

Mexico's War on Journalism

By Eliana Carter, Preston Moore and Vijay Mittal

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Executive Summary

_____ In a state where corruption has taken a significant hold, those in power use methods of fear and oppression to control its citizens. In that sort of oppressive regime, certain groups of citizens that hold influence within a community are targeted and silenced by the state. This dossier examines Mexico's war on journalism. Ahmed, a prominent journalist of the New York Times, claims that these actions happen because journalists are one of the few demographics that can hold someone accountable.¹ The very nature of investigative journalism is to use the freedom of the press in order to hold those in power accountable. In Mexico, the corrupt crusade known as The War on Drugs has left much of its government victim to corruption and in many localities forced the government to cede control to the cartel and local gangs simply. Another factor we will discuss is the massive wave of neoliberal policies that shaped much of the economy of Latin America through the mid to late twentieth century. Pressures from the USA to comply as well as local profits led to many concessions of freedom. Profit and the desperate need to act with impunity has lead to the heavy targeting of Mexico's investigative press.

This Dossier looks at the administrations of Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto and how violence and corruption have escalated through their regimes. Neoliberal policies of the late twentieth century provided Mexico's cartels and governments with the tools of oppression. The sheer profit from neoliberalism leads to many violations of human rights and the policy of denial of these violations by Mexico's government as well as other governments like the USA.

¹ Ahmed, Azam. "In Mexico, 'It's Easy to Kill a Journalist'." The New York Times. April 29, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/29/world/americas/veracruz-mexico-reporters-killed.html>

An investigative journalist's very job is to shed light on these violations, but in a regime that does not protect their rights, corrupt officials and criminals have found it easier to silence them. For journalists, this equates to death threats, disappearances, hits and the self-censorship of the press from fear of violence. The inability to disseminate information or opinions freely is a massive obstacle in the restoration of human rights for the average citizen.

Restorative justice accounts for the crimes committed by the violators of human rights as well as the trauma faced by the victims. It is an effective way to heal a community or state but requires the participation of all parties.² The Mexican government has refused to acknowledge these violations out of corruption and embarrassment. This report looks at how the protective measures put in place have proved incredibly ineffective. These recent policies that were intended to make progress towards justice have placed much of the burden of proof on the victims even before any investigation is carried out. A recent report demonstrates that one method pursued by fellow journalists is to bring the issue to light by providing statistics and dates to show trends and the existence of the issue itself.³ Despite massive efforts by committed journalists, the lack of government assistance has led to a system where less than one percent of the disappearances and murders of journalists are deemed necessary of a federal investigation. Fair and free investigation in order to acknowledge the problem is the first step towards restorative justice and a better future for Mexico's citizens.

This report uses the prominent case of the murder of Ruben Espinosa to examine the different issues and obstacles journalists seeking justice face. His pictures regarding protests

² Collins, Cath. *Post-Transitional Justice: Human Rights Trials in Chile and El Salvador*. University Park: Penn State Press, 2010

³ Albaladejo, Angelika. "Mexico Journalists Face Violence From Both Officials and Crime Groups: Report." March 21, 2018. <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/mexico-journalists-face-violence-officials-crime-groups-report/>.

and the state response put him on the radar of corrupt officials and organized crime. In the summer of 2015, an unflattering picture of the new governor of Veracruz and known associate of organized crime, Javier Duarte, lead to threats, disappearance and eventually execution. Though Espinosa was very clearly a victim of political corruption, the official investigation has refused to acknowledge these factors and those truly responsible are still at large. His death is one of hundreds and typical of the sort of violence occurring today, but the atypical amount of coverage his death has received has turned him into a martyr for Mexico's freedom of the press.⁴

The information gathered and analyzed in this report comes from various sources; including journalists in both Mexico and the United States, reports, and declarations from local journalist organizations and human rights organizations. Many of the interviewers of Mexican journalists note how much of the testimony is tainted or self-censored by the presence of armed guards or mercenaries. Others that were able to get a fair interview were only able to do so by protecting the identities of those interviewed and employing complete secrecy.

Historical Context

To truly understand the recent phenomena of targeted repression and political violence against journalists in Mexico we have to examine the War on Drugs and how that has profoundly affected and shaped political and civic life for many sectors of the Mexican population. Targeted repression of journalists has its roots within the recent onset of the War

⁴ North, James. *Welcome to Veracruz, Mexico, One of the Most Dangerous Places in the World to Be a Journalist.* The Nation, 23 Mar. 2018, www.thenation.com/article/welcome-to-veracruz-mexico-one-of-the-most-dangerous-places-in-the-world-to-be-a-journalist/.

on Drugs started by Felipe Calderon and his administration in 2006. A process of neoliberalization began in the 1980s and unfurled over most of Latin America in the ensuing decades. This process was chiefly characterized by policies that “favor[ed] the needs of business and investment” over meaningful social progress and “minimize[ed] the role of the state in the economy, promot[ed] efficiency, and maximiz[ed] productive output”.⁵ The push for neoliberalization endorsed by the Mexican government, multinational corporations, and the U.S. government was part of a larger pattern that sought to protect the interests and wealth of a select number of groups at the cost of many human lives.⁶ While open economy policies helped to further industrialize and modernize Mexico, it led to an increase in human rights violations perpetrated by the state that were justified purely on the financial gains these policies brought. These violations often came at the cost of Mexican citizens’ rights as well as their lives.

The process of neoliberalization profoundly affected and shaped the political and economic landscape of Mexico during the 1980s through the 1990s. Its policies led to increased levels of inequality and forced many to become involved in low-level crime to supplement their incomes.⁷ While these policies increased inequality, they also increased the “size of the narcotics industry” and created the groundwork from which the War on Drugs progressed.⁸ While economic measures, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),

⁵ Lara Kelly, “Neoliberalism in Latin America,” Citizens’ Press, 2009, accessed February 26, 2019, <https://cpress.org/editorials/old/neoliberalism-in-latin-america>.

⁶ Molly Molloy, “The Mexican Undead: Toward a New History of the “Drug War” Killing Fields,” Small Wars Journal, August 21, 2013, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-mexican-undead-toward-a-new-history-of-the-“drug-war”-killing-fields>.

⁷ Julien Mercille, “Violent Narco-Cartels or US Hegemony? The political economy of the ‘war on drugs’ in Mexico,” *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 9 (Oct. 2011): 1640.

