

**MEDIA ALERT:        *FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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**U.S. JOURNALIST MURDERED IN OAXACA/ FEDERAL  
TROOPS POISED TO ENTER OAXACA CITY TONIGHT**

As independent journalists working in Mexico, we are outraged by the brutal murder of one of our colleagues, Brad Will, at the hands of plainclothes police officers and local government officials in the State of Oaxaca. Brad's death is now being used as a pretext by the Mexican federal government to launch a military incursion into Oaxaca City. The logic behind this police action represents a total distortion of the facts as we have been reporting and we are urging the media to more carefully scrutinize recent events. It is our hope that you, our colleagues, can help prevent bloodshed in Mexico.

Yesterday, Brad was reporting from a protest encampment in Santa Lucia del Camino, Oaxaca, when it came under attack from several individuals in civilian clothing who shot pistols and high powered rifles at the protesters. Brad was filming the siege when one of the assailants fatally shot him twice in the abdomen. According to local residents and the Mexican newspaper El Universal, the attackers have been positively identified as municipal police officers and government officials of Santa Lucia del Camino.

The current conflict began on June 14th when Oaxaca's governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz sent in state police to break a teachers' strike that was camped out in the center of Oaxaca City. Gov. Ruiz had already alarmed international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, for atrocities committed before the June 14 police violence. The actions on June 14<sup>th</sup> further ignited people's anger throughout the State who responded, by forming the People's Popular Assembly of Oaxaca (APPO) who reinforced the teachers' encampment in Oaxaca City. The single demand of the APPO has been the resignation of Gov. Ruiz. In the last five months, at least 12 people have been killed by police and paramilitary forces connected to Gov. Ruiz.

Major media outlets, worldwide, have erroneously implied that teachers and members of the APPO are to blame for the violence, including the death of Brad Will. Repeated calls on Mexican television for the restoration of "law and order" are disturbing because they fail to recognize that the recent spate of targeted killings have been traced to the State government, and that the fundamental necessity to restoring peace in the state is the immediate removal of Gov. Ruiz. This is a conclusion that we, as journalists, have reached after studying the facts carefully.

A siege of the city is expected to begin tonight. Most observers agree that it will be impossible to dislodge the protesters without bloodshed. We are calling on all responsible journalists to cover this impending crisis, and help to shed light on the facts before more innocent lives are lost.