



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

ARTICLE 19

POLICY PAPER

PRESS FREEDOM UNDER SIEGE

Women Journalists in Mexico

Lucía Elisa Miguel Osorio, María José de Icaza

ANALYSIS

Imprint

Publisher

Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit
Truman-Haus
Karl-Marx-Straße 2
14482 Potsdam-Babelsberg

🌐 www.freiheit.org/es/mexico

📘 @fnfmexico www.facebook.com/fnfmexico

🐦 @fnfmexico www.twitter.com/fnfmexico

Authors

Lucía Elisa Miguel Osorio
María José De Icaza

Editores

María José Salcedo, FNF Mexico Office

Research and Political Strategy (FNF)
Global Themes Division

Paula Saucedo Ruíz, ARTICLE 19

Contact

E-Mail mexico@freiheit.org

Date

November 2023

Notes on using this publication

This study is produced by ARTICLE 19 in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. This document is available free of charge and is not for sale and may not be used by political parties or for electoral purposes in campaigns (federal, state, local or for the European Parliament).

License

Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

Table of contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2. INTRODUCTION	5
3. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS	6
3.1 <i>Militarization and Violence</i>	6
3.2 <i>Violence perpetrated by the State</i>	7
3.3 <i>The Case of Cecilia Solís</i>	7
4. STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES TO TACKLE THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS	9
4.1 <i>Best Practices from Latin America: Civil Society Protection Networks and Multisector Strategies</i>	9
4.2 <i>Best Practices from Mexico: Civil Society Efforts amid the State's lack of Protection</i>	10
4.3 <i>Policy Recommendations</i>	10
5. CONCLUSIONS	12
6. REFERENCES	13
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	16

1. Executive Summary

The human rights violations in Mexico pertain to the right to freedom of expression and access to information, of both journalists and society in general. In Mexico, journalists face systematic practices of violence and intimidation. These types of practices include those used by the government to silence journalists and misinform the public (through control and management of information of any kind and of media outlets), and those perpetrated by private actors and members of organized crime groups. According to figures by ARTICLE 19 (an independent, non-partisan organization that promotes and defends the progressive advancement of the rights to freedom of expression and access to information for all people, per the highest international human rights standards), on average, every 13 hours a journalist or media person is assaulted in Mexico for carrying out their profession in the country (ARTICLE 19, 2023). Undoubtedly, violence against the press has increased each year. ARTICLE 19 started tracking attacks on journalists in 2007. In 2022, it registered 697 attacks against the press, turning it into the most violent year in its recordings (ARTICLE 19, 2023).

The violence against the press in Mexico has a significantly different impact on media depending on the intersectional dimension, social categories, and context of each individual. Ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status are characteristics prone to accentuate the risks and impact of human rights violations. Violence against women journalists is grounded on heteronormative and patriarchal understandings and practices. Women journalists are infringed for appropriating their discourse and making the media their place of enunciation, especially when providing journalistic coverage on topics considered more “masculine” such as politics, corruption, security,

sports, science and economics. Moreover, women in Mexico are often attacked for their gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation, facing racism, and sometimes even exoticization of their identities.

Through resilience, and as a self-managed defense response, strategies have been developed in various parts of Latin America, especially from the journalistic community and civil society organizations, to confront the many obstacles that women journalists face during their careers. At the local level, several journalist networks, civil society organizations and supporters of victims had to develop strategies for individual and collective self-protection of women journalists. These strategies are mainly focused on gender, as a reaction to the evident lack of protection, insufficiency, and disinterest of the state institutions in the region. Unfortunately, the shortsightedness with which institutional responses have been developed has not been able to provide neither justice nor reparation. In the case of Mexico, the State has not managed to change the context of violence. Moreover, impunity levels remain at high levels, leading to the continuation of materializing violence into crime.

Any public policy that aspires to be sufficient needs to consider the distinct situations that involve violence against women journalists in the physical, labor, digital, economic, and psycho-emotional spheres. Hence, it must recognize the intersections that each one faces to identify how individuals are affected according to their experiences on different degrees of privileges and states of oppression.

2. Introduction

In Mexico, violence against the press has a differentiated impact on journalists, depending on the intersections and social context of each person, such as ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic level. Although there is still no consensus on a univocal definition of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)¹, it is a political and methodological tool that seeks to portray the effects produced by systems of oppression in individuals. The degrees of intersectionality of a person can accentuate the risks and impacts of human rights violations. In the case of the press, a woman journalist's vulnerabilities and risks, in the face of an attack, are not the same as those of a man. Therefore, strategies and public policies to address violence against those who exercise the right to inform must take into account the differentiated violence and particular experiences of such reality.

