



**Embassy of the United States of America
Paris, France**

Paris, June 2, 2021

Mr. Guilherme Canela
Chief
Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists Section
Communication and Information Sector
UNESCO
7, place de Fontenoy, Room 5.031
F-75352 Paris 07 SP

Dear Mr. Canela,

Please express our thanks to Deputy Director-General Xing Qu for his letter dated March 23, 2021, regarding the status of the legal investigations into the killings of Jacinto Hernández Torres on June 13, 2016, in Garland, Texas; Gerald Fischman, Rob Hiaasen, John McNamara, Rebecca Smith, and Wendi Winters in the Capital Gazette shootings in Annapolis, Maryland on June 28, 2018; and Zachary Stoner on May 30, 2018, in Chicago, Illinois. The letter also invited the United States to provide information on steps it has undertaken to promote journalist safety and address the issue of impunity. Upon receipt, the United States Department of State immediately passed this request to the Garland Police Department in Garland, Texas; the Anne Arundel County Police Department in Annapolis, Maryland; and the Chicago Police Department in Chicago, Illinois.

The Garland Police Department provided the following information regarding its investigation into the murder of Jacinto Hernandez Torres: The suspect is still at large and has not been arrested. The case has been filed with Dallas County. Additionally, the Garland Police Department does not suspect that the murder of Mr. Hernandez Torres was connected to his profession as a journalist.

The Anne Arundel County Police Department provided the following information regarding its investigation into the murders of Gerald Fischman, Rob Hiaasen, John McNamara, Rebecca Smith, and Wendi Winters at the Capital Gazette offices. Jarrod Warren Ramos, who was apprehended as a suspect and remains in custody, has pled guilty to the indictment. While admitting that he murdered the five journalists at the Gazette, Ramos has also maintained that he is not criminally responsible. Due to this, the Judge ordered that Ramos be evaluated by the Maryland Department of Health, which found him responsible for his actions. However, a separate evaluation by a defense

expert found Ramos to be not criminally responsible. Under Maryland law a defendant can litigate their guilt or innocence via trial, and then if found guilty, a second trial can be held to determine whether the defendant is criminally responsible for their actions. The trial to determine Ramos' competency was scheduled to occur on March 4, 2020, but was delayed to June 2020. The trial has not yet occurred but is expected to take place in the near future, as soon as conditions related to the pandemic will allow.

The Chicago Police Department provided the following information regarding its investigation into the murder of Zachary Stoner: The investigation, which is considered closed, identified two alleged offenders. It showed that one of the alleged offenders was himself murdered following Mr. Stoner's death. The second alleged offender was arrested, but the Cook County State's Attorney declined to prosecute for reasons that have not been made public.

As a key part of our foreign policy, the United States uses diplomacy, multilateral and multi-stakeholder engagement, and programmatic support to promote freedom of expression, including for members of the press, and the ability of journalists throughout the world to work free from harassment, intimidation, and violence. We advocate for the release of journalists imprisoned for their work. We promote accountability for violence against journalists and media workers.

In multilateral and multi-stakeholder fora, the United States continues to lead on supporting efforts related to press freedom, both online and offline. This includes in the UN, regional intergovernmental bodies, the Media Freedom Coalition, and the Freedom Online Coalition. This also includes the Group of Seven (G7), where in May 2021 the United States joined other G7 countries and the EU in commitments on supporting media freedom and responding to Internet shutdowns, which unjustifiably restrict the exercise of fundamental freedoms online. For World Press Freedom Day 2021, we highlighted the critical link between press freedom and Internet freedom by inviting journalists and experts to discuss governments' increased efforts to deprive the public of information and knowledge by controlling Internet access and censoring content. The United States condemns the use of partial or complete government-imposed Internet shutdowns, among other tactics, to prevent the exercise of freedom of expression online and restrict the ability of independent journalists to serve the public.

The information contained in this response can be released publicly.

Sincerely,



Dionandrea Shorts
Advisor for IO and UNESCO Affairs