

Day 2, April 22, 2017: Afternoon Session – 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Accountability Journalism in Polarized Societies Around the World

Chair: Krissah Thompson, Staff Writer, Washington Post

- **Carlos Fernando Chamorro**, Founder and Editor, **Confidencial.ni, Nicaragua**
 - **Steven Dojčinović**, Editor-in-Chief, **KRIK.rs. Serbia**
 - **Ivan Kolpakov**, Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief, **Meduzza.io, Russia/Latvia**
 - **Malou Mangahas**, Co-Founder and Executive Director, **Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Philippines**
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Carlos Fernando Chamorro: Yesterday morning, our colleagues were talking about accountability journalism in the U.S. I think the major distinction for which I'm going to talk about is that in my country, in Nicaragua, there is no state accountability. There are no state of the law. So the press, the independent press, is the only institution that can play this role of promoting accountability. I started Confidencial 20 years ago as a weekly print newsletter, and it's still being printed in that way. 2010, under the inspiration of our friend, Rosental and the Austin Forum, we became a news website, so now we are both between the old and the new media. We created in 2010—in 2000, I'm sorry—a television show, Esta Semana. It's a show in open television in primetime, Sunday night. We also produce an online-style magazine for millennials, Niú, within our platform. And we have a very small newsroom of around 12 young journalists who are producing content for print, for digital, for open television, and also for video.

So, we are between old media and new media, but I have to say that old media gives us, at this point, more commercial revenue than new media. We get more revenue from advertising in television and from print subscription than from digital advertising; therefore, we combine our efforts with grants from different institutions.

Daniel Ortega came back to power in Nicaragua in 2007, and he imposed an authoritarian regime. That means full concentration of power, no rule of the law, no independence in the powers of the state. In theory, this is a multi-party system. In practice, it's a one-party system. The private business has an alliance with the government, and that means that there is a sacrifice of democracy and transparency, and therefore, independent media is the only actor demanding accountability from the government.

The war against the media. Ortega, just like Donald Trump did recently, well, Ortega did it ten years ago—he proclaimed the independent media as the enemy and he called us journalists to be the souls of Joseph Goebbels.

In Nicaragua, there are no laws to exert control of the press, like in Ecuador and Venezuela; however, the state promotes campaigns of defamation and intimidation to induce self-censorship. In 2008, our offices were raided by the police and the district attorney office as part of a so-called criminal investigation alleging money laundering.

During ten years in power, Ortega has never given a press conference, and his bureaucrats, they have prohibition to give interviews to the independent media outlets. This prohibition covered everything, including police reports, health issues, even natural catastrophes. Therefore, public information is only available through official media, and the equivalent of FOIA law is not complied with. About 90% of open television and radio stations are controlled by the presidential family business and their private associates.

How do we do journalism without access to public information? Well, we try to develop our own journalistic agenda. We cultivate independent sources mostly based on trust and professional ethics. And we try to, well, we offer protection of anonymity to official sources that turn into whistle blowers. We double check the information they provide with independent sources.

We focus on stories trying to develop a better narrative quality, and we try to use multimedia platforms. We try to give visibility to individuals and groups who are victimized by the state and by power, who defy authoritarian forces. And finally, and this is the most important thing, we battle every day against the pressures of self-censorship. We try to develop alliances in order to resist public and private reprisals.

I will say that the independent press in Nicaragua, like in other countries that face this kind of situation, we are in a situation of survival. I used to say to my friends, “We are like Alcoholics Anonymous. We win a battle every day, we survive, and we’re ready for the next day.”

These are some stories that we have investigated, but because although there are these restrictions to access of public information, there is good quality journalism being done in Nicaragua by *Confidencial*, by *Esta Semana*, by *LaPrensa*, and some very other few independent media outlets.

We investigated the illegal appropriation of more than \$4-billion in a ten-year period in state cooperation from Venezuela that now is under the private control of the presidential family business groups, which includes the purchase of a private TV station. This was Channel 8 where I used to work as an associated independent producer.

Another story is about environmental destruction. There are no leaks in this story. There are only foot reporting deep in the forest. We investigated the deforestation and destruction of the Bosawas Natural Reserve in the northeast part of Nicaragua, the biggest biosphere reserve in Central America. And we also investigated the climate of violence and persecution against indigenous population by land owners in a series of several investigations.

Now, we've done a lot of work trying to discover what is dark—the inner circle of power, the *who is who* in the Nicaraguan "House of cards," which is not fictional, but is a real version of House of Cards in our country, in which Rosario Murillo, the president's wife, [who] now is also the vice president of the country, emerges as the most powerful woman in power.

Another story has to do about the failed promise of the interoceanic canal [project] in Nicaragua. A mysterious.... We developed a series of investigations on the mysterious Chinese entrepreneur, Wang Jing. We did most of the reporting in Manawa. We reported with databases in Hong Kong. And we had some support from Latin American reporter in China to dig on Wang Jing's network of enterprises. He was granted a 100-year concession to build a canal at the cost of \$50-billion. Nothing has been built or done. We have focused on the sovereignty issue, but also on the major environment threat of the Lake of Nicaragua and the social cost of this project or this threat that has already produced some kind of peasant rebellion on the projected canal route.

Finally, we do a lot of stories on human rights violations. Cases of impunity, abuses against human right defenders, peasant women, workers, and member of the LGBTI community affected by discrimination.

Now finally, in spite of the publication of these and other stories, I have to admit that nothing has changed in Nicaragua. No official investigation by Congress, by the Public Ministry, by the Supreme Court of Justice has ever been done, because there is a system of total impunity. However, we are not policemen. We are not judges. And as journalists we cannot substitute the role of the state institutions when they don't work.

