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A joint investigation by Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists, containing an evaluation of the effectiveness of Mexico's federal policies for the protection of journalists, an analysis of existing deficiencies and a series of recommendations on how to better protect journalists in Mexico.

# INTRODUCTION

In light of the severe and relentless violence against journalists in Mexico, the most dangerous country for the press in the Western Hemisphere, in 2022 Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) began working on a joint project to identify areas of opportunity to strengthen the Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, the country's legal and institutional framework to protect journalists at federal level.

The Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists was created in 2012 after then-president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa signed the federal Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, which governs the institution's operations. A federal agency, it is overseen by the Human Rights Unit of the federal Interior Secretariat (Secretaría de Gobernación or SEGOB) and is the direct responsibility of the federal Undersecretariat for Human Rights, Population and Migration.

While its day-to-day operations are handled by the head of SEGOB's Human Rights Unit, the Mechanism's Board of Governance (Junta de Gobierno) has the final say over all major decisions the institution takes. The Board of Governance consists of nine permanent members with voting power, five of whom are representatives of federal institutions, such as the attorney general's office and the National Commission for Human Rights. The four members of the advisory board are representatives of civil society, human rights defenders, and journalists.

The Mechanism's principal task is to provide journalists and human rights defenders under threat with protective measures. The Mechanism provides several dozen different kinds of protective measures, including (but not limited to) relocation, panic buttons, bulletproof vehicles, safehouses, basic living needs such as food and medical support, camera systems, and reinforced doors and fences at beneficiaries' homes.

When a journalist is accepted as a beneficiary, the Mechanism by law has up to nine hours to implement urgent protective measures. The Board of Governance must review cases every six months to determine if the protections should continue, end, or be reduced or increased. The Mechanism also coordinates protective measures with other institutions, such as state law enforcement agencies.

While there is some overlap between the categories of journalist and human rights defender in Mexico, given CPJ's mandate and Amnesty International's previous research on the protection of human rights defenders in the country, this investigation specifically focuses on the Mechanism's work to protect journalists. This does not reflect any sense that the protection of human rights defenders is any less urgent; on the contrary, the Mechanism's ability to protect human rights defenders continues to merit further investigation.

Amnesty International and CPJ firmly believe that the Mechanism is a vital tool for the protection of human rights, including freedom of expression, press freedom, and the right to information, in Mexico. By highlighting existing weaknesses in the Mechanism, the organizations hope to contribute to a constructive dialogue that leads to it becoming a more effective instrument.



# METHODOLOGY

Amnesty International and CPJ worked with Mexican journalists to gather data and testimonies to support this investigation. The researchers submitted freedom-of-information requests to relevant authorities in Mexico, via the National Institute for Access to Information and Protection of Personal Data (INAI). They also conducted a thorough review of publicly available data and literature, including reports by media outlets, SEGOB, the Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Against Freedom of Expression (FEADLE), the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico (OHCHR-Mexico) and the freedom of expression organization Article 19, as well as legal documents and the law that created the Mechanism itself.

Throughout 2022 and 2023 the researchers conducted fieldwork in the states of Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, and Tlaxcala, interviewing journalists enrolled in the Mechanism and relatives and colleagues of journalists who were killed while enrolled in the Mechanism. The cases chosen exemplify many – but certainly not all – of the concerns with the Mechanism. They also do not exemplify the full scope of challenges faced by journalists in Mexico.

From June to September 2023 the organizations also collected responses to a questionnaire from journalists currently enrolled in the Mechanism. It received 28 responses: 18 from men and 10 from women. This is equivalent to 3.9% of the male journalists and 5.6% of the female journalists currently under the Mechanism's protection. While Amnesty International and CPJ do not consider the results comprehensive given the limited sample size, many of the testimonies obtained through this questionnaire raise serious concerns about the Mechanism's performance and highlight important opportunities for improvement.

**Metodología elaborada por: Primavera Téllez Girón García y Luis Miguel Carriedo Téllez de la Red por la Libertad de Expresión Contra la Violencia a Comunicadores.**

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**Methodology developed by: Primavera Téllez Girón García and Luis Miguel Carriedo Téllez of the Network for Freedom of Expression Against Violence against Communicators.**

# OVERVIEW OF THE MECHANISM

In response to considerable pressure from civil society groups and international human rights organizations, Mexico's Congress passed the Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in June 2012, which required the federal government to create the Mechanism.

