



STATEMENT

Mexico City, Wednesday 16 April 2008

- C. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of Mexico
- C. Juan Camilo Mouriño Terrazo, Minister of the Interior
- C. Eduardo Medina Mora Icaza, Attorney General
- C. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, Governor of Oaxaca
- C. Octavio Alberto Orellana Wiarco, Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Journalists
- C. Evencio Martínez Ramírez, Attorney General of Oaxaca
- C. José Luis Soberanes Fernández, President of the National Human Rights Commission

In a statement addressed to the highest authorities in Mexico, including the President of the Republic, the Mexican branch of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, ARTICLE 19 and Reporters without Borders condemn the murder of two community journalists and demand:

- 1. Investigation into the events of 8 April 2008 on the San Juan Copala road, Oaxaca, which resulted in the murder of Teresa Bautista Merino and Felicitas Martínez Sánchez, community journalists working for the radio station *La Voz que Rompe el Silencio* (Voice that Breaks the Silence).**
- 2. That the intellectual and material authors of the crime that took the life of these journalists be brought to justice**
- 3. Guarantees for the life and physical integrity of the survivors, Faustino Vázquez Martínez, Cristina Martínez Flores and their two young children, who are key witnesses to the events, and the life and physical integrity of other members of this community radio station.**
- 4. An end to the climate of impunity that allows attacks against community media personnel, journalists and the media in general and their disappearance and murder to continue, which makes Mexico the most dangerous country on the continent to be a journalist.¹**

Background:

The creation of the autonomous municipality of San Juan Copala in January 2007 saw the return of the municipality that was abolished by decree by the Oaxaca State Legislature in 1948. However, it also signalled the exacerbation of conflict between opposing groups in the region.

As part of the autonomous municipality's programme, the community radio station, *Radio Triqui, La Voz que Rompe el Silencio*, was created. The murdered journalists played an important role in the community and denounced human rights violations, abuses of power and especially the increase in the number of attacks and rapes of the community's women by local political bosses.

In recent years, the Triqui region has suffered a climate of generalised violence because of a lack of mechanisms for dialogue and development in the region. The impunity of the crimes committed in recent years has aggravated the alarming increase in human rights violations.

¹ http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=24021



This is not the first attack on indigenous community radio stations in Oaxaca. In 2006, Radio Nnandia, a licensed radio station in Mazatlán Villa de Flores, was violently evicted from its offices and members of Radio Calenda in San Antonino de Castillo Velasco were shot at and severely beaten up. Oaxaca's indigenous and community radios have distinguished themselves in recent years with information services to their communities, which has broken the domination of traditional media.

The facts:

The community journalists, Teresa Bautista Merino and Felicitas Martínez Sánchez were travelling back to their community with Faustino Vázquez Martínez, Cristina Martínez Flores and two children after attending a meeting with people in the community of Llano Juárez about the latter's participation in the radio station.

They were ambushed by persons attempting to abduct them. They were hit by several bullets and lost control of the vehicle. The journalists Teresa Bautista and Felicitas Martínez lost their lives in the attack, while the couple, Faustino and Cristina (and their two children) suffered bullet wounds.

Twenty 7.62 calibre bullet cartridge cases were found in the area, the type used by AK-47 assault rifles, weapons restricted to army use.

We therefore **DEMAND:**

I. That the Attorney General and the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Journalists (FEADP):

- Undertake an investigation into the killings and the attack, on the grounds that attacks against journalists are under their jurisdiction and because of the calibre of the weapon used to kill Teresa Bautista Merino and Felicitas Martínez Sánchez, journalists at the community radio *La Voz que Rompe el Silencio*.
- Take the necessary measures to protect the lives and physical integrity of Cristina Martínez Flores and Faustino Vázquez Martínez and their young children, aged three and two years, witnesses to the events, and all other members of the radio.
- Investigate in a serious, expeditious and effective manner, bring to justice those responsible, including the material and intellectual authors, and order reparations for the harm caused.

II. That the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH):

- Monitors the events and calls for measures to protect the life of Cristina Martínez Flores and Faustino Vázquez Martínez and their young children, aged three and two years, witnesses to the events, and all other members of the radio.

III. That the Federal and State Executives:

- Guarantee justice, respect for human rights and freedom of expression, punish those responsible, create mechanisms necessary to promote dialogue and put an end to the generalised climate of violence in Oaxaca.

IV. That the Federal Legislative Power:



- Takes the necessary legislative measures for community radios to be able to carry out their work in an atmosphere of legality, security and freedom.

We remind the Mexican Government that:

- “The murder, kidnapping, intimidation of and/or threats to social communicators, as well as the material destruction of communications media violate the fundamental rights of individuals and strongly restrict freedom of expression. It is the duty of the state to prevent and investigate such occurrences, to punish their perpetrators and to ensure that victims receive due compensation”.²
- The Rule of Law in Mexico is under serious threat when freedom of expression, a fundamental human right that is a cornerstone of democracy, is continuously violated: “Freedom of expression in all its forms and manifestations is a fundamental and inalienable right of all individuals. Additionally, it is an indispensable requirement for the very existence of a democratic society.”³

NOTES TO EDITORS

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² Principle 9 of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ Principles on Freedom of Expression.

³ Principle 1 of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ Principles on Freedom of Expression.