

WAN-IFRA Board Press Freedom Resolution – Mexico and Brazil, 2019

The Board of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), meeting in Glasgow, Scotland on 3rd June, 2019 during the 71st World News Media Congress, 26th World Editors Forum, and 3rd Women in News Summit, calls on the new leaders and their respective administrations in Mexico and Brazil to take urgent, resolute action to end the cycle of violence that continues to target the profession of journalism and make decisive steps in prioritising the safety and security of journalists.

The Board of WAN-IFRA notes with dismay that Mexico remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for professional journalism, and that the new Federal Government has failed to take the necessary steps to reduce impunity for attacks against journalists. At least eight media professionals have been killed during the first six months of President Andres Manuel López Obrador's government. This is despite some of the victims having been part of the 'Federal Protection Mechanism' developed in recent years by the Interior Ministry to reduce the killings of journalists.

In addition, the Board recognises an increasingly polarised society in Mexico as a result of the change in administration, one that is further undermined by the new leftist-president's on-going narrative against his critics - amongst which are media outlets and civil society organisations that have been fighting impunity and corruption since the previous administration. This is in addition to the rising threat of online attacks and harassment against journalists across social media.

The Board of WAN-IFRA also highlights an increase in both verbal and online attacks against critical media coverage during the first months of Jair Bolsonaro's right-wing government in Brazil. The president and his family have blocked journalists on social media, refused to give interviews to some outlets they consider spread misinformation, and adopted a 'fake news' narrative that mirrors US President Donald Trump's efforts to discredit the role of the press within democracy.

The Board is alarmed by reports of a rising threat to critical media outlets in Brazil coming from members of the government and its supporters, one that is deliberately stoking mistrust of the press and fuelling antagonism towards journalists. Such attitudes seek to dispute verifiable facts and undermine the legitimacy of professional media at a time when populist governments and their supporters have been emboldened to reject any narrative that fails to support their worldview.

The Board of WAN-IFRA urges governments in both Mexico and Brazil to acknowledge the vital importance of journalism in society and the critical role of journalists in bringing information to public attention. The Board also encourages all legitimate efforts to identify collective and inclusive solutions to the numerous safety and security challenges facing the industry across both countries.