Journalism, violence and persecution

SHADOW REPORT ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN LATIN AMERICA

2024

VOCES DEL SUR

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Red Voces del Sur is comprised of Latin American civil society organizations that work in coordination with the objective of promoting and defending freedom of the press, freedom of expression, access to information and the safety and protection of journalists. Red Voces del Sur began in 2017 with the idea of creating a common registry of press freedom violations, allowing for a comparative view of the state of these fundamental freedoms in the region.

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)

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Instituto Cubano de Libertad de Expresión y Prensa (ICLEP)

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Fundación Andina para la Observación y Estudio de Medios (Fundamedios)

El Salvador
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Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios para la Democracia Social (DEMOS)

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Mexico
Artículo 19 México y Centroamérica (ARTICLE 19)

Nicaragua
Fundación por la Libertad de Expresión y Democracia (FLED)

Paraguay
Instituto de Derecho y Economía Ambiental (IDEA)

Peru
Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS-Perú)

Uruguay
Centro de Archivos y Acceso a la Información (CAinfo)

Venezuela
Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS-Venezuela)

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Executive Summary

In 2024, violence against the press in Latin America was multifaceted, blending old and new forms of aggressions. Red Voces del Sur (Red VDS) documented 3,766 alerts in 17 countries, a figure only slightly lower than that of 2023. Rather than represent an improvement in conditions, this data reflects a reality in which violences are reinforcing self-censorship, information deserts, and the exile of journalists.

Aggressions and attacks were the primary threat, with 1,562 registered alerts, or 41.5% of the total. Within this category, physical attacks, threats, and harassment to intimidate journalists and inhibit sensitive coverage predominated. Notably, state actors were responsible for one-third of these acts, with police and security forces playing a particularly concerning role, highlighting the paradox that those tasked with protecting citizens are often the ones perpetrating the violations.

Extreme expressions of violence also persisted. During 2024, 14 journalists were murdered, which is equivalent to a death every 26 days. Moreover, there were 4 forced disappearances, 8 kidnappings, and 12 cases of torture, which is triple the number reported in 2023. Honduras, Mexico, and Colombia were the most lethal countries. Meanwhile, in Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba, censorship and systematic repression of independent media intensified, contributing to the expansion of news deserts. This silencing of media has perverse individual effects and also erodes citizens' right to be informed.

Organized crime and narco-criminal networks reinforced their roles as aggressors, with 190 distinct actors identified and 170 aggressions committed across the region, an increase from the previous year and a confirmation of the growing risk that journalists face when reporting on security, corruption and drug trafficking. Furthermore, the judicial system was increasingly used as a means of censorship. In 2024, a total of 219 civil and criminal cases were brought against journalists and the media, indicating a continued trend of legal persecution by both public and private institutions.

Stigmatizing discourse was the second most frequent form of violence, with 756 alerts recorded, or 20.1% of the year's total. More than half of these originated from state actors, including presidents and senior officials. This type of violence ultimately legitimizes hostility towards the press, creating an environment that permits further aggression. Notably, Venezuela and Argentina have been prominent examples of governments where stigmatization has been promoted from the highest levels of authority.

Red VDS documented 142 alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation, which is a cross-cutting indicator. These acts disproportionately

impacted women journalists, indigenous women communicators, and LGB journalists, who faced attacks both for their work in critical journalism and for discrimination based on their sex or sexual orientation.

The monitoring confirms that the state remains the primary violator of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information. In 2024, state actors were responsible for 49.3% of the total number of alerts. This pattern, which has persisted since the inception of Red VDS's monitoring, is true for 9 out of the 13 registered indicators, which highlights how violence against the press is exercised systematically and with high rates of impunity.

In summary, Red VDS's monitoring in 2024 confirmed that violence against journalists in Latin America is a longstanding issue. It is fueled by the intersection of state repression, organized crime, abusive litigation, and stigmatizing rhetoric from those in power. The ongoing occurrence of murders, disappearances, and torture, combined with the growth of information deserts and exile, creates an environment of extreme risk that undermines the public's right to information and further erodes democracy in the region.

Introduction

Red VDS is a 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, the network became independent, taking on its own identity as an autonomous civil society organization (CSO). Since 2017, the network has developed and implemented a common monitoring methodology based on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.10.1 of the 2030 Agenda, with the concerted aim of systematically registering violations of these fundamental rights. The 17 organizations that make up the network utilize the common methodology to monitor violence against media workers across the region. Red VDS publishes “alerts” of violence based on 13 common regional indicators and one cross-cutting indicator throughout the year, as well as an annual Shadow Report that reflects the primary findings from each country and at a regional level. Beyond their monitoring activities, the Red VDS has also established itself as a key actor in promoting freedom of expression and freedom of the press through collective advocacy initiatives at the national and international levels.

This year, Red VDS presents the seventh edition of its Shadow Report, a tool for accountability and independent analysis that seeks to enrich, complement, and contrast with official information presented in governmental reports, in accordance with SDG 16.10.1. Moreover, it offers key input for the formulation of evidence-based public policies, which seek to create more just, democratic, peaceful, and inclusive societies. The current report offers a regional diagnosis of the primary tendencies, challenges, and setbacks associated with freedom of expression and freedom of the press based on the 2024 monitoring efforts of Red VDS’s member organizations. Each national context is addressed individually, considering its local characteristics, with key recommendations provided to strengthen journalistic practice in each country.

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 partner organizations of Red VDS in 17 countries in Latin America. This monitoring—based on the parameters of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.10.1 of the 2030 Agenda—is based on a common and consensual methodology, under continuous revision and improvement, by the member organizations of Red VDS.

The methodology is centered on the monitoring and documentation of "alerts," which are instances of violence committed against the press (journalists, media workers, and communication services), and which constitute violations of freedom of expression and directly aim to obstruct, censor, or negatively impact the professional exercise of journalism. Red VDS only registers incidences in which the motive can be directly linked to the journalistic work of the affected person as alerts. Every alert is classified as one of the 13 regional indicators, with the possibility of the additional application of the cross-cutting indicator (based on sex or sexual orientation). In cases where there is more than one victim identified in the same alert, the methodology records each victim separately. For data classification, the methodology applies the "most serious crime" rule: if an incident incorporates elements of more than one category, it is coded as the most severe offense, as a means of avoiding duplicate registries.

Over its seven years of implementation, the Network's monitoring methodology has been enriched by the accumulated experience of partner organizations in diverse contexts and refined based on this collective learning. Furthermore, it follows the guidelines of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG SDG) and has been submitted for consultation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

VDS 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.

AGGRESSIONS AND ATTACKS: Violent, intimidating, or limiting actions, which can be physical or verbal, against journalists or media outlets.

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.

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURES: Private or public legal proceedings in which consequences may include fines or imprisonment, among others.

RESTRICTION OF 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.

INTERNET RESTRICTIONS: Impediment and/or limitation to freedom of press and freedom of expression on the internet through strategies that limit the use of the internet to publish or access information.

ALERT BASED ON SEX OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Evaluates whether the motive behind an attack or violation is related to the victim's sex or sexual orientation.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

For this iteration of the report, Red VDS incorporated an indicator to measure sexual violence into its methodology. This new indicator enables the registry of explicitly sexual aggressions, particularly when they take place from a position of power and seek to pressure, coerce, or force victims into sexual relations, as well as intimidate or punish based on the professional performance or sex of the victim.

Additionally the indicator of violence based on sex or sexual orientation has been added as a cross-cutting indicator. This alert is activated when a violation of freedom of the press includes a component of discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation. This indicator is not added to the overall count as an additional aggression, but rather serves to underline that a registered aggression contains an element of violence based on the sex, physical appearance, sexuality, or sexual orientation of the affected journalist.

The inclusion of both indicators allows for a more refined analysis of the dynamics of violence against journalists, revealing differentiated forms of violence faced by women and LGB individuals within their professions.

Methodological Limitations

Red VDS's monitoring methodology was built collaboratively through the exchange of experiences between partner organizations and is continuously evolving. The dynamic approach used allows for the incorporation of learnings from each implementation cycle, as well as adaptations to the specific contexts of each country. However, like any tool, it presents certain limitations that are important to recognize.

First, while the definition of the SDG 16.10.1 Indicator includes trade unionists and human rights defenders, Red VDS has opted to focus its monitoring exclusively on journalists, media workers, and media outlets.

This strategic removal allows for greater analytical precision, although it restricts the range of cases considered.

Second, as is common in the process of monitoring human rights violations, there is the possibility of underreporting. The intimidating effects of aggressions, coupled with self-censorship and fear of retaliation, can result in many victims opting out of reporting. This is particularly true for people covering dangerous or sensitive topics, people living under dictatorship, women journalists, and LGB journalists, among others. Similarly, member organizations of Red VDS are in different phases of integration of the cross-cutting indicator related to violence based on sex or sexual orientation, which could lead to additional underreporting of alerts that pertain to this form of violence.

Third, the quality and thoroughness of the data collected ultimately depends on the technical and operational capacity of each partner organization to identify, document, and validate alerts in their country. As of the release of this report, some alerts were still in the process of being validated, meaning that the data could vary in future updates. The network is proud of the diversity of its members, while also recognizing that each partner possesses distinct approaches and capacity in their monitoring.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the partner organizations use their own monitoring systems which are adapted to their local context. For this regional report, these registries are adapted to the VDS indicator methodology. This includes registering every victim as an independent alert, which differs from some local monitoring approaches. The process of adapting national registries to the shared network methodology allows for a comparative analysis at the regional level, but can generate discrepancies between the data presented in this report and the national reports created by each organization.

Chapter 1. Regional Analysis

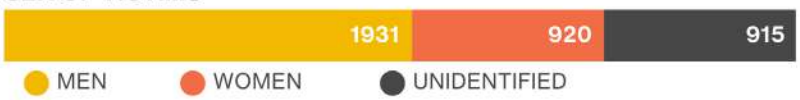
ALERTS PER COUNTRY

Regional Analysis

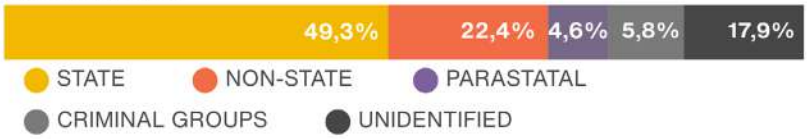
GENERAL DATA

142
ALERTS BASED ON SEX OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION

SEX OF VICTIMS



AGGRESSORS



Context and trends

Violence towards the press persists across Latin America. New patterns show that the most serious offenses are continuing, and technology is now also being used to intimidate and silence media workers. In 2024, Red VDS documented 3,766 alerts in 17 countries, a number slightly lower than the previous year (3,827), which—far from representing an improvement—reveals a shift in forms of violence, as well as an increase in self-censorship and exile.

Aggressions and attacks: the primary threat to journalists in the region

Red VDS registered 1,562 aggressions and attacks, or 41.5% of all alerts documented in 2024. This situations them as the most frequent form of violence towards the press in Latin America. This form of violence was the highest recorded in 11 of 17 countries monitored, which follows suit with previous years. The difference between this category and the second most frequent one—stigmatizing discourse, which accounted for 20.1% of alerts—is 21.4 percentage points, a gap which highlights the prevalence of aggressions and attacks compared to any other form of violence against journalists in 2024. Within this category, physical attacks, threats, and intimidation towards journalists predominated. These aggressions affect both the physical and psychological safety of the journalists, as well as intimidate and discourage coverage of controversial topics. Such is the case in Nicaragua, where, persecution by Daniel Ortega's regime has forced independent media to reduce its coverage to three topics: events, performances, and international news.

State actors perpetuated one-third of aggressions and attacks throughout 2024. Within this group, roughly 40% of alerts were linked to police or security forces, which shows a concerning level of involvement from the agencies responsible for guaranteeing citizen protection and preventing violence. Non-state actors were responsible for 22.6% of the total registered alerts. This reveals how violence against journalists is perpetrated by a wide range of actors, including state structures, criminal groups, and anonymous individuals, making it challenging to establish effective protection mechanisms due to the broad scope of risks.

The data reveals that the aggressions and attacks rarely occur in an isolated manner. Frequently they precede even more extreme violence, such as kidnapping, forced disappearance, or murder. Impunity in the face of repeated threats, physical aggressions, and campaigns of systematic harassment against journalist enables an escalation of violence leading to more serious attacks. This clear pattern was demonstrated on October 29th in Uruapan, Mexico, when unidentified armed men murdered the journalist Mauricio Cruz Solís, despite him having previously reported being threatened on multiple occasions. Similarly, on January 24th, journalist Mardonio Mejía—founder and director of Sonora Estéreo— was

A journalist was murdered every 26 days in Latin America in 2024

murdered by hitmen on motorcycles in Colombia. The crime currently remains unpunished. These cases demonstrate how impunity is not only a problem itself, but it also acts as an early warning sign of the deadly risks that journalists are exposed to.

Silencing with violence: the most extreme forms of censorship

In 2024, Red VDS registered the murder of 14 journalists, which is equivalent to a death every 26 days. Honduras, Mexico, and Colombia were again the most lethal countries for journalism, an alarming pattern which has persisted since 2022. In Honduras, all six victims were community journalists, environmentalists, and human rights defenders. Among them were Juan López and Marvin Dubón, community leaders murdered in Aguán Valley, one of the most violent areas in the country that is marked by territorial disputes, drug trafficking operations, and environmental conflicts. As of publication, none of these homicides has been solved. One of the five murder victims in Mexico, Víctor Alfonso Culebro (director of the information portal Realidades) was found with signs of violent injuries and bullet wounds in a part of Chiapas currently disputed by organized crime. In Colombia, FLIP registered the murders of three journalists, all related to investigations regarding corruption and public resource management. The case of Jaime Vásquez is emblematic; at the time of his murder, Jaime was researching irregular negotiations between businesses, public hospitals, contractors, and political actors in the region. This case reflects two aggravating factors: first, the risk of covering topics that aggravate powerful economic and/or political interests, and second, the increased vulnerability faced by journalists in “liberated” zones, or those without State protection—such as in the north of Santander, where 11.4% of all alerts in Colombia were registered. This environment of silencing fuels violence against the press, encourages self-censorship, and increases the risk of deadly consequences. In addition, eight attempted murders were registered in the region in Brazil (2), Colombia (4), and Bolivia (2). The persistence of lethal violence demonstrates the lack of guarantees of freedom of the press and of expression, as well as the risks of practicing journalism in the region.

Four (4) forced disappearances were also registered, a significant increase from the single case reported in 2023. State actors perpetuated 75% of these acts. In Mexico, organized crime groups were responsible for one disappearance. Moreover, eight kidnappings of journalists were documented, a slight decrease compared to the 13 registered the year before, yet still very concerning due to the gravity and persistence of the crime. These occurred in Mexico (5), Colombia (2) and Bolivia (1). Of the kidnappings, 62.5% were committed by criminal groups (primarily in Colombia and Mexico), 25% by unidentified actors, and 12.5% by parastatal actors. The persistence of these violent and serious alerts is aggravated by a culture of impunity in which those responsible are almost never held accountable for their actions.

Torture alerts grew at an alarming rate, with four registered 2023 and 12 in 2024, an increase of 200%. Mexico accounted for seven cases, followed by Bolivia (3) and Cuba (2). State actors were directly responsible for 66.6% of these events. Among the registered alerts in Mexico, ARTICLE 19 highlighted the case of Marco Antonio, an independent journalist specializing in political and social topics, who was kidnapped for nine hours and released with clear signs of torture. A total of 57.1% of victims in Mexico covered safety and justice topics, while 28.6% reported on social protests and 14.3% on human rights. These cases reflect how torture is used to deter journalistic coverage and restrict citizen access to crucial information.

Self-censorship, information deserts, and exile

Democracy in Latin America is facing significant challenges. According to the 2025 Varieties of Democracies report, autocracy is expanding in the region, as seven countries have lost ground in democratic ranking (including Argentina, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru). The authoritarian regimes of Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba maintain their policies of systematic persecution and repression against journalists and news outlets. As in 2023, both Nicaragua and Cuba saw a reduction in alerts in 2024, which reflects the impact of State intimidation on the press. In 2023 and 2024, State persecution in Nicaragua doubled the amount of “silent zones” (areas where independent journalism has completely disappeared), expanding from five to ten of the country’s 17 departments. The silencing is part of a process that erodes informational diversity, which is maintained by the Nicaraguan dictatorship’s almost absolute control over the media and its direct pressure on non-digital media and local news. In Venezuela, the Maduro regime’s persecution of journalists increased the amount of “news deserts,” which are urban and rural zones where communities are left with restricted access to factual, trustworthy, and diverse information. Fear, suppression, and underreporting have been normalized to the point where they are standard operating processes amongst media. The effect of these practices is evident in the news coverage, which is becoming increasingly limited and controlled.

As state persecution surges, the number of journalists being forcibly displaced and exiled in the region continues to rise. In 2024, Colombia, Mexico, and Ecuador reported 19 such cases, which were documented to raise awareness about this issue in their respective countries. In the cases where the perpetrators were identified, a staggering 95.5% were found to be criminal organizations.

Violence and narco-criminality: a dynamic on the rise

In the past few years, the advance of narco-criminal networks, armed groups, and criminal gangs have positioned Latin America as one of the primary epicenters of organized crime globally. This dynamic, denounced by Red VDS in previous reports, continues to increase violence against the

press and cultivate a climate of fear and coercion that limits independent journalism. In 2024, 190 aggressors were identified as being linked to criminal groups. Since the inception of this categorization in 2021, violence at the hands of these actors has tripled at an annual increase rate of 45%. This alarming evolution confirms the rapid ascent of criminal groups as aggressors towards the press. Colombia accounted for the majority of aggressions linked to these groups, with 122 alerts in 2024, which is significantly higher than the second country, Ecuador, which counted 37. This reveals the magnitude of the problem in Colombia.