Therefore, our first challenge remains to keep the credibility of our audiences among the pervading polarization. They try to discredit our work saying that all the critical investigations that we do are the result that we have a political agenda or that we're part of the opposition. So, to keep credibility is number one.

The second challenge has to do with promoting innovation in our relationship with the audiences, despite the fact that Nicaragua has one of the lowest internet connectivity rates.

And last but not least, the third challenge is to achieve financial sustainability, combining commercial sales with grants from abroad. This is particularly difficult because of the alliance that exists in Nicaragua between the government and the

private sector that generates a hostile climate towards the critical role of the independent press.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

Steven Dojčinović: So, as I was introduced, I work for KRIK, our major investigation. We also publish English, so which means you can check our movie plot stories later. And I also—we are partners of Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, which is a global network of investigator centers.

So, Croatian Serbia is now like similar explained in the previous presentation, but with one difference. Actually, we as a country, we had one period of, let's say, one decade when we developed a lot in terms of EU integration, and we built a lot of institutions and so on. But then 2012 happened something similar, very similar to what happened in United States in the last election, and since then, we're really rapidly going backwards, and society become too much polarized. So, we will discuss about how we basically do journalism in this field.

But first, I just want to introduce you to a couple of stories that we discovered in the last two years, just to get a little bit of flavor of what kind of reporting we do. So, here, this is Hillary Swank, right? But she's not the one of the focus now, it's her friend on the right side. It's the current mayor of Belgrade, Siniša Mali. And he's supposedly one of the most corrupted individuals in the country, at least according to our findings, and we break at least five stories on him engaging in really big corruption. In one of the stories, we discovered that through a series of off-shore companies, he purchased 24 luxury apartments in this residential coast in Bulgaria. It was next to the sea. And he invested here something around, as we estimated, €6-million. Of course, at the same time, he's just a mayor with one small salary, which is about €1,000 per month. Of course, later in the story, as I say, you can even watch. We made a video. We discovered corruption deal that was with one Russian company and how basically he earned this money.

This is another case. Last year, during the night, this is one street very close to the center of the capital of Serbia, Belgrade. Suddenly, group of masked individuals appeared around one o'clock in the night, and with them, four bulldozers, and they completely destroyed a full street and disappeared. And it was completely a mystery why and who basically destroyed the street, which is around like one kilometer from very, very, very center of town. It was a very complex investigation to which in the end, a long story short, we discovered that even the mayor is actually behind this. And this is the area where some rich guys—actually, the prince family of United Arab Emirates, want to build a parking lot for their project building some big shopping mall. So, he tried to help them in this way by destroying the restaurants which were owned by private individuals.

This one of the most hardcore stories with a lot of the problems we have later on. This is current Minister of Health. So in the story, basically, we discovered and

managed to pull out a lot of proof that in 2001 when he was something around my age, 31 years old, he was a doctor who worked in emergency clinic. And we actually discovered that he cooperated with one notorious criminal gang. It's called Zemun Gang, narco smuggling group, and that he assisted them in one murder. There's one guy which they shot on the street, but he survived, so they hired him as a young doctor and he injected some substance and killed this guy later in the hospital, and he received one apartment as a bribe. And we managed to prove this through documents and stuff, which you also can read.

I'll finish with this. This is like.... Because we have strong organized crime groups in Balkan and Serbia in general, in a lot of cases, we're proving these links through these links between crime groups and government officials. So here on the right side is Rodoljub Radulović, which was one of the most influential drug barons from Serbia. And he sits in restaurant with a guy on the left side, which was at that time in 2009 Minister of Police. [laughter] And we did a story. Um...this is funny. And we did the story and it was big mess after it, but the thing is that after last election, last year, our Minister of Police was reappointed and he's now Minister of Foreign Affairs. [audience reacts] So, he got even more further. We will come, like,...

Just to mention, we also do a lot of databases. These databases are pretty, I think, cool. We do database of assets of politicians when you can see what property they own, what businesses they own, and how much income they have. And if you go, you can even put a list according from the richest to the poorest and this kind of stuff, so it is very visited. People like to play with it.

So, this is kind of the major, major investigations. But now, let's talk about environment. In Serbia, as I said, it was not like this four years ago. Four years ago was completely different story. But then what happened, we have some populous guys. Let's compare them to Trump. And really, you can find a lot of lines that are connected. They gain the power. And of course, nothing happened over the night, but in five years, we've developed in some completely opposite direction, where a lot of freedom of media was destroyed and institutions. Of course, we don't have clear media censorship in a way that government has legal tools to censor media, but through sophisticated measures, mostly through financial terms, they manage really to shut down all the media. And actually, all of our stories that I show you was not ended in the major media. It sounds crazy, but that happened.

These are the basically major problems we are facing reporting. Big media self-censorship. So, there is no one single mainstream TV station, newspaper, that is ready to publish any kind of criticism. A very much polarized society, so it's like split in two. Half of society always vote for the guy on the right side, who was prime minister for four years, and now since last month, he is president, so he's just switched to another position. And other part of society sees him as a dictator. It's not possible when you are independent media to get any advertising money.

That's big problem. And the thing is that most of the private companies are afraid to basically, you know, advertise in independent media. Because if they do, they

will be under big pressures from the government, you know, financial, inspections, and so on.

It is unsafe environment, not in a way like the government will send somebody to kill you, but the atmosphere that the government is creating through smear campaigns can kind of mobilize a lot of citizens who are on the edge to send threats to the journalists and even to attack them. And what is special about Serbia, and I will show you next, is the smear campaigns, which are in my country at some really bizarre level. And of course, Serbia is really independent of opinion of European Union, because we are very close to join it. We are in this process.