Overseen by SEGOB's Undersecretariat for Human Rights, it began operating in November of that year. Its purpose, the law stated, was to establish cooperation between federal and state authorities to take preventative and urgent measures to "guarantee the life, integrity, freedom and security of people who are at risk as a result of the defense or promotion of human rights and the exercise of freedom of expression and journalism." [1]

The Mechanism is a reactive tool that works to protect human rights defenders and journalists who have already suffered threats or attacks. It does not carry out preventative work.

From October 2012 to 30 November 2023 (when the latest available data was made public), the Mechanism received 943 requests for protection from journalists and other media workers. [2] It approved 762 of these requests and rejected 181. The number of rejections has risen sharply in the last few years, from just one in 2020 to 14 in 2021, 49 in 2022 and another 49 in the first eleven months of 2023.

With some of these requests coming from collectives rather than individuals, as of November 2023 the Mechanism had granted protective measures to a total of 931 journalists: 666 men and 265 women. As some of those journalists have since been killed or deemed to no longer need protective measures, as of November 2023 there were 651 journalists enrolled in the Mechanism: 469 men and 182 women.

[1] Ley Para la Protección de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas, 25 de junio de 2012 <https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LPPDDHP.pdf>

[2] Informe Estadístico noviembre 2023, Mecanismo para la Protección de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas, Información actualizada al 30.11.2022, [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/876441/2023\\_11\\_Informe\\_estadistico\\_f.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/876441/2023_11_Informe_estadistico_f.pdf)



On paper, the speed of the Mechanism’s response to each request should depend on how urgent it considers the situation. Cases deemed “extraordinary” are processed by the Mechanism’s so-called First Unit, also called the Case Reception Unit, and by the Mechanism’s head while its Board of Governance handles those deemed “ordinary”.

There were journalists enrolled in the Mechanism in all 32 Mexican states as of November 2023. Mexico City was home to the most journalists (91) under the protection of the Mechanism at this time, followed by Guerrero (73), Quintana Roo (53), Tamaulipas (52), and Oaxaca (31).

The most common protective measures that the Mechanism had granted to journalists as of November 2023 were panic buttons (in 2,584 instances), phone numbers to contact in case of emergency (2,259), and police patrols outside their homes or places of work (1,055). The Mechanism had assigned bodyguards to journalists in 337 instances, making this one of the less frequently used measures.[3] Initially, the bodyguards were provided by a private contractor, RCU Sistemas. Since August 2023, however, bodyguards have been provided to all beneficiaries via the Federal Protection Service, a federal government agency. According to Enrique Irazoque, the head of the Mechanism until late November 2023, this change was implemented due to complaints from beneficiaries over the behavior and reliability of the bodyguards assigned by RCU.

SEGOB confirmed to Amnesty International and CPJ that the Mechanism has signed agreements to collaborate with authorities in all 32 Mexican states, but that only two of the states – Veracruz and Mexico City – were fully operating their own state-level mechanisms for the protection of human rights defenders and journalists. SEGOB also revealed that it “has no record of the resources available to the state protection mechanisms”.[4] The absence of such records appears to reflect a lack of coordination between the state and federal protection mechanisms that could inhibit their ability to effectively diagnose and remedy situations of potential risk to journalists and human rights defenders. Although Mexican states are autonomous in creating and operating human rights institutions, the federal Mechanism has consistently stated to CPJ on numerous occasions over the past seven years that it seeks to strengthen ties and cooperation with state mechanisms.

[3] Informe Estadístico noviembre 2023, Mecanismo para la Protección de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas: Información actualizada al 30.11.2022

[4] Informe Estadístico noviembre 2023, Mecanismo para la Protección de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas: Información actualizada al 30.11.2022

# ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS



Photo: Protest over murdered journalists, by Cuarto Oscuro

As a signatory of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights, Mexico is bound by international law to uphold the right to freedom of expression and to protect journalists and other media workers. Attacks on journalists and other media workers undermine the rights of individuals and society at large to seek and receive information; their protection is essential for guaranteeing freedom of expression.

