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Extract of Presentation

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Panel: Justice and Freedom of Expression and of the Press: A Hemispheric Vision

In the IAPA we believe that only freedom of expression can ensure the protection of the other human rights. It is only when free speech and press freedom are present that the status of all the other rights can be adequately monitored.

We must always begin with the assumption that freedom of expression and of the press are essential rights for democracies and that any corrosion in the free exercise of those rights has an effect upon peaceful coexistence, the exercise of other rights and the democratic system itself.

To this, regrettably, we are all witness in Mexico. A few years ago Colombia was the most dangerous country for the practice of journalism; currently, this record belongs to Mexico, where the number of journalists killed is the highest in the Americas. The number of news men and women murdered, however, hardly compares with the far larger number that have found themselves obligated to keep silent – the thousands that resort to self-censorship as the only recourse to save their lives and those of their family members. The result of this situation is well known – citizens find themselves deprived of the right to be informed, a right that the Constitution says it guarantees, and democracy is greatly harmed.

Our objective also is to improve transparency and working relationships between judges and journalists. We journalists know that we bear a great responsibility in this issue.

To fully attain its objectives within a democracy the press must enjoy all guarantees to gather and disseminate news freely. An independent Judiciary that ensures respect for human rights and guarantees that democratic institutions prevail is essential for this to happen.