

## MEXICO

	2009	2011
<b>INTERNET FREEDOM STATUS</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>Partly Free</b>
<b>Obstacles to Access</b>	n/a	12
<b>Limits on Content</b>	n/a	10
<b>Violations of User Rights</b>	n/a	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>32</b>

**POPULATION:** 110.7 million  
**INTERNET PENETRATION:** 28 percent  
**WEB 2.0 APPLICATIONS BLOCKED:** No  
**SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL CENSORSHIP:** No  
**BLOGGERS/ONLINE USERS ARRESTED:** No  
**PRESS FREEDOM STATUS:** Partly Free

### INTRODUCTION

In February 1989, the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey established Mexico's first internet connection.<sup>1</sup> Despite dramatic growth in internet penetration over the last 21 years, the majority of the population, particularly in rural areas, still lacks affordable access. This is largely due to infrastructural deficiencies and high prices resulting from ownership concentration in the telecommunications sector. Nevertheless, access to the internet is expanding, government initiatives are underway to narrow the digital divide, and mobile-phones are widely available.

Once individuals are able to get online, the Mexican internet is predominantly free of censorship, though on several occasions in 2009 and 2010, videos and other content related to political debate were removed at the authorities' behest. While the blogosphere is not as influential as in other countries in the region, the social-networking site Facebook and the Twitter microblogging service have emerged as important tools for citizen mobilization, including in response to drug-related violence and attacks on journalist. Despite the growing violence against traditional media workers, online journalists and bloggers have yet to be similarly targeted.

<sup>1</sup> Network Information Center (NIC) Mexico, "Historia de NIC Mexico" [History of NIC Mexico], <http://www.nic.mx/es/NicMexico.Historia> (in Spanish), accessed November 16, 2010.

## OBSTACLES TO ACCESS

Internet penetration in Mexico has increased significantly over the past decade, from approximately 7.1 million users (8 percent of the population) in 2001 to approximately 30 million (28 percent of the population) in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, these figures remain relatively low for a country at Mexico's level of economic development, and especially for a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). For example, while Mexico has 9.5 internet subscribers for every 100 inhabitants, the OECD average is 20 subscribers for every 100 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> In addition, technological advancement has been uneven across the country, with a large percentage of users concentrated in Mexico City. In total, 84 percent of users over the age of six reside in urban areas, while only 16 percent live in rural parts of the country.<sup>4</sup> This digital divide is largely due to a lack of infrastructure, reflected in the fact that only 18.4 percent of households have internet service.<sup>5</sup> Together with the high prices described below, this has put the internet beyond the reach of a majority of the population. Nevertheless, cybercafes are generally easy to access in small cities, some small towns, and in areas frequented by tourists. The number of Mexicans accessing the internet primarily at home has increased in recent years, though as of May 2010, 54 percent of users reportedly still accessed the web outside their home.<sup>6</sup> Broadband access is relatively limited. No accurate statistics are available on the level of internet use among the indigenous population.

A lack of competition in the telecommunications sector has contributed to high prices and weakened incentives for the dominant companies to expand services to rural areas, leaving many parts of the country without connectivity. Although there are hundreds of independent internet-service providers (ISPs) in Mexico,<sup>7</sup> the private company Teléfonos de México (Telmex) dominates the market for landlines and DSL broadband internet