Moreover, as noted by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, journalism can only be exercised freely when those who carry out this work are not victims of threats or physical, mental, or moral attacks or other attacks or harassment.[5]

This is often not the case in Mexico, however. Throughout the 21st century it has remained one of the world's deadliest countries for journalists.[6] According to data CPJ has gathered since 1992, the Mexican reporters most at risk tend to be based outside of Mexico City and cover the general crime beat or the nexus between organized crime and political corruption for local and regional outlets.

[5] Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, caso Vélez Restrepo y familiares vs. Colombia, sentencia de 3 de septiembre de 2012

[https://corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec\\_248\\_esp.pdf](https://corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_248_esp.pdf)

[6] Datos del CPJ, [https://cpj.org/data/?status=Killed&start\\_year=2000&end\\_year=2023&group\\_by=location&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist](https://cpj.org/data/?status=Killed&start_year=2000&end_year=2023&group_by=location&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist)

Statistics on the number of journalists murdered in Mexico vary considerably, even among federal authorities. From 2012 to December 2023, FEADLE recorded 86 killings of journalists. Of these, it deemed 30 of the murders to have been linked to the journalists' work.[7] However, from 2012 to October 2022, SEGOB recorded 166 killings of journalists, without specifying how many of those were linked to the victims' work.[8]

The disparity between these sets of figures may be in part due to FEADLE not including figures from state prosecutor's offices. Nonetheless, it reveals a lack of clarity and coordination between federal and local institutions that could undermine efforts to design and implement effective protective measures.

CPJ has recorded 88 killings of journalists and media workers in Mexico since 2012 and verified that 37 of them were murdered in relation to their work.[9] The most dangerous states in that period have been Veracruz (21 killings), Guerrero (10), Oaxaca (9), and Sonora (7). CPJ distinguishes between murders that have been confirmed to be linked directly to the victim's work and killings of which the motive is not yet clear.

Mexico also has the highest number of disappeared reporters in the world, according to CPJ data. As of late 2023, at least 15 journalists had been confirmed as missing, yet none of those disappearances has ever led to a conviction or sentence. The states with the highest number of disappeared journalists are Veracruz, Michoacán, and Guerrero.

In response to a freedom-of-information request by Amnesty International and CPJ in October 2022, SEGOB confirmed that eight journalists had been killed while under the protection of the Mechanism since its foundation. While no journalists were killed while enrolled in the Mechanism throughout the first five years of its existence, at least one journalist was killed while under its protection every year from 2017 to 2022.

Two journalists were killed in Quintana Roo (2018 and 2019) while enrolled in the Mechanism, while each of the other six killings took place in the states of Veracruz (2017), Baja California Sur (2019), Guerrero (2020), Sonora (2020), Oaxaca (2021), and Michoacán (2022).[10]

[7] Informe Estadístico, Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos cometidos contra la Libertad de Expresión: Actualizado al mes de Diciembre de 2023

<https://stastdgv2portfgr032.blob.core.windows.net/femdh/FEADLE/Informes/ReportesMensuales2023/ESTADISTICAS%20Dic%2023.pdf>

[8] Respuesta de la SEGOB a la solicitud de información No. 330026222001797, 13 de octubre de 2022.

[9] Datos del CPJ, <https://cpj.org/data/killed/>

[https://cpj.org/data/killed/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&motiveUnconfirmed%5B%5D=Unconfirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&type%5B%5D=Media%20Worker&cc\\_fips%5B%5D=MX&start\\_year=2012&end\\_year=2023&group\\_by=year](https://cpj.org/data/killed/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&motiveUnconfirmed%5B%5D=Unconfirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&type%5B%5D=Media%20Worker&cc_fips%5B%5D=MX&start_year=2012&end_year=2023&group_by=year)

[10] Respuesta de la SEGOB a la solicitud de información No. 330026222001796, 13 de octubre de 2022.

