THE RORY PECK TRUST

FREELANCERS IN MEXICO

A SURVEY - FINDINGS AND CHALLENGES
The Rory Peck Trust exists to support freelance newsgatherers and their families worldwide in times of need, and to promote their welfare and safety.

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Freelance newsgatherers are an essential part of an open, democratic society and the international newsgathering industry relies heavily on their contribution. The Rory Peck Trust, established in 1995, has an ongoing commitment to their welfare and safety. The Trust provides financial support to freelancers working in news and current affairs who have been seriously injured, imprisoned, persecuted or are in exile as a result of their work and to the families of freelancers who have been killed. The Trust also promotes good practice and subsidises training in hostile environments for freelancers.

Each year, the Trust organises its main fundraising event, The Rory Peck Awards. Sponsored by Sony, the Awards are the only showcase in the world celebrating the work of freelance cameraman and camerawomen in news and current affairs. This annual event has become one of the most prestigious and moving events in the newsgathering industry.

The Trust enjoys the active involvement and support of an international and influential committee of freelance newsgatherers, journalist support organisations and broadcasters including ABC News, AP Television News, ARD, BBC, B SkyB, CBC, Channel 4, CNN, NBC News, Reuters TV and ZDF.

The Trust is totally independent and relies on its income from sponsorship, donations and grants in order to fund its work.
For The Rory Peck Trust in its work in Latin America, the term ‘freelance’ is defined as:

» A journalist, photojournalist, radio reporter, cameraperson or photographer who is not employed as staff member of a media organisation, and does not have a permanent contract with entitlement to any benefits. e.g. sick pay, holidays, social security, pension

» He/she delivers the work (articles, reportages, photos, films, investigations) at his/her own risk and expense, in an independent way, to one or several media organisations, which will be published in exchange for an economic remuneration

» This professional does not have a formal or commercial relationship with any governmental office or private company linked to his/her sources of information

The Rory Peck Trust has been helping freelance newsgatherers and their families for the last twelve years.

We do this because we passionately believe that freelancers play a vital role in the free flow of information. Bearing witness to events in remote – and often dangerous - regions, they are often the first to bring news of issues that can impact on people’s everyday lives at all levels, political, financial and personal. For this, they can suffer intimidation and sometimes lose their lives.

The Rory Peck Trust has always worked to raise awareness of the value of freelancers with media employers in Europe and America, with whom we have an ongoing dialogue on issues of good practice and welfare. This has enabled us to influence the way that media employers treat their freelancers and has also affected their policies and codes of conduct.

It feels entirely appropriate that our first programme dedicated to good practice should be in Mexico, a country where the dangers for all journalists, including freelancers, have become so great.

We hope that this report – and the work that has begun – will have a positive effect and begin the dialogue without which there can be no change.

We thank the Open Society Institute for making this programme in Mexico possible, and all our colleagues and supporters in Mexico who have provided a warm welcome and allowed us to work with them so closely.

Finally, we would like to salute the courage of those freelancers in Mexico who, despite danger and intimidation, struggle to continue telling the truth.

They should know that they are not alone.
Título de la sección

ALICIA HUERTA CORTÉZ
The aims of our work are very simple but still a challenge in today’s Mexico: to identify the freelance sector and highlight their specific problems to the media, NGOs and the general public, and to advocate for good practice with media, ensuring that freelancers can report in safety and security. For this, we have worked with our Mexico Advisory Committee, partner organisations CEPET, INSI and PRENDE and local based media, and with over 300 freelancers from 16 federal states in the first nine months of 2007. This was mainly done through an online questionnaire and 19 focus groups and we are grateful to all those who participated.

The Trust’s presence in Mexico has already started a debate about the increasingly dangerous situation for freelancers. We are now hoping that the results of this research will provide a necessary resource for the Trust and others to work with local media in ensuring that freelancers in Mexico can report in freedom and safety.

While staff reporters often count on the logistic and financial back-up of their employers when injured, killed or persecuted, the great majority of freelancers have no one to turn to. This is no different in Mexico, which is fast becoming one of the most dangerous countries to be a journalist in the world at this time, where freelancers are being intimidated, kidnapped or killed by illegal groups and organised crime – the so called poderes paralelos - as a result of their work. Often they not only have to worry about their own safety, but have to protect their families from these threats as well. While for a long time this was a problem mainly faced by reporters working in the northern border region, it has now spread to almost every state in the country, with freelancers no longer investigating narco-related stories out of fear of being killed, or concerned to get injured while covering a demonstration that turns violent.

Based on the findings of extensive research into the situation of freelancers in Latin America in 2005, and reflecting its commitment to support freelancers around the world, The Rory Peck Trust started its first Good Practice Programme in Mexico in January 2007 with the support of the Open Society Institute. We found that a large number of freelancers did not recognise themselves as freelancers, or realise the important role they have in emerging democracies, providing the general public with an independent point of view. While the Trust knew about individual cases of Mexican freelancers who were threatened, kidnapped or killed, there had not been any statistics or detailed information on how many freelancers there are in the country, what media they work in and what problems they are facing.

The Trust’s presence in Mexico has already started a debate about the increasingly dangerous situation for freelancers. We are now hoping that the results of this research will provide a necessary resource for the Trust and others to work with local media in ensuring that freelancers in Mexico can report in freedom and safety.
LETTER FROM THE MEXICO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUSANA SEIJAS
CHAIR, MEXICO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Covering drug trafficking and organised crime has become a life-threatening endeavour in Mexico, and many reporters and editors now avoid these topics. According to several press freedom organisations, journalists in Mexico now face more dangers than in any other nation except Iraq. Moreover, journalism as a profession has long lacked the public’s respect, and news organisations tend to fear new initiatives.

When the Trust started its Good Practice Programme in Mexico in January 2007, raising its concerns about the situation of freelance journalists in the country, the level of violence against reporters in Mexico had become even more common. “The fact that the Trust has chosen Mexico to implement its Good Practice Programme, clearly demonstrates its seriousness about the difficult circumstances faced by our colleagues in the country, whose simple aim is to inform the general public” says José Cohen, freelance producer and member of The Rory Peck Trust Mexico Advisory Committee.

“Mexico’s tenuous democracy is in dire need of objective and critical journalism, but sadly this country has been unable to provide an environment where independent journalists can do their job without fearing for their personal integrity or even their life,” says Pedro Enrique Armendares, Executive Director of the Centro de Periodistas de Investigación and committee member.

The Advisory Committee, which presently consists of four Mexican freelance journalists, exists to support the Trust’s Good Practice Programme in Mexico. Our collective experience has clearly demonstrated to us the danger of being a journalist in Mexico and is the main reason for supporting the work of the Trust.

