

## **WAN-IFRA Board Press Freedom Resolution – Venezuela and Nicaragua, 2019**

The Board of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), meeting in Glasgow, Scotland on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2019 during the 71<sup>st</sup> World News Media Congress, 26<sup>th</sup> World Editors Forum, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Women in News Summit, reiterates its call for urgent, resolute action by the governments of Venezuela and Nicaragua respectively to end the cycle of censorship that continues to target journalism in both countries and commit to guaranteeing the free-flow of information to citizens.

The Board of WAN-IFRA has noted with deep concern the escalation of political tensions in Venezuela since the beginning of 2019. The popular uprising in support of self-proclaimed president and opposition leader, Juan Guaidó, combined with the response to this challenge by current President Nicolás Maduro and his government, have worsened an already hostile environment for media and journalists nationwide.

The Board highlights the general decline in freedom of expression and freedom of the press witnessed in Venezuela in recent years, with the government of President Maduro having suppressed dissent and critical reporting by both national and international media through online harassment, confiscations of equipment and material, arbitrary detentions, and expulsions. The Board remains concerned by the case of *El Nacional*, the last remaining independent national newspaper title, which ceased printing in December 2018 due to a lack of newsprint. In addition to this, many radio stations have been closed and digital outlets are being targeted.

The Board of WAN-IFRA also notes with alarm an escalation of repressive measures against the press in Nicaragua. Over the past year, President Daniel Ortega has launched an offensive against civil society organisations and media outlets in an attempt to remain in power and weaken democracy in the Central American country. In the 12 months between April 2018 and April 2019, human rights organisations documented over a thousand cases of attacks against press freedom, including assassinations, physical assaults, censorship, verbal and online threats. Nearly 480 journalists have suffered as a result of coercive measures and more than 60 professionals have fled the country.

The Board of WAN-IFRA recognises the intense pressure under which independent media outlets in Nicaragua are operating. News organisations critical of the government have been shuttered, police have forcefully occupied offices, and newsrooms have had to relocate. TV and radio signals have also been disrupted and in some cases switched off. The Board calls for the immediate release of Lucía Pineda, an editor with TV station *100% Noticias*, who was arrested six months ago and remains, to this day, the only female journalist detained on the continent.

The Board of WAN-IFRA urges the authorities in both Venezuela and Nicaragua to guarantee a safe environment for journalists and provide the necessary conditions for the press to do its job, accurately and without restriction. The Venezuelan and Nicaraguan governments must acknowledge the crucial role that journalism has in strengthening and maintaining democracy, and must refrain from attempts to censor or curtail the free-flow of information.