

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Mexico: Amnesty International condemns the murder of another journalist in Veracruz

Amnesty International condemns the murder of journalist Víctor Manuel Báez Chino, whose body was found on a street in the centre of Xalapa, Veracruz state, on 14 June, showing apparent signs of torture.

Víctor Manuel Báez Chino, founder of the news website 'reporterospoliciacos.com' ("policereporters.com") and responsible for covering the Xalapa crime beat for the local edition of the Milenio national newspaper, was kidnapped by a group of armed people and forced into a van as he left his office on the night of 13 June. This was the last time he was seen alive.

This is yet another in a long line of murders of journalists that have taken place in the country in the past few weeks, particularly in Veracruz state. It shows that neither the federal nor the state authorities are capable of ending the impunity surrounding these attacks on journalists, and nor do they seem willing to offer these people effective protection in accordance with their wishes.

Only two days later, on 15 June, the journalist Stephania Rodríguez Cardoso from Saltillo, Coahuila state, called a radio station to let people know that she had decided to go into hiding with her son in order to protect their safety. As she had still not received any support from the authorities, she did not want to explain the reasons for her fear. Amnesty International calls on the authorities to honour their commitment to provide her with effective protection.

These recent events highlight the vulnerability of journalists and human rights defenders and emphasize the urgency of implementing the new Law on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, which was approved by the Mexican Congress in March but which has still not been signed into law by the President.

Amnesty International calls on the President to sign the new law without delay in order to enable its entry into force but notes that the law will be insufficient to protect human rights defenders and journalists if no serious and coordinated efforts to do so are implemented on the ground.

Amnesty International calls urgently on the authorities to conduct an impartial and exhaustive investigation into Víctor Manuel Báez Chino's murder in order to bring those responsible to justice.

Finally, Amnesty International strongly reaffirms the authorities' duty to guarantee freedom of expression, which includes putting an end to impunity for crimes against journalists and establishing effective protection measures for them so that they are able to carry out their work without fear of reprisals.