And what happened a couple of years ago kind of inside of the European Union, which will affect Serbia, is that political point of view changed from being rule of law and democracy in the first place to this sentence: First comes stability, then human rights. And suddenly, what's happening in EU, which is not just the case of Serbia, it's Macedonia, Montenegro, even Turkey, is suddenly having an idea that it's better to have strong leader with EU deal than to really support democracy inside the country. That really affected that we come in this direction that we went.

This is just interesting just to see. This is one NGO that did media monitoring during the presidential campaign. So, you can see how much each of candidates have access to media. The first slide is current president, and this is all the rest of opposition, which altogether didn't have close to what he had. So, the media is completely on his side and block for any sign of criticism.

Smear campaigns. This is something which become very interesting model in Serbia. So, this is one of the front pages and articles on me. It's one of tens, hundreds, I don't know. So basically, here, they are accusing that I work with the guy on the right side, which is George Soros, right? Because since we cannot gather money from private sector, we can just do crowdfunding, and we basically apply to the projects and to donators. So, this was commonly used by government to present the fact that we're fundraising for donators, such as Open Society, that basically we work for them. And of course, you have all these kind of theories that will come about George Soros being some kind of guy from the shadow who wants to collapse our government.

Then, for instance, on the left side is another front page with me. This photo is taken by intelligence, Secret Service. So, the guy on the right, on the right side—actually, my left side—is the guy who is connected to criminal environment. Let's say I do a lot of crime reporting and I even publish own book on narco cartel, and of course I have sources in the crime underworld. So, the intelligence, basically, which is heavily used to monitor by government, they took this photo and published in tabloid at the time when we were investigating the property and assets of our prime minister. And they claim down there that basically [the] mafia, through me, [is] trying to attack the family of prime minister. So, this is kind of the stuff they do. Of course, this photo was taken like a year before it. And my meeting with this person doesn't have anything to [do] with this research that is current.

This was also followed by strong attacks and pressures on your sources. So usually if you have sources in public company, when they discover him, they will just fire him if he is private, and prior, they will send the financial inspection and so on.

On the left side, they go with more personal attacks. So, this was also front page in article. They claimed that in my sexual life I am a sadomasochist, and so they go into these details. [laughter] So, you have those articles say I'm Satanist and like ultimately a bad guy against prime minister who is always portrayed as the most perfect and moral individual.

Of course, I was not the only one. On this front page, this is the ombudsman, human right defender, who is a state institution. And he opened one case which the prime minister didn't like, so they dig out from the archives and find case that best friend, his best friend when he was teenager, committed suicide in his apartment while he was not there, and then he came in apartment and found his dead friend and reported to police. And the case was closed decades ago. But now they reopened this old case, and they start attacking in newspaper claiming that he's the one actually who killed his best friend. And this was campaign that lasted for two years—two months, sorry. And after this campaign, the whole state structure refused to communicate with ombudsman who is part of the state, right? So, they were not accepting his calls for meetings and all, claiming that, I mean, "He is murderer, so we cannot sit at the table with murderer." So, this basically what they do.

This is one of the sickest examples. The right side is Vanja Čalović. She's director of [the] leading anti-corruption NGO in Montenegro, which is close to Serbia and basically very, very connected states. So, they found some video of a girl having sex with a dog. Bad quality video with girl that visually looks like her. And they were like for three, four months publishing this on front pages claiming that it's her, actually calling her to admit that it's her. And in a small country like Montenegro, where the whole country is like 300,000 citizens, a really traditional country, this kind of stuff, when you start publishing against female it really puts you in difficult position. So, I just wanted to give you a little bit of flavor of what anyone who's trying to step up against government can survive.

And this newspaper, I think, for one reason, it's the biggest circulation in Serbia. This one. So, it's not like some small independent. [It's] like the biggest. And it's followed by TV with also the biggest circulation. It's called TV Pink, which always follow this publication publishing on TV.

OK. I'm sorry I don't have much time. I will just fastly finish. This is the story on the 24 apartments of the mayor of Belgrade. So, this become viral. So, it's like one of the memes that, it's kind of mailbox with 24, I think, that was done. So, and this is the.... We did even cartoon video of this case of Minister of Health who was participating in murder.

So, but what I wanted to tell now is that, still, the biggest problem that you're facing working in this environment is that usually when society become polarized,

then you're kind of in a field that you also need to be polarized. Like, this really affects media. So, kind of you get close to speaking just with your audience. So, we have big audience on the internet, but there's two Serbia's. I mean, there's two societies inside of one. Like, we can make some powers to hear.

And a big move which we made is when we changed from just reporting to our own audience and trying to expand to other audience who is kind of instantly against us. So what I'm saying [is], for instance, you report against Trump just to Hillary supporters, for instance. Of course, you can inform them about some new cases, but in the basic, they don't learn much. They will just come and pick from your news kind of new arguments for what they already believe. But it's very important to find a way how to approach another part in which we actually are now developing new models. And we actually are more and more getting into audience who is actually for pro-governmental and against them.

Sorry, we can take more details later, so I will stop now. OK, thanks.

[Applause.]

Ivan Kolpakov: All right, fellows, let's talk about Russia. [laughter] Now this. I do know this Oxford's Dictionary of New Expressions. So, a couple of years ago, they added new definition for the word *Russian*. It means a person who is permanently depressed. [laughter] So, um, your mood usually depends on what news you are consuming. If you're talking about the Russian situation, the Russian circumstances, we have to admit that news are bad, news really sucks. So, if you're an average, liberal, young reader of internet media in Russia, you're probably scared to death, you know, every day. It's like, how does it feel like? It feels like you're waking up every day in the same day, and today is definitely not better than yesterday.

