



LASALLECUNMUN 2025

UNESCO

United Nations
Educational Scientific
and Cultural
Organization

“Censorship and
repression of press
freedom on
organized crime
issues: challenges,
impacts and
solutions”

Background Guide





Dear delegates,

My name is Ximena Carballo Grande I am the president of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, along with my moderator Leonardo Oliva Peña, and Conference Officer Juan Carlo Martinez Escalera we welcome you with much excitement to LASALLECUNMUN 2025! I hope you have fun and enjoy participating in this model, we will do our best to guide you and make sure you have a great experience.

I'm 17 years old, in my third semester at Universidad La Salle Cancun, in the Business Administration Area. When I finish High school my goal is to study Law, part of my decision to study that career is because of Model UN, I have previously participated in ULSACUNMUN 2023 and ULSACUNMUN 2022. In my first model, I represented the delegation of Germany and in my second model, I was part of DISEC as the moderator. I had a lot of fun both times, as a delegate I enjoyed researching in depth the problematics that were presented and my country. As the moderator, I had a lot of fun with my committee planning and taking pictures. Through both experiences, I discovered my passion for debate and research, something I never thought I was good at and could do. I encourage you to be open-minded through the entire model and challenge yourself. In my free time, I enjoy ice skating, going out with my friends, and working out in the gym. My main hobbies are playing the guitar, painting, playing video games, and most recently photography

I find MUN to be a unique experience as well as really interesting and nurturing as it helps you discover new passions. I hope that you have a great time in the model, make great memories with friends, and learn a lot from it. Throughout the model I highly encourage you to listen actively and think critically, remember it is not just a simulation; it is an opportunity to discuss pressing international challenges and to work together to find solutions to solve them. If you have any doubts, don't hesitate to get in touch with me and I will make sure to help you.

With heartfelt regards and best wishes

Ximena Carballo Grande

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COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It contributes to peace and security by promoting international cooperation in education, sciences, culture, communication, and information.

Political and economic arrangements of governments are not enough to secure the lasting and sincere support of the people. Peace must be founded upon dialogue and mutual understanding. Peace must be built upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity. UNESCO's mandate is more relevant than ever. Cultural diversity is under attack and new forms of intolerance, rejection of scientific facts, and threats to freedom of expression challenge peace and human rights. In response, UNESCO's duty remains to reaffirm the humanist missions of education, science, and culture.

Topic: "Censorship and repression of press freedom on organized crime issues: challenges, impacts and solutions"

INTRODUCTION

Press freedom allows individuals and organizations to express and publish information without censorship. It is essential for society as it provides people with important information and brings relevant news to public attention. It ensures that abuses of power, injustices, crimes, and corruption are exposed and punished. Press freedom is essential for democracy as informed citizens can make better choices on who they vote for, advocate for their rights, and fight for good causes. Although this is a fundamental right, crimes against journalists and news reporters are frequent. Journalism can only be exerted freely by people who are not harassed or worried about what would happen to them if they were to publish an article exposing criminal organizations.

Organized crime as the name indicates means that the acts of violence or illegal activities are not unplanned nor individual, they are carefully calculated. Organized crime's ultimate goal is to profit or gain power. When these groups gain power they can "buy", or intimidate with some form of violence public officials so they don't get punished for their crimes. That is why people must know what is happening in their country, cities, and communities. Because journalists being murdered, threatened, or attacked for informing facts about what is happening creates a culture of impunity further endangering press freedom and permitting groups of organized crime to operate more freely and gain even more power. This weakens our democratic institutions and undermines the law.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Censorship and suppression of freedom of the press on issues related to organized crime have been a persistent phenomenon throughout history, due to that there is no clear information about exactly when it started to happen. However, it is clear that it has affected how crime is reported and perceived, making it harder to report the truth without fear of intimidation. Since the early 20th century, more and more criminal organizations have used intimidation tactics to silence the media, leading to an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship among journalists. The term “organized crime” encloses not only small groups of criminals but also groups of people that corrupt the government, directly affecting the system of justice that is supposed to judge them for their crimes. Efforts to combat organized crime have been around for a while. For example, in 1998 recognizing that with globalization organized crime between countries was easier, the Member States of the United Nations decided to establish an ad hoc Committee to elaborate an international Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to combat the problem.