María Idalia Gómez, freelance journalist and winner of the Mexican National Prize for Journalism 2006, says: “I joined the Committee due to the lack of awareness that exists among journalists, society and institutions regarding the notion of freelance journalists and the impact their work can have”.

“Much of the best investigative work in the country is done by freelancers,” says Pedro Enrique Armendares. “I am happy to support the Trust’s efforts to protect them and encourage their work.”

Members have held regular meetings, participated in the monitoring and planning process of the Good Practice Programme and supported a variety of the Trust’s activities in Mexico such as the Good Practice Forum in June 2007. The Committee has played a very important role in contributing to the goals set out by the Trust for the first phase of its activities in Mexico, and I would like to thank each member sincerely for the time and wisdom they have given over the past year.

The Committee is pleased with the accomplishments of Good Practice Programme in the last year, especially with the direction in which it is heading. We will continue focusing on achieving more involvement from editors and media owners. As we expand our network of Mexican freelancers and enlarge the Committee itself, our aim is to change attitudes among media owners and directors, and to reach more freelancers across Mexico.

The challenges ahead are complex but surmountable. Active participation of the freelance community and media editors and owners will be essential in improving the precarious situation freelancers are facing.
Threats, beatings, kidnappings, journalists gone missing, murder...
In Mexico, freelancers working in different parts of the country live side by side with insecurity. The intimidation springs from the same sources: drug-traffickers, police and military forces.
**Darío Fritz**  
Journalist and Programme Coordinator

Freelance journalist Rogelio Agustín tells us his story, which is that of many of his colleagues and inhabitants of the city of Chilpancingo. He does so with a bewildered smile, not paying much attention to the fact that it has become possible that everyday life gets shattered without being startled by it.

‘At 11 pm we were stopped at a checkpoint outside the city, on our way to Acapulco, by a group claiming to be policemen. Among them was a young man whom I had met a few weeks before, when he was arrested in the street because of his links to drug trafficking and I had tried to interview him. Now it was him who, with other men disguised as policemen, was detaining motorists. At first he didn’t recognise me, so I made him aware of who I was. Then he let us go. I didn’t ask him any questions, nor did I want to know. Who knows what they were looking for, or who they wanted to find?’

Agustín, an independent journalist in the capital of the state of Guerrero, is editor of the magazine *Interacción*. The weekly journal is produced by a team of five freelance reporters and has its own web page. Agustín told us about what had become routine in this city in the summer of 2007. According to reports from the mayor’s office, the local Archbishop and legislators, the city was overrun by delinquent gangs at night. The police had lost control and the city’s 230,000 inhabitants had to remain in a virtual curfew in their homes after 11pm. Journalists were not exempt from this.

This is only one case among many that demonstrates how the prevalent violence in several Mexican states and cities subjects professional journalists to threats, attacks and even murder at the hands of criminal gangs. Freelancers are no strangers to such violence, which, as they explain, places them all too often in jeopardy when it comes to the task of providing information.

To inform is a leap in the dark if precautions are not taken. A piece of writing or an image may lead to a death certificate.

In 2007 Mexico spiralled deeper into this violence. From January onwards there were various cases of missing persons; the first murder came in April, with the killing of Amado Ramírez, a Televi-sa correspondent in Acapulco, in the state of Guerrero. Even in December unknown assailants had murdered Gerardo Israel García, a reporter from the newspaper *La Opinión*, in a hotel in Uruapan, Michoacán.

The list of murders and of ‘the disappeared’ shows that since 2000, when the first democratic government came to power, six newsgatherers were murdered in direct reprisal for their work, as well as another eleven in which the circumstances surrounding their death have not yet been established. According to reports from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) five reporters have disappeared since 2005. The Rory Peck Trust’s research dating from 2000, shows that eight of these cases were freelance journalists. Reporters without Borders, the Inter American Press Association, Article 19, CEPET and CPJ have confirmed that violence against professional newsgatherers has increased since 2000.

The increased insecurity for journalists in Mexico, demonstrated by these figures, makes it the riskiest country for newsgathering professionals in the American continent. The number of alerts of attacks against journalists is also illustrative: according to the Inter American Commission on Human Rights’ Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (CIDH-OEA), alerts have increased from 150 to 2,500 between 2005 and 2007.

The reality described by freelancers in Mexico differs according to the zone, city or federal state. The presence and force of organised crime is a constant factor that obstructs freedom of expression, on top of an already precarious financial situation and working conditions for journalists.

In Mexico City, Guadalajara, Colima, Querétaro or Guanajuato it is possible to work without this constant threat from criminal organisations. The most sig-
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ders were registered (25 of them were decapitations), as well as multiple kidnappings in 2007.

Michoacán is one of the states most affected by drug trafficking. In spite of the current military presence to fight the drug cartels, which has been in place since 2006, more than 335 murders were registered (25 of them were decapitations), as well as multiple kidnappings in 2007.

More than 20 journalists disappeared in so-called levantones, or forced disappearances carried out by criminal organisations, to threaten and intimidate journalists into silence. García Pimentel’s murder was not the first one. Jaime Arturo Olvera Bravo, a freelance journalist from La Piedad, was executed in front of his children on 9 March 2006. José Antonio García Apac, editor of Ecos de la Cuenca de Tepalcatepec, has been missing since 20 November of the same year.

Freelancers also report being ill treated by security forces when covering street demonstrations and security operations. There have been accusations of threats by army personnel, such as ‘Journalists? We throw them in sacks’, by Humberto Castillo Mercado, a reporter from Morelia, Michoacán.

In the face of such accusations, the official response is more often than not just empty promises. Their investigations into murders or threats rarely result in justice.

Bárbara Obeso, freelance correspondent of international agencies in Sinaloa, the birthplace of drug trafficking in Mexico, sums up the general atmosphere in different parts of the country: ‘There are no guarantees for our work; furthermore, even if we denounce an attack, there is no action by the police or other officials.'
“THERE HAVE BEEN CALLS BY SOME INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS FOR ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS TO BE MADE FEDERAL CRIMES”.

Our complaints never go far. That’s why so few threats are being officially reported.’

The failure of The Special Prosecutor’s Office for the Attention of Crimes against Journalists, created by Vicente Fox’s federal government in 2006, is evidence of that lack of response. Since its creation it has received more than 180 cases, but so far it has not succeeded in solving any. As a result, there have been calls by some international organisations for attacks against journalists to be made federal crimes, so that judicial research and actions are centralised at a national level.