<sup>2</sup> International Telecommunication Union (ITU), "ICT Statistics 2001—Internet," <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/icteye/Indicators/Indicators.aspx>, accessed August 30, 2010; "Mexico Online," *eMarketer*, January 2009, [http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/N/n67/varia/oislas/emarketer\\_2000531.pdf](http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/N/n67/varia/oislas/emarketer_2000531.pdf); Internet World Stats, "Internet Usage and Population in Central America," <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats12.htm>, accessed August 25, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> "La SCT invertirá 1,500 MDP para Internet" [The SCT Will Invest 1.5 Billion Pesos for the Internet], CNN Expansión, June 23, 2010, <http://www.cnnexpansion.com/economia/2010/06/23/sct-invertira-1500-mdp-en-internet> (in Spanish); ITU, "ICT Statistics 2009—Internet," <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ICTEYE/Indicators/Indicators.aspx>, accessed August 30, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Mexican Internet Association (AMIPCI), *Estudio AMIPCI 2009 Sobre Hábitos de los Usuarios de Internet* [AMIPCI 2009 Report on Internet Users' Habits] (Mexico City: AMIPCI, May 2010), <http://www.amipci.org.mx/estudios/temp/Estudiofinalversion1110-0198933001274287495OB.pdf> (in Spanish). Of the 30.6 million users over the age of six, an estimated 25.6 million live in urban areas.

<sup>5</sup> "Sólo el 18% de los hogares en México tienen Internet: INEGI" [Only 18% of Mexican Households Have Internet: INEGI], *El Semanario*, May 17, 2010, [http://www.elsemanario.com.mx/news/news\\_display.php?story\\_id=38482](http://www.elsemanario.com.mx/news/news_display.php?story_id=38482) (in Spanish).

<sup>6</sup> AMIPCI, *Estudio AMIPCI 2009 Sobre Hábitos de los Usuarios de Internet*.

<sup>7</sup> James Thomasson, William Foster, and Laurence Press, *The Diffusion of the Internet in Mexico* (Austin: Latin American Network Information Center, University of Texas, 2002), <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/etext/mexico/thomasson/thomasson.pdf>.

services, providing service to 6.3 million of the latter market's 8 million subscribers.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the cost of a broadband connection remains prohibitively expensive for many Mexicans, ranging from 389 pesos (US\$30) to 999 pesos (US\$78) per month.<sup>9</sup> In cybercafes, the rate for one hour of access ranges from 10 to 15 pesos (US\$0.77 to US\$1.15), compared with the minimum wage of 50 to 55 pesos (US\$3.80 to US\$4.20) an hour depending on location.<sup>10</sup> In addition, a 2010 study found that 52 percent of Mexicans surveyed who did not access the internet explained this was because they did not feel it was important, another potential explanation for the country's relatively low penetration rate.<sup>11</sup>

The Mexican government has acknowledged the serious gaps in internet access and shown greater willingness in recent years to address the problem. In April 2009, Congress introduced a proposed Law for the Development of an Information Society. The draft legislation explicitly recognizes the responsibility of the Mexican state to plan and promote the development of access to information and communication technologies (ICTs).<sup>12</sup> In May 2010, the Department of Communications and Transportation also announced an investment of 1.5 billion pesos (US\$115.5 million) to extend internet access to neglected regions that private companies have deemed unprofitable.<sup>13</sup> The government plans for the first time to use a national network of fiber-optic cables to connect outlying regions, and allow third parties to offer internet services.<sup>14</sup> As of mid-2010, steps had also begun to expand broadband services to academic institutions across the country,<sup>15</sup> and the department had joined private investors like the Telefónica Foundation to establish "digital clubs" as a means of introducing new media technologies to broader segments of the population.<sup>16</sup>

Applications like Facebook, Twitter, the video-sharing site YouTube, and international blog-hosting services are freely available and growing in popularity. In 2005, users of the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service Skype complained that Telmex had blocked access to the platform, allegedly because it feared losing revenue from fixed-line

<sup>8</sup> Isabel Ferguson, "Telmex en 'Infinitum,' sólo si ofrece TV" [Telmex in Infinitum only if TV is offered], CNN Expansión, January 26, 2010, <http://www.cnnexpansion.com/negocios/2010/01/25/telmex-pide-video-a-cambio-de-internet> (in Spanish).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Black, "Mexico to Raise Minimum Wage 4.85 Percent on Average in 2010," Bloomberg, December 17, 2009, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aDxkLtk91LkA>.