In 2022, out of the 697 registered attacks against the press, 451 were committed against male journalists (equivalent to 64.71%), 178 against women (25.54%), and 68 against media² (representing 9.76% of the total). According to the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC):

Women journalists face differentiated violence because they are expected [...] to conform to stereotypical roles, and sexualized images of women and to operate in a context of unequal power relations between men and women in the media world. They are often targeted for being highly visible and outspoken, as well as for their work, especially when they do not submit to the rules of gender inequality and concomitant stereotypes. (HRC, 2020)

Violence against women journalists represents a serious threat to democracies, because in addition to the negative impact on access to information and freedom of expression, it reflects the absence of public policies that guarantee the full enjoyment of their rights and to that effect a weak implementation of the rule of law. This paper illustrates some of the characteristics of violence against women journalists, as well as specific strategies aimed at resolving or contributing to its resolution. The first section addresses the context in which women journalists carry out their work and provides information on specific challenges through a case study. Subsequently, to provide ideas on how to address the causes of violence, information will be provided on strategies, as well as best practices in the region and Mexico.

For the preparation of this policy paper, various reports published and produced by ARTICLE 19 were used, including the database of attacks against the press compiled in the intersectional methodology for the documentation of attacks. The objective of this methodology is to incorporate the gender and intersectional approach³ in ARTICLE 19's systems for the documentation and registration of attacks against the right to freedom of expression. This allows the development of a sensitive analysis of the challenges of documenting the experiences of journalists who are victims of discrimination, and who are often made invisible, delegitimized, or defamed, as is the case of women journalists. For the case study, ARTICLE 19 conducted interviews to find details about violence against women journalists and how it is promoted by institutions. Additionally, for the section on strategies, best practices, and recommendations, information contained in regional and national regulations was used, as well as initiatives that journalists and various organizations have implemented.

¹ Kimberlé Crenshaw first coined the word „intersectionality“ in 1989 in her essay „Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics“. Crenshaw is a professor of law at the University of California, Los Angeles, and her agenda as an activist and scholar focuses on civil rights in the United States, specifically feminist and anti-racist politics. Her ideas on intersectionality grew out of a critique of the dominant theoretical framework that addressed and analyzed race and gender as isolated and mutually exclusive social categories.

² Here we considered the documentation of a case against a media syndicate, specified as a syndicate in the semiannual report of the First Semester 2021 of ARTICLE 19.

³ In the framework of the *Intersectional Methodology* for the documentation of aggressions, we define the intersectional approach as a „gender and intersectional approach“ to recognize, complement and deepen the effort carried out in the last decade by feminist and human rights organizations with the objective of making visible the experiences of women human rights defenders and journalists.

3. Violence against Women Journalists

In 2022, ARTICLE 19 recorded 66 cases of stigmatization by official communications, 41 cases of smear campaigns against the press and two cases of criminalization. Although this represents a decrease in what was registered in 2021, this process must be analyzed within the framework of the normalization of this type of violence, since the press has already accepted it as part of the environment of the public debate in Mexico. Part of this normalization comes precisely due to the constant onslaught from all levels of the government and parties, being particularly acute during the daily morning press conferences of the President of the country.

In the case of women, it is necessary to recognize that, as journalists, they are diverse in their contexts, experiences, thoughts, feelings, and life stories. To guarantee that women journalists have access to adequate prevention, protection, attention, and reparation processes, the specificities of each one must be taken into account. Violence is not only based on gender, but also on socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, or sexual orientation. Thus, in addition to facing aggressions for exercising their right to freedom of expression and for their gender, women journalists experience racism (ECLAC, 2018). Groups of indigenous origin also suffer the devaluation of their knowledge and work, due to the colonial heritage that criminalizes and persecutes them under the stigma of managing their media under illegal models and because of their approach to the defense of their land and territory (RELE, 2018). In addition, they could also face rejection for recognizing themselves as lesbians or of other diverse identities.

According to the documentation carried out by ARTICLE 19, in 2022, out of the 178 cases of aggression directed at women 11 were targeted based on gender or sexual component, five identified themselves as indigenous, three said they had a disability and one belonged to the LGBTQI+ community (ARTICLE 19, 2023). Although the figures may not seem alarming in comparison with the total number of aggressions, from an intersectional perspective, it is undeniable that women journalists who belong to any of the groups face a different and higher level of violence. Therefore, the impact of the attacks usually reaches dimensions that affect their work in various manners, as well as their relationship with their community due to the implications of inequality, racism, and discrimination.