VULNERABILITY IN THE PROVINCES

‘Colleagues from abroad, Mexico City or elsewhere in the country come here and we help them to get information, to denounce and to publish investigations. The problem is that when they leave, we are the ones facing threats and bullying, the ones who stay behind, and not the colleague who wrote or filmed and then left.’

This candid description offered by Lizbeth Díaz Arroyo matches that of many in Tijuana, Baja California, a city on the border with the United States where organised crime and people smuggling have been a permanent presence for decades.

In this city, where the independent weekly magazine Zeta lost three of its journalists to attacks from drug traffickers in the past three years, and whose director survived an attempt on his life in 1997, professional journalism is affected on several fronts. It is not uncommon for the judiciary to ask investigative freelance journalists to testify in court as a means of intimidating them, since they have no legal protection. Another issue regarding their personal welfare is that banks do not consider them eligible for mortgages because of the “vulnerability” of their profession. This phenomenon is also experienced in the state of Oaxaca.

Threats do not only come from criminal organisations. Civil servants and the police, paramilitary and guerrilla groups, religious organisations and social movements have at times, shown intolerance towards freelance journalists, photographers or cameramen.

In Tijuana, Xalapa (Veracruz), Puebla and Oaxaca, pressure from city councils and political sectors has become common. Freelance journalists, as well as their editors and managers are the victims of complaints and intimidation aimed at imposing censorship. In extreme cases this involves demands for the removal of a reporter who is in the way of a politician’s interests.

Freelance reporter Fredy Martín Pérez López, a Chiapas correspondent for the newspaper El Universal, and Jorge Becerra, from Diario Meridiano, were subject to such intimidation in October 2007 when they were assaulted and intimidated by police from the Venustiano

THE DELIGHTS OF FREELANCING

OLGA ROSARIO AVENDANO
REPORTER IN OAXACA

If you are hired to work for a particular newspaper it means you have to produce several pieces a day. In 2006, when we covered the social movement of the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO), opposing the government of Ulises Ruiz, as freelancers we had the opportunity to produce a number of articles and features, which proved difficult for those local colleagues, who have to deliver up to five or six pieces a day.

Another advantage of this way of working is that you have more time for training. After being a freelancer for four years, at the beginning of 2007 I had the opportunity to obtain a grant from PRENDE in Mexico City. Had I been employed by a local newspaper, my situation would have been quite different. The EFE Agency, with which I work, backed me in this.

Yet independent work has its drawbacks, too. We have no medical insurance or paid sick leave, there are no holidays and if we rest we have no income.

To be a freelancer is wonderful. I enjoy being in charge of my time so that I can work on issues I care about and undertake projects such as the website ‘Olor a mi tierra’ (‘Scent of my land’), which I founded with my colleague Victor Ruiz Arrazola.
Carranza municipality and by agents of the Federal Investigations Agency (AFI), after covering a march led by indigenous people.

‘A white van blocked our way and several men got off, carrying rifles and large-bore weapons, so we were afraid they would shoot’, said Martín Pérez to the Centre for Journalism and Public Ethics (CEPET). Among these people they recognised Comité’s Coordinator for Public Security, who approached the reporters gun in hand, and the AFI’s chief officer in Chiapas.

Mistrust among colleagues, low wages, corruption and self-censorship are pervasive. Freelancers’ immediate response to the diverse kinds of aggression they suffer, is self-censorship. This is also a common factor among staff reporters. Its most radical manifestation is the refusal to cover any information that is considered a risk to their lives.

‘Here we don’t “do” information on 80% of issues relating to the police or organised crime’, Jaime Delgado, a freelancer from Mexicali, Baja California says candidly. ‘In the media, news on drug trafficking has been brought to a freeze.’

Freelancers, as well as their colleagues in the newsroom, have now agreed with editors and managers to no longer sign certain reports in order to protect their personal safety. ‘What good would a tomb be to us for covering some news’, says Manuel de la Cruz, a journalist working for print media and radio in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. Nevertheless, some editors are still insensitive, as was the case with Díaz Arroyo in Tijuana, where the journal she wrote for broke the tacit agreement of not signing her notes on organised crime and printed her name at the top of her investigative report ‘It was the magazine’s way of making me the only person responsible and avoiding any reprisals against themselves’, she says.

Often it is poverty that underlies the conflicts between freelancers and their sources of information, and this can lead to violence and intimidation. Dalia Villatoro, a freelance correspondent for the Chiapas newspaper Cuarto Poder, in the Comité municipality, was detained last September and had her photographic equipment confiscated by a group of poor farmers after covering a demonstration. They took her camera, which they returned to her the following day, for fear of reprisals from the authorities if the photographs got published.

The scope for reprisals, combined with the lack of government response to bring to justice those who hamper the free flow of information, has left a bitter taste of self-censorship, while having to search for ‘safe’ topics to cover has led to lethargy amongst many professional newsgatherers. The murder in the state of Oaxaca of three El Imparcial del Istmo newspaper vendors led to the resignation of many of its staff. The Committee to Protect Journalists stated in a recent report that in Michoacán, a quarter of journalists abandoned their profession over the past three years.

Despite the bleakness of this scene, Martín Esquihuela shows some optimism. ‘Even though you can tell that the systematic threats are no joke’, he says, ‘and somehow, within the vast horizon of anonymity, they seem to come from unambiguous sources... you still feel the urge to go on asking questions.’

**PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT**

**SERGIO HARO**

**REPORTER IN MEXICALI, BAJA CALIFORNIA**

Newsgathering in the northern border region of Mexico has become increasingly risky, mainly because criminal groups operate with impunity. These groups now have more power than the authorities and they have damaged the police’s reputation.

In mid October 2007, an armed group of around 60 people burst into the offices of the coroner’s court in Ensenada in order to steal a corpse. The following week a similar group took ten new cars from the premises of Toyota in Tijuana. No one was arrested.

Towards the end of November, gunmen in Tijuana entered the house of the chairman of the Citizens’ Council on Public Security (Consejo Ciudadano de Seguridad Pública), who is one of the most critical among civil voices. The intended victim saved his own life by defending himself with a R15 rifle.

The cases are endless. In Mexicali, a former ministerial police commander was murdered and his body defaced. A week later it was revealed that he was linked to the Sinaloa drug cartel, to the murder of half a dozen ministerial agents who had been stealing drugs and to the corruption of civil servants, among them the State Attorney. Once again, there were no arrests.

Mugger, the ‘disappeared’, aggression and threats against journalists are everyday fare on this border, where a journalist’s work is a social as well as a professional commitment.

