

TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead calling for the halt of violence against journalists in Mexico.

25 May 2007

His Excellency Felipe De Jesús Calderón Hinojosa
Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos
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Excellency,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing to express serious concern about the attempt on journalist Lydia Cacho's life.

On 7 May 2007 investigative journalist and human rights activist Lydia Cacho Ribeiro (44) arrived at Mexico City international airport. She was accompanied by three police bodyguards due to death threats received as a result of her work. Cacho and the guards got into a vehicle allegedly belonging to the Attorney General (Procuraduría General de la República). After a few kilometres the driver lost control of the car and narrowly avoided crashing. On inspection it was discovered that the nuts on one of the wheel had been loosened, suggesting that this was a deliberate attempt to cause an accident. Cacho and her lawyer lodged an official complaint on 8 May.

This apparent attempt on Cacho's life may be connected to a macabre death threat made against journalists four days earlier. World Press Freedom Day on 3 May saw a the head of a corpse left on a street in the eastern city of Veracruz along with a message threatening local columnist Milo Vera (*Notiver* daily newspaper) and other journalists. Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) reports that it is suspected that the death threat was the work of drug traffickers.

Both incidents follow hard on the heels of the killing of yet another Mexican journalist, Saúl Noé Martínez Ortega (*Diario de Agua Prieta* and *El Escorpión* newspapers and *Interdiario* magazine) based in Agua Prieta in Sonora State. Martínez (36) was abducted from outside the Public State Security Headquarters in Agua Prieta by unidentified armed men on 16 April. His badly decomposed body was found in a ravine near the Chihuahua-Sonora state border a week later, on 23 April. Martínez was a crime reporter and it is thought that his murder was connected to his investigation into the recent kidnapping and murder of one of his sources, a police informer and former policeman. Martínez' death is to date being attributed to organised crime. Journalists have been repeatedly attacked by drug traffickers in Sonora and other northern states.

PEN Canada is deeply concerned by the suspected sabotage of journalist Lydia Cacho's vehicle on 7 May 2007 in what it is feared was an attempt on her life. This development is particularly disturbing given the growing trend of violence against journalists in Mexico, including a macabre death threat against journalists on 3 May, World Press Freedom Day, and the killing of a reporter in April. Six Mexican print journalists have been murdered in as many months, and two others disappeared. PEN Canada urges Mexican authorities to take all possible measures to bring those responsible for these crimes to justice and halt the pattern of killings and violence against journalists.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

Appeals to:

Attorney General

Lic. Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza

Procurador General de la República

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Salutation: Señor Procurador General/Dear Attorney General

Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Journalists

David Vega Vera

Fiscal Especial

Fiscalía para la Atención de los Delitos Contra Periodistas

E-mail: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Fiscal Especial/Dear Special Prosecutor

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Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

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Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

The Hon. Peter MacKay

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