Women journalists are subject to violence related to both, their social and personal life. For example, enforced displacement implies the stigma of abandonment by the family and possible discrimination by the host community. Within the digital dimension, there are attacks on their personal lives and even hate speech because of their sexual orientation or diverse identities (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2010). Women who exercise their right to freedom of expression through journalism face violence since this profession is framed and created under heteronormative and patriarchal

norms, which position men as the main spokespersons of journalism (Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, 2022).

3.1 Militarization and Violence

In 2023, the country witnessed a consolidation of the military character in its structures, as the security strategy, ostensibly aimed at combating criminal groups, leaned heavily towards militarization. This shift was starkly highlighted by the reduction of the budget allocated to civil, security and justice institutions by 271%, compared to the substantial resources channeled towards the Army, Navy, and National Guard. Conversely, in 2022, there was a notable surge in the military budget, with a significant allocation to the National Guard (GN), witnessing a 70% increase (26 billion pesos) compared to the previous year, totaling 62.8 billion pesos. This contrast is even more striking, when we look back to 2018, where the funds earmarked for the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA), whereas the Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR) were only 18% (20 billion pesos) higher than the combined allocation for the Attorney General's Office (now FGR), the Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection (SSPC), and the Secretariat of the Interior (SEGOB). Considering the practical military role assumed by the GN in 2022, despite its constitutional mandate for civilian oversight, the budget was observed to be a staggering 271% (149,000 million pesos) higher. This alarming discrepancy underscores a 7.5-fold increase in military expenditure over civilian (ARTICLE 19, 2023).

Furthermore, the presence of military groups in the maintenance of public order, a role traditionally assigned to civil police, exacerbates and intensifies the egregious violation of human rights. This is exemplified by the grim history of Mexico, where acts of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, murders, torture and other cruel and inhuman practices have been tragically common, all perpetrated by elements of the Army.

How this strategy of social control is achieved has evolved and adapted to technological changes. It is well known that the Mexican government has purchased malware to illegally monitor human rights defenders and journalists. The Army is one of the many actors that benefit from the information obtained and this has led to serious human rights violations. In 2022, according to official figures provided by the National Human Rights Violation Alert System, the National Guard received 577 complaints, while the Ministry of National Defense received 428 (National Human Rights Commission, 2022). On the other hand, complaints of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment totaled 158 and the number of arbitrary detentions up to 157.

3.2 Violence perpetrated by the State

The situation for the press in Mexico is increasingly adverse, as persecution and violence are exercised in a permissive context perpetrated mainly by the State. All stages and spheres of women's lives are significantly affected by historical power relations that place them at a disadvantage compared to men,⁴ who have historically dominated these relations to their own benefit and to the detriment of women. Discrimination⁵ against women includes the dissemination, reproduction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes based on a sociocultural ideology that attributes behaviors, responsibilities and rights in favor of men. This allows the normalization of violence against women, and consequently, the acceptance and reproduction of violence against them.⁶

In the case of women journalists, these power and patriarchal relations are intertwined with the system of domination of the media, control of information and stigmatization of the profession. This places them at a disadvantage, in the face of their leaders, colleagues, and sources of information, but also to agents of the State as being the main violators (Freedom of Expression and Gender Program, Communication and Information of Women A.C. [CIMAC], 2022). The violence faced by women who exercise their right to freedom of expression as a way of confronting the patriarchal system, in which they have been deprived of this right because of gender discrimination, is aimed at restricting their journalistic practice.

Gender censorship (Tax, 1995), as coined by journalist Ninotchka Rosca in 1993, materializes through acts of discrimination such as the invisibilization or hypervisibilization of women journalists within the media, the salary gap, unequal opportunities for development and growth and unequal treatment due to the erroneous conception that journalism is a profession for men. It also includes violent acts such as discrediting their work, harassment, and sexual violence, up to the most serious manifestation of violence against women: *femicide*, a term legally coined and defined in the Federal Penal Code of Mexico⁷ (McGinnis, 2020).

Consequently, the impacts faced by women journalists have a significant gender stigma around them, since the violations are based on stereotypes that involve and question their personal, social and sexual life. This has a different impact on their psychological and emotional environment. Likewise, labor inequalities that affect the economic and patrimonial sphere of women journalists are worsened, when they are discriminated such as through unjustified dismissals or raids, leaving them in a situation of greater risk and affecting their

integrity (Freedom of Expression and Gender Program, Communication, and Information of Women A.C. [CIMAC], 2022).