Working under deplorable conditions –low salaries, zero benefits, no life insurance– the safety of journalists depends more on their own means of protecting themselves rather than on any other kind of support. We must also bear in mind that freelancers are increasingly employed by newsgathering companies that, in most cases, assume no responsibility for their professional well being, let alone offer them protection or support.

Why should one work and take risks in such circumstances? The answer is simple: Because there are journalists with both a social and professional commitment who, in spite of the harsh working conditions, choose to take the risks and remain dedicated to their profession, despite the repercussions this entails. ☺
FREELANCERS IN MEXICO
A DETAILED PICTURE
When Phase 1 of The Rory Peck Trust’s Good Practice Programme, Mexico was implemented in February 2007, its aim was to get to know the freelancers working in the country: to know who and where they are, what problems they face, how they work and under which conditions.

We had to start from scratch.

An assessment was necessary in order to answer these and other questions, and we have based our work on its results.

We designed a survey that gave us a preliminary view of freelancers in Mexico, something unprecedented in this country.

On the basis of 22 questions, the outline of the Mexican freelancer started to take shape. Through our website, focus groups and individual meetings in more than 15 cities we managed to create a detailed picture of the situation for freelancers in Mexico.

Three hundred journalists, photographers and cameramen and women answered our questions.

One key question was why they chose to be freelancers. 29% stated that being freelance meant that they can perform their professional activities independently, with no constraints; 19% are freelancers because they enjoy professional freedom they would not attain otherwise, and 13% chose this option pragmatically, because they believed that they could make a living through journalism.

The survey’s results (see figure 3) show a rather substantial factor: 32% consider being freelance as the only possible way to carry out their work as professional newsgatherers.

This explains why some freelancers in Mexico, when faced with financial pressures and dangers, are constantly considering new horizons, such as looking for additional jobs outside their profession and even, in the worse case scenario, stopping their work for the media altogether.

Replies to this survey presented some surprises. Almost a third of all freelancers we interviewed were women.

WORK AND MORE WORK

Atoyac de Álvarez is little more than one hour away from Acapulco, Mexico’s main tourist destination. This municipality, accustomed to extreme heat throughout the year, is a gateway to the mountain range known as the Sierra Madre, a complex geographical area where guerrilla groups usually go to recruit. The Mexican army’s presence is constant, drug-traffickers operate and poverty manifests itself in every single village in the area. It’s an ideal place for many foreign and Mexican journalists to practise investigative journalism and look for stories.

For many professional freelancers in the area, this is a chance of working as a fixer, establishing contacts with their sources and sometimes even pocketing up to 100 US dollars, if the visiting colleague is insightful enough to offer financial support. 100 US dollars usually equals their monthly income for work in the area’s radio stations and newspapers.

In the canteen of some barracks, once a military base and now accommodating several offices of the Atoyac de Álvarez municipality, Pablo Alonso told us about his misfortunes and those of many of his colleagues.

During the last hurricane season, at his own expense and risk, he went to an area where several settlements had been engulfed by water and were only being assisted by the army. He took exclusive photographs that he sold to the editor of an Acapulco newspaper for the equivalent of 10 US dollars each. The editor paid him 200 US dollars – equivalent to his monthly income – in total. He wondered why he was being paid so much.

A few months later the editor told him, showing some remorse, that he had sold his photographs to an international agency for 100 US dollars each. “I got nothing from that transac-
1.- Do you work for Mexican national media outlets?

- Only Mexican: 19%
- Only foreigners: 29%
- Both: 29%
- No reply: 4%  

2.- Do you work for Mexican or international media outlets?

- For a newspaper: 38%
- For a magazine: 17%
- As a photographer: 14%
- As a cameraman: 1%
- For a TV outlet: 22%

3.- What is your main reason for working as a freelancer?

- Independent: 32%
- Money: 29%
- It is the only option: 13%
- Journalistic focus: 19%

4.- What type of contract do you have?

- Verbal agreement: 35%
- Written: 4%
- Fees: 6%
- Other: 6%  

RESPONSIBILITIES

Why are wages so low that they force freelance journalists, photographers and cameramen and women to have more than one occupation, to resort to jobs that compromise their work ethics or have nothing to do with their profession? Are they so badly paid because of the country’s unstable economy? Is it the media’s responsibility? Are freelancers themselves responsible for not finding the appropriate channels in which to make their demands known? In several meetings in different Mexican cities, freelancers constantly ascribed their low earnings to the cost reduction poli-

tion’, says Alonso. ‘I understood then why he had been so generous. Without leaving his desk or taking any risks he had made a fortune at my expense.’

The meagre income freelancers receive for their stories, photographs or footage, which is far below the quality of their work, is a constant problem, particularly for those who work in the provinces.

When assessing average earnings our findings reveal that in 28% of cases, approximate monthly incomes fluctuate between 300 and 500 US dollars. But in places such as Guerrero or Veracruz, the standard earnings are between 100 and 250 US dollars a month.

Monthly income reaches around 1,000 US dollars in cities like Mexico City and some others in the north of the country, such as Guadalajara and Monterrey.

In Chiapas, Oaxaca or Guerrero, a photograph or story of the day is paid at around 6 US dollars (equivalent to six litres of milk).

In the face of such low income, the immediate solution for many has been to find additional work related to their profession, such as obtaining publicity deals from their sources for media employers, for which they receive a commission, or working in the press office of a political party or an electoral candidate.

Such situations may be at odds with professional ethics, but they are accepted.

Another option is to work outside their profession (figure 5). Common examples are working as college or secondary school teachers, or managing family businesses such as grocery shops or eateries. Out of the 48% who replied that they had additional income to that from newsgathering, 13% said this income amounts to 10% of their total earnings, while another 13% said it amounts to 70%.

Verónica González Cárdenas, who has been a journalist in the state of Colima for fifteen years, states: ‘I know that, as a journalist, I will never be able to have a pension or social security, this is why I have a job as a teacher at the University of Colima. Although the wages are low, at least if I get ill, I will have access to public healthcare.’
8% said it was ‘excellent’. In contrast, only 4% described the way they are treated by their employers as “bad”. This reaction reflects how freelancers perceive their role in relation to their employers as each of them has different responsibilities and aims.

**INPUT AND DIALOGUE**

In meetings such as those that took place in Mexico City, Morelia, Tijuana, Mexicali and San Cristóbal de las Casas, freelancers emphasized the need to be organised so that they can find a common path leading to professional improvements for all. The survey shows that 86% do not belong to any professional organisation or union.

Freelancers do not have trade unions or associations to protect them or to whom they can turn as a last resort in order to defend their interests. They are not alone in this. Staff reporters also lack this kind of support and security, though in other countries in the region journalists support organisations have become more established.