⁸ Julien Mercille, “Violent Narco-Cartels or US Hegemony?”, 1637, 1642.

enriched trans-national corporations and the elite sectors of Mexican society, a tide of growing dissatisfaction also followed; with popular sectors of Mexico unable to reap the benefits of these policies and economic activity. Failure to create jobs or increase wages for workers added to an increasingly repressive atmosphere that the neoliberal tide further established within Mexican society.

Under the presidency of Felipe Calderon, the War on Drugs became a ploy by the Mexican state—and to a certain extent the U.S. government—to “repress dissent and popular opposition to [these] neoliberal policies.”⁹ The concern to fight drugs and ensure public safety was known to be a pretext, as collusion between the state and narco-traffickers had existed for many decades.¹⁰ Increased militarization and a politics of impunity formed the platform from which the war was fought. While the Calderon administration had destabilized the status quo and further opened a power vacuum fought between cartels, it was no less a war to “expand, protect, and police neoliberal policies,” that allowed the “US government to offer economic assistance and security assistance” under these pretenses.¹¹ While the rhetoric that defined the war was mired in the language of safety and fighting corruption, the realities it presented were much darker.

Under the Calderon administration violence surged, disappearances rose, and killings soared to unprecedeted levels. Following the presidency of Enrique Pena Nieto from 2012 and on, a continuing pattern of impunity and violence rose to even higher levels, with forty-one

⁹ Julien Mercille, “Violent Narco-Cartels or US Hegemony?” 1637.

¹⁰ Javier Trevino-Rangel, “Silencing grievance: Responding to human rights violations in Mexico’s war on drugs,” *Journal of Human Rights* 17, no. 4 (October 2018): 487.

¹¹ Trevino-Rangel, “Silencing grievance,” 487.

journalists murdered since 2012.¹² Against this backdrop, journalists found themselves at an impasse where their ability to critically report the news came under fire, and their job descriptions came attached with a possible death sentence, as a way to silence their efforts. As the War on Drugs has illustrated, it is a “war of silencing” which has forcefully—and somewhat successfully—muffled those critical voices and created a climate of fear in which groups who criticize the government have faced punishment for their willingness to speak out.¹³ Suffice it to say, we cannot talk about political repression without analyzing the economic and political factors that have lent to an increasingly hostile environment in which critical voices continue to be forced to toe the line or remain silent.

Although the war became the ‘solution’ by which the Mexican government came to protect its interests and grapple with increasing popular discontent, it was not a sudden event, but one that had been characterized by broader trends of repression carried out by the state apparatus. Since the War on Drugs began, observed patterns of impunity that had been in place for a long time only intensified. Official discourse and rhetoric on human rights violations throughout the Calderon administration ranged from “complete denial” to “re-interpret[ive] denial,” based on language that dehumanized victims and based its justifications on moral ideals of necessity.¹⁴

Both the Calderon and Pena Nieto administrations portray a weak rule of law. Data shows that 91% of homicide cases against journalists remain unsolved from 2007 to 2015.¹⁵

¹² Article 19, (March 2018), “Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in advance of the review of Mexico,” *UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 63rd session, 3.

¹³ Trevino-Rangel, “Silencing grievance,” 498.

¹⁴ Ibid., 491-492.

¹⁵ Jos Midas Bartman, “Murder in Mexico: are journalists victims or general violence or targeted political violence?,” *Democratization* 25, no. 7 (February 2018): 1095-1096.

Complicity and negligence by local authorities in addressing these cases systematically followed rhetoric used by the federal government to hamper down on ‘subversive’ individuals and impede any meaningful developments in prosecuting those culpable for the crimes. Cases of torture from the onset of the War on Drugs to 2011 have shown that, local prosecutors, medical examiners, and local police had taken part in or covered up any wrongdoings committed by state actors, further highlighting the problem of impunity which has pervaded all levels of the state.¹⁶ It would be remiss to ignore links of collusion between local and federal authorities in repressing critical journalists, as their work often challenges the official narratives put forth by the government.

While patterns of impunity have been visible through the years, local politics have also constituted a strong force in how and why journalists face continual violence. Local and state politics as “subnational authoritarianism” that “emphasiz[ed] state-level politicians...[as] authoritarian” have also lent to the argument that journalists who have written negatively about local and state politicians have often faced violent reprisals for their specified works.¹⁷ While concessions at the federal level had been made in the prior decade to address the problem of impunity, there has yet to be any meaningful accountability at the state level. As a result of these observed patterns, many journalists have self-censored to protect themselves and their families for fear of reprisal from local authorities.¹⁸

Although the Calderon and Pena Nieto administrations have both denied any targeted or concerted efforts to suppress journalistic work aimed at challenging government narratives,

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Neither Rights, Nor Security: Killings, Torture, and Disappearance’s in Mexico’s “War on Drugs”, *Human Rights Watch Report*, November 2011, 35-58.

¹⁷ Bartman, “Murder in Mexico,” 1097.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch (Organization). 2018. *Human Rights Watch world report*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch.

the rates of violence against journalists remain significantly higher than that of the general population.¹⁹ Observed patterns of targeted killings have shown that the rate at which journalists have been killed ranges from state to state. Indicative of causal links between local authorities and violent criminal gangs cooperating to target critical journalists, politicians and criminal gangs have worked together for a long time, serving each other's interests.²⁰

Even though local and national politics have played an integral role in the repression of journalists for the past fifteen years, the U.S. government has also played a prominent role in financing the War on Drugs, as a way of maintaining their hegemony within the Western hemisphere. The war has allowed the U.S. government to "offer economic cooperation and security assistance under the condition of implementing neoliberal reforms", while also allowing the Mexican government to "militarize the country and use security forces to repress activists, journalists, and critics of the regime".²¹ Although motives for the War on Drugs have varied for these state actors, it remains clear that the war has created a climate in which human rights abuses have been able to proliferate against the backdrop--and justifications--of neoliberalism. Considering that the U.S. has played a major role in the increased militarization of security forces with such strategies, such as the Merida Initiative from 2008 onward, the three billion in aid that was given to the Mexican government to purportedly combat organized crime, has instead been used to repress "human rights defenders and journalists" with "more than 100,000 people...killed by criminals and security forces alike".²² Suffice it to say, that the role the U.S. government within the war is a highly problematic one, in which accountability

¹⁹ Bartman, "Murder in Mexico," 1095.

