

Film promotion director recalled from Cannes; travel was unauthorized

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Travel was arranged before a presidential memo ordering no travel without authorization



While representing Mexico on the world stage at the Cannes Film Festival, the director of the Mexican Institute of Cinematography (Imcine) got an abrupt and unwelcome order from the president: come home.

It turned out that María Novaro, also a well-known film director, had not received the express consent of President López Obrador to attend the glamorous event currently taking place in the French Riviera resort.

In a May 3 memorandum, the president said all overseas trips by government officials must be authorized by him and that allowances for approved travel had been cut by 50%. Imcine is an agency of the federal Secretariat of Culture.

López Obrador said yesterday that he had approved 20 overseas trips this month out of 100 proposals presented to him. But Novaro wasn't among the officials who were granted travel permission.

The order for the Imcine chief to return to Mexico prevented her from attending scores of meetings she had lined up with film industry figures at which she would have promoted Mexican cinema.

Novaro also planned to give several interviews to the press and attend screenings of Mexican films being shown at this year's festival, including a remastered edition of the 1950 Luis Buñuel movie *Los Olvidados*.

Her sudden recall to Mexico was slammed on social media and by cultural figures.

“The lack of independence of the whole cultural sector in this fourth transformation [a term used by López Obrador to refer to his administration] is very concerning,” said documentary maker Everardo González.

“If things continue like this, we’ll be [soon] living through the beginning of the end . . . for Mexican cinema.”

Arturo Saucedo, a cultural commentator, described what happened to Novaro as “humiliating.”

“The government of Mexico is generating a terrible image of our country and in one of the most important international meetings of the film industry. In the end, the [travel] expenditure is useless if they make her return. This is not the institutional way of a democracy.”

Source: [El Economista](#) (sp), [El Universal](#) (sp)