So, an anti-gay—wait—gay propaganda law, imprisoning of political activists, this is what you're consuming every day. And if you're watching Russian television, it is every more scary. It is way more scary. Because Russian television is fully controlled by the state. And what kind of picture you can see on Russian television? There are two types of world news you can see on Russian television. The first type is something pathetic and funny. Something like, I don't know, [unintelligible] against Eurovision, if you know what I mean. The rest and the biggest part is something terrible that happens in the world—immigration crisis, terroristic attacks, Donald Trump becomes the president of the U.S.A—[laughter]—oh, wait, it's good news, sorry.

So, you know, Russia is surrounded by the enemies. And the result of this... Oh, yeah, I have forgotten—fake news. Russian is the motherland of fake news. For example, you know, I feel some—me and my colleagues, journalists in Russia—we feel some pervert satisfaction observing what's happening right now in the U.S.A. [laughter]

So, for example, in 2014, main Russian TV channel, huge TV channel, they published a story about a Ukrainian fascist who literally sacrificed—crucified a baby, you know, in Donbas. So, what is normal reader's reaction to that aggressive and depressive environment? Yeah, I completely understand the reader. I don't want to consume that type of news. Nothing good is happening. Only bad things happening.

Can we respond anything to this? Is there any opportunity for us to be interesting for the readers in that circumstances? As our CEO, Galina Timchenko, she actually one year ago was here. You must remember her.

Audience member: Woo-hoo!

Rosental Calmon Alves: Yes.

Ivan Kolpakov: She says that, you know, we are all clowns in the circus—talking about the journalists in Russia, which is true. So, Meduza was founded a couple of years ago in Riga. It is based.... So, Riga is not, you know, in Russia. It is the capital of another, not Russia, another country. I have to repeat it, you know, because Latvia was a part of the USSR and stuff like that. So, we are focused on young audience. We have a very pragmatic idea about the young audience. These are the people who have a good chance—I can't say—I can't be sure for 100%—they have a good chance to live in Russia without Putin. So, these people we are focused on.

We're trying to be way more attractive than other Russian media and than any media anywhere right now. So, we have some, you know, ideas. We're trying to fight the empathy actually. This is not a completely new thing for you, of course, but, you know, you have to report news as good as possible, especially for the social networks. You have to create, you have to invent a lot of formats to tell interesting stories in news.

This is an example. This is the story.... This is a very popular format for Facebook—In One Picture. This is the short story of the only toilet in Moscow underground. So, September 18, the toilet is open and the station prospect of peace. November 12, the only toilet is closed. And November 26, the management of Moscow underground promises to reopen fucking toilet. [laughter] All right. Be funny. It's easy.

We have crash in, you know, news games. It works really good. It works really well. We have permanent of news games. This one is about Russian priests, about Russian Orthodox Church, which, you know, takes part in all important public processes. They have their opinion about the education, and they want to embed some orthodox lessons into schools. They have opinion about what's happening in political sphere. They have opinion about, you know, Ukrainian War. And they are corrupted to scale, so we literally hate them. And this game, you need to click on priests to bring them back to the church from the movie, theatre, concert hall, museum, school, and stuff like that. [laughter]

So, this one is also good. [Laughter. "Super Putin Bros" game on screen. Looks like Super Mario game.] Now, Putin is always, always late. When he met British queen, he was not on time. He really... He was really late when he met the British queen. So one day, he decided to meet with the Pope. So, this is Mario looking game with Putin as a main hero, as a main hero. And, you know, you need to be on time. According to the game, you're trying to meet the Pope and you need to be on time.

This is the game which is inspired by the House of Cards from one side and poker from the other side. So, you're basically playing in cards using presidents, dictators, and their results on elections. So, if your result on elections is higher, you're winning.

All right. Very good advice. You need to make video. Of course, you need to make video, but you need to make good video. You don't need to make these stupid, fucking, viral videos about everything! About food, about—I don't know. [applause] Video has to be sophisticated. All right? This is the journalism. Let's back journalists into videos. This is what we're trying to do. It is about the story, about the facts, about something, but not about, you know, only entertaining.

All right. This is my favorite part. This is what makes me feel a bit more optimistic about the journalism and Russia and our audience. Because, you know, the most popular pieces of Meduza are investigative journalism. Really. Not games. Not funny stories about the toilet in Moscow underground. But the investigations. Currently, we're trying to reconstruct our special reporter's desk into investigative team. And we're also trying to collaborate with a lot of investigative teams, because, you know, if you're a small media, you just don't have enough money to make good investigations.

So, for example, one of these investigations was made in collaboration with OCCR team, with Organized Crime, Corruption, blah, blah, blah. Yeah. So, this is about Putin's ex-wife. He's divorced. Probably you haven't noticed that. [laughter] But two years ago, he divorced. And we know nothing about his family. OK, we know he has ex-wife, he has a lover, probably, and he has two daughters, and if you will try to google these daughters, you will find five photographs of these girls. Is it possible to have like five photographs in whole internet of president's daughters? So, he's a good KGB guy, really. [laughter] So, that's why it's important. Everything about his family is important. So, his ex-wife and her young, new husband bought a villa in France.

Creating community is also extremely important. I'm trying to be short as I can. So, this is a Snapchat-looking thing, a Snapchat-inspired thing. This is a chat for our readers, because we hate comments. You know, comments is shit. They come in and they're writing shit under your article. [laughter] That's true. [applause] So, we decided to make chat. So, you're chatting with a lot of readers, and then everything disappears within 24 hours. All this bullshit disappears. [laughter] S, you can really enjoy chatting, just chatting, like you're doing it in your life, and offline.