²⁰ Bartman, "Murder in Mexico", 1104.

²¹ Trevino-Rangel, "Silencing grievance," 487.

²² Laura Carlsen, "In Mexico, Hunted Down for Speaking Out," *La Prensa San Diego*, Aug. 4, 2015, ProQuest.

and justice cannot be attained for the targeted murder of journalists, when considering that U.S. taxpayer money is helping Mexican security forces repress those whose job it is to critically engage with the government.

Case Analysis: Ruben Espinosa

One case that illuminates the dynamic situation facing journalists in Mexico is the case of Ruben Espinosa. Señor Espinosa was a photojournalist in the Mexican state of Vera Cruz who covered protests and activism throughout much of his career. This role brought him into close contact with situations of government suppression of protesters and “dissidents.” The election of Veracruz governor Javier Duarte signaled a continuing downward trend of corruption and state involvement with organized crime. The state of Veracruz is one of the hardest hit by the drug war and underdevelopment of its democratic institutions are compounding the repression of human rights within its borders. Javier Duarte was known to have cooperated with organized crime and to have financially benefited from his public office. Just in the last year, he has been convicted of corruption while in office.²³ Ruben Espinosa worked for *El Proceso*, and after capturing many pictures of protests and police forces breaking them up, Espinosa persisted in his journalism and eventually released an unflattering photo that showed Duarte in a police hat with his stomach hanging out over his pants.²⁴

²³ Argen, David. "Mexico: 'worst Governor in History' Sentenced to Nine Years for Corruption." *The Guardian*, September 27, 2018. Accessed February 26, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/27/javier-duarte-mexico-veracruz-guilty-sentenced-corruption>.

²⁴ Espinosa, Reuben. "Espinosa-Duarte-Photo." Digital image. PDN Pulse. August 12, 2015. Accessed February 26, 2019. https://pdnpulse.pdnonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/espinosa-duarte-photo_sized.jpg.

Shortly after taking the infamous photograph, Espinosa reported having received threats in addition to being followed and finding henchmen outside of his apartment building. Fearing for his life Espinosa fled to Mexico City, long considered a haven for journalists. Other journalists who had run afoul of corrupt politicians and cartel bosses had enjoyed a higher level of safety in the nation's capital. Proximity to the federal government and its agency charged with protecting journalists led many to believe that they would be protected once removed from the localities of corruption and violence. A month later in July 2015 after the organization Article 19 initiated missing journalists' protocols; Espinosa was found dead along with four women in his Mexico City apartment.²⁵ Their deaths would signal to the rest of their colleagues that there was indeed no safe place to hide and even seemingly small and unflattering photographs were met with abhorrent violence for the individuals and the people close to them.

The Constitution of Mexico and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights outline the freedom of the press. Both of these documents are meant to legally safeguard the freedom of expression and prevent the stifling of dissent. However, human rights have eroded in Mexico; threats of violence against journalists carry multiple harmful connotations for the freedom of expression within the country. Mexico sits among the lowest and most dangerous countries in the world for journalists.²⁶ The country has seen the continual blending of the state

²⁵ Unknown. "Mexican Photojournalist Rubén Espinosa Found Dead in Capital." *The Guardian*, August 01, 2015. Accessed February 22, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/02/mexican-photojournalist-ruben-espinosa-found-dead-in-capital>.

²⁶ Carmona, R. (2016, July). Mexican journalism: Still in the line of fire. Washington, DC: Center for International Media Assistance, National Center for Democracy. Retrieved from http://www.cima.ned.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/07/CIMA_Mexican_Journalism_2016.pdf

and organized crime. Throughout 2017, the majority of aggression against journalists was committed at the hands of the state.²⁷ Many more journalists have taken to fleeing local governments and cartels within Mexico and abroad. The case of Ruben Espinosa was by no means isolated. It was merely part of an escalating trend across Mexico despite international efforts to combat the problem of targeted political violence.

Freedom of expression and the press are internationally recognized human rights that democracies rely on for the candid examination of the state. Mexican journalists are subject to homicides at three times the rate of the rest of the country, having some of the highest rates of murder in the world.²⁸ Ruben Espinosa was no stranger to the risks his profession exposed him to. The crimes against journalists highlight the high levels of state corruption that have allowed organized crime to operate with impunity, aided by the blending of organized crime and the state at all levels of the Mexican government.

Efforts designed to provide security teams, surveillance, panic buttons and backed by the United States and the United Nations have fallen short of preventing further violence. Further investigations have revealed that these same buttons often do not function or worse, alert local authorities already privy to illegal activity and in many cases involved in its execution. ²⁹ Compounding these issues are the excessive levels of impunity with which these crimes are carried out. Less than one percent of the total murders of journalists result in appropriate

²⁷ U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. Violence against Journalists in Mexico: In Brief, by Seelke, Clare Ribando. R45199. 17 May 2018, accessed: 22 January 2019. Pp 5-6

²⁸ Hughes, Sallie, and Mireya Marquez-Ramirez. "Examining the Practices That Mexican Journalists Employ to <https://www.oah.org/about/> Reduce Risk in a Context of Violence." *International Journal Of Communication* 11 (2017): 499-521.

²⁹ U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. Violence against Journalists in Mexico: In Brief, by Seelke, Clare Ribando. R45199. 17 May 2018, accessed: 22 January 2019.

investigations or prosecutions. States like Veracruz have such a high level of corruption in the wake of the drug war that there is little to no recourse, despite attempts at federal action within the past decade. Escalating crimes against journalists to federal offenses have failed to yield desired results of accountability and justice. The federal establishment, The Office of the Special Prosecutor Against Freedom of Expression, has been charged to investigate and prosecute violence against journalist and killings. However, further corruption has made the office mostly inert and unable to thoroughly investigate and prosecute cases for a myriad of reasons. Partly due to reforms within the legal system in Mexico which has come with a more significant burden of proof, though counter to the intention of the laws passing the regulations has made it more difficult to bring charges against suspected persecutors successfully.³⁰

Impunity has become the norm due in part to a complicated situation between the local authorities and criminal actors. There is a feedback loop in place between journalists, the state and organized crime.³¹ Unlike much of the rest of the world where newspapers receive funding through advertising sales, in Mexico much of this activity comes from state actors, leaving journalists' ability to report at the mercy of the state. In addition to this, targeted violence causes a great deal of self-censorship.³² Studies into the censorship practices of journalists revealed that age was a significant factor in whether or not an individual would intentionally repress information from their colleagues. The younger an individual is, the more likely they are

³⁰ Seelke, Pp 8

³¹ González, Rubén Arnoldo A. "Silence or Alignment. Organized Crime and Government as Primary Definers of News in Mexico." *Observatorio* 12, no. 4 (2018): 125-39.

