

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 41/061/2008
21 November 2008

UA 321/08

Fear for safety

MEXICO

Armando Rodríguez's family
Journalists with "El diario de Juárez", Ciudad Juárez local newspaper
Other journalists with local media

Journalists working with daily newspaper "El Diario de Juárez" and other media workers from Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state, are in danger after their colleague, Armando Rodríguez Carreón, was shot dead by a unknown gunman. The murder is believed to be connected to his journalistic work. Several other journalists in the city have received telephone death threats since Armando Rodríguez Carreón's murder.

On the morning of 13 November Armando Rodríguez was sitting in a company car in his garage and was about to take his daughter to school. Then an unidentified assailant got out of a car parked nearby and shot Armando Rodríguez several times. His daughter who was in the car at the time of the attack was uninjured. His wife, also a journalist, fears for her and her children's safety.

In the last year Armando Rodríguez had received several death threats. In a death threat he received over the phone in January a male voice said "you are going to die if you keep talking" (*te vas a morir si sigues hablando*). Following that threat he left Mexico for a couple of months and went to the United States. At that time he had been reporting on drug-related violence and organised crime in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua state. A week before the killing, a severed human head was left on the media workers monument in "Plaza del Periodista" ("Journalists square") in an attempt to intimidate local media workers.

Reporters working for "El Diario" and other media in the area have also received death threats in recent weeks. The director of a web newspaper received a phone call during Armando Rodríguez's funeral saying "you are next" (*tú serás el próximo*). Because of an increase in gang related criminal violence in the area, several media workers have left Mexico in recent months fearing for their safety.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Recently there have been two other similar incidents. On 17 November, two hand grenades were thrown at the office of daily newspaper El Debate in Culiacán, Sinaloa and on 9 October, Miguel Villagómez Valle, director of Michoacán newspaper, La Noticia, was abducted and killed.

The federal authorities have opened investigations into all these incidents, but similar cases in the past have lacked effective investigation where no progress was made to identify the perpetrators or bring those responsible to justice.

In 2008, up to 4,500 people have been killed in violence committed by organized criminal gangs in several Mexican states, particularly drugs trafficking cartels. One of the worst affected regions is Chihuahua state, where 1300 people have been killed in 2008. According to the National Human Rights Commission, 24 journalists have been killed since 2005 and those who report on organised crime in Mexico are at particular risk. The failure of state or federal authorities to effectively investigate crimes against journalists and bring those responsible to justice has helped create a climate of impunity which is an obstacle to freedom of expression and access to information, particularly in connection with issues of organized crime and corruption.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern at the murder on 13 November of Armando Rodríguez in Ciudad Juárez and for the safety of media workers in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua state;
- calling on the authorities to protect Armando Rodríguez's family, his colleagues with El Diario de Juárez and any other journalists who have asked for protection after receiving threats;
- calling on them to order a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the murder of Armando Rodríguez, for the results to be published and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities of their duty to ensure those responsible for the killing of media workers are held to account in accordance with the law and in order to prevent future attacks and create a climate in which journalists can exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of reprisal.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Fernando Francisco Gómez-Mont Urueta

Secretario de Gobernación

Secretaría de Gobernación

Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez, Del. Cuauhtémoc, México D.F., C.P.06600, MEXICO

Fax: +52 55 5093 3414

E-mail: secretario@segob.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Minister

Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza

Procuradur General de la República

Procuraduría General de la República, Av. Paseo de la Reforma nº 211-213, Piso 16

Col. Cuauhtémoc, Del. Cuauhtémoc, México D.F., C.P. 06500, MEXICO

Fax: +52 55 53 46 09 08

Salutation: Señor Procurador General/Dear Attorney General

Governor of Chihuahua State

Lic. José Reyes Baeza Terrazas

Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua, Palacio de Gobierno, 1er piso, C. Aldama #901, Col. Centro,

Chihuahua, Estado de Chihuahua, C.P. 31000, MEXICO

Fax: +52 614 429 3300, then dial extension 11066

Salutation: Señor Gobernador / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

ARTICLE 19 México, Medellín 33 Col. Roma, México D.F. 06140, México
and to diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 02 January 2008.