

# Another Journalist Killed in Mexico

Doing journalism right – reporting on abuses of power with care and honesty – is never easy, but it requires a special courage in physically dangerous circumstances such as exist in Mexico, reports Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

Mexico has earned the reputation of a dangerous place for journalists, a grim reality underscored by the murder last week of Miroslava Breach Velducea, a correspondent for the national newspaper La Jornada from the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua.

“We are shocked by the brutal killing of Miroslava Breach,” said Carlos Lauría, of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). “This wave of violence threatens citizens’ right to access vital information, and harms Mexico’s democracy by limiting public debate. We urge the Mexican federal government to put an end to this violence by bringing the perpetrators of this crime to justice.”

Breach was shot eight times by heavily armed gunman as she was leaving home in her car, accompanied by one of her three children, shortly after 7 a.m., according to published reports. The child was not injured, but Breach died in transport. Breach was the third journalist to be murdered in Mexico this month, according to CPJ.

I spoke late Friday with Molly Goss, Special Correspondent for Flashpoints on Pacifica Radio, from Mexico City, as she was beginning her investigation in the murder.

Dennis Bernstein: There is a very serious situation unfolding there with the assassination of Miroslava Breach Velducea, a correspondent for the national newspaper La Jornada, an important progressive newspaper coming out of Mexico City. ... Tell us about the reporter ... Tell us something about what happened here, what led up to this killing?

Molly Goss: This is a reporter named Miroslava Breach Velducea. And she had been a reporter for La Jornada, as you said, a progressive newspaper. It was founded in Mexico City in the mid 80’s. She’d been a correspondent in the north of Mexico for over twenty years. And previous to that she worked for some other publications in the north of the country. She was a really important correspondent, basically reporting on the situation in the State of Chihuahua. That’s where she was based. And recently she’d done a lot of really fearless reporting around the situation with the narco-trafficker, with the drug

trafficking situation, particularly in the north of the country.

So, this was a really highly respected reporter, a highly respected correspondent who had done a lot of really courageous work. And, what happened, was ... on Thursday, the 23rd, she was leaving her home in Chihuahua, in the capital of the State of Chihuahua, around 7 in the morning, and I've heard different reports, but what is clear is at least one gunman, as she was taking her car out of the garage, one gunman shot about 8 times, and killed her on the scene, I believe. There's some reports of other people being seen around that area.

But, there was definitely one armed man that shot at her, and killed her. It was really awful circumstances. She had her son in the car with her, she was taking him to school. And she was shot down in front of him. So, the other thing is being reported is that ... we're not sure who, but someone left some kind of pasteboard or cardboard note saying something which basically means this is for having a big mouth, or saying too much, for bringing things out into the light that you shouldn't.

So what's being investigated at this point, and is... a lot of the research and the articles that she's written recently for La Jornada in particular, they are around the drug trafficking situation. And a particular area in Chihuahua which is called the Sierra Tarahumara where there's a lot of people being expelled from their homes, having their land taken away from them, and being taken over by drug traffickers. So that's according to the governor of the State of Chihuahua, Javier Corral, that is one of the lines of investigation that they are looking at right now is basically, her reporting and the drug trafficking that is a huge problem in the north part of the country.

DB: I know, Molly, you are just beginning to investigate this story, to do a little reporting on it. But do we know... can we trust law enforcement that's supposed to be investigating now? What can we expect? Will there really be an investigation, based on past experience?

MG: That's a great question. I know we talked about, a couple years ago, the disappearance of the 43 students, and all of the distrust that exists in the country around investigations, around criminal investigations. So, yes, I... based on that experience I definitely have my doubts about how much we can trust these investigations. For example, the governor of the state who I just talked about, Javier Corral, is already being kind of looked at as somewhat of a shady character. He's being criticized for having this past week-end been out golfing and not attending to the really difficult situation in his state, in terms of violence.

So, absolutely there's been murders of three journalists in the last month, in the month of March. There was Miroslava Breach who was just murdered yesterday, and there were two others, one I believe was in Veracruz and another in Guerrero. So, it is very difficult for journalists themselves and for any in the country to trust these investigations. because almost... very, very seldom is anyone brought to justice. People who are supposedly brought to justice, are often questioned... in terms of the 43 students, there's questions about people being tortured, and getting false confessions.

And, I'm sure it's been reported on Flashpoints, Mexico is the most dangerous place in Latin America for journalists. There have been three, only, in the month of March. And no one has been brought to justice in any of those cases. So, yes, it is highly questionable how this investigation will take place. I was just reading that it can be investigated by the federal authorities, but at this point it's just state and local. And there's lots of talk about corruption, within the state and local police departments. So, it's definitely something that has to be followed. I know that the Commission on Human Rights, here in Mexico is already on the case. And will be looking at if the investigation is being done in the correct way. But that is a very difficult question whenever there are journalists murdered or human rights workers murdered in Mexico, because unfortunately the authorities... most people here do not believe what the authorities say, and, again, the perpetrators are very seldom brought to justice.