<sup>11</sup> Octavio Islas and Fernando Gutiérrez, "Resultados de los Estudio de Hábitos y Percepciones de los mexicanos sobre internet y Tecnologías Aplicadas 2010" [Results for Study of Mexican Habits and Perception on Internet and Applied Technology, 2010], Razón y Palabra, August-October 2010, [http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/N/N73/Varia73/00Islas\\_V73.pdf](http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/N/N73/Varia73/00Islas_V73.pdf) (in Spanish).

<sup>12</sup> Special Committee of Congress for the Promotion of Digital Access to Mexicans, "Ley para el desarrollo de la Sociedad de la Información" [Bill to Promote the Development of the Society of Information], 2009, <http://jmcane.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/ley-desarrollo-sociedad-de-la-informacion-mexico.pdf> (in Spanish).

<sup>13</sup> "Invertirá SCT mil 500 mdp en Internet" [SCT Will Invest 1.5 Billion Pesos for the Internet], *El Universal*, June 23, 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/689775.html> (in Spanish).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.; Thomasson and others, *The Diffusion of the Internet in Mexico*.

<sup>15</sup> Thomasson and others, *The Diffusion of the Internet in Mexico*.

<sup>16</sup> Secretariat of Communications and Transportation, "Impulsa SCT Campaña Nacional de Inclusión Digital" [SCT National Campaign Promotes Digital Inclusion], news release, August 13, 2010, <http://www.sct.gob.mx/despliega-noticias/article/comunicado-de-prensa-no-131-impulsa-sct-campana-nacional-de-inclusion-digital/> (in Spanish).

calls.<sup>17</sup> The company denied that it was deliberately blocking the application.<sup>18</sup> Following a public outcry, the blocking ended, and as of 2010, the Skype service was freely available.

Six private companies, led by Telcel, control the mobile-phone market. Mobile-phone access is significantly more widespread than internet use, with 83.5 million subscribers as of 2009.<sup>19</sup> Some 8 out of 10 households have at least one mobile phone.<sup>20</sup> The penetration rate has grown rapidly, from 52.6 percent in 2006 to over 80 percent in 2010.<sup>21</sup> According to the Federal Telecommunications Commission (COFETEL), this is still a low rate compared with other OECD countries.<sup>22</sup> Access to the internet via mobile phones has also grown in recent years.<sup>23</sup> However, due to the high cost of third-generation (3G) technology handsets, only 10 percent of users can afford the necessary equipment.<sup>24</sup>

Mexico's legal framework for telecommunications is complicated and outdated, as the main legislation on the topic was passed in the 1960s. COFETEL and the Federal Competition Commission (CFC), an antitrust body, are the primary agencies tasked with regulating the telecommunications sector.<sup>25</sup> Observers and press freedom advocates have criticized COFETEL for its lack of independence from the Department of Communications and Transportation and the executive branch. The president directly appoints COFETEL commissioners without the need for Senate approval, and the commission operates with limited transparency. These problems contribute to mistrust of its actions, especially regarding frequency allocations. Nevertheless, there have been no cases of companies being prevented from offering digital-technology services. The CFC has a better reputation, and its head commissioner has demonstrated the will to enforce antitrust legislation, but the

<sup>17</sup> Ben Charny, "Mexican Telephone Operator Under VoIP Fire," CNET News, April 25, 2005, [http://news.cnet.com/Mexico-telephone-operator-under-VoIP-fire/2100-7352\\_3-5681542.html](http://news.cnet.com/Mexico-telephone-operator-under-VoIP-fire/2100-7352_3-5681542.html).

<sup>18</sup> Eduardo Arcos, "Se Confirma el Bloqueo a de VoiP por Telmex/Prodigy" [Telmex/Prodigy Blockage of VoIP Is Confirmed], *Alt1040*, April 21, 2005, <http://alt1040.com/2005/04/se-confirma-el-bloqueo-de-voip-en-telmex-prodigy> (in Spanish).

<sup>19</sup> ITU, "ICT Statistics 2009—Mobile Cellular Subscriptions," <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ICTEYE/Indicators/Indicators.aspx>, accessed August 31, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> AMIPCI, *Estudio AMIPCI 2009 Sobre Hábitos de los Usuarios de Internet*, 37.

