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## **Mexico: Journalists under attack in fresh wave of violence**

Fresh attacks against media outlets in Mexico highlight the authorities' failure to take measures to protect journalists from a wave of intimidation and violence by armed gangs, Amnesty International said today.

Gunmen set a car alight and fired bullets outside the offices of a newspaper in the northern city of Torreón, Coahuila state, yesterday, while a newsroom in the eastern state of Veracruz was ransacked by armed attackers on 6 November.

"As these latest incidents show, Mexico continues to be one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a journalist," said Javier Zuñiga, Special Adviser to Amnesty International.

"The Mexican authorities must demonstrate that threats and violence against the media will not be tolerated, by putting in place effective preventative measures and by carrying out a thorough, impartial investigation into the attacks and swiftly bringing those responsible to justice."

At least three armed men reportedly took part in the attack on the newspaper El Siglo de Torreón in the northern state of Coahuila early on Tuesday morning.

In addition to setting a car alight outside the main entrance to the newspaper's offices, the gunmen shot at least 20 live rounds at an adjacent building, which houses a sister publication. No one was hurt in the attack.

Shots were also fired at the newspaper's offices in August 2009, while several other media outlets in and around Torreón have come under attack and journalists have been abducted in recent years by organized crime groups.

In the neighbouring state of Zacatecas, authorities are investigating the case of two delivery workers from the newspaper El Financiero, who have been missing since Monday afternoon after they reportedly informed colleagues they were being followed by police.

Meanwhile on 6 November El Buen Tono, a daily in the eastern port city of Veracruz was ransacked by gunmen who vandalized equipment and set fire to the newspaper's offices.

UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression Frank La Rue has said Mexico is the most violent country in the Americas for journalists, and the fifth most dangerous worldwide.

According to figures published in September by the state-funded National Human Rights Commission (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, CNDH), 74 journalists have been killed in Mexico since 2000, including at least eight so far this year. Those behind the attacks and killings are virtually never identified or brought to justice.

Given the high risk to reporters, particularly at local level, regional Mexican media outlets often take

precautions like toning down their coverage or completely ignoring issues surrounding crime and insecurity.

“The self-censorship brought on by Mexico’s violent war on organized crime is eroding freedom of expression in some parts of the country,” said Javier Zuñiga.

“The authorities must do more to ensure effective protection measures for journalists so they can carry on their work without facing intimidation or physical attacks. The most urgent measure needed is to end the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for attacks on journalists and media outlets.”