In the category of aggressions and attacks, groups outside the law were responsible for over 150 incidents in 2024, indicating that this is their most common form of violence. A notable example occurred on January 19 in Ecuador, when an armed group stormed the TC Televisión facilities, taking employees hostage and threatening them with guns and grenades while the station was still broadcasting live. This traumatic event had a profound impact on the mental health of journalist José Luis Calderón, a well-known figure on the channel, prompting him to go into exile. The attack marked a disturbing escalation of armed violence against the press and represented a significant setback for the rights to investigate, inform, and access diverse and open information. The pervasive presence of organized crime in the region is fueling self-censorship and driving journalists into exile, as they fear retaliation for covering sensitive topics.

Prosecute to censure: an advance in civil and criminal procedures

The judicial system is increasingly being used as a tool for repression and censorship in the region, where governments and political actors deliberately manipulate justice institutions to intimidate and undermine the independent media. In 2024, Red VDS registered 217 civil and criminal procedures against journalists and media, which represents 6.2% of total alerts. This tendency tracks with a steady increase over the years: in 2023 they represented 5.2% and in 2022 only 3.9%. Colombia was the country with the highest number of alerts (45), followed by Brazil (32) and Chile (23). State actors were responsible for 61.1% of civil and criminal procedures, whereas non-state actors accounted for 35.4%, which reaffirms the prevalent role of public institutions in this type of aggression. In Brazil, for example, the mayoral candidate of Curitiba, Cristina Graeml, and her assistant, Jairo Ferreira Filho, filed two lawsuits to impede reporting on fiscal offenses connected to the latter. As in recent years, the data on this indicator reflects the persistence of the disproportionate and punitive use of the judicial system as a part of systematic state repression towards the press across the region.

Stigmatization to discredit: discourse as a weapon against the press

Stigmatizing discourse was the category with the second highest number of alerts in 2024, with 756, or 20.1% of the total. This trend has continued

In 2024, one out every two stigmatizing discourses was perpetrated by state actors

to rise over the last few years: in 2018 and 2019 it represented only 5% of the total alerts, whereas it rose to 10% in 2020, 15% in 2021, and 17% in 2022. This sustained growth confirms that the use of rhetoric to discredit and attack the press is a sustained strategy to silence journalism. The risk is aggravated when the discourse come from the highest political spheres, as they are perceived as legitimizing a permissive environment for other forms of direct and structural violence against journalists. In 2024, one out of every two stigmatizing discourses was perpetrated by state actors. Argentina stands out, where President Javier Milei was directly responsible for 64.61% of stigmatizing discourse nationally. Comparably, Nicolás Maduro accounted for 21.8% in Venezuela. These examples demonstrate that when stigmatization originates from positions of political power, it can normalize hostility towards the press and undermine the right to practice independent journalism.

The state as the center of violence

The state is the primary party responsible for violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Latin America. State actors perpetrated 49.3% of network alerts (1,681 alerts), while parastatal actors committed an additional 4.6% (157), together accounting for over half of all alerts in 2024. Since Red VDS started monitoring, the state has consistently been the leading source of violence, exceeding 49% each year (with some fluctuation) and accounting for as much as 75% of cases in 2019. State actors are the primary aggressors in 15 out of 17 countries monitored by the network. The only exceptions are Brazil and Chile, where non-state actors take the lead, and Colombia, where the greatest proportion corresponds to unidentified aggressors. State agents are the leading perpetrators of 9 of the network's indicators. In 2024, presidential figures were accounted for the greatest number of alerts amongst state actors: the president of Argentina, Javier Milei, held 30.52% of the alerts, followed by Nicolás Maduro (7.5%) and the president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele (7.1%). Aggressions and attacks constituted the most frequent form of state violence with 532 alerts, followed by restrictions to access to information (380) and stigmatizing discourse (362), all of which have a profoundly inhibiting impact on journalism.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

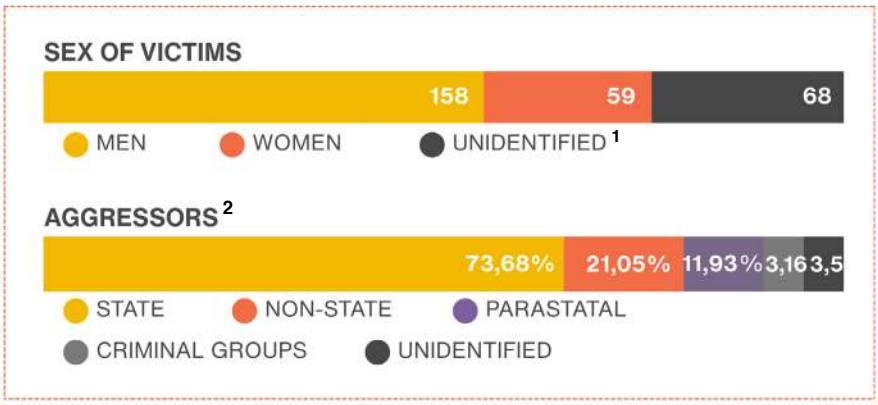
In 2024, Red VDS registered 142 transversal alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation. These cases particularly affected women, Indigenous., and LGB reporters whose journalism focused on critical or territorial issues. Red VDS documented a significant increase in this type of violence in Colombia and Brazil. The monitoring reveals that aggressions of this type intensify when journalists cover topics linked to human rights, corruption, recent historical events, the environment or violence based on sex or sexual orientation. This was particularly evident in Mexico, where online violence in the form of sexual content and death threats were

deployed to silence critical investigations, as well as in Uruguay, where journalists working on transitional justice (processes of restoration and analysis of violent acts and repression of the recent past and their current effects) were targets of sexist campaigns.

Additionally, in at least 9 out of the 17 countries monitored, public officials, legislators, and presidents used public discourse as a weapon. In Argentina, President Milei perpetrated 6 of the 7 alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation towards journalists, which included sexist remarks, allusions to sexual orientation, and degrading comments about journalism as a profession. When state actors and institutions perpetrate this form of violence, they invite revictimization, catalyze impunity, and normalize the silencing of dissident voices. Across the board, Red VDS member organizations warn that retaliation, absence of institutional mechanisms of protection, and revictimization on the part of accusers continue to be key factors in explaining self-censorship in journalism.

Chapter 2. Argentina

GENERAL DATA



1 The “Unidentified” category used by VDS is differentiated by FOPEA as “General press,” “Media outlets,” and “Organizations”.

2 The total percentage of the aggressors is over 100% because in some cases one victim had two different aggressors.

Context and trends

As predicted in 2023, tension between the press and the government intensified and deepened in 2024. President Javier Milei took office with an openly hostile posture towards journalism, which he says forms part of what he has designated "the caste". The stigmatizing discourse, restrictive measures, institutional violence, and defunding of the media point to a systematic government strategy to weaken public debate, limit freedom of expression, and restrict access to information. In this context, Foro de Periodismo Argentino (FOPEA) registered the second highest number of incidents since beginning their monitoring in 2008, surpassed only in 2013. In 2024, they documented 179 cases of attacks on freedom of expression impacting 285 victims, which resulted in the registration of 285 alerts according to Red VDS's methodology. This is an increase of 85.1% compared to 2023, when FOPEA measured 154 victims (alerts) in 117 incidents.

State actors were responsible for 73.68% of alerts in 2024, which represents an increase of 32.78% from the 40.9% registered in 2023. The president perpetrated 87 of the 285 alerts, making him the primary aggressor. Similarly, a significant increase in aggressions committed by state security forces was observed, shifting from 18 alerts in 2023 to 48 in 2024, or an increase of 166%. This trend reached unprecedented levels in 2024, with journalists attacked in public spaces simply for carrying microphones with identifiable logos. This trend shows how state violence perpetuates a climate in which distinct forms of violence proliferate against the press.

Stigmatizing discourse represented 45.6% (130) of the registered alerts in 2024, an exponential leap from the 60 alerts registered in 2023. President Javier Milei committed 64.61% (84) of these alerts, using his platform to try to discredit media and journalism without any ideological distinctions. Aggression was on full display in public statements, social media posts, and responses—primarily through X—which create a toxic ecosystem where journalism is attacked and stigmatized as the "enemy of the people" or "enemy of freedom." A notable example of this was a post by Milei on April 10th, titled "Freedom of Expression for All," where he accused journalism of having "become corrupted, dirtied, and having prostituted itself in pursuit of bribes and official advertising."

The Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA) accounted for 60.4% of alerts across the country, or 172 cases. State actors perpetrated 140 of these, 75.58% of which were stigmatizing discourse. Furthermore, CABA was the jurisdiction with the highest number of aggressions and attacks (46 alerts, or 47.9% of the country's total). One notable example occurred on February 2nd, when security forces cracked down on the press while they were covering the protests outside Congress, where the debate on the Bases Law, a major government project, was taking place.

Furthermore, the government took concrete steps to restrict fundamental rights. One of the most concerning of these was an amendment to the Law

President Milei perpetrated 6 out the 7 alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation

of Access to Public Information, which drastically reduced its scope after journalistic criticism about the use of public resources in the presidential residence. The decision represented a setback in transparency and weakened both investigative journalism and social oversight. In this regard, FOPEA registered 30 alerts of restrictions on access to information, 13 more than in 2023.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, FOPEA recorded 7 alerts linked to violence based on the sex or sexual orientation of journalists, more than double that of 2023 (3). The country's president, Javier Milei, perpetrated 6 of these alerts, which included comments with sexual connotations, references to sexual orientation, and attempts and discrediting the journalistic profession. One noteworthy case occurred when Milei publicly attacked the journalists María O'Donnell and María Laura Santillán on his X account, using misogynist and sexist phrases to stigmatize their work and stifle their credibility. These violent acts have tangible consequences in the daily lives of journalists and nurture an environment of hostility towards their profession.

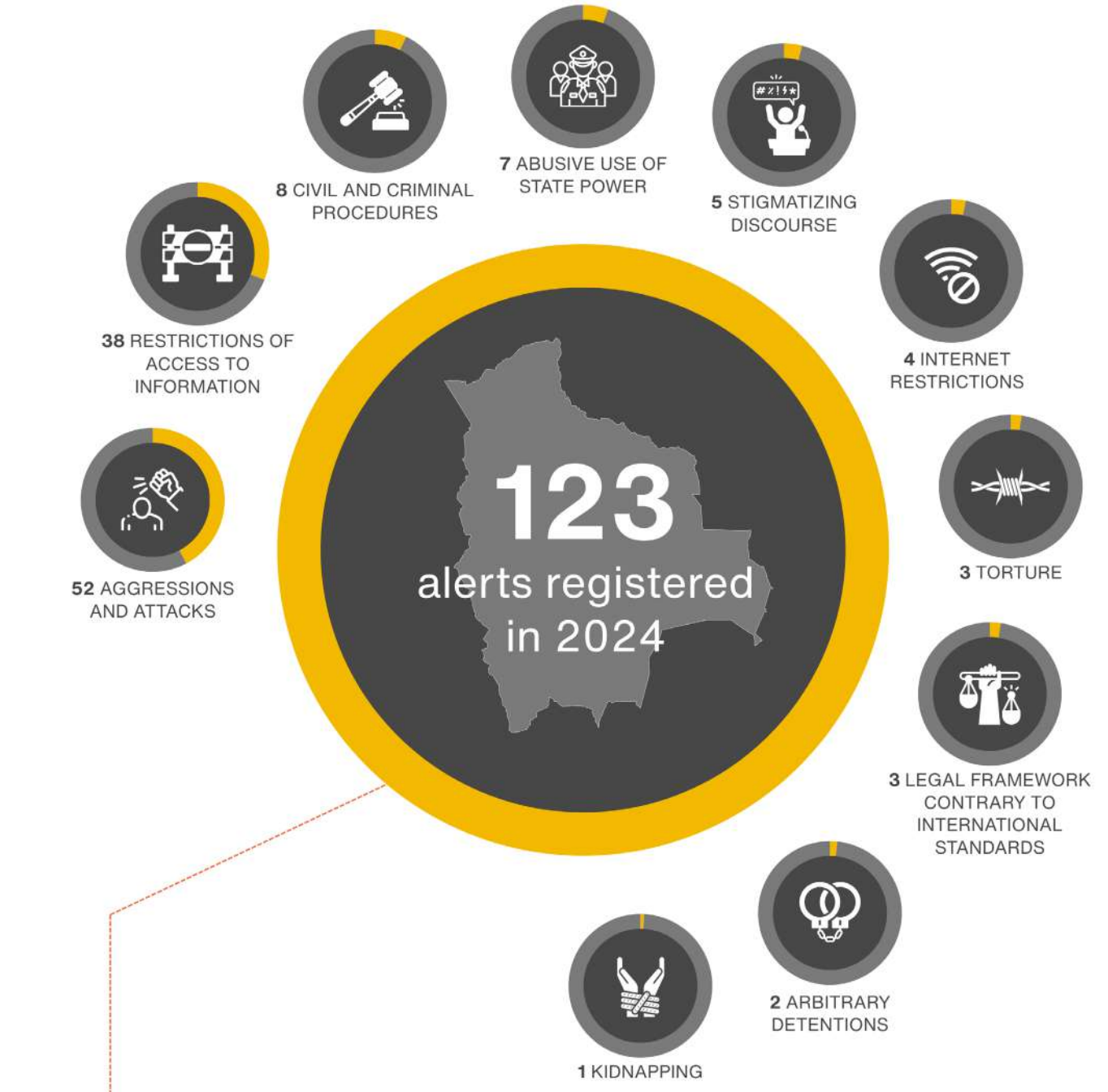
Conclusions and recommendations

Milei's first year in office was marked by an increase in hostility toward journalism, especially the increased use of stigmatizing discourse by the nation's Executive Branch and social media accounts aligned with the administration. In light of this, there is an urgent need to strengthen alliances between civil society organizations, media outlets, journalist groups, and human rights defenders that began in 2023. On the other hand, it is of utmost importance to guarantee adherence to the Law of Access to Public Information, and to promote its adoption in the provinces that do not yet have this legislation in place. Defending freedom of expression does not only concern journalists: without it, society's right to be informed and actively participate in democratic life is at stake.

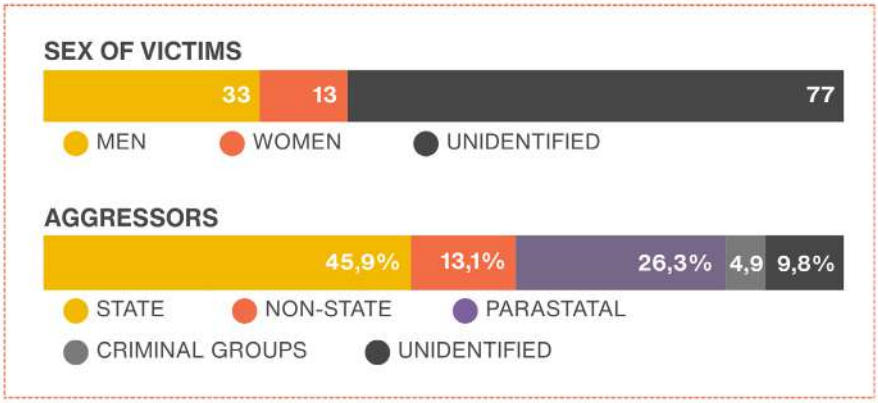
It's also crucial to promote a sustained sensitization campaign about the impact of violence against the press, since a free press is essential to democracy and individual rights. The intense pressure on journalists undermines the quality of information, fosters self-censorship, and erodes their ability to hold those in power accountable.

Chapter 3. Bolivia

GENERAL DATA



4 ALERTS BASED ON SEX OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION



Context and trends

In 2024, freedom of press in Bolivia continued to be suppressed in a context that has been intensifying for 19 years. The situation is marked by political conflict, growing judicial harassment, the economic stifling of the media, and impunity that is continually reproduced and legitimized by the state. The polarization between the ruling party and the opposition, along with internal struggles within the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), have deepened political conflict in Bolivia, exposing journalists to risky situations. In this context, self-censorship has emerged as one of the most urgent concerns highlighted by the Asociación Nacional de la Prensa (ANP), which represents Bolivia's main newspapers.

In 2024, 52 physical and verbal attacks against media workers were recorded, including confiscation of equipment, detentions, and death threats. Adding to these, there was one kidnapping, three cases of torture, and two attempted murders. Among the most serious incidents were threats to burn journalists alive that were reporting on roadblocks organized by supporters of former President Evo Morales in October and November. The protests demanded an end to the investigation into alleged human trafficking against the former president. Among the victims are journalist Josué Chubé, who was detained, threatened, and tortured while covering the roadblocks in the town of Mairana, on the route between Cochabamba and Santa Cruz; and Jurgen Guzmán Ribera, a reporter for the Unitel television network, who suffered an attempted murder and arbitrary detention by protesters while reporting on the events along with his team on a highway connecting the departments of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. These attacks highlight the level of violence and risk journalists confront when working in areas facing social conflict.

In this context, the state maintained its role as the main perpetrator of attacks against the press, responsible for 45.9% of all alerts and reinforcing an increasingly hostile environment for journalism. During 2024, ANP recorded 7 alerts for abuse of state power and 3 legal frameworks contrary to international standards. The denial of access to public information stood out, rising 633% compared to the previous year (6 alerts in 2023, 38 alerts in 2024). The government of President Luis Arce has systematically used these practices to intimidate journalists and media outlets that oppose it, thereby restricting the public's right to information.