³² Hughes, Sallie, and Mireya Marquez-Ramirez. "Examining the Practices That Mexican Journalists Employ to Reduce Risk in a Context of Violence." *International Journal Of Communication* 11 (2017): 499-521.
<https://www.oah.org/about/>

to withhold information out of fear. Preventing information from getting to the presses was not the only level at which fear influenced behavior. Journalists reported methods such as self-censorship within their offices and press pools, highlighting the depths of corruption, with the state both opposing some journalist activity publicly as well as psychologically.

Though Mexico passed legislation to provide protection mechanisms for journalists, there is widespread distrust in the program as a whole. In August 2017 the first murder of a journalist enrolled was widely reported. There was also high profile news coverage when the Nieto government purchased high-end surveillance software designed to help the government keep track of “subversive” activity by journalists and human rights supporters.³³ The growing distrust journalists have with the government at the local and federal level is a likely motivator for increased censorship as a means for self-preservation. The reactions to journalist killings have only managed to sew more skepticism, much as happened with the Espinosa murders, as the high profile obfuscated any illusion of safety.

Journalists have taken community steps to try and combat the violence against themselves and their colleagues, and international efforts have been undertaken with the United States to secure their safety better and try to safeguard the government organizations designed to protect those who have received threats. The United States provides money as a means of supplementing the Mexican federal government's programs. These programs, designed during the Obama administration come with requirements that the Mexican government takes additional steps to cut out corruption and provide protection squads and prosecutors. However, this has proved to be difficult for the federal government given the size

³³ Seelke, Pp 7-9.

of the protection force versus the size of the country and the widespread corruption caused by the drug war. US drug policies have helped to drive up the levels of violence in the country, and cooperative support in the militarization of the war itself is also a direct result of US aid by way of arms and military training assistance.

In recent years the Washington Post adopted the slogan “democracy dies in darkness,” though this statement seems to outline the duty of the press in the United States. Similar to the Mexican constitution, the press is protected to provide a critical investigative entity that will illuminate government activities and keep officials accountable to their constituents. Within Mexico, democracy faces suppression under very public and violent conditions. The war on journalists has been anything but dark, though it has been working at many levels to create a docile, cooperative press that does not seek to be critical of the corrupt politicians. The case of Ruben Espinosa highlights the fact that sanctuary within the capital city for those seeking to exercise their human rights to speak against their government is no longer a viable option. Journalists have responded by continually suppressing the extent to which they will dare to be critical, hiding information from their coworkers and the public at large. Compounding the issues of violence, many periodicals within Mexico rely on the government for the necessary funding to stay in business. Permitting the suppression of democracy and fostering the conditions where the killing of opposition is both normalized and no longer shocking.³⁴ In response, many journalists have banded together in hopes of safeguarding themselves, the criminal elements within the state work to suppress them. Espinosa’s murder was by no means

³⁴ Gohdes, Anita R, Sabine C Carey, Håvard Hegre, Nils W Metternich, Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, and Julian Wucherpfennig. "Canaries in a Coal-mine? What the Killings of Journalists Tell Us about Future Repression." *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 2 (2017): 157-74.

isolated, merely one of many; it stands out for its brutality and the lasting legacy of fear that is indicative of the overall suppressive effects of the violence across Mexico and the rest of Latin America. Espinosa died for a photo that depicted a corrupt governor in an unflattering light physically. Capturing in an image Duarte's use of state forces to suppress dissidents, Espinosa became a stand-in for all witnesses to the criminal activities, his life taken merely because his job provided him with a voice. This crime highlights the desperate nature of anti-journalist violence and the suppression of investigative journalism in order to solidify holds on power through manipulation of the democratic process.

Human rights organizations, such as Article 19, have suggested and worked towards national awareness campaigns. Their research and publication of reports have outlined the methods and increasing amounts of targeted violence being carried out against journalists. Other organizations, like the Mexican Environmental Journalist Organization (REMPA), have banded together and put forth declarations and pleas to the Mexican government for further investigation into the deaths of their colleagues, accountability for political violence and assured securities of their freedoms of press and speech.³⁵ Article 19 and other organizations have also called for increased international pressure on the Mexican government to ensure that members comply with policies set forth to protect journalists. The first steps towards justice for these crimes are awareness as well as pressure to start more thorough investigation.

³⁵ "REMPA Statement on Killings of Mexican Journalists." July 05, 2012. <https://www.sej.org/library/rempa-statement-killings-mexican-journalists>

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Case Files Bibliography

Ahmed, Azam. "A Journalist Was Killed in Mexico. Then His Colleagues Were Hacked."

New York Times, November 27, 2018.

In the New York Times article, "A Journalist Was Killed in Mexico", Azam Ahmed reports on the targeted use of spyware on journalists by the Mexican government. He uses the case of prominent journalist Javier Valdez--whose colleagues and family members were subjected to several types of hacking attempts, such as text messages embedded with malicious software—to highlight this problem of attempts by the state to use hacking as a means to collect information illegally. Using spyware purchased from cyber arms dealer, NSO Group, the Mexican government has used a software known as Pegasus, to monitor and gather information on those close to the slain journalist. The author is careful to note that this is not a first attempt by the government, but one of a series of a hacking attempts that is indicative of a broader pattern of surveillance.

To use the software, individuals are sent messages with links that are embedded with malicious software that then track and keep record of any actions that take place through the infected technology. The messages were worded in a way that would elicit a response from the receiving parties, such as the messages sent a day after Valdez was murdered, declaring the perpetrator had been detained—even though no one had been caught. Ahmed mentions how this practice first emerged under the presidency of Enrique Pena Nieto and while the

government has acknowledged the use of Pegasus to target criminals and terrorists, as well as, opened a federal investigation into the allegations of abuse, no one has been found guilty so far for using this technology illegally.

