

CÉSAR RICAURTE

Journalist | Human Rights Defender | Freedom of Expression Advocate | Institution Builder

Quito, Ecuador | cesar@fundamedios.org | www.fundamedios.org

Protecting freedom of expression, journalist safety and democratic accountability across the Americas.

Four things define César Ricaurte's candidacy for the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the IACHR/OAS. **First, lived experience:** Ricaurte knows the Inter-American System as a petitioner and journalist-at-risk, not only as an advocate. **Second, proven institution building:** where others offer diagnosis, he has built robust institutions, networks and programs — Fundamedios, Ecuador Chequea, Voces del Sur, Liberties 360 — capable of operating under pressure, generating evidence and protecting journalists. **Third, independence:** a record of integrity and credibility sustained across governments, courts, donors and international mechanisms for more than two decades, demonstrating a defense of freedom of expression as a practical guarantee for the peoples of the Americas. **Fourth, a regional vision:** while Ricaurte has built his career from Ecuador, his work and vision span all of the Americas — from the Southern Cone to North America — with particular sensitivity to the realities of Central America and the Caribbean, where journalism today faces persecution, exile and the closing of civic space.

“Despite being attacked and harassed, he never broke.”

— Adriana León, Director, Information Freedoms Area, IPYS (translated from Spanish)

STRATEGIC PROFILE

Internationally recognized, multi-award-winning Ecuadorian journalist, human rights defender and institution builder with **more than 37 years of professional experience in journalism and more than 20 years** defending freedom of expression, protecting journalists and strengthening civic space across the Americas. As a journalist-at-risk — and through his own lived experience petitioning and seeking the protection of the IACHR — César brings deeply personal knowledge, insight and sensitivity to the contemporary challenges facing journalists and the threats to freedom of expression in the Americas. He is a native Spanish speaker with professional working proficiency in English.

Founder and Executive Director of Fundamedios since 2007, one of the region's most recognized civil society organizations dedicated to monitoring, documenting and responding to attacks against journalists, media outlets and freedom of expression.

His candidacy brings together five assets directly relevant to the mandate of the Office of the Special Rapporteur: sustained and successful engagement with the Inter-American and Universal human rights systems; practical experience protecting journalists at risk; proven capacity to build and manage institutions, teams, budgets and donor-funded projects; regional leadership through networks such as Voces del Sur; and a democratic approach to disinformation — through Ecuador Chequea and Liberties 360 — that rejects censorship as a response.

César Ricaurte has not merely analyzed freedom of expression from outside the field. He has built durable institutional machinery to defend it in environments marked by authoritarian pressure, legal harassment, state stigmatization, organized crime, democratic deterioration, disinformation and the closing of civic space. He is a credible, trusted and independent voice among freedom of expression advocates in the Americas, with **high moral integrity and a record of institutional independence** sustained across governments of every political orientation — including resisting, and prevailing over, a state attempt to dissolve Fundamedios in 2015.

Under his leadership, Fundamedios has strengthened **more than 30,000 people** through media literacy initiatives and produced **more than 3,095 fact-checks**, evolving from a national media observatory into a regional actor of reference.

CORE QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS & COMPETENCIES FOR THE MANDATE

- Deep thematic knowledge of freedom of expression, press freedom, access to information and Inter-American human rights standards, procedures, legal precedents of the IACHR and jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court.
- Protection of journalists, monitoring of attacks and documentation of restrictions on civic space.

- Extensive advocacy before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, including as coalition spokesperson in Geneva (2022).
- Strategic direction and oversight of civil society organizations, including governance, staff management, budgeting, donor relations and project sustainability.
- Information integrity, fact-checking, media literacy and democratic responses to disinformation.
- Public policy advocacy — before the IACHR, the UN Human Rights Council (UPR), UNESCO and NED forums on SDG 16.10.1, national legislatures and electoral authorities — on journalist protection mechanisms, media law, institutional guarantees for the press and democratic accountability.
- Regional network building, coalition coordination and cross-border cooperation in Latin America. Key partners include **FLIP, FLED, PADF, ADEPA, FOPEA, CAINFO, IPYS, CPJ, RSF, ACM and IAPA**, among others.
- Public communication, media engagement, crisis response and institutional representation under political pressure.