ANP also noted a concerning increase in civil and criminal proceedings against journalists, with 8 active cases, double the number in 2023. This uptick grew hostility against journalists and reinforced the use of the justice system as a censorship tool. In several cases, judicial authorities attempted to violate the Press Law's protection of professional confidentiality by requiring journalists to reveal their sources in court. A representative case was that of sports journalist Jaime Vega, summoned by a Santa Cruz judge to testify as a witness in a defamation case.

Lastly, ANP continues to warn about impunity, inaction, and negligence by authorities tasked with investigating and punishing acts of violence

ANP registered a 633% increase in restrictions to access to information in comparison to 2023

against the press. Cases such as those of journalists Jorge Huanca and Armando Montecinos—who were attacked while reporting on San Pedro Hill in Oruro—and that of cameraman Joel Orellana and his assistant Miguel Ángel Rivero—assaulted by a police officer while covering protests over the arrest of then-Governor Fernando Camacho of Santa Cruz—reflect this deliberate lack of protection. The kidnapping and torture of six journalists on October 28, 2021 remains in a drawn-out judicial process with no sanctions for those responsible to date. This impunity is being used as a disciplinary mechanism to deter independent journalism, which fosters self-censorship, normalizes violence, and directly undermines freedom of expression.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, ANP recorded 13 alerts against women journalists, of which 4 were classified as being based on sex or sexual orientation. The organization noted that inequality and violence against women journalists and members of the LGB community intensifies when intersected with their ethnic identities and social classes.

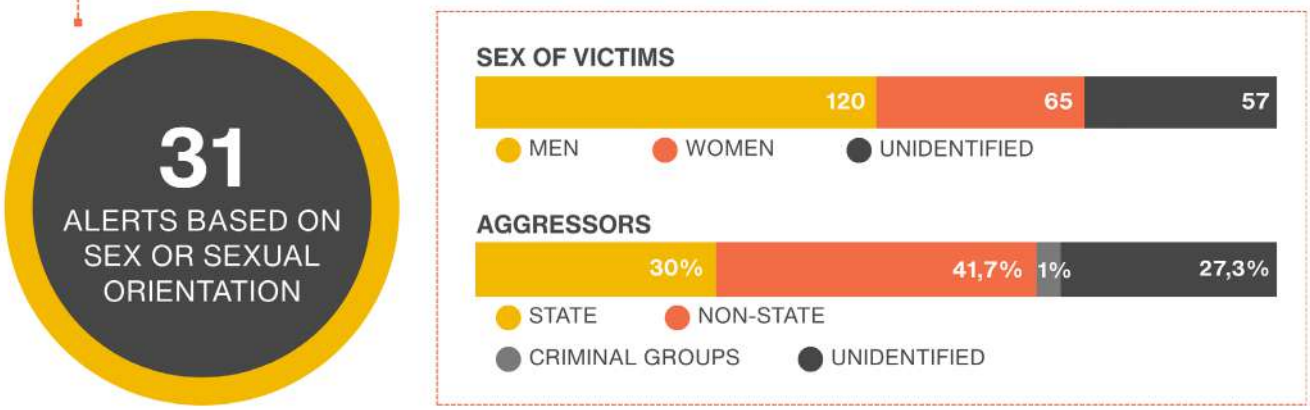
Conclusions and recommendations

Freedom of the press in Bolivia has been undergoing increasing and systematic repression that intensified in 2024 due to political conflict and state impunity, ultimately resulting in an even more dangerous environment for journalists. The state, far from protecting the press, positions itself as its main aggressor, using legal and coercive mechanisms to silence critical voices. Furthermore, the lack of justice in the face of violence fosters self-censorship and profoundly erodes freedom of expression, putting the fundamental rights of journalists, media workers, and independent media outlets at risk.

In response to this worrying situation, ANP urgently calls on citizens to actively defend the media and support journalism. It is essential to place value on the work of independent journalists and media outlets, recognizing their indispensable role in providing access to truthful and pluralistic information. Likewise, ANP demands that all social and political sectors reject all forms of censorship, intimidation, and repression that limit freedom of expression. Protecting journalism is not just a sectoral concern, but a collective responsibility that is essential for safeguarding democracy.

Chapter 4. Brazil

GENERAL DATA



Context and trends

In 2024, during the second year of Lula da Silva's administration, Brazil recorded a 34.6% decrease in freedom of the press violations, with 242 alerts compared to 370 in 2023. However, this reduction does not necessarily reflect an improvement in the journalistic environment. According to the Associação Brasileira de Jornalismo Investigativo (Abraji), certain forms of violence have intensified, and aggressors have shifted and spread to committing violence in virtual settings. This trend is coupled with a sustained increase in legal prosecution and sexist violence.

Following the political tension and attempted coup that marked the transition away from the Bolsonaro administration in 2023, a significant shift in the profile of those responsible for attacks against the press occurred. The participation of state actors—who in 2023 were the main aggressors, accounting for 51.9% of alerts—decreased to 30.2% in 2024. This reduction was especially noticeable in the use of stigmatizing discourse by the state, which dropped from 72.1% in 2023 to 18.1% in 2024, or 54%. In line with this trend, an increase was observed in attacks led by non-state actors (39%) and by unidentified sources (42.9%), revealing a transition from the state to citizens as the primary perpetrators of aggressions against the press.

Non-state actors accounted for 41.7% of documented alerts. At least 20 alerts involved supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro, as well as candidates and partners of the Liberal Party (PL). Six alerts linked to right-wing candidate Pablo Marçal (PRTB) and 2 alerts tied to supporters of the Workers' Party (PT) were also recorded. In cases where the sources of the aggressions are known, the data show that most violence comes from the radical right.

The digital environment established itself as a particularly aggressive space toward media workers. Of the 94 assaults and attacks recorded in 2024, 31.9% were digital threats and cyberattacks, an 8.4% increase compared to the 23.5% measured in 2023. The increase is primarily due to digital harassment, which is characterized by direct physical threats and/or the exposure of journalists' personal data on social media. This pattern shows a liberal and widespread use of violence, where the state's role as a direct aggressor decreases, and citizens become key players through virtual platforms, emboldened by the legitimacy they've gained from previously normalized institutional violence. This process transforms the digital space into a stage for violence against journalism in Brazil, with a high potential for escalation if current trends persist.

As for civil and criminal proceedings against the press, there has been a sustained increase over the past three years, with an average yearly increase of 5.12%. In 2022, they represented just 1.9% of total alerts; a year later, the figure quadrupled to 8.1%, and in 2024, it climbed again to 13.22%. In the last year, 71.2% of judicial proceedings (23) were initiated by state actors: political authorities, mayors, and candidates for public office. One case involved Cristina Graeml, mayoral candidate of

71.2% of judicial proceedings were initiated by state actors

Curitiba, and her assistant, Jairo Ferreira Filho, who filed two lawsuits seeking to prevent media coverage of alleged financial crimes. These types of actions reflect the use of the judicial system to serve political and economic interests as a means of intimidation and censorship.

This dangerous practice extended to the sports world. During 2024, club owners filed civil and criminal lawsuits to silence and even imprison journalists investigating issues related to corruption in soccer. This demonstrates a blatant form of persecution and control that erodes freedom of expression and independent journalism in the country.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, Abraji recorded 31 alerts linked to victims' sex or sexual orientation: 71% stigmatizing discourse (sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, or biphobic); 22.6% attacks and aggressions with sexist narratives; and 6.4% incidents of sexual violence. Although men technical represent the majority of victims, violence against female journalists is grossly underreported due to fear of reprisals, which hides the magnitude of the issue. The flagrancy was notable in sports coverage, especially soccer: in 2024, there were 4 alerts where fans were pointed to as the aggressors.

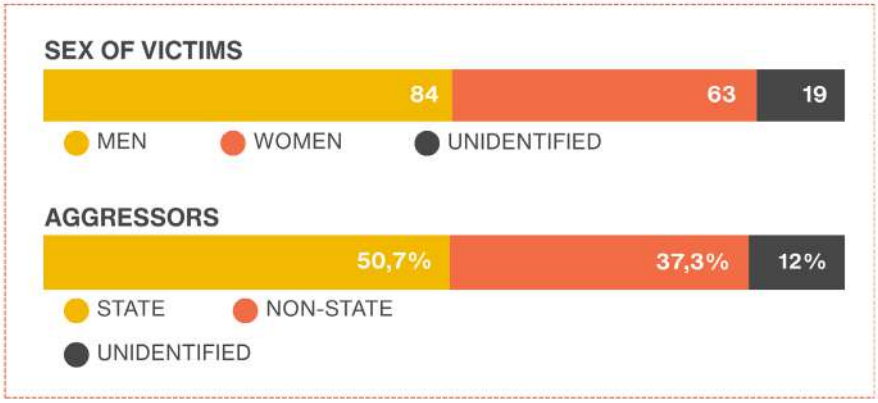
Conclusions and recommendations

Violence against the press in Brazil did not recede; rather, it reconfigured. The drop in alerts masks a dangerous shift in the profile of aggressors, moving from state to non-state actors. Online space has established itself as an arena of impunity and cruelty, amplified by new perpetrators with seemingly unlimited reach. The prosecution of the press has also grown, used as censorship by political authorities and endorsed by judges. Structural and sexist prejudices that seek to exclude pluralism in media persist. If these trends are not reversed, the country runs the risk of normalizing an ecosystem where reporting carries a high personal, collective, and democratic cost.

Abraji calls for the guarantee of unrestricted access to information and the strengthening of policies of protection against judicial harassment and online violence. They urge the state to commit to an environment of informational diversity, and for digital platforms to adopt effective measures against coordinated attacks, with streamlined channels for reporting and removing abusive language. They recommend that media outlets implement security protocols for sensitive coverage and training in digital and physical protection, as well as provide legal and psychological support for journalists who are victims of violence and harassment.

Chapter 5. Chile

GENERAL DATA



Context and trends

Chile experienced a 48.21% increase in alerts of violence against the press, rising from 112 in 2023 to 166 in 2024. This shows how violence against media workers has normalized generally, and is not merely an isolated reaction to social protests, such as those in 2019. Additionally, three main trends were identified: 1) the use of the judicial system as a tool for intimidation and censorship, 2) the normalization of stigmatizing discourse by public figures, and 3) an exponential increase in violations in digital spaces.

Observatorio del Derecho a la Comunicación (ODC) recorded a 130% increase in civil and criminal proceedings against journalists, rising from 10 alerts in 2023 to 23 in 2024. The majority were directed against local or community media outlets, such as *El Ciudadano*, *Radio Aconcagua*, *Radio Isla de Chiloé*, and 33 Segundos. Criminal proceedings accounted for 82.6%, despite the Chilean Press Law establishing a specific mechanism for clarification and rectification. This practice persists because libel and slander remain classified as crimes that can lead to prison sentences and fines. The use of criminal jurisdiction in cases involving journalistic coverage is abusive and disproportionate, considering the asymmetric power relations that exist between journalists from local and independent media outlets and authorities and business owners.

In 2024, 24 alerts were recorded for stigmatizing discourse against the press. Political figures were responsible for 24%, and 54.2% of victims were women, confirming that attempts at public discrediting is a mechanism of violence directed at women. While men typically receive one or two instances of harassment, women face up to four different forms of abuse. Two cases starkly reflect this: a reporter for an independent digital media outlet and another from a traditional national outlet suffered at least seven violations each, including threats, legal proceedings, digital restrictions, and, in one case, the dissemination of fake or altered pornographic material. Although attacks against women are fewer in numerical terms, their repetition, intensity, and format (often online) reflect a particular virulence that seeks to punish, silence, and psychologically exhaust women journalists.

Internet restrictions increased significantly compared to 2023, rising from 4 alerts to 11 in 2024. This escalation was primarily reflected in cyberattacks and hacking, exclusively affecting journalists and independent media outlets. Some of the victims of these attacks covered environmental conflicts, ethnic issues, or territorial disputes, particularly those linked to the Mapuche people. The hacking of *Radio Lafkenche*'s Instagram account and the website *Mapuexpress* were examples of how these attacks deliberately target alternative media outlets that critique the actions of political and economic authorities.

Assaults and attacks remained the indicator with the highest number of alerts (65), trending with the previous year. Within this category, physical attacks—including beatings and the use of tear gas, water cannon

ODC recorded a 130% increase in civil and criminal proceedings against journalists

vehicles, and projectiles against journalists and media teams—stand out. Among the most serious incidents was a tear gas attack on reporters at a demonstration in Temuco, and the wounding by gunfire of a cameraman while they worked in the Lo Valledor Market, Metropolitan Region.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, alerts for violence based on sex or sexual orientation significantly increased, going from a single documented case in 2023 to six cases in the last year. These alerts include stigmatizing discourse (2), aggressions and attacks (2), and online violence (2). ODC warns that women journalists are particularly vulnerable to repetitive, sexist attacks that often face greater public exposure.

Stigmatizing discourse from public figures, such as congressional leaders, can trigger new waves of violence such as harassment, threats, or stalking. A notable development was the novel emergence of violence through the use of fake or altered images. This development introduces a new form of digital attack, which underlines the vulnerability of women journalists in hostile online environments.

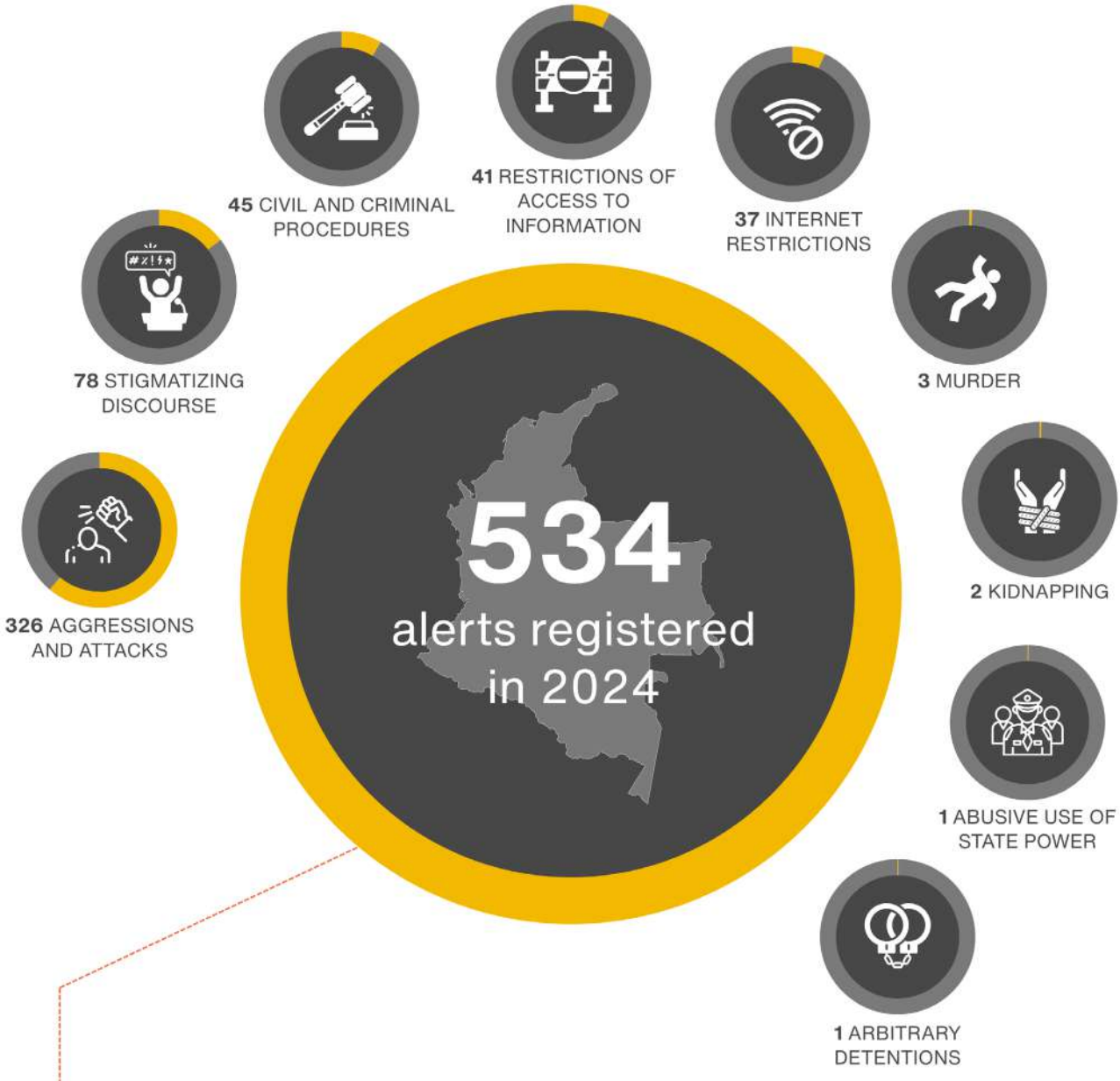
Conclusions and recommendations

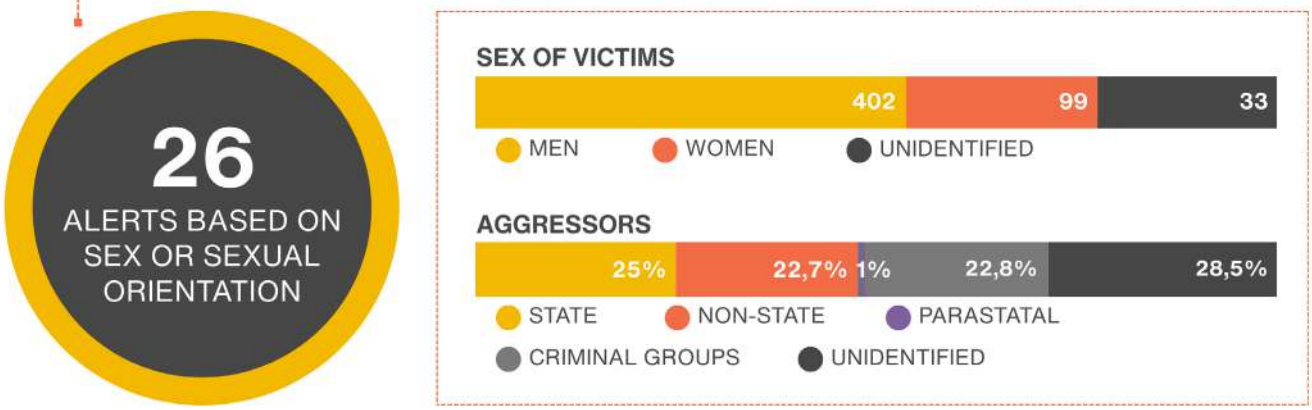
In Chile, the environment for journalism is becoming increasingly marked by violence, which is evolving into a normalized and multifaceted phenomenon. The excessive and disproportionate use of the judicial system, derogatory rhetoric from public figures and party supporters, and the proliferation of digital attacks—particularly against women—are all severely constraining journalistic work. This underscores the fragility of current freedom of expression protections and necessitates a robust institutional response that tackles violence and the underlying structures that perpetuate it.

