

**Roberto Rock**  
**President of the Inter American Press Association**  
**Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Reparation Ceremony – Guillermo Cano Case**  
**February 9, 2024**

Good morning.

- I greet the presence, but more so the resilience and courage displayed for 37 years by Mrs. Ana María Busquets de Cano. Her strength and example inspire those of us accompanying her today.
- Our respect to all members of the Cano Isaza family.
- I pay tribute to the colleagues and media outlets in Colombia who, after the assassination of Guillermo Cano, declared a day of silence and formed a united front to denounce the masterminds of the attack. Their courage set a path, one of solidarity within the profession, which we must continue to follow.
- Representatives of the State of Colombia.
- Commissioner and Rapporteur for Colombia of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Dr. José Luis Caballero Ochoa.
- Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression of the Commission, our friend Pedro Vaca.
- Colleagues from various media and fields.
- Ladies and gentlemen.

This is a shining day because it will become a reference point for journalism worldwide, particularly in the Americas and, very specifically, for journalists and media in Colombia. It should also be for our societies because fighting against impunity surrounding crimes against journalists is not just about demanding justice for any victimized human being. It is also about defending everyone's right to express ideas without fear of reprisals; the public's right to express their thoughts using freedom of the press as a tool.

We cannot forget that this ceremony, although animated for noble purposes, does not succeed in removing the cloak of impunity that has loomed over the Cano Case for 37 years. It remains unacceptable that the material and intellectual

authors of this attack, qualified as a crime against humanity, have not faced a just punishment for their actions.

In this same month, but in 1997, 27 years ago, the IAPA presented the Cano Case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The process was marred by delays and other irregularities that have not been clarified to this day.

An accumulation of 37 years of impunity cancels the concept of thorough justice and the expectation of non-repetition of similar offenses. Impunity is a basic teaching for violence. Providing swift justice in the Cano Case could have discouraged similar attacks, both within and outside Colombia. Those who looked the other way—police, prosecutors, judges, the current rulers, even those who hindered the progress of the respective complaint in the Interamerican system—will always bear an enduring guilt.

However, today, as Colombia celebrates “Journalist Day,” we hope that this symbolic act brings some peace, forgiveness, and harmony, especially to the family of Guillermo Cano, "Don Guillo," as many lovingly called him.

On September 17, 1986, the day his life was taken by a gang of cowards, Cano published a text under his name in *El Espectador*, the newspaper he dedicated 40 years of his career to; the project founded by his grandfather, Don Fidel Cano, and led by his father, Don Gabriel Cano Villegas. The same newspaper that continues to bring pride to Latin American journalism.

In his final editorial, in his legendary column "Libreta de apuntes," Cano Isaza expressed a belief that still resonates today: "Just as there are events that compel discouragement and hopelessness, I do not hesitate for a moment to point out that the Colombian spirit will be able to advance towards a more egalitarian, just, honest, and prosperous society."

These words could summarize the ideals in the life of the brave and virtuous Guillermo Cano. And these ideals should drive us as journalists and as a society to continue working for freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

Affirming Guillermo Cano's legacy is crucial in the current complex environment for the journalism industry. This includes, prominently, the widespread political narrative that seeks to undermine the legitimacy and authority of good journalism practiced in Colombia and throughout the continent. This type of discourse, which

characterizes many hardline governments, is itself an incitement to violence against journalists.

It is an unacceptable contradiction that a ruler in any country may believe that the mandate received through democratic means authorizes them to undermine freedoms that are an essential axis of democracy itself. Faced with such threats, we must remember Guillermo Cano, his example of integrity, unwavering independence, his stance against corruption wherever it occurred. Beyond the timelines imposed by politics on its actors, Cano will continue to be a teacher, a beacon, a guide, and a stronghold for journalism.

Properly honoring Guillermo Cano's memory requires the representatives here today to embrace what he symbolizes. The IAPA commits, before you, to deepen and diversify its efforts against crimes against journalists. To act in prevention tasks; to protect informants from threats, to advocate for the prosecution of those responsible for consummated attacks. And to vigorously confront the growing cases of attacks against female journalists aggravated solely by their gender.

I want to thank my Colombian predecessors in the IAPA, like the late President Luis Gabriel Cano, brother of Don Guillermo; former presidents Enrique Santos Calderón and María Elvira Domínguez, as well as former president David Lawrence, for their firmness and perseverance in this cause, ensuring that Guillermo Cano's memory continues to be intensely alive. The presence of Jaime Abello from the Gabo Foundation once again identifies him with the best causes of journalism and reminds us of the decades-long close friendship between Guillermo Cano and Gabriel García Márquez.

With much gratitude, I acknowledge our petitioner colleagues and comrades in this battle. Without their leadership and experience in defending victims and illuminating the path to justice, reaching this reparative act would have been a much more arduous journey. Our thanks to the executive director of FLIP, Jonathan Bock, and his team, and to Pedro Vaca, who, as Jonathan's predecessor, contributed valuably to advancing the case. Our gratitude also to the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights and lawyer Angelita Bayens, who accompanied us in other cases in Colombia, such as that of Nelson Carvajal, on which the Inter-American Court issued a ruling in 2018.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor and pride for the Inter American Press Association to be allowed to stand beside all of you today.

Thank you very much.