policy to combat organised crime includes the deployment of the army and latterly the federal police in Ciudad Juarez and other cities in Chihuahua.. However, without a code of conduct for the treatment of the media during operations, deployment of the army and police have resulted in more threats, physical attacks, destruction of equipment and illegal detentions.

*"I am more afraid of the federal police than the organized crime, at least you know exactly where you stand [with the criminals]"*, explained a reporter during an interview.

On 1 July, federal police broke into the office of the Journalists and Communicators Association without a warrant, claiming they had information that the building was a secure house for kidnappers and the storage of weapons. The illegal entry has not been investigated by the authorities.

The absence of proper legal remedies to investigate cases of attacks on journalists and human rights defenders sends the wrong message to future perpetrators, including those involved in organised crime.

After repeated attacks against its staff, *El Diario* published a front-page editorial on 19 September asking for a truce with organised crime groups. The government accused the newspaper of negotiating with the groups but the editorial sent a clear sign that the newspaper feels the government is failing in its duty to protect the media.

ARTICLE 19 reiterates its strong appeal to the Mexican authorities to guarantee the safety security of those who are exercising their right to freedom of expression, in accordance with Mexico's international obligations. In particular, ARTICLE 19 appeals to Chihuahua state authorities and federal authorities to undertake prompt and effective investigations into the crimes and make information about the investigations available. . ARTICLE 19 expresses its solidarity with the relatives, friends and colleagues of Luis Carlos Santiago Orozco, Armando Rodriguez and Josefina Reyes.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.