The problems, shortages and needs of freelancers in Mexico are not being discussed or examined collectively or at an organisational level. This limitation extends to the lack of dialogue with editors and media executives.

The Good Practice Forum organised by The Rory Peck Trust in Mexico City in June 2007 highlighted the need to seek such rapprochements and take the first step towards forming basic agreements between editors and freelancers.

The most prominent aspect of the debate was that freelancers and the media should start by discussing their common ground, and then proceed to different kinds of agreements related to efficiency and professionalism, training and social benefits and safety (see Appendix: Safety Codes).

The media executives’ response to the Programme throughout the country is encouraging, and allows us to hope that we will accomplish our aims through perseverance and commitment.

**PRIORITIES**

According to 29% of participants in our survey, low income is considered a problem that requires immediate attention (figure 14). This if followed by: job stability, training, resources (equipment, office space, technology) and, lastly, freedom to work.

‘My biggest concern is the lack of a steady income that allows me to know how much I can rely on in order to meet my basic obligations, such as regular bills I have to pay each month’, says Laura, a freelance photographer in Mexico City.

Only 37% of the respondents have a regular income. Claims of delayed payment to freelancers for work already agreed and delivered confirm this.

‘Many times we depend on our good relationship with the editor we work for, so that he or she puts pressure from within on the administrative department’, says Héctor, a Mexico City cameraman who prefers to remain anonymous.
A significant percentage – 28% – stated that working relationships with print media, radio or TV stations are determined by verbal agreements (figure 4). Only 6% stated that they had written contracts with their employer. Most charge a gross fee per piece of work, from which they have to deduct income tax. This reduces their net income by a significant amount.

Access to sources of information is of paramount importance in freelancers’ work. Journalists often have to overcome obstacles when trying to obtain information, but these are multiplied for freelancers due to a lack of accreditation, which prevents them from gaining access to an area, event or interview they want to cover.

The fact that freelancers do not receive press accreditation from their media employers nor from government bodies or unions was brought up in our focus groups time and time again.

Their situation is worse than that of a foreign correspondent, who, as Univisión’s Mexico Bureau Chief Porfirio Patiño Juárez points out, receives press accreditation from the President’s Office. A strong network of personal contacts is usually the best tool to have access to restricted zones.

**TRAINING AND INSURANCE**
Freelancers believe that there are two main aspects to their work as professional newsgatherers, which are also part of the mission of The Rory Peck Trust. Firstly, training in order to develop their professional expertise. Secondly, access to affordable life and medical insurance, which they must obtain at their own expense, as they are not staff employees.

More than half of those who took part in the survey – 52% – said they have not taken part in any further training/refresher course during the past two years (figure 7), and 64% have no life or medical insurance (figure 12).

Requests for training differ according to the area, but ‘any training is welcome’, says Laura Cuevas, a freelancer from Veracruz specialised in covering political news. ‘Here’, she says, referring to the city of Xalapa, where she works, ‘the state’s government offers diff-
11.-Denounced to:

- 14% to the judiciary (ODHN)
- 34% to employers
- 36% to no one

12.-What kind of insurance do you have?

- 4% Life insurance
- 7% Medical insurance
- 16% None of the mentioned
- 29% Both
- 36% Other
- 45% Blanks

13.-Do you pay for your own insurance?

- 80% Yes
- 20% No

14.-What are your main needs in order to carry out your work?

- 29% Better income
- 19% Work stability
- 17% Professional training
- 13% Better resources (office, equipment)
- 12% Freedom to work
- 8% Medical insurance
- 7% Professional development
- 5% Work security
- 4% Life insurance

During the first phase of the Good Practice Programme, we have witnessed an increase of violence affecting all journalists and therefore freedom of expression in general.

Our survey registers that half of the colleagues we interviewed have received some kind of threat; 40% of the threats were verbal (figure 9).

Whereas the statistics of freedom of expression and human rights organisations point to organised crime as the main responsible for attacks, intimidation, threats and murder of journalists, we have noticed that freelancers lay responsibility on other agents.

They consider that 51% of threats come from members of the government, police and the military, and in only 9% of cases they lay responsibility on drug-traffickers (Figure 10).

It should also be noted that they attribute 29% of threats to the general public. While this is a vast issue, and in several cases those freelancers questioned mentioned threats from sectors or individuals linked to companies and religious or social movements, it also suggests a certain degree of animosity towards news gatherers from the general public.

‘We often end up paying for the sensationalism with which some colleagues and the media itself handle information’, says photographer Juan Manuel Villaseñor, a specialist in crime news coverage. ‘Many times people see us in the street and treat us badly, because they think we are all the same. Even more so when they are defending a relative or friend involved in the story we are covering. They have no respect for us.’

Freelancers trust their employers (36%) more than the judiciary (11%) when reporting any threats or attacks they receive. Human rights organisations are trusted also (19%, including both national and international organisations).

It is also noteworthy that a large percentage (34%) prefer not to denounce these attacks at all (figure 11). This reveals a mistrust in public authorities that in turn engenders impunity, since justice cannot be administered without a formal complaint.

According to conversations with freelancers in different states, threats, attacks, murders and the ‘disappearance’ of journalists, photographers and camera crews have led to an air of mistrust among peers.

In May 2007, after TV Azteca journalist Gamaliel López Landanosa and cameraman Gerardo Paredes Pérez went missing in Monterrey, Nuevo León – a case that remains unsolved –, nobody agreed to attend our focus group and sit at the same table with their colleagues for fear that they might be informers for drug-traffickers. This phenomenon was also observed in places such as Saltillo, Acapulco or Morelia, and is persistent.

In spite of the high levels of risk involved in the practice of professional newsgathering in several states in Mexico, freelancers do not identify violence as one of the main problems they face in their profession. Low income, deficient equipment, inaccessible sources and corruption are the four main issues they have specified as major obstacles to their work.

In the face of the adversities revealed by this survey, freelancer Verónica Gonzalez added a note of optimism: ‘You almost have to pay in order to be an independent journalist, but in spite of all this I carry on in my profession because I believe in what I do, and if the publication of a few lines helps others to improve their situation, that is rewarding enough for me.’

“Low income, deficient equipment, inaccessible sources and corruption are the four main issues freelancers have specified as major obstacles to their work.”
A LOCAL EXPERIENCE

JUAN ANGULO OSORIO
GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE EL SUR NEWSPAPER IN GUERRERO

It is common practice for local Mexican newspapers to accept freelance work or commission freelancers for specific jobs. This is partly because local newspapers do not have a great amount of financial resources and also because they do not want to pay social security contributions and avoid having to comply with labour obligations.

