



*Item 3 and Item 5: Clustered interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

*39<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council  
statement delivered by Lucy Bye*

Mr President,

ARTICLE 19 shares the concerns of the Special Rapporteur that in Mexico, indigenous peoples continue to face “serious challenges in the exercise of their human rights”, against a backdrop of profound inequality, and structural discrimination.

The Mexican Government’s international commitments to respect, protect and fulfill the right to freedom of expression and information for all, are not matched by the legal, political and institutional reality that indigenous men and women in the country face on a daily basis.

Indigenous journalists and media outlets continue to face heightened risks of reprisal for their work, perpetrated by state and non-state actors, and struggle to access justice for such attacks.

In August 2014, indigenous community radio station La Calentana Luvimex A.C. 96.5 FM, in the State of Mexico, was subject to an armed attack by non-state actors. The child of the station’s founder was shot and killed. In November 2016 Radio Tlayoli (Voces del Maiz) 104.3FM, in the State of Puebla was attacked, with a presenter shot and wounded. The perpetrators enjoy total impunity.

In the State of Yucatán and Quintana Roo, Mayan journalists [Pedro Canché](#) and [Ricardo Neftalí](#) (also known as Felix Bigman) - were arbitrarily detained by municipal police on 30 December 2016 in relation to their reporting of a sit-in by workers. Canché was subsequently charged with ‘sabotage’ whilst Bigman was released within hours without charge. Both allege being tortured whilst in detention, and were subjected to smear campaigns aimed at discrediting their testimony and their work. The authorities have never exhaustively investigated their claims, and the journalists continue to face harassment.

Mayan journalist [Edwin Canché](#), subject to arbitrary detention and alleged torture by municipal police in Yucatán and Quintana Roo in January 2014, has similarly not had access to remedies.

We call on the government to act on recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, to urgently guarantee the safety of indigenous journalists and media outlets – working with the relevant bodies to ensure they have unhindered access to tailored protection measures, and to ensure that all attacks against them are fully investigated, and the perpetrators brought to account.

Rural and indigenous communities face structural and institutional obstacles to access information, including government-held information related to the provision of their health services, local governance issues, and massive development projects affecting their land and communities.

The National Transparency System (NTS), through which individuals are able to request access to such information, privileges the digitally connected, urban and educated. There is a significant urban-rural digital divide in Mexico: just 14% of Internet users are located in rural areas, where the majority of indigenous communities are found. Indigenous women's disproportionately low access to the Internet and ICTs further compounds pre-existing inequalities in their enjoyment of all human rights, including freedom of expression and information, and their economic social and cultural rights.

We are concerned by indigenous women's limited access to information, in particular on themes related to their sexual and reproductive rights. This must urgently be addressed to ensure their right to health, to enable indigenous women to make informed decisions about their health, and, crucially, towards preventing obstetric violence against them.

We call on the Government of Mexico to fully implement the legal framework on access to information, and take steps to address acute digital divides in the country, to ensure indigenous men and women are able to enjoy all their human rights.