ODC warns of a worrying decline in freedom of the press if current trends continue, and urges the state to develop public policies and mechanisms to protect the press, prioritize aligning regulatory frameworks to international standards, and to prevent legal concepts of libel and slander from being used as mechanisms to control, punish, and censor the press. ODC also stressed the role that media organizations should play in preventing risks when journalists cover potentially hazardous stories and offer support to those who face judicial or digital harassment.

Chapter 6. Colombia

GENERAL DATA





Context and trends

Lethal violence against the press in Colombia intensified in 2024, revealing the critical nature of the situation and a complete lack of protection for journalists. Illegal armed groups—drug traffickers, criminal gangs, and dissidents of the Fuerzas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)— intensified their attacks, reaching unprecedented levels of violence over the past decade, while public officials replicated stigmatization, judicial harassment, and online attacks from official channels, fueling a hostile environment. As a result, Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP) documented 534 alerts, a 10.3% increase compared to 2023. Aggressions and attacks accounted for 61% of the total.

In the last year, FLIP recorded the murders of 3 Colombian journalists, all related to investigations of corruption and the misuse of public funds. A landmark case is that of Jaime Vásquez, who was investigating irregular activities by companies, public hospitals, contractors, and political actors in the department at the time of his murder. The case highlights two aggravating factors: firstly, the risk of covering issues that challenge economic or political power, and secondly, the vulnerability of certain areas that lack state protection, such as Norte de Santander, which accounted for 11.4% of all alerts and is effectively a "liberated" zone. These geographic areas of restricted expression amplify violence against the press, fosters self-censorship, and increases the risk of death.

Armed criminal groups committed 122 aggressions and attacks and 2 kidnappings, representing a 51.8% increase compared to 2023. These aggressors included criminal gangs; the insurgent guerrilla organization, ELN; and FARC-EP dissidents such as the Estado Mayor Central (EMC). Journalist Juan Alejandro Loaiza was kidnapped despite being protected under the national protection mechanism; he was detained by an armed group in Huila for refusing to publish information in their interest. In Cúcuta, the capital of Norte de Santander, the AK-47 criminal organization executed "Plan Pistola," aimed at targeting journalists who reported on their activities. These incidents suggest a resurgence of the tactics used during the most turbulent periods of the Colombian conflict, with journalists once again finding themselves in the crossfire. Armed groups appear to be attempting to control the narrative, manipulate information, and limit the influence of their opponents, all while maintaining their own position amidst rivalries and in power struggles.

State officials remain the principal perpetrators of stigmatizing discourse against the press, representing nearly 90% of alerts in 2024. President Gustavo Petro exemplified this pattern when attempting to discredit journalist, María Jimena Duzán, after she published an investigation into irregular government contracts, taking to X to accuse her of trying to "destroy the government."

Judicial harassment rose to the third most frequent type of alert this year. In 2024, 45 civil and criminal proceedings were recorded, of which 51.1%

Armed criminal groups committed 122 aggressions and attacks in 2024

were initiated by state officials. Notable cases include accusations filed by the mayor of Cartagena, Dumek Turbay, against journalists investigating corruption within his administration, and attempts by the mayor of Paipa, Germán Ricardo Camacho, to stop a critical publication in media outlet *Amigos de Paipa*. These cases exemplify how the judicial system is used to repress journalistic expression, hide information, and promote censorship in Colombia.

The online space has emerged as a particularly hostile and aggressive environment for the Colombian press. This year, 37 internet restrictions were documented, including account blocks, cyberattacks, smear campaigns, and arbitrary content removal. More than half of these attacks (56.7%) were occurrences of arbitrary content removal, followed by cyberattacks (27%) and content removal requests (8.1%), transforming the digital world into a coercive environment.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, FLIP documented 26 alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation. Aggressions and attacks represented 84.6% of registered cases. Journalist Sandra Chindoy, an anchor and reporter for *La Voz del Territorio*, suffered digital harassment in the form of over 100 stigmatizing messages, insults, and racist and misogynistic comments targeting her work, identity, and appearance. These attacks aim to intimidate and silence journalists, particularly when reporting on sensitive topics such as violence against women, environmental issues, and territorial conflicts.

Conclusions and recommendations

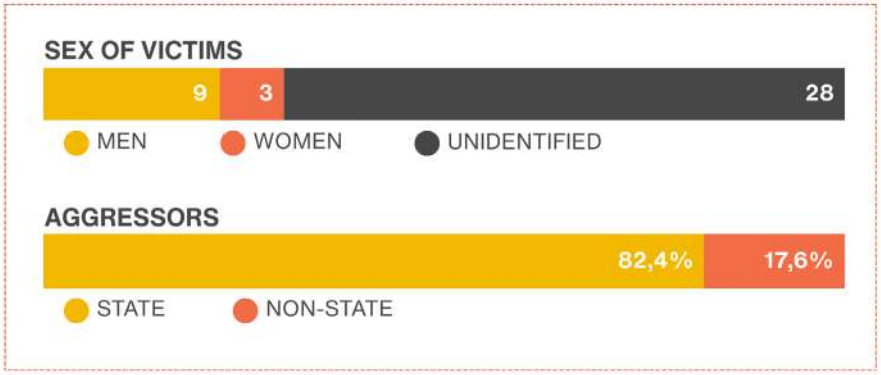
In 2024, deadly violence against journalists in Colombia escalated, with killings, kidnappings, and forced displacements underscoring the extreme danger of investigating topics that threaten political or economic interests. Armed groups stepped up their attacks, while the government continued to engage in practices of stigmatization and judicial harassment, further deteriorating the environment for journalism and posing a threat to democracy and press freedom.

FLIP warns that the state's response remains inadequate and delayed, leaving the press exposed to threats that lead to self-censorship, forced displacement, and exile. It calls for prioritizing the protection of journalists in areas where armed groups are gaining strength, developing effective strategies to prevent attacks by illegal actors, and strengthening protocols around elections and protests to ensure safe conditions for journalists, without criminalizing freedom of expression. Finally, FLIP demands that public officials cease stigmatizing journalists and that it hold aggressors accountable for their crimes, ultimately affording justice to victims.

Chapter 7. Costa Rica

GENERAL DATA

No cross-cutting alerts based on sex or sexual orientation were registered



Context and trends

According to Instituto de Prensa y Libertad de Expresión (IPLEX), 2024 marks the year when violence against the press became institutionalized, with the state playing a significant role as the primary agent legitimizing and perpetuating these violations, thereby normalizing and entrenching a culture of hostility towards journalists. The proportion of state actors committing violence against the press increased steadily, with 54.5% in 2022, 75% in 2023, and 82.4% in 2024. In a mere two years, the number of alerts has tripled, indicating a drastic regression in the right to freedom of expression and a surge in anti-press activity, largely fueled by the Executive Branch. This is a troubling development in a country that was once regarded as a beacon of democracy and fundamental freedoms in the region.

Restrictions on access to information became one of the main forms of harassment towards journalists, accounting for 35% of alerts in 2024. Among the most serious incidents is the arbitrary exclusion of journalists from the executive branch's press conferences, a practice that seeks to control the official narrative and turn what should be public information into a political game.

Additionally, there were 14 alerts for the abusive use of state power, an indicator that reflects how political authorities use state institutions to control journalism and public information. The exploitation of the Sistema Nacional de Radio y Televisión (SINART), a federal entity, to manipulate state guidelines; the firing of press workers from the presidential office; and the institutional harassment of Acontece.co.cr by the Municipality of Heredia are just a few examples of the ways in which the government has sought to exert control over the media and suppress freedom of expression.

Stigmatizing discourse remained prevalent in 2024, 66.7% of which came from the President of the Republic. When those in power spread these narratives, they legitimize violence, breed permissiveness, and invite diverse expressions of violence against the press. The emergence of aggressions and attacks as new modality proves this point; two years ago, there were zero cases, whereas six were recorded in 2024.

Evidence of this lies in the alerts of aggressions and attacks, a phenomenon that did not exist two years ago, with 6 documented cases in 2024. Among them was an attack by a supporter of the president who beat a journalist in front of the cameras as he was interviewing a former congresswoman, an unprecedented act which had no legal consequences.

In 2024, the profile of victims broadened, reflecting a shift in repression strategies. The persecution extended to key players within the media ecosystem's structure, including media directors, content creators, and particularly photojournalists. The executive branch was responsible for threats intended to prevent the photographic or audiovisual recording of events considered sensitive by the government, indicating a growing trend

Restrictions on access to information became a primary means of harassment against journalism

of censorship aimed at blocking journalistic documentation of situations that could put the government in a negative light, and undermining the media's editorial autonomy.

Another form of coercion exercised by the state was the withholding of government funds for media. An illustrative example occurred when Kölbi (a state-owned company of ICE) removed its funding from one of the most popular parody and satire programs in the country, El Chinamo, broadcasted on Channel 7. The decision—the result of the program's humorous critiques of the government—constitutes a form of state pressure in which authorities use government funding to reward media outlets considered sympathetic and punish those perceived as critical.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, no alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation were recorded in Costa Rica. IPLEX raises the possibility that this type of aggression is underreported, motivated by fear of reporting, lack of institutional support, or the absence of protection mechanisms. These factors exacerbate the vulnerability of women and diverse populations who work in contexts marked by unequal power relations, especially in rural areas.

Likewise, self-censorship increases when the main aggressors are powerful male figures, such as presidents, ministers, or senators. A concerning incident occurred in 202, when President Rodrigo Chaves dismissed a journalist during a press conference to avoid answering her question, making a comment about her watch. This behavior set a precedent for the public humiliation of women journalists, which in turn leads to self-censorship as a means of protection.

Conclusions and recommendations

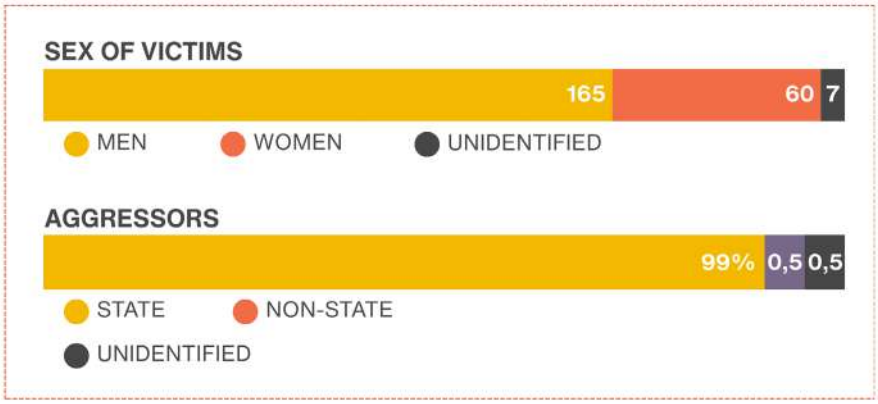
The situation in Costa Rica in 2024 confirms that the country is regressing democratically, as evidenced by the institutionalization of violence against journalism and the role of the state as the main aggressor, which erodes fundamental freedoms. Restrictions on access to information, the abusive use of public resources, financial harassment, and anti-press hate speech from President Rodrigo Chaves reveal the politicization of the press. Costa Rica, once considered a regional beacon for freedom of expression, is now at a critical juncture in which attempts at silencing the media has become state policy.

According to IPLEX, it is imperative to defend free, critical, and independent journalism as an essential pillar of democratic life. It urges the state to strengthen channels for reporting hate speech by institutions and public officials; review legal frameworks to guarantee greater protection for freedom of expression and establish effective prevention and sanction mechanisms; and strengthen digital literacy as a tool to counter misinformation and stigmatizing discourse, thus enhancing citizens' abilities to identify and negate hateful narratives. Similarly, IPLEX calls on civil society organizations to better document violence against the press, considering the diversity of territories and actors involved.

Chapter 8. Cuba

GENERAL DATA

No cross-cutting alerts based on sex or sexual orientation were registered



Context and trends

In Cuba, 232 alerts were recorded in 2024, reflecting a 53.2% reduction compared to the 496 documented in 2023. El Instituto Cubano de Libertad de Expresión y Prensa (ICLEP) attributes this decrease to the forced exodus of independent journalists and communicators, who have left the country due to systematic persecution and the structural collapse of independent journalism on the island. Those who remain live with fear and self-censorship; those forced to emigrate do so in precarious conditions and with irregular immigration status, and very few are able to sustain their work in exile.

Repression has evolved into a structural strategy to silence journalists. State actors were responsible for 99% percent of alerts, with security forces being the primary means of repression, accounting for (63.2%). These structural attacks include mechanisms such as citations, threats, arrests, and intimidation, which effectively operate as instruments of political control. The Cuban Telecommunications Company S.A. (ETECSA) was also a significant contributor, responsible for nearly one third of alerts (28.4%), solidifying its role in digital and information control. Furthermore, the courts, aligned with the Executive Branch, impose sanctions and deny due process, transforming the judicial system into a suppressive tool.

The continued practice of imprisonment without due process remains a mechanism of persecution that flagrantly violates fundamental human rights. In 2024, ICLEP documented 67 arbitrary arrests, many of which were accompanied by threats and physical aggression, as well as 2 cases of torture and 8 judicial proceedings. Notably, this marks an increase from 2023, when there were no recorded judicial proceedings. Currently, at least three journalists remain detained without due process: Carlos Michel Morales Rodríguez, Yeris Curvelo Aguilera, and José Gabriel Berrenechea Chávez. These actions not only infringe upon the right to freedom of expression but also deny due process and compromise the physical and psychological wellbeing of the victims.

Censorship is prevalent in the digital sphere. In 2024, 63 internet restrictions were documented, 90% of them attributed to ETECSA, the state-owned telecommunications monopoly. ETECSA played a central role in intentional and selective service outages, including the blocking of digital fact-checking media outlets, the disconnection of journalists during international interviews, cyberattacks against critical reporting, the blocking of independent websites, and cyberbullying. These restrictions are not random, but rather reveal a deliberate and escalating use of technological control, particularly on sensitive dates such as July 11. These restrictions aim to prevent coverage of protests and preserve state narratives.

With journalism largely stifled, an alarming pattern has emerged: the expansion of repression to citizens, who now face criminal penalties for social media posts. ICLEP warns of a shift in repression toward individuals with no ties to the media, who now face arrests, lawsuits, and prison

ICLEP recorded 67 arbitrary detentions of journalists in 2024

sentences for their online posts. What was once punishable by fines now results in arrests and lawsuits. The case of Sulmina Martínez Pérez, accused of contempt and crimes against the constitutional order for a Facebook post, reflects this escalation, with the prosecution seeking a 10-year sentence. Similarly, nurse Arony Yanko García Valdés was sentenced to one and a half years in prison for "aggravated contempt" after sharing a meme. These cases demonstrate how the regime is criminalizing online expression among citizens. The shift confirms that the state is no longer solely targeting independent journalism, but also any criticism emanating from civilians.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, ICLEP did not report any alerts based on sex or sexual orientation. However, it warns that this does not indicate the absence of risks for historically marginalized populations, but rather a lack of visibility and dedicated documentation.

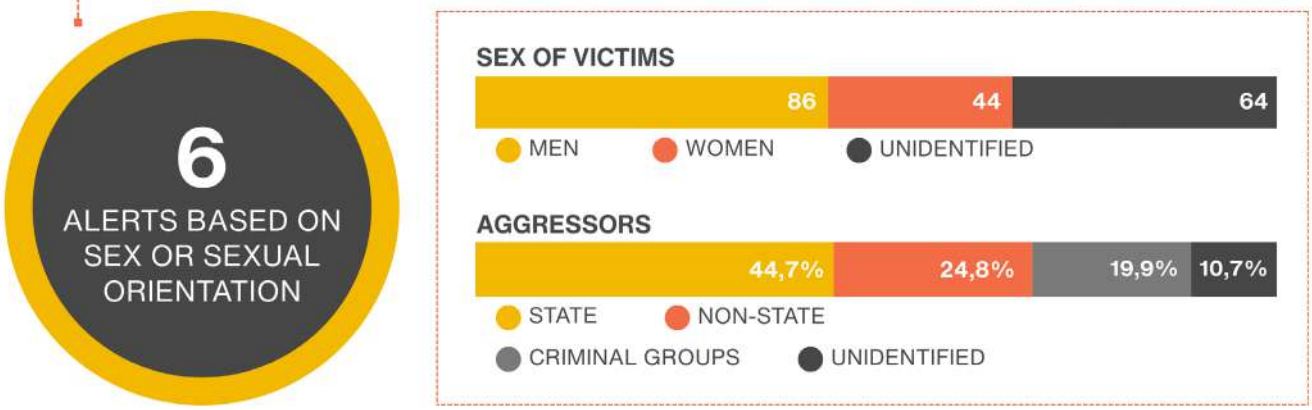
Conclusions and recommendations

The situation in Cuba reveals a deep-seated and systemic crisis for human rights and press freedom. According to data and patterns documented by ICLEP, the exercise of freedom of expression continues to be met with persecution, imprisonment, and exile. This reality seeks to eliminate independent journalism and criminalize citizens, effectively silencing the population. In 2024, the Cuban government further solidified its role as the main repressor, exerting control over key areas such as security, telecommunications, and justice. The year also saw a notable increase in judicial proceedings against journalists and citizens, which has effectively institutionalized the criminalization of dissent. Moreover, the government has expanded its digital control, leveraging the internet as a tool for censorship and isolation. This repression now extends beyond journalists and dissidents, targeting ordinary citizens who dare to speak out, thereby entrenching a system that suppresses any critical voice and maintains a climate of fear and intimidation.

In light of this dire situation, ICLEP urgently appeals to the international community to increase diplomatic and political pressure, shining a spotlight on and condemning the severe state of press freedom and freedom of expression in Cuba. It is imperative that protection mechanisms be put in place and that legal and humanitarian support be provided to those who have been forced into exile, often under precarious circumstances. Access to information in Cuba can no longer be postponed and demands a prompt, coordinated, and sustained response from international actors, human rights organizations, and the media.

Chapter 9. Ecuador

GENERAL DATA



Context and trends

In 2024, journalism in Ecuador was exercised in a high-risk climate marked by collusion between organized crime and the state. Violence against the press persisted through armed attacks, judicial harassment, and censorship, and was concentrated in areas of the country considered to be centers of political and economic power. Notably, violence also spread to other regions, indicating an expansion of the threat to freedom of expression. Fundación Andina para la Observación y Estudio de Medios (Fundamedios) recorded 194 alerts, 33.5% fewer than in 2023. Roughly 60% were aggressions and attacks, confirming the ongoing and entrenched hostility towards journalism, which persists despite a decrease in reported alerts.

Criminal groups—including delinquent and terrorist organizations—were responsible for 19.9% of alerts documented in 2024. Fundamedios warns about the "thousand faces of organized crime against freedom of expression," alluding to the collaboration between local governments and criminal groups to extort and threaten journalists. On January 19, an armed group stormed the *TC Televisión* facilities and held employees hostage, pointing guns at them and threatening them with grenades during a live broadcast. The attack occurred during a wave of widespread violence that led the president to declare an "internal armed conflict" and mobilize the armed forces. Due to these events, journalist José Luis Calderón, one of the channel's most recognizable faces, went into exile. The attack marked a breaking point in armed violence against the press and highlighted the setbacks in the rights of investigation, reporting, and access to free and diverse information.

Despite the enactment of the Law on Access to Public Information and its regulations, 14 alerts were recorded related to restrictions of access to information, 92.9% of which were perpetrated by state actors. Among these actions was a decree issued by the president, which established the National Cybersecurity Committee, which has been met with criticism, as it raises concerns about the potential compromise of personal data protection, lack of transparency in the use of information, limited accountability, and particularly, restricted access to public information. Fundamedios warns that the administration of Daniel Noboa has implemented a policy of silence and obscurity, which not only hinders journalistic work but also limits citizens' right to access information.

Moreover, the misuse of the justice system to persecute journalists remained an issue, with 15 civil and criminal proceedings, 10 of which were initiated by state actors. These legal actions have become pressure points in contradiction with international standards of freedom of expression and serve to intimidate the press. A notable example is that of businessman Xavier Jordán, who filed eight lawsuits for non-material damages against media outlets and journalists investigating his links to organized crime and corruption. This case highlights the use of the judicial system, by both state and non-state actors, to censor, intimidate, and undermine investigative journalism.

Six out of ten alerts (60.3%) were aggressions and attacks

Lastly, the emergence of new forms of censorship facilitated by technology intensified in 2024. Journalists and media outlets were targeted by systematic smear and intimidation campaigns linked to criminal organizations. In November, the Mesa de Articulación para la Protección de Periodistas (MAPP) warned about the massive and illegal leak of alleged conversations between more than 150 journalists and former presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio, who was assassinated on August 9, 2023. This leak publicly exposed journalists in a violent and individualized manner, and represents one of the largest violations of journalistic privacy in the country's history.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, six cross-cutting alerts were documented for violence based on sex or sexual orientation, including threats and physical and verbal attacks on journalists. In March, during coverage of International Women's Day (8M), a journalist was publicly denigrated with sexist insults. Attacks were also reported against columnists who wrote about the referendum and those who expressed political opinions on social media, all with misogynistic undertones and sexist smears. Clearly, the sex and sexual orientation of reports remains a differentiated risk factor for journalists in Ecuador.

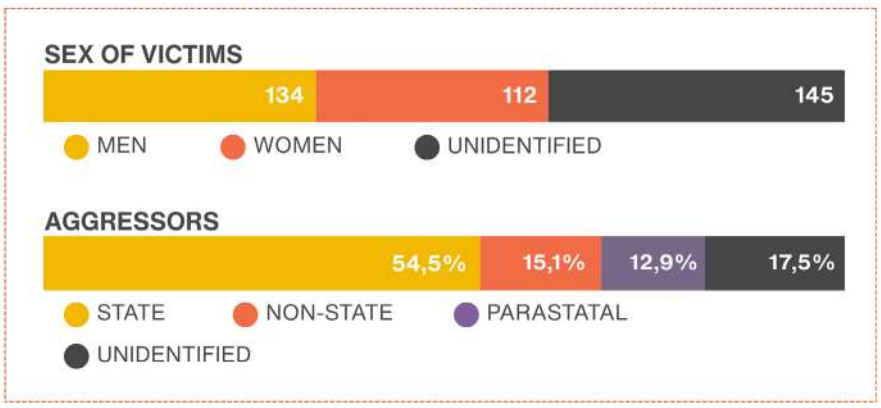
Conclusions and recommendations

The state was the main perpetrator of attacks against the press in Ecuador in 2024. In light of this, it is necessary to equip the country's protection mechanism with the necessary resources to ensure its effective operation. Furthermore, although Ecuador has an Organic Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information, its implementation needs to be guaranteed, ensuring timely, complete, and non-discriminatory access to state information. Likewise, reprisals against journalists must be punished in accordance with the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality.

Fundamedios urges prosecutors and the national police to diligently and effectively address threats, harassment, and attacks against journalists, ensuring impartial investigations and appropriate consequences for the perpetrators. The lack of legal responses discourages reporting of abuses and reinforces impunity. Finally, it is essential to review current legislation to prevent the use of the judicial system as a tool to persecute journalists. This trend must be reversed with legal reforms and judicial rulings that guarantee freedom of expression as a guiding democratic principle.

Chapter 10. El Salvador

GENERAL DATA



Context and trends

El Salvador held presidential and legislative elections in 2024 under its ongoing state of emergency. The concentration of political power, along with prolonged restrictions to fundamental rights, constrained democratic life and freedom of expression in the country. Within this framework, Asociación de Periodistas de El Salvador (APES) recorded 391 alerts, an increase of 34.8% compared to 2023. This increase is tied to elections, the rise in both digital and institutional forms of violence (including against APES), and a building trust with journalistic unions that strengthens reporting structures.

While conducting monitoring for Red VDS, APES noted that January through March was a high-risk period for journalism due to the elections. Half of all alerts in 2024 (48.8%) occurred within those months. That quarter also saw the majority of restrictions on access to information (88.4%) and almost half of the alerts for stigmatizing discourse (45.5%) and aggressions and attacks (41.9%). Furthermore, close monitoring during this window revealed the role of parastatal actors as aggressors, with 43 registered cases involving members of electoral boards, polling station managers, and political party overseers.

The state remained the principal aggressor against the Salvadoran press, responsible for 54.5% of alerts in 2024. Perpetrators included the executive branch, through stigmatizing discourse and restrictions on access to information; the legislative branch, through regressive legal reforms; and the National Civil Police and the armed forces, responsible for arbitrary detentions. Furthermore, the Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (tasked with protecting human rights) has systematically failed to address these issues, having opened only a minimal number of cases since 2022 and avoiding public commentary on these violations.

A spillover effect was observed in the attacks on journalists by public officials. The discourse from high-ranking official was mirrored at intermediate and operative levels, which resulted in soldiers and police officers acting as censors in public spaces, further restricting press freedom. This pattern was exacerbated by the state of emergency that has remained in place since March 2021, and suspends key constitutional rights, including freedom of assembly and the right to defense, while granting extensive powers to security forces. In this context, journalists have faced equipment confiscation, threats of detention, and pressure to delete graphic material. These practices have limited the press's capacity to cover events of public interest, giving rise to self-censorship and restricting citizen access to accurate information.

Judicial persecution consolidated its role as consistent form of repression. APES registered four civil and criminal processes against the press. A particularly alarming case occurred in December, when the police unexpectedly raided the home of newspaper journalist Mónica Rodríguez and confiscated her equipment and journalism materials. To date, this case

APES registered a 74% increase in internet restrictions

remains unresolved, and authorities have not provided an explanation for the delay. This case reflects a deliberate use of the judicial system to violate fundamental rights and intimidate journalism.

The online environment has also grown increasingly hostile towards journalism. In 2024, 87 alerts of internet restrictions were recorded, a 74% increase compared to 2023. The most prevalent forms of online repression were digital harassment, cyber threats, hacking, and intentional internet restrictions that blocked access to specific websites and social networks. An emblematic case is that of media outlet *Redacción Regional*, which experienced approximately 2,800 daily hacking attempts following the publication of an investigative report examining the assets of President Bukele's family.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, APES registered 10 alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation. APES flagged a sustained increase in digital violence with misogynistic tones directed towards women journalists. One case was Carolina Amaya, director of the *Mala Yerba* magazine, who—due to her profession—is one of the most attacked journalists on social networks. This form of aggression not only compromises the security of women journalists, but also fosters a climate of self-censorship. As a result, many opt to limit their presence on social media in an effort to minimize the attacks.

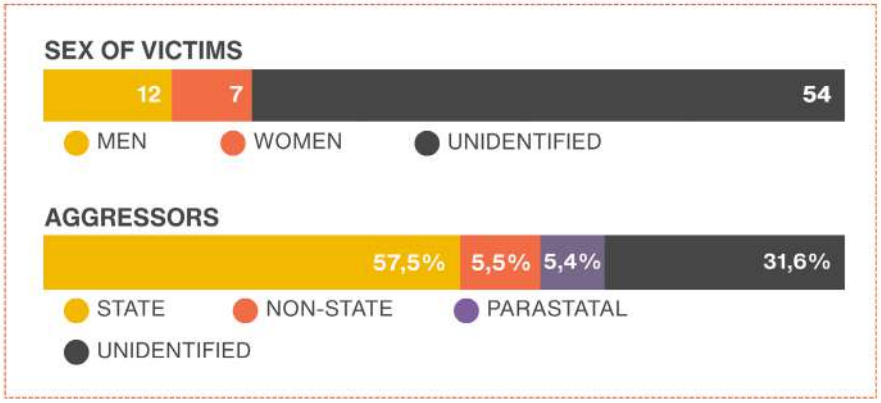
Conclusions and recommendations

In 2024, El Salvador saw a persistent pattern of harassment, with the state emerging as the primary aggressor against the right to freedom of information. The use of smear campaigns, judicial criminalization, digital harassment, and physical violence has created an increasingly insecure environment for journalists, communicators, and independent media outlets. Furthermore, the ongoing state of emergency has been utilized as a means to restrict journalism, thereby exacerbating impunity and enabling attacks on the press.

APES warns of the urgent need to strengthen protections for journalists, which should include the provision of sufficient resources, the development of clear protocols, and better inter-institutional coordination. The state should reform regulations to prevent the use of the judiciary as a tool of persecution, guarantee full access to public information, and train the National Civil Police and armed forces on international standards of freedom of the press, explicitly prohibiting practices such as the seizure of equipment and the destruction of informational materials. Finally, APES urges the Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos to document violations and issue public statements to invite citizen engagement.

Chapter 11. Guatemala

GENERAL DATA



Context and trends

Over the past year, Guatemala has experienced an escalation in threats to freedom of expression, with 73 alerts documented by Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios para la Democracia Social (DEMOS). The manipulation of the judicial system continued to be a key mechanism used to repress journalism, as it remains co-opted by an alliance of corrupt interests, often referred to as the "pact of the corrupt," which brings together political, business, and sometimes criminal elites. Despite the change in administration in December 2023, the systems inherited from the previous government and centralization of power in the Constitutional Court and the Public Prosecutor's Office have resulted in the sustained criminalization of journalism, self-censorship, forced exile, and the spread of digital disinformation.

According to DEMOS, alerts increased by 58.7% in 2024 compared to the previous year. Aggressions and attacks remained the most frequent form of violence against journalism. The most notable change was the exponential increase in restrictions to access to information, which quadrupled from six alerts in 2023 to 24 in 2024, distinguishing this as one of the main obstacles to journalistic work. Civil and criminal proceedings, on the other hand, were reduced by almost half (from 11 to 5). Additionally, the first two registered alerts of the application of a legal framework contrary to international standards emerged.

State actors were responsible for 57.5% of alerts, confirming their central role in subduing the press. Almost half of these alerts (45.2%) were restrictions of access to information, mostly carried out by the Secretaría de Asuntos Administrativos y de Seguridad de la Presidencia (SAAS). One prominent case occurred on May 24 in Quetzaltenango, when the SAAS blocked ten journalists from accompanying a visit by President Bernardo Arévalo, ultimately preventing coverage of the official event. In addition, 40.5% of the alerts linked to state actors were aggressions and attacks, primarily perpetrated by legislators. Such was the case of Representative Oswaldo Rosales Polanco (VIVA), who physically assaulted and threatened to kill a journalist at an official event. These events demonstrate how the state's lack of transparency and the use of physical violence impede journalistic work.

Another persistent trend is the harassment of community journalists, especially in areas where mining, deforestation, local crime, and corruption by municipal authorities are being investigated. On February 4, journalist Mario Paolo Monterroso faced an extortion attempt and death threats against him and his family after writing about two suspected drug dealers in his community. The vulnerability faced by community journalists is exacerbated by the absence of specific protection mechanisms and structural limitations such as a lack of resources, poor visibility, and limited access to justice. Data reveals that community journalism carries disproportionate and differentiated risks and is systematically ignored by state policies.

Restrictions on access to information quadrupled, shifting from six alerts in 2023 to 24 in 2024

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

DEMOS recorded three alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation in Guatemala during 2024. One of the most notable cases was that of journalist Ashley Monzón, *TV Azteca*, who was attacked with misogynistic comments on social media after the presidential communication secretary referred to her as a "netcenter" worker during a press conference. Another case was that of Maya Q'eqchi' journalist Irma Tzi, who was physically assaulted by a police officer during coverage in Alta Verapaz. These types of attacks foster self-censorship, reduce women's participation in public debate, and restrict citizen access to open and diverse information, directly impeding freedom of the press and expression for all in Guatemala.

Conclusions and recommendations

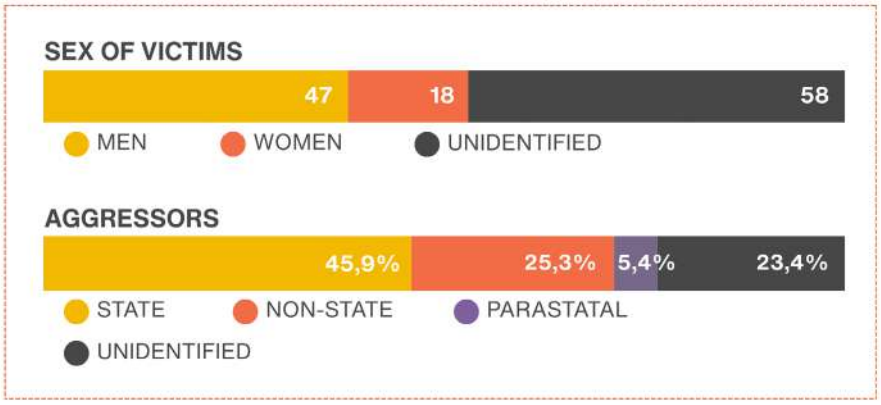
In 2024, the judiciary played a significant role in perpetuating harassment and criminalizing freedom of expression, with prosecutors, judges, and magistrates tied to the "pact of the corrupt" intentionally targeting critical journalists and discouraging public scrutiny. This abusive use of the judicial system has created a climate of intimidation that is likely to worsen in 2025, particularly with the upcoming elections for key institutions such as the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Constitutional Court, and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. These corrupt power networks are seeking to exert control over these bodies in order to maintain impunity and shield themselves from accountability until the 2027 general elections, further entrenching the existing system of repression.

DEMOS urges the state to immediately end baseless criminal proceedings against journalists and communicators. It is crucial to establish comprehensive protection mechanisms for journalists and community media outlets, which should include sufficient resources, specialized personnel, and culturally and linguistically relevant protocols. At the same time, provisions that criminalize or restrict the operation of community radio stations must be repealed. This entails halting the practice of seizing equipment, ending administrative persecution, and discontinuing the systematic denial of licenses. Furthermore, community radio stations should be guaranteed legal recognition and equitable access to radio frequencies, ensuring their ability to operate freely and effectively.

Judicial independence is essential to reverse this repressive trend. The government must end arbitrary persecution of those who denounce corruption or abuses of power, and ensure judicial authorities act in accordance with legality, due process, and human rights. Without these guarantees, self-censorship, exile, and a weakened information environment will persist, threatening freedom of the press and democracy.

Chapter 12. Honduras

GENERAL DATA



Context and trends

In 2024, journalism in Honduras proved deadly, with the country remaining one of the most perilous places for the press in Latin America. Under Xiomara Castro's government, state institutions failed to provide adequate protection and, instead, often acted as aggressors against journalists and media outlets. This has created a scenario where public agencies and economic and political powers collaborate to silence critical journalism, putting journalists' lives at risk and, in some cases, claiming them as the highest cost.

The murder of six journalists was the most extreme form of violence against the press in Honduras in 2024, doubling the number of homicides committed in 2023. Four victims were reporting on conflicts related to land defense, forced evictions, or resistance to mining projects. Among them were Juan López and Marvin Dubón, community leaders murdered in the Aguán Valley, one of the most violent areas in the country due to disputes over natural resources, drug trafficking, and mining operations. Armed individuals also murdered journalist Henry López, a contributor to *Suyapa Medios* in Tegucigalpa, the second member of this media outlet to be killed in two years. Luis Alonso Teruel was executed by an armed group in his vehicle in Atima, Santa Bárbara; Erlin Asbiel Blandín Álvarez in Juticalpa, Olancho; and *Choluvisión* cameraman Douglas Enrique Arce Jr. in Choluteca. None of the murders have been solved, and in every case, the state attempted to disassociate the victims' journalistic work from the murder, presenting them as robberies or accidents. This official narrative reinforces the impunity that covers up crimes against journalists in Honduras.

The Honduran state deepened its role as the main aggressor against the press in 2024, perpetrating 45.9% of alerts, which is far more than the 35% reported in 2023. The executive branch exercised direct censorship, reinforcing a pattern of control and surveillance. One of the most concerning examples is the case of *Radio Progreso*, a critical media outlet that has faced systematic attacks in recent years. In September, the station was censored live and taken off the air after the executive branch applied direct pressure to cancel advertising contracts if President Xiomara Castro, her husband, former President Manual Zelaya, or the administration were mentioned. This form of extortion, carried out directly by the presidency, poses a significant threat to freedom of the press and constitutes a clear attempt to dismantle it.

Aggressions and attacks accounted for 47.2% of alerts in 2024, with a total of 68 cases. Eight civil and criminal proceedings against journalists were also documented, many in retaliation for investigations into corruption, abuse of power, and human rights violations. A notable example is Gloria Marina Enamorado Melgar, a community defender from Bajo Aguán, who was accused of usurpation by the agro-industrial corporation Dinant and detained without due process or a court hearing. Such practices determine which topics are deemed threatening to those in power and aim to silence coverage of these issues.

C-Libre registered six murders of Honduran

Besides its key role in monitoring violations to freedom of the press, C-Libre was subject to attacks in 2024. After publishing its annual report, the organization faced a stigmatizing campaign which it warns could intensify during the elections in November 2025. These practices prevail in Honduras due to legal provisions that facilitate criminalization of the press. The Criminal Code allows honor crimes to be a cause for prosecution of journalists, with prison sentences and unwarranted aggravations including dissemination on social media. This context exposes journalists to enduring harassment and reveals the lack of protections for carrying out their work.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, four cross-cutting alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation were registered. One such incident involved journalist Claudia Fortín, who was attacked with pepper spray by police officers during a live broadcast of a protest for Savia Radio in Choluteca, which affected her health and disrupted her work. Similarly, journalist Yamileth Flores was subjected to a series of violent acts after reporting on the lack\of social acceptance for the Gran Terminal del Pacífico facility in Choluteca. She was violently attacked, and subsequently faced threats, surveillance, police intimidation, and even threats of a lawsuit for “inciting violence”—a situation not experienced by her male colleagues who also covered the story. These incidents underscore the particularly harsh treatment faced by women journalists in the exercise of their profession.

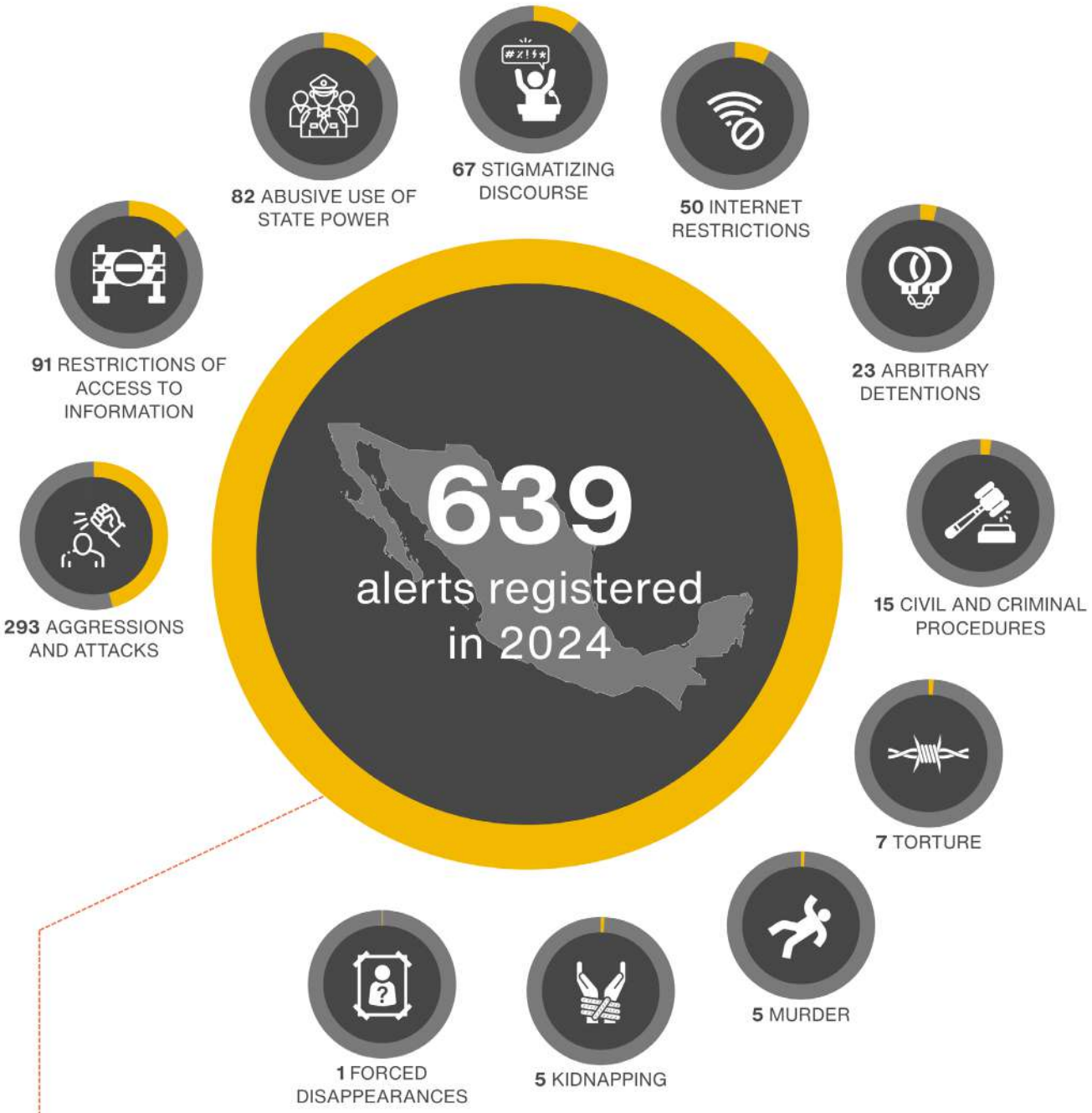
Conclusions and recommendations

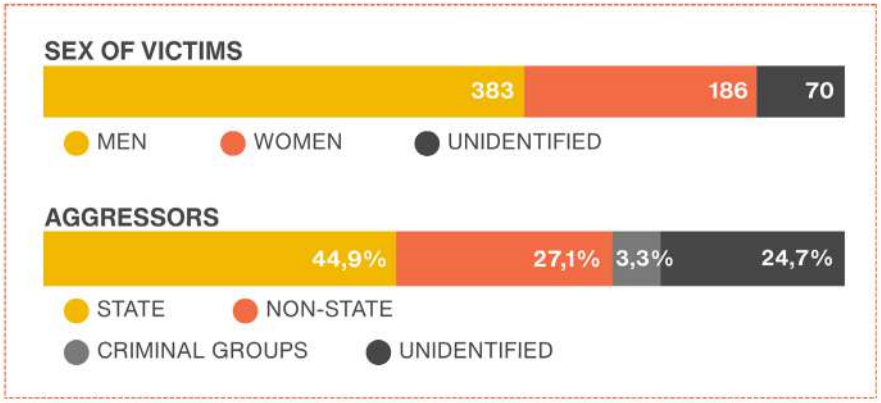
The practice of journalism in Honduras can be fatal. In 2024, the country saw murders, kidnappings, arbitrary detentions, and systematic attacks against journalists, demonstrating that the State not only fails to protect them but also perpetuates aggression with total impunity. The environment is marked by self-censorship, judicialization, and direct censorship of critical media outlets, making it deadly to report on social and territorial conflicts, corruption, and abuses of power. Women journalists face additional sexist attacks, increasing their vulnerability. These events highlight the lack of protection for media outlets and journalists, exposing the fragility of Honduras’ democratic guarantees.

In response to this hostile scenario, C-Libre recommends establishing a specific protocol for investigating journalist murders, strengthening protection mechanisms, and decriminalizing honor crimes to prevent their use as a tool of legal intimidation against journalistic work.

Chapter 13. Mexico

GENERAL DATA





Context and trends

In 2024, an act of violence against the press was recorded every 14 hours in Mexico. The simultaneous besiegement of drug trafficking, organized crime, and the state itself once again positioned it as one of the deadliest countries for the press in the region. In the last year of the López Obrador administration and the first two months of Sheinbaum's, the government carried out direct attacks on journalism through stigmatizing discourse, judicial harassment, and restrictions on information of public interest. In this context, ARTICLE 19 Mexico and Central America (ARTICLE 19) recorded 639 alerts against freedom of the press, an increase of 13.9% compared to the previous year.

The state established itself as the main aggressor against the press, accounting for 44.9% of alerts. Public officials were responsible for 68.3% of the cases—including mayors and members of the judiciary—followed by civilian security forces (27.2%) and armed forces (4.5%). This was compounded by the unprecedented growth of abusive use of state power, which rose from 11 cases in 2023 to 82 in 2024, an increase of 645.5%. This exponential rise demonstrates the severity of institutionalized violence against freedom of the press in the country.

Between March and June 2024, Mexico experienced the longest and most polarized electoral process in its history, with federal, state, and municipal elections taking place. During this four-month period, 286 alerts were recorded, accounting for 44.8% of the annual total. A breakdown of alerts by type reveals that 55.6% of the annual total of alerts for abuse of state power and 55.2% of stigmatizing discourse occurred in this window of time. Additionally, almost half (48.5%) of the restrictions on access to information and 39.3% of the aggressions and attacks were also concentrated in these months. The high frequency of alerts during this period confirms that elections in Mexico can catalyze violence against freedom of expression, highlighting the structural vulnerability of journalism in electoral contexts.

Furthermore, Mexico was once again one of the deadliest countries for the press, with 5 journalists murdered in 2024. All of the victims covered sensitive topics such as security, justice, corruption, and politics. One of the most emblematic cases was the murder of journalist Mauricio Cruz Solís, perpetrated by unidentified gunmen on October 29 in Uruapan, following his live coverage of the electoral process and despite his having reported repeated threats. These murders reflect the extreme risk of investigating issues of public interest and confirm that Mexican journalism is caught at the intersection of political, criminal, and state interests.

In 2024, investigating or covering corruption and politics accounted for more than 60% of total alerts. This was followed by coverage of security and justice, which ranked second in terms of risk, with 105 alerts. Faced with this situation, many journalists adopted self-protection measures, such as omitting bylines on publications or avoiding addressing sensitive

ARTICLE 19 registered a 645.5% increase in abusive use of state power

topics. An example case was the attempted murder of Ismael Flores, director of the digital media outlet *Franqueza Guanajuato*, who was investigating child disappearances and covering the city council session of Dolores Hidalgo. The concentration of attacks linked to coverage of corruption, politics, and security highlights the lack of guarantees for journalistic practice, fostering a climate of self-censorship.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In Mexico, 22 alerts for violence based on sex or sexual orientation were documented in 2024. ARTICLE 19 is concerned about the digital threats, both physical and sexual, aimed at LGB and women journalists, which are intended to silence journalism. A troubling case was that of journalist Yohali Reséndiz, who received death and sexual violence threats on her WhatsApp after publishing investigations into corruption in the state government of Morelos. These attacks not only seek to directly silence the victim, but also to discourage other women journalists from investigating sensitive topics. The intensification of attacks through social media contributes to establishing a true "culture of fear," which, in Yohali's words, constantly strikes until it cracks the defenses that journalists have had to build.

Conclusions and recommendations

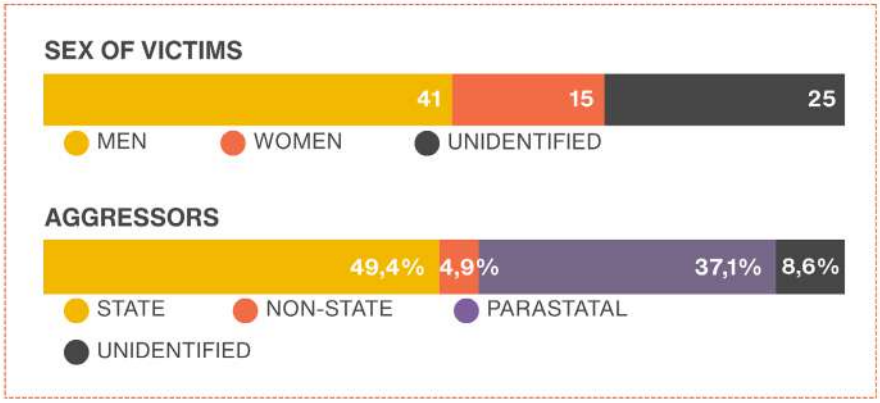
In 2024, Mexico maintained its position as one of the world's deadliest countries for the press, with the state acting as both the main aggressor and a failed protector against violence from criminal groups. The persistent collusion between authorities and organized crime fuels structural violence, creating a cycle of impunity that leads to further violence. The failure to make significant progress in investigations and the ineffectiveness of protection policies contribute to a hostile environment, making it dangerous for journalists to report on corruption, security, and politics, posing a threat to their safety and lives.

ARTICLE 19 warns that breaking the cycle of violence and impunity requires judicial powers to stop acting as aggressors through abusive processes and instead strengthen internal oversight and apply international freedom of expression standards in their rulings. Authorities must investigate and punish those responsible for these crimes, both the physical perpetrators and the intellectual authors. To prevent and reduce journalist murders, a specific plan is needed that combines early threat monitoring, effective physical protection, and comprehensive criminal prosecution. Without a genuine commitment to dismantling impunity and curbing lethal violence, the Mexican public's right to information will remain severely compromised, and democracy will continue to be undermined.

Chapter 14. Nicaragua

GENERAL DATA

No cross-cutting alerts based on sex or sexual orientation were registered



Context and trends

After 17 years in power, the Ortega regime has brought freedom of expression and press freedom in Nicaragua to the brink of collapse. In 2024, the government's systematic repression continued, with Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo maintaining a grip of brutal control and surveillance that stifled journalists and media outlets. This is not a new development, but rather the culmination of a long-standing pattern of repression that has relied on exploiting institutions, dominating local media, launching smear campaigns, and forcing critics into exile to silence dissident voices.

Fundación por la Libertad de Expresión y Democracia (FLED) recorded 81 alerts in 2024, of which 86.4% were committed by state and parastatal actors. This positions the Nicaraguan state as the primary agent of repression against the press, both domestically and in cases where journalists have been exiled. In line with this trend, eight alerts were recorded for the abusive use of state power, involving coordinated actions by various institutions, including the National Police, the National Assembly, the Dirección General de Ingresos (DGI) y the Instituto Nicaragüense de Seguridad Social (INSS). These findings confirm that the regime's institutions are working together to suppress freedom of expression, and also highlight the erosion of any meaningful safeguards for the exercise of journalism and free speech in Nicaragua.

The year was also marked by the intensification of smear campaigns and verbal attacks against the critical press, including journalists living abroad. The use of stigmatizing discourse increased by 72.2%, rising from 22 cases in 2023 to 38 in 2024. State and parastatal actors were responsible for 70.3% of these attacks, demonstrating that discrediting critical journalism has become a key strategy for the regime. Journalist Miguel Mendoza became a prime target, facing repeated public attacks by pro-government supporters, including Enrique Quiñones, in retaliation for his denunciations on digital platforms and social media.

The Nicaraguan regime intensified its surveillance of the media ecosystem, leaving more than half of the population without access to free and diverse information. Currently, 10 of Nicaragua's 17 departments are "silence zones," areas where independent journalism has completely disappeared. The few remaining media outlets are only allowed to broadcast content approved by the municipality, limiting their coverage to events, international news, and entertainment. Meanwhile, Rosario Murillo routinely utilizes national networks to disseminate a biased narrative that aligns with the official ideology, manipulating information; inciting attacks against journalists, opponents, and dissents; and ultimately resulting in the near total erosion of freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

The profession of journalism is also plagued by precarious conditions, with newsrooms struggling to survive due to a lack of resources. This has resulted in understaffed and overworked teams, low wages, and cramped working spaces. According to research by FLED, these challenging

Stigmatizing discourse increased 72.2% in 2024

circumstances have led 52 journalists to abandon the profession altogether. Furthermore, the climate of fear has driven many journalists into exile, with 283 having been forced to flee the country since 2018, including 46 in 2024 alone, due to threats, arbitrary judicial proceedings, confiscation of property, and reprisals against their family members. The situation is further complicated by the fact that verifying and comparing information has become increasingly risky, as many sources are too afraid to speak out or retract their reports, while others will only agree to provide information anonymously. Although anonymity is necessary to protect these sources, it ultimately weakens the credibility and impact of the media, exacerbating the decline of news outlets in the country.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, no alerts related to violence based on sex or sexual orientation were recorded in Nicaragua. However, FLED warns that women journalists are being repeatedly targeted by attackers with a misogynistic and discriminatory agenda, who subject them to violence that includes interference in their private lives, references to their families, and derogatory comments about their physical appearance and their families' economic status.