If you're creating good community around you, you get volunteers. This guy is.... I love this guy. He's 14 years old. He's one of our coders. He worked for us for free for some period. Now, he's currently, I think, he's 16, and he's working for Google, I suppose. Nice guy.

Do something new. All right. Also good advice. Quizzes. Everybody is doing quizzes. I'm personally not a good fan of quizzes. Quizzes is a good way of storytelling—new, good way of storytelling. But, you know, I'm tired of quizzes. So, we tried to make something different. This quiz was made by Alex Navalny. Alex Navalny is the brother of main Russian oppositional leader. He's sitting in prison. So, we just, you know, printed our tests, and we sent him our tests a letter and asked him to make a quiz in prison about, you know, doing all the rules of the prison. And he did it. It was really—it's brilliant. Believe me. You don't read Russian unfortunately. This one, this one is *recificater*^{sic}. I don't know how to say it in English. You know, we have this stupid.... No, wrong word. We have our.... There is ex-presidents meeting with Medvedev in Russia. He is Prime Minister of Russia currently. And, you know, some months ago he said, "If we are real patriots, we can't call Coffee Americana as Americana. We need to call it *Russiana*^{sic}." [laughter] So, we made these *recificators*^{sic}. You can put your favorite words, and we are *recificating*^{sic} it. [laughter] Actually, it's written terminate, terminator, all right? In Russian, it's *Russinator*^{sic}. Right.

The last one thing. If you're doing your, you know, if you're doing journalism nowadays, [chuckles], you have to fight with your own empathy, first of all. Not with the empathy of your, you know, readers. You have to fight with your own empathy about this fucked up world, unfortunately. So, every day when you come into your open space, your editorial office, you have to be like, like our dear Rosenthal. You have to say, "Let's rock!"

[Applause.]

Malou Mangahas: OK. That's a very tough act to follow, huh? [laughter] I was asking him what is the favorite rock band of the Russians, because he could be a Junior Rosenthal. Maybe.

Anyway, I'm focusing on something that is so, so familiar with you by now—the drug war in the Philippines—to indicate, to illustrate the narrative of the visions, conflict, policy, discourse in the Philippines right now. I think, first off, I'd like to say that before you had your Trump, we had our Rodrigo Duterte. And possibly also, he would beat the Trump anytime in Time Magazine's most influential persons of the world list. That's because so many Filipinos voted for him perhaps.

OK. So, the possibility is that you've seen this photograph. It's appeared in many of the newspapers in the U.S. This came from a Philippine newspaper. It's a real picture, not the image that you see in many churches. But this woman is holding onto her husband who was killed in a drug war operation by the Philipian police. Our president called it too dramatic.

These are people rounded up for investigation by the police. All of them suspects. As you can see, there are supposedly some samples of drug paraphernalia that had been seized from them. The question really is, it's the flip side to innocent until proven guilty. What's happening now is that people are deemed guilty before they could be proved innocent.

There are people who had just been found by the wayside. Some of them with masking tape all over their faces, their hands and legs tied, or some in garbage bags. The bodies of suspected — I stress *suspected* drug users and pushers are littering the streets of our country. Too many, too often at night or even daytime. And yet, this is a photograph that appeared in the International Press about how congested Philippine jails are. About 1,500% more than capacity. And this is where actually they would be bringing these numbers of people.

Very confused [data] for now. It's supposedly about 4-million drug users or drug dependents in the Philippines. We have a population of 102-million. 16,000 family households — 16-million households in the Philippines, but also 20% of our people are living in poverty or earning less than \$1.50 a day. So, our president says we have 4-million drug dependents. Our drug enforcement agency says it's 1.7-million. I think our president is very bad with math, because he adds those who have surrendered to the official data, so 1.7 plus a million over who had surrendered or been coaxed to surrender. That makes it 4-million.

So by now, as of January 31, these are the numbers that define the very tragic harvest of the drug war of our president from July 2016 to the present. All in a span of about 8 months. Casualties: 7,080 persons killed, including, according to the police, 2,500 suspected drug users and dependents killed in police operations, and many more, about 4,000 killed in operations, not yet clear who the suspects were, except that they are vigilantes or unidentified armed groups. Very few investigated cases by now, so that would mean actually failure on the part of police as well. 922 victims of cases—the investigation had finished—out of about 4,000 by vigilantes. Arrested 53,000 persons. You will be surprised what the word *surrenderees* means. People have been coaxed to visit their village offices, their village officials so that they could sign up and clear their names, because they are supposedly on a watch list of drug users and dependents. And a million houses visited by the police to flush out so-called users and pushers.

This is the guy behind it all. What do you think is wrong with this story? He was a mayor of Davao City, a city that's in Southern Philippines, undefeated in all the elections he had participated in. For over 30 years, actually, mayor and member of congress. He won as President of the Philippines in May 2016 at a time when many other rivals were from the elite families, who had been associated with actually the former president Benigno Aquino III. So this president has been called The Punisher or calls himself The Punisher, and has been called Dirty Harry of the Philippines.

He curses, he cusses, he disrespects women, but he communicates quite well with the Filipino masses, I would say, because the numbers are his trust rating is quite high. Actually, three times higher than Trump has in the U.S. His disapproval rating

is a very low 7%. Distrust rating just 5%. Undecided Filipinos, 15%. This is as of the latest public opinion survey, March 2017. His approval rating by socioeconomic class is highest in the ABC group of affluent families. Quite low in the D and E groups of the people living in poverty conditions. So, the pictures will give you cause to wonder, why are the figures falling this way still in his favor?