<sup>21</sup> Federal Telecommunications Commission (COFETEL), "Estadísticas: Telefonía Móvil" [Statistics: Mobile Telephony], [http://www.cofetel.gob.mx/wb/Cofetel\\_2008/Cofe\\_telefonia\\_movil](http://www.cofetel.gob.mx/wb/Cofetel_2008/Cofe_telefonia_movil) (in Spanish), accessed August 31, 2010; "Mexico—Mobile Market—Overview, Statistics and Forecasts," Budde Comm, <http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Mexico-Mobile-Market-Overview-Statistics-and-Forecasts.html>, accessed February 14, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Claudia Juarez Escalona, "En México Suman 80.8 millones de Móviles" [80.8 Million Mobile Phones in Mexico], *El Economista*, August 19, 2009, <http://eleconomista.com.mx/notas-impreso/internacional/2009/08/19/mexico-suman-808-millones-moviles> (in Spanish).

<sup>23</sup> Google Sites, "Telefonía 3G: Mexico 3G," <http://sites.google.com/site/telefonia3g/mexico-3g> (in Spanish), accessed August 31, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> "Altos costos Limitan Penetración de Celulares 3G en Mercado Mexicano" [High Costs Limit Penetration of 3G Phones in Mexican Market], *Informador*, December 15, 2009, <http://www.informador.com.mx/economia/2008/63021/6/altos-costos-limitan-penetracion-de-celulares-3g-en-mercado-mexicano.htm> (in Spanish).

<sup>25</sup> COFETEL, "Ambito de Acción" [Scope of Action], [http://www.cofetel.gob.mx/wb/Cofetel\\_2008/Cofe\\_ambito\\_de\\_accion](http://www.cofetel.gob.mx/wb/Cofetel_2008/Cofe_ambito_de_accion) (in Spanish), accessed August 31, 2010; Federal Competition Commission, "¿Qué hacemos?" [What Do We Do?], [http://www.cfc.gob.mx/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=54&Itemid=6&lang=es](http://www.cfc.gob.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54&Itemid=6&lang=es) (in Spanish), accessed August 31, 2010.

institution remains weak and has limited power to impose sanctions on large companies like Telmex. There are no restrictions on opening cybercafes, though like other businesses they are required to obtain a license to operate.<sup>26</sup>

## LIMITS ON CONTENT

The Mexican authorities do not employ any technical methods to filter or systematically curb access to online content, and no legislation restricts the internet as a medium for mass communication. Nonetheless, there have been isolated incidents in which online content in the public interest has been removed at the behest of government agencies. For example, in March 2010, the authorities in Jalisco asked YouTube to take down a video produced by a local civil society organization that criticized a highway construction project in the region; the video was subsequently deleted.<sup>27</sup> In addition, under Mexican law, the Federal Electoral Institution (IFE) is charged with regulating the use of political advertisements and restricting the circulation of overly negative or false portrayals of candidates. In this context, in April 2009, the IFE ordered the incumbent president's National Action Party (PAN) to remove from its website an online game that was highly critical of other political parties.<sup>28</sup> Two months later, following a complaint lodged by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the IFE asked YouTube to take down a video attacking Fidel Herrera, the governor of Veracruz. YouTube complied and the video was removed.<sup>29</sup> In another instance, journalist Alejandro Lelo de Larrea reported in April 2010 that a Facebook group he created calling for President Felipe Calderón's sobriety 24 hours a day was deleted, presumably at the request of the government.<sup>30</sup> There have been no reports of proactive content manipulation by either companies or the government.

Although there is extensive self-censorship among journalists working in traditional media, particularly regarding police activity and drug trafficking, the phenomenon is less prevalent among online journalists and bloggers. This is partly because online journalism is not well developed in Mexico, and online writers are less likely to face violent attacks.

