

Three Mexican journalists murdered over past week



Mexico City, August 4 (RHC)-- Two Mexican journalists were murdered in the space of 24 hours this weekend, local media reported, identifying the victims as Zihuatanejo-based editor, Edgar Alberto Nava Lopez, and Veracruz reporter, Jorge Celestino Ruiz.

The pair of deaths amounts to three journalists murdered in the last week and a national toll of 10 so far this year. Nava was the first victim, shot and killed at a restaurant in a coastal city in the state of Guerrero.

A journalist and editor, Nava worked for multiple publications, namely the *Diario de Zihuatanejo*, *El Despertar de la Costa* and *La Verdad de Zihuatanejo*. The details of his murder have not been released and it is unsure whether his death is connected to his journalistic endeavors as he had been on a prolonged vacation. Most recently, his time had been devoted to his duties as a Regulations Director in the city, the Prosecutor's Office of Guerrero said.

Hours later, Celestino was shot dead in Actopan. He had worked as a reporter with the state's oldest newspaper *Xalapa* and had been trying to keep a low profile after suffering a brutal attack last October. Celestino had received numerous threats and his home was riddled with bullets. Again, the reasons for the attack and perpetrators are still being determined.

These murders follow the first of this week's when Guerrero al Instante director Rogelio Barragan was found dead in the trunk of a car in Morelos. He had received numerous death threats, warning him to stop publishing political and police news in the Chihuahua newspaper, El Monitor de Parral which was later attacked with incendiary bombs.

"We condemn the cowardly murder of a local media correspondent, Jorge Ruiz. We will meet those responsible; His murder will not go unpunished. For hours now we continue in the coordinated operation to capture the culprits," said Veracruz Governor Cuitlahuac Garcia Jimenez.

The number of killings continues to rise in Mexico with more than 17,000 homicides registered over the first six months of the year, reaching an all-time high in spite of the efforts made by the government of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to combat violence in the country.

Three thousand and one murders were recorded in June, which represents 232 more homicides than what was reported last year at the same period, according to data provided on July 21 by the Mexican Secretariat of Public Security.

Last month's numbers mark the second-highest figures since statistics began to be compiled in 1997, July 2018, when 3,158 murders were reported is the record number. The data also show that the first half of the year saw 17,138 killings, almost 100 homicides each day, 7.2 percent higher than the statistics for the first half of 2018 when 15,973 murders were reported.

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