

RESOLUTION ON HONDURAS.

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Since the ouster of President José Manuel Zelaya, in June 2009, Honduras has become one of the most dangerous countries in the world. In 2011, with a homicide rate of 91.6 murders per 100,000 citizens, it became the murder capital of the world. As the security situation has deteriorated, dozens of journalists have been killed and many more continue to work in a climate of fear and self-censorship.

Transnational drug cartels are responsible for much of the violence, but a report by PEN and the International Human Rights Program (IHRP) at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law, recently concluded that the current crisis is also due to a long history of state-sanctioned violence and serious corruption within the security forces. This has produced a common perception among journalists and human rights defenders that state agents are one of the primary sources of targeted violence and human rights violations.

Repeated failures to address chronic corruption within the police force have eroded public trust in state agencies and hampered the institutional capacity of the justice system. Journalists' murders are rarely adequately investigated or solved. At the time of writing, only four convictions had been obtained in the cases of the at least 44 journalists murdered since 2003.

The Special Prosecutor for Human Rights is critically underfunded and lacks jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute the murder of journalists. Meanwhile, the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Life, created in August 2013, lacks a human rights focus and there is little information publically available on its activities. Moreover, until recently divergent interests within the national agencies responsible for addressing the violence against journalists . the independent ombudsman, the National Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Sub Secretariat of Human Rights and Justice . produced a poorly-coordinated response to the violence and squandered the state's limited resources for human rights work. The overlap of institutional responsibilities has given rise to a situation in which no single agency has been fully accountable for ensuring justice for victims and their families. Although there are signs that this lack of coordination and transparency may be improving, to date the surge of violence against journalists has been met with a familiar mixture of inadequate resources, bureaucratic ineptitude, blame-shifting and denial.

The serious challenges posed to freedom of expression in Honduras go beyond violence against journalists. The lack of institutional support for the arts and humanities, or other activities that foster a culture of reading and critical thinking, are inseparable from the country's wider crises with freedom of expression. Defamation remains a criminal offence.

In light of these findings, the Assembly of Delegates of PEN International urge the Honduran Government to:

- Ensure that new legal mechanisms intended to improve journalist security . such as the proposed Law to Protect Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Legal Practitioners . come into effect with adequate financial, human and technical resources, as well as political will, to guarantee effective implementation.
- Improve the implementation of Inter-American Commission on Human Rights precautionary measures for journalists and human rights defenders, and ensure that institutions responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of journalists and human rights defenders are adequately funded, transparent, in regular communication and coordinate their work.
- Reaffirm the close relationship between freedom of expression and cultural diversity by ensuring that cultural spaces receive adequate funding and are allowed to operate autonomously.
- Decriminalise defamation.