

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 11, 2018

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

We write to express our concern about the growing number of targeted killings of journalists in Mexico. As it remains unclear in most of the cases who is responsible for these brutal attacks, we urge you to work with the Mexican Attorney General and the National Human Rights Commission to investigate each case of murdered journalists listed in this letter.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), in 2017 alone, there were nine journalists killed in Mexico and six of those murders are confirmed to be directly connected to their jobs. This alarming figure places Mexico as one of the most dangerous countries to work as a journalist. The following six cases, documented by CPJ, demonstrate a harrowing indication of how press freedom is under assault in Mexico.

- **Mr. Cecilio Pineda**, a contributor to local newspapers *El Universal* and *La Jornada de Guerrero* reported on crime and corruption on his Facebook page. Mr. Pineda was shot and killed on March 2, 2017 in Ciudad Altamirano, Guerrero. He had previously been shot in 2015 and had been approached by Mexico's federal protection program.
- **Ms. Miroslava Breach Velducea**, a correspondent for the national newspaper *La Jornada* from the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua, reported extensively on alleged links between organized crime groups and politicians in the Sierra Tarahumara region. Velducea was killed on March 23, 2017 in Chihuahua, Chihuahua. Despite repeated statements from state authorities, as well as information allegedly leaked from the case file that suggested that authorities have identified the killers, no one is in custody.
- **Mr. Maximo Rodríguez**, who reported on crime on the police blog *Colectivo Pericú* was shot and killed on April 14, 2017 in La Paz, Baja California Sur a few days after receiving a death threat for a column he wrote in which he was dismissive of a local criminal gang.
- **Mr. Javier Valdez Cárdenas**, an investigative reporter and editor, was fatally shot on May 15, 2017, near the editorial offices of Riodoce, the investigative weekly he co-founded in 2003 in the northern Mexican city of Culiacán.
- **Mr. Salvador Adame Pardo**, director of the television station 6TV, was presumably killed sometime between May 18 and June 26, 2017 in Michoacán. Gunman abducted

Salvador Adame Pardo on May 18, 2017, from the central Mexican town of Nueva Italia in Michoacán state. In June, state authorities told Mexican media that they had found the burned remains of Mr. Adame in the town of Gabriel Zamora. Authorities have not publicly identified any suspects and no arrests had been made as of mid-December, 2017.

- **Mr. Edgar Daniel Esqueda Castro**, a freelance photographer who covered social events and crimes for several local outlets was abducted at his home on October 5, 2017 in San Luis Potosí. The men identified themselves as police officers but were wearing civilian clothing. Mr. Castro's body was found by investigators the next day with signs of torture. He had reported threats from police officers in July of this year.

The continuous attacks, harassments, threats, and murders of journalists in our own hemisphere should be of great concern to the United States and we should work with our southern neighbor to ensure that journalists simply doing their job are protected. Martin Luther King Jr. once said that "*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.*" We must guard those words as sacred as a nation that upholds human rights. We urge you to work with the Government of Mexico to thoroughly and credibly investigate these crimes and to bring to justice those responsible.

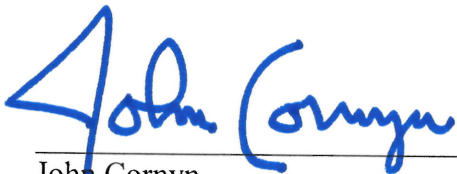
Sincerely,



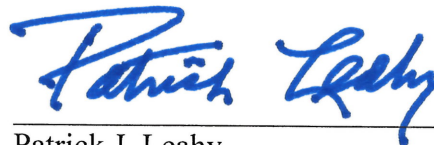
Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator



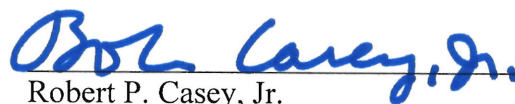
John Cornyn
U.S. Senator



Patrick J. Leahy
U.S. Senator



Todd Young
U.S. Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
U.S. Senator

Chris Coons

Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator