

VOCES
DEL SUR

Cartography of silence

2025 Shadow Report on Press
Freedom in Latin America

Cartography of silence

2025 SHADOW REPORT ON
PRESS FREEDOM IN LATIN
AMERICA

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* The data, analysis, and recommendations presented in this document are the responsibility of organizations that are part of Red Voces del Sur and do not necessarily reflect the position, values, or opinions of the consulting team.



Red Voces del Sur (Red VDS) is comprised of 17 civil society organizations across Latin America that work in coordination to promote and defend freedom of expression, freedom of the press, access to information, and the safety and protection of journalists. Red VDS began in 2017 with the purpose of creating a common registry of violations of these freedoms, allowing for a comparative analysis of the region. Red VDS has been legally incorporated in Uruguay since 2024.

ARGENTINA — Foro de Periodismo Argentino (FOPEA)

BOLIVIA — Asociación Nacional de la Prensa de Bolivia (ANP)

BRAZIL — Asociación Brasileña de Periodismo de Investigación (Abraji)

CHILE — Observatorio del Derecho a la Comunicación (ODC)

COLOMBIA — Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP)

COSTA RICA — Instituto de Prensa y Libertad de Expresión (IPLEX)

CUBA — Instituto Cubano de Libertad de Expresión y Prensa (ICLEP)

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MEXICO — Artículo 19 México y Centroamérica (Article 19)

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Executive summary

In 2025, press freedom in Latin America experienced a structural setback marked by the consolidation of increasingly complex forms of censorship. Red Voces del Sur (Red VDS) documented 2,484 alerts affecting 3,230 victims across 17 countries in the region. While this is a decrease in alerts compared to 2024, this does not represent an improvement in the situation, but rather a reconfiguration of violence towards less visible mechanisms —particularly in the digital, judicial, and institutional spheres— combined with the advance of self-censorship and “zones of silence.”

Lethal violence claimed the life of 23 journalists in 2025 —nine more than in 2024— equivalent to one death every 16 days. Mexico recorded seven murders, positioning it as the deadliest country in the region, followed by Ecuador (five) and Peru (four). Red VDS also recoded murders in Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, and El Salvador. Most of the victims were investigating corruption, illicit economies, or organized crime, and had previously reported threats or were under protection measures. The impunity surrounding these crimes confirms the collapse of even the most basic guarantees for practicing journalism in Latin America.

Regional monitoring confirms the central role of the state in violations of press freedom: one out of every two identified aggressors was a state actor. The trend is especially critical in Cuba, Venezuela, Honduras, Uruguay, Peru, Argentina, and Ecuador, where state actors accounted for more than 50% of the alerts. In authoritarian contexts such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, the prominence of state actors translated into surveillance, persecution, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, and systematic censorship. In countries with formal democratic systems, state repression took the form of public stigmatization, discursive criminalization, and institutional restrictions aimed at intimidating and silencing journalism.

Stigmatizing discourse was the second most frequent category in 2025, with 547 alerts. State actors perpetrated at least half of these incidents. Argentina led this category with 139 alerts, followed by Colombia, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Brazil, and Chile. These practices seek to discredit journalists and media outlets, erode public trust, and legitimize further aggressions. Their impact is especially serious when they come from actors with political power or high public visibility, as they increase the vulnerability of the press to other forms of violence.

Likewise, digital violence emerged as one of the main forms of aggression against the press in Latin America. Red VDS documented 182 alerts related to violence through the use of digital technology, with Colombia, Mexico, and Ecuador among the most affected countries. Coordinated smear campaigns, threats on social media, surveillance, organized trolls, and the use of artificial intelligence to produce false content demonstrate how new technologies amplify the capacity for intimidation and sustained persecution. In Chile, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, a significant proportion of the alerts occurred in digital spaces (45.6%, 65.8%, and 58.7%, respectively).

In 2025, Red VDS recorded 296 physical aggressions against journalists, accounting for more than one in every ten alerts. Mexico led this indicator with 57 alerts, followed by Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia. Unlike other forms of aggression, physical violence shows a relatively balanced distribution between state and non-state actors, revealing that threats to journalists' physical integrity stem from a broader range of aggressors.

Judicial harassment also remained a mechanism of censorship, with 190 alerts recorded, with Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, and Brazil among the countries with the highest numbers. Abusive use of civil or criminal lawsuits, baseless investigations, content takedown orders, and requests for access to private communications were used to intimidate journalists, wear down their reputations and finances, and constrain reporting on matters of public interest.

Additionally, Red VDS recorded 279 alerts related to restrictions on access to public information. Mexico led this indicator with 59 alerts, followed by Colombia, Argentina, Honduras, and El Salvador. Systematic refusals to respond to requests, unjustified delays, exclusion from press conferences, and administrative obstacles limited the ability to investigate, verify, and disseminate information relevant to the public.

In summary, 2025 confirmed that violence against the press in Latin America is not decreasing; rather, it is evolving and becoming more sophisticated. The convergence of state repression, organized crime, abusive use of the justice system, online harassment, and public stigmatization exacerbates self-censorship, expands "zones of silence," and undermines the public's right to be informed. The sustained deterioration of press freedom also constitutes a critical sign of democratic decline in the region.

Introduction

Red Voces del Sur (Red VDS) is a regional network of 17 civil society organizations working to promote and defend freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information throughout Latin America. In 2025, Red VDS achieved a significant milestone in its institutional development by becoming an independent organization with its own legal status as an autonomous civil society association.

Since 2017, Red VDS has developed and implemented a common monitoring methodology based on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.10.1 of the 2030 Agenda. Its objective is to systematically, rigorously, and comparatively register violations of these fundamental rights across the region. Through this jointly developed and continuously evolving methodology, member organizations document alerts regarding acts of violence against journalists, media workers, media outlets, civil society organizations, and journalists' family members. These alerts are defined as actions aimed at obstructing, censoring, or negatively affecting the practice of journalism.

Red VDS structures its monitoring system around 15 regional indicators that classify the different types of violence against the press. In addition, the methodology includes a cross-cutting indicator on sex-based violence aimed at highlighting the differentiated forms of violence faced by women journalists. Throughout the year, Red VDS publishes alerts that feed into a regional database, which serves as the main input to produce the annual Shadow Report.

Beyond its monitoring activity, Red VDS has established itself as a key actor in

regional and international advocacy, organizing evidence to contribute to state accountability mechanisms and promote public policies based on international human rights standards. In this eighth edition of the Shadow Report, Red VDS presents an independent analysis intended to enrich and contrast the official information reported by states regarding compliance with SDG 16.10.1. The report provides a regional diagnosis of the main trends, challenges, and setbacks related to freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Latin America during 2025, complemented by country-specific analyses that reflect the features of each national context and offer recommendations to improve conditions for journalistic practice.

The 2025 edition of the Shadow Report introduces significant methodological changes designed to more accurately capture the complexity of attacks against the press in the region, as detailed in the following section. These changes may result in discrepancies between the national reports produced by partner organizations and VDS's Shadow Report. As noted above, these discrepancies are the result of methodological considerations and in no way call into question the integrity of the partners' national-level reports.

Methodology

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Target 16.10

Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Indicator 16.10.1

Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months.

The information and data contained in this Shadow Report have been produced through monitoring carried out by the 17 partner organizations of Red VDS in Latin America. This monitoring employs a common methodology, developed by consensus and subject to continuous review, aligned with the parameters of SDG 16.10.1 of the 2030 Agenda.

The methodology focuses on the monitoring and documentation of “alerts” concerning acts of violence against the press, which constitute violations of freedom of expression and are directly intended to obstruct, censor, or otherwise negatively affect the professional practice of journalism. Red VDS only registers incidents whose motivation is directly linked to the journalistic work of the victim.

The 2025 edition introduces substantial methodological changes compared to previous years that affect the scope of the indicators and how data is counted. These modifications should be considered when making interannual comparisons. The most significant change concerns the relationship between alerts and victims. Until 2024, both variables were treated as directly equivalent: each alert corresponded to one victim. Starting in 2025, alerts and victims are accounted for separately. Alerts are counted as contextual units, while victims are recorded independently within each alert. This means that a single incident affecting multiple media workers simultaneously — such as a police operation during a protest or a coordinated harassment campaign — is now recorded as one alert involving multiple victims, rather than registering a separate alert for each individual affected.

This methodological adjustment aims to more accurately reflect the nature of the aggressions and to avoid the distortions produced by the previous system. However, as a result, the 2025 alert numbers are not directly comparable in absolute terms with data from previous years. The change may also lead to differences between the figures presented in the national reports of partner organizations, as these may rely on different counting criteria. These differences do not constitute methodological inconsistencies but rather reflect the outcome of a deliberate adjustment in the unit of analysis as part of an ongoing process to improve and harmonize regional monitoring.

In the same vein, it is now possible to register multiple indicators within a single alert. In previous years, each alert was classified under a single prevailing indicator, which required partner organizations to identify the dominant type of violation even when a single incident combined several forms of aggression. Starting this period, all applicable types of violations within the same context must be recorded, while still keeping one alert per row. This makes it possible to more accurately capture the complexity of these attacks, which often combine, for example, an arbitrary detention with physical assault and restrictions on access to information within a single repressive episode.

The victim typology has also been updated, broadening and refining its scope compared to previous years. Notably, reporters, analysts, and producers of journalistic content — including freelancers, bloggers, YouTubers, and influencers — are now grouped under a single category; cartoonists are explicitly incorporated; and the notion of media workers has been expanded to include technical, administrative, and support roles. New categories have also been added, such as the journalistic community, civil society organizations, and family members or close associates, recognizing that violence against the press can extend beyond the individual journalist. For the purpose of counting victims, collective categories — such as media outlets, organizations, or journalistic community — are recorded as single victims. These changes aim to more comprehensively reflect the diversity of actors affected and the contemporary ways in which journalism is practiced, although they may also affect comparability with national monitoring efforts.

Red VDS also revised the list of indicators relative to 2024. Two new categories have been added: forced displacement, covering cases of exile and arbitrary denial of entry to one's country of origin; and violence through the use of digital technology, encompassing practices such as hacking, doxxing, illegal surveillance, account blocking, and the use of artificial intelligence to spread disinformation. The addition of this last indicator reflects the growing weight of digital violence, which in previous editions could be scattered across other categories. Additionally, the aggressions and attacks indicator has

been disaggregated into two aspects: physical aggressions, and verbal, written, and digital aggressions — enabling a more precise characterization of the forms of violence. At the same time, the internet restrictions category has been removed, and the civil and criminal procedures indicator has been replaced by a judicial harassment indicator.

The methodology also maintains and strengthens the cross-cutting indicator for sex-based violence, which is not added to the general count as an additional aggression but instead flags — across all 15 indicators — that an already-registered alert contains a component of differentiated violence linked to the sex of the affected journalist. This indicator is activated when the aggression includes challenges to professional competence on the basis of sex, sexist or misogynistic acts or remarks, acts of differentiated sexual or workplace violence, differentiated digital violence, or when the attack is connected to journalistic coverage of rights, violence, or discrimination on the basis of sex. The inclusion of this indicator allows for a more precise mapping of the differentiated forms of violence faced by women journalists.

Methodological limitations

The monitoring methodology developed by Red VDS was built collaboratively, drawing on the exchange of experiences among partner organizations, and it continues to evolve. The dynamic approach used makes it possible to incorporate lessons learned from each implementation cycle, as well as adaptations to the specific contexts of each country. Nevertheless, like any tool, it has certain limitations that are important to acknowledge.

First, while the definition of SDG 16.10.1 includes trade unionists and human rights defenders, Red VDS has chosen to focus its monitoring exclusively on journalists, press workers, and media outlets. This thematic delimitation enables greater analytical precision, although it narrows the range of cases considered.

Second, as is common in human rights violation monitoring processes, underreporting remains a possibility. The chilling effect of aggressions coupled with self-censorship and fear of retaliation may lead many victims to not report incidents. This is particularly true for journalists covering dangerous or sensitive topics, those living under dictatorships, and women journalists, among others. Additionally, organizations are at different stages of implementing the cross-cutting indicator on sex-based violence, which could result in further underreporting of alerts involving components of this type of violence.

Third, the quality and completeness of the data collected ultimately depends on the technical and operational capacities of each partner organization to identify, document, and validate alerts in its own

country. As of this report's closing, some alerts remained in the validation stage, so the data may vary in future updates. The network takes pride in the diversity of its members, but also recognizes that each partner has different approaches to, and capacities for, monitoring.

The changes introduced in 2025 to the counting logic and the catalog of indicators call for an adjustment in how the data is read, both in relation to VDS's historical series and to the national reports of partner organizations. In particular, the distinction between alerts and victims, along with the incorporation of multiple indicators per alert, makes it possible to capture the complexity of these attacks more precisely, although this may generate variations in the figures compared to previous exercises. Far from limiting the analysis, these methodological improvements strengthen the regional monitoring effort's capacity to identify trends and understand how violence against the press has evolved over time.

VDS Indicators

■ Derived directly from SDG 16.10.1

■ Derived from the concept of “other harmful acts” included in the definition SDG 16.10.1

■ Other indicators



Murder

Intentional killing of a journalist.



Kidnapping

Unlawful seizure and retention of one or more journalists against their will.



Forced disappearance

Arrest or any other form of deprivation of liberty of journalists that is carried out by government agents, or groups or individuals acting on behalf of or with the support of the state, and that refuses to disclose their fate or whereabouts or to acknowledge that they are deprived of their liberty.



Arbitrary detention

Arrest, retention, or detention of a journalist without fair trial or legal basis justifying the deprivation of liberty.



Torture

Act by which intentional physical or mental pain, intimidation, coercion or severe suffering is inflicted on a journalist



Physical aggressions

Acts of physical violence carried out with the aim of preventing or limiting freedom of expression, obstructing press work, and/or restricting access to public information or newsworthy events.



Verbal, written, and digital aggressions

Intimidation or threats — whether verbal or written — delivered through traditional or digital channels with the aim of intimidating journalists or media outlets, thereby limiting freedom of expression and press work.



Forced displacement

Actions that compel or pressure journalists, media workers, or media outlets to relocate by

force, whether within or outside their country (forced migration or exile), including the arbitrary denial of re-entry to their country of origin by immigration authorities.



Stigmatizing discourse

Publicly-made attacks, usually verbal, aimed at discrediting and disqualifying one or several journalists or a media outlet.



Sexual violence

Unwanted sexual acts, attempts, comments, or insinuations, both in physical and digital spaces.



Judicial harassment

Abusive legal actions targeting journalists or media outlets, including SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation), with the aim of intimidating and curtailing journalistic work and public debate.



Restriction on access to information

Obstruction of access to public interest information or newsworthy events.



Abusive use of state power

Planned, proposed, and executed actions by the State that, abusing its power, go against international standards of freedom of press and freedom of expression, and that harm journalists and media outlets economically or prevent them from doing their job.



Legal framework contrary to international standards

Proposal and/or approval of norms, which may include laws, decrees, regulations, resolutions, ordinances, and/or rules that restrict freedom of the press, expression, and the right to access information and/or generate censorship.



Violence through the use of digital technology

Actions that prevent and/or restrict freedom of expression and press freedom through strategies that limit the use of digital networks to publish

or access information; it also encompasses forms of violence that exploit information and communication technologies to cause harm to a victim's privacy, personal security, and/or dignity.

**Alert based on sex**

Evaluates whether the motive behind an attack or violation is related to the victim's sex.

2025 Regional Analysis

Countries monitored:

17

Number of alerts:

2.484

Number of victims:

3.230

Cross-cutting alerts
based on sex:

142

Geographic distribution of alerts:



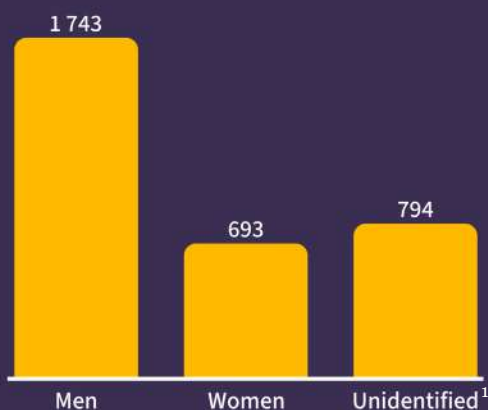
Comparative chart of alerts by country:



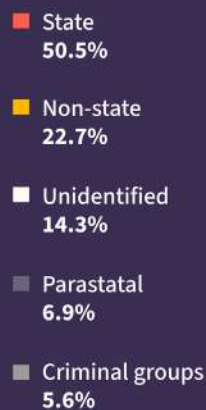
Number of alerts by indicator:



Sex of victims:



Aggressors:



¹ The 'Unidentified' category includes, among other cases, collective victims. For the purpose of counting the number of victims, collective categories — such as media outlets, organizations, or unions — are recorded as a single victim. This methodological simplification may result in an underrepresentation of the total number of individuals potentially affected in this type of alert, but it ensures consistency in data recording and analysis.

Context and trends

In 2025, press freedom underwent a structural setback in Latin America, where physical, digital, judicial, and institutional violence claimed the lives of journalists. Against this backdrop, the regional monitoring conducted by the VDS Network recorded 2,484 alerts affecting 3,230 victims across 17 countries, confirming that these are not isolated incidents, but rather the existence of increasingly hostile environments where direct attacks, smear campaigns, abusive use of public institutions, and censorship converge.

Throughout 2025, state actors were the primary aggressor against the press across the region, responsible for 50.5% of all alerts. Their methods included judicial harassment, abusive use of state power, stigmatizing discourse, arbitrary detention, and restriction on access to information. In countries like Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, these practices combined to give the state near-total control over the information ecosystem. In formal democracies, meanwhile, they took more sophisticated forms — intimidation and public discrediting carried out, for instance, through social media.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions — 861 alerts in total — was the most frequent category of violence against the press in Latin America, reflecting a consolidation of violence in online spaces. Stigmatizing rhetoric added another 547 alerts, a disciplinary tool used mainly in Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, and Costa Rica to erode public trust in journalism and lend legitimacy to further attacks.

Violence against journalists' lives and physical safety reached critical levels. In 2025, Red VDS registered 296 physical attacks and 23 murders of journalists. Mexico topped the list in both categories, confirming that covering corruption, security, and organized crime remains an extremely dangerous line of work in the region.

Finally, restrictions on access to information (279 alerts) and judicial harassment (190 alerts) reinforced contemporary mechanisms of censorship, with Mexico, Colombia, and Argentina among the most affected countries. Taken together, these figures show that violence against the press in Latin America isn't decreasing — it's shifting shape, diversifying, and becoming ever more effective at undermining media pluralism and the public's right to be informed.

Latin America: the architecture of criminality and the failure of state protection

In 2025, 23 journalists were killed in the countries monitored by Red VDS — 9 more than in 2024. The majority of these crimes occurred in broad daylight at the hands of hitmen or criminal groups. These were not unforeseeable deaths: the victims had reported threats and, in many cases, had protection measures in place that proved ineffective.

The impunity surrounding these crimes points to a collapse of the minimum guarantees for the practice of journalism in the region. This pattern also reaffirms that investigating corruption, illicit economies, and networks of power continues to cost lives.

Mexico was the most lethal country in the region, with seven recorded murders. Their murders took place in local contexts, where reporting on corruption and security runs up against a convergence of political, economic, and criminal interests. The killing of Cayetano de Jesús Guerrero, a journalist and deputy director at Global México, despite having federal protection, exposes the state's inability to guarantee the safety of those exercising the right to inform.

In an unprecedented development, Ecuador documented the murder of five media workers in 2025 —Sebastián Rivadeneira, Xavier Ramos, Fernando Álvarez, Darwin Baque, and Patricio Aguilar— all of whom were investigating corruption networks or illicit economies. As of publication, their killings remain unpunished. Meanwhile, Peru recorded four murders of journalists executed by hitmen —Gastón Medina, Raúl Celis, Mitzar Castillejos Tenazoa, and Fernando Núñez Guevara— exposing the extreme risks of investigative journalism in areas dominated by illegal mining and drug trafficking.

In Guatemala, journalist Cristian Martínez was killed during a robbery, while Ismael Alonzo and Jorge Zapeta were attacked by armed men — Zapeta after having reported threats and survived a prior disappearance. Honduras recorded the murders of Carlos Gilberto Aguirre and Javier Hércules, the latter killed despite being under protective measures. In Colombia, journalist Óscar Gómez was shot dead by a hitman as he entered a community radio station, after having voiced fear over his work, amid threats from armed groups. Finally, the murder of Salvadoran journalist Javier Salinas — killed by hitmen in Honduras despite being under protective measures — illustrates the transnational reach of violence against the press.

In this regional context, states — through action or omission — become complicit in the web that enables lethal violence against journalists. Their failure to prevent, protect, and punish normalizes a threat that has become an everyday reality, making Latin America one of the most dangerous environments in the world to practice journalism.

The state as the primary driver of press freedom violations

The state is primarily responsible for violations of press freedom in Latin America: one in every two aggressions is committed by state actors. When this trend becomes entrenched, it undermines the very foundations of democratic systems. In 7 of the monitored countries — Cuba, Venezuela, Honduras, Uruguay, Peru, Argentina, and Ecuador — state actors are responsible for more than 50% of alerts, acting as

coordinators, enablers, or legitimizers of broader ecosystems of harassment and censorship. Their pressure is concentrated mainly in stigmatizing rhetoric, restrictions on access to information, and verbal, written, and digital attacks. **This pattern confirms that state violence takes on multiple forms to control which topics get investigated, and to wear down and delegitimize journalism.**

In countries such as Cuba and Venezuela, the state has consolidated near-total control over the information ecosystem through systematic practices of surveillance, persecution, censorship, and arbitrary detention. In Cuba, the 55 arbitrary detentions recorded in 2025 represent the highest rate in the region for this category; in Venezuela, the 15 arbitrary detentions and 3 forced disappearances point to an increasingly acute pattern of direct repression. In these contexts, state violence stops being a reaction to journalistic coverage and becomes a preventive mechanism instead: the goal is no longer to silence a single voice, but to eliminate the very possibility of reporting.

In formally democratic countries, the state is also the main architect of hostile environments for journalism. In Honduras and Guatemala, public stigmatization, discursive criminalization, and the use of delegitimizing narratives from high levels of government consolidated a climate of institutional hostility that left the press more vulnerable to other forms of attack. In Honduras, stigmatizing rhetoric (37 alerts) and restrictions on access to information (26 alerts) point to systematic institutional harassment during a year of peak electoral tension, in which public officials and state-linked actors branded journalists as “enemies” or “traitors” through official channels and obstructed coverage at press conferences. In Guatemala, state actors were behind 43.2% of alerts, through threats of detention and bans on entry to judicial hearings of public interest. These patterns reveal a democratic paradox: institutions meant to guarantee rights and protect public debate end up reproducing practices that weaken press freedom and normalize violence as a structural feature of the relationship between power and journalism.

Added to this is a **growing outsourcing of violence**: the state delegates harassment to intermediary actors — parastatal groups or those aligned with the ruling party — who act as an executing arm without formally implicating the state’s institutional responsibility. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, parastatal actors were behind 31.7% and 31.4% of alerts, respectively. In Venezuela, this pattern showed up with particular intensity in January 2025, when at least 25 attacks on the press were recorded in the days leading up to the presidential inauguration, carried out simultaneously by security forces and civilians aligned with the ruling party.

The state’s role shouldn’t be assessed solely in terms of who directly carries out attacks, but also in terms of its structural responsibility

for producing, tolerating, or deepening the conditions that restrict journalistic work. The recurrence of this pattern confirms that the main threat to press freedom in Latin America lies in the direct or indirect use of state resources, rhetoric, institutions, and omissions to limit, discipline, or control journalism.

Digital violence as a new axis of harassment

In 2025, digital violence emerged as one of the leading forms of aggression against the press in Latin America. In Chile, 45.6% of all alerts occurred in the digital space; in El Salvador, 65.8%; and in Nicaragua, 58.7% — a pattern that confirms the online ecosystem as a central and growing arena for harassment of journalists in the region. Violence through the use of digital technology accounted for 182 alerts (6.9% of the total), with Colombia (57), Mexico (30), and Ecuador (23) the hardest-hit countries. **When verbal, written, and digital attacks are combined with stigmatizing rhetoric — much of it channeled through social media — digital violence becomes structurally dominant across the total number of alerts.** This concentration is deliberate: the online environment offers attackers anonymity, low cost of execution, a high capacity for replication and simultaneous coordination, and the ability to amplify discrediting narratives without resorting to visible forms of censorship. For media workers, these attacks take many forms — direct threats, coordinated defamation campaigns, identity theft, surveillance, exposure of personal data, mass attacks on social media, audiovisual manipulation, and pressure aimed at discrediting investigations or punishing critical coverage. While these attacks don't always leave immediate traces, their effects are cumulative — emotional exhaustion, self-censorship, withdrawal from public engagement, and the abandonment of sensitive topics.

Digital violence has differentiated forms and impacts. Women journalists face attacks that are especially invasive and degrading, centered on their physical appearance, private lives, family ties, professional credibility, or social expectations about their public role. These attacks frequently include sexualized threats or campaigns designed to humiliate them and drive them out of public debate. This differentiated intensity compounds the personal costs of practicing journalism and further restricts the participation of diverse voices in the information space.

In this context, digital violence is no longer a secondary phenomenon; it has become a central dimension of contemporary attacks on press freedom in the region. It demands comprehensive responses in terms of protection, digital security, and accountability.

Physical aggressions as a mechanism of intimidation and silencing

Red VDS documented 296 physical aggressions in 2025, accounting for one in every ten alerts across the region. Mexico led this category with 57, followed by Brazil (55), Argentina (32), and Bolivia (26). From beatings and disproportionate use of force by public security forces to direct attacks during coverage, these acts of aggression function as deliberate mechanisms — carried out primarily by state and parastatal actors — to punish investigative work, disrupt the flow of information, or drive the press out of public spaces through intimidation.

Regional monitoring also confirms that physical violence occurs alongside other serious forms of harassment. In Mexico and Brazil, for example, high levels of physical aggressions coexist with murders, threats, forced displacement, and structural restrictions on the practice of journalism. In Argentina and Bolivia, by contrast, the risk escalates during coverage of polarized social protests, where the press is exposed to both security forces and hostile demonstrators. This suggests that physical aggression functions as a precursor to more extreme forms of violence, fueled by institutional inaction that deepens the cycle of impunity.

Among the emblematic cases during the reporting period was the attack on Argentine photographer Pablo Grillo on March 12, 2025, during a demonstration outside the National Congress in Buenos Aires. While carrying out his journalistic work and duly identified as press, he was struck in the skull by a tear gas canister fired by security forces, sustaining extremely severe injuries that required eight surgical interventions and a prolonged stay in intensive care. The magnitude of the attack, unusual in the Argentine context, revealed the persistence of patterns of police violence during coverage of demonstrations and reinforced the sense of risk among media workers, some of whom have begun adopting protective equipment to reduce their exposure.

Stigmatizing discourse as a tool of discrediting and disciplining

Stigmatizing discourse accounted for 547 alerts, reinforcing its position as a systematic tool used to delegitimize the press and undermine the conditions necessary for journalism. Argentina recorded 139 alerts, followed by Colombia (61), El Salvador (58), Costa Rica (53), Brazil (51), Chile (46), Honduras (37), and Venezuela (13). This trend deepens the pattern documented in 2024, when this type of aggression accounted for 20.1% of the regional total. In 2025, state actors were responsible for 59% of stigmatizing rhetoric.

In Argentina, President Javier Milei was responsible for 99.4% of stigmatizing discourses, including through public disparagement,

accusations of “media manipulation campaigns,” labeling journalists as “paid-off” or “political activists,” and questioning the independence of media outlets based on their editorial stance. When such narratives are promoted by actors with political power or high public visibility, they not only damage the reputation and safety of journalists and media outlets, but also amplify their exposure to other forms of violence and lend legitimacy to further attacks.

Throughout the region, this phenomenon intensifies in electoral periods or moments of heightened political debate, when information takes on strategic value in the contest for power. During these periods, political, media, and partisan actors instrumentalize stigmatizing rhetoric to delegitimize the press whenever its investigations, coverage, or fact-checking prove inconvenient to their electoral campaigns. In Bolivia, for example, journalists were the target of discrediting campaigns on social media following critical coverage, facing public accusations of being “bought” or serving political interests. The polarization of public debate narrows the space in which journalism is recognized as an independent actor and instead frames it as a political adversary — a process that accelerates in the digital environment, where automated amplification and an “us versus them” logic favor the escalation of harassment.

Structural restrictions on access to information

In 2025, restrictions on access to information accounted for 279 alerts. Mexico led this indicator with 59 alerts, followed by Colombia (30), Argentina (28), Honduras (26), and El Salvador (25). Cuba and Venezuela recorded 12 and 11 alerts respectively, which does not reflect lower levels of repression, but rather two simultaneous realities: access to information is structurally nonexistent, and the capacity to document violations is severely constrained. **These restrictions operate as indirect censorship mechanisms, as they undermine the press’s ability to investigate, verify, and disseminate information of public interest.**

In Uruguay, where this indicator ranked highest, administrative obstacles were recorded, including refusals to respond to information requests, unjustified delays, and restrictions at official venues that limited access to sources and authorities. In Bolivia, journalists were excluded from press conferences held by electoral bodies and faced restrictions and physical pushback when attempting to cover judicial hearings, revealing both formal and de facto limits on access to information. In El Salvador and Honduras, these dynamics manifest as systematic refusals to provide public information and restricted access to relevant official data. The result is a press corps forced to operate without verifiable official sources, in an environment designed to obstruct accountability.

The normalization of bureaucratic barriers doesn't always take explicit forms of censorship. **Administrative silence, incomplete responses, discretionary handling of data, and exclusion from official spaces steadily erode the right to inform.** These practices shift control over information away from formal legality and toward opaque mechanisms of public administration. In Latin America, where state opacity frequently conceals corruption, abuses of power, and human rights violations, this restriction not only affects the practice of journalism but also deprives citizens of information essential to accountability. Without access to official sources and data, investigative journalism is weakened precisely where it is needed most.

Expansion of zones of silence and self-censorship

Zones of silence—territories where independent journalism has completely disappeared—expanded across several Latin American countries in 2025 and directly affected the statistics. **In Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, this phenomenon has reached its most extreme expression: the decline in the number of alerts recorded in these countries does not reflect an improvement in conditions but rather the opposite — a shrinking pool of active journalists still able to document abuses.** In Venezuela, the sharp drop in alerts compared to 2024 is explained mainly by widespread self-censorship, while in Cuba and Nicaragua “zones of silence” have become the norm.

In 2025, the VDS Network recorded 31 cases of forced displacement of journalists: 22 in Colombia, 3 in Nicaragua, 2 in Venezuela, 2 in Mexico, and 1 each in El Salvador and Honduras. Exile, internal relocation, and the impossibility of return thus emerge as mechanisms of silencing every bit as effective as direct violence. These processes involve not only the physical departure of journalists from their territories, but also the severing of ties with their sources, audiences, and areas of coverage.

The monitoring reveals that these situations do not occur in isolation, but form part of broader environments of pressure. In Colombia, for example, displacement is linked to direct threats in regions with a heavy presence of armed groups; in El Salvador, journalists have made preventive departures in response to risks of detention tied to their investigative work; and in Venezuela, alerts of persecution combine with decisions to seek protection or relocate internally. In Nicaragua, denial of entry into the country and the impossibility of return have entrenched exile as a prolonged condition.

The expansion of these zones of silence is closely tied to rise of self-censorship among journalists and media outlets. Faced with persistent threats, institutional hostility, and/or a lack of protection safeguards, they choose to limit or abandon coverage altogether. In El Salvador, the dismantling of the independent press —with nearly all major

critical media outlets either shut down or forced into exile— has turned the digital sphere into the only remaining space for reporting abuses, while also making it the most heavily surveilled. In Bolivia, the drop in recorded alerts has coincided with greater severity in individual cases, suggesting that underreporting and self-censorship have reduced the number of complaints without decreasing the level of risk.

The forced displacement of journalists represents an irreparable loss for the information ecosystem of their countries of origin; their voices and knowledge of local context are irreplaceable. When those who cover sensitive issues — corruption, organized crime, abuses of power — are forced to leave their territories, entire communities are left to live in information deserts, where the public narrative falls to the mercy of the state or criminal groups. In a region already suffocated by media concentration, these information gaps deepen inequality in access to information and eliminate the minimum conditions required for democratic life.

Judicial harassment as a mechanism of attrition and censorship

Judicial harassment accounted for 190 alerts across the region (7.2% of the total). The countries with the highest number of alerts were Mexico (48, a 200% increase from 2024), Argentina (32), Colombia (27), and Brazil (18). In Peru, judicial harassment represented 13% of all alerts, ranking as the third most frequent type of aggression against the press, with at least six judicial proceedings open against journalists.

In Argentina, criminal complaints and civil lawsuits were filed against journalists over their published work, while in Mexico and Colombia, repeated judicial proceedings were documented against reporters investigating corruption or organized crime. In Argentina, 71.9% of judicial harassment alerts were driven by state actors through formal warnings, criminal complaints, and injunctions aimed at halting publications or forcing retractions. The phenomenon, however, is not limited to the state: business owners, private individuals, and public figures also resort to lawsuits, cease-and-desist letters, and mediations involving high damages claims as tools of pressure. In Colombia, 59.2% of judicial harassment cases were driven by state actors, with patterns combining judicial proceedings and threats of arrest against journalists investigating corruption and illegal economies — a disciplining effect that is especially pronounced in regions of weak institutional presence. In Mexico, 64.6% of judicial harassment alerts were attributed to state actors, and in Brazil, state actors drove 80% of judicial harassment against the press.

In these cases, the threat lies not in the final ruling but in the process itself. Prolonged, costly, and repeated, litigation functions as a tool

of attrition that constrains journalistic work well before any verdict is reached. When the justice system is used against the press, the damage is not confined to the affected journalist: it fractures trust in the system as a guarantor of rights and instills the conviction that speaking out is futile or dangerous.

Moreover, judicial harassment compromises the very mechanisms meant to protect journalists. Institutions that should investigate threats, sanction attacks, guarantee safety end up absorbed by strategic litigation or turned against those in need of protection. In this way, the justice system not only fails to protect the press but can itself become part of the risk environment journalists face. The persistence of this phenomenon confirms that one of the most sophisticated threats to press freedom in the region lies in the capture of legal and institutional tools to wear down journalism from within the state itself, replacing explicit censorship with mechanisms that are formally legal but materially restrictive.

Argentina 2025

Number of alerts:

278

Number of victims:

374

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

5

Number of alerts by indicator:



139 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE



32 PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS



32 JUDICIAL HARASSMENT



28 RESTRICTION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION



23 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



9 ABUSIVE USE OF STATE POWER



8 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



4 LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

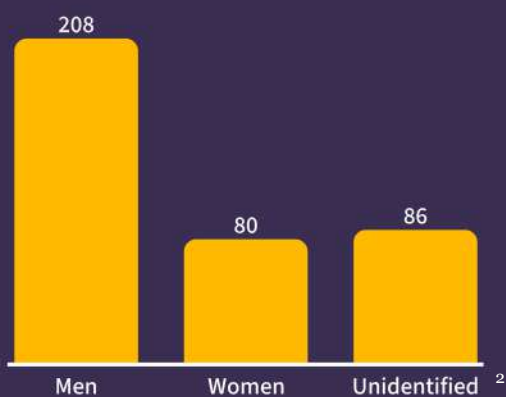


2 ARBITRARY DETENTION

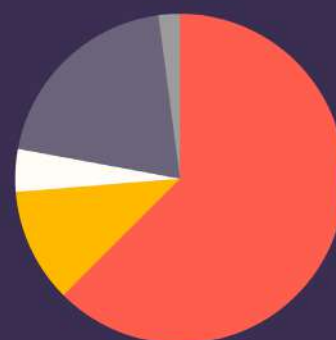
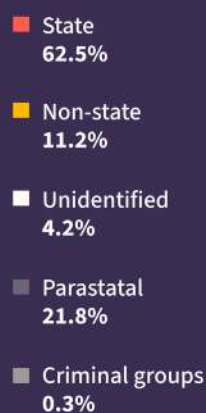


1 SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:



² In addition to "Men" and "Women," FOPEA uses three other possible classifications for its victims: General press, Organizations, and Media outlets.

Context and trends

“We don’t hate journalists enough”. President Javier Milei turned this premise into the driving force behind a systematic offensive against the Argentine press throughout 2025, organized around the hashtag #NOLSALP. Under this hostile mandate, the state intensified stigmatization, encouraged physical aggressions in public spaces, weaponized the judicial apparatus as a tool of intimidation, and used official advertising to pressure editorial lines. In this context, the Foro de Periodismo Argentino (FOPEA) recorded 278 alerts.

State actors were the leading aggressors against the press. President Javier Milei was involved in 42.8% of alerts, a figure that underscores the central role of the executive branch in the deterioration of press treatment. The state was behind 136 of the 139 stigmatizing statements recorded, the vast majority delivered directly by the president. This pattern confirms the consolidation of an official narrative aimed at discrediting and delegitimizing journalistic work.

Physical aggressions accounted for 11.5% of annual alerts. The indicator ranked as the second highest-risk category perpetrated by state actors, primarily security forces. The most emblematic case is that of photojournalist Pablo Grillo, struck in the skull by a tear gas canister fired by a “Gendarmería” corporal during a demonstration outside Congress on March 12, 2025. After eight surgeries and months of intensive care, Grillo was able to return home in February 2026, though he has not yet received a final medical discharge. The aggressiveness of security operations has forced media workers to wear helmets and tactical gear as their only safeguard.

Judicial harassment, meanwhile, rose to 11.5% of total alerts in 2025, nearly doubling the 6% recorded in 2024. State actors were responsible for 71.9% of these attacks, institutionalizing the use of civil and criminal lawsuits as mechanisms of disciplining. The president led this trend by pursuing legal action against journalists to silence scrutiny of his administration, and by securing an order from Federal Civil and Commercial Court No. 5 banning the dissemination of any material related to the Secretary General of the Presidency, Karina Milei — a measure amounting to prior censorship. The situation escalated further when Security Minister Patricia Bullrich requested raids on the streaming channel Carnaval and the homes of journalists Jorge Rial and Mauro Federico over the publication of compromising audio recordings involving the president’s sister.

Cases of prior censorship also resurfaced in the country’s interior provinces, through a legal framework at odds with international standards. In Tucumán, the courts imposed a legal gag order on the director and staff of a cable television company, barring them from reporting on the conduct of prosecutors, officials, and judges.



State actors were the primary aggressors against journalism

FOPEA documented a deterioration in public discourse marked by a proliferation of verbal, written, and digital attacks (23 alerts), carried out both by the president and officials with high visibility on social media, and by parastatal actors, who were responsible for four out of every 10 episodes. On X, statements circulated such as claims that the best journalist is one at the bottom of a river, or that journalists aren't hated enough. The first surfaced on June 7th in response to a FOPEA campaign for Journalist's Day — backed by more than 10,000 people — and was amplified by accounts aligned with the ruling party, reinforcing narratives of symbolic violence against the press.

In addition, eight alerts involving violence through the use of digital technology were recorded for the first time. One notable case involved journalist Hugo Alconada Mon, who, after revealing a strategic plan by the *Secretaría de Inteligencia del Estado* (SIDE) to investigate those “eroding” public trust in the authorities, became the target of threats, online harassment, cyberattacks on his accounts, and anonymous messages containing insults sent to his mobile phone.

Violence based on sex

FOPEA documented five cross-cutting alerts based on sex, consisting primarily of sexist and misogynistic comments perpetrated on social media by actors aligned with the government. An episode of extreme gravity occurred at the *Casa de Gobierno of Tucumán*, where two women journalists were victims of sexual harassment during an official event held by Governor Osvaldo Jaldo. These incidents echo similar cases recorded in 2023 at the same venue, exposing a structural lack of protection for women in spaces of power and underscoring the urgent need to implement safety protocols to prevent this kind of violence..

Conclusions and recommendations

The 2025 landscape confirms a regressive trend in the conditions for journalism in Argentina, driven by state power and characterized by the institutionalization of stigmatizing discourse, the normalization of physical aggression in protest settings, the misuse of judicial mechanisms with a potential chilling effect, and reliance on official advertising as an instrument of control. The picture is further aggravated by episodes of sexual harassment within institutional settings, incidents that expose the structural lack of protection afforded to women media workers in spaces of power.

In this context, national and provincial authorities must immediately cease stigmatizing discourse against the press, guarantee access to public information, and avoid restrictions that limit journalistic coverage. Likewise, the judiciary must safeguard the principle prohibiting prior censorship and avoid measures that function as mechanisms of silencing. On security matters, FOPEA recommends

incorporating specific safeguards for journalists into security forces' operating protocols and establishing effective accountability mechanisms. Finally, it is essential to strengthen coordination among civil society, media outlets, and journalist collectives to bring visibility to attacks, promote protection standards, and sustain a public narrative that recognizes freedom of expression as an essential pillar of the rule of law.

Bolivia 2025

Number of alerts:

52

Number of victims:

98

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

2

Number of alerts by indicator:



26 PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS



14 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



11 RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION



6 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE



4 ABUSIVE USE OF STATE POWER



4 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



2 ARBITRARY DETENTION



2 JUDICIAL HARASSMENT

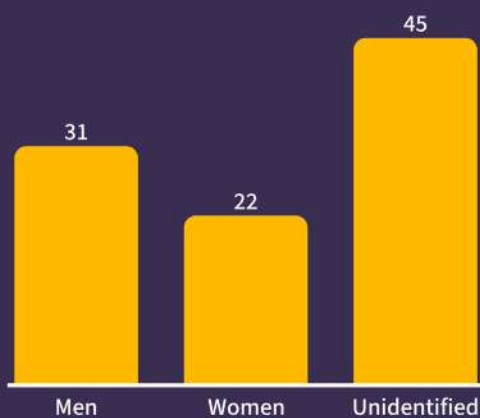


2 SEXUAL VIOLENCE

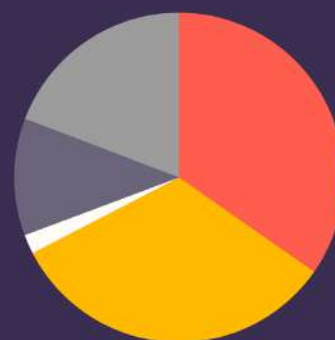
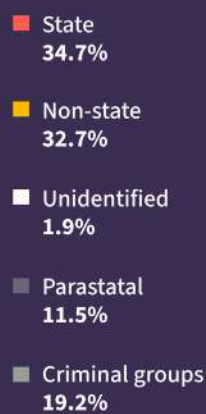


2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:



Context and trends

For the Asociación Nacional de la Prensa (ANP), 2025 represents a critical transition after nearly two decades of economic strangulation and systematic persecution under the administrations of Evo Morales (2006-2019) and Luis Arce (2020-2025). Although the change in government raised expectations of greater openness, the internal fracture within the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) and Morales's attempt to return to power perpetuated journalism's vulnerability. Extreme political polarization intensified hostility in public spaces, turning road blockades and demonstrations into high-risk settings for journalists' physical safety. Against this backdrop, ANP recorded 52 alerts affecting a total of 98 victims during 2025. Although the overall number declined 20.3% compared to 2024, the ferocity of the attacks subjected media workers to episodes of extreme violence and hostility.

Physical aggressions established themselves as the leading threat to journalism in Bolivia, accounting for three out of every ten alerts documented in 2025. Non-state actors perpetrated 26.9% of these aggressions, followed by a convergence of state actors, parastatal actors, and groups operating outside the law (23.1% each). A critical case occurred after ten days of blockade on the highway connecting the cities of Oruro and Llallagua, where supporters of former president Evo Morales ambushed press crews with rocks, dynamite, and firearms to prevent coverage of the conflict. The siege forced media workers to abandon their vehicles to protect their lives, in an episode that also included the killing of two police officers. The scale of this case underscores the severity of the environment in which reporters carry out their work.

The anonymity of social media makes it possible for 50% of verbal, written, and digital aggressions to come from unidentified actors engaged in discrediting campaigns, unsubstantiated accusations by social leaders, harassment by political sympathizers, and threats from demonstrators. The state bore sole responsibility for restrictions on access to information, through the exclusion of media outlets from press conferences, aggressions during coverage, and the systematic refusal to answer journalists' questions. Attacks carried out by groups operating outside the law, meanwhile, raise particular concern for press freedom — not only because of the sharp increase recorded over the past year, from 4.9% in 2024 to 19.2% in 2025, but also because of the nature and severity of the methods used. ANP warns of the consolidation of criminal groups, allegedly linked to the political sphere of the MAS, operating clandestinely within union organizations with the aim of obstructing journalistic work. These actions follow an escalating pattern that begins with verbal harassment and can lead to physical aggression.



ANP warns
of the
consolidation of
criminal groups

An example of this dynamic emerged during the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB) protest on January 5, where direct attacks by these groups against journalists were recorded. Documented cases include death threats against journalist Soledad Prado, as well as the assault on Claudio Abrego, correspondent for the Spanish news agency *EFE*, who was injured while covering the August 17 electoral proceedings. These episodes reflect a pattern of intimidation aimed at limiting news coverage in contexts of political and social conflict.

Territorially, La Paz and Santa Cruz account for 70% of 2025 alerts between them — 38.5% and 32.7%, respectively. This reflects how institutional centrality and political conflict translate into heightened risk for journalists in the country's major cities

Violence based on sex

ANP did not record any incidents of sex-based violence in 2025; however, it documented an increase in the number of women journalists attacked, rising from 13 in 2024 to 22 in 2025. This increase reflects the greater exposure of women journalists in settings of increased social conflict. Among the documented cases is that of journalist Ángela Ninoska Mamani, who was injured while covering an event in Quillacollo by a group led by a municipal official. Far from intervening to stop the violence, the official incited his followers to continue their physical assault on the reporter.

Conclusions and recommendations

During 2025, press freedom in Bolivia unfolded against a backdrop of extreme political conflict, marked by a concerning rise in the intensity of episodes of violence. The persistence of physical, verbal, and digital aggressions, together with restrictions on access to information, points to the structural risks facing the press. The continuity of blockades, marches, and mobilizations tied to power disputes heightens journalists' exposure to attack. Likewise, the rise in women victims underscores the need to adopt specific protective measures tailored to their differentiated needs.

Against this backdrop, ANP reiterates its call to consolidate effective guarantees for the practice of journalism, strengthen prevention and protection mechanisms, and ensure that every aggression against media workers is investigated with due diligence. The organization notes that judicial proceedings related to the kidnapping and torture of journalists on October 28, 2021, in the department of Santa Cruz, remain unresolved.

The defense of freedom of expression and the work of independent media constitutes an essential pillar of democratic stability in Bolivia,

particularly in electoral contexts and political disputes where the circulation of plural, truthful information is indispensable.

Brazil 2025

Number of alerts:

204

Number of victims:

247

Cross-cutting alerts
based on sex:

31

Number of alerts by indicator:



80 VERBAL, WRITTEN,
AND DIGITAL
AGGRESSIONS



55 PHYSICAL
AGGRESSIONS



51 STIGMATIZING
DISCOURSE



18 JUDICIAL
HARASSMENT



7 RESTRICTIONS ON
ACCESS TO
INFORMATION



7 VIOLENCE THROUGH
THE USE
OF DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY



4 SEXUAL
VIOLENCE

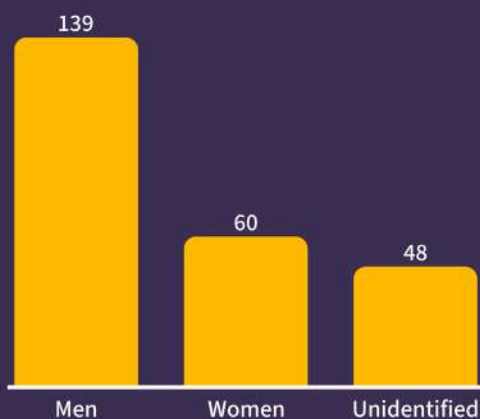


3 ABUSIVE USE
OF STATE
POWER

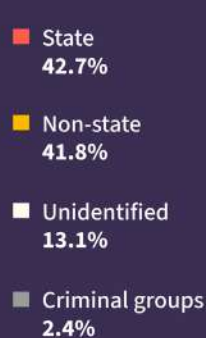


3 ARBITRARY
DETENTION

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:



Context and trends

In 2025, the third year of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government, Brazil recorded 204 alerts corresponding to 247 victims. The figure sustains the downward trend from the 791 alerts documented at the close of Jair Bolsonaro's government in 2022, though the Associação Brasileira de Jornalismo Investigativo (Abraji) warns that aggressions persist and are simply taking on new forms. This trend is a source of concern ahead of the 2026 electoral process, a period that has historically seen a rise in virulence against journalists, with direct impacts on their safety and on the exercise of freedom of expression.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions accounted for 39.2% of annual alerts, making them the most frequent indicator of the period. These aggressions included death threats against journalists investigating the management of public funds, insults directed at those who question figures in the world of sports power, attacks in WhatsApp groups, and verbal harassment during field coverage. Compounding these practices is violence through the use of digital technology, involving online harassment campaigns, defamation, and the exposure of personal data (doxxing) to intimidate and discredit journalists. Journalist Thiago Herdy, of the *UOL* news portal, was targeted and defamed on social media over his investigation into public contracts awarded by the city hall of São Paulo. Similarly, reporters Gabriela Biló and Thaísa Oliveira, of the newspaper *Folha*, faced death threats and doxxing following an online disinformation campaign that blamed them for handing the Supremo Tribunal Federal the photographic evidence that led to the recent conviction of a protester involved in the coup-attempt attacks of January 8, 2023. These cases illustrate how the digital environment functions as a catalyst and amplifier of violence against the press.

Physical aggressions, meanwhile, represented 27% of the total number of alerts. State actors perpetrated the most serious cases of the year and turned protests into the most dangerous setting for the press, where police forces repressed journalistic work with disproportionate force. This was evident during the march of the *Acampamento Terra Livre* (ATL) in Brasília, where the Legislative Police and the Military Police fired tear gas canisters and injured journalists covering the demonstration. Particularly alarming was the assault committed by the mayor of Parauapebas, Aurelio Goiano, who struck journalist Wesley Acosta during a live broadcast of COP30 in Belem. The episode, which occurred in a setting of maximum international visibility, exposed the risks posed by abuse of power and direct physical violence exercised by public officials against the press.

State actors carried out 42.7% of 2025 alerts, an alarming jump from 30.2% in 2024. Mayors, local council members, municipal legislators,

and police forces led this offensive. Their prominence was reflected in arbitrary detentions and abusive use of state power (100% in both cases), stigmatizing discourse (50.9%), judicial harassment (80%), and restriction on access to information (85.7%). One unprecedented act of censorship stands out in the *Câmara de Deputados*, where the presiding officer ordered the live broadcast cut to prevent coverage of a parliamentary debate. This pattern reveals increasingly decentralized and fierce state violence at the local level, combining direct coercion, institutional pressure, and anti-press narratives.

Meanwhile, non-state actors were behind 41.8% of total alerts, extending their hostility across 20 states nationwide. Their actions accounted for 65.5% of physical aggressions and 45.9% of verbal, written, and digital aggressions. A representative case was the attack on an *RIC TV* crew in Londrina, Paraná, where demonstrators threatened the journalists and threw rocks at their vehicle, damaging equipment and injuring a cameraman. These episodes reflect the persistence of violence originating from sectors of the citizenry, particularly in contexts of protest and social conflict.

Finally, violence against the press struck all 27 states of Brazil, confirming the phenomenon's nationwide reach. São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro registered the highest volumes, with 39 and 26 alerts respectively, followed by the *Distrito Federal* with 20, the epicenter of institutional aggressions. In the North and Center-West regions, judicial harassment prevailed as the most common tool used against journalists covering land conflicts and public administration. In the Northeast, by contrast, non-state actors led the attacks, primarily through verbal, written, and digital aggressions. The territorial decentralization of violence is thus confirmed as a structural trend, spreading into medium and small municipalities where journalists have fewer protective resources at their disposal.

Violence based on sex

Abraji registered 31 alerts based on sex, matching the previous year's figure and confirming the persistence of this form of violence. Both public officials and non-state actors—including influencers, businesspeople, and internet users—resorted to these attacks in response to journalistic scrutiny. This conduct is reflected in misogynistic insults posted on social media by council member Carlos Bolsonaro against journalist Míriam Leitão, and in the wave of digital harassment directed at reporter Andréia Sadi following the publication of her journalistic analysis. The recurrence of these episodes confirms that sex-based violence remains a structural component of aggressions against the press in Brazil, particularly in the digital environment, where virality amplifies its impact.



Verbal, written, and digital aggressions making them the most frequent indicator of the period

In the sports world as well, episodes with a strong sexist bias were recorded. Journalist Renata Mendonça, of *TV Globo*, was publicly attacked by Flamengo club president Luiz Eduardo Baptista during a *Flamengo TV* broadcast. Journalist Nathalia Freitas, of *Globo*, walked out of a press conference after the president of *Atlético Goianiense* insinuated that her professional assessment was influenced by a player's physical appearance, trivializing her journalistic work.

Conclusions and recommendations

Brazil underwent a profound reconfiguration of violence in 2025. Aggressions have become territorially decentralized, with a growing role played by both state and non-state actors. At the same time, the digital environment has solidified as a key space for the stigmatization, persecution, and delegitimization of journalistic work. Taken together, these trends shape a critical landscape ahead of the 2026 electoral cycle and its potential impact on press freedom.

In light of this scenario, Abraji recommends strengthening the legal framework and public policies aimed at preventing and sanctioning judicial harassment against journalists, a practice that continues to rise despite precedents set by the Supremo Tribunal Federal. It likewise underscores the need to **promote training programs and specific protocols for local authorities and security forces, in order to improve the prevention, investigation, and response to aggressions against the press**. Abraji calls on the state to strengthen protective policies against online violence, and for platforms to adopt effective measures against coordinated attacks, including agile channels for reporting and removing abusive content — particularly abuse based on the victim's sex.

Chile 2025

Number of alerts:

125

Number of victims:

190

Cross-cutting alerts
based on sex:

5

Number of alerts by indicator:



46 STIGMATIZING
DISCOURSE



39 VERBAL, WRITTEN,
AND DIGITAL
AGGRESSIONS



24 RESTRICTIONS
ON ACCESS TO
INFORMATION



14 PHYSICAL
AGGRESSIONS



13 VIOLENCE THROUGH
THE USE
OF DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY



9 JUDICIAL
HARASSMENT

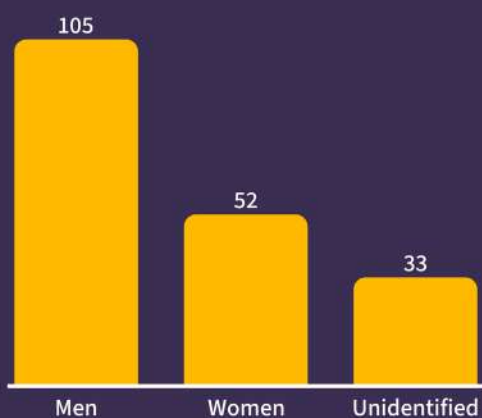


3 ABUSIVE USE
OF STATE
POWER



2 ARBITRARY
DETENTION

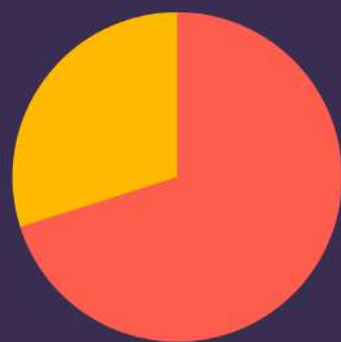
Sex of victims:



Aggressors:

State
70.1%

Non-state
29.9%



Context and trends

In 2025, harassment of the press in Chile shifted increasingly into the digital environment, a trend that intensified during the presidential elections. Anti-press narratives, abusive use of state power, and digital attacks disproportionately affected community and local media outlets. Against this backdrop, the Observatorio del Derecho a la Comunicación (ODC) recorded a 14.4% increase in the number of victims compared to the previous year.

Stigmatizing discourse accounted for 36.8% of annual alerts, making it the most frequent indicator of the period. 89.1% of these cases occurred in the digital sphere, where political actors and high-visibility figures amplified disparaging labels branding journalists as “activists,” “octubristas,” “fake news,” or as serving ideological interests. During the electoral process, the spread of this discourse revealed a normalization of anti-press narratives no longer aimed solely at critical outlets, but at the journalistic profession as a whole.

For the first time, Chile recorded three alerts of abusive use of state power. The first involved the *Corte de Apelaciones* of Temuco, which imposed prior censorship on the director of a regional outlet and two of his sources through a precautionary order. The second involved the mayor of San Miguel, who unilaterally terminated a municipal property loan agreement granted to a community outlet. The third involved a public health service that dismissed an employee for collaborating with a community outlet that had questioned municipal management. All three cases point to a common pattern: the abusive use of institutional power to restrict media pluralism, with a disproportionate impact on community outlets.

While judicial harassment declined from 23 alerts in 2024 to nine in 2025, this practice continues to disproportionately affect journalists and media executives from outlets such as *Radio Paulina*, *El Ciudadano*, *Contrapoder*, and *Novena Digital*. These legal tactics included defamation and libel lawsuits, attempts to expose journalistic sources, and injunctions aimed at removing publications or preventing new television broadcasts from airing. Far from disappearing, judicial harassment has increasingly targeted community and local media outlets, taking advantage of their limited resources and low public visibility to silence critical reporting at minimal political cost.

ODC also recorded 13 alerts of violence through the use of digital technology, involving sophisticated methods such as hacking, doxxing, identity theft, and deepfakes. Presidential candidate Marco Enríquez-Ominami was at the center of a troubling case after using artificial intelligence in a televised campaign spot to caricature three journalists and falsely portray them as responsible for a judicial action against

him. This incident set a disturbing precedent in the use of emerging technologies for disinformation and discrediting purposes.

A significant reconfiguration in the type of aggressor was recorded in 2025. Non-state actors accounted for 70.1% of annual alerts, a sharp rise from 37.3% in 2024. This shift is tied to the growing weight of the digital environment, where anonymous accounts, social media profiles, and opposition figures drove much of the harassment. Even so, a pattern of state intervention persisted: *Carabineros*, the *Policía de Investigaciones de Chile*, municipalities, and government sub-secretariats — at least 14 different public agencies — obstructed access to information throughout the year. In particular, 95.8% of cases of restriction on access to information were carried out by the state, sustaining a clear form of institutional opacity. In this way, while non-state actors erode the press's credibility on social media, the state restricts the inputs necessary for investigative journalism, combining reputational and institutional erosion.

Violence based on sex

ODC recorded five cross-cutting alerts based on sex. These included sexist and misogynistic comments, disseminated primarily on digital platforms. ODC identified a pattern of targeting toward women journalists with high public visibility, especially following their participation in widely watched debates or interviews, where digital violence functioned as a mechanism of symbolic disciplining and attack amplification. The most illustrative case involved a journalist who moderated a debate between presidential candidates: following a tense exchange with one of them, she was immediately targeted by a wave of misogynistic digital harassment on social media, in which the aggression was directed not at her professional performance but at her being a woman.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, violence against the press in Chile settled into a dual pattern: on one hand, the digital space became the primary arena for aggressions through stigmatizing discourse, harassment, and technological attacks; on the other, state power continued to disproportionately affect community and local media outlets. Although the total number of alerts declined compared to previous years, the rise in victims reflects an increasingly complex environment for journalism, particularly in electoral contexts.

In light of this context, ODC urges the Chilean state to develop public policies and effective mechanisms to protect the press, given the growing virulence of anti-press discourse and stigmatization directed at journalists and the particular harm it causes. It likewise calls on media outlets to implement risk-prevention strategies for potentially



89.1% of
stigmatizing
discourse alerts
occurred in
digital spaces

dangerous coverage and to provide comprehensive support in cases of judicial and digital harassment. It is equally essential to promote specialized research and strengthen institutional and professional capacities that guarantee the protection of journalists and media teams, thereby ensuring a safe and sustainable environment for the practice of journalism in Chile.

Colombia 2025

Number of alerts:

468

Number of victims:

481

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

19

Number of alerts by indicator:



247 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



61 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE



57 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



30 RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION



27 JUDICIAL HARASSMENT



22 FORCED DISPLACEMENT



20 PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS



2 ARBITRARY DETENTION

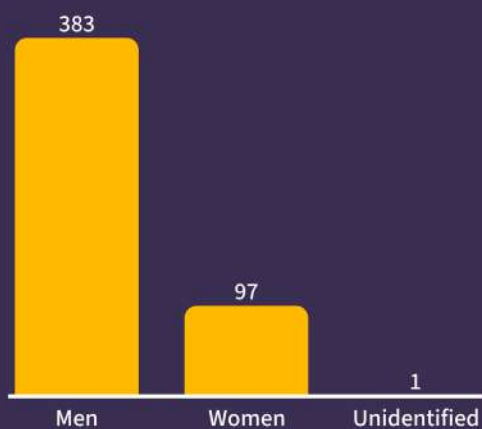


1 ABUSIVE USE OF STATE POWER

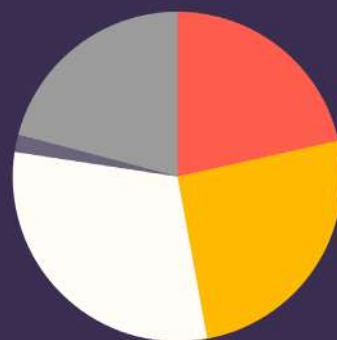
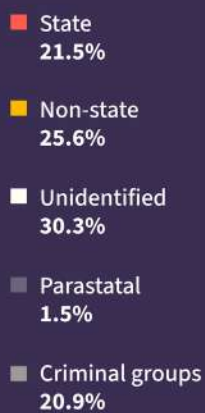


1 MURDER

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:



Context and trends

In 2025, the press in Colombia faced an environment of extreme hostility and impunity, driven by the reconfiguration of the armed conflict and the state's inability to provide effective protection to journalists. Illegal armed groups carried out systematic attacks, while the state intensified stigmatization and pursued disproportionate judicial actions against journalism. Against this backdrop, the Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP) documented 468 alerts affecting 484 victims, including murders, attacks, threats to life, forced displacements, and violence through the use of digital technology.

The year began with the murder of Óscar Gómez, a reflection of the lethal violence that journalists in Colombia live with daily. On January 24, a hitman killed him as he entered the community radio station *Rumba del Café*. Gómez had told colleagues he feared continuing his work. To date, his murder remains unpunished. Amid this same climate, Gustavo Chicangana — director of the station *Guaviare Estéreo*, journalist for *Caracol Radio Guaviare*, and FLIP correspondent — survived four gunshot wounds after being attacked by an unknown assailant at the door of his home. The attack occurred two months after the journalist had reported threats from the group *Renacer del Erpac* and requested that the *Unidad Nacional de Protección* (UNP) strengthen his security. Both cases share the same underlying logic: journalists who reported threats and sought protection, only to be attacked regardless. Impunity is not the outcome of this violence — it is the condition that sustains it.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions accounted for 52.8% of total alerts, with 247 recorded over the year. Unidentified aggressors carried out 41.7% of these aggressions, while illegal armed groups were responsible for 36.4%. Among the most serious cases is that of journalist José Ignacio Arango, who between 2024 and 2025 was the target of 12 direct threats against himself and his family. In one of the most alarming episodes, the criminal gang *Los Mexicanos* forced him to publish a video containing threats against the director and deputy director of the *Cárcel Modelo* in Cúcuta, announcing a “plan pistola” against any outlets that refused to cooperate with them. These practices aim to control the local narrative through a climate of terror that stifles journalism.

Meanwhile, state actors were responsible for 82% of the 61 instances of stigmatizing discourse recorded in 2025, establishing this practice as the aggression with the greatest institutional weight. President Gustavo Petro was the primary source of these hostile messages, setting a precedent that was replicated by ministers, members of congress, and candidates ahead of the 2026 elections. This systematic pattern of targeting and discrediting placed media outlets and journalists in the middle of political disputes, labeled either as allies or as mouthpieces.

The effect on journalism is twofold: it erodes the credibility of those reporting the news and narrows the space for independent coverage in an election year.

Judicial harassment reached 27 alerts, establishing itself as one of the most abusive and damaging practices. Public officials filed 65% of these judicial actions, though the pattern extends to private actors as well. Journalist Lorena Beltrán, after years of reporting irregularities in the validation of postgraduate medical degrees, faced eight *tutelas* filed by physicians connected to her reporting. As a result of this judicial harassment, Beltrán was forced to leave the country to protect her safety. This abusive use of the judicial apparatus seeks to wear down journalistic work and send a message of intimidation to those investigating sensitive issues.

Colombia also recorded the forced displacement of 22 journalists during 2025, making it one of the most severe consequences of violence against the press. Journalist Éder Narváez, of Cauca, Antioquia, was forced to relocate on two occasions due to threats related to his reporting on the management of public funds and the alleged interference of the *Clan del Golfo* in local politics. These repeated attacks against reporters and their sources reveal a pattern of violence that seeks not only to silence journalism, but to dismantle it altogether.

Violence based on sex

FLIP documented 19 cross-cutting alerts of sex-based violence against journalists, 16 of which corresponded to verbal, written, and digital aggressions. This type of violence seeks to discredit and silence journalistic work through attacks that specifically target women professionals. These attacks took the form of insults about physical appearance, social media montages depicting journalists in trash bags or riddled with bullet holes, and explicit threats such as warnings to stay quiet or end up dead. Compounding this were false accusations linking women's professional advancement to alleged sexual favors, aimed at undermining their credibility. Taken together, this violence affects not only its individual victims but also functions as a collective warning meant to restrict women's participation in journalism.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, Colombia continued to face critical levels of violence against the press. The intensification of attacks by armed groups and hitmen — including murders, death threats, and attacks — combined with judicial harassment, the persistence of state actors reproducing and amplifying stigmatizing discourse, the lack of state protection, and high levels of impunity, has produced an increasingly restrictive environment for the practice of journalism.



Judicial harassment established itself as one of the most abusive and damaging practices of 2025

FLIP warns that the state's response remains insufficient and must focus on guaranteeing effective protection for journalists and media workers. In this regard, it is essential to strengthen investigation and sanctioning efforts against those who commit aggressions, ensuring justice in cases of crimes against the press and preventing these acts from going unpunished.

It is likewise necessary for the state to advance in the creation and implementation of legal tools that offer protection against judicial harassment, a practice that is increasingly affecting the exercise of journalism.

The organization also urges the government to prioritize the protection of the press, particularly in territories where armed groups are present and expanding. This requires developing and implementing effective strategies to prevent attacks by illegal actors.

Finally, it recommends strengthening protection protocols in electoral contexts and during social mobilizations, in order to guarantee safe conditions for the practice of journalism.

Costa Rica 2025

Number of alerts:

69

Number of victims:

93

Cross-cutting alerts
based on sex:

3

Number of alerts by indicator:



53 STIGMATIZING
DISCOURSE



5 ABUSIVE USE
OF STATE
POWER



4 VERBAL, WRITTEN,
AND DIGITAL
AGGRESSIONS



3 RESTRICTIONS ON
ACCESS TO
INFORMATION

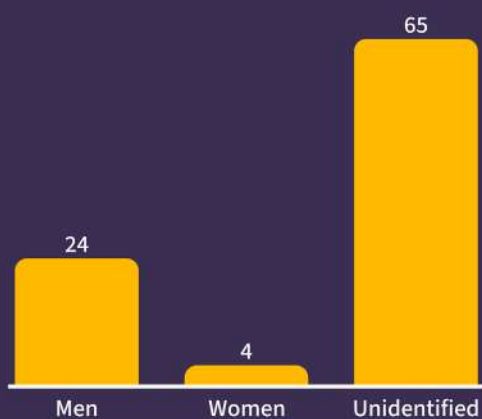


2 PHYSICAL
AGGRESSIONS



1 SEXUAL
VIOLENCE

Sex of victims:



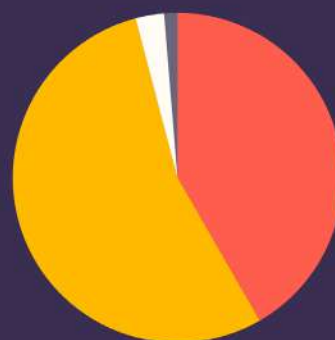
Aggressors:

State
41.7%

Non-state
54.2%

Unidentified
2.8%

Parastatal
1.3%



Context and trends

The Instituto de Prensa y Libertad de Expresión (IPLEX) observed an outsourcing of violence against the press in Costa Rica during 2025. While state actors had carried out the vast majority of attacks against journalists in the recent past, the state's direct responsibility declined from 75% in 2023 to 41.7% in 2025. For IPLEX, this trend shows that state violence took root and then shifted toward third-party actors, who now reproduce and amplify attacks against journalism, particularly in digital settings — the arena for 60.9% of alerts documented over the year.

Stigmatizing discourse accounted for 76.8% of total alerts and stood out as the central axis of violence against journalism on social media.

69.8% of this discourse came from non-state actors and 28.3% from state actors. Given the reach and impact of social media, waves of digital hatred emerged accusing journalists of being liars, manipulators, or mercenaries serving political interests. One critical case involved a journalist who faced death threats on social media after being filmed and confronted by a government supporter while covering a press conference held by President Rodrigo Chaves. In another episode, a pro-government legislator used the floor of the *Asamblea* to brand media executives as thieves and shameless, accusing them of looting the state for seven decades.

An unprecedented case of abusive use of state power occurred in 2025: the government pushed forward an auction of radio and television frequencies with price floors that threatened to exclude community, family-run, and Indigenous radio stations. The terms set a floor of ₡96 million (\$203,000) for FM radio stations and ₡800 million (\$1,700,000) for television. According to IPLEX, this measure constituted a direct threat to Costa Rica's popular culture and social fabric, and was ranked as the most serious structural alert of the year for its potential to damage the identity structures underpinning Costa Rican culture. Finally, in February 2026, the *Sala Constitucional* struck down the auction, ruling that the mechanism privileged economic power over the public interest.

Furthermore, the first case of sexual violence perpetrated by a state official was recorded. The complaint involved then-minister Arnold Zamora, whom a journalist accused of sexual abuse and coercion following the end of his employment contract. Far from ceasing the aggression, Zamora used public resources to record a video exposing the victim, thereby committing an act of revictimization and abusive use of power.

Violence based on sex

For the first time, IPLEX recorded three cross-cutting alerts based on sex, marking an inflection point in the monitoring of differentiated



Stigmatizing discourse represented 76.8% of all alerts during the reporting period

violence against journalists and media workers. The alerts documented that at least seven candidates for congressional seats delivered sexist remarks before taking public office, a sign that sex-based violence is becoming institutionalized in politics. The offensive intensified in the final six months of the year, as the electoral process turned discriminatory rhetoric into a strategic tool for discrediting journalism, particularly on digital platforms.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, Costa Rica faced a scenario in which violence against the press retained its full capacity to erode public debate and weaken democratic foundations. Far from receding, the state remains a central actor: its stigmatizing discourse has permeated various sectors of society, functioning as fertile ground for violence that has since spread and multiplied through third parties, particularly in digital settings. At the same time, threats directed at small, community, and Indigenous media outlets demonstrate that freedom of expression is not merely a professional right, but an indispensable condition for the health of Costa Rican democracy.

IPLEX notes that the current context calls for new resources, specialized technical support, and a strategic review of available tools — both to strengthen monitoring systems and to improve preventive responses and follow-up actions after each aggression. It is likewise a priority to intensify digital literacy efforts, in order to promote responsible use of digital platforms and strengthen citizens' critical capacity to recognize, challenge, and counter hate narratives, stigmatizing discourse, and disinformation dynamics that affect public debate. In addition, there is a need to develop analytical methodologies capable of measuring, monitoring, and anticipating the effects of technology-mediated violence in the public sphere, both through organized civil society initiatives and individual efforts. Finally, within a human rights framework, the state must prevent, protect against, investigate, and sanction any attack directed at journalists. In light of this scenario, IPLEX calls for building collective and sustained responses that protect the practice of journalism and guarantee the right to information as a pillar of Costa Rican democracy.

Cuba 2025

Number of alerts:

166

Number of victims:

224

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

0

Number of alerts by indicator:



75 VERBAL,
WRITTEN, AND
DIGITAL
AGGRESSIONS



55 ARBITRARY
DETENTION



12 RESTRICTIONS ON
ACCESS TO
INFORMATION



7 ABUSIVE USE
OF STATE
POWER



5 PHYSICAL
AGGRESSIONS



5 STIGMATIZING
DISCOURSE

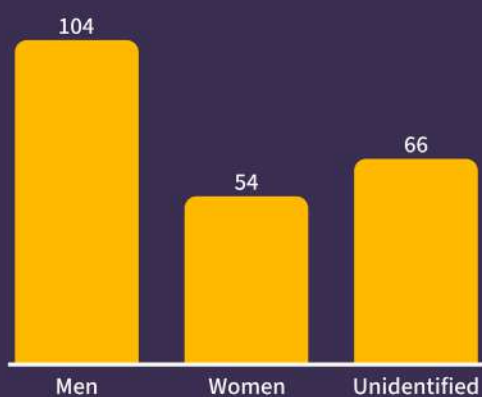


5 JUDICIAL
HARASSMENT



2 VIOLENCE THROUGH
THE USE
OF DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY

Sex of victims:



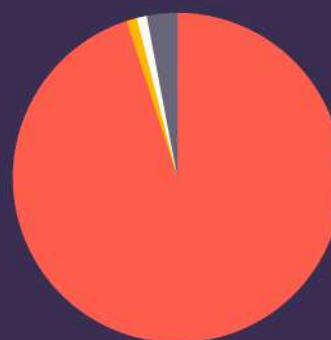
Aggressors:

State
96.8%

Non-state
0.3%

Unidentified
0.3%

Parastatal
2.6%



Context and trends

Following the sustained exodus of journalists between 2021 and 2023, Cuba now stands as a “zone of silence” where independent journalism has practically disappeared. Against this backdrop, the Instituto Cubano por la Libertad de Expresión y Prensa (ICLEP) recorded 166 alerts affecting 224 victims, a slight 3.4% decrease compared to 2024. Far from reflecting an improvement in press freedom, this shift confirms a structural silencing deepened by exile, self-censorship, state repression, and forced resignations.

The state accounted for 94.9% of alerts during the period, confirming that violence against the press is not episodic but the result of a systematic policy of eliminating dissent. State security led with 135 records, functioning not only as the principal repressive agent but as the coordinator of the apparatus as a whole. Harassment by the *Policía Nacional Revolucionaria* was also recorded, linked primarily to arbitrary detentions and operational support, as was harassment by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the delegitimization and stigmatization of the independent press. The prison system, the judiciary, and the telecommunications company *ETECSA* round out the structure, ensuring the continuity of punishment and control over access to information. The diversity of actors involved, together with the distribution of their functions — from surveillance and direct repression to criminalization, institutional punishment, and technological censorship — reveals a coordinated pattern of action.

Systematic imprisonment persists as a mechanism for silencing journalism on the island. In 2025, ICLEP documented 55 arbitrary detentions, equivalent to 33.1% of total alerts. The six-year prison sentence handed down against independent journalist José Gabriel Berrenechea Chávez, after he took part in a peaceful protest against blackouts in the municipality of Encrucijada, illustrates the use of the penal system to criminalize expression. Under this same policy, other journalists — including Ángel Cusa Alonso, Carlos Michel Morales Rodríguez, and Yeris Curvelo Aguilera — remain deprived of their liberty without due-process guarantees. This arbitrariness not only violates fundamental rights but also deepens a climate of widespread intimidation.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions constituted the most frequent category of 2025, with 75 alerts (45.2% of the total). These aggressions included threats, acts of public repudiation, and discrediting campaigns carried out simultaneously in different parts of the country. The case of Yunia Figueredo reflects the intensity of this offensive: after taking over as director of *Amanecer Habanero* — an ICLEP community media outlet — she was subjected to phone threats, acts of repudiation outside her home, police summonses, and detentions and interrogations by the *Ministerio del Interior*, which

maintains permanent police surveillance and issues house-arrest orders against journalists. These aggressions, combined with public stigmatization campaigns and explicit threats of imprisonment, form a set of practices aimed at keeping independent voices on the island under control.

The prevalence of restriction on access to information (12 alerts) confirms a pattern that ICLEP has been denouncing for years. In 2025, the *Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba* (ETECSA) was responsible for 90% of deliberate internet blocks and connectivity restrictions, particularly during periods of heightened political sensitivity. Spikes in outages recorded in July, August, and December coincide with periods of the most intense general repression, evidencing that these disruptions form part of a planned strategy to prevent coverage of protests.

Judicial harassment (five alerts) and abusive use of state power (seven) round out the regressive framework for press freedom through institutional mechanisms. The regime made the lifting of an exit ban against journalist Alexander Hall Lujardo conditional on acts of public self-incrimination and the surrender of personal resources. Journalist Orlidia Barceló Pérez was deported to Cuba from Bolivia after being detained over questionable irregularities in her visa; the Cuban consulate refused to assist her and dismissed her right to seek asylum, revealing the transnational reach of state control. Meanwhile, a municipal court arbitrarily extended sanctions against journalist Carlos Michael Morales Rodríguez in his absence and without basic due-process guarantees. All three cases reveal the discretionary use of legal and administrative norms, the absence of due process, and the imposition of disproportionate coercive measures, all serving the same end: punishing and deterring journalism through the instrumentalization of the state.

Finally, in terms of geographic distribution, the provinces of Cienfuegos, Granma, and Las Tunas recorded no alerts for the entire year, while Santiago de Cuba reported just two cases and Holguín only one. This absence of records does not indicate lower repression, but rather points to zones of deeper silence, fear, and self-censorship, stemming from a lack of local capacity to document abuses.

Violence based on sex

In 2025, ICLEP recorded no cross-cutting alerts related to violence based on sex. However, the absence of documented cases does not mean these risks are absent, pointing instead to an ongoing vulnerability in the protection of journalists.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, press freedom in Cuba showed no substantive progress, but rather the consolidation of a structural silencing model sustained



ICLEP
documented
55 arbitrary
detentions
throughout 2025

by the state. The slight decline in the number of victims reflects the hollowing-out of independent journalism within the country, driven by forced exile, systematic persecution, and self-censorship. The concentration of violence in state actors, arbitrary detentions, criminalization, and the deliberate control of internet connectivity confirm the existence of a comprehensive policy aimed at suppressing dissent.

In light of this context, ICLEP urges the international community, human rights protection mechanisms, and democratic governments to condemn the Cuban regime's systematic repression of the press and to demand an immediate end to arbitrary detentions, judicial criminalization, and harassment of journalists. The reduction in recorded victims should not be interpreted as an improvement. Rather, it reflects the deepening of a silencing model based on fear, forced exile, and the progressive elimination of independent journalism in Cuba.

Ecuador 2025

Number of alerts:

129

Number of victims:

225

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

5

Number of alerts by indicator:



26 VERBAL,
WRITTEN, AND
DIGITAL
AGGRESSIONS



23 PHYSICAL
AGGRESSIONS



23 VIOLENCE THROUGH
THE USE
OF DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY



19 RESTRICTIONS ON
ACCESS TO
INFORMATION



14 ABUSIVE USE
OF STATE
POWER



12 JUDICIAL
HARASSMENT



5 MURDERS



3 ARBITRARY
DETENTION

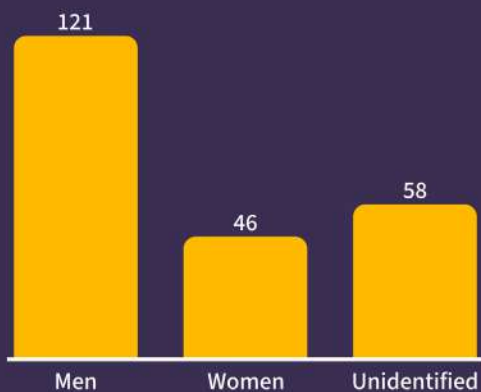


2 STIGMATIZING
DISCOURSE



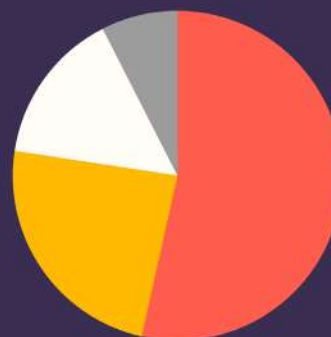
2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK
CONTRARY TO
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARDS

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:

- State 53.5%
- Non-state 23.9%
- Unidentified 15.1%
- Criminal groups 7.5%



Context and trends

In 2025, Ecuador consolidated an “architecture of official violence” that turned the state into the leading aggressor against freedom of expression. Amid persistent states of emergency, electoral processes, and heightened social conflict, the Fundación Andina para la Observación y Estudio de Medios (Fundamedios) recorded a 16% increase in the number of victims compared to 2024.³ These violations combined regulatory restrictions, administrative limitations, physical aggressions, lethal violence, and the use of technology to cause discredit.

The return of lethal violence marked the most critical point in the escalation of persecution against the press in 2025, with the murder of five journalists — an unprecedented figure for Ecuador — who were investigating corruption networks or illicit economies. To date, justice has not clarified any of these crimes, and investigations are proceeding slowly. An emblematic case is the murder of Patricio Aguilar, shot dead in retaliation for his journalistic work in the city of Esmeraldas. This resurgence of murders and armed attacks reflects the strengthening of alliances between organized crime and local authorities, which would explain the decline in murders committed by criminal groups and the rise in lethal violence carried out by unidentified aggressors.

State actors perpetrated 53.5% of alerts in 2025, an increase from the 44.7% recorded in 2024. Police and military forces played a predominant role in physical aggressions against journalists, which totaled 23 cases over the year and were concentrated mainly in September and October, amid the national strike. The most severe incident occurred in Imbabura, where a community journalist was shot, underscoring the extreme level of violence reached. During coverage of these protests, officers fired tear gas directly at the faces of media workers and imposed operational restrictions that limited fieldwork, cementing the police’s role as the leading aggressor during this period.

In addition, an attempted vehicular attack was recorded during a live broadcast in Guayaquil, along with an assault bearing the hallmarks of a targeted hit in Manabí, showing that physical risk extends beyond coverage of social unrest. At the same time, under sweeping administrative powers, the *Agencia de Regulación y Control de las*

³ During 2025, the monitoring recorded a significant variation in the number of alerts compared to the previous year, largely associated with a methodological change in the way alerts were recorded. Whereas in 2024 alerts were counted under a one-victim-per-alert criterion, in 2025 Red VDS adopted an approach that distinguishes between alerts and victims. The modification allows multiple affected individuals to be grouped under a single incident. Using this methodology, FUNDAMEDIOS documented 129 alerts corresponding to 225 victims, representing a 16% increase compared to the 194 victims registered in 2024.

Telecomunicaciones (Arcotel) temporarily suspended the signals of community and Indigenous radio stations. This combination of physical and administrative aggressions forms a pattern of harassment that confirms the state's central role as the leading aggressor.

The 2025 electoral cycle and the referendum that returned Daniel Noboa to the presidency for a second term coincided with a rise in institutional opacity. Within this context, **restriction on access to information doubled in incidence, rising from 7.2% in 2024 to 14.7% of total alerts for the year**. These limitations intensified during election day, when the armed forces and CNE officials barred press access to polling stations in various cities across the country, including Machala and Loja, despite journalists holding official accreditation. Likewise, the official narrative of an “internal armed conflict” and the repeated invocation of states of emergency deepened restrictions on public information, further limiting the right of access on matters of general interest.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions (26 cases) and violence through the use of digital technology (23) together form the leading front of aggression against the press in Ecuador, accounting for 38% of total alerts for the period. Although both unfold in the digital environment, they follow distinct dynamics. Verbal, written, and digital aggressions show a more diverse profile of aggressors and a higher level of attribution: state actors (35%), non-state actors (31%), and groups operating outside the law (23%), ranging from public denunciations by officials to direct threats from criminal organizations and the impersonation of media outlets. Violence through the use of digital technology, by contrast, operates predominantly through anonymity: 61% of cases involve unidentified actors (trolls, fake profiles, and coordinated accounts), through practices such as identity theft, coordinated attacks on social media, content blocking, website takedowns, the spread of defamatory material, and mass reporting to remove publications. In this context, official and institutional accounts also play a significant role in amplifying discrediting narratives, helping to establish the digital environment as a central space for the harassment and silencing of journalism.

Finally, state surveillance and infiltration tactics deepened information control in 2025. Intelligence agents infiltrated press chat groups using profiles that impersonated media outlets in order to monitor conversations. At the same time, actors linked to the government purchased media companies, raising questions about media concentration and the indirect influence on editorial lines.

Violence based on sex

Fundamedios documented five alerts involving cross-cutting alerts of violence based on sex, all of which occurred online. These cases included



Ecuador
recorded five
murders of
journalists by
unidentified
actors

personal attacks, smear campaigns, and the activation of coordinated accounts —including trolls— to amplify hostile messages against journalists. More broadly, the weakening of institutional safeguards and the rise in structural violence have a differentiated impact on reporters who already face heightened vulnerability, underscoring the need to incorporate diversity and non-discrimination approaches into protection policies.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, Ecuador experienced a deepening of regressive trends in freedom of expression. An architecture of official violence took hold, access to information of public interest was increasingly restricted, digital technology was weaponized for online attacks, and state actors played an outsized role in physical aggressions — conditions that, together, enabled the return of journalist killings.

Fundamedios stresses the urgent need to put the *Ley Orgánica de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información Pública* into effective practice, ensuring that access to state information is timely, complete, and free of discrimination. States of emergency and the government's framing of an "internal conflict" cannot be allowed to serve as standing justification for withholding information at official discretion.

In the face of rising lethality, authorities have an obligation to investigate journalists' murders swiftly, independently, and with due diligence, breaking the cycles of impunity that have taken hold. **The Fiscalía General del Estado should make prosecuting threats and crimes against the press a priority, activating protective measures for witnesses, sources, and family members.** On security, Fundamedios calls for clear protocols that guarantee respect for journalistic work during protests and security operations, including an explicit ban on attacking identified media workers.

Finally, Fundamedios argues that strengthening the journalist protection mechanism is essential — providing it with adequate resources and operational autonomy — alongside fostering an environment that supports pluralism, editorial independence, and the structural conditions journalism needs to operate freely throughout the country.

El Salvador 2025

Number of alerts:

205

Number of victims:

254

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

11

Number of alerts by indicator:



124 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



58 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE



25 RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION



9 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



6 PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS



6 SEXUAL VIOLENCE



4 ARBITRARY DETENTION



3 ABUSIVE USE OF STATE POWER

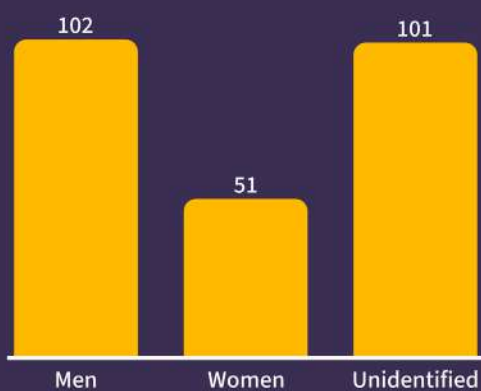


1 MURDER

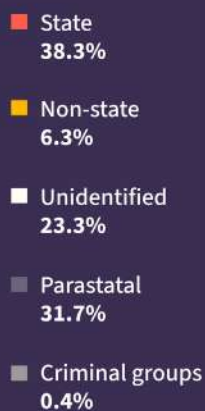


1 FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:



Context and trends

In 2025, the Salvadoran state deepened the suffocation of civic space under the uninterrupted continuation of the state of exception. This climate of growing militarization, in which police and military forces operate with sweeping powers of intervention, allowed official harassment and the blocking of international funding to force media closures and drive journalists into exile. The resulting self-censorship and hollowing-out of the information landscape rendered these aggressions invisible and weakened civil society's capacity to speak out.

Although the Asociación de Periodistas de El Salvador (APES) recorded a 35% drop in victims in 2025 compared to the previous year, this decline does not reflect an improvement — it reflects the structural weakening of the media ecosystem. The deterioration intensified between May and July, a period that accounted for 42.9% of alerts, amid an increasingly authoritarian state response to social discontent. The repression of protests through illegitimate use of force, the criminalization of human rights defenders, and the instrumentalization of the criminal justice system heightened pressure on the press, driving journalists to retreat from sensitive topics such as public security, the detention of activists, and the state of exception.

The murder of Salvadoran journalist Javier Salinas, of the outlet *A Todo Noticias*, killed by hitmen in Honduras, marked the most extreme act of violence of the year. Salinas had been under protective measures since 2023, after surviving an attempted kidnapping and death threats. Compounding this were other episodes of severe violence, including the arbitrary detention of a female reporter and two foreign journalists covering the *CECOT* in Tecoluca by military personnel, who coerced them into deleting their material, as well as six documented cases of sexual violence.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions were the predominant pattern of violence against the press in El Salvador in 2025, with 124 alerts (52.3%). Far from being isolated incidents, they follow a sustained logic in which the digital environment has become the primary space for intimidation, involving parastatal actors, unidentified aggressors, and public officials seeking to silence the press.

According to APES, 147 of the 205 alerts (64.5%) occurred in the digital environment, including 95% of stigmatizing discourse and eight cases of violence through the use of digital technology. This offensive seeks to delegitimize journalistic work through narratives linking journalists to organized crime, in a context where the growing exile of the media ecosystem has also shifted aggressions into the digital space.

State actors remain the driving force behind violence against journalism, responsible for 38.3% of recorded alerts. At the same

time, the weight of parastatal actors is especially notable, accounting for 31.7% of cases. While this does not necessarily represent an increase over previous years, the proportion reveals the consolidation of a network of “digital satellites” — YouTubers and influencers acting in step with official discourse. The case of the user *@LauraPocasSV* is emblematic: from her X profile, she stigmatizes, amplifies, and coordinates systematic attacks against journalists, functioning as a harassment hub that turns the digital space into a territory of political persecution.

Amid this sustained pressure, APES recorded one alert of forced displacement, corresponding to the case of the outlet *El Faro*: seven of its journalists fled the country urgently after receiving diplomatic warnings about possible imminent arrest orders against them. Nearly a year after APES filed a legal request to clarify the legal status of six reporters, the state has maintained an administrative silence that validates the uncertainty and perpetuates exile as a mechanism of silencing.

Of the 25 alerts involving restriction on access to information, the incidents in June reveal a deliberate pattern of blocking judicial coverage. At the *Centro Judicial Isidro Menéndez*, new security measures made entry contingent on press authorizations and left requests unanswered. During the hearing against human rights defender Ruth López, police officers actively obstructed journalistic work. These cases confirm that the government is systematically restricting coverage of sensitive judicial proceedings.

Violence based on sex

In 2025, 11 cross-cutting alerts based on sex were recorded, a figure that confirms the persistence of this type of violence, up from the 10 documented in 2024. **The identification of six cases of sexual violence against journalists is the most alarming finding of the monitoring effort.**

These aggressions manifest mainly through misogynistic comments, questioning of professional competence, and differentiated digital violence: while attacks against male journalists tend to focus on criminalization or political affiliation, aggressions against women tend to center on sex-based motives meant to discredit their journalistic work, such as alleged sexual favors used to gain positions, or attacks on their personal and moral character.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, El Salvador deepened a pattern of harassment against the press amid the concentration of power and the weakening of institutional safeguards. Although the number of alerts declined



64.5% of
registered
alerts occurred
online

compared to 2024, the greater severity of the aggressions — together with the exile of journalists, the retreat from sensitive coverage, the drop in international funding, and the prevailing climate of fear — shows that there has been no structural improvement in the conditions for practicing journalism.

APES stresses the need to strengthen protection mechanisms with adequate resources and clear protocols; to guarantee access to public information; and to train the *Policía Nacional Civil* and the *Fuerza Armada* in international standards. It also urges a review of recent legislation, particularly the *Ley de Agentes Extranjeros*, given its potential to be used for criminalization, and warns of the risks associated with the state of emergency and new cybersecurity regulations, given the absence of clear safeguards that could otherwise enable improper surveillance.

Finally, it is essential to guarantee the safe return of exiled journalists and to extend protective measures to human rights defenders facing similar patterns of persecution.

Guatemala 2025

Number of alerts:

35

Number of victims:

38

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

0

Number of alerts by indicator:



12 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



8 JUDICIAL HARASSMENT



7 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



5 PHYSICAL AGGRESSION



3 MURDER



3 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE



1 FORCED DISAPPEARANCE

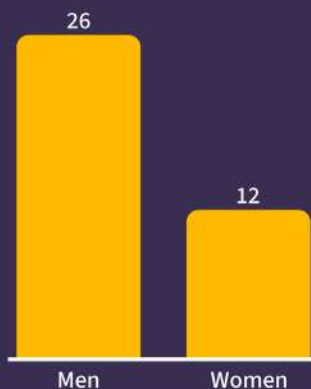


1 ARBITRARY DETENTION

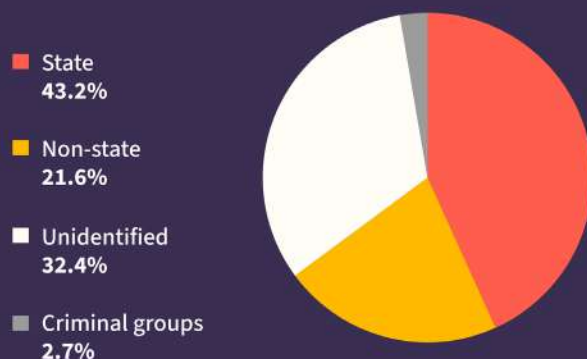


1 RESTRICTION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Sex of the victims:



Aggressors:



Context and trends

Journalism in Guatemala remained a high-risk activity in 2025. Sectors of political and economic power waged an offensive that combined judicial pressure, economic strangulation, digital harassment, and lethal violence. Against this backdrop, the Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios para la Democracia Social (DEMOS) recorded 35 alerts affecting 38 journalists, representing a 47.9% decline in the total number of victims compared to 2024.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions accounted for 29.3% of recorded alerts, establishing themselves as the leading mechanism of violence against journalists. At the same time, judicial harassment accounted for 19.5% of alerts — a 12.7% increase over 2024 — confirming the growing use of the legal system as a tool to wear down the press. Violence through the use of digital technology, meanwhile, reached 17.1% of cases, reflecting the consolidation of the digital environment as a central space for the persecution and harassment of journalists.

Lethal violence reached critical levels with the murder of three journalists: Cristian Martínez, killed in the context of a robbery; Ismael Alonzo, a community journalist shot dead by a group of armed men at the door of his home; and Jorge Zapeta, who had previously reported threats and whose body was found a week after his disappearance, bearing signs of violence. Compounding this offensive was the forced disappearance of Milton Polanco, who remains missing to this day. The justice system's inaction in the face of these crimes reinforces structural impunity, a factor that perpetuates the risk of death and nullifies the minimum guarantees needed for the practice of journalism. In the same vein, irregularities and constant changes of judges have marked the nearly four years of pretrial detention of journalist José Rubén Zamora, who remains deprived of his liberty to this day because of his journalistic work.

State actors carried out 43.2% of total alerts, including the *Ministerio Público*, officials from the *Organismo Judicial*, the *Policía Nacional Civil*, mayors, and a municipal secretary. Their involvement spanned various forms of aggression, combining judicial harassment, restriction on access to information, stigmatizing discourse, and physical and digital aggressions. Within this framework, structural practices are evident — such as the state's restriction of investigative journalism through the systematic non-compliance with the *Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública* — alongside direct acts of intimidation through the judicial apparatus aimed at constraining journalistic work. One example was the pressure exerted by the *Juzgado de Paz* of San Pedro Ayampuc against journalist Edwin Omar Sandoval, who was pressured to stop covering public administration issues under threat of legal action and possible imprisonment.



Lethal violence reached critical levels with the murder of three journalists

In addition, economic strangulation forced a structural reconfiguration of Guatemala's media ecosystem in 2025. The financial crisis wiped out nearly all print media outlets, forcing their exclusive migration to digital formats. This shift altered the conditions under which independent journalism is produced and financed, heightening exposure to security risks and digital surveillance. Against this backdrop, the emergence of the print newspaper *Positivamente*, financed by two private companies, stands as an exception within an otherwise predominantly digitized media ecosystem.

Violence based on sex

No cross-cutting alerts of sex-based violence were recorded in 2025. However, DEMOS notes that the absence of a *Programa de Protección a Periodistas* with differentiated measures limits the ability to specifically address the forms of sex-based violence that arise in the practice of journalism.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, freedom of expression in Guatemala continued to confront structural patterns of criminalization, judicial harassment, and institutionalized impunity, driven primarily by the state. This pattern of aggression, which escalates as far as the murder and disappearance of journalists, dismantles basic legal guarantees and nullifies any real protection for the practice of journalism.

Given this situation, it is imperative that the *Ministerio Público* and the *Organismo Judicial* put an end to practices of judicial persecution and strengthen investigative protocols in cases of attacks against journalists, ensuring the proper functioning of the *Fiscalía de Sección de Delitos cometidos contra Periodistas*. Likewise, DEMOS urges the executive branch to follow through on its commitment to create and operationalize a *Programa de Protección a Periodistas* in consultation with the profession, to ensure the effective implementation of precautionary measures granted by the *Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos*, and to guarantee the functioning of the *Instancia de Análisis de Ataques contra Defensores de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas*.

Likewise, the *Dirección de Protección a Personas y Seguridad* of the *Policía Nacional Civil* must strengthen its mechanisms for risk assessment and the assignment of protective measures, ensure the emergency reporting hotline remains operational, and review specialized investigative protocols. It is also important to make progress on guarantees that would allow for the safe return of exiled journalists, and to establish mechanisms for collecting disaggregated data on attacks against journalists and other populations in situations of vulnerability. Finally, DEMOS insists that the *Procuraduría de*

Derechos Humanos must continue providing effective support to journalists and media outlets under attack, and safeguard the right of access to public information.

Honduras 2025

Number of alerts:

77

Number of victims:

118

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

16

Number of alerts by indicator:



37 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE



26 RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION



17 PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS



13 JUDICIAL HARASSMENT



11 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



9 ABUSIVE USE OF STATE POWER



3 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



2 MURDER

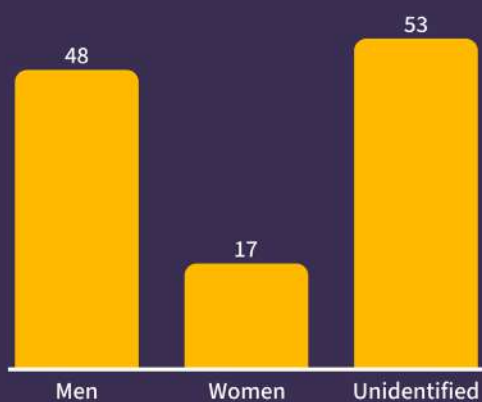


2 ARBITRARY DETENTION



1 FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Sex of victims:



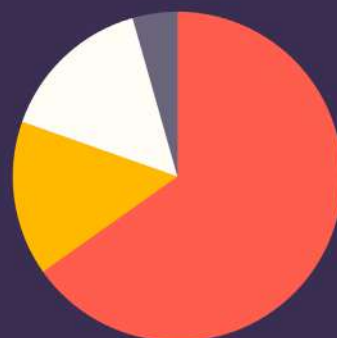
Aggressors:

State
65.2%

Non-state
15.2%

Unidentified
15.2%

Parastatal
4.4%



Context and trends

In 2025, violence against the press in Honduras persisted through murders, stigmatization, and the use of the state apparatus to intimidate journalists. Amid the electoral cycle, aggressions, hate speech, and discrediting campaigns against journalists and media outlets intensified. According to monitoring conducted by the Comité por la Libre Expresión (C-Libre), 77 alerts were recorded affecting 118 victims, a figure close to the 123 victims documented in 2024.

The murder of two journalists exposes the extreme vulnerability of those who practice journalism in Honduras. The cases of Carlos Gilberto Aguirre, a radio announcer and sports reporter for *Oro Estéreo* in Olancho, and Javier Hércules, a journalist with the program *A Todo Noticias* in Copán — whose killing occurred despite him being under official protective measures — demonstrate the Honduran state's inability to guarantee the safety of those who practice journalism. For C-Libre, these crimes form part of a structural pattern of impunity, in which roughly 90% of journalist murders remain judicially unresolved.

Lethal violence forms part of a broader pattern of delegitimization of journalism, in which stigmatizing discourse escalated sharply, rising from 7.3% in 2024 to 30.6% in 2025. State actors were responsible for 59.5% of these alerts, cementing the use of official discourse as a mechanism to delegitimize journalistic work. Adding to this were 11 alerts of verbal, written, and digital aggressions, which included death threats and attacks on social media. Among the documented incidents, one that stands out is the posting of banners at various points across Tegucigalpa by the head of the armed forces, branding journalists as “hitmen of the truth.”

Within this context, state actors were behind 65.2% of annual alerts, entrenching practices of surveillance, institutional pressure, and persecution of the press. In particular, they were responsible for 84.6% of judicial harassment cases, a form of aggression that rose from 6.5% in 2024 to 10.7% in 2025, reflecting greater use of legal mechanisms to intimidate and pressure journalists. In keeping with this pattern of persecution, the *Ministerio Público* demanded that the digital outlet *Criterio.hn* disclose sources and methods behind an investigation published three years earlier. Such actions violate professional confidentiality and are directed particularly at journalists investigating corruption, abuse of power, or political conflicts.

During the 2025 electoral cycle, attacks against the press rose significantly, accounting for 41.6% of the year's alerts. During this period, state actors were responsible for 62.5% of aggressions, revealing the use of public power to restrict news coverage. The most serious case involved journalist Henry Torres, who was brutally

assaulted by the mayor of San Marcos (Ocotepeque), Gerardo Antonio Mejía, and the mayor's cousin and municipal employee, Jester Cardona Mejía, in retaliation for reporting on the mayor's electoral defeat. The attack was premeditated and carried out with extreme violence: Torres was struck from behind until he lost consciousness. The case also revealed the unequal application of the justice system: the journalist's complaint went nowhere, while the criminal complaint filed by the official moved forward.

Also documented during this period, in the run-up to the election, were 26 cases of restriction on access to information, affecting citizens' right to receive timely information about the electoral process. At least five local media outlets were obstructed in their reporting by members of the *Policía Militar del Orden Público* and agents of the *Dirección Policial de Investigaciones* (DPI), as they attempted to cover the electoral process in Roatán, Islas de la Bahía. These practices of censorship, restriction, and silencing of the press take on a particularly critical dimension in contexts of heightened political sensitivity, such as elections, where control over information becomes strategic and, as a result, heightens the risks and violence faced by those covering the news.

Violence based on sex

Cross-cutting alerts of violence based on sex against journalists and media workers quadrupled in Honduras, rising from four alerts in 2024 to 16 in 2025. These aggressions included acts of workplace violence, sexist remarks, and misogynistic attacks. Documented cases included direct threats against journalists during field coverage, intimidation aimed at forcing them to abandon their reporting work, and physical aggressions in the context of political coverage. Episodes of digital violence and social media harassment campaigns against journalists in retaliation for critical coverage were also reported. Among the most serious incidents were threats of physical assault against a journalist covering citizen complaints and an attempted arson attack on a media worker's home, revealing an escalation of structural violence that limits women's participation in public debate.

Conclusions and recommendations

Journalism in Honduras remains profoundly hostile and lethal. Physical aggressions, stigmatization campaigns, judicial harassment, and the use of state institutions to intimidate journalists all show that the country still faces serious challenges in guaranteeing freedom of expression. The high level of state involvement as an aggressor, along with the use of the justice system to pursue journalists, reflects a troubling instrumentalization of public institutions. Compounding this is the persistent impunity surrounding the murders of journalists,



State actors were responsible for 84.6% of cases of judicial harassment against the press

which denies victims justice and sends a message of tolerance toward violence against the press.

Given this situation, it is urgent that the state strengthen its system of safeguards for the effective protection of journalists and media workers. Priority measures should include: strengthening the *Mecanismo de Protección* for journalists and human rights defenders; ensuring effective, specialized investigation of crimes against the press; unrestricted respect for professional confidentiality and source protection; and the adoption of public policies that prevent and sanction stigmatization and violence against journalists. It is likewise essential that the state allocate sufficient resources to the *Mecanismo de Protección*, guarantee the independence of the *Ministerio Público* from political pressure in cases involving journalists, and establish clear protocols to ensure security forces respect the work of the press when covering demonstrations and official events.

Mexico 2025

Number of alerts:

400

Number of victims:

461

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

36

Number of alerts by indicator:



114 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



59 RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION



58 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE



57 PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS



48 JUDICIAL HARASSMENT



30 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL INFORMATION



10 ARBITRARY DETENTION



8 LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS



7 MURDER



2 FORCED DISAPPEARANCE



2 FORCED DISPLACEMENT



2 ABUSIVE USE OF STATE POWER

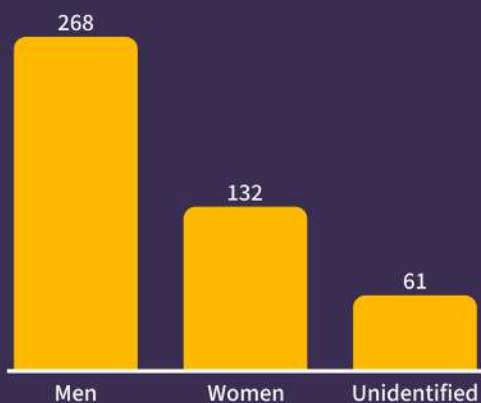


1 KIDNAPPING



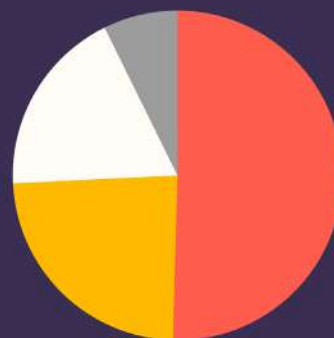
1 SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:

- State 50.5%
- Non-state 23.8%
- Unidentified 18.5%
- Criminal groups 7.3%



Context and trends

The Claudia Sheinbaum administration, in its first year in office, softened the government's official rhetoric toward the press — but not the structural violence underlying it: **Mexico leads the region in aggressions and is confirmed as the most violent and lethal country for journalism in 2025**. While total alerts declined by 38.6%, this figure reflects methodological adjustments made by the monitoring organization (ARTICLE 19) rather than any structural improvement in the guarantees for practicing journalism.⁴

Despite this apparent decline, **lethal violence against the Mexican press worsened in 2025, with seven murders — up from five the previous year**. These crimes are concentrated mainly in local settings, where coverage of corruption and security runs up against a convergence of political, economic, and criminal interests. One case that lays bare these dynamics is the murder of Jesús Guerrero Cayetano, a journalist and deputy director at *Global México*, who was killed by unknown assailants in a public parking lot despite being under protective measures from the federal mechanism. This crime reopens a cycle of impunity for the outlet, which twelve years earlier suffered the murder of Adrián Silva Moreno, a case that remains unresolved to this day. This pattern reflects the ineffectiveness of protection mechanisms and the state's inability to investigate and prevent these crimes.

Lethal violence does not operate in isolation but as the pinnacle of a continuum of severe aggressions. Alongside the murder cases, the year also saw two forced disappearances — one attributed to a state actor and the other to unidentified aggressors — one kidnapping carried out by groups operating outside the law, and two cases of forced displacement in Michoacán and Guerrero, states where organized crime exerts territorial control that makes local journalism untenable. These extreme forms of violence serve as a prelude to lethal violence: early warning signs of a process of normalization in which each unanswered aggression paves the way for the next.

Another notable feature of the period was the shift in the types of violence recorded. In 2024, attacks and aggressions accounted for 45.9% of total alerts. In 2025, that indicator ceded the top spot to verbal, written, and digital aggressions (28.5%), followed by stigmatizing discourse (14.5%), pointing to a shift toward discursive and digital forms of harassment. This greater variability across indicators shows that aggressions are no longer concentrated in a single dominant category, but are instead distributed across different mechanisms of pressure.

⁴ It should be noted that the number of recorded alerts differs from ARTICLE 19's annual report due to differences in counting methodologies. In its annual report, the organization documents each act of aggression per victim and uses fewer indicators than those indicated in Red VDS's methodology

Judicial harassment escalated sharply to 12% of total alerts, up from 2.5% in 2024. The popular election of judges has weakened the independence of the judiciary, creating conditions in which judicial harassment against the press is becoming entrenched as a mechanism of silencing, particularly in electoral contexts. A paradigmatic case was the detention of journalist Rafael León Segovia, known as Lafita León, who was arrested on charges of terrorism and crimes against public security institutions. According to ARTICLE 19, the criminal proceedings are linked to Segovia's reporting in southern Veracruz, a region marked by macrocriminality.

Another significant institutional development was the disappearance of the *Instituto Nacional de Transparencia, Acceso a la Información y Protección de Datos Personales* (INAI), the autonomous body responsible for guaranteeing access to public information. Its functions were absorbed by the executive branch, raising concerns about the independence of transparency mechanisms. This institutional setback did not occur in a vacuum: restriction on access to information accounted for 12% of total alerts recorded in 2025, with 48 cases attributed entirely to state actors. In this context, ARTICLE 19 underscores the importance of preserving institutional safeguards that ensure effective access to information of public interest.

Violence based on sex

During 2025, ARTICLE 19 recorded 36 cross-cutting alerts of violence on the basis of sex affecting 40 victims. The digital environment accounted for 80.6% of these alerts, carried out through coordinated social media campaigns involving misogynistic comments and threats of sexual violence against women journalists. Within these cross-cutting alerts, stigmatizing discourse accounted for 44.4%, while verbal and digital aggressions accounted for 36.1%, confirming the centrality of online spaces as sites of harassment. Additionally, two of the 10 arbitrary detentions recorded during the year involved sexist or misogynistic conduct on the part of the aggressors.

The case of Rubí Soriano illustrates the press's vulnerability within the judicial sphere. During the 2025 elections, the *Instituto Electoral de Puebla* filed a complaint against the journalist for political violence on the basis of sex after she published a critical piece on a candidate — a case built arbitrarily on third-party comments on social media rather than on anything the journalist herself had written. This incident shows how legislation created to protect women's political participation can be applied expansively in an attempt to censor journalistic content.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, Mexico was the most violent country in Latin America for the practice of journalism. The rise in murders of journalists during



Mexico consolidated its position as the deadliest country in the region, registering seven murders

the period, including some who were under state protection, reveals persistent and serious shortcomings in preventing violence against the press and in the effectiveness of existing protection mechanisms.

Strengthening comprehensive public protection policies is a priority, not only by adapting the measures granted to journalists but through preventive action by the state aimed at reinforcing the protection of journalists and media outlets. Given the high levels of impunity that continue to characterize these crimes, it is essential to guarantee diligent, effective investigations capable of holding perpetrators accountable and helping prevent these acts from recurring.

At the same time, the rise in judicial harassment confirms the growing use of judicial mechanisms as a form of pressure and silencing against the press. This trend, occurring alongside the weakening of judicial independence, reinforces the need to adopt measures that prevent the justice system from being used to restrict and obstruct journalistic activity, particularly in cases tied to coverage of matters of public interest.

The disappearance of autonomous bodies overseeing access to public information undermines an essential condition for the practice of journalism. The state must reinstate and guarantee the independence of these institutions, provide them with sufficient funding, and ensure that their decisions are binding and enforceable without interference from the executive branch.

Finally, the ongoing pattern of violence on the basis of sex against women journalists — particularly in digital settings — shows that these aggressions affect certain groups disproportionately, and that institutional responses must account for these specificities. Within this framework, it is necessary to incorporate differentiated approaches into existing protection policies and to develop targeted responses to forms of violence that disproportionately affect women journalists.

The persistence of these aggressions in their many forms — lethal, institutional, and digital — reveals that reversing Mexico's position as the most hostile environment for the press in the region will require sustained structural reforms, not isolated measures.

Nicaragua 2025

Number of alerts:

63

Number of victims:

110

Cross-cutting alerts
based on sex:

2

Number of alerts by indicator:



45 VERBAL, WRITTEN,
AND DIGITAL
AGGRESSIONS



6 STIGMATIZING
DISCOURSE



5 VIOLENCE THROUGH
THE USE
OF DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY



3 FORCED
DISPLACEMENT ⁵



2 ABUSIVE USE
OF STATE
POWER

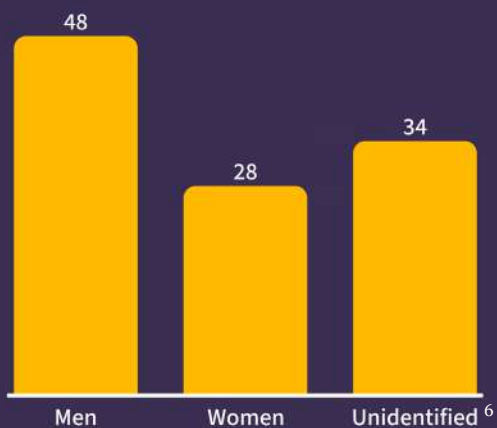


1 PHYSICAL
AGGRESSION



1 ARBITRARY
DETENTION

Sex of victims:



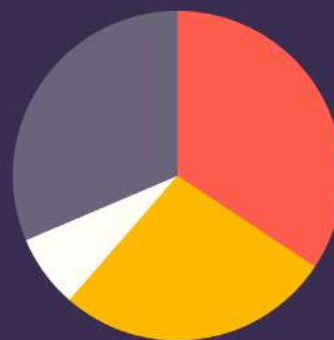
Aggressors:

State
34.3%

Non-state
27.1%

Unidentified
7.1%

Parastatal
31.4%



⁵ FLED complements the “Forced Displacement” indicator in its monitoring with the category “Exile,” which accounts for a cumulative total of 309 exiled journalists since 2018, including 26 cases documented in 2025.

⁶ According to FLED’s monitoring, the 34 alerts with an “unidentified” victim correspond to media outlets.

Context and trends

In 2025, the Nicaraguan state consolidated a model of absolute control over information. After 18 uninterrupted years of the regime's rule, technological surveillance, digital harassment, and judicial persecution formed a state machinery of systematic pressure aimed at silencing journalism and depriving citizens of information of public interest. Against this backdrop, the Fundación por la Libertad de Expresión y Democracia (FLED) recorded 63 alerts affecting 110 journalists and media outlets, representing a 35.8% increase in the number of victims compared to 2024.

These dynamics are embedded within an institutional framework that has expanded the tools available for controlling information and communications. According to FLED, the constitutional reform consolidated in 2025 enables restrictions on fundamental rights under the guise of national sovereignty, with potential consequences for freedom of expression. This is reflected in concrete actions, such as the dissolution of a journalists' association, the destruction of a news channel's archives, and bans preventing journalists from entering or returning to the country. Compounding this is the *Ley de Telecomunicaciones Convergentes*, which allows the state to access private communications without a judicial order, and the *Ley de Ciberdelitos*, which penalizes the dissemination of information deemed false. Together, this legal and institutional framework forms a surveillance system capable of criminalizing criticism and citizen engagement in digital spaces.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions form the largest category of the period with 45 cases, 71% of total alerts, and carry a distinctive feature: the digital space is the primary territory of violence, with 62.2% of cases originating on digital platforms. Moreover, seven out of every ten aggressions occurring in the digital environment were carried out by parastatal or state actors, painting the picture of a repressive ecosystem in which the state operates both directly and through media outlets, journalists, and Sandinista loyalists who replicate and amplify official discourse.

The year's highest spike occurred in June, with 9 cases, most of them tied to a coordinated escalation of attacks from accounts and figures aligned with the ruling party against directors of exiled independent media outlets and journalists still inside Nicaragua, who also faced an additional form of harassment: the targeting of their homes and families as a method of extended pressure.

During the final quarter of 2025, aggressions from non-state actors increased. Of the 10 alerts recorded between October and December, 7 were carried out by non-state actors, particularly in digital settings, surpassing those attributable to the state for the first time that year.



FLED recorded a 35.8% increase in the number of victims compared to last year

This trend may be linked both to coordinated digital harassment strategies and to the gradual internalization of official narratives that discredit journalistic work and portray journalists as responsible for generating political or social instability.

Finally, the spread of “zones of silence” — territories where independent journalism has disappeared entirely — constitutes the most critical consequence of state violence. In 2025, with the disappearance of the press in Chinandega, the number of departments without pluralistic coverage rose to 11, leaving 65% of the national territory under the exclusive control of the official narrative. This phenomenon reflects a process of informational desertification tied to media closures, the exile of journalists, and restrictions on journalistic work.

Violence based on sex

In 2025, FLED recorded two cross-cutting alerts of violence based on sex. In one case, an individual linked to parapolice structures threatened and physically assaulted a reporter while she was surveying residents about rising gasoline prices; the harassment forced her to leave the scene to protect her safety. FLED warns that women journalists continue to face disproportionate vulnerability, particularly while covering stories in public spaces.

Sex-based aggressions are widely underreported, but the press’s systematic stigmatization compounds this: harassment tends to hit women with particular severity, especially in digital settings. Comment sections and platforms hosting journalistic content routinely carry aggressive or disparaging messages aimed at journalists, and women bear the brunt of it.

Conclusions and recommendations

After 18 years of rule under the Ortega-Murillo regime, the press in Nicaragua faces an ongoing process of structural erosion, marked by judicial persecution, digital surveillance, the criminalization of critical expression, and the expansion of “zones of silence.”

Given this context, FLED reiterates its call on the Nicaraguan state to respect and guarantee freedom of expression and the right to information; to end the persecution of the press; and to release all individuals detained for carrying out journalistic work or expressing critical opinions. It also urges a review and revision of the current legal framework — including provisions related to telecommunications surveillance and cybercrime offenses — to bring it into line with international human rights and freedom of expression standards.

Finally, FLED calls on the international community and countries in the region to pay close attention on the state of press freedom in Nicaragua, and to strengthen protection and support mechanisms for

journalists at risk, including those continuing their work from exile. This means facilitating access to visas and humanitarian protection status, providing sustained funding for Nicaraguan media outlets operating from abroad, and ensuring that exiled journalists can take part in international advocacy spaces without putting their families or sources still in Nicaragua at risk.

Paraguay 2025

Number of alerts:

20

Number of victims:

21

Cross-cutting alerts
based on sex:

0

Number of alerts by indicator:



11 VERBAL,
WRITTEN, AND
DIGITAL
AGGRESSIONS



5 PHYSICAL
AGGRESSIONS

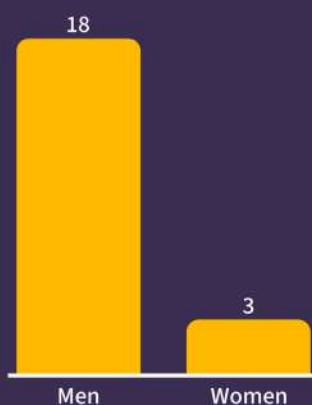


3 JUDICIAL
HARASSMENT



1 ABUSIVE USE
OF STATE
POWER

Sex of victims:



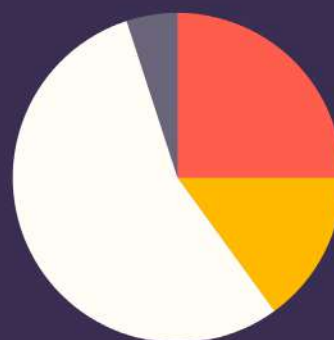
Aggressors:

State
25%

Non-state
15%

Unidentified
55%

Parastatal
5%



Context and trends

Paraguay saw a 42.9% drop in alerts against the press, falling from 35 in 2024 to 20 in 2025. For the Instituto de Derecho y Economía Ambiental (IDEA), this decline stems mainly from the absence of an electoral cycle — a context that has historically intensified attacks on journalists — and from a strategic retreat by aggressors, particularly political, wary of the negative impact anti-press rhetoric can have on their public and international image. Despite this decrease, IDEA warns that physical violence, threats, and judicial pressure continue to constrain journalism in the country.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions were the most frequent indicator of 2025, with 11 alerts, five of which escalated into death threats. The anonymity of attackers in 55% of alerts perpetuated impunity and hindered investigations. State actors were responsible for 25% of these acts in cases where perpetrators were identified. Complaints filed against a member of the *Cámara de Diputados* and a senator over threats made against journalists illustrate a persistent pattern: political power wielded as a tool to silence the press.

Meanwhile, physical aggressions accounted for 25% of all alerts. In each of the five recorded cases, the aggressors could not be identified, compounding the levels of impunity. One of the most alarming incidents occurred when an unidentified individual with his face covered threw a Molotov cocktail at the home of Aníbal Benítez, director of *PDS Radio y TV Digital*, while he was inside with his family. The attack caused no injuries, but the attacker left a bullet in an envelope as a threat. Also in Lambaré, unidentified individuals fired shots at the home of Carlos Benítez, director of the outlet *El Observador*. For IDEA, these aggressions reach journalists investigating groups or criminal networks embedded within the judicial system, tying together businesses, prosecutors, and judges in corruption schemes.

Judicial harassment persisted as a tool of censorship in 2025, with three registered alerts. State actors carried out all of these attacks in an effort to silence journalists investigating corruption. In one instance, judge Marcos Giménez Rivas barred journalists César Candia and Alberto Núñez from reporting on a livestock theft case involving Julio Vera, a council member from the Yasy Cañy department. IDEA further warns that these proceedings often drag on for years as a deliberate strategy to wear down and censor investigative journalists.

The most significant shift in aggressor patterns from 2024 to 2025 was the decline in state actors' involvement, whose share of attacks fell from 59.3% to 25%. Unidentified aggressors, by contrast, accounted for 55% of cases, underscoring the impunity that shields attacks against the press. Separately, digital threats linked to drug trafficking increased, heightening the risk of physical violence against journalists investigating organized crime.



Attackers remained unidentified in 55% of alerts, perpetuating impunity

Finally, a proposed bill to protect journalists and human rights defenders faced renewed political tensions in 2025. Its latest version stripped out the autonomous institutional structure originally proposed for the executive branch, and explicitly excluded human rights defenders from the protection system — a move that has drawn criticism from civil society organizations working in this field.

Violence based on sex

IDEA recorded no alerts of violence based on sex during 2025. This absence, however, does not mean women journalists are free from the distinct risks they face in their work. The lack of recorded alerts for the year should be read with caution, as a sign of the ongoing barriers to reporting this kind of aggression rather than as evidence it isn't occurring.

Conclusions and recommendations

In Paraguay, physical aggressions, death threats, and judicial harassment persist, particularly against journalists investigating corruption, organized crime, and powerful networks, revealing a highly vulnerable environment for investigative journalism. Compounding this are concerns over setbacks in access to public information, the instrumental use of legal norms to restrict journalistic work, and tensions surrounding the design of the journalist protection mechanism.

To address this violence, IDEA recommends training judges and prosecutors to prevent laws designed to protect women from being used as tools of prior censorship or intimidation against journalists. On the mechanisms and procedures for requesting public information, it recommends eliminating the mandatory “identidad electrónica” for basic queries on the *Portal Unificado*, ensuring that foreign citizens and international journalists can exercise this right without technical obstacles. At the same time, continued debate on stronger standards for a journalist protection law in Paraguay remains essential. The judiciary must also establish transparent mechanisms to report on the progress of investigations in order to curb impunity. Finally, **the *Mesa para la Seguridad de Periodistas* requires formal legal standing and dedicated funding to implement real measures of prevention, protection, and justice.**

Peru 2025

Number of alerts:

62

Number of victims:

97

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

2

Number of alerts by indicator:



21 PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS



13 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



8 JUDICIAL HARASSMENT



5 RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION



4 MURDER



4 ABUSIVE USE OF STATE POWER



3 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE

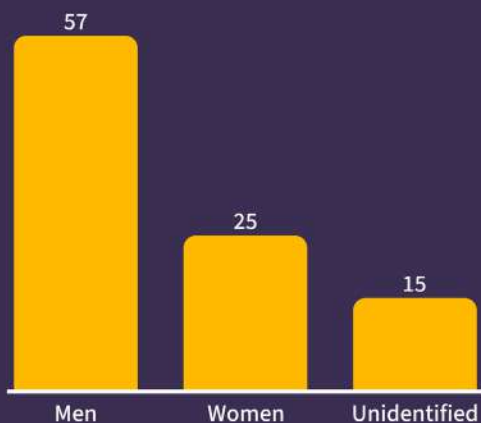


3 LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS



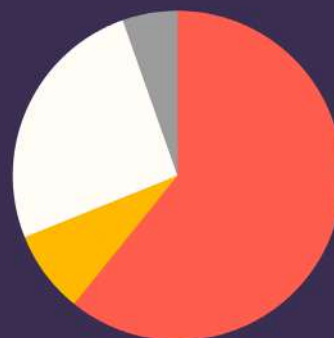
1 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:

- State 60.8%
- Non-state 8.1%
- Unidentified 25.7%
- Criminal groups 5.4%



Context and trends

In 2025, the convergence of illegal economies with armed violence and institutional weakness eroded the guarantees for press freedom in Peru. Against this backdrop, journalists investigating drug trafficking, illegal logging, and illegal mining faced lethal risk for covering these issues. According to monitoring by Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS), this systematic offensive drove an 83% rise in the number of victims compared to the previous year, from 53 in 2024 to 97 in 2025.

The murders of Gastón Medina, Raúl Celis, Mitzar Castillejos Tenazoa, and Fernando Núñez Guevara marked the most extreme expression of violence against the press in 2025. Hitmen killed them in broad daylight, exposing the extreme vulnerability of investigative journalism, particularly in regions outside the capital. One illustrative case is that of journalist Castillejos Tenazoa, who had been investigating the financing behind illegal mining and drug trafficking routes in the Amazon before his murder. This lethal violence, together with death threats against Gudelia Gálvez, Manuel Calloquispe, and Hessed Rosales Santos, remains largely unpunished, reinforcing a message of tolerance toward violence against the press.

Physical aggressions accounted for 33.9% of the year's alerts, affecting 41 media workers. Private individuals, officials, and security forces used force to obstruct coverage, with attacks extending to journalists' homes and vehicles.

Organized crime syndicates and groups operating outside the law also mounted their own offensive, carrying out roughly 5.4% of aggressions. These criminal networks deployed tactics of direct intimidation and systematic harassment in both public and private settings. In Huaral, an unidentified individual attacked the home of Carlos Mesías Zárate, editorial director of the outlet *Central de Noticias*, with dynamite, in retaliation for his investigations into an alleged land-trafficking network operating in the area. Though the explosive was detected in time and did not detonate, the case illustrates the extreme risks faced by journalists investigating criminal networks in regions outside the capital.

Meanwhile, the digital environment accounted for 19.4% of total alerts. This assault was carried out mainly through restriction on access to information, stigmatizing discourse, and verbal, written, and digital aggressions. Political figures — including Rafael López Aliaga, Tomás Gálvez, and staff from the *Presidencia del Consejo de Ministros*, among others — deployed armies of bots and networks of operators to erode the press's credibility. This discrediting strategy operates through so-called “*mercenarios digitales*” or “*los dibujitos*”, groups that specialize in organizing systematic attacks against journalists on social media.



IPYS recorded an 83% increase in the number of victims

Judicial harassment accounted for 13% of total alerts, making it the third most frequent type of aggression. As of the end of 2025, six judicial proceedings remain open against journalists. One involves journalist Yessica Rosario Bazalar Sequeiros, director of the outlet *Cusco en Portada*, who faces a severe campaign of judicial harassment, political persecution, and systematic censorship driven by congressman Alejandro Soto Reyes, a legislator for *Alianza para el Progreso* and former president of the *Congreso de la República*. These legal complaints have been systematically admitted by the *Corte Superior de Justicia* of Cusco, revealing how the judiciary can become an instrument of abuse of power, with direct consequences for due process, the right to inform, and freedom of expression.

Violence based on sex

IPYS recorded 2 cross-cutting alerts of violence based on sex in 2025. Among the cases is that of Romina Mella, a journalist covering corruption, who has been a recurring target of social media defamation campaigns using terms like “*bruta*,” “*estúpida*,” or “*secretaria*” to demean her work. Clara Elvira Ospina also faced digital attacks with xenophobic overtones over her journalistic work, including remarks telling her to go back to her country. Various political actors deployed these attacks to fuel a hostile climate aimed at discouraging women journalists from taking part in public debate.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2025, journalism in Peru suffered a serious deterioration in its security conditions, reflected in an 83% rise in the number of victims compared to the previous year. The murder of four journalists, the advance of illegal economies, growing digital harassment, and the instrumental use of the judicial system — particularly against investigative journalism — drove this decline. These developments confirm a systematic pattern aimed at silencing critical voices. Amid a persistent political crisis and institutional weakness, this environment directly undermines the country’s democratic quality and, in particular, the practice of journalism. The state’s response has been clearly insufficient: a protection mechanism exists, but it lacks adequate resources and operational capacity, while investigations move slowly and rarely identify those who order the attacks.

Ahead of the 2026 electoral process, there is a high risk that this situation will worsen. In this context, IPYS considers it urgent for state authorities to adopt effective, coordinated, and professional measures to protect journalists and combat impunity. It is likewise essential to strengthen the protection mechanism with adequate funding and to improve the justice system’s investigative capacity. Finally, IPYS recommends mobilizing citizens to amplify the demands

of the organizations that monitor and defend press freedom, given the alarming rise in violence against journalism.

Uruguay 2025

Number of alerts:

43

Number of victims:

44

Cross-cutting alerts
based on sex:

4

Number of alerts by indicator:



18 RESTRICTIONS ON
ACCESS TO
INFORMATION



6 STIGMATIZING
DISCOURSE



5 VIOLENCE THROUGH
THE USE
OF DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY



4 JUDICIAL
HARASSMENT



3 PHYSICAL
AGGRESSIONS



3 VERBAL, WRITTEN,
AND DIGITAL
AGGRESSIONS



2 ABUSIVE USE
OF STATE
POWER

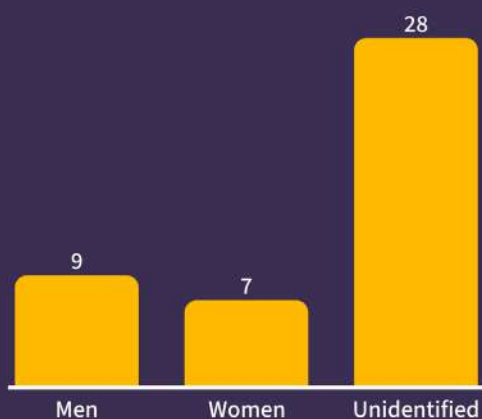


1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK
CONTRARY TO
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARDS



1 SEXUAL
VIOLENCE

Sex of victims:

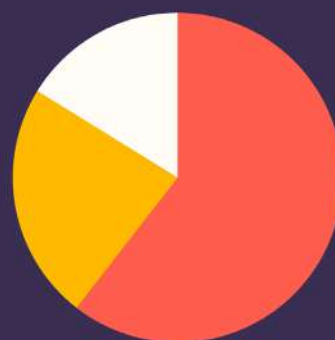


Aggressors:

State
60.5%

Non-state
23.3%

Unidentified
16.3%



Context and trends

After years of tension, the change of government on March 1, 2025, led authorities to adopt a different tone in their engagement with the press. This shift halted the escalation of stigmatization against the press that had marked the previous administration and cut the number of affected journalists by 56.8%: from 69 alerts affecting 69 victims in 2024 to 43 alerts affecting 44 media workers in 2025. This statistical improvement points to a relatively more favorable environment for the practice of journalism, even as structural challenges remain.

Restriction on access to information remains the most frequent violation, accounting for 41.9% of total alerts for the year. This indicator reflects the weakening of the *Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública* (Nº 18.381), as restrictive criteria increasingly abuse provisions for secrecy and confidentiality. Compounding this opacity, acting court prosecutor Mónica Ferrero maintains a standing ruling that bars reporting on criminal cases involving public figures, while a media law that, according to CAinfo, encourages the concentration and foreign ownership of media properties. The change of government has raised hopes for regulatory reform, but parliamentary fragmentation — the governing coalition holds a majority in the Senate but not in the House— makes any progress contingent on negotiations with an opposition that maintains a confrontational stance toward the media.

Stigmatizing discourse, whose share of total alerts fell from 24.6% in 2024 to 14% this year, remained one of the leading trends, with five alerts recorded. Senator Graciela Bianchi drove four of these cases, disparaging journalists on social media by branding them as “bought,” accusing them of reporting “in exchange for money,” and calling the investigative program *Sin Piedad* an “operación enchastre”. These stigmatizing narratives from the ruling party seek to undermine journalism’s credibility and neutralize its role as a check on power.

Within the category of verbal, written, and digital aggressions, media outlets also faced direct pressure to alter or remove published content.

One case with significant impact involved businessman Francisco De Posadas, head of *Grupo Magnolio*, who pressured media outlets to remove coverage of an attack on his offices that occurred on May 21.

According to accounts circulating within the profession, several outlets agreed to take down the story. This prompted the *Institución Nacional de Derechos Humanos* to intervene, characterizing the episode as a serious act of censorship and a violation of the right to information. The case exposed the vulnerability of media outlets to economic pressure and the weight that concentrated media ownership can carry over the circulation of information of public interest.

The identification of five cases of violence through the use of digital technology in Uruguay, while limited in number, carries real qualitative

significance, reflecting how aggressions against journalism persist and adapt. This type of violence typically takes the form of harassment campaigns on social media, the spread of stigmatizing content, threats, and coordinated attacks, often amplified by platforms' algorithmic dynamics. Though not the predominant form of aggression in the country, its presence points to a broader regional trend, in which the digital space is becoming fertile ground for intimidation and silencing, particularly in highly polarized contexts.

Violence based on sex

CAinfo reported four cross-cutting alerts linked to violence based on sex in 2025. The case of sports journalist Ana Inés Martínez set a precedent after she filed a complaint of workplace and sexual harassment against the management of Canal 10 and the newscast *Subrayado*. While the courts dismissed the workplace harassment complaint for lack of evidence, the sexual harassment complaint moved forward, backed by documented messages and communications. This case brings visibility to the structural and symbolic violence that affects women disproportionately in the profession, particularly where unequal hierarchical relationships intersect with politically sensitive public debates.

Conclusions and recommendations

Uruguay's 2025 landscape shows signs of easing tension between state authorities and the press, reflected in a decline in the number of alerts recorded compared to the previous year. Even so, regressive legal frameworks still in force, the concentration of media ownership, and restriction on access to public information point to structural challenges that demand urgent attention.

For CAinfo, the current dialogue must translate into reforms that grant real autonomy and binding authority to the body overseeing access to information. The state must also remove provisions that restrict access to judicial information of public interest. Cases of violence based on sex, meanwhile, call for effective mechanisms of prevention, reporting, and sanction within media organizations, along with protections against workplace retaliation. Strengthening institutions and ensuring safe working environments are essential if women are to fully exercise freedom of expression.

Whether Uruguay consolidates an environment that fully respects freedom of expression in the coming years will depend on its ability to turn the current openness to dialogue into concrete legal and institutional reforms. This means reviewing and adjusting legal frameworks that could enable undue restrictions, strengthening mechanisms to protect journalists and respond to attacks against them, guaranteeing the independence and operational capacity of



Restrictions
on access to
information
represented
41.9% of alerts

the relevant bodies, and promoting public policies that address the violations identified in a structural, lasting way.

Venezuela 2025

Number of alerts:

88

Number of victims:

155

Cross-cutting alerts based on sex:

0

Number of alerts by indicator:



20 VERBAL, WRITTEN, AND DIGITAL AGGRESSIONS



15 ARBITRARY DETENTION



13 STIGMATIZING DISCOURSE



12 ABUSIVE USE OF STATE POWER



12 VIOLENCE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



11 RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION



4 PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS



3 FORCED DISAPPEARANCE

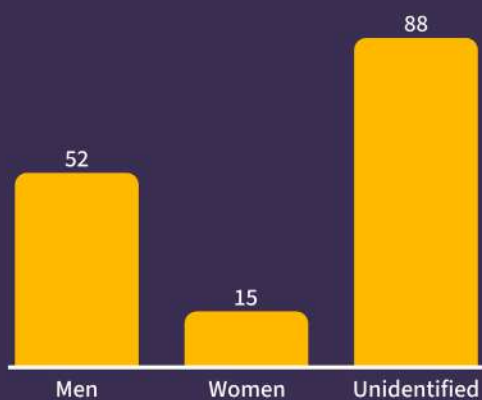


2 FORCED DISPLACEMENT



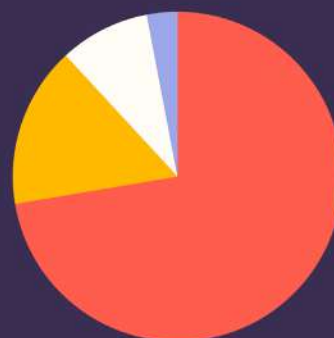
1 JUDICIAL HARASSMENT

Sex of victims:



Aggressors:

- State 72.3%
- Non-state 15.8%
- Unidentified 8.9%
- Parastatal 3%



Context and trends

The Maduro regime's crackdown following the 2024 electoral process shaped the hostile environment in which journalism operated in 2025. During this period, the Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS Venezuela) recorded 88 alerts affecting 155 victims, a significant drop from 487 the previous year. This decline points to a climate of self-censorship, in which pulling back from coverage has become a survival strategy in an increasingly restrictive environment.

The state dominates this picture: **one of the year's defining trends was the growing share of state aggressors in Venezuela, rising from 55.8% in 2024 to 72.3% in 2025.** This figure reveals a deepening of the structural nature of violence against the press, in which the state is not only expanding its numerical weight but consolidating its role as the leading force restricting the information space.

Verbal, written, and digital aggressions, with 20 alerts (21.5% of the total), form the most frequent category of the period and function as the first layer of pressure on the press. These aggressions cluster around moments of high political tension, particularly around Nicolás Maduro's inauguration, when simultaneous attacks were recorded across several states. Most target independent media outlets and are perpetrated by state actors (71.4%), followed by parastatal actors (14.3%), confirming their structural and deliberate nature.

The systematic imprisonment of journalists emerged as the most alarming trend of 2025. **IPYS Venezuela documented 15 arbitrary detentions involving 16 journalists, an unprecedented figure for the country.** One case involved journalist Nakary Ramos and her husband, Gianni González, who were detained after Nakary published a report on public perceptions of insecurity in Venezuela. The regime compounded this arbitrariness through forced disappearance (3 alerts) as an additional mechanism of pressure. The case of journalist Rory Branker illustrates these dynamics: security forces subjected him to three separate periods of disappearance during his detention. Beyond the individual cases, these detentions had a structural effect on journalism. **The real possibility of being deprived of liberty for reporting instilled a climate of fear that led many media workers to lower their public profile, avoid covering sensitive topics, and omit bylines to protect their safety.**

At the same time, the state imposed 11 instances of restriction on access to information that deepened the institutional siege on the press. These violations included selective barring of media workers from official events — such as the limited access granted to photographers and camera operators covering President

Nicolás Maduro's *Memoria y Cuenta* address — episodes of intimidation and censorship in at least eight municipalities during local elections, and the criminalization of expert commentary on economic matters. This deliberate obstruction of access to official sources restricts journalistic work and undermines citizens' right to information of public interest.

Compounding these dynamics of political and judicial pressure is the growing **precarity of Venezuela's media ecosystem**. A lack of funding forced media outlets and journalistic organizations to cut staff and scale back operations. Economic strangulation, meanwhile, pushed several journalists to abandon the profession altogether or take on other work to make ends meet, unable to sustain themselves through journalism alone. These conditions hit local journalism particularly hard — one of the sectors most affected by the crisis — and have contributed to a decline in news coverage across various regions of the country, deepening phenomena such as information deserts.

Violence based on sex

In 2025, IPYS Venezuela recorded no cross-cutting alerts of violence based on sex. This absence does not necessarily mean such aggressions did not occur; it may instead reflect underreporting, difficulties in identifying these patterns, or the prioritization of other forms of violence within a highly restrictive environment. Strengthening monitoring and analysis mechanisms is necessary to adequately capture these dynamics.

Conclusions and recommendations

The data reflect a scenario in which mounting risks drove journalists to retreat from their work in 2025. The imprisonment of 16 journalists, combined with practices such as forced disappearance and restrictions on access to legal defense, created a powerful deterrent effect across the profession as a whole. Within this context, the state cemented its role as the principal architect of a restrictive environment that systematically curtails freedom of expression.

Given this landscape, IPYS Venezuela urges strengthening independent journalistic initiatives and promoting collective protection strategies — such as digital security protocols, support networks among journalists, and rapid-response mechanisms for detentions — to sustain the practice of journalism in an environment marked by institutional harassment. **It also stresses the need to continue documenting and drawing attention to aggressions against the press, to prevent self-censorship, forced exile, and media closures from becoming the norm.**

Partnerships between national and international media outlets offer an important path for preserving access to information of public



State actors
perpetrated
72.3% of
aggressions
against the press

interest and ensuring the continuity of journalism, which is why IPYS Venezuela insists on maintaining and expanding them. Finally, IPYS Venezuela reiterates its call on Venezuelan authorities to guarantee adequate conditions for the practice of journalism and to respect the right to inform. Journalism serves an essential function in any democratic society, and its practice must not be criminalized.

Conclusions

Throughout 2025, press freedom in Latin America continued to deteriorate. Alerts documented by the VDS Network reveal that violence against journalism no longer takes the form of direct attacks alone: it now operates through the convergence of physical, digital, institutional, and discursive mechanisms that progressively restrict and constrain the practice of journalism.

State actors carried out 50.5% of alerts documented in 2025, confirming the state's role as the leading aggressor against journalism in the region. This action took shape through stigmatizing discourse, restriction on access to information, judicial harassment, arbitrary detentions, and abusive use of state power. While in authoritarian contexts such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela these practices consolidated near-total control over the media ecosystem, in formal democracies state power took less visible forms — such as stigmatizing discourse — that were nonetheless equally damaging, aimed at wearing down, delegitimizing, and indirectly censoring the press.

Lethal violence reached alarming levels in 2025: 23 journalists were murdered, an increase of nine cases over 2024. Most of these crimes occurred after prior threats or despite the existence of protective measures. Mexico cemented its position as the deadliest country in the region; Ecuador recorded an unprecedented five murders, and Peru saw four journalists murdered due to coverage of illegal economies. These killings expose the structural failures of state systems for prevention, protection, and investigation.

Physical aggressions — with 296 alerts — persisted as a mechanism of intimidation and silencing. Regional monitoring shows that covering protests, corruption, public security, or organized crime continues to carry risks to the physical safety of media workers. In several countries, physical violence — preceded by threats and sustained by impunity — functions as a deterrent that pushes journalists toward self-censorship on the most sensitive coverage.

The digital environment emerged as a new front of attack against journalism in 2025. Coordinated harassment campaigns, threats, surveillance, audiovisual manipulation, and discrediting efforts amplified the capacity to harm journalists and media outlets in several countries. This pattern shows that violence adapts quickly to new platforms and technologies, refining harassment tactics and shielding aggressors from accountability.

With 547 alerts recorded, stigmatizing discourse also established itself as a dominant form of attack and control over the press. Its impact was

especially visible amid political polarization and electoral disputes, where official discourse sought to delegitimize the press, erode public trust in its work, and frame it as a political adversary — paving the way for further aggressions.

Restriction on access to information and judicial harassment confirmed the expansion of indirect forms of censorship. Bureaucratic obstacles, exclusion from official spaces, repeated lawsuits, criminal complaints, and intimidating judicial measures weakened the press's investigative capacity and eroded trust in institutions that should be guaranteeing fundamental rights.

Finally, the spread of zones of silence, forced displacement, and self-censorship confirm that in various territories, violence no longer aims merely to punish journalists — it seeks to eliminate independent journalism altogether. Wherever the press retreats, opacity and impunity advance, and the public's right to know is eroded.

Given this landscape, the VDS Network puts forward the following recommendations to defend the right to information and guarantee the protection of press freedom and freedom of expression in the region:

1. Adopt comprehensive protection policies with real operational capacity

The murders of journalists despite being under protective measures — as occurred in Mexico and Honduras — along with the extreme-risk conditions observed in Peru, underscore the urgency of turning these systems into real tools of prevention rather than formal mechanisms lacking operational capacity. The worsening of aggressions against journalists across the region demands that executive branches design and implement comprehensive protection policies that combine effective prevention, response, and reparation measures. These policies must move beyond reactive approaches and incorporate early-warning systems, individualized risk assessments, and differentiated strategies for high-violence contexts, such as territories under the control of armed actors or during electoral processes. To ensure their effectiveness, protection mechanisms need adequate funding, specialized personnel, and the capacity to coordinate across institutions — with prosecutors' offices, security forces, and local authorities. Security forces, in turn, must operate under mandatory protocols that recognize and protect the role of journalism in contexts of tension and conflict.

2. Guarantee effective investigations to break the cycle of impunity

The persistence of murders, threats, disappearances, forced displacement, and physical aggressions demands that public

prosecutors' offices and judicial branches conduct diligent, thorough, and independent investigations into all aggressions against journalists, identifying and sanctioning both the direct perpetrators and those who order such attacks — including criminal networks and officials responsible through action or omission. Achieving this requires creating or strengthening specialized units and prosecutors' offices dedicated to crimes against freedom of expression, equipping them with technical and financial resources, functional autonomy, and targeted training. Disciplinary and oversight bodies, in turn, must monitor the performance of prosecutors and judges, ensuring accountability for negligence, unjustified delays, or cover-ups.

Across the region — and especially critically in Mexico, Ecuador, Honduras, Guatemala, Peru, and Colombia — structural reforms are urgently needed to restore public trust in the justice system and break the message of tolerance toward violence against the press.

3. Prevent the abusive use of the judicial system and reform restrictive legal frameworks

The expansion of judicial harassment as a mechanism of attrition and censorship requires legislatures to review and reform legal frameworks that facilitate the criminalization of journalism, particularly those defining defamation, contempt, and national security offenses in terms broad enough to be used abusively against the press. At the same time, judicial branches must strictly apply Inter-American and international freedom of expression standards to halt baseless proceedings, prevent disproportionate precautionary measures, and uphold the prohibition on prior censorship. Ministries of justice and judicial councils should issue guidelines that prevent courts from being used instrumentally to intimidate media outlets and journalists.

The patterns documented in Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru show that the threat lies not only in a potential conviction, but in the economic, time, and reputational cost of the judicial process itself. Addressing this practice is therefore essential not only to protect the press, but to restore the justice system's democratic function — one of guaranteeing rights, not suppressing them.

4. Address stigmatizing discourse at a structural level

The sustained rise in stigmatizing discourse from state actors — as seen in Argentina, Honduras, Costa Rica, and El Salvador — shows that these narratives are not merely rhetorical: they erode public trust in the press, increase its exposure to further aggressions, and intensify amid political polarization or electoral disputes. Reversing this trend requires executive branches — particularly heads of state, ministries, and official spokespeople — to make explicit commitments

to respect press freedom and to refrain from statements that discredit, target, or portray journalism as a public enemy. States should establish codes of conduct governing official communication about the press, mechanisms for systematically monitoring statements from institutional channels, and avenues for accountability when officials use these channels to attack the press. Ombudsman offices, electoral bodies, and human rights organizations should play an active role in documenting and tracking these practices.

5. Guarantee effective access to public information and strengthen media pluralism

The persistence of restriction on access to public information requires executive branches to effectively fulfill their obligations of proactive transparency and guarantee timely responses to requests from citizens and journalists alike. This means eliminating practices such as exclusion from press conferences, discretionary accreditation processes, systematic delays, and the incomplete disclosure of information. Legislatures, for their part, must review laws that restrict access to information and strengthen the autonomy of oversight bodies against interference from the executive branch.

In countries where systematic patterns of opacity or information blockage have been documented — including Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Uruguay, Bolivia, Cuba, and Venezuela — restoring minimum conditions of access to official sources is a priority. At the same time, states should promote policies that support the sustainability of independent, community, and Indigenous media, through transparent criteria for the distribution of official advertising and mechanisms ensuring equitable access to public funding.

6. Protect freedom of expression in digital environments and regulate the use of emerging technologies

The consolidation of the digital environment as a central space of aggression demands institutional responses that match the scale of the phenomenon. The cases documented in Chile, Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and El Salvador confirm that digital violence has ceased to be a peripheral issue and has become a structural dimension of risk for the practice of journalism.

Executive branches and relevant agencies must develop public policies aimed at preventing and sanctioning online threats, coordinated harassment campaigns, arbitrary surveillance, the exposure of personal data, and technological manipulation targeting journalists. These policies must guarantee source confidentiality, strengthen cybersecurity capacities, and offer accessible channels for reporting and technical assistance. The growing use of artificial intelligence

to fabricate false content or amplify harassment campaigns further calls for regulatory frameworks aligned with human rights standards, transparency, and traceability.

Digital platforms, for their part, must adopt effective and transparent mechanisms to identify and respond to coordinated attacks and abusive content aimed at silencing journalistic voices, and must cooperate in identifying the perpetrators.

7. Introduce protection policies for women journalists

The 2025 data confirm that women journalists face distinct forms of violence tied specifically to their sex — attacks that, beyond seeking to silence a voice, target their credibility, their bodies, and their private lives, with the aim of driving them out of the profession. States must recognize this specificity and respond accordingly. Protection mechanisms and specialized bodies should design targeted protocols for prevention, reporting, and support for journalists affected by violence based on sex, guaranteeing psychosocial support, legal assistance, and confidential reporting channels. In countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Uruguay, where high levels of alerts involving women journalists were recorded, this institutional response is especially urgent.

Media outlets, for their part, must adopt internal policies for preventing, addressing, and sanctioning these aggressions — both those occurring outside and within newsrooms.

8. Strengthen regional and international cooperation

The transnational nature of many threats against the press — exile, forced displacement, organized crime, digital campaigns, and cross-border violence — requires states, in coordination with international bodies and regional human rights systems, to strengthen permanent mechanisms of cooperation. The case of countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela — where journalism is practiced partly from exile — illustrates just how effectively banishment has become a form of censorship that transcends borders.

Developing regional platforms for early warning, information sharing, coordinated protection, and the tracking of serious cases is a priority. The international community must also strengthen its support for displaced journalists and media outlets that continue reporting from outside their countries, ensuring that exile does not strip them of their ability to report or their right to protection.

VOCES
DEL SUR