The author uses interviews with close friends and colleagues of Valdez, as well as, official government rhetoric to reconstruct this wider narrative of secret surveillance. While Ahmed is careful to note that the individuals targeted by this software had direct links to murdered victims or were involved in work that directly criticized the government, there is no conclusive evidence that supports this—although there is much in the way of circumstantial evidence on why these individuals were targeted. While many believed Valdez to be too well-renowned to be targeted, his death has further etched away at the crumbling façade, revealing a state rife with impunity from the laws it proclaims to uphold.

Ahmed, Azam. "In Mexico, 'It's Easy to Kill a Journalist'." The New York Times. April 29, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/29/world/americas/veracruz-mexico-reporters-killed.html>

An important part in resolving these killings and violence against journalists is the participation of the state as well as those wronged in order to work for justice. This article examines statistics as well as interviews from people on the scene, both from civilians and members of the Mexican government, to support the claim that there is extreme amounts of targeted violence against journalists. Ahmed claims that these actions happen because journalists are one of the few demographics that has the ability to hold someone accountable. The article then claims that the reason why it is so easy to kill a journalist is lack of help from the state. The majority of these cases are simply ignored and further investigation is denied or

sabotaged. This lack of support forces practices like self-censorship and undermines the entire concept of freedom of speech. The article then highlights a few case studies with fallen journalists. Ahmed reveals to us the trauma faced by examining the specifics cases like the deaths of Regina Martinez and Ruben Espinosa as well as how living colleagues and friends deal with that trauma.

This source is a great way to introduce the issues, what possible solutions there are to the situation as well as what obstacles are faced by those seeking justice. Ahmed draws from statistics from multiple sources and even compares the different figures reported by human rights groups and the Mexican government. Ahmed also uses interviews and quotes members and former members of the state as well as civilians and uses the comparison of that information to verify his point. He concludes the article by claiming that with Mexico's current trends, the violence does not look like it will improve.

Albaladejo, Angelika. "Mexico Journalists Face Violence From Both Officials and Crime Groups: Report." March 21, 2018. <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/mexico-journalists-face-violence-officials-crime-groups-report/>.

Albaladejo writes for InSight Crime. This news company focuses on investigating and analyzing organized crime. A large issue in the violence against journalists is the massive denial by the state that this violence is even happening. Albaladejo first provides statistics and dates to show trends and the existence of the issue itself. Then the article moves to provide its own analysis based on these numbers. They then highlight the states of Mexico that are in such crisis and the heavy amounts of self-censorship that is now necessary for survival. The article

highlights the fact that cartels and corrupt officials kill the journalists and then the government covers it up. A major claim is that silence from violence is convenient for political power.

This article relies heavily on statistics as well as reports from Article 19, a human rights organization, as evidence for their points. Though this source lacks testimony from government officials, it is a good current, secondary source showing how the violence and obstacles for justice outlined in older articles is still very much a problem today.

Argen, David. "Mexico: 'worst Governor in History' Sentenced to Nine Years for

Corruption." *The Guardian*, September 27, 2018. Accessed February 26, 2019.

Article 19. *Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in advance of the review of Mexico.*

[https://www.article19.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/ARTICLE-19-IESCR-submission-](https://www.article19.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/ARTICLE-19-IESCR-submission-update-FINAL-1.pdf)
[update-FINAL-1.pdf](https://www.article19.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/ARTICLE-19-IESCR-submission-update-FINAL-1.pdf)

Article 19 is a human rights organization that advocates and seeks to protect the basic human rights of: freedom of expression and access to information. This report was put together in conjunction with the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to establish a set of issues that are currently plaguing Mexico in regard to the aforementioned freedoms. While the report has six sections that detail the various problems with implementation of these freedoms, I will focus on the first two, as they pertain to journalists specifically.

The first section of the report titled, "Access to information and safety of journalists", highlights the importance of implementing stronger frameworks and institutions of transparency at the local and federal levels. Article 19 argue that by promoting the right to

access information, those in positions of power can be held accountable, and citizens of marginalized groups have more equal access to information held by the government. At the end of the section, the report lists recommendations for the government to follow, so as to develop an environment that fosters the rights to access information on an equal and open level.

The second section of the report, “Safety of journalists and the issue of impunity”, focuses on that various ways in which journalists are targeted in their line of work, as well as, the problem of impunity. Although it is noted that the federal government has set up special counsels to investigate these problems, such as the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Freedom of Expression (FEADLE), and the Federal Mechanism for the Protection of Journalists and Human Rights Defenders (the “Protection Mechanism”), it has ultimately failed in bringing any perpetrators to justice. Using five case studies of murdered journalists to highlight the failures of the state in adhering to these guidelines and investigating these murders and disappearances, the report makes recommendations to the Executive branch, FEADLE, the “Protection Mechanism”, and the State and Federal Prosecutor’s Offices to be more thorough, transparent and impartial in their investigations and prosecutions.

Common threads throughout the first two sections, deal with the failure of the government to implement objective measures, that would safeguard journalists and the right to access information in any meaningful way. Although government officials attempt to come off as impartial, they blame the majority of journalist killings on criminal violence and fail to

investigate public officials who have been implicated in these crimes. The report also sheds light on the common feature of acts of intimidation and threats that journalists, friends, family, and colleagues face before, during and after a murder.

Bartman, Jos Midas. "Murder in Mexico: Are Journalists Victims of General Violence or Targeted Political Violence?" *Democratization* 25, no. 7 (Mar. 2018): 1093-1113.

In his article, "Murder in Mexico", Jos Midas Bartman examines whether journalists are victims of general or targeted violence. Bartman draws on quantitative data to support his argument that journalists do face higher levels of violence and murder when compared to the rest of the Mexican population. He analyzes the various reasons why this subgroup is more susceptible to political violence, and makes a clear correlation between the targeting of journalists at the hands of local governments. Bartman makes the case that while the federal government is centralized and democratized, it is at the state level that government takes on a more authoritarian approach to silence those who are critical of local administrations and policies.

Bartman attempts to be impartial by comparing both the official narrative that journalists are just victims of general violence, versus the unofficial narrative that journalists are a targeted group and are targeted so, not by criminal violence, but by state actors. By designating each narrative as a testable proposition, he labels the first narrative as P1 and the second as P2a and P2b (to account for the role of national and state politics). Testing the data by comparing the homicide rates of journalists and the general population at the state and national level, Bartman finds that journalists have a higher statistical chance of being targeted

and killed when contrasted to the rates of general violence that the general Mexican population faces. He also finds that the levels of violence and murder vary, depending on state.