DB: I guess the Committee to Protect Journalist actually came out with an official report, was released yesterday or today that said that that Mexico is the most dangerous country in the hemisphere to be reporting on, at this time, in history. And, I guess, we're going to keep a very close eye on this. Francisco Herrera is here with us Molly and he has a question for you.

Francisco Herrera: As I understand Miroslava, quite a veteran journalist. Actually, she wrote much of the work, and especially when my wife was doing human rights work there in the 80's and 90's. So, she was quite a hard worker. Right now, what we are hearing of the State of Chihuahua, and some of the other states, people in the north don't realize what a state of war Mexico is in right now, Molly. And that's precisely part, as we talk about immigration, this is precisely the kind of information that people in this country, and in Mexico, in fact, are not getting, as to why people are crossing the borders so desperately.

When my brother-in-law was murdered in 2010 there was at least thirty bodies a day being discovered, thrown in the side of the roads. And now people are saying it's not so bad because they're only finding sixteen bodies a day. Could you speak a little bit to the state of war that Mexico is living through, whether

anybody wants to admit it or not?

MG: Sure. Yeah, that's a huge topic. I just moved back from living in the State of Michoacan, for about a year and a half. So, I can speak to this because previous to that I've been living in Mexico City. And Mexico City is like any big city, it has its problems, but it's probably the safest place to live in the country. And so for those first few years I was here, I was reporting on different things. I was reporting on the 43 missing students. But you can kind of get into a state of "well, it's not that bad here. It can't possibly be quite as awful as they're reporting in the states, in the provinces."

And then I did move to Michoacan. I was in a safe part of the state, however, I did some traveling... Michoacan is one of the states where there is a lot of drug trafficking activity going on. And, so, I was able to talk to people. I remember in particular, I was on a bus going from Michoacan to Mexico City, and I had a woman sitting next to me who told me very nonchalantly, nonchalantly in the sense that this was just normal life for her, at this point. That both her brother and one of her cousins had been disappeared, had disappeared three years ago and they have no idea where they were, and they had no hope of going to anyone, or going to the police to find out where they were because the police are... there's so much collusion between the police and drug traffickers.

So, I have the experience of being outside of Mexico City, being outside of kind of what is the bubble, where things are pretty safe here. And, yes, going out to places like Michoacan... for example, Veracruz they just found, I believe, two different mass graves in the State of Veracruz. I mean the situation is incredibly, incredibly dangerous, for many people. People who don't have the resources to move to Mexico City and get away from the violence, and as you said, in terms of immigration, this is a really important issue because there are people at the border trying to ask for asylum from Mexico.

And, some of these we've reported on in the past on Flashpoints, being turned away. Being turned away, and being told that people from Mexico can't receive asylum, when there's this incredibly dangerous, and awful situation that many people are going through, where, if they don't leave, the state where their from, where their families is from, they very likely could be murdered. So, it's such an interesting situation in that you can be in Mexico City, and feel completely safe, and kind of be protected, or ignore what's going on in the rest of the country. But, if you leave the city, there are many people living there, many people living their lives, normally as well. But there's a lot of violence going on that causes people to flee, and often flee to the United States. So, it's a very complicated situation.

DB: Before we let you go, just want to sort of get your... just sort of your

Rorschach on life in Mexico, after Trump. Is there a noticeable difference? Is there a noticeable reaction on the street? Stuff like that.

MG: Yeah, I, before the election I went out of my way to ask people what they thought about... because I worked in immigration, immigration cases. I'm interested in Latin American, U.S. policy, foreign policy. And, so I had lots of conversations, particularly in Michoacan where I lived. And, people were, I think in some ways, people were more realistic about the possibility of him winning and what that would do for their compatriots in the U.S. Many people I talked to thought it very possible, he could win, and were very worried about their family members, and their friends in the U.S. After the election, in these last two months, again, I think because people here are very cynical about politics, and very cynical about politicians, they're not surprised by Trump's actions. I feel like a lot of people say well, the president we have, the current president of Mexico, [Enrique] Pena Nieto, who we've talked about on your show before, is also not liked at all. He's done lots of awful things, that we could talk about for hours.

But, again, people are not surprised by Trump. People are not surprised by his actions. I think people are much more realistic about the possibility of him winning, here than in the United States. And, of course, people here are very sad for their family members who are in the U.S. and are afraid of deportation. So, there are some people that look at possible positive outcomes, of Trump being president in the U.S. And what I mean by that is, if people are deported, if people are forced to come back to Mexico then possibly it can work towards changing the system here, politically. There are some people who have that kind of point of view. But, in general, I think they have a much more realistic kind of viewpoint on how politicians work, than many kind of more idealistic people in the United States.

**Dennis J Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at [www.flashpoints.net](http://www.flashpoints.net).**

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