French Government Recognizes Mexican Journalist Lydia Cacho for Her Work to Promote Rights of Women and Girls

Carlos Navarro

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in SourceMex by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.
French Government Recognizes Mexican Journalist Lydia Cacho for Her Work to Promote Rights of Women and Girls

by Carlos Navarro
Category/Department: Mexico
Published: 2013-03-13

On International Women’s Day on March 8, the French government awarded Mexican journalist Lydia Cacho the prestigious Knight of the Legion of Honor for her work on behalf of children’s and women’s rights and for her contribution to freedom of expression.

The recognition of Cacho is one of the few bright spots for Mexican journalists, who remain under siege from drug traffickers and organized crime. In early March, the Zócalo newspaper group, which publishes several dailies in Coahuila state, said its coverage of organized crime would stop to avoid further risk to members of the editorial staff and their families. The decision came the same day a statement was released by the Miami-based Inter-American Press Association (IAPA), which said attacks on journalists have not diminished during the administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto.

Cacho, who writes a column for the Mexico City daily newspaper El Universal and other dailies, is known for her book Los Demonios del Edén (The Demons of Eden), which revealed several networks of pedophiles and child pornographers in the resort city of Cancún (SourceMex, Feb. 22, 2006). The book created some political waves for individuals in high places, which resulted in Cacho’s arrest on bogus charges (SourceMex, Sept. 27, 2006). Cacho challenged the arrest before the courts, but the high court (Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación (SCJN) ruled there was insufficient evidence to charge Puebla Gov. Mario Marín and other people implicated in the bogus arrest with violating Cacho’s rights (SourceMex, Dec. 5, 2007).

Cacho also examined human trafficking and the mistreatment of women and girls around the world in a book entitled Esclavas del Poder (Slaves of Power), published in 2010. "[Lydia Cacho] is a person who dedicates her life to defending women who are marginalized or victims of violence," French Ambassador Elisabeth Beton Delegue said at a ceremony honoring Cacho in Mexico City.

But Cacho credited her mother, a French immigrant to Mexico, for her tireless efforts to fight for women’s rights. "It was she who taught me to defend my rights," said Cacho. "Tonight I dedicate this honor not only to my mother but to all women in all corners of this country who defend and respect the integrity and diversity of women."

Cacho condemns continuing violence against journalists in Mexico

Following the ceremony, Cacho took the opportunity to bring attention to the plight of journalists in Mexico in the mounting violence and criticized the inaction of authorities in the face of "abuse, disappearances, threats, and kidnappings." But, even though organized crime is ultimately behind the violent treatment of journalists, she placed the blame on local and federal police and the military, and even emissaries of politicians, for carrying out the work for the cartels.

Because of the intimidation by organized crime, many news outlets have stopped reporting altogether on activities of the drug cartels (SourceMex, Aug. 1, 2012), and sometimes social media is the only medium by which information is disseminated to the public (SourceMex, Feb. 20, 2013).
Numerous threats and two grenade attacks on its facilities led El Mañana de Nuevo Laredo to stop reporting on organized crime, effective in July 2012. The newspaper said it would no longer carry articles on "violent incidents that are the product of the war between rival criminal groups."

And the attacks have continued against the media in northern Mexico this year. In March, unidentified individuals attacked the offices of El Siglo de Torreón in Coahuila and El Diario de Ciudad Juárez and the television station Canal 44 in Chihuahua in March of this year.

There has already been one casualty since Peña Nieto took office in December. Jaime Guadalupe González, editor of an online news site, was shot down in Ojinaga in Chihuahua state on March 3.

**Threats force Coahuila newspapers to stop covering organized crime**

The continuing violence prompted the Zócalo newspaper group to announce that all editions of Periódico Zócalo (published in the cities of Saltillo, Monclova, Piedras Negras, and Ciudad Acuña) would stop all local coverage of organized crime. The threats were magnified when a criminal organization displayed posters around Coahuila threatening Zócalo director Francisco Juaristi.

The newspaper explained that its decision was based on a responsibility to "watch out for the well-being and safety of more than 1,000 employees" and their families. "There are no guarantees or security for the full exercise of journalism," the newspaper group said in a statement.

The IAPA denounced the continuing violence against journalists in Mexico at a semi-annual meeting in Puebla in March 2013. The association, which represents journalists from 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, said there are no signs that the situation has improved for journalists in Mexico. The organization noted that the Mexican government has done little to prevent and investigate crimes against journalists, with only 5% of cases resolved in the last 10 years.

The IAPA said Mexico needs to fully implement and strengthen the Fiscalía Especial de Delitos contra Periodistas ((FEADP), which has been mostly ineffective since the special office was created in 2006 (SourceMex, April 26, 2006, Feb. 24, 2010, and Feb. 1, 2012). As a result, delegates announced that the IAPA would seek a special audience with Peña Nieto to demand that his administration find a solution and take more forceful actions to protect journalists in Mexico.

The IAPA also demanded that the government conduct thorough investigations of recent attacks against journalists in four states with high levels of activity from criminal organizations: Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua, and Veracruz. "These are where the most attacks have occurred against journalists in the last several years," said the IAPA, noting that the government could take actions ranging from finding those responsible for the attacks to dismantling the criminal organizations.

-- End --