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Acceptance Speech

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As prepared for delivery

Thanks to CPJ for this award.

I always wanted to be a journalist. I was attracted by the enormous power that journalists have. The power to be there, in the place where news is made, watching a story come to life before your eyes and to have the gratifying duty to tell that story to others. The power of being informed. Of feeling adrenaline run through your veins, and of having something different and exciting to tell every day. The power to make the powerful uncomfortable and to use the word as the most effective weapon to reveal corruption. The power to give a voice to those who are listened to the least. To hold up a mirror to society so that it cannot deny that we are part of a reality that cries out for change. And to not be silent.

Right now my country is going through a difficult time. The powerful have taken over the word and have turned the right to express oneself freely into a public service, bound and controlled by political power. The power of the word has succumbed to the power of money. The silence in my country has a price. People are silent because they have full pockets. The government takes advantage of the enormous price of oil to say that we are living in a new era. The country is full of public works that have disguised the truth: bridges, highways, schools, hospitals, bonuses, subsidies. But the mirror will show the truth: a truth of corrupt people who continue to steal people's dreams, of nouveau riche that live off the government, of jails filled with poor people who don't have the money to pay the price of justice. A democracy with people who are conveniently silent or afraid to tell the truth is not a democracy.

During the past six years, all of the government's resources and propaganda apparatus have been used to paint Ecuadoran journalists as mediocre, liars, traitors, enemies, thugs, hit men, thieves, and complicit in human rights violations.

Many people, dazzled by state propaganda, see us that way. Today I am part of a community with which no one wants to mix. People are afraid to have relationships with journalists, doubt giving us information, and are terrified of becoming targets of the state along with the rest of us. I am not the only one. Colleagues of mine in this profession, like Martín Pallares, Gustavo

Cortez, Roberto Aguilar, Iván Flores, Diego Cornejo, Juan Carlos Calderón, Christian Zurita, César Ricaurte, and many more, have received constant insults and, as a result of this, threats, for the mere fact of being journalists, asking questions and thinking differently.

This award means a lot. It is a sign that we are not alone and that the world is aware of what is happening to us.

As a way of thanking you for awarding it to me, I invite you all to visit Ecuador. You will be impressed by the landscape, do not doubt that. But I ask that if you go, that you look at the country and write about it. Report what is happening to Ecuadorans and how one constructs a democracy of silence and a state of propaganda.

Thank you and good night.