In the state of Guerrero there is not one single media organisation that hires independent reporters or photographers solely because they consider they need their good professional services. Nor are there that many freelancers offering to work for the media.

Ideally El Sur would want for all those who regularly collaborate with the newspaper to be fully integrated as staff, with the corresponding rights and obligations.

This situation would have the advantage of photographers and reporters working under a common journalistic code; they would stick to the newspaper’s editorial criteria and ethos. They would be at the media’s disposal and would only focus on our assignments.

Under such conditions, the newspaper would only use freelancers in exceptional cases, or it could create a network of stringers in different parts of the state, so that they would be able to send us prompt information about relevant events in advance.

But since our company’s financial conditions do not allow us to reach that ideal, we hire reporters or photographers in some cities in Guerrero who work for other media as well.

Our experience of working this way has been generally fruitful, with one or two disagreeable incidents. The advantages are that we rely on colleagues who, because of the above-mentioned conditions, have great mobility and are always on top of local events. The disadvantages are that they are not always available to provide a specific detail we require, cover a particular story that we need, or go into depth.

A quite different experience of a freelance photographer, who made his name through his work with El Sur and had established his main contacts through us, preferred selling his best pictures to newspapers in Mexico City instead, even though we would have paid him the same fee.

After this experience we tried to set some rules in order to avoid this kind of disloyalty based on media hierarchies, emphasizing the fact that a local newspaper is as important as a national one, keeping a constant flow of communication with our contributors and striving to pay a decent amount for their work.

I would like to end by mentioning the deep effect the Forum organised by The Rory Peck Trust in Mexico City in June 2007 had on me. One of the Trust’s goals is to ensure that freelancers around the world can receive safety training so that they can obtain and broadcast information even in the most difficult conditions. Knowing that the Trust understands this mission as a way to safeguard society’s right to be informed gave me reasons to be optimistic about our profession’s future.
FREELANCERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
Working conditions for freelancers in the UK have been changing rapidly over the last ten years. As a freelancer myself, complete with bicycle and a black book containing the details of every TV news editor in London, I can say that UK freelancers today, in relation to our colleagues in the developing world, have it very good. I think as freelancers we judge ‘good working relationships’ mainly on the size of the pay packet and also insurance. When I pitch an 8 minute story idea that is say in Afghanistan, or East Africa, I should expect a budget that will cover enough for me to travel safely, do all my research, production costs and edit facilities, and of course, my salary. Insurance should be paid separately by the broadcaster.

Change has come in the UK and Europe as a result of many high profile deaths and the emergence of strong lobby groups who are not afraid of tackling - publicly or privately - the big broadcasters such as BBC, CNN, Channel 4 and ARD. Organisations such as The Rory Peck Trust and INSI are places that freelancers can turn to, confide in, seek advice and if needed, get support in advocating for best practice. It is not a paradise, abuse of freelancers of course still continues here, but there is a great awareness and at least lip service to respecting us. I think one of the problems we face as a freelance community is our own individualist nature - ‘working alone’ and finding the story - alone. When we can stand as a group in solidarity - we are a much stronger organisation - and although I will fight to beat my colleagues to the story, quite happily directing them down the wrong street, I will fight tooth and nail for them if they are in serious trouble. We help each other in the UK and their is a genuine sense of concern.

If I don’t get a commission, I will often be talking to various broadcasters at the same time, looking for the best deal. This is a common practice here - but still the final price never usually matches a commission fee. With a commission will automatically come the issue of insurance - which can be pricy. Also the major broadcasters are all legally bound to make sure you have adequate safety training for the story. Broadcasters here don’t want a headache of a freelancer getting kidnapped or killed if they can help it. For a story in a hostile environment - I will usually expect to fill out 10 - 20 pages of forms showing my understanding of the dangers, my evacuation plans, my local knowledge and the A - Z of emergency plans. This is time consuming but VERY good. It forces me to prepare properly for what disaster might happen - and also makes the broadcaster feel they have ticked their insurance boxes. People do complain, that the freelance spirit has been lost - but I would prefer that broadcasters are stricter with less commissioning than not caring about our safety.

“CHANGE HAS COME IN THE UK AND EUROPE AS A RESULT OF MANY HIGH PROFILE DEATHS AND THE EMERGENCE OF STRONG LOBBY GROUPS WHO ARE NOT AFRAID OF TACKLING THE BIG BROADCASTERS”.
Freelancers in Mexico share common problems with many of their counterparts around the world: insecure work, no access to life/medical/equipment insurance and low income. They are at risk of violence and abuse from criminals, security forces and individuals or organisations that are affected by the information they publish.

Working with local organisations, freelancers and the media, The Rory Peck Trust created a map of the freelance sector in Mexico, the first of its kind. A survey with 22 questions answered by 300 freelancers via an online questionnaire and through focus groups in 15 different cities in 2007 brings us closer to a world that remained unknown before the publication of this document. It reveals the general profile of a freelancer in Mexico:

- Male (72%)
- 37 years old (average age)
- Without a regular income (60%)
- Works as a freelancer because it is the only option available (32%)
- Works for two or more media outlets (86%)
- Works for a newspaper or magazine (59%)
- Works for national as opposed to local media (71%)
- Has a monthly income between $300 and $500 US dollars
- Has no access to medical, life or equipment insurance (65%)
- Has received some form of threat (50%)

The key findings of our mapping activity can be summarised as follows:
- Most freelance journalists obtain work through informal arrangements and networking
- Most endure precarious working conditions and receive hardly any support from media employers
- There is little mutual support among freelance newsgatherers
and no collective organisation to defend their rights
» There is a need for safety training courses
» There is a failure to comply with copyright law, which affects particularly freelance photographers
» There is a lack of respect for journalists from the general public

Although these answers are based on the responses of a relatively small number of freelancers, they offer a clear outline of the sector as a whole in Mexico. They indicate that action is required to improve this situation to ensure that freelancers continue to provide an independent point of view, which is essential in Mexico’s emerging democracy.

There are pressing needs that freelancers themselves have to address, and which can be supported by international NGOs such as The Rory Peck Trust. Among the precarious situation that many freelancers face, the Trust has identified three main needs: the provision of safety training for freelancers, access to life, medical and equipment insurance, and improving the dialogue between freelancers and editors they work for.

Freelancers face serious difficulties when working in hostile environments and have to take preventative measures for their personal safety. It is also important to receive the necessary training which prepares newsgatherers to work in this situation, and it is therefore a priority to provide courses taught by professional trainers who can address the particular dangers Mexican freelancers face.