In countries where the government's power and justice system are weak, organized crime stands out for its presence, and the media faces direct threats and violence from these organizations. In response to these challenges, the international community has sought to establish mechanisms for protecting press freedom. In the 90's there were multiple declarations to promote independent and pluralistic media around the world, like the Declaration of Windhoek, the Declaration of Alma Ata, the Declaration of Santiago, the Declaration of Sana, and the Declaration of Sofia. In addition to that in 1980, UNESCO created the International Programme for the Development of Communication. This program promotes the safety of journalists, supports media independence, and aims to improve journalism education. In 1997 UNESCO approved Resolution 29, which condemns violence against journalists and invites governments to refine their legislation to make it possible to prosecute and sentence those who instigate the assassination of persons exercising the right to freedom of expression.

CURRENT SITUATION

Press freedom is at its lowest point in over 10 years, the reason for that is violence, intimidation, political persecution, impunity for crimes against journalists, governments, and law systems that fail to protect the practice of journalism as a whole. Crimes that threaten freedom of expression should not go unnoticed, because when a person who used force to censor a journalist, is not adequately punished, others feel intimidated and as a consequence can be afraid to report on a similar issue. An example of this in Latin America is Colombia where journalists and in general people who speak out about organized crime and corruption receive threats and are sometimes even attacked. Like the case of William Stiven Rojas Rincon, an independent journalist who collaborates with news websites and has faced threats from organized crime groups for investigating them. Because of cases like this more and more journalists are afraid to report on certain topics or certain regions. This does not only happen in Latin America; it is a global situation. In the Middle East and Southeast Asia, journalists exposing drug cartels and corruption within the government have been harassed or assassinated. Both of these cases show that there is a systemic problem where governments and law enforcement are either complicit or unable to protect press freedom.

But when the perpetrators of crimes against journalists do get caught and sentenced, the freedom of expression aspect of the crime must be recognized, for instance in the case of Ayub Khattak, a Pakistani who published an article exposing a drug smuggling operation, and hours later was killed by the people that he accused. In his case, the court sentenced the perpetrators for life, but they failed to recognize a key element, the freedom of expression aspect of the crime. It is important that when such cases of violence, threats, or any intimidation against the press happen, the legal system emphasizes that such attacks affect not only an individual's right to free expression but also society's right. To help accomplish the recognition of the freedom of expression aspect in cases like that; UNESCO trains judges and prosecutors to defend press freedom, in partnership with educational institutes. They focus mainly on international standards related to freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. The training pays close attention to issues of impunity, impunity in cases where a journalist has been intimidated or attacked is a dangerous thing, if the accused is granted impunity it sends a message that they can do that and not be punished.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, roughly 40% of homicides around the world are linked to Organized crime groups. In some countries, organized crime has taken control and gained power over the government and traditional media, leaving citizens to rely on independent news sources, to report what is happening. The job of a journalist is to ask difficult questions to uncover the truth, to take an investigation to the next level, and keep citizens informed of injustices, conflicts, and problems that could affect society. But this job is interrupted when organized crime is out of control and the law and state institutions are unable or unwilling to offer them protection, or justice.

The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity has been one of the most successful initiatives to protect journalists, this led to the creation of, 50 National Protection Mechanisms for the safety of journalists and the UNESCO Observatory on Killed Journalists which keeps track of the killing of journalists and the judicial status of ongoing and unresolved cases. The protection of press freedom is not only a matter of individual safety but of safeguarding democracy itself. It is of the utmost importance that countries, combat impunity, and ensure that no journalist is silenced for doing their job. International initiatives, such as UNESCO's training programs, and the UN Plan of Action have shown that meaningful change is achievable.

COUNTRY BOX

Federal Republic of Nigeria

French Republic

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Islamic Republic of Iran

Italian Republic

Kingdom of Denmark

Kingdom of Norway

Kingdom of Sweden

People's Republic of China

Republic of Colombia

Republic of Cuba

Republic of Guatemala

Republic of South Africa

Republic of The Philippines

Russian Federation

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

State of Israel

State of Qatar

United Mexican States

United States of America

GUIDE QUESTIONS

- I. What are the key challenges faced by journalists covering organized crime in your country?
- II. How has your country addressed cases of violence, intimidation, or censorship of journalists by organized crime groups?
- III. How has organized crime evolved in your country over the past two decades?
- IV. What role has UNESCO played in your country to safeguard freedom of expression and press freedom?

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