RELEVANCE TO THE OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The Office of the Special Rapporteur requires a profile that combines legal standards, public authority, institutional management and rapid response to crises. Ricaurte's experience is directly aligned with that combination. His work has connected victims, journalists, civil society organizations, donors, embassies, public authorities, courts and international mechanisms around a common democratic objective: protecting freedom of expression as a practical guarantee rather than a rhetorical commitment.

His experience is especially relevant to four current challenges in the Americas: the safety of journalists in contexts of organized crime and political violence; the misuse of law and regulation to restrict expression and association; the defense of civic space and independent civil society; and the need to address disinformation without undermining free expression standards. This profile allows him to contribute to the mandate from day one with field experience, institutional discipline, a clear commitment to the Inter-American System and a truly hemispheric outlook, attentive to the distinct realities of Central America, the Caribbean, the Andean region, the Southern Cone and North America.

“He knows the Americas thoroughly. He has a network of trust in every country that allows him to grasp quickly the multiplicity of situations arising at every point of the American territory, whether a large city or a remote rural area. That network was built over years of solidarity with those who needed his counsel and his help in difficult moments.”

— Fernando J. Ruiz, former President of FOPEA (Argentine Journalism Forum) and member of the National Academy of Journalism, Argentina (translated from Spanish).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Institution building:** founded and has led Fundamedios for 20 years, transforming it from a national media observatory into a regional reference organization that has survived direct state pressure — including the 2015 dissolution proceeding, archived after national and international advocacy.
- **Inter-American advocacy:** documented participation in IACHR thematic hearings, working meetings and advocacy processes in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2023 and 2024 — including personal experience as a petitioner seeking IACHR protection.
- **Protection with results:** directed journalist-protection programs delivering legal aid, psychosocial support and relocation, and designed the management and financial model for Ecuador's Journalist Protection Mechanism (2024), delivered to the authorities for implementation.
- **Democratic innovation:** founded Ecuador Chequea (2016), Ecuador's first fact-checking platform; promoted the Ecuador Verifica coalition; and launched ChequeaLab (2026) and the civic-tech tool Liberties 360.
- **International recognition:** Chapultepec Grand Prize for Press Freedom (IAPA, 2012) and Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (2017), among other awards and fellowships.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder and Executive Director — Fundamedios (Fundación Andina para la Observación y Estudio de Medios) | Quito, Ecuador | 2007–present

- Founded and leads one of Latin America's most visible organizations devoted to freedom of expression, press freedom, access to information, digital rights, information integrity and journalist protection, sustaining monitoring, advocacy, training, protection, legal analysis and public policy work across different governments and political cycles.
- Directs the systematic monitoring of attacks against journalists, media outlets and civil society in Ecuador — annual reports, alerts and thematic reports that constitute the country's historical record on freedom of expression since 2008 (e.g., 356 aggressions documented in 2022; 265 aggressions and 343 victims in 2023, the year of journalist exile) and that have underpinned IACHR hearings and UPR coalition reporting.
- Coordinates protection projects providing legal aid, psychosocial support, relocation of journalists at risk, public-security coverage training and police-journalist dialogue;

contributed to the design of Ecuador's Journalist Protection Mechanism and developed its management and financial sustainability model (2024).

- Manages institutional relationships with international donors, boards, regional partners, government counterparts and media organizations. A recent example: the police-journalist relations project with DCAF (2023–2025), which led the National Police's Council of Generals to sign a document for the protection of journalists, making it doctrine for the security institution.
- Leads policy and legislative advocacy against restrictive media laws, criminalization of expression, judicial harassment, administrative restrictions, state stigmatization and censorship — including the Hoja de Ruta por la Libertad de Expresión (2017–2025), a programmatic agenda presented to presidential candidates, lawmakers and public authorities.