Due to a dearth of funding, including a lack of investor interest in internet advertising, it is difficult for individuals and nonprofit initiatives to establish sustainable

<sup>26</sup> "Por qué un Café Internet aún es buen negocio en México" [Why an Internet Café Is Still Good Business in Mexico], InternetCafes.com.mx (blog), July 1, 2010, <http://internetcafes.com.mx/2010/07/por-que-un-cafe-internet-aun-es-buen-negocio-en-mexico/> (in Spanish).

<sup>27</sup> Janet Vazquez, "Censura Jalisco Video de Youtube" [Jalisco's Government Censors Youtube], W Radio, July 12, 2010, <http://www.wradio.com.mx/nota.aspx?id=1325812> (in Spanish).

<sup>28</sup> "IFE Censura a PAN: Zavala" [Zavala: PAN Is Censored By IFE], W Radio, April 3, 2010, <http://www.wradio.com.mx/nota.aspx?id=789606> (in Spanish).

<sup>29</sup> José Gerardo Mejía, "IFE ordena a YouTube retirar spot de Fidel Herrera" [IFE Orders YouTube to Remove a Video of Fidel Herrera], *El Universal*, May 12, 2009, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/597512.html> (in Spanish).

<sup>30</sup> Katia D'Ártigues, "¿Todos contra Brewer?" [Everybody against Brewer?], *Vanguardia*, April 27, 2010, <http://www.vanguardia.com.mx/%C2%BFtodoscontrabrewer?-492495-columna.html> (in Spanish).

online media projects. For example, the electronic magazine *Reporte Indigo*, launched in 2007, is now one of Mexico's most innovative and influential political websites, but due to financial constraints it has been forced to begin charging for its content. Nevertheless, the internet has provided space for certain forms of expression that is unavailable elsewhere. Some community radio stations,<sup>31</sup> such as RadioAMLO Puebla, have successfully migrated online after being shut down by the authorities because of Mexico's restrictive legal framework on such outlets.<sup>32</sup> A group of journalists have founded *Periodistas de a Pié*, which, among other things, used social media to organize a rally protesting violence against journalists, and *México Infórmate*, dedicated to promoting transparency and auditing officials' use of state resources.<sup>33</sup> Blogs and politically oriented web portals have not gained significant influence or succeeded in dramatically widening the spectrum of views available to Mexicans beyond the narrow set of opinions found in the concentrated print and broadcast market. This is not due to deliberate government censorship, however, and the Mexican public generally has open access to the full range of national and international news sources.

Many civil society groups have their own sites, and those that cannot afford a website are able to use blogging platforms to provide information on their activities. According to the World Association of Community Radio in Mexico, the internet has been a helpful tool for nongovernmental organizations operating in rural areas, and especially for female activists.<sup>34</sup>

Facebook has emerged as an important instrument for social and political mobilization, as Mexico was home to over 18 million users at the end of 2010, the largest contingent in Latin America and eighth largest in the world.<sup>35</sup> Twitter also has a growing number of registered users, approximately 146,000 as of February 2010.<sup>36</sup> Citizens have used Twitter and Facebook to exchange information about drug-related violence, and to warn local communities about dangerous situations, especially in the northern states.<sup>37</sup> In October 2009, when Congress introduced a plan to impose a 3 percent tax on internet access, users mobilized via a Twitter movement called "Internet Necesario," and Congress

<sup>31</sup> See the website of the World Association of Community Radio–Mexico at <http://www.amarcMexico.org/> (in Spanish).

<sup>32</sup> Julio Hernández López, "Cofetel Golpeadora: Silencia Dos Radios Comunitarias" [Cofetel Shuts Down Two Community Radio Stations], *La Jornada*, October 4, 2007, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2007/10/04/index.php?section=opinion&article=004o1pol> (in Spanish).

<sup>33</sup> See the México Infórmate website at <http://www.mexicoinformate.org/portal/> (in Spanish).

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Laura Salas, advocacy coordinator for AMARC–México, August 2010.

