

SHADOW  
REPORT ON THE  
IMPLEMENTATION  
OF SDG 16.10.1 IN  
LATIN AMERICA

2022







## SHADOW REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 16.10.1 IN LATIN AMERICA 2022

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**VDS** is a network of 17 civil society organizations that monitor, analyze, and report on the state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in Latin America with the purpose of defending and promoting these fundamental rights.

### Argentina

Foro de Periodismo Argentino (FOPEA)

### Brazil

Asociación Brasileña de Periodismo de Investigación (ABRAJI)

### Bolivia

Asociación Nacional de la Prensa de Bolivia (ANP)

### Colombia

Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP)

### Costa Rica

Instituto de Prensa y Libertad de Expresión (IPLEX)

### Cuba

Instituto Cubano de Libertad de Expresión y Prensa (ICLEP)

### Chile

Observatorio del Derecho a la Comunicación (ODC)

### Ecuador

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

### El Salvador

Asociación de Periodistas de El Salvador (APES)

### Guatemala

Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios para la Democracia Social (DEMOS)

### Honduras

Comité por la Libre Expresión (C-LIBRE)

### Mexico

ARTICLE 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)

### Venezuela

Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS)

### Uruguay

Centro de Archivos y Acceso a la Información (CAINFO)



<http://www.vocesdelsurunidas.org/>



<https://twitter.com/VDSorg>



<https://www.facebook.com/VDSorg>



<https://www.instagram.com/vdsorg>

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This is the fifth year of the Voces del Sur network’s monitoring and reporting on the state of freedom of expression in the region. Throughout this period, the joint monitoring efforts of the network have resulted in the broadest and most comprehensive and methodologically robust record of violations of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information in Latin America. The processing and analysis of this year’s data demonstrate that 2022 has been the most violent year for the press in the region since the creation of the network in 2018. Aggregated data from the last 5 years evidence the decline of fundamental freedoms and exhibit 10 dangerous trends that threaten the exercise of journalism in Latin America, while also providing 5 valuable lessons that point in the right direction.

In these 5 years, one of the most important contributions of the VDS network has been to use data to expose the various types and patterns of violence against women and LGBTIQ+ journalists, and how these particular forms of violence are deployed and experienced differently.

As the network expands and continues to refine and perfect its methodology, the capacity of the data collected to transform the way fundamental freedoms are defended and promoted in the region increases. This contributes to the construction of more democratic, just, peaceful, and inclusive societies in Latin America.

# INTRODUCTION

## Voces del Sur: Five Years of Monitoring Freedom of Expression in Latin America



<https://unsplash.com/es/fotos/ZI3n0D0gcfA>

The Voces del Sur (VDS) network is a regional initiative of 17 civil society organizations (CSOs) working to defend and promote freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information in Latin America. Since 2018, the VDS network has monitored attacks against these rights based on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 16.10.1.

The VDS network publishes an annual Shadow Report in parallel to information presented—or omitted-- by Latin America's governments, ultimately complementing, contrasting, and enriching official state reports and statistics. This is the fifth Shadow Report published by the VDS network. Both the VDS network itself and the scope of the Shadow Report have doubled since the network's beginning, from covering 8 countries in 2018 to 16 countries in 2022. In 2023, with the addition of Chile, the VDS network will document in 17 countries across the region.

Throughout these 5 years, the VDS network's joint monitoring efforts have allowed for the construction of the most comprehensive, integrated, and methodologically robust record of violations of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information in Latin America. Its data collection and processing facilitate independent evaluation of trends, achievements, and challenges in fulfilling SDG 16.10, and contributes to the quest for solutions. It guides public policy and provides empirical evidence to help achieve more democratic, just, peaceful, and inclusive societies in the region.

# METHODOLOGY

## United Nations (UN) 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



**Goal 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 data contained in this Shadow Report are provided by VDS member organizations monitoring at a national level in Latin America. Partner organizations report “alerts” of violations of fundamental freedoms using a methodology based on SDG indicator 16.10.1. The methodology utilized for this report has been collaboratively developed and updated by network members. It follows the guidelines of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), has been presented for consultation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and has been continually refined over 5 years of implementation.

Alerts issued by the VDS network are classified according to 13 common regional indicators, plus one cross-cutting gender indicator. Given that there may be more than one identified victim in the same alert, indicators consider each victim separately. The registered alerts are ordered in accordance with the “most serious crime” rule. If an incident includes elements of more than one category, it is coded in the highest one. Finally, the indicators only consider acts that aim to obstruct, censor, or negatively impact journalistic work or the profession.

## INDICATORS VDS



**1. MURDER:** Intentional killing of a journalist



**2. KIDNAPPING:** Unlawful seizure and retention of one or more journalists against their will



**3. ENFORCED 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



**4. ARBITRARY DETENTION:** Arrest, retention, or detention of a journalist without a fair trial or legal basis justifying the deprivation of liberty





**5. TORTURE:** Act by which intentional physical or mental pain, intimidation, coercion or severe suffering is inflicted on a journalist



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



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



**8. SEXUAL VIOLENCE:** Unwanted sexual acts, attempts, comments, or insinuations, both in physical and digital spaces



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



**10. RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION:** Obstruction to access information of public interest or newsworthy events



**11. 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 expression, and that harm journalists and media outlets economically or prevent them from doing their job



**12. LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PRESS:** Proposal and/or approval of norms, which may include laws, decrees, regulations, resolutions, ordinances, and/or rules, that restrict freedom of press, expression, and the right to access information and/or generate censorship



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



**14. GENDER ALERT (CROSS-CUTTING):** Evaluates whether the motive behind an attack or violation is related to the victim's sex, gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation



## Gender and Inclusion

The VDS network has incorporated a cross-cutting gender indicator into its methodology to document differentiated threats and attacks against women and LGBTIQ+ journalists. The gender alert is issued when a violation of freedom of expression contains elements of discrimination based on gender, including physical appearance, sexuality, gender expression, gender identity, or sexual orientation of journalists. Additionally, this year, the VDS network has introduced a new indicator of “Sexual Violence” to further capture the differentiated forms of violence experienced by women and LGBTIQ+ journalists.

## Methodological Limitations