Conclusions and recommendations

In Nicaragua, 17 years of the Ortega-Murillo regime have led to a profound erosion of press freedom. The regime's tactics—including threats, disappearances, arbitrary trials, property confiscation, physical removals, and constant surveillance—have driven hundreds of journalists into exile and expanded "silent zones" that now cover more than half of the country. Journalists face precarious working conditions, fear, and control, while the government promotes skewed narratives that distort information and discredit critical media. Despite this oppressive context, the independent press continues to resist, both inside and outside Nicaragua, using various strategies to defend freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

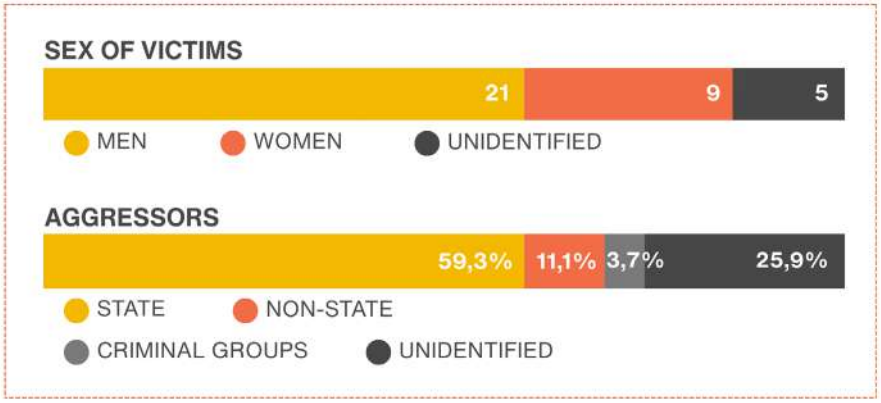
Given this context, FLED demands that the Nicaraguan state respect fundamental rights, cease the violent and direct persecution of journalists, and release all those detained for the exercise of their profession or expressing critical opinions. Although the regime refusers to respond, maintaining these demands remains essential to guarantee freedom of the press and freedom of expression under all circumstances.

The international community and countries in the region are warned that the authoritarian practices observed in Nicaragua could be replicated in other nearby countries. The Nicaraguan experience demonstrates that the erosion of freedoms and the closure of democratic spaces can cross borders and undermine environments considered stable. Therefore, denunciation and regional solidarity are essential to halt this pattern and protect the right of all people to inform and be informed.

Chapter 15. Paraguay

GENERAL DATA

No cross-cutting alerts based on sex or sexual orientation were registered



Context and trends

Freedom of press in Paraguay is in a period of heightened tension and vulnerability. While the number of alerts decreased from 50 in 2023 to 35 in 2024, this seems in part due to it no longer being an election year, given that there was a 59.1% increase in alerts in 2024 compared to non-election years, such as 2022. Civil and criminal proceedings against journalists became one of the main forms of harassment, while state actors intensified their role, with President Santiago Peña leading a stigmatization campaign against journalists.

Instituto de Derecho y Economía Ambiental (IDEA) warns that the use of the judicial system to censor the press increased alarmingly in 2024. Nine civil and criminal proceedings were filed against journalists, a 50% increase compared to the previous year. Among the most serious cases are cases initiated through the distorted application of Law No. 5.777, originally designed to protect women from violence but opportunistically used to hinder journalistic investigations involving women in power. Senator Norma Aquino used this law to curb the dissemination of information about her administration and announced her intention to promote a bill imposing controls on journalists and media outlets. Similarly, Senator Lilian Samaniego obtained a precautionary measure preventing journalists from commenting on her based on a complaint filed under the same law. These practices transform a tool intended for protection into an instrument of silencing journalism.

State actors were responsible for 59.3% of alerts recorded in 2024, cementing their role as the principal violators of press freedom. This trend, which began at 30% in 2022 and rose to 42% in 2023, is evidence of a sustained escalation of state repression against journalism. One incident involved Congressman Yamil Esgaib, who during a news coverage snatched the microphone from two women journalists, injuring one of them. The act was criminally reported, demonstrating that this was not a minor incident. Violence exerted by those in power directly affects journalism and contributes to an increasingly entrenched climate of hostility toward the media.

Furthermore, five alerts of stigmatizing discourse were recorded during the year, all committed by state actors. President Santiago Peña led the stigmatization of journalism with public statements accusing the media of acting out of economic interests and aligning with the opposition. The issuance of such accusations by a president who holds political clout and the ability to influence public perception has a significant impact on legitimizing distrust and deepening the discreditation of the media. Legislators and senators echoed these statements, reinforcing the narrative.

All of these forms of violence against the press occurred together with important legal initiatives that directly affected journalism, especially independent journalism. The NGO Regulation Law and the Bicameral

IDEA registered a 50% increase in civil and criminal proceedings against the press

Commission of Inquiry operated under the pretext of financial oversight and regulation, while in practice they sought to delegitimize journalistic work by unfoundedly associating internationally funded independent media outlets with their criticism of the government and, consequently, with the political opposition. These seemingly low-key actions are profoundly effective in undermining the editorial autonomy of media outlets and weakening sustainability strategies, consolidating a camouflaged persecution of journalism in Paraguay.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

While no specific alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation were recorded in Paraguay during 2024, IDEA notes an increase in worrying situations in which public officials—such as in the case of Esgaib—publicly attack female media workers or use misogynistic and sexist language. These actions contribute to the stigmatization and questioning of the journalistic work carried out by women and people of diverse backgrounds in the media.

Conclusions and recommendations

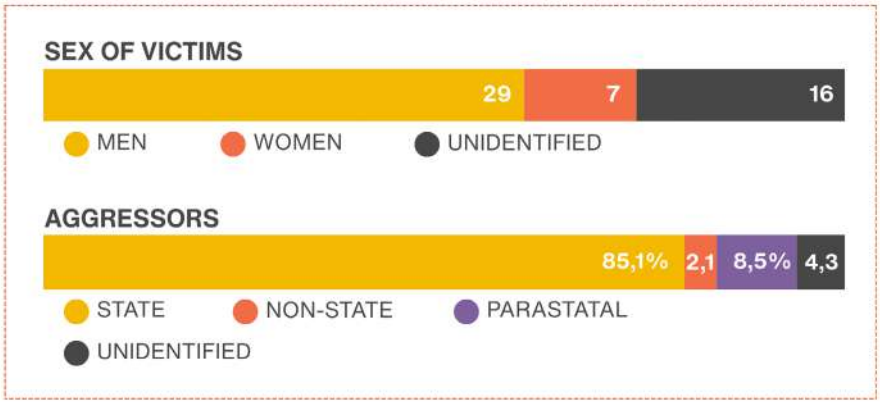
In 2024, the press in Paraguay faced tensions and various forms of silencing, especially through judicial processes used as tools of persecution in which state actors played a central role. Stigmatizing discourse toward journalists, particularly when issued by the president, generated a context of social delegitimization that directly impacts journalism. Laws and legal mechanisms effectively operated to undermine editorial autonomy and the sustainability of media outlets, while also punishing independent media outlets by attaching their political opposition to the funding they received. This constitutes a hostile environment that significantly limits the practice of journalism and puts freedom of expression at risk in Paraguay.

IDEA urges judicial authorities to investigate cases of violence against journalists with swiftness and transparency, to apply proportionate sanctions, and to prevent rhetoric that threatens their safety. It calls for a review of the NGO Law and the Bicameral Commission to prevent their persecutory application, put an end to initiatives that delegitimize independent media, and properly apply Law No. 5.777 in accordance with international standards, which protects women without censoring journalists. Civil society and the media should lead campaigns that strengthen the role of journalism and counter stigmatizing discourse.

Chapter 16. Perú

GENERAL DATA

No cross-cutting alerts based on sex or sexual orientation were registered



Context and trends

In 2024, journalism in Peru faced a context marked by legislative projects that threatened freedom of the press and promoted self-censorship, professional burnout, and the normalization of risk as part of the job. Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS) registered 52 alerts throughout the year, with an increase in stigmatizing discourse, legal proceedings, and restrictions on access to public information.

Stigmatizing discourse against journalism increased significantly in 2024, with five alerts registered compared to one in 2023. The mayor of Lima, Rafael López Aliaga, was a prominent figure in promoting this anti-press narrative, frequently using derogatory terms such as “caviar press” and “corrupt and bribed press” to discredit media outlets and undermine their credibility. This approach was also adopted by spokespeople for the executive branch. At the same time, restrictions on access to information increased substantially, rising from one alert in 2023 to seven in 2024, which perpetuates a pattern of institutional opacity. One notable instance was when the president of the Peruvian Congress, Alejandro Soto, prohibited the press from attending a session on a standing committee, an arbitrary and deliberate decision that highlights the systematic use of power to limit access to information of high public interest.

In addition, six alerts were issued regarding legal frameworks that contradict international standards, which aim to toughen sanctions and expand state control over journalism. These initiatives deepen an already stifling regulatory framework for journalists and are part of the advance of so-called “gag laws,” which were initiated in 2021 and approved by Congress with the support of political parties such as Perú Libre and the Bloque Magisterial. The most controversial proposals presented in 2024 include increasing penalties for defamation and slander from four to six years, with actual imprisonment, as well as requiring mandatory accreditation and membership in professional associations for journalists. Such measures would hinder the practice of journalism and pose a threat to editorial independence, journalistic ethics, and investigative journalism.

The judicial system has become a means of harassing the press, with the number of alerts doubling from 2024 to a total of 14 civil and criminal cases against journalists in 2024. Most of these cases remain ongoing, indicating a strategy of censorship by attrition, where the goal is to silence the victims by imposing extremely high economic, psychological, and moral costs. A notable example is the case of Paola Ugaz, who faced at least seven simultaneous legal proceedings for investigating abuses within the Sodalicio de Vida Cristina. She was also subjected to defamatory media campaigns and violations of her professional confidentiality. The case highlights the significant power imbalance that arises when journalists investigate issues that make those in power uncomfortable, resulting in a journalist being targeted by a network of political, judicial, and media forces that seek to exhaust her emotionally and economically until she is silenced.

Stigmatizing rhetoric increased fivefold compared to 2023

In 2024, state actors were identified as the primary aggressor against the press, accounting for 85.1% of alerts. This represents a significant increase of 23.8% compared to the previous year. This dominance was reflected in various ways, including restrictions on access to information, abusive use of state power, legal proceedings against journalists, and legislative proposals seeking to toughen sanctions against the press. State actors also perpetrated 62.5% of the attacks and aggressions registered in 2024, with one incident involving Minister of the Inferior Juan José Santivañez, who threatened to "control" critical journalists.

Lima accounted for 75% of alerts, which can be attributed to its high population density, as well as the possibility of underreporting in other cities. IPYS notes that self-censorship and a lack of reporting in other areas may be obscuring the true extent of violence against journalists. Additionally, covering topics such as corruption or organized crime, particularly related to illegal mining or drug trafficking, poses a significant risk to the safety of journalists and contributes to information deserts.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, no cases of violence based on sex or sexual orientation were reported. However, an IPYS report revealed that women journalists face distinct forms of violence, especially those investigating power and corruption. Women journalists are being targeted with sexist attacks and threats, both physical and digital, which have increased in intensity in recent times. These aggressions include degrading comments about their physical appearance, moralizing about their role as mothers, and explicit threats of sexual violence, such as rape. This pattern of sexist attacks aims to demoralize and delegitimize the work of women journalists.

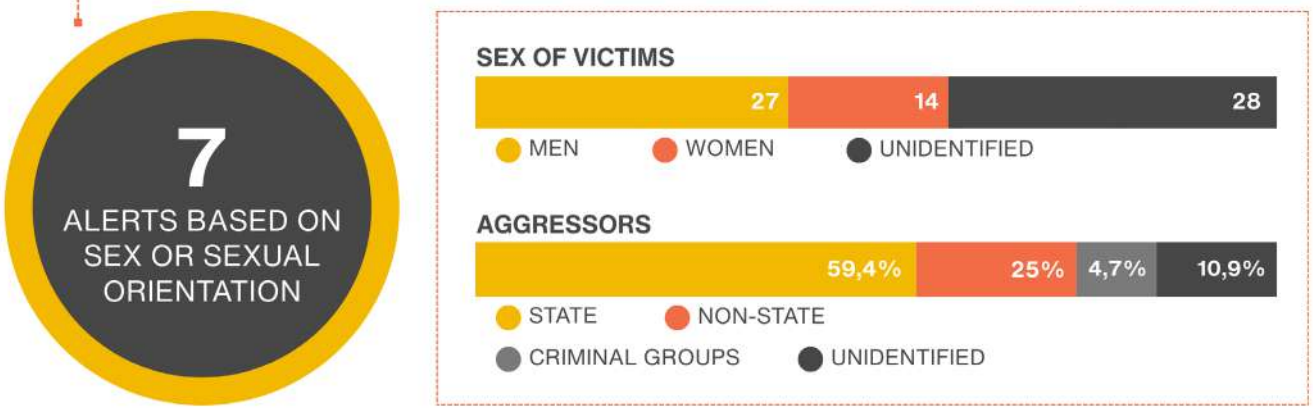
Conclusions and recommendations

In 2024, the journalistic environment in Peru was adverse and suffocating, with the state apparatus emerging as the primary aggressor. The state promoted gag laws, legal proceedings, and restrictions on access to information to silence critical journalism. The majority of attacks were concentrated in Lima, which suggests underreporting in other regions due to self-censorship. The power imbalance faced by prosecuted journalists, particularly women, contributes to silencing. IPYS warns that these trends may intensify during the 2026 elections.

In response to this violent context, IPYS calls on Peruvian authorities to urgently activate the Protection Mechanism for Journalists and ensure its effective application. Additionally, IPYS considers it essential for political forces to reject bills that restrict freedom of the press in order to guarantee free and safe conditions for the practice of journalism throughout the country.

Chapter 17. Uruguay

GENERAL DATA



Context and trends

Uruguay, historically a leader in freedom of the press in the region, is experiencing a decline in journalistic freedom. In 2024, the country ranked third in the region for state involvement in violence against journalists. There were 69 alerts registered for restrictions on freedom of expression, which is a 15% increase compared to 2023. This upward trend indicates a continued deterioration of the situation. The increase in alerts during the last year of the Lacalle Pou administration suggestions that the barriers to freedom of expression are becoming institutionalized, as evidenced by the growth in restrictions on access to information and internet access.

In 2024, the State remained the primary aggressor against the Uruguayan press, accounting for 59.4% of the alerts, highlighting the significant role of public bodies in violating freedom of expression. The aggressors included senators, ministers, members of the Legislative Branch, and officials of the Executive Branch, demonstrating a widespread antipathy toward journalism within the government. Centro de Archivos y Acceso a la Información (CAinfo) reported four alerts related to the abuse of state power and 5 concerning frameworks that violate international standards. The approval of the new Audiovisual Communication Services Law has been particularly notable, with national and international organizations criticizing it for promoting media concentration and foreign ownership, restricting citizen participation, and weakening institutional safeguards.

Alerts of restrictions on access to public information experienced the most significant increase among all indicators in 2024, with a 26.7% rise compared to the prior year (from 15 to 19 alerts). A noteworthy case was the resolution issued by Acting Attorney General Mónica Ferrero, which limited access to judicial proceedings of public interest, such as the case of former mayor of Soriano, Guillermo Besozzi. This measure marked a reversal of the Prosecutor's Office's previous practice of transparency, directly hindering journalistic work and reducing democratic oversight of public administration.

Meanwhile, stigmatizing discourse was the second fastest-growing category in 2024, with a 13.3% increase. Political actors and public officials were responsible for six of these incidents, primarily through social networks and media outlets. An emblematic case involved National Party Senator Graciela Bianchi, who launched public attacks and threats against journalists and media outlets, questioning investigations and accusing them of operating politically against the government. Additionally, women journalists have suffered stigmatizing sexist discourse such as personal defamation, ideological accusations, and misogynistic attacks.

With UNESCO's support, CAinfo, a local member of Red VDS, launched a legal clinic in 2024 that specializes in access to public information. This clinic provides legal counsel to journalists who rely on public information for their investigative work. The initiative aims to strengthen journalism and expand guarantees for access to public information, offering legal

Restrictions on access to public information increased by 26.7% between 2023 and 2024

advice on filing complaints with the Unidad de Acceso a la Información Pública (UAIP) and pursuing legal action when government agencies provide incomplete or no responses. CAinfo has been involved in cases such as the administration of Colonia, which was forced to release information about an administrative investigation after a court order, and the Ministerio de Salud Pública, which agreed to provide requested data on anti-smoking inspections following a demand for access supported by CAinfo.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

During 2024, seven cross-cutting alerts of violence based on sex or sexual orientation were identified in Uruguay, including stigmatizing discourse (5), sexual violence (1), and physical assault (1). Most of these alerts targeted women journalists investigating corruption, human rights, or recent historical events. One of the most notorious cases was that of journalist Iliana da Silva, who was the target of sexist attacks on social media after reporting on disappearances during Uruguay's last dictatorship. This pattern confirms a specific added layer of risk for women in journalism, in which sexism operates as a mechanism to discredit and silence reporters.

