



“State of Freedom of Expression and Journalism in the Americas” Virtual Seminar

**11:00 AM-1:00 PM (EST)
Friday, February 26, 2021**

Context

The relationship between the effective validity of freedom of expression and the preservation of democracy, as a central value, has been the subject of multiple political pronouncements. In particular, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, approved in 2001 as a manifesto recognizing representative democracy as the only legitimate political regime in the region. In article 4 it mentions, among the fundamental components of the exercise of democracy, freedom of expression and of the press.

To this end, the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE) created by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in 1997 to stimulate the hemispheric defense of the right to freedom of thought and expression, has promoted in accordance with its mandate, the adoption of legislative, judicial and administrative measures to make the exercise of freedom of thought and expression effective.

Likewise, on different occasions, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) has expressed its support for the work being carried out by the Office of the Special Rapporteur, and has entrusted it with the monitoring or analysis of some of the rights that make up freedom of expression.

As a result of the Eighth Summit of the Americas, the "Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance against Corruption" was approved, a set of mandates or specific measures to prevent and combat corruption. Among the mandates adopted is Mandate 23, regarding freedom of expression: "*Protect the work of journalists and individuals who investigate corruption, in a manner consistent with international obligations and commitments on human rights, including freedom of expression.*"

On top of persisting old problems, such as acts of violence and attacks against journalists and human rights defenders who have been arbitrarily imprisoned, or have been subjected to physical or online violence, other challenges are added, such as the enactment of emergency laws to diminish or restrict freedom of expression, as well as the growing use of criminal law to criminalize expression and social protest.

Added to this, are new challenges mainly associated with the digitization of information and technological advances, such as the control of online content and the concentration on the internet, as well as the control of content by technology companies.

In light of the aforementioned challenges, and on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the origin and implementation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, it is necessary to review the existing challenges in the promotion of freedom of expression in the region. In this regard, the Summits Secretariat, in its capacity as Technical Secretariat of the Summits of the Americas Process, jointly with

the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, invites you to an exchange of ideas, to address the conditions for the right to exercise freedom of thought and expression in member states.

Guiding Questions

1. What challenges is journalism currently facing, how long before it becomes extinct, how close is it to being seized and what horizons does the press have?
2. What censorship mechanisms persist without being resolved, what mechanisms have become more sophisticated?
3. Lately much attention has been paid to the issue of content moderation on the internet. What does it mean for journalism and what should be the role of the states? Is it possible to think of international regulation on content moderation? What implications does it present for the democratic debate in the region?

Objectives and expected result

This webinar, convened by the Summits Secretariat jointly with the Office of the Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Expression (RELE) within the framework of the Follow-up and Implementation of the Eighth Summit of the Americas, and in preparation towards the Ninth Summit of the Americas, is an opportunity to establish a direct dialogue with the relevant actors, associations of journalists and investigative journalists promoting agendas at the regional level, international organizations on the subject, or think tanks interested in the protection of freedom of expression.

Based on the discussions, the Summits Secretariat and the RELE will prepare a report with the conclusions, revisiting the key issues.

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

Friday, February 26, 2021

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| 11:00 am - 11:20 am | Introduction and Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maria Celina Conte, Director a.i., Summits of the Americas Secretariat- Ambassador James Lambert, Secretary for Hemispheric Affairs of the Organization of American States- Jon Piechowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Bureau of Western Hemispheric Affairs, United States Department of State |
| 11:20 am - 11:25 am | Tour de table-Presentation of panelists |
| 11:25 am - 11:45 am | Context on “Situation on freedom of expression and journalism in the |

11: 45 am – 1:00 pm Americas” by Mr. Pedro José Vaca Villarreal, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)
Discussion moderated by Mr. Pedro Jose Vaca Villareal, Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the CIDH

Panel of Experts:

- Agustina Del Campo, Director of the Center for Studies on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (CELE) at the University of Palermo, Argentina.
- Monica Baró, Cuban freelance journalist
- Carlos Fernando Chamorro, Nicaraguan investigative journalist
- Luz Mely Reyes (*TBC*), Venezuelan independent journalist, Director and co-founder of the digital portal *Efecto Cocuyo*

1:00 pm Closing

The event will feature: English / Spanish interpretation
Webcast transmission

Bios of Experts:

Pedro José Vaca Villarreal: Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Mr. Vaca has a background in human rights and trial law with a focus on freedom of information. Prior to his appointment, he was the Former Director of the Foundation for Press Freedom in Colombia. He has also served as Chair of the Coordinating Committee of the IFEX Network for Freedom of Expression in Latin America (2014-2015). Professor of Freedom of Expression of the Master's Degree in Journalism at the Universidad de Los Andes (CEPER). Experience in research of limits to press freedom, media regulations and freedom of expression on the internet. He is a lawyer and holds a Master's Degree in Law with a focus in Constitutional Law from the National University of Colombia.

Agustina Del Campo: Agustina is Director of the Center for Studies on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (CELE) at the University of Palermo. She is a lawyer and has a Master's in International Law with a specialization in Human Rights from the American University Washington College of Law. She is a member of the Group of Experts on Freedom of Expression of Columbia University in New York, and professor of undergraduate and graduate degrees in International Human Rights and Human Rights and Internet Law at the Universidad de San Andrés and in Palermo. She is an author and contributor to publications on the subject.

Monica Baró: Cuban freelance journalist who currently lives in Madrid. Winner of the 2019 Gabo Prize for his work “*La sangre nunca fue amarilla*” or The blood was never yellow. Born in Cuba in 1988, graduated from Journalism in 2012, at the University of Havana. She worked for a year and a half in a state magazine called Bohemia, the oldest in the region. In 2015 she began working as a reporter and member of the editorial board of Periodismo de Barrio, an independent digital magazine, through the end of 2018.

Carlos Fernando Chamorro: Nicaraguan independent investigative journalist. He is the founder and editor of www.confidencial.com.ni, a news website and weekly publication combining investigative journalism and analyses of current affairs. Mr. Chamorro is a winner of the 2010 Maria Moors Cabot Prize from Columbia University and was a Knight Fellow at Stanford University in 1997-1998.

Luz Mely Reyes, Venezuelan independent journalist. Director and co-founder of the digital portal Efecto Cocuyo. In 2016, she completed the Entrepreneurial Journalism Program at the City University of New York (CUNY). Recipient of an international fellowship at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Organization of American States (OAS) to study Andean integration. Professor of Political Communications at Simon Bolivar University in Caracas, Venezuela.