Founder and Director General — Ecuador Chequea | Quito, Ecuador | 2016–present

- Founded Ecuador's first fact-checking platform as a democratic response to disinformation, electoral manipulation and the deterioration of public debate; today the country's leading verification outlet and the only one in Ecuador certified by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN).
- Promotes fact-checking, media literacy, information integrity and public-interest journalism as compatible with — and dependent on — a robust understanding of freedom of expression.
- Leads partnerships among civil society, media, universities, international organizations and verification networks, including the Ecuador Verifica coalition and ChequeaLab (2026), Ecuador's first laboratory for verification, media literacy and informed democracy, supported by UTPL and IAPA.

Co-founder / Regional Network Builder — Voces del Sur | Latin America | 2017–present

- Co-founded and promoted a regional network of national organizations across Latin America dedicated to monitoring, documenting and denouncing attacks against the press and restrictions on freedom of expression.
- Co-developed, with member organizations, the network's common methodologies for regional monitoring, shadow reporting and advocacy on SDG 16.10.1 and journalist safety.
- Participates in regional advocacy before international mechanisms — including the IACHR, the UN Universal Periodic Review and UNESCO/NED forums on SDG 16.10.1 — and civil society platforms such as IFEX on press freedom and democratic deterioration.
- Extended protection methodologies beyond the Andean subregion: in 2019, amid the crackdown on Nicaragua's press, led the team of specialists that trained and consolidated FLED's network of 17 Press Freedom Promoter Journalists, providing strategic advice grounded in IACHR indicators that shaped the organization's documentation methodology —

“a tool that remains a fundamental pillar for our organization” (Guillermo J. Medrano, Executive Director, FLED, Nicaragua; translated from Spanish).

“His leadership has helped build bridges among organizations working in diverse and difficult national contexts. [...] César’s contribution has been marked by seriousness, generosity, strategic vision, and a deep commitment to regional collaboration.”

— Red Voces del Sur, institutional letter signed by Marianela Balbi, Council Member (IPYS Venezuela)

First Ombudsman (Defensor del Televidente) — Ecuavisa | Quito, Ecuador | 2007–2009

- Served as the first audience ombudsman in an Ecuadorian television channel and authored the channel’s Manual of Ethics and Style.
- Hosted the weekly program Televidencia, focused on media accountability, journalistic ethics and audience rights.

Reporter, Editor, Columnist, Media Analyst and Publisher — Major Ecuadorian media | Ecuador | 1988–present

- Worked as reporter, editor, columnist, media analyst and cultural journalist in major Ecuadorian outlets including El Comercio, Diario Hoy, El Universo, La Hora, Vistazo and Mundo Diners; served as weekly-edition and culture editor of Diario Hoy, and as reporter, city editor, contemporary-life editor and media analyst at El Comercio.
- Founded and directed Traffic, an Ecuadorian cultural and music magazine.
- Published more than 3,000 articles, opinion columns and essays on politics, democracy, human rights, journalism, media and culture. He is currently a columnist at La Hora, El Universo and Ecuador Chequea. He also has an extensive body of poetry: he edited Plano y Simple (2000), an artist's book, and has several poetry collections ready for publication.

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS AND RECOGNITIONS

Ricaurte has been recognized internationally for his outstanding and courageous work defending freedom of expression and protecting journalists across the Americas. He is honored to have received the following awards, fellowships and recognitions:

- International Academy for Leadership / Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Germany, 2023 and 2025.
- Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law, 2017.
- Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellowship / National Endowment for Democracy, Washington, D.C., 2017.
- Horacio Aguirre Award / Interamerican Institute for Democracy, 2017.

- Carlos Pérez Perasso Merit Award / Quito Chamber of Commerce, 2014.
- Chapultepec Grand Prize for Press Freedom / Inter American Press Association (IAPA), 2012.
- Premio a la Libertad de Expresión Internacional / Editorial Perfil, Argentina, 2012.
- International Visitor Leadership Program / U.S. Department of State.