<sup>35</sup> "Mexico Facebook Statistics," Socialbakers, <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/mexico/last-3-months#chart-intervals>, accessed February 14, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> "There Are 148,000 Accounts of Mexican Users on Twitter," *Latin Daily Financial News*, February 9, 2010, <http://www.latindailyfinancialnews.com/index.php/en/business/mexico/3956-there-are-148-thousand-accounts-of-mexican-users-on-twitter.html>; "Twitter en México, algunos numerosos" [Twitter in Mexico, some numbers], <http://www.webadictos.com.mx/2010/02/08/twitter-en-mexico-algunos-numeros/>, accessed February 14, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Miguel Castillo, "Mexico: Citizen Journalism in the Middle of Drug Trafficking Violence," *Global Voices*, May 5, 2010, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/05/05/mexico-citizen-journalism-in-the-middle-of-drug-trafficking-violence/>.

was forced to withdraw the proposal.<sup>38</sup> Finally, in July 2010, the Periodistas de a Pié movement launched a campaign called “Los queremos vivos” to protest attacks against journalists, using Twitter and Facebook to organize rallies and demand government action. The campaign organizers were able to gather approximately 1,000 journalists, with demonstrations taking place in Mexico City, Tijuana, Culiacán, and elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> In advance of federal elections in 2009, a number of NGOs adapted the crowdsourcing platform Ushahidi to track reports of vote-buying by citizens, eventually leading to additional investigations by the special prosecutor.<sup>40</sup> Despite these successes, online activism remains limited to a small community, as many of the most popular bloggers address personal topics rather than engaging in political or social commentary.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to civil society uses of social media tools, all political parties participating in the 2009 elections launched online campaigns to reach potential voters, with some candidates using Twitter or Facebook to communicate their platforms.<sup>42</sup> In a more disturbing trend, drug cartels have also begun using social media applications to exchange information on military checkpoints, prompting calls by some Mexican politicians for increased government monitoring and regulation of these tools.<sup>43</sup>

## VIOLATIONS OF USER RIGHTS

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The federal criminal defamation law was repealed in 2007, but civil insult laws remain on the books, and criminal defamation statutes exist in 17 of Mexico’s 32 states.<sup>44</sup> During 2009, local press freedom watchdogs reported several cases of harassing lawsuits against journalists,<sup>45</sup> though

<sup>38</sup> Renata Avila, “#InternetNecesario,” Technology for Transparency Network, February 13, 2010, <http://transparency.globalvoicesonline.org/project/internetnecesario>.

<sup>39</sup> National Center for Social Communication, “Cientos marchan por la Libertad de Expresión” [Hundreds March for Freedom of Expression], Campaña Permanente, August 9, 2010, <http://www.libertad-expresion.org.mx/tag/los-queremos-vivos/> (in Spanish).

<sup>40</sup> Susannah Vila, “Cuidemos el Voto” [Care for the Vote], Technology for Transparency Network, April 27, 2010, <http://transparency.globalvoicesonline.org/project/cuidemos-el-voto>.

<sup>41</sup> Kaitlyn Wilkins, “Social Media in Mexico: 5 Things You Need to Know,” Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, September 24, 2009, <http://blog.ogilvypr.com/2009/09/social-media-in-mexico-5-things-you-need-to-know/>.

<sup>42</sup> Octavio Islas, Amaia Arribas, and Erika Minera, “El empleo propagandístico de Internet 2.0 en campañas a puestos de elección ciudadana, Estado de México, Julio 2009” [The Use of Web 2.0 Propaganda in Campaigns for Elected Office, State of Mexico, July 2009], *Razon y Palabra* 14 no. 70 (November 2009–January 2010), [http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/N/N70/Final\\_Argentina.pdf](http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/N/N70/Final_Argentina.pdf) (in Spanish).

<sup>43</sup> Alexis Okeowo, “To Battle Cartels, Mexico Weighs Twitter Crackdown,” *Time*, April 14, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1981607,00.html/r:t#ixzz0laM8OTIa>.

