



For immediate release – 3 February 2010

PRESS RELEASE

Mexico: Three Journalists Murdered in First Weeks of 2010

ARTICLE 19 calls on the Mexican authorities to fully and immediately investigate the killings of another three journalists in recent weeks. A total of 904 killings took place across the country in January 2010, making this the bloodiest month in a decade.

Just last weekend, several incidents involving gunfights took place. A shooting that killed 16 people, most of them teenagers with no apparent ties to drug gangs, in the northern city of Ciudad Juárez, proves a context of widespread violence amid President Felipe Calderon's "war against organised crime".

In these circumstances, journalists face ever increasing risks to their safety when exercising their profession. On the evening of 29 January, in the southeastern state of Guerrero, the journalist Jorge Ochoa Martinez was killed by an unidentified person when leaving a restaurant.

Ochoa Martinez was murdered at the seat of the municipal government of Ayutla de los Libres, 100 kms away from Acapulco. The journalist was director and editor of the local daily *El Sol de la Costa* and the weekly *El Oportuno* newspapers. It has not been established yet whether the killing was connected to his work as a journalist.

Valentín Valdés Espinosa, a reporter for the local newspaper *Zócalo de Saltillo*, was found dead on 8 January in the city of Saltillo, Coahuila State. The body of radio journalist José Luis Romero, who worked for *Línea Directa*, was found on 20 January, although he may have been killed soon after his abduction in December 2009. Both men had been tortured before being executed.

ARTICLE 19 actively documents and analyses cases of aggressions against media workers in Mexico and there is clear evidence that these attacks cannot be viewed in isolation from the ongoing violence against civilians in this country. It is also clear that the Mexican Government is failing to properly investigate attacks and that a state of impunity for crimes of assault, kidnapping and murder prevails. ARTICLE 19 is extremely concerned that the criminal justice system is failing – a concern that is echoed by the National Human Rights Commission, along with Cencos, a national partner organisation of ARTICLE 19.

“Despite the large number of attacks against the journalists and editors in Guerrero, and countrywide, there is a massive degree of impunity,” states ARTICLE 19 Mexico Director, Dario Ramirez. “The Mexican authorities must take the necessary steps to adequately investigate these cases and bring to justice the perpetrators of such terrible crimes.”

ARTICLE 19 also expresses our condolences to the families of these three journalists, who have died so needlessly, and offers our solidarity to the whole journalistic community,” continues Ramirez.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the Mexican Government to guarantee the right to freedom of expression and to ensure all the necessary security measures media workers trying to exercise this right, in accordance with its international human rights obligations.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information, please contact Ricardo González, ARTICLE 19 Programme Officer: Freedom of Expression, ricardo@article19.org, +52 55 10 54 6500 ext. 103.
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.