Access to insurance is not only providing support to freelancers themselves but to their families, who are also affected by the dangers newsgatherers confront. Given the fact that newsgathering in Mexico is now considered a high risk profession by many insurance companies not only endangers freelancers but their journalistic work as a whole. Further work needs to be done with insurance providers and regulators to try and find an affordable solution for freelancers.

Freelancers depend on the media to inform the public. We believe that a better understanding between freelancers and the media will contribute to a better-informed society, with a deeper concern for freedom of expression. Our relations with both freelancers and the media has raised awareness about the need for more regular debate and discussion, which is the first step towards providing concrete agreements to ensure that freelancers can work in safety and freedom.

During the ten months that this project has been operating in Mexico, the seeds have been sown to help freelancers attain a high level of professionalism in their work, so that they can contribute to a well-informed democratic society. There’s still a long way to go.
THE BENEFICIARIES PROGRAMME
At the heart of the Trust’s work, this specialised assistance programme distributes charitable grants to freelance newsgatherers and the families of those who have been killed, injured or are suffering persecution as a result of their work. We support freelancers in regions of conflict and civil disorder, while also responding to a growing number of cases where they are forced into hiding or exile.

Our grants are made according to the needs and circumstances of each individual beneficiary. We work closely with families and local contacts to identify the most beneficial areas for support and make our money go as far as possible. Where we are unable to help, we try to refer cases to our network of partner organisations. This kind of help is unique, and really quite simple. We help freelancers and their families to survive and move forward.

The programme is supported by private donations and grants from trusts and foundations.

THE RORY PECK TRAINING FUND
Newsgatherers, especially war reporters, are often faced with challenging and unpredictable situations. Through The Rory Peck Training Fund, the Trust is able to provide bursaries to enable freelance media workers, who could not otherwise afford it, to cover the costs of specialist safety training courses. The Training Fund is given by approved course providers, all of whom run courses both in the UK and Overseas. Freelancers learn skills that raise their awareness of potentially dangerous situations, and how to react in a crisis and help their colleagues when needed.

The Training Fund is supported by contributions from private donations and the media such as: AP Television News, CNN, BBC News, Channel 4 Television, The Guardian, and NBC News.

THE RORY PECK AWARDS
The Awards, sponsored by Sony, is an international competition, which celebrates the work of freelance cameramen and camerawomen in TV newsgathering and current affairs worldwide. It provides an opportunity for freelancers worldwide to showcase their work and reflect what is happening in their countries, while continuing to prove to the international newsgathering community that freelancers matter.

There are four awards: the Rory Peck Award for Hard News, honours freelance coverage of an event where the focus is on the immediacy of the action; the Rory Peck Award for Features, honouring a major contribution to a news feature or documentary demonstrating originality and depth of approach; the Impact Award given by Sony honours footage providing humanitarian imagery which has had an impact internationally and contributed to a change in perception or policy; and the Martin Adler Prize, which honours a freelancer who has told, or played a vital part in telling a significant news story.

The annual Awards Ceremony is a prestigious event and the main fundraiser event for The Rory Peck Trust which honours their skill and initiative and, above all, their courage. It is attended by senior broadcasters, freelancers, bureau chiefs, commissioning editors, diplomats and journalists.
PRINCIPLE 1 – COMMITMENT

The media, public authorities and journalists themselves shall systematically seek ways to assess and reduce the risks in war zones or dangerous areas by consulting each other and exchanging all useful information. Risks to be taken by staff or freelance journalists, their assistants, local employees and support personnel require adequate preparation, information, insurance and equipment.

PRINCIPLE 2 – FREE WILL

Covering wars involves an acceptance by media workers of the risks attached and also a personal commitment which means they go on a strictly voluntary basis. Because of the risks, they should have the right to refuse such assignments without explanation and without their being any finding unprofessional conduct. In the field, the assignment can be terminated at the request of the reporter or the editors after each side has consulted the other and taken into account their mutual responsibilities. Editors should beware of exerting any kind of pressure on special correspondents to take additional risks.

PRINCIPLE 3 – EXPERIENCE

War reporting requires special skills and experience, so editors should choose staff or freelances who are mature and used to crisis situations. Journalists covering a war for the first time should not be sent there alone, but be accompanied by a more experienced reporter. Teamwork in the field should be encouraged. Editors should systematically debrief staff when they return so as to learn from their experiences.

PRINCIPLE 4 – PREPARATION

Regular training in how to cope in war zones or dangerous areas will help reduce the risk to journalists. Editors should inform staff and freelances of any special training offered by nationally or internationally qualified bodies and give them access to it. All journalists called upon to work in a hostile environment should have first-aid training. Every accredited journalism school should familiarise its students with these issues.

PRINCIPLE 5 – EQUIPMENT

Editors should provide special correspondents working in dangerous areas with reliable safety equipment (bullet-proof jackets, helmets and, if possible, armoured vehicles), communication equipment (locator beacons) and survival and first-aid kits.

PRINCIPLE 6 – INSURANCE

Journalists and their assistants working in war zones or dangerous areas should have insurance to cover illness, repatriation, disability and loss of life. Media management should take all necessary steps to provide this before sending or employing personnel on dangerous assignments. They should strictly comply with all applicable professional conventions and agreements.

PRINCIPLE 7 – PHYSIOLOGICAL COUNSELING

Media management should ensure that journalists and their assistants who so desire have access to psychological counseling after returning from dangerous areas or reporting on shocking events.

PRINCIPLE 8 – LEGAL PROTECTION

Journalists on dangerous assignments are considered civilians under Article 79 of Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions, provided they do not do anything or behave in any way that might compromise this status, such as directly helping a war, bearing arms or spying. Any deliberate attack on a Journalist that causes death or serious physical injury is a major breach of this Protocol and deemed a war crime.

REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS
March 2002
www.rsf.fr
THE INSI SAFETY CODE

The International News Safety Institute is dedicated to the right of all journalists to exercise their profession free from persecution, physical attack and other dangers to life and limb. While recognizing that some conditions under which journalists and media staff work can never be completely safe and secure, INSI will strive for the elimination of unnecessary risk, in peace and in war. It will draw on the expertise of its members and supporting organisations to lobby on behalf of working journalists everywhere who embrace the INSI Code of Practice and confront physical or psychological barriers to the free and independent gathering and dissemination of news.

1. The preservation of life and safety is paramount. Staff and freelances equally should be made aware that unwarranted risks in pursuit of a story are unacceptable and strongly discouraged. News organisations are urged to consider safety first, before competitive advantage.