Actually, the problem is, the rule of law is very weak in the Philippines, and the criminal justice system is quite slow. Drugs are a problem that resonate with many households in the Philippines, who know of a friend or a neighbor or a son or a daughter or a relative who had been _____ and had been pushed to desperation because there's no more solution in sight. So, this president offers them some hope. The desperate Filipinos who wanted something done.

Because rule of law is very weak, he had managed to do what he as he did in Davao City. Repeat the deployment of police officers to just arrest. And he says, "If they should resist, kill them." So now, there is a very long history of human rights activism in the Philippines, but the problem with human rights activism in the Philippines is that we have been too focused on civil and political rights. Criminal justice system rights or issues have not taken root in the Philippines, and that is why we think that's been the weakness of our effort to tell our citizens that there is such a thing as due process. You should look at warrants of arrest. You should look at search warrants to be very clear that you are the subject of such operations.

There have been for the longest time very broken institutions in the Philippines. Our police do very bad work. The military, the courts, the legislature, very compromised. And of course, for the longest time, politics of patronage has been the culture in the Philippines. There are 80 provinces in the Philippines. And in all these, you have political clans dominating election after election for the longest time. And suddenly, there was a switch when this president came in, from very open institutions and processes to now very opaque processes and institutions.

OK. The challenge. How do you do journalism in this situation? First off, we thought at first we must really plan very well what we can do given the situation. It's very difficult to just say that, you know, to ignore this president. He doesn't do good conversation. He doesn't deal with the issues. He just curses and is so full of himself. But the point is, we're not communicating with the president alone, but with the citizens. So we thought, first problem, we have so many single-source stories. And the single source will be just the police. The usual doesn't work anymore.

The choices, the sources, the voices, the events are very new ones. We need to connect the docs and data. We have not been used to having a database of the criminal justice system as in monitoring the drug war or monitoring how the police has been doing its investigation of unidentified vigilantes. We need to check and challenge and validate, look at subtext and context of stories and report more and better.

So, I'll give you just some sample of what we do. This is month one of the campaign. Already, we're counting 1,800 dead. That is on average about six persons—60 persons—after 30 days, being killed per day, to illustrate how bad it is. We looked at the need to question assumptions of the state that [are] saying 4,000 people have surrendered—I'm sorry, yeah—but where are these people? So, you have to locate them in the regions, and you will see that in some regions there are operations; in others, none. We have to look at persons killed. So, zero for some of the regions and many for the others.

We have to look at the most vulnerable. The children and the women, we did special attention to their cases. Some children as young as six to 12 years old. They had been listed as drug pushers and runners. Because in the Philippines, drug law is for every ten grams and up of marijuana or shabu, you will lead a life in jail. Single penalty for all sorts of crimes.

So, and then, we wanted to find out, what are the hidden rules or executive orders defining this drug war? What happens to drug surrenderees? There are templates and forms that the police had done that required people to rat on the their neighbors. Like, who is the source of your drugs? Where does he live? What is his occupation? Where does he get his money?

And then finally, we thought, this is something so, so important. There is cash rewards table for policemen who will arrest and also force the surrender of suspects for all sorts of drugs. We were thinking, does the crime index really improve or does it go down when this drug war has been launched? It doesn't, because we don't have drugs as an index crime in the Philippines. We still have cattle rustling however.

So, and then we thought that one of the things we can do is work with lawyers to let people know about their rights when they are arrested, when they are savaged or victims of summary execution, or they fear that they will be, when they search operations. I think it's important to find out as a parting shot that, you know, journalism is never an easy thing. In a country like the Philippines, where since 1986, 152 have been murdered, and mostly by state forces or private armed groups of local war lords. But this is something so, so different.

In the name of the rights of the people to progress and democracy, the saying that it's all right to kill and violate rights. I think it's a tide of dark populism that's engulfing our nation, as it is also the situation in many countries of the world. We have a saying in the PCIJ where I work that, you know, who blinks first loses, and we always have to strive to live to write another day.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Luz Mely-Reyes: I would like to say, like my friend Laura Zommer from Argentina, that I come from the future. But I can't say that. I come from a country

that is living in loop time, a tiny loop, during 20 years, I think so. When we create Efecto Cocuyo.... By the way, who doesn't know what Efecto Cocuyo means? You know. Cocuyo is like a firefly, and in English Efecto Cocuyo means firefly effect. We microphone a lot of...[unintelligible]. We create Efecto Cocuyo two years ago. We were inspired by this effect of the Cocuyo to be a tiny spark or light that together can illuminate an entire nation. And why we do that? I'm going to show a video that could explain what is happening in my country. And then I'm going to begin again.

[Video plays in Spanish. Closed captioning translates it to English: *Being a journalist in Venezuela is an everyday challenge. Massive media is restricted and tries to bury the truth in service of dark interests. A large propaganda machine seeks to impose its version unreviewed. The government uses all resources available, legal or otherwise, to weaken and harass independent journalists. But who said we're afraid? Let me tell you a story... The shortage of medicines in Venezuela reaches 70%, yet the government insists on denying this. Braian is 12 years old. He has a tumor in his head. He suffers from epilepsy and can't find the medication for it. Epilepsy prevents Braian from undergoing an operation. And he could die. Maria Laura is a journalist and she works at Efecto Cocuyo. She investigates the shortage of medicines for children, discovers Braian's story, and she writes it. Monica is a Venezuelan living in Spain. She suffers from epilepsy and has access to the medication Braian needs. Monica discovers Braian's story on Efecto Cocuyo. Monica sends the medication. Braian gets his operation. Braian's life is saved. And the best news is that you can be a part of this. We're a team of men and women which fight to keep the Venezuelan journalist alive. We're committed with our audiences through social networks and digital tools. We're creating a new generation of Venezuelan journalists. And after just two years of our creation, we were nominated for the Gabriel Garcia Marquez Award. If you're a global citizen or a Venezuelan living abroad this is your chance to build democracy in the distance. We're Efecto Cocuyo, journalism that enlightens. End of video.]*

[Applause.]

