



DECLARATION OF MÉXICO
2nd Meeting of Editors and Publishers of the Mexican Republic
Inter American Press Association
June 26-27, 2008
Mexico City, Mexico

We executives of Mexican newspapers brought together by the Inter American Press Association in this 2nd Meeting of Editors and Publishers of the Mexican Republic strongly reject the climate of violence that affects our society at all levels and seriously jeopardizes freedom of expression and of the press and the right to information. We express profound concern at the high level of impunity that prevails in crimes against journalists and which results in troubling self-censorship by the news media.

Because the Constitution of Mexico guarantees freedom of the press and provides for swift and impartial administration of justice we are united in our determination to continue submitting concrete proposals for the government to be effective in the battle against offenses that are contrary to freedom of expression and the right to information,

We reaffirm that the right to life, to personal freedom and integrity, to safety and to the protection of the law, to freedom of expression and of the press are essential rights of all persons, guaranteed in international treaties such as the American Convention on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We give emphasis to our request that the Mexican government demonstrate authentic political will to create a legal framework with the institutional means necessary to provide responses to combat violence against the press and put a halt to the phenomenon of impunity.

We declare that this legal framework should classify crimes against free speech, press freedom and the right to information as federal offenses, establish the principle that they not be subject to any statute of limitations whatsoever, and stiffen the penalties for such crimes, as we articulated in the 2002 Conclusions of Tijuana, the 2005 Declaration of Hermosillo and the 2006 Conclusions of Nuevo Laredo.

We recall that the presidents of the United States of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (1994-2000), Vicente Fox Quesada (2000-2006) and Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (2006-) have expressed their support to the Inter American Press Association of these proposals whose sole purpose is to enshrine the principles of free speech, press freedom and the right to information as the foundation of democratic life and the national political institution.

We uphold the Declaration of Principles of the Hemisphere Conference on The Judiciary, The Press and Impunity (Dominican Republic, 2007), in which chief justices and members of Supreme Courts in the Americas ratified “the importance of taking the measures necessary to investigate and punish attacks on freedom of speech and crimes against journalists and officials of the justice system in order to break the vicious cycle of impunity.”

We extol the Mexican government’s key role in the adoption of Resolution 120 by UNESCO in 1997 whereby member countries are urged “to improve their laws to provide for the trial and conviction of the masterminds of murders of those who are exercising the right to freedom of expression” and “to adopt the principle of not permitting the statute of limitations to expire on crimes against the person when they are perpetrated to impede the exercise of freedom of information and of expression or when they would have as an objective the obstruction of justice.”

We hold that member states take the necessary steps “for attacks on freedom of expression and crimes against journalists to be investigated and punished in accordance with their domestic laws” as set forth in the 1998 resolution of the Organization of American States.

We call attention to the moral mandates of the 1994 Declaration of Chapultepec and the 2000 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression, which condemn murder, terrorism, kidnapping, force, intimidation, unjust imprisonment of journalists, the material destruction of news media, and the impunity surrounding such crimes, and call upon States to investigate those violent acts promptly and punish them harshly to ensure that victims receive adequate reparations.

We confirm the Conclusions of the Hemisphere Conference on Unpunished Crimes Against Journalists, Guatemala 1997 which set historic precedent and established the need for a legal framework that makes it possible to combat the impunity that engenders violence against free speech, press freedom and the right to information.

For these reasons, we agree:

- 1) To call upon the Honorable Congress of the Union to create the legal instruments necessary for the government to effectively combat violence and offenses against freedom of expression, press freedom and the right to information and, thus, reduce the climate of impunity.
- 2) To ask the Honorable Congress of the Union to take under consideration and review the concrete proposals that were prepared at this 2nd Meeting in accordance with the international norms that govern classification of crimes against freedom of speech, press freedom and the right to information as federal offenses, to establish the principle that such offenses be exempt of any statute of limitations and subject to stiffened penalties through their incorporation into the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Proceedings and the Charter of the Judicial Branch of Government.
- 3) To urge the president of the Republic, in addition to honoring his commitment to send Congress a constitutional reform that places offenses against freedom of expression under federal jurisdiction, to adopt swift and effective administrative measures that enable the agency responsible for protecting freedom of expression and the safety of journalists to be refocused and strengthened as a ranking

special prosecutor's office.

4) To ask the Mexican Attorney General's Office to evaluate the scope of the Special Prosecutor's Office for Dealing with Crimes Committed Against Journalists, conceding to it the powers needed for it to operate effectively and take on cases under federal jurisdiction and to analyze its reorientation as set out in the previous clause.

5) To recognize that the executive and legislative branches of government have united their efforts and shared visions to create legal tools that strengthen freedom of expression, press freedom and the right to information through legislation on access to public records, on the decriminalization of libel at the federal level, and on professional secrecy; notwithstanding, to also insist that the placement of official advertising be brought into line with technical criteria and international standards in order to prevent the discretionary use of public funds with the intent of controlling the press.

6) To encourage editors and publishers of news media to place greater emphasis on incorporating mandates in the Declaration of Hermosillo and in the Conclusions of Nuevo Laredo regarding installation of security systems in company facilities, adopting safety measures for reporters, and raising technical, work and ethical standards.

7) To encourage the continuation of discussion forums which stimulate unity and solidarity among journalists, news media and press associations, as well as holding professional training seminars to deal with the risks faced when practicing the profession.

8) To involve members of the judiciary through forums, conferences and workshops, with the objective of creating greater awareness of the need to combat offenses against the rights to free speech, press freedom and information that are fundamental to the strengthening of democracy.