

Program for protection of journalist in Colombia and Mexico

- 1) **Principle:** When the main violator of freedom of expression and information is not the State, but rogue violent actors, as in Colombia, it is the government responsibility to protect freedom of expression and right to information and journalists as guarantors of these rights.
- 2) **The press in the Colombian context**
- 3) **How the program for protection of journalists in Colombia evolved**
 - In the 90's there was a continuous situation of violence against specific groups (human rights defenders, union members, social leaders, and journalists) that demanded actions from the State.
 - In year 2000 the government and civil organizations of press designed a Program for the protection of journalists. The Program was designed to guarantee the security of journalists, providing physical protection measures like bodyguards, armored cars, bulletproof vests, communication systems, among others.
 - Although the government runs the Program, the civil organizations of the press have an active role: they present cases, suggest measures of protection, and do follow up to the implementation of the protection measures.
 - In 2012 the Colombian Government created an specialized and autonomous institution for the protection of vulnerable people, including journalists (Unidad Nacional de Proteccion-UNP)
 - Who the Program is protecting now and costs.
- 4) **Mechanism for the protection of journalists in Mexico, inspired in the Colombia example.**
 - History of how a similar mechanism evolved in Mexico until a 2012 law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists approved by Congress included it.
 - The Mechanism has received 105 requests for protection, 40 of them from journalists.
 - There is no information about how many journalists receive protection.
 - Budget and effectiveness.
 - Problems of representation of the journalism field. Mistrust of government.
 - **Positive outcomes**
 - i. The creation of the Program coincides with the decline of journalists murdered.
 - ii. Many local journalists were able to go back home and continue doing journalism.
 - iii. Good cooperation between government and press organisations without losing independence. Unique condition to Colombia?
 - iv. Allows having more accurate information about the situation of the freedom of the press in the country.
 - v. Has inspired other countries to create their own protection programs (Mexico, Brazil, Honduras, Guatemala)
 - **Negative outcomes**
 - i. It is a reactive Program – it only operates if there is a situation of risk.
 - ii. In many cases has failed to effectively implement the protection measures.
 - iii. Information from the Program has been used to spy on journalists (DAS).
 - iv. Has a narrow vision of protection (doesn't includes prevention and tackling impunity)
 - v. Already seen corruption.