It is important to mention that women journalists have made the digital space a new place of expression to disseminate their investigations from a more autonomous position. However, this digital space has also become a corner for aggression. In 2022, out of the 178 aggressions against women journalists, 51 were exercised in the digital space (Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, 2022), which highlights the specific needs for safety in this area and how it affects the work and lives of women journalists. In this sense, the measures to guarantee the appropriate attention, protection, and reparation must be seen from women's human rights and an intersectional approach.

3.3 The Case of Cecilia Solís

Journalist Cecilia Solís joined the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists (hereinafter, the Mechanism) following an attack she faced on November 9, 2020, while covering a feminist protest in the municipality of Benito Juárez in the state of Quintana Roo in southern Mexico. Aiming at repressing the protests and blocking the journalistic work of the media, elements of the municipal police attacked and shot women protesters as well as journalists working in the area. Cecilia was shot in the leg (ARTICLE 19, 2021). It is important to highlight that incidents of violence against journalists rarely end with a single attack; rather, they often lead to a series of subsequent assaults. This reality is evident in the case of Cecilia, where her pursuit of truth and justice resulted in further acts of violence, inflicted by both state and federal authorities. These sustained attacks have had profound and farreaching effects on various aspects of Cecilia's life, particularly on a psychological and emotional level.

After the incident, known as 9N, Cecilia was registered as a beneficiary of the Mechanism, from which she would have been granted extraordinary protection measures, which included surveillance cameras in her home, patrols by members of the National Guard, and escort services. In an interview with ARTICLE 19, Cecilia mentions that, from the beginning, there were omissions and bad practices on the part of the Mechanism's personnel. She reported that the Mechanism did not establish effective communication with her, since neither the obligations and benefits she had as a beneficiary nor the obligations of the institution were mentioned to her.

⁴This is only if gender, i.e., people and the locations of domination or privilege in which they find themselves, are compared based on social categories (ethnicity, ability, nationality, etc.) and specific historical and social contexts, which go beyond gender, so that analyzing oppressions from an integral viewpoint must include other intersectionalities.

⁵CEDAW states that discrimination is "any difference in treatment based on sex which intentionally or in practice places women at a disadvantage, and which prevents the full recognition of their human rights in the public and private spheres" (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 1993).

⁶According to the Convention of Belém do Pará, violence against women is defined as any action or conduct, based on gender, which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or the private sphere (General Assembly of the Organization of American States, 1994).

⁷In Mexico, the term gained prominence when Marcela Lagarde expanded upon the concept of femicide introduced by Russell and Radford, coining it "femicidio" instead of simply translating it as "femicidio". According to the OAS Declaration on Femicide, Lagarde's perspective was that while femicide referred to the killing of women without specifying the cause, femicide considered the gender-based motives and societal constructs underlying these deaths, along with the prevailing impunity surrounding them. This legal distinction can be found in the Federal Penal Code of Mexico, Article 325, which provides (translated): "The crime of femicide is committed by a person who deprives a woman of life for reasons of gender" (C.P.F, 2023).

Despite the seriousness of Cecilia's situation and established extraordinary safety measures, six months after suffering the attack, the escort service was granted only on May 23, 2021. The journalist reports that with the presence of the security plan, she noticed a critical change in the perception of her safety. On one hand, she felt accompanied and, therefore, in a safer and more trusting environment. On the other hand, due to the presence of the bodyguards, there was a significant decrease in the acts of harassment and intimidation that she used to face.

Some of the security measures provided to the journalist had a positive influence on her emotional stability and resulted, for a while, in a decrease in security incidents. Although some measures initially fulfilled their purpose (such as the placement of security cameras and infrastructure measures implemented in her house), the journalist mentioned that the poor implementation of other measures caused her a feeling of insecurity and, consequently, she was forced to reduce her outings and restrict her life to the walls of her home. Among the bad practices are those implemented by the members of the National Guard, who are responsible for making patrols near her home. According to the journalist's testimony, this measure "never worked properly, [since] the elements only arrived at the house, took photographs as supposed evidence of the patrols and left to just finish their job, without having done an effective reconnaissance of the dangers in the area". This generated a feeling of lack of protection and insecurity for the journalist, which affected her work and her stability.