EDUCATION

- M.A. Candidate in Human Rights, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR), Spain. Expected completion: November 2026. Current GPA: 9.4/10.
- Licenciatura en Comunicación Social (Bachelor's degree in Social Communication / Journalism), Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja.
- Studies in Communication Research / Investigative Journalism, Facultad de Comunicación Social, Universidad Central del Ecuador.
- Diplomado Superior en Comunicación, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar.

CIVIC TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

One of Ricaurte's most innovative developments is **Liberties 360**, a civic technology for monitoring freedom of expression, developed in collaboration with the Colombian firm Nodo IA and scaled with the support of Tech For Rescue. Its evolution, **Liberties 360 Pulse**, enables the preventive detection of narratives that fuel violence against journalists — a concrete example of technology placed at the service of freedom of expression and journalist safety.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT, INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

A distinctive element of Ricaurte's profile is his ability to transform rights-based diagnoses into concrete, sustainable and measurable institutional projects. Under his leadership, Fundamedios has created and maintained long-term programs that combine monitoring, advocacy, protection, training, public policy, legal analysis, information integrity and regional coordination: the monitoring and annual-report system; Ecuador Chequea; Escuela Fundamedios; Voces del Sur; Fundamedios USA; Media and Democracy in the Americas; the Amazon Journalism and Climate Change Summit; safe electoral-coverage training; police-journalist dialogue initiatives; journalist-protection projects; policy design for Ecuador's Journalist Protection Mechanism; and ChequeaLab.

Between 2023 and 2025, Fundamedios implemented donor-supported projects with measurable results. As a result of these projects, 3,095+ pieces of content were verified and **30,000 people**

were strengthened in media literacy (Ecuador Verifica). The National Police's Council of Generals signed a Document of Agreements for Police-Journalist Relations, making it institutional doctrine. Journalists at risk received legal advice, psychosocial support and relocation assistance. The two Amazon Journalism and Climate Change Summits convened **1,300 participants, more than 100 speakers, 10 keynote conferences, 20 dialogue tables and 30 workshops**. Escuela Fundamedios graduated more than **100 fact-checkers from local and regional media**. These initiatives align directly with the protection, monitoring and capacity-building priorities of the IACHR Strategic Plan 2023–2027. (Full project matrix at Annex VI.)

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

Ricaurte is comfortable and at ease in high-level forums and fully conversant with the modalities, procedures and jurisprudence of the international human rights mechanisms. In particular, **his personal experience as a petitioner before the IACHR — including precautionary-measures proceedings in which he is expressly named (2018) —** has deepened his knowledge of the Inter-American System and gives him a unique perspective on the experience of those who turn to it for protection.

He has participated in multiple thematic hearings, working meetings and advocacy processes before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights concerning freedom of expression, freedom of association, attacks against journalists, civic space, journalist protection and democratic deterioration in Ecuador, with documented proceedings in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2023 and 2024. A highlight: in November 2023 he presented before the IACHR requesting guarantees for Ecuador's Journalist Protection Mechanism and an end to reprisals. In November 2024 he led the civil society delegation, alongside journalist victims, at the IACHR hearing on the grave situation of journalism in Ecuador amid organized-crime violence.

He has also supported advocacy efforts by civil society groups in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, and have advised organizations in Paraguay and Chile on the submission of reports for various cycles of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review since 2012, including the submission of the coalition report for Ecuador in 2012, 2017, and 2022, as well as my role as spokesperson in Geneva.

"He is highly qualified for the position — and, beyond that, a person singularly motivated by the defense of freedom of expression and the protection of journalists, of every kind."

— Frank La Rue, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression; President of the Board, Instituto DEMOS (Guatemala) (translated from Spanish).

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

A selection of Ricaurte’s most mandate-relevant publications follows; this section should be read together with Annex III, “Reports, Publications and Monitoring,” which contains the full portfolio with verification links.