SEGOB told Amnesty International and CPJ that it had no records of journalists being murdered after the Mechanism denied their requests for protection.[11] However, in December 2021 the Los Angeles Times reported that five journalists were killed that year after the Mechanism allegedly rejected their requests for help.[12]

From October 2012 to November 2023, the Mechanism recorded 834 attacks against journalists and other media workers. Of these, the Mechanism found that 356 (43%) were likely committed by public officials and 276 (33%) by non-state actors, including, but not limited to, organized crime groups. The Mechanism was unable to identify the probable culprits of the remaining 202 (24%) incidents. The recorded attacks included 34 kidnappings or abductions, 193 acts of physical violence and 530 threats.[13]

Impunity is a key factor in the violence against journalists in Mexico, with the vast majority of attacks going unpunished. On the rare occasions when authorities do secure convictions, they tend to be against those who carried out the attacks but not those who ordered them.

Despite the high number of attacks against the press, from 2012 to December 2023 FEADLE secured just 37 convictions for crimes against journalists, including threats, robbery, torture, and homicide, with sentences varying from 22 days to 50 years in prison. [14] In total, FEADLE achieved just eight sentences for journalist killings in this period. When Amnesty International and CPJ asked the federal Attorney General's Office (FGR) how many of these convictions corresponded to those who carried out or ordered the homicides, it declined to provide this information.[15] CPJ's research shows that federal authorities have never convicted the mastermind of a journalist killing since FEADLE began prosecuting such cases in 2010.

SEGOB said it did not have any information on convictions related to the 166 killings of journalists that it had recorded since 2012 because the Mechanism is not involved in investigating or prosecuting crimes and referred Amnesty International and CPJ back to the FGR.[16]

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[[11] Respuesta de la SEGOB a la solicitud de información No. 330026222001798, 13 de octubre de 2022.

[12] "RCU Sistemas, la empresa ligada a García Luna que ha convertido en millonario negocio el cuidado de los periodistas en riesgo", 25 de diciembre de 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/espanol/mexico/articulo/2021-12-25/rcu-sistemas-la-empresa-ligada-a-garcia-luna-que-ha-convertido-en-millonario-negocio-el-cuidado-de-los-periodistas-en-riesgo>

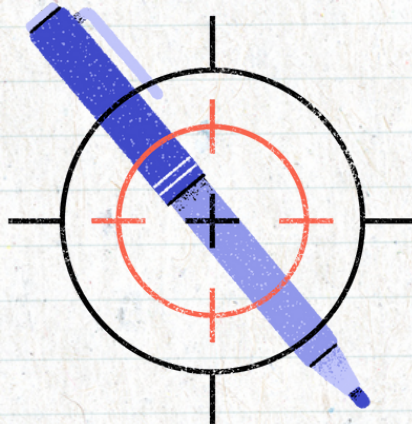
[13] Informe Estadístico noviembre 2023, Mecanismo para la Protección de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas: Información actualizada al 30.11.2022 [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/876441/2023\\_11\\_Informe\\_estadistico\\_f.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/876441/2023_11_Informe_estadistico_f.pdf)

[14] Informe Estadístico, Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos cometidos contra la Libertad de Expresión: Actualizado al mes de Diciembre de 2023, <https://stastdgv2portfgr032.blob.core.windows.net/femdh/FEADLE/Informes/ReportesMensuales2023/ESTADISTICAS%20Dic%2023.pdf>

[15] Respuesta de la FGR a la solicitud de información No. 330024622002920, 4 de octubre de 2022.

[16] Respuesta de la SEGOB a la solicitud de información No. 330026222001797, 13 de octubre de 2022.

In light of the Mechanism's failure to guarantee the safety of the eight journalists murdered while under its protection, Amnesty International and CPJ asked Mexico's Ministry of Public Function, which monitors federal officials and agencies, if any of the Mechanism's staff had faced sanctions over their performance. The Ministry did not give an affirmative or negative answer but provided instructions to ascertain said information via the National Transparency Platform. Following those instructions on the platform revealed that no sanctions have been registered against any SEGOB employees.[17]



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[17] Respuesta de la Secretaría de la Función Pública a la solicitud de información No. 330026522002531, 26 de septiembre de 2022.

# THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MECHANISM

Amnesty International and CPJ conducted three case studies that highlight serious flaws in the Mechanism's handling of high-risk situations.