OK. And now I want to talk about something that maybe you can find familiar. [Shows picture of Donald Trump and Hugo Chavez side by side, both frowning.] [Laughter.] Maybe somebody doesn't know this guy from my right—not my right—my left. He is the former president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, and he gained the election in 1998. And I think he's a leader who inspired your leader, no?

Woman: Yes.

Luz Mely-Reyes: Yeah. And I think he's inspired by the Russian leader also and the Cuban. So, you know, it's not a coincidence. I don't know if he inspired your president, American president. I don't know. I don't want to say that. But what we had found in this year is kind of the polarization rules. I would like to share [with] you and you can say if you have or you don't have this kind of situation.

The first thing in a polarization society is the information. The fact doesn't matter but the version that you believe about them does, even if it's a lie. The moral—you

are with me or against me. Sound familiar? No matter what, they're wrong and we are right. This is the rule of polarization. But I have bad news for you, because beyond the polarization, we have hyper-polarization. And we find this kind of thing. We found this kind of thing—sleeping with the enemy. Some people believe that in a hyper-polarization society you can make some business with the leader, the public's leader, but I have bad news for you. Maybe he can kill you.

Advocacy journalists that have—they are less journalists and more of an advocacy—I have five minutes—and misinformation. I think that collateral damage of the war between media and government is the truth and the right to be well informed. It's what we live in Venezuela.

On how to break the polarization rules, [unintelligible], I think it's more of unbury^[?] journalism, and it means very well informed journalists, investigative journalists, verified journalists. Once in my country, a newspaper published a rumor as the news. And this rumor, "Something has happened in Venezuela." We say, "OK, this is a [rumor]. We are doing this very badly."

I think listening to the people and building community, everybody say that it's easy to do that or you have to do that. In this case, she's my cofounder, Laura Weffer. When we decided to launch Efecto Cocuyo, we went to Petare. It's like a slum in a very poor neighborhood in Caracas. And we were talking with the people asking, saying that we want to be journalists and asking for a small quantity of support, like a symbolic ad. And people say, "OK, I'm going to support you, but you have to listen to us. You have to say what is happening in Venezuela, and you have to be close to us." It was a lesson for us, because we went there thinking that we are going to teach something there, and they told something to us.

I think that's something that we have learned during this year especially, the journalists, is that partnerships work. For example, the Panama Papers Alliance, means that in Venezuela 14 journalists that work in different media, they can work together, not like a team, but like an alliance. So, we lay aside our difference, and we went to investigate what was happening in this case.

And I have this quote to end this presentation, that we always talk about credibility. I think credibility is like a saving account that you have enough funds to support the withdraw the attack of the police, the propaganda, this kind of thing. In Spanish, this is El Chigüire Bipolar. It's an ironical, sarcastic site in Venezuela like The Onion here in the states. And now, you know, we are pioneering everything. And now we have not only fake news, because we have fake voice note^[?]. So El Chigüire Bipolar make a statement and say, "OK, you don't have to believe the fake voice note and you don't have to believe us, because we always say [we are] fake news. But if you want to know what is happening in Venezuela, you have to go to EfectoCocuyo.com."

So, I think the credibility that we can build during these years—sorry, I'm gonna finish—during these years is one of the best lessons that we can share with everybody. So, if you want to know what is happening in Venezuela right now, and

you want to hear the journalists in Venezuela and in our country, I suggest that you go to EffectoCocuyo.com. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Martin Pallares: OK. Hello. First of all, I want to apologize for my English here, my grammar and my spelling. I rushed. Second thing, I'm not going to get into the details of how they attack us in Ecuador, how they harass us, how they hack our emails, how the president insults some of us in a weekly show that the president has. I'm not going to get in all those details, because I think that after ten years of living this, we have to share some thoughts about, how is it working under a totalitarian and autocratic regime?

The theme of this panel was polarization. I think polarization is just a product of an autocratic regime. And one of the thoughts that I have is that your autocrats, the first thing they do is to give words a different meaning. OK? When they change the meaning of the words, society fails to share certain values that were once common to all. So once an autocrat describes democracy in a certain way, and society has a different way, then comes polarization. And this happens thanks to propaganda [that] the autocrats have and by the support that they have from certain shares of society.

So, things get an alternative meaning. OK? Let's say democracy. Democracy for Rafael Correa, for example, it's the will of the majority. But it will never be a system to respect minorities. And I think that's quite important, because—well, that explains why the name of our site is Quatro Pelagatos. Correa, when he refers to the minorities or the people who criticize him, he says, "It's quatro pelagatos." That means there are just a few poor guys who doesn't mind, who are not relevant. That's why we chose the name Quatro Pelagatos, because we think a democracy is a system to protect minorities, and we wanted to represent minorities.

OK. Another example—freedom of expression. For them, freedom of expression, it's the right to talk. And when we say freedom of expression, for them, it's freedom of enterprise. We are the enterprise. We are the companies.

Civil societies. Civil society only have rights if it's organized by the state, by the government, and the official party. When it's not, it's subversion.