To analyze these findings, the author uses testimony from NGOs and journalists, as well as, official government reports. Bartman addresses the biases inherent in the reliability of government records and narratives, including the problem of a disproportionate amount of unresolved cases (and hard evidence) in the deaths of these journalists. While this poses a problem with the second proposition in that there is no direct evidence that links state governments to the deaths of journalists, Bartman couples the findings of the quantitative data with the testimony of NGOs and journalists to lend to his argument that critical journalists are victims of state violence.

Although Bartman's findings do not delve deep into how and why state politics are involved in the murder of journalists, it is important to note that with his findings, useful and testable data points to the fact that journalists are a specifically targeted group. This is a reality that the federal government cannot afford to keep ignoring. Bartman argues that besides the violation of human rights, the killing of journalists also poses a problem with the idea of democracy. With violence continually directed towards critical journalists, government officials and leaders cannot be held accountable, thus moving Mexico further away from the bulwarks of truth and justice.

Brambila, J. A. "Forced Silence: Determinants of Journalist Killings in Mexico's States, 2010–2015." *Journal of Information Policy* 7 (2017): 297-326.

doi:10.5325/jinfopol.7.2017.0297.

This source explores the levels of violence in comparison to the subnational states in Mexico looking for predictive trends and essentially finding that the states with the least amount of development and higher levels of poverty were strong predictors for the likeliness of violence. Other factors were the levels of social violence and the record of human rights abuses in the area. Though the term can become problematic, the less developed an area is the higher the likelihood that journalists will face threats because of their careers choices.

The article examines the above-stated factors and presents the data; offering theoretical solutions to the system as a whole in hopes of easing the violence against journalists. The data showed a strong correlation between the murders and new or emerging democracies; Mexico is one country where the militarized drug war is causing dissension into a more totalitarian like rule in many of the smaller states within the overall country. The author suggests that improvements to the state structures, accountability, and democratic institutions would likely alleviate the problem substantially.

Overall this source provides strong data about the location and factors that contribute to the overall violence. It also offers the theory that the violence is in some ways merely a symptom of an overall sickness in the political society that contributes to social violence. The evidence the report uses is strong, and they identify that further studies of the same nature are needed and understand the overall narrative of the problem and solutions. The source is vetted and published by a credible academic source. There was no substantial bias detected throughout the study, and since a numerical style analysis drove it, there is less nuance surrounding the data interpretation.

Carlsen, Laura. "In Mexico, Hunted Down for Speaking Out." *La Prensa San Diego*, Aug 14, 2015. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1707035068?accountid=14505>.

This newspaper article is an editorial piece that examines the murder of Ruben Espinosa, a photojournalist who was murdered after fleeing the state of Veracruz in response to repeated threats and acts of intimidation he received. He along with four other women, including activist Nadia Vera, were murdered execution style in Mexico City, which was considered a safe haven for journalists prior to Espinosa's murder. The author, Laura Carlsen points out the many inconsistencies and subsequent cover-up that Mexico City Attorney General Rodolfo Rios implemented. Many like Carlsen, believed Mexico City to be a safe place, from which journalists who had fled for fear of their safety, could be free from violent reprisal. Carlsen is also quick to point out how the murders have directly affected the community of journalists within Mexico—including herself—and created a climate of anger and frustration at the inability of the government to properly investigate and prosecute those responsible.

Carlsen also brings to light the role that the U.S. government has played within the broader developments on the War on Drugs and how its effects have created climate of rising human rights violations within Mexico. The author argues that while U.S. aid—the Merida Initiative—has been used to help the Mexican government fight organized crime, it has lent to increasing acts of repression within the country and created a hostile environment for anyone willing to speak out against the state. Carlsen urges the U.S. government to stop contributing to these growing human rights violations because it hurts Mexican citizens and goes against U.S. values of freedom.

Consequently, La Prensa is a bilingual newspaper that uses a Chicano/Latino perspective to examine events that take place in the U.S. and Mexico. This newspaper article offers an important outlook because of its double-mindedness in analyzing the murder of Espinosa, as well as, its implications in and outside of Mexico.

Carmona, R. (2016, July). Mexican journalism: Still in the line of fire. Washington, DC: Center for International Media Assistance, National Center for Democracy. Retrieved from http://www.cima.ned.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/07/CIMA_Mexican_Journalism_2016.pdf

The Center for International Media Assistance is a Washington DC-based group, dedicated to protecting freedom of expression abroad. Mexico has some of the highest homicide rates in the world, with journalists suffering even higher rates than the rest of the population. Carmona's piece deals with the depth of the problem, the failure of legal reforms and the arising alternative media organizations that are working to overcome the hurdles caused by violence against journalists.

Veracruz is the epicenter of the violence against journalists, and this source uses the state as an example of how far the corruption continues the processes even in the wake of political reforms. A non-governmental organization, Article 19 tracks the growing crisis for journalists in Mexico, the source explained that while they helped get the legislation passed, they are strong critics of the convoluted and discretionary nature of the legal web in Mexico that pertains to periodistas. The legislation makes crimes against journalists a federal crime; however, the referral of such cases rarely happens because of the local government's discretion — many of the crimes against journalists classified as having motives other than the victim's

profession. The trend is also made worse by the fact that much of the Mexican press is dependent on government money for their continued functioning. Undermining will for critical reporting on a national scale. Also, there is a lack of quality in the measure that has been put in place to protect journalists and provide them and their families with security.

Despite the increasing problems in Mexico surrounding freedom of expression and human rights overwatch, there is one sector that is seeing a major boost in the shadow of the crisis. Independent media has increased worldwide, and Mexico is no different. There is a strong independent sector that is growing amidst the chaos. Despite efforts such as the publishing of fake and pro-governmental periodicals in the country the independent media continues to brave the danger and report on the government shortfalls and corruption.

This source is a strong NGO, which aims to provide transparency for the increasingly dangerous profession. They provide a strong argument that examines multiple levels of the problem and makes meaningful connections between them. The only reasonable source of violence that I could readily hypothesize is the fact that a pro journalist organization writes the source. However, it remains unseen if that influenced the reporting in any way. The report was well sourced and balanced. The source is writing in a voice that made the information accessible and easy to take in.