2. Assignments to war and other danger zones must be voluntary and only involve experienced news gatherers and those under their direct supervision. No career should suffer as a result of refusing a dangerous assignment. Editors at base or journalists in the field may decline to terminate a dangerous assignment after proper consultation with the field one another.

3. All journalists and media staff must receive appropriate hostile environment and risk awareness training before being assigned to a danger zone. Employers are urged to make this mandatory.

4. Employers should ensure before assignment that journalists are fully up to date on the political, physical and social conditions prevailing where they are due to work and are aware of international rules of armed conflict as set out in the Geneva Conventions and other key documents of humanitarian law.

5. Employers must provide efficient safety equipment and medical and health safety guards appropriate to the threat to all staff and freelances assigned to hazardous locations.

6. All journalists should be afforded personal insurance while working in hostile areas, including cover against personal injury and death. There should be no discrimination between staff and freelances.

7. Employers should provide free access to confidential counselling for journalists involved in coverage of distressing events. They should train managers in recognition of post traumatic stress, and provide families of journalists in danger areas with timely advice on the safety of their loved-ones.

8. Journalists are neutral observers. No member of the media should carry a firearm in the course of their work.

9. Governments and all military and security forces are urged to respect the safety of journalists in their areas of operation, whether or not accompanying their own forces. They must not restrict unnecessarily freedom of movement or compromise the right of the news media to gather and disseminate information.

10. Security forces must never harass, intimidate or physically attack journalists going about their lawful business.


FOR THEIR SUPPORT WE THANK:

MEDIA:

AP, AP Television News, BBC, Cactus Producciones, CNN en Español, El Noroeste, El Sur, Excélsior, La Jornada, Reuters, RiDoce, Televisa, Zeta

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS:

Article 19; Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social (CENCOSS); Centro de Periodismo y Ética Publica (CEPET); Comité para la Protección de Periodistas (CPJ); Open Society Institute (OSI); Fundación Prensa y Democracia México, A.C. (PRENDE); Reporteros Sin Fronteras (RSF); Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa (SIP/AIP)

INDIVIDUALS:

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Ernesto Álvarez Ponce
Juan Angulo Osorio (sur)
Ana Ariana (Knight Foundation Fellow)
José Luis Añez (Televisa)
Pedro Armendares
Olga Avendaño
Elena Ayala (The news)
Elsa Baz
José Alfredo Beltrán (el noroeste)
Pascal Beltzan del Río (excélsior)
César Rene Blanco Villalón (zeta)
Ismael Boujoñez (Río doce)
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Aleida Callejas (amarc)
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Gerardo Carrillo (reuters)
Manuel Carrillo (AP)
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Armando Castilla Gallardo (la Vanguardia)
Jesus Cervantes (proceso)
Roberto Cienfuegos
Juan Francisco Corcos Cardona (televisa)
José Cohen
Alfredo Corchado (the dallas morning)
José De Cordoba (the wall street journal)
Phil Cox
Aniel Crespo (Cnn en español)
Francisco Cuamea (el noroeste)
Mireya Cuellar (la jornada)
Laura Cuevas
Darío Dávila
Manuel de la Cruz (AP)
José de la Luz Lozano (multimedios)
Rodolfo DelPercio
Rodolfo Díaz Fonseca (el noroeste)
Humberto Duarte (AP)
Marco Antonio Duarte (el universal)

Oliver Elroot (reuters)
Balbina Flores Martínez (rsf)
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Héctor Hugo Jiménez (hora cero)
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Maria Salazar Ferrro (cpu)
Irene Sanchez
Laura Saravia
Susana Seijas
Raúl Trejo Delarbre (unam)
Richard Trott (ap)
Javier Trujillo
Gustavo Valcarcel (ap television news)
Julian Vázquez (prémio nac. de periodismo)
Marian Vitrales
Fernando Villa del Angel (el universal)
Rogelio Villarreal (revista replicante)
Andrew Winning (reuters)
Alejandra Xanic (expansión)

And all the freelancers who have shared their experience with us.
# THE RORY PECK TRUST

**PATRON**

The Most Hon. The Marquess of Salisbury, PC, DL

**CHAIRMAN**

Bob Jobbins, OBE

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<td>Non-Executive Director</td>
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<td>Michael Jermeij</td>
<td>Editor, ITV Regional News</td>
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<td>Peter Jouvenal</td>
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<td>Tira Shubart</td>
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## STAFF

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<tr>
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## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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<td>Journeyman Pictures</td>
<td>NBC News</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netforce</td>
<td>RAI</td>
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<td>Reporters Sans Frontieres</td>
<td>Reuters TV</td>
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<td>RTE</td>
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<td>Westdeutscher Rundfunk</td>
<td>ZDF</td>
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## Mexico Coordinator

Dario Fritz

## Mexico Advisory Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susana Seijas (Chair)</td>
<td>Freelance Journalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Enrique Armendares</td>
<td>Freelance Journalist</td>
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<tr>
<td>José Cohen</td>
<td>Freelance Producer</td>
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<tr>
<td>María Idalia Gómez</td>
<td>Freelance Journalist</td>
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### CONTRIBUTE BY PROVIDING US WITH SOME FEEDBACK

To what extent do you agree with the following (tick one box for each statement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THIS PUBLICATION MEETS MY INFORMATION NEEDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>I FIND THIS PUBLICATION TO BE TRANSPARENT AND OPEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>THIS PUBLICATION IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND</td>
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<td>THE CONTENT OF THIS PUBLICATION IS TRUE</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES ARE INTERESTING</td>
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</table>

**How this publication has change your opinion of:**

» The work of freelance journalists

» How they are perceived by Mexican society

» Their working conditions and lack of safety

» Editors’ perception of freelance newsgatherers

**Please use this space to make general comments you would like to share with us about this report**

**How did you obtain a copy of this publication?**

Name: ________________________________
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Telephone number (optional): __________________________
Even though Mexico is a country which is internationally not known to be at war, it has now become one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a journalist, and especially a freelancer. Since the Trust first visited Mexico in the 2005, 18 newsgatherers have been killed and five have disappeared, four newspaper offices were the targets of bomb attacks and many, many more newsgatherers were injured and threatened. However, a great number of editors may not be aware of the dangers their freelance reporters in the field are facing, and the necessary training or insurance schemes are not easily accessible.

In 2007, with the support of the Open Society Institute, The Rory Peck Trust carried out the first ever investigation into the situation of freelancers in this dangerous climate. Through focus groups and an online questionnaire, the Trust reached more than 300 freelancers in 16 out of 32 federal states and this report presents the findings.