Corruption. Corruption is a bona fide error. When a minister was questioned by a journalist about a huge scandal, he said that was a mistake, bona fide mistake. So, I just wanted to show you how they change the meaning of things and why, why I think this is important.

Because sometimes, let's say, investigative journalism, I think it's the most important and valuable kind of journalism possible. But there's a moment when corruption doesn't mean nothing for the people, because it's just—it's just an issue that gets normalized.

Accountability. Accountability is what the president says to the people without anyone questioning. Our president has a show, a weekly show, three hours, where he says whatever he wants. And that's how he's — he says that he's transparent.

Like, minorities, it's another word, another term that has a different meaning for them. Minorities are groups that should have no rights, because they are just a few. [Speaks Spanish.] That's an expression. We are the majority, and we can do whatever we want.

And here, I wanted to share [with] you this idea that I have. One of the main purposes of autocrats is to make normal what is abnormal. OK? Once they have done that, they have the control of everything. For example, ten years ago, the lack of separation of powers was abnormal and scandalous in Ecuador. Now, it's perfectly normal. It used to be abnormal and scandalous for a president to insult and mock those who do not agree with him. Now, it's perfectly normal. Ten years ago, it was not normal for a president to give orders to the electoral authority during the election. This happened like one week ago. Now, it is perfectly normal. It was not normal for the ruling party to use the public media as a propaganda outlets. Now, it's normal. It was not normal for newspapers to be punished for not publishing news the government believes are relevant. Now, it's normal.

Yesterday, six papers in Ecuador were punished because—punished and fined—because they didn't publish a special story that was published in an Argentinian newspaper called *Página Doce*, and they were fined because the government thought that that story was relevant, because it was an attack to the opposition candidate. So, these papers should have paid attention on that publication in Argentina and publish it. They did not. They were punished.

This is because in Ecuador we have a communication law that created a regulatory body that belongs to the executive power, to the president. And this regulatory body can define everything. It's probably the toughest communication law in the world, the Ecuadorian one. And so this Supercom, that's the name of this regulatory body, it decides everything. So, they decided that these papers were committing auto censorship because they didn't want to publish something that was published in Argentina, and that's why they are fined. So, they decide everything.

There's a really huge fear situation in Ecuador. When I was fired, nobody wanted to hire me because — all the media outlets didn't want to hire me because I was not good for the government, okay? So, this brings us to what is called Kasparov metaphor. Doing journalism under authoritarian regime is like playing chess against somebody who keeps knocking the figures off the board. It's like playing chess with somebody that is not playing chess. That's the feeling we have, okay? You think you're playing with somebody, and the other guy just is playing another thing.

Well, just a few things that I think is also our guilt. Journalism has helped autocrats normalize the abnormal. How? They accepted the new journalistic ethos imposed by the autocrats. Autocrats wants journalists to only describe the facts, but not to say what the fact means. Autocrats do not want journalists with opinions. They only

want them as factual recorders. The lesson we have learned [is] that facts and truth are not always the same. Journalists must be able not only to describe the facts, but also the truth.

For example, Rafael Correa ordered to imprison a young man. This happened like a month ago. Rafael Correa ordered to imprison a young man because he made a bad sign to him. That is the fact. But telling the audience that he does that because he is not a democrat, is also to tell the truth. Sometimes these kind of things autocrats do, they are assumed as normal also. And we shouldn't accept that as normal.

Lessons. The battle begins the very first day. Journalists have to be an obstacle in the normalization of the abnormal. We have to be aware that journalism is under threat, because journalism is [a] fundamental part of the public sphere. And autocrats are willing to take over the public sphere.

Autocrats are very smart. They will find a lot of ways of imposing censorship. Their menu is huge: libel laws, regulatory bodies, fear, propaganda, harassment, copyright laws, communication laws, apparently designed to protect people. If they think you are a threat, they will find a way to make your boss fire you—my case.

I'm going to skip this because I wanted to share this really tiny video. It's one minute. Because you know what I wanted to share this video? Because we think that we have to retake the meaning of the words. In Ecuador, there's only one word master—that is Rafael Correa. He owns the right to speak. He's the only one who really have this right to say whatever he wants. We created a MashiMachine. Mashi is the nickname for Correa. We created this machine. It's just a digital tool. We smashed in all Correa's speeches. And so, people can play and say whatever they want through Correa.

[Video plays.]

Rafael Correa: In Ecuador there is only one voice that says it all. And it is mine. I am Mashi Correa, President of Ecuador.

Woman: The Ecuadorian government controls all the national media and criminalizes freedom of speech. The New York Times: "This represents an assault on democracy." Three journalists who were censored by Mashi Correa decided to open a new digital journal that defies the media clamp the government imposed. To promote this journal, they gave a voice to Ecuador by using the only authorized voice, MashiMachine, a web platform where people express themselves making videos using thousands of the words Mashi has said in his public speeches.

Rafael Correa: Freedom of speech should not be censored. Monday, taxes. Tuesday, taxes. Wednesday, also taxes. Thursday and Friday, taxes.

Woman: So, the MashiMachine spoke and thousands of voices were heard. Everybody spoke except for the government.

The voice of 4Pelagatos is the voice of the people!

Largest organic viral campaign in the history of Ecuador.

You click on "make your video" and based on different speeches of Rafael Correa, using words from the President, it creates videos.

Ecuador: An antidote against censorship.

The MashMachine was hacked, but it didn't stop.

Woman: Three hacking attempts could not silence MashMachine, turning their website into one of the most visited sites in Ecuador, proving that there was not only one voice in Ecuador but millions of them.

Now Ecuador has more than one voice.

Rafael Correa: Long live freedom of speech.

[End of video.]

[Applause.]