In one case, the reporter Rubén Pat Cauich was shot dead in Playa del Carmen in the state of Quintana Roo on 24 July 2018, just two months after enrolling in the Mechanism. Pat had reported multiple threats and acts of aggression against him, and his employee José Guadalupe Chan Dzib was also murdered weeks earlier on 29 June 2018. Yet the Mechanism did not assign Pat bodyguards, providing him only with a panic button. A source close to Pat, whose identity has been withheld for the individual's protection, noted that the authorities are often slow to respond to alerts and said: "He should have had more protection from the Mechanism."

CPJ communicated with Pat on a regular basis in the weeks before his death. On at least one occasion, the journalist told CPJ that he believed he was in imminent danger and that repeated attempts to convey the urgency of his situation to the Mechanism had gone unanswered. CPJ communicated those concerns to a now-former official of the Mechanism on at least two occasions, but apparently with no immediate result.

## Journalist Rubén Pat Cauich



Photo: Rubén Pat Cauich , by Article19

"NO ONE GUARANTEES MY SAFETY":

The urgent need to strengthen Mexico's federal policies for the protection of journalists  
Amnesty International

In another case, journalist Gustavo Sánchez Cabrera asked to be enrolled in the Mechanism more than 13 months before he was shot dead near his home in Morro de Mazatán, in the state of Oaxaca, on 17 June 2021. The Mechanism took more than eight months to approve his request but even then it still did not provide Sánchez with any protective measures, despite him suffering multiple shootings and threats throughout the last year of his life. Mexico's National Human Rights Commission found that Mechanism staff "incurred in serious irregularities and omissions that had a direct impact on [Sánchez's] life, physical integrity and personal safety," leaving him "in a state of absolute defenselessness." [18] As his widow, Marilú Salinas Zárate, told Amnesty International and CPJ: "It could all have been avoided, if the relevant authorities had acted earlier, when he asked for help."

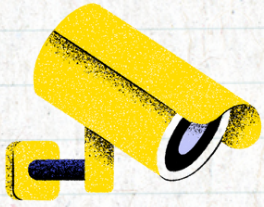
### Journalist Gustavo Sánchez Cabrera



Photo: Gustavo Sánchez, by Facebook

The third case that Amnesty International and CPJ documented is that of Alberto Amaro Jordán, a journalist from the state of Tlaxcala. In the last few years, Amaro has been beaten, threatened and arrested by police officers, intimidated by alleged members of a drug cartel, suffered an attempted break-in, and had shots fired at his house, among other attacks. Despite all this, in August 2023 the Mechanism determined that he was no longer in danger after four years enrolled in the Mechanism and told him it would be withdrawing his four bodyguards. Amaro won an injunction to suspend the removal of his bodyguards but is uncertain if the Mechanism will continue providing protection in the future. He has accused Mechanism officials of ignoring the dangers he and his family continue to face due to his work.

[18] Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, Recomendación No. 121/2022 [https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/documentos/2022-07/REC\\_2022\\_121.pdf](https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/documentos/2022-07/REC_2022_121.pdf)



## Journalist Alberto Amaro Jordán



Photo: Alberto Amaro Jordán, by Amnesty International

Amnesty International and CPJ found serious oversights in Amaro's July 2023 risk evaluation. Among them was the Mechanism's determination that the arrest of one individual whom Amaro said had threatened him was sufficient to mitigate the risks facing the reporter, even though several other individuals who were also involved in that particular threat were still at large. CPJ has also expressed its concern about the apparent unwillingness of federal institutions who are voting members of the Mechanism's Board of Governance to even consider maintaining Amaro's protection measures.

Amnesty International and CPJ also used a questionnaire to interview 28 journalists currently incorporated in the Mechanism in the states of Mexico City, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Mexico State, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa, and Tamaulipas. Most of the journalists that responded to the questionnaire (71%) were freelancers and the majority covered politics, crime or human rights issues, or some combination of those topics.

Those who responded to the questionnaire typically requested protection from the Mechanism after suffering threats or physical attacks from organized crime, government officials, or police officers. While most of the respondents described their enrollment in the Mechanism as a swift and smooth process, some said it was slow and overly bureaucratic. When asked how long they had to wait to receive protective measures, 11 (39%) said under a week, four (14%) said more than a week, five (18%) said more than a month, six (21%) said several months, and two (7%) said more than a year.