Collins, Cath. *Post-Transitional Justice: Human Rights Trials in Chile and El Salvador.*

University Park: Penn State Press, 2010

Domonoske, Camila. "Violence Against Journalists Reached 'Unprecedented Levels' In 2018, Report Finds." December 18, 2018.

[https://www.npr.org/2018/12/18/677819169/violence-against-journalists-reached-unpreceden](https://www.npr.org/2018/12/18/677819169/violence-against-journalists-reached-unprecedented-levels-in-2018-report-finds)

ted-levels-in-2018-report-finds.<https://cpress.org/editorials/old/neoliberalism-in-latin-america>

Domonoske examines a report from Reporters Sans Frontieres, RSF. Violence against journalists has only increased in Mexico and at this point in time, there are many more case studies to go on. This article then compares the violence against journalism in Mexico to other tumultuous regions of the globe. The source uses interviews from members of RSF and the organizations statistics to give an idea of how horrific the violence really is. Yemen is considered one of the most dangerous regions to work as a reporter. The fact that there are more deaths occurring in Mexico reveals how real and serious the issue is. The main goal of this article is to show that the violence is still happening and very much real. This article also shows some of the innovative ways civilians are dealing this issue, like amateur news reporting organizations.

Espinosa, Reuben. "Espinosa-Duarte-Photo." Digital image. PDN Pulse. August 12, 2015.

Accessed February 26, 2019.

https://pdnpulse.pdnonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/espinosa-duarte-photo_sized.jpg

Gohdes, Anita R, Sabine C Carey, Håvard Hegre, Nils W Metternich, Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, and Julian Wucherpfennig. "Canaries in a Coal-mine? What the Killings of Journalists Tell Us about Future Repression." *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 2 (2017): 157-74

González, Rubén Arnoldo A. "Silence or Alignment. Organized Crime and Government as Primary Definers of News in Mexico." *Observatorio* 12, no. 4 (2018): 125-39.

Hughes, Sallie, and Mireya Marquez-Ramirez. "Examining the Practices That Mexican

Journalists Employ to <https://www.oah.org/about/Reduce Risk in a Context of>

Violence." *International Journal Of Communication* 11 (2017): 499-521.

Reporters who operate in combat zones face exceptionally high levels of stress, stress which has a lasting impact on the health and professional behavior of those affected. The author surveyed the responses and behavior of Mexican journalists after being exposed to long term violence and anxiety. The author notes that the effects of this stress were similar and at times exceeded the effects seen in journalists that operated in combat zones. This stress environment comes as a result of the militarization of the "War on Drugs" that began under President Calderon.

The source takes a highly statistical approach to the mechanisms of censorship in action at different levels of the journalism profession throughout Mexico. The article explores the factors that increase self-censorship including age, an area in which they are reporting, and the perceived financial ties of the particular organization. One of the most interesting points was that age was a major factor in the censorship behaviors, which included hiding information from colleagues, leaving information out of papers, and in extreme cases, leaving the profession altogether. The younger a journalist was, the more likely they were to self-censor, which shows a generational effect of the violence on the freedom of expression in Mexico. Another interesting factor was that the population of the area they were reporting in; in summary, the proportion of attacks to the overall population area had a significant effect on the daring of journalists. Therefore, the areas where the most violence is happening will be the ones in which more and more journalists choose to look the other way. The third factor of interest to the dossier is the financial ties. Journalists that perceived their outlets as being

highly connected to mostly state-based financial resources the more likely they were to have had to hide information from people they did not trust and as a consequence the public at large.

This source is clear about its shortcomings, the author states from the outset that there was significant difficulty in getting willing participants to the study and that this caused the field work to go on for more than two years. However, there is still a great deal of corroborating evidence as well as valuable insight into the overall trends that follow in the wake of violence against Mexican journalists. It will help to decipher the unseen effects and how they may impact the future. Also, there is space for insight into possible solutions to the problems.

Human Rights Watch (Organization). 2018. *Human Rights Watch world report*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch, “Neither Rights, Nor Security: Killings, Torture, and Disappearances in Mexico’s “War on Drugs”,” *Human Rights Watch Report*, November 2011, 35-58

Julien Mercille, “Violent Narco-Cartels or US Hegemony? The political economy of the ‘war on drugs’ in Mexico,” *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 9 (Oct. 2011): 1640

Lara Kelly, “Neoliberalism in Latin America,” Citizens’ Press, 2009, accessed February 26, 2019, <https://cpress.org/editorials/old/neoliberalism-in-latin-america>

Molly Molloy, “The Mexican Undead: Toward a New History of the “Drug War” Killing Fields,” Small Wars Journal, August 21, 2013, accessed February 19, 2019

Timmons, Patrick. "Every Journalist Mourns a Dead Journalist." NACLA. September 14, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://nacla.org/news/2016/09/14/every-journalist-mourns-dead-journalist>.

The Patrick Timmons piece deals with the plight of a particular journalist named Noe Zavaveta. Zalaveta wrote a book talking about the largely disastrous term of the Veracruz governor. Timmons is writing at a time when Zavaleta has found himself forced to take a break from his work due to increasing threats against his safety. Veracruz is the epicenter of corruption and the increasing violence against journalists. Following six years of worsening corruption and failed efforts to increase safety and transparency.

Timmons book deals with governor Javier Duarte and the massive increase in cartel activity and killings during his term. It is also the place where the least amount of accountability exists. Following the publishing of his book he has had to move from the lawless area towards the capital where journalist murders are rare; but, they do take place infrequently — lending further credence to the idea that the problem of violence is regional within the greater state of Mexico. Further building on the common research theme of regional hot zones of journalist killings in the Cartel controlled southern states and the northern border states where much of the trafficking activity takes place.

The North American Congress on Latin America is a longtime organization that reports of the state of affairs throughout Central and South America. The NGO has played a critical role in understanding. The primary purpose for the source is to use a more publicly oriented article rather than academic examinations only. With a long history of fair reporting and analysis, the NACLA is a safe source. The examination also focuses in on a single person providing insight into a particular case that might be useful in the final dossier.

Trevino-Rangel, Javier. "Silencing Grievance: Responding to Human Rights Violations in Mexico's War on Drugs." *Journal of Human Rights* 17, no. 4 (2018): 485-501.