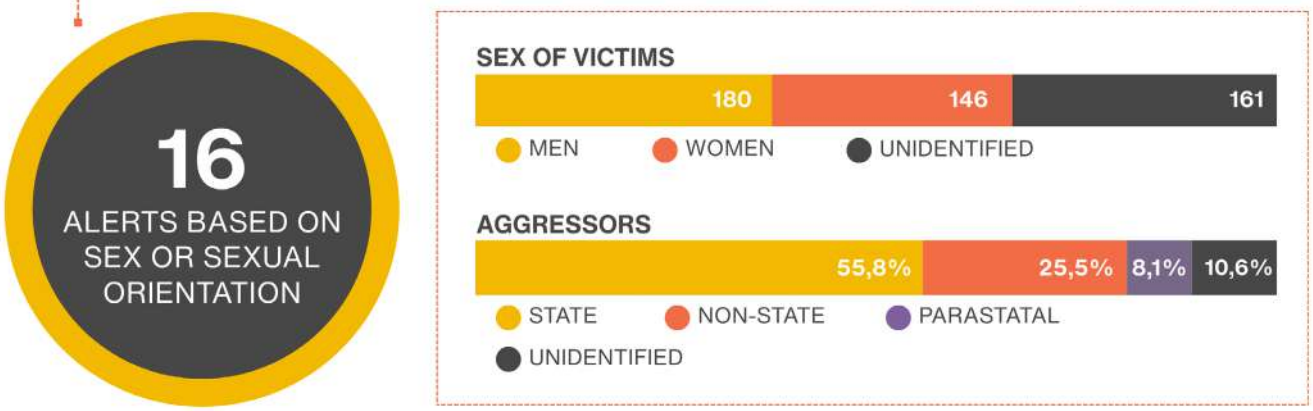
Conclusions and recommendations

An analysis of the Uruguayan context reveals a growing concern about the deterioration of the regulatory and institutional conditions that guarantee the exercise of freedom of expression and the right to information. This is due to the new media Law, obstacles to accessing public information, and the rise in stigmatizing attacks against journalists, many of which are driven by political actors, which compromise the international commitments assumed by the state.

In response to this situation, it is recommended that the press reject the normalization of stigmatizing discourse by utilizing existing reporting channels, especially when such discourse comes from public figures. Furthermore, journalists are encouraged to enhance their reporting capabilities through ongoing training in international standards and principles of ethical self-regulation. CAinfo urges Uruguayan authorities to review the current regulatory framework, particularly the Media Law, and to take a firm stance against attacks on the media. Finally, it demands that effective access to public information be guaranteed and that specialized legal assistance mechanisms, such as those promoted by CAinfo, be strengthened. These measures, combined with a clear political will to prevent setbacks, are essential to preserving and strengthening freedom of expression and the right to information in Uruguay.

Chapter 18. Venezuela

GENERAL DATA



Context and trends

In 2024, Venezuela registered 487 alerts, underscoring the persistently high level of attacks on freedom of expression and the press. During the July 28 presidential elections and the subsequent post-electoral crisis was marked by arbitrary arrests, the blocking of independent news outlets, direct reprisals against journalists, the exclusion of opposition voices from the media, and a pronounced climate of self-censorship, all of which contributed to an environment of systematic silencing of the press.

This deterioration was evident in 10 arbitrary arrests and one forced disappearance. Notable cases include the arrests of Carlos Julio Rojas, a journalist detained by the Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional (SEBIN), and Ana Carolina Guaita, a journalist with La Patilla, who was detained due to her family ties with opposition leaders. Furthermore, 22 journalists were forcibly displaced, and 16 instances of abusive use of state power were recorded, including the forced search of cell phones, camera confiscation, and social media monitoring to identify sources. These actions, carried out by the regime, are part of a sustained strategy of intimidation and punishment aimed at those who exercise their right to inform or defend fundamental rights.

State actors were responsible for more than half of the alerts (55.8%), including security forces, officials from Plan República, judicial authorities, and members of the regime, such as the dictatorial leader, Nicolás Maduro. Additionally, paramilitary groups accounted for 8.1% of the alerts, with pro-government militants and supporters playing a role. Furthermore, non-state actors, such as pro-government media outlets and individuals who amplify stigmatizing discourse on social media, were involved in 25.5% of the alerts. The convergence of these actors creates a complex and high-risk environment for journalism, highlighting the lack of effective guarantees for the protection of journalists in Venezuela.

Similar to aggressions and attacks, instances of stigmatizing discourse (142 alerts) were concentrated during the election months, as political leaders publicly discredited journalists and media outlets as part of a strategy of harassment surrounding the elections. Notably, in a televised campaign event, Nicolás Maduro launched a public attack on the *EFE* news agency, the Spanish newspaper *El País*, and *CNN* en Español, labeling them “media hitmen of farce and lies.” This kind of rhetoric, emanating from the highest levels of political power, perpetuates a climate of hostility toward the press and legitimizes the delegitimization of critical journalism, further undermining the freedom of the press.

The digital environment proved to be a high-risk space for journalism, with 47 reported alerts of internet restrictions, including cyberattacks, content monitoring, and the blocking of news websites, as exemplified by the case of IPYS. In response, many journalists opted to stop signing their articles as a precautionary measure. Some newsrooms also implemented technological innovations to protect the integrity of their staff, such as utilizing artificial intelligence to create digital avatars like “la chama” and “el pana.” This protective strategy earned international recognition, including the prestigious Premio Rey de España.

IPYS registered 47 alerts of internet restrictions

The consequence of this environment has been a deepening deterioration of the information ecosystem in Venezuela, with the expansion of "news deserts" - areas where entire communities have restricted access to reliable and diverse information due to the absence of independent journalism. This crisis is evident in the increased number of alerts registered in various regions, including Bolívar (42), the Federal District (26), Cojedes (20), Miranda (16), Nueva Esparta, and Carabobo (14). Fear and underreporting have become normalized, even influencing the daily operations of the media. Although there is no official record of prior censorship or blacklists, the effects of these practices are apparent in news coverage, which is becoming increasingly limited and controlled.

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation

In 2024, 16 instances of violence based on sex or sexual orientation were documented, including verbal attacks, harassment that led to forced exile, and invasive actions targeting the private life of a media director. One notable incident occurred on March 9, when leaders and supporters of the Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT) party attacked Alejandro Hernández, director of the digital media outlet *La Gran Aldea*, using feminized language after he published a critical analysis of political maneuvers in the electoral context. These acts of violence, driven by prejudice, aim to silence and exclude journalists from public debate, ultimately weakening freedom of expression in authoritarian contexts.

Conclusions and recommendations

The conditions for practicing journalism in Venezuela have continued to deteriorate, perpetuating an environment of repression, forced exile, criminalization, digital surveillance, and silencing that directly infringes upon the right to information and freedom of expression. Fear has a paralyzing effect, forcing journalists into silence or exile. Venezuela's journalism landscape is characterized by a system of structural, institutionalized censorship that has been in place for over two decades, earning the country a reputation as one of the most restrictive and opaque in the region.

To combat this dire situation, it is essential to implement flexible funding strategies that prioritize the prevention of "information deserts" from expanding. Protecting journalists is crucial and can be achieved by providing legal assistance, psychosocial support, and digital security training. It is also vital to strengthen alternative networks for disseminating information, including the promotion of mirror platforms, mobile messaging bulletins, and open repositories of public data. IPYS-Venezuela urges collective action, continued opportunities for denunciation, and the development of joint protection strategies. Ultimately, the preservation of journalism in Venezuela is a fundamental condition for any hopes of restoring democracy and upholding human rights, making it an indispensable aspiration for the country's future.

Conclusions and recommendations

In 2024, journalism in Latin America faced one of the most hostile environments in decades. The independent press experienced a lethal combination of state repression, criminal violence, and the collapse of institutional guarantees. Across much of the region, freedom of the press has devolved from a protected right to a high-risk activity, increasingly subject to persecution. Physical attacks, criminalization, stigmatization, and censorship continued unabated. Authoritarian governments and declining democracies employed coordinated strategies to silence journalists and media outlets, while armed groups and criminal networks reinforced their territorial control through threats, assassinations, and forced displacement. This state of siege was sustained by a pervasive culture of impunity, which both endangered journalistic work and deprived the public of its fundamental rights to access to information and freedom of expression.

States solidified their position as the primary aggressors against the press, leveraging a combination of administrative and judicial mechanisms and the deployment of security agents to intimidate and repress journalists. Furthermore, armed groups and non-state political actors escalated their attacks, particularly in areas with limited state presence, such as southern Colombia, the northern border of Mexico, and rural parts of Honduras. This resulted in forced displacement, self-censorship, and information deserts. Community and Indigenous-run media outlets in countries like Guatemala and Bolivia faced persistent harassment, including legal restrictions and the withholding of licenses, which undermines media diversity. In authoritarian regimes like Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, the state exerted total control over information, persecuting journalists into exile and even criminalizing citizen who shared public interest information on social media. In countries with official democratic systems, such as Paraguay, El Salvador, and Guatemala, sophisticated censorship practices proliferated, including through the abusive use of judicial power, information blockades, smear campaigns, and digital harassment against journalists. Meanwhile, in Colombia and Mexico, the convergence of lethal violence and threats from armed groups and organized crime, coupled with stigmatization from official sectors, underscored the extreme risk faced by journalists investigating corruption, crime, or abuses of power.

The situation was further exacerbated by the internet becoming a new battleground for the harassment of journalists, with violence steadily escalating. In this environment, new aggressors emerged, emboldened by the rhetorical violence perpetrated by states. This phenomenon amplified

harassment and transformed social media into a constant source of aggression, with high potential for escalation if current trends persist. Furthermore, violence against women journalists and LGB individuals remains a pervasive threat in the region, with alarming examples in Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil, where sexist and digital attacks have intensified. While collaborative networks and innovative resistance strategies have emerged—such as the use of technology to protect identifies in Venezuela or transnational alliances in Argentina—the lack of basic guarantees for journalism has prevented a reversal of the regressive trend and made the digital environment yet another hostile space within the ecosystem of violence against the press.

In light of this context, Red VDS proposes the following recommendations to safeguard the right to information and the protection of freedom of the press and expression in the region:

1. Adopt comprehensive protection policies

The persistence and diversification of attacks against journalists in the region demand that states design and implement comprehensive protection policies that encompass prevention, response, and redress measures. These measures must be complemented by the rejection of restrictive legislative initiatives, such as so-called “gag laws,” and by concrete strategies to reverse the precarious working conditions that undermine the safety and autonomy of journalism. Policies must have sufficient resources, clear protocols, and differentiated approaches that consider the sex, sexual orientation, ethnic identity, and territorial context of those affected. To ensure their effectiveness, it is essential that governments develop these responses in consultation with civil society, and that they also include specific training for public officials and adhere to international standards for prevention and protection.

Likewise, these policies must go beyond reactive responses and incorporate early warning systems, continuous risk monitoring— including physical, digital, psychological, economic, and legal—and comprehensive support for victims, including legal, psychological, and social support, as well as physical and digital protection measures that allow them to continue their journalistic work safely. Governments must also prioritize the allocation of budgets sufficient to strengthen the institutions responsible for investigating attacks against the press in order to reduce impunity and prevent self-censorship, which undermines media diversity. For instance, in Peru, where the government protection mechanism is already in place, it is crucial to render it fully operational and able to prioritize vulnerable areas and anticipate risks, particularly in the lead-up to the 2026 elections. In an environment marked by democratic decline, ensuring a safe environment for the full exercise of the right to inform and be informed is an essential condition for preserving democracy.

The continued advance of organized crime and non-state armed groups in the region has led to a surge in violence against the press, particularly

in areas marked by territorial conflict and illicit economies. To address this, states should establish specialized security protocols for journalists, which must include, at the very least: tailored risk assessments, early warning systems, direct communication channels with security authorities, provision of escorts or on-the-ground support when needed, and guarantees of safe evacuation in high-risk situations. The development of these protocols should involve the participation of journalists, civil society organizations, and security experts, and should be grounded in international standards. In Colombia, for instance, it is essential to bolster security measures in areas with a high presence of illegal armed groups and to coordinate efforts with other countries to investigate and dismantle transnational criminal networks.

2. Guarantee an independent judicial system and stop the legal harassment of journalists

The abusive use of the judicial system as a tool for control, censorship, and persecution continues to weaken freedom of press in numerous countries in the region. To reverse this situation, States must guarantee judicial independence through transparent mechanisms for selecting and evaluating judges and prosecutors, as well as strengthen internal and external oversight bodies that prevent the co-opting of the judiciary, including collaboration with civil society. In turn, it is crucial to implement clear protocols that prevent the opening of unfounded criminal cases against journalists, with mechanisms for early review and guarantees of defense in place during the initial stages.

In addition, states must ensure swift, thorough, and independent investigations into all attacks against journalists. This requires creating specialized units with trained personnel, clear protocols with defined deadlines, genuine autonomy for prosecutors and judges, and effective protection for victims and witnesses, along with severe sanctions for those responsible, both directly and indirectly, particularly when it comes to state agents. In Guatemala, where the justice system has been co-opted, it is imperative to dismiss criminal proceedings lacking legal basis, facilitate the safe return of journalists in exile, and guarantee comprehensive reparations that restore their rights and working conditions.

3. Reform restrictive legal frameworks and prevent their persecutory use

Certain countries have laws in place that effectively legitimize persecution against journalists, such as Cuba's Social Communication Law, Bolivia's Law against Racism and all Forms of Discrimination, and Venezuela's Constitutional Law against Hatred and for Peaceful Coexistence and Tolerance. To counter this, states should initiate formal dialogue processes that bring together authorities, civil society, journalists, and specialized organizations to review and propose legislative reforms that safeguard freedom of the press and expression. It is also crucial to prevent the misuse of the legal system by curbing the use of criminal law to restrict

freedom of expression and the press. Decriminalizing crimes against honor is a key priority, as these laws are often used for persecutory purposes. This requires participatory processes that involve civil society, journalists, and specialists to ensure effective and sustainable reforms. A notable example is Ecuador, where the Mesa de Articulación para la Protección de Periodistas (MAPP) has driven proposals for regulatory improvements to protect journalism. For instance, in October 2024, MAPP presented a report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva, recommending that sufficient funding be allocated to the country's protection mechanism, thereby enhancing its operational capacity.

4. Address stigmatizing discourse

The increasing use of stigmatizing discourse by state actors, including presidents, poses a significant threat to freedom of the press by legitimizing and facilitating other forms of violence, such as online harassment to physical assaults. To address this, sates must promote awareness campaigns and training programs for public officials that are aimed at demonstrating how these narratives undermine democracy. It is essential to establish institutional protocols and permanent monitoring mechanisms to identify, record, and analyze stigmatizing discourse and, and to publish verifiable data demonstrating the impact of stigmatization on the press. Additionally, governments should create spaces for collaboration among authorities, civil society organizations, and media outlets in order to prevent the spread of stigmatizing discourse and mitigate its impact on the media landscape and journalist safety.

5. Guarantee access to public information and media diversity

Full and non-discriminatory access to public information remains a challenge, even in countries with transparency laws such as Ecuador and Argentina. To advance their effective implementation, states must conduct periodic audits of the implementation of their legal frameworks, involving civil society and independent oversight bodies, and extending all the way to the highest levels of authority, including the president or relevant oversight authorities. Moreover, it is essential to establish clear consequences for institutions that fail to provide information and to create accessible and efficient appeal mechanisms for citizens. By doing so, not only is the rule of law strengthened, but also discretionary restrictions are limited, ultimately guaranteeing citizens a genuine and verifiable right to information. Furthermore, to counterbalance media monopolization and promote a diverse representation of voices and perspectives in the region, it is crucial to ensure the equitable distribution of official advertising and financial support for community and independent media outlets.

6. Protect freedom in digital spaces

The digital environment has become a key space for both journalism and the spread of new forms of violence and surveillance. States must prohibit

mass surveillance without judicial oversight, protect the confidentiality of sources, and strengthen the media's capacity to address disinformation campaigns without restricting public debate. It is also necessary to promote the ethical and transparent use of artificial intelligence (AI), expand digital literacy, and foster ethical self-regulation as tools to counter stigmatizing discourse and reinforce journalistic credibility. In Venezuela, independent media outlets used AI to create the digital avatars "la chama" and "el pana" in response to the need to protect journalists from persecution and repression by the Venezuelan government. These avatars gather information from a dozen Venezuelan and a hundred international media outlets and present the news without revealing the journalists' identities. This protection strategy received international recognition with the Premio Rey de España.

7. Prevent and address violence based on sex or sexual orientation

Violence based on sex or sexual orientation against journalists requires specialized prevention and support measures, including safe reporting channels, mandatory training for justice system personnel, and guarantees for the effective participation of women, LGB individuals, and journalists from Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities under conditions of equality and safety. This approach fulfills a human rights obligation and contributes to promoting diversity and representation within the media environment. Additionally, it is necessary to promote the presence of women, LGB individuals, and journalists of color in leadership positions within the media.

8. Promote regional and international cooperation and solidarity

The magnitude and persistence of violence against the press in the region demands a coordinated response that transcends borders. Strengthening collaborative networks, designing digital reporting platforms, and creating specialized legal assistance mechanisms will allow independent media to withstand adverse environments. Regional cooperation should include the creation of specialized working groups with the IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, the cessation of all forms of arbitrary persecution against critical voices, and sustained public awareness campaigns that highlight the impact of violence against journalism. Furthermore, promoting multi-stakeholder, multi-level, and multilateral international mechanisms for the protection of freedom of expression and of the press is urgent. The international community should exert greater diplomatic and political pressure on states to end stigmatizing discourse against the press and to comply with their international obligations regarding freedom of expression and the protection of journalists. Actively defending freedom of expression is a collective and strategic task to preserve democracy in Latin America.

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