- Entre la intemperie y la captura (2026) — report on the structural crisis of Ecuadorian journalism: the material, professional, ethical and democratic conditions for independent journalism. Fundamedios.
- Arquitectura de la violencia oficial (2025) — documentation of patterns of institutional violence, administrative censorship, surveillance, state opacity and stigmatization against journalism. Fundamedios.
- Letra Muerta: Recomendaciones para la libertad de expresión y prensa en Ecuador. Fundamedios, 2022.
- El delito de expresarte. Fundamedios, 2023.
- El derecho a reunarnos en paz. Fundamedios, 2014.
- Antídoto contra el silencio: Periodismo de investigación y nuevas tecnologías en Ecuador. Fundamedios, 2012.
- La prensa bajo ataque (2011) and La palabra rota (2009). Fundamedios.
- Annual reports on freedom of expression in Ecuador. Fundamedios, 2008–present.
- More than 3,000 articles, opinion columns and essays in Ecuadorian and international media.

MANAGEMENT, DONOR RELATIONS AND OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

Beyond public advocacy, Ricaurte has directed the operational side of complex civil society work: strategic planning, team leadership, donor relations, budgeting, reporting, risk management, public representation and governance relations — experience directly relevant to a mandate that must operate with technical authority, institutional discipline and financial sustainability.

- Designed, implemented and supervised multi-year programs funded by international cooperation agencies, private foundations, multilateral partners and democratic institutions. Principal donors: **UNESCO, German Development Cooperation, USAID, NED, the European Union, the Poynter Institute, the U.S. Department of State and Meta**; project portfolios in the range of **US\$200,000 to US\$1,000,000 per year**.
- Aligns programmatic goals with measurable outputs, public-interest impact, risk mitigation, donor compliance and institutional sustainability.
- Leads and coordinates multidisciplinary, multicultural teams — journalists, lawyers, researchers, trainers, communicators and finance staff — working in person and remotely

across Ecuador and the United States (Fundamedios USA). Like the broader sector, Fundamedios has had to reduce the size of its team while sustaining the impact of its work: it currently comprises 8 staff working across monitoring, protection, legal defense, communications and advocacy, and project management and new business development.

- Translates complex rights standards into practical tools, trainings, reports, public policy proposals, protection protocols and advocacy messages, and maintains institutional credibility under hostile public narratives, state pressure and politically polarized contexts.

PUBLIC VOICE AND DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATION

Ricaurte has developed a strong, independent public voice as a journalist, columnist, media analyst, interviewer and institutional spokesperson, and is comfortable appearing in TV, radio and print interviews as required — with constant public participation from 2007 to 2026 in debates on freedom of expression, civic space, access to information, disinformation, journalist protection and democratic risk. This capacity matters because the Special Rapporteur must explain standards in ways that are legally rigorous, publicly understandable and politically difficult to distort. Throughout his career, he has defended freedom of expression without reducing it to corporate media interests or partisan positions, framing it instead as a core guarantee of democratic accountability and human dignity.

STRATEGIC CLOSING STATEMENT

Ricaurte offers the Commission a candidacy proven in the field: that of someone who has defended freedom of expression before governments, courts, international mechanisms, donors, media organizations and journalists at risk — and who has built the institutions capable of sustaining that defense over time. The last word belongs to those who have accompanied that work:

“He fully possesses the qualities required to exercise this mandate: independence of judgment, professional excellence, personal integrity, the capacity for dialogue with multiple actors, and a recognized legitimacy among press and human rights organizations across the entire region.”

— Zuliana Lainez Otero, President of the National Association of Journalists of Peru (ANP) — representing more than 12,000 journalists — and of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) (translated from Spanish)

“I have attended hemispheric and global events alongside César and found him to be a firm, knowledgeable, and principled advocate and earnest team member.”

— Wesley Gibbings, Vice President, Media Institute of the Caribbean; Advisor, Association of Caribbean MediaWorkers (Trinidad and Tobago)