The most common measures that the Mechanism took to protect the journalists were providing them with panic buttons and phone numbers that they could call in case of emergency, and organizing police patrols outside their homes or places of work. Many of the journalists complained that the panic buttons did not work properly. The Mechanism only provided surveillance cameras, locks, or other home security features for six of the 28 journalists and assigned bodyguards to just four of them. While most of the male journalists felt that the measures they received were sufficient, only four of the 10 women felt that the measures they received were even temporarily or partially sufficient.

Sixteen of the 28 journalists said that the Mechanism asked them to relocate for their own safety, but many of them said it provided little or no logistical or economic support in that process. Many spoke of the difficulties they encountered in attempting to rebuild their lives in an unfamiliar part of the country. These included economic problems, trouble finding work, and a lack of access to safe and adequate accommodation, education for their children, and quality healthcare and psychological support – despite the significant impact that forced displacement had on their physical and mental health. Several also criticized the absence of a systematic process to return displaced journalists at risk to their place of origin with sufficient measures to guarantee their safety and enable them to continue their work.

Of the 28 journalists who responded to the questionnaire, 23 (82%) continued to suffer security incidents after enrolling in the Mechanism. These aggressions mostly consisted of threats against them, their families or colleagues, and digital attacks. Several journalists said the Mechanism did not take any action when they reported these new incidents.

“The response was bureaucratic and slow,” said one male journalist. Another said the Mechanism staff were “indifferent, they don’t care, they just pretend”. A third man described the response as “very bad, since they did not reinforce my security.” One female journalist who continued to suffer aggressions after being enrolled in the Mechanism said the response of its staff was “slow and incredulous.” Another woman called it “slow, very slow” and a third described it as “cold and distant, they stick to their bureaucratic terms. There is kindness, but huge barriers that prevent empathy and the creation of more appropriate protocols in each case.”

Only six of the 28 people (21%) who responded to the questionnaire said unreservedly that they felt safer since enrolling in the Mechanism. Seven (25%) felt their security had not improved, while the others were either unsure or felt they had experienced improvements in some respects and regressions in others.



The risks facing journalists and the need to live under state protection have had a significant impact on their mental and physical wellbeing. Among the biggest disruptions to their lives, respondents cited losing their income, having to uproot their families from their homes and take their children out of their schools, losing their social circles, and having to self-censor as a survival mechanism. Of the 28 journalists who responded to the questionnaire, 26 said they had suffered anxiety, 20 had suffered insomnia, 17 had suffered depression, and seven had had suicidal thoughts. None of the 10 women felt that the Mechanism had taken their mental health into consideration and only two of the 18 men thought it had.

The questionnaire also highlighted specific challenges that female reporters enrolled in the protection scheme faced. Only one of the women who responded felt that the Mechanism took gender into account when attending to them. Several women felt that Mechanism staff minimized the risks they faced and many said they failed to take account of their roles as the main providers and caretakers in their families, often as single mothers.

“They’re very cruel to women, many of whom are displaced and have young children, and they treat them very badly,” one woman said of the Mechanism staff. Another noted that “they don’t consider whether or not you have a disability or what it is”.

“They urgently need a course on attention from a gender perspective. If they were more sensitive that would be a big improvement. They should also provide women with comprehensive psychological support and health care so that the time they spend in displacement or at risk is not so traumatic and worrying. They should help them with school, administrative, and tax procedures. Make their lives easier and meet their needs as much as possible,” said another woman.

When asked about the Mechanism’s strengths, several journalists pointed to its mere existence, while others pointed to the tools, infrastructure, and resources at its disposal. When asked to name its weaknesses, many said the Mechanism was slow and overly bureaucratic and that its staff were insensitive and lacked empathy.

“In my case several officials have shown their ineffectiveness, they’ve been rude in their treatment, even revictimizing me, insulting me while raising their voices and literally shouting at me,” one respondent said. “The lack of organization, lack of humanity, aberrant criteria, lack of support to swiftly achieve justice in each case, lack of inter-institutional coordination, lack of rapid responses,” said another.