This article examines the ‘War on Drugs’ and its effects upon Mexican society, in terms of fostering structures, institutions and rhetoric in which Human Rights violations arise. While the article is broad in its evaluation of human rights abuses committed by the government, it is useful in understanding how the War on Drugs, as initiated by president Felipe Calderon in 2006, has led to a rise in atrocities against Mexican citizens. The author, Javier Trevino-Rangel places special attention on language, and how official discourse often fails to portray the reality of state sponsored repression, facilitates language of justification for human rights abuses, and leads to a general malaise and feeling of passivity from the Mexican population.

While the author does not focus on the motives for the war, he does make the case for the state as an agent of repression, by examining NGO reports and official government rhetoric. Trevino-Rangel points out three different tactics of rhetoric used by the Calderon administration: to “deny, reinterpret, and justify” the government’s role in committing human rights abuses. Strategies of language were used to distance and minimize abuse devised by the government, and discredit and dehumanize victims of state violence. The author notes that this official discourse also has an effect on low level officials of government, who then normalize and justify their own abuses against citizens. Trevino-Rangel argues that official discourse matters because it has real-world consequences and uses sociological studies to make his case. While focus is on government as the main antagonist in the War on Drugs, the author also points out that the direct perpetrators of these abuses are hardly, if ever brought to justice. Interestingly, Trevino-Rangel also shines the light on the general population and the ingrained

belief that violence perpetrated by the state and drug traffickers is selective and thus, justified, further proof of the power of rhetoric in aiding repressive states.

Although the author focuses on the Calderon administration (2006 to 2012), which initiated the war that exacerbated human rights violations, he is also careful to note that the subsequent administration of Enrique Pena Nieto (2012 to 2018) has not only continued this war, but intensified militarization of the country and adopted a rhetorical strategy of complete denial and silence. While the War on Drugs became less of a central theme for Nieto's presidency, the silence that followed his administration on this topic was replaced by more clandestine efforts of repression, that sought to target those who were critical of the state.

North, James. *Welcome to Veracruz, Mexico, One of the Most Dangerous Places in the World to Be a Journalist*. The Nation, 23 Mar. 2018, www.thenation.com/article/welcome-to-veracruz-mexico-one-of-the-most-dangerous-places-in-the-world-to-be-a-journalist/.

This source begins by examining the violence against journalists in Veracruz and the obstacles for justice and then moves into the specific death of Ruben Espinosa. North uses statistics from trusted colleagues and websites, such as the infamous report by Article 19, and interviews he's conducted himself to show how the violence is real and targeted. He also explains some of the methods the state uses to silence and oppress these issues. A major source of trauma and tool for oppression is the way the government police kill people. They will simply "disappear" them, meaning no body is found and no one but the killers really know what happened. North then explains at how this massive trauma shuts down any resistance faced by these corrupt officials.

After going over the general issues and obstacles, North dives into the case study of Ruben Espinosa. Espinosa had the gall to publish a photo of Duarte where the politician simply looked unattractive. The fact that such a simple freedom would inspire execution has turned Espinosa into an important martyr for the journalist community. North explains how Espinosa is a rallying cry for reporters, a symbol to never give up on the freedom of speech. He then goes over the lacking international response and interviews two journalists on the ground for their take on the situation.

"REMPA Statement on Killings of Mexican Journalists." July 05, 2012..

<https://www.sej.org/library/rempa-statement-killings-mexican-journalists>.

This is a direct report and plea by the Society of Environmental Journalists. This is a key primary source and the general sort of organisation many of news articles interviewed for information. They highlight colleagues of theirs that have been affected by the killings and the deaths of many of their martyrs. They claim that the deaths of their colleagues have shown the massive disregard in Mexico, especially Veracruz, for the freedom of speech. The group states in three points what they want from the Mexican government going forward. The fact of the matter is, the Mexican government simply refuses to investigate these deaths. This plea for accountability occurs in 2012. This source is important because it shows how there hasn't been much progress in the trauma faced or justice acquired in the past years till now. They use their own experiences as well as data from fellow organizations. This source is not an investigative report, but a claim with statistics. This means they do not have any dissenting views being examined in their article.

Unknown. "Mexican Photojournalist Rubén Espinosa Found Dead in Capital." *The Guardian*, August 01, 2015. Accessed February 22, 2019.

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/02/mexican-photojournalist-ruben-espinosa-found-dead-in-capital.](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/02/mexican-photojournalist-ruben-espinosa-found-dead-in-capital)

U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. Violence against Journalists in Mexico: In Brief, by Seelke, Clare Ribando. R45199. 17 May 2018, accessed: 22 January 2019.

Over the past two decades, Mexico has seen consistent increases in the frequency and intensity of violence targeting journalists (periodistas). The author establishes that targeted violence against the community has increased, with relative impunity. Relative impunity has been made possible by the lack of resources as well as state actors initiating more than half of the documented cases. Violence takes multiple forms: ranging from threats to beatings, kidnappings, and murder. These actions have facilitated an environment of suppression and self-censorship by Mexican journalists. Organizations such as the Journalists Without Borders have ranked Mexico at the bottom for freedom of expression. Efforts have been made by the Mexican federal government to try and protect as well as compensate victims and their families. The author details aid programs backed by state actors such as the United States and non-state organizations such as Reporters Without Borders (JWB). However, these efforts to address the abuses have been slow to unfold and face unsure processes because agents within the state are perpetrating much of the violence. Counter efforts are sluggish and have resulted in a few real protections due to nonworking panic systems and surveillance and an inability to rely on local law enforcement systems. Also, reforms within the Mexican Judicial system have made prosecution even harder to seek; therefore, the environment of impunity continues to hold freedom of expression and criticism hostage.

The Author, Clare Ribando Seelke is a Latin American Affairs specialist for the Congressional Research Service. The CRS is highly regarded for their research and analysis, informing governmental policies and operations. The source provides an excellent summary of the human level impacts as well as the efforts by state and non-state actors to rectify the issue. The article is however designed to provide background information and inform on the effects of US aid efforts. It does not speculate as to possible long-term actions or outcomes.

The source provides a good starting point from which to explore in greater depth the impact of journalist killings in Mexico, and lists that contain a starting point for comparison between countries within the region as well as across the world. Sources cited within the article also provide an excellent and recent list of readings that will provide further analysis of the problem.