<sup>44</sup> Article 19, “State of Veracruz Decriminalizes Defamation,” International Freedom of Expression eXchange, July 26, 2010, [http://www.ifex.org/mexico/2010/07/27/defamation\\_decriminalised/](http://www.ifex.org/mexico/2010/07/27/defamation_decriminalised/).

<sup>45</sup> See for example Periodistas en Línea [Online Journalists], “Caso Sosa Castelán vs. Alfredo Rivera Flores y Miguel Angel Granados Chapa,” news release, <http://www.periodistasenlinea.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=9684> (in Spanish), accessed November 22, 2010.

there have been no such cases lodged against online journalists. A 2009 Supreme Court decision expanded the range of reporting protected from state defamation laws, and some states have gradually followed the federal lead in decriminalization. These positive changes to the legal environment presumably also benefit online journalists and bloggers.

There are no legal provisions enabling the monitoring of internet activity, and online surveillance is not a serious concern in Mexico. However, in recent years, some scandals have emerged in which the authorities recorded mobile-phone calls by politicians or private individuals. In addition, a law passed in 2008 mandated that mobile-phone companies keep a registry of communications and text messages for use by law enforcement agencies in combating extortion and kidnappings.<sup>46</sup> Critics expressed doubt that the authorities would securely store the information to protect users' privacy, especially given past failures by the state to safeguard such data.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, 70 percent of users complied with the registration requirement by the deadline, in part due to threats that their line would be cancelled if they did not. The government then extended the deadline, and it was anticipated that most users would be registered by late 2010.

Violence against traditional media journalists has increased sharply since 2006, with reporters probing police issues, drug trafficking, and official corruption facing a high risk of physical harm. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 22 journalists have been killed in Mexico in connection with their work since 1992.<sup>48</sup> The National Human Rights Commission, which is more liberal in its definition of journalism-related deaths, cites 64 killings since 2000.<sup>49</sup> This phenomenon has been exacerbated by widespread impunity for those carrying out such attacks. While there have been no reports of physical attacks or killings in retaliation for online forms of expression, some prominent bloggers retain their anonymity for fear of potential reprisals.<sup>50</sup>

Cyberattacks are not a serious problem in Mexico, especially compared to other countries in the region like Brazil. However, in July 2010, a Mexican man claimed responsibility for an attack that caused Google searches of the word "vaticano" to be redirected to the website [pedifilo.com](http://pedifilo.com), as a critique of cases of pedophilia within the Catholic church.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> "En México Todas las Conversaciones Telefónicas Serán Grabadas y se Guardarán Durante Un Año" [In Mexico, All Telephone Conversations Will Be Recorded and Stored for One Year], *Babel Del Norte*, December 16, 2008, <http://www.babeldelnorte.com/index.php?view=article&catid=39%3Acultura&id=719%3Aen-mexico-todas-las-conversaciones-telefonicas-seran-grabadas-y-se-guardaran-por-un-ano> (in Spanish).

<sup>47</sup> Miguel Castillo, "Mexico: Fear and Intimidation in Electronic Media," *Global Voices*, May 12, 2010, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/05/12/mexico-fear-and-intimidation-in-electronic-media/>.

<sup>48</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, "22 Journalists Killed in Mexico Since 1992/Motive Confirmed," <http://cpi.org/killed/americas/mexico/>, accessed August 25, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> "UN, OAS Rips Mexico Over Freedom of Expression," *Latin American Herald Tribune*, August 26, 2010, <http://laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=364380&CategoryId=14091>.

<sup>50</sup> Olga R. Rodriguez, "Narco-Blogger Beats Mexico Drug War News Blackout," *Associated Press*, August 12, 2010, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gB8cHuobTuv0x63xhVQURz0zomFQD9HI77O81>.

<sup>51</sup> "Mexican Claims Responsibility for Cyber Attack Against Vatican on Google," *Catholic News Agency (CAN)*, July 21, 2010, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/mexican-claims-responsibility-for-cyber-attack-against-the-vatican-on-google/>.