Several journalists also complained that the protective measures that the Mechanism provided were only designed for them and not their families.

“In my case several officials have shown their ineffectiveness, they’ve been rude in their treatment, even revictimizing me, insulting me while raising their voices and literally shouting at me,” one respondent said. “The lack of organization, lack of humanity, aberrant criteria, lack of support to swiftly achieve justice in each case, lack of inter-institutional coordination, lack of rapid responses,” said another.

Several journalists also complained that the protective measures that the Mechanism provided were only designed for them and not their families.

“I think the measures should be expanded and take into account the specific needs of each beneficiary. But I believe that the mechanism is more focused on demonstrating its institutional validity than on responding specifically to the security problems of each person. I think there should be more measures to allow journalists to continue their professional activity. It’s very difficult to have to deal with threats and still be able to continue working,” one journalist said. Another simply called on the Mechanism to “react immediately to calls for help. That’s the difference between life and death.”

Several journalists complained of the constant changes in personnel within the Mechanism. They said this had led to breakdowns in communication and assessments being made by staff unfamiliar with their case histories. They called for the Mechanism to hire analysts with better knowledge of the security situation across the country and for the analysts to visit affected journalists in the field as part of their assessments. Multiple respondents also emphasized the need for staff with significantly more experience and training in human rights. Those replies are in line with a large number of interviews that CPJ has conducted over the past seven years. During that same period, CPJ has received numerous complaints about the lack of regional knowledge of Mechanism officials and the need for the institution to be better informed about the constantly changing situation on the ground in many of the areas where journalists are at risk.





Several journalists also called for the Mechanism to coordinate much more closely with investigative bodies such as FEADLE in order to address the root causes of the dangers they face and ensure that those responsible for crimes against them face justice. One journalist said: “I’ve asked the Mechanism to hold FEADLE accountable for its lack of investigation. I think there should be a greater connection between the Mechanism and investigation, because these are two dimensions that are interconnected and yet they are treated as two bureaucratically separate dimensions. It’s very frustrating because judicial investigation of threats is indispensable to put an end to the threats and guarantee our security.”










# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS






Amnesty International and CPJ's research demonstrates that the Mechanism is a much-needed institution that can play a vital role in the protection of Mexico's journalists. It has helped to ensure the safety of hundreds of journalists at risk in one of the world's most dangerous environments for the press. However, this research also highlights many serious flaws and shortcomings in the Mechanism's performance and capabilities that are leaving many journalists unprotected in the face of grave dangers. In light of their findings, Amnesty International and CPJ are making several recommendations to Mexican authorities in order to strengthen the Mechanism's ability to protect journalists and further guarantee the right to freedom of expression.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FEDERAL MECHANISM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND JOURNALISTS

-  Develop and implement new communication protocols, in collaboration with journalists and other relevant stakeholders, to ensure that Mechanism staff provide prompt and emotionally sensitive attention to journalists at risk. Ensure that Mechanism staff take regular, specialized training sessions on human rights, communication, and psychological support, with a gender perspective and a focus on empathy, cultural sensitivity, and emotional intelligence. These training sessions should be held repeatedly, and their effectiveness should be subject to regular evaluation.
-  Carry out a thorough review of the methodology for risk evaluations, in consultation with journalists, press freedom groups, human rights defenders, and other relevant civil society organizations. The methodology must include a comprehensive gender perspective to better understand the particular risks and challenges facing women journalists, their specific needs and those of their dependents. Promptly implement the necessary changes to improve the accuracy and impartiality of these evaluations. Ensure that risk evaluations are conducted within 24 hours of an individual requesting protection from the Mechanism.
-  Conduct a comprehensive review of the Mechanism's relationship with investigative bodies, including FEADLE and state attorney general's offices. Implement the necessary measures to guarantee effective coordination between the Mechanism and these bodies with regard to the protection of journalists enrolled in the Mechanism.
-  Work to ensure that the Mechanism has a much better understanding of regional dynamics that may pose risks to journalists. This could include appointing regional representatives of the Mechanism in each of Mexico's 31 states outside of Mexico City, to participate in risk evaluations and help to determine appropriate security measures in each case.