Despite the shortcomings and lack of effectiveness of the security measures applied to her case, Cecilia acknowledges that the escort program made her feel safer. However, on August 9, 2023, the Mechanism withdrew the protection. Several organizations that accompany human rights defenders and journalists have expressed their concerns about the arbitrary withdrawal of the protections, especially without properly considering whether the conditions to do so existed. At the same time, it is highly relevant to point out that the Mechanism has suffered the reduction of economic resources and budget (Official Gazette of the Federation, 2020) assigned to the needs of the beneficiaries, which implies that the protection measures are not anymore granted or must be withdrawn.

4. Strategies and Best Practices to tackle the Violence against Women Journalists

Violence against women journalists is a generalized trend in Latin America. Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador have been recognized by the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as some of the most dangerous countries for journalistic work (Sánchez, 2018). Additional risks are imposed due to the characteristics of women in this region, given the specific structures that promote sexual violence against them.

In response to this situation, numerous mechanisms, strategies, and standards are under development in Latin America to mitigate the effects and to eradicate violence against women journalists. The main instruments that serve as a guiding basis for the designing of laws, protocols and public policies to promote the protection of women journalists are the following: the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women “Convention of Belem do Para”, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights.

These instruments establish the obligations of the ratifying countries to respect, protect and fulfill their provisions as part of such states’ international commitments.

4.1 Best Practices from Latin America: Civil Society Protection Networks and Multisector Strategies

Despite the existence of international obligations, in several countries, human rights are not protected and guaranteed in some States. Notwithstanding, the benefits of international law in establishing a common horizon for actions, intersectionality has been relegated within it, since it is not formally recognized as a transversal axis in the promotion and protection of the human rights of women journalists. Although international efforts have led to safety mechanisms, they cannot fully capture the complexity of human rights violations for women journalists (Gebruers, 2020). Indeed, in various parts of Latin America, strategies have been developed by civil society organizations and the journalistic communities. Among them, the most frequent is the organization of peer to peer investigation and protection networks such as the Network of Feminist Journalists of Latin America and the Caribbean. This network is dedicated to the creation and dissemination of care tools, such as the “Digital care kit for feminist journalists” (LATFEM, 2020), and protection strategies in the digital space through capsules covering topics such as encryption of information, social engineering, account protection and the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPN).

At the same time, organizations in the fieldwork have also developed protocols and manuals to address violence. This is the case of PEN AMERICA, which in collaboration with other organizations in the region, such as Luchadoras (Fighters in English), promoted the development of the Manual Against Online Harassment (PEN AMERICA, n.d.). It aimed at writers, journalists, photojournalists, activists, and artists with different sexual and gender orientations. The Manual provides strategies and tools for prevention and response to various types of common digital aggressions against women journalists, such as doxing and cyber-espionage, among others.

Similarly, the Colombian Network of Journalists with Gender Vision launched in 2016 a pedagogical campaign for prevention and denunciation of gender violence and harassment: “Journalists without harassment” (Colombian Network of Journalists with a Gender Vision, n.d.). Another case is the Network of Feminist Journalists and Communicators of Chile, which in 2021 presented a series of proposals before the Commission on Knowledge Systems, Science, Technology, Culture, Art, and Heritage of the Constitutional Convention, for the recognition of the right to communication without discrimination (JMT Radio, 2021).

In Córdoba, Argentina, the Tripartite Communication Commission of the province of Córdoba, which brings together the Ministry of Labor, employer companies, and the Press Union, launched the Protocol on the Prevention of Gender Violence in the Journalistic Media of the Province of Córdoba (CISPREN, 2020). It seeks to establish common procedures to prevent and act against gender violence and discrimination within the media. It also promotes the election of a gender delegate for each company, who would be part of the Union’s Gender Commission, the obligation of the companies to establish protocols for action and response to violence, and their adhesion to the Micaela Law, which consists of training workers in gender violence and non-sexist communication.

The case of Argentina is a good example of creating high-impact multi-sectorial strategies, where working groups of government institutions, media companies, unions, civil society and women journalists were created to address particular contexts from a human rights, labor rights, gender and intersectionality approach.

Self-managed actions in Latin America have a common factor: the creation of grounding strategies. These strategies inspire the creation of multi-sectorial spaces for decision-making processes for prompt, relevant, and effective actions that prevent and respond to the systematic violence experienced by women journalists.

4.2 Best Practices from Mexico: Civil Society Efforts amid the State's lack of Protection

In response to the upsurge of violence in Mexico and due to pressure from journalists and human rights defenders, the Protection Mechanism was created in 2012. Since the beginning, this institution has had the objective of “implementing and operating preventive measures, and protective measures that guarantee the life, integrity, freedom, and security of people at risk” (Ley de para la Protección de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas, 2012). In 2018, the Standardized Protocol for the Investigation of Crimes Committed against Freedom of Expression was published. It establishes, among others, an intersectional perspective. In this sense, all criminal investigations must have a specialized gender and intercultural approach, considering the additional vulnerability factors and particular circumstances present in such aggressions, the application of sexual violence investigation protocols, cultural factors, and the context of the victim in the conduct of the investigation and accompaniment of the process (Procuraduría General de la República, 2018).

Although there is a slight approximation to intersectionality in these public policies the Mechanism does not implement specific protocols and measures according to the profile of each beneficiary woman journalist. Thus, not allowing for the reevaluation and modification of the protection measures that are relevant for them and their families. Faced with this scenario of insufficiency, networks of journalists, civil society organizations and victims' collectives have had to develop strategies for individual and collective care. These strategies are mainly in gender as a response to the evident lack of protection, inadequacy, and disinterest of Mexican State institutions. Of these, the following stand out:

a. The National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico: Operating since 2010 to respond to the violence women human rights defenders and women journalists face due to the gender factor, the Network has developed strategies around four axes: self-care, collective care, and healing; security and urgent action; registration and documentation; and communication (Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders, n.d.).

b. #RompeElMiedo (#BreaktheFear) Network: A platform between media and human rights defenders that since 2013 has aimed at “strengthening tools, processes and networks for the protection and safety of journalists and their work during high-risk coverage and social mobilizations” (#RRM, n.d., History). This Network, coordinated by ARTICLE 19, Data Cívica, and the Defense Network of Digital Rights R3D, in addition to offering tools to prevent and react to violations in electoral contexts and social mobilization, works through monitoring centers activated to establish prevention and protective measures. Moreover, they work on the documentation, verification and visibility of aggressions that hinder the exercise of freedom of expression and access to information.

c. *Círculo*: A technological tool developed by ARTICLE 19 and The Guardian Project, which offers a secure messaging and geolocation channel for the activation of comprehensive security protocols based on collective support networks. It was designed and developed in collaboration with women journalists to identify their safety needs and learn about the particularities of the contexts in which they carry out their profession. (ARTICLE 19, n.d.).

d. Appropriation of the Digital Space: As a complementary tool to denounce the systematic violence suffered by women journalists in various areas of their work, mobilization through the digital space has also proliferated. Organizations such as ARTICLE 19, Communication and Information of Women (CIMAC A.C.), and the National Network of Journalists have promoted the hashtag #AlertaMujeresPeriodistas (#Alert-WomenJournalists) as a tool to disseminate and denounce various types of aggressions against women journalists in Mexico.

The construction and strengthening of women journalists' networks have become an indispensable tactic to confront the violence they face with full knowledge of the context in which they carry out their profession. Collective care networks allow the existence of safe spaces for denunciation and accompaniment, as well as the implementation of measures adapted to the needs of women journalists.

4.3 Policy Recommendations

As previously mentioned, international instruments are already allowing for the creation of institutional frameworks, but a budget is required to implement better practices that allow for the protection of women journalists. Considering the best practices from Latin America and Mexico the following policy recommendations are suggested:

a. Strengthening Networks of Support: Amid difficult contexts in countries where freedom of press and expression is not guaranteed, strategies aiming to protect journalistic work could include calling upon social responsibility to proactively participate in the protection of women journalists. For example, the Network of Feminist Journalists of Latin America could enlarge their membership and information to other journalists and exchange best practices with other communities and networks. Another example is the Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico.

b. Foster Exchange of Protocols and Alliance with Third Parties: Manuals that provide strategies for the prevention of various types of violations against women journalists, as well as protocols implemented by organizations could be a starting point to question the current mechanisms and how they can be better implemented to fulfill the protection of journalists suffering violations. Moreover, the case of *Círculo* from ARTICLE 19 and The Guardian Project, shows real applications with technology to implement security protocols that could be considered for the reshaping of protection mechanisms.

c. Tripartite Communication Commissions: The example brought by the province of Córdoba in Argentina showcases the power of different actors working to adopt protocols for action and response to violence. This case could be applied in other regions such as Mexico, to implement high-impact multi-sectorial strategies between government institutions, media companies, civil societies, and women journalists.

Any public policy that aspires to be sufficient needs to consider the different situations of violence against women journalists. Actions to avoid impunity require dialogue and collective construction of preventive strategies with women journalists and the civil society organizations that accompany them. Their marginalization within a better policymaking process will not guarantee the non-repetition of violation of their rights or revictimization.

5. Conclusions

The abuse and harassment against women journalists has become increasingly frequent and more coordinated in Mexico. As demonstrated throughout this study, it aims to threaten, silence, and stigmatize women journalists, with the potential to keep them out of public spaces. Despite the importance of selfcare actions and collective care, State responsibility in Mexico and its institutions at national and local levels to guarantee journalistic work that is free of violence is vital for any democracy.

Currently, there are no public policies based on an intersectional approach that would allow a proper and relevant response to the patterns of violence against women journalists. The shortsightedness with which institutional responses have been developed has failed to generate protections or reparation. It has not managed to change the context of violence to which women journalists are subjected, nor modify the structural inequality between men and women. Moreover, the levels of impunity in the country still lead to violence materializing into crime. The recommendations of this paper seek to share the best practices from civil society groups and networks working to enhance existing protocols while defending women journalist's freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

6. References

- Red Rompe el Miedo [RRM]. (n.d.). *Historia*. <https://informaterompeelmiedo.mx/historia/>
- Article 19. (n.d.). *Propuesta de Apoyo a la labor de mujeres periodistas de México, Guatemala y Honduras: CÍRCULO* [Proposal to support the work of women journalists in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras: CÍRCULO]. https://encirculo.org/es/assets/docs/A19CirculoReport2021_es.pdf
- MX-CA, A. 19. (2023, May 15). *Ataques Digitales en contra de Denise Dresser y su familia les pone en riesgo* [Digital attacks against Denise Dresser and her family put them at risk]. <https://articulo19.org/ataques-digitales-en-contra-de-denise-dresser-y-su-familia-les-pone-en-riesgo/>
- MX-CA, A. 19. (2022, August 12). *Organizaciones exigimos UN Alto Al Acoso e intimidaciones contra Cecilia Solís Martín* [Organizations demand a stop to harassment and intimidation against Cecilia Solís Martín]. <https://articulo19.org/organizaciones-exigimos-alto-al-acoso-e-intimidaciones-contra-cecilia-solis-martin/>
- ARTICLE 19 Office for Mexico and Central America. (2023). *Voces contra la Indiferencia* [Voices against indifference]. <https://articulo19.org/vocescontralaindiferencia/>
- Código Penal Federal [C.P.F.] [Federal Penal Code], as amended, Article 325 of 2012. August 14, 1931 (Mexico). <https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/CPF.pdf>
- Crenshaw, K. (2018). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics [1989]. *Feminist Legal Theory*, 57–80. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429500480-5>
- General Assembly of the Organization of American States. (1994). *Convención Interamericana Para prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia contra la Mujer* (Convención de Belém do Pará) [Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women]. <https://www.oas.org/es/mesecvi/docs/BelemDoPara-ESPANOL.pdf>
- ECLAC. (2018). *Mujeres afrodescendientes en América Latina y el Caribe: deudas de igualdad* [Afro-descendant women in Latin America and the Caribbean: debts of equality]. https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/43746/4/S1800190_es.pdf
- CISPREN. (2020). *Protocolo de prevención de violencias de géneros en los medios periodísticos de la Provincia de Córdoba* [Protocol for the Prevention of Gender Violence in the Journalistic Media of the Province of Córdoba]. <https://www.cispren.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PROTOCOLO-GENERO.pdf>
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (1993, December 20). *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>
- Comunicación e Información de la Mujer A.C. (CIMAC). (2022, November 18). *Palabras impunes: estigmatización y violencia contra mujeres periodistas 2019-2022* [Unpunished words: stigmatization and violence against women journalists 2019-2022].
- Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2010). *Caso Fernández Ortega y otros VS México* [Case of Fernández Ortega et al. v. Mexico]. https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_215_esp.pdf
- Decreto por el que se reforman y derogan diversas disposiciones de la Ley para la Protección de los Derechos Humanos [Decree reforming and repealing several provisions of the Law for the Protection of Human Rights]. (2020, November 6). https://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5604411&fecha=06/11/2020#gsc.tab=0
- Gebruers, C. (2020). Intersectionality: from theory to law and human rights practice. *Perspectivas*, 11(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.19137/perspectivas-2021-v11n1a04>
- HR. (2020). *Eradicating violence against women journalists. Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences*. A/HRC/44/5. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/109/82/PDF/G2010982.pdf?OpenElement>
- McGinnis, T. (2020, June 15). *Exploring the Legal Context of Femicide in Mexico. Justice in Mexico*. <https://justiceinmexico.org/legal-context-femicide-mexico/>
- Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en México. (n.d.). México – im-defensoras. *IMDefensoras*. <https://im-defensoras.org/red-nacional-de-defensoras-de-derechos-humanos-en-mexico/>
- LATFEM. (2020). *Kit de cuidados digitales para periodistas feministas* [Digital care kit for feminist journalists]. <https://latfem.org/kit-de-cuidados-digitales-para-periodistas-feministas/>
- Ley de para la Protección de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas [Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists], as amended, Article 1. June 25, 2012 (Mexico).
- PEN AMERICA. (2022, December 7). *Online harassment: an urgent and growing threat to women, democracy and freedom of expression*. <https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org>

Procuraduría General de la República [PGR] [Attorney General's Office of the Republic] (2018). *Protocolo homologado para la investigación de delitos cometidos contra la libertad de expresión*. https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/444272/Protocolo_homologado_de_investigaci_n_de_delitos_cometidos_contra_la_libertad_de_expresi_n.pdf

Radio JGM. (2021, December 2). *Periodistas y comunicadoras Feministas Entregan propuestas a La Convención constitucional* [Feminist Journalists and Communicators deliver proposals to the Constitutional Convention]. <https://radiojgm.uchile.cl/periodistas-y-comunicadoras-feministas-entregan-propuestas-a-la-convencion-constitucional/>

Red Colombiana de Periodistas con Visión de Género (n.d.). *Periodistas sin Acoso*. <https://www.redperiodistasgenero.org/red-periodistas-sin-acoso/>

Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression. (2018, October 31). *Mujeres periodistas y libertad de expresión* [Women journalists and freedom of expression] <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/expresion/docs/informes/MujeresPeriodistas.pdf>

Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression. (2022, October). *Mujeres periodistas y salas de redacción* [Women Journalists and Newsrooms] <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/expresion/informes/Mujeres22-es.pdf>

Sánchez, S. (2018, October 18). *Libertad de Prensa: Una utopía en la mayor parte de América Latina*. *Red internacional de periodistas*. <https://ijnet.org/es/story/libertad-de-prensa-una-utop%C3%ADa-en-la-mayor-parte-de-am%C3%A9rica-latina>

Tax, M. (1995, August). *The power of the word: culture, censorship and voice*. *Women's WORLD Pamphlet*. https://www.academia.edu/32171708/The_Power_of_the_Word_Culture_Censorship_and_Voice

About the authors



Lucía Elisa Miguel Osorio

Researcher in the Protection and Defense Program - ARTICLE 19 Mexico

Feminist communicator with postgraduate studies in Human Rights. She has worked in civil society organizations documenting aggressions against women journalists in the exercise of their work and carrying out comprehensive accompaniment. She has also collaborated in the media as co-editor of politics at El Universal newspaper and volunteer reporter at NOTIMIA, a news agency run by indigenous and Afro-descendant women, where she strengthened her interest in indigenous community media and developed an intersectional perspective, related to decolonial thinking, and human rights of indigenous people.



María José De Icaza

Researcher for the Digital Rights Program - ARTICLE 19 Mexico

Human rights defender and feminist activist. She has collaborated as a researcher with collectives, civil society organizations, international organizations and academia. She is currently a researcher for the Digital Rights Program of ARTICLE 19 Mexico and Central America Office.

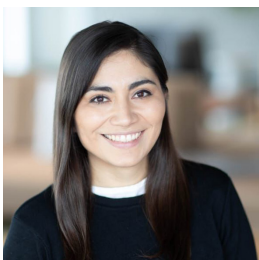
Editoras



Paula Saucedo Ruiz

Protection and Advocacy Program Officer - ARTICLE 19 Mexico

She is an internationalist graduated with honors from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, has a postgraduate degree in international development and gender from the University of Melbourne, Australia and has a diploma in Cybersecurity from the University of Malta. She has more than nine years of experience in development, implementation of Human Rights and Climate Change projects. She is currently the Protection and Defense program officer at Artículo 19 Mexico where she coordinates protection, defense and advocacy initiatives on freedom of expression and those who exercise it, she also leads processes on civic space, gender and intersectionality and comprehensive security training for journalists and human rights defenders.



María José Salcedo Campos

Mexico Project Coordinator - Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in Mexico

Master in Political Economy from the University of Kassel in Germany and Bachelor in International Relations from ITAM, she specialized in entrepreneurship, and knowledge economy. She joined the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in 2018. She is Coordinator of the Mexico, Klima and Flucht Projects.

