

PEN CANADA
BACKGROUND

MEXICAN JOURNALIST Lydia Cacho

Winner of 2009 One Humanity Award



Lydia Cacho (born 1963, Mexico City, Mexico) is an award-winning author, journalist and women's rights activist. Following the publication of her first book in 2005, on child pornography in Mexico, she was illegally arrested, detained and ill treated before being subjected to a year-long criminal defamation lawsuit. She was cleared of all charges in 2007 but continues to be the target of harassment and threats due to her investigative journalism.

In the spring of 2005, Cacho published *Los Demonios del Eden: El Poder Que Protege a la Pornografía Infantil* (The Demons of Eden: The Power That Protects Child Pornography), an exposé of child abuse and pornography rings in Cancun. In her book, she accuses Jean Succar Kuri, a Cancun hotel owner, of being involved in a child pornography ring. She mentions Kamel Nacif Borge, a Puebla businessman, as protecting Succar Kuri, as well as implicating various well known politicians. The book was based on victim testimonies and a video of Kuri filmed with a hidden camera.

In October 2005, seven months after the publication of her book, Nacif Borge sued Cacho for criminal defamation. A few days later, police officers from the state of Puebla forced Cacho into a van and drove her 950 miles across Mexico, reportedly ramming gun barrels into her face and taunting her for 20 hours with threats that she would be drowned, raped or murdered. She was released on bail.

In February 2006, several telephone conversations between Nacif Borge and Mario Marín, governor of the state of Puebla, were revealed by the Mexico City daily *La Jornada*, creating a media frenzy. In these conversations, which took place before Cacho's arrest, Marín and Nacif Borge discussed putting Cacho in jail as a favour, and having her beaten and abused while in jail in order to silence her. In January 2007, Cacho was acquitted of all charges of defamation.

On November 29, 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that Governor Marín had no case to answer. Following this ruling, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights advised Cacho to leave the country and offered her political asylum, legal assistance and access to international courts. However, Cacho has chosen to remain in Mexico.

In April 2008, the Attorney General's Office issued arrest warrants against five public servants from Puebla allegedly involved in Cacho's illegal detention in 2005. These were said to include the former attorney general, a minister, a police commander and various criminal justice system officials, who allegedly falsified paperwork in order to facilitate Cacho's arrest. However, in June 2008, a court in Quintana Roo state rejected the request on jurisdictional grounds and closed the investigation. As of late 2008, this ruling was pending appeal. Cacho alleges that her file has been altered and key information has been removed by the Attorney General's office, weakening her case. She remains under threat.

PEN has supported Cacho since the beginning of her ordeal. It has sent appeal letters on her behalf to the Mexican authorities, including as part of the 2006 Day of the Imprisoned Writer, and has provided an emergency grant to help with her legal costs. In July 2007, International PEN published the report [Violence, Intimidation and Criminal Defamation in Mexico: the case of Lydia Cacho](#) making recommendations to the Mexican government to protect other journalists from criminal defamation lawsuits and violence.

Cacho's work includes three non-fiction books: *Los Demonios del Edén*(The Demons of Eden: The Power That Protects Child Pornography) (2005), *Memorias de una Infamia* (Memorias de una infamia (Memoirs of a Scandal) (2008), which describes the author's abduction and trial, and *Con mi hij@ no*(Not with my daughter/son) (2009). She is also a columnist for the Mexico City newspaper, *El Universal*. In addition to her work as a journalist, Cacho founded and directs the Refuge Center for Abused Women of Cancun and is president of the Center for Women's Assistance, which aids victims of domestic violence and gender discrimination.

Cacho has won numerous awards including the Tucholsky prize from Swedish PEN (2008), the Freedom of Expression prize from Spanish Journalists' Union in Valencia (2008), the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize (2008), the Oxfam/Novib PEN Award for Free Expression (2007), the Amnesty International Ginetta Sagan Award for Women and Children's Rights(2007) and the Francisco Ojeda Award for Journalistic Courage (2005).

Useful links:

Lydia Cacho's [blog](#)

[*Mexico's Most Wanted Journalist*](#), an interview with Cacho, May 1, 2007

[*Defamation Case Raises Issues of Fairness in Mexico*](#), NYT, February, 2006

Cacho on the dangers for journalists in Mexico

(English): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LObTn7Q06K8>

Cacho on violence against women, CNN Heroes

(English): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3gyxumQfNY&feature=related>

Cacho on her legal case after the publication of the tapes in 2006

(Spanish): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=me04WSRG474&feature=related>

Interview with Cacho on legal process an impunity

(Spanish): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHkScHoK5Mo>

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