-  Conduct a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of each of the protective measures that the Mechanism offers to journalists and ensure that the most effective measures are made available to all those who need them.
-  Conduct a thorough review of the use of panic buttons, including analyzing response times, the performance of the company tasked with monitoring alerts, and the effectiveness of coordination between the company and state security forces, and look into whether alternative measures of a similar nature could provide more effective protection. Implement the necessary changes to significantly improve the effectiveness of these measures.
-  Make it a requirement for personnel of the Federal Protection Service to be trained in dealing with journalists at risk and vet them to ensure they do not pose any risks to the journalists.
-  Create a comprehensive program to guarantee prompt access to psychological support for journalists enrolled in the Mechanism and their families, developed in consultation with the journalists and in accordance with their needs, including from a gender perspective.
-  Conduct a thorough review of the Mechanism's performance from a gender perspective, in consultation with the women journalists enrolled in the Mechanism, and swiftly implement the necessary reforms to guarantee their effective protection, in accordance with their specific circumstances, their needs, and those of their dependents.
-  Reverse the decision to withdraw protective measures for Alberto Amaro Jordán and guarantee that his case will be fairly evaluated and voted on.
-  Continue to strengthen the Mechanism by adhering to the recommendations made by the OHCHR-Mexico and the working group of the Civil Society Organizations for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists.







## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FGR/FEADLE:

-  Ensure a prompt, thorough and effective investigation into the killing of Gustavo Sánchez.
-  Exercise the faculty of attraction (federalizing the investigation) in the case of the killing of Rubén Pat Cauich.
-  Exercise the faculty of attraction to investigate the threats against Alberto Amaro Jordán.
-  Actively participate in the evaluation process of protective measures for Mechanism beneficiaries.
-  Conduct prompt, thorough and effective investigations in cases of attacks against journalists under federal jurisdiction, as stipulated by Article 21 of the National Code of Penal Procedures[19], to identify and bring to justice not only those responsible for carrying out attacks, but also those responsible for ordering them.

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[19] Código Nacional de Procedimientos Penales, <https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/CNPP.pdf>

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SEGOB


-  Ensure that the Mechanism receives sufficient economic and human resources to be able to operate effectively and to implement all of the above recommendations.
-  Ensure the participation of journalists in their own relocation plans, considering options in safe areas where journalists will experience less cultural shock. Provide consistent and comprehensive logistical, social, and economic support to journalists and their dependents who require relocation in order to guarantee their access to work and their right to freedom of expression, thus ensuring that they are able to reintegrate into society in their new location, continue their work and rebuild their lives in safety. Implement a gender perspective to better address the specific needs of women journalists and their dependents throughout the relocation and resettlement process. Coordinate with other state agencies as necessary to guarantee the rights to health, housing, and education of the journalists and their dependents.
-  Develop a comprehensive policy for the investigation of the risks and challenges facing journalists, shifting the paradigm towards the prevention of aggressions against them instead of focusing only on reactive responses. This preventative approach should aim to eliminate the causes of the risks and challenges facing journalists in part by ensuring public officials are held accountable for aggressions against journalists and implementing a zero-tolerance policy for such behavior. It should also include protocols to ensure transparency and close collaboration with FEADLE and state attorney general's offices.
-  Implement a specific sanction procedure within the Mechanism's framework to ensure that grave and avoidable human errors that may place journalists in increased danger are subject to the highest accountability standards.
-  Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Mechanism's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Swiftly implement the changes needed to improve its effectiveness.
-  Conduct a thorough review of the solicitation process that led to the use of a private contractor to provide protective measures for enrolled journalists. Based on this review, consider either renegotiating this contract or opening a new public solicitation to explore other partners.




## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PERSON HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE POWER

-  Guarantee the continued existence of the Mechanism and ensure that it receives sufficient economic and human resources to implement all of the above recommendations.
-  Publicly recognize the importance of keeping journalists safe and refrain from using stigmatizing or delegitimizing language against journalists.
-  Publicly condemn aggressions against journalists.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEXICO'S FEDERAL CONGRESS

-  Consider reforming the Federal Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists to expand the role, reach, autonomy, and authority of the Mechanism, including expanding its measures to include social support for journalists and incorporate state protection Mechanisms in its operations.



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