

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/58/97

UA 219/97 Extrajudicial execution / journalists' safety

18 July 1997

MEXICO Benjamín Flores González, journalist
Dozens of other journalists

On 15 July Benjamín Flores González, a young journalist and director of *La Prensa* newspaper in San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora State, Mexico, was gunned down with machine-gun fire and then shot at close range in the head outside the newspaper's offices. The perpetrator is still at large. Amnesty International is deeply alarmed at the extrajudicial execution of Benjamín Flores González who is the eighteenth journalist to have been murdered in Mexico during the last eight years.

Benjamín Flores González had received several death threats prior to his murder as a result of the publication in his newspaper of articles concerning the alleged involvement of members of the local government with powerful drug cartels. He had also received death threats for a recent investigation he was involved in concerning reported links between the Sinaloa drug cartel and other cartels with the local police and other officials. The state of Sonora, bordering the USA, is an important route for drug-smuggling into the States.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 1989 journalists have suffered more threats and attacks in Mexico than anywhere else in Latin America. At least 270 cases have been reported to Amnesty International so far. These include beatings, short term "disappearances" and torture. Journalists live in fear of reprisal attacks as a result of reporting information accusing the authorities of human rights violations or linking them to other criminal activities. This is particularly true of drug-trafficking which has the reported involvement of some high government officials and members of the security forces. Most of the perpetrators of these violations have benefitted from impunity which can only be possible with the acquiescence of the authorities.

The organization has expressed its highest commitment to help protect human rights defenders and journalists critical of the authorities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/emails/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern about the brutal murder of Benjamín Flores González and calling for immediate and effective investigations to bring the perpetrators to justice.
- calling for urgent and effective measures to ensure the full protection of journalists and their right to freedom of expression in Mexico particularly where they concern reports into alleged official responsibility for human rights violations and other crimes.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Interior
Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor
Secretario de la Gobernación
Secretaría de la Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er piso

Col. Juárez, 06699 México DF, MÉXICO

Telegrams: Secretario Gobernación, México D.F., México

Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350/+ 52 5 535 9952

Salutation: Sr. Secretario/Dear Minister

2) Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuéllar

Procurador General de la República

Procuraduría General de la República

Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta

Col. Guerrero, 06300 México D.F., MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador Madrazo, México D.F., México

Faxes: +52 5 626 4419

Salutation: Sr. Procurador General / Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

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Sr Director,

Proceso

Fresas 13

Col. Del Valle

C.P. 03100, Mexico, D.F. MEXICO

Fax: +52 5 6292028 and 6292086

Daily newspaper

Sr. Editor

La Jornada

Balderas 68

06050 México D.F., México

Fax: + 52 5 5212763 and 5101901

Federación Latino americana de Periodistas (Latin American journalists' federation)

Nuevo León 144, 1 er. Piso Col. Condesa, 06170

Mexico D.F. MEXICO

Fax: + 52 5 2866085

Rapporteurs Sans Frontiers (international NGO)

5, rue Geoffroy Marie, 75009 Paris (France)

Fax: + 33 1 45231151

E-mail: rsf@calvanet.calvacom.fr

and to diplomatic and media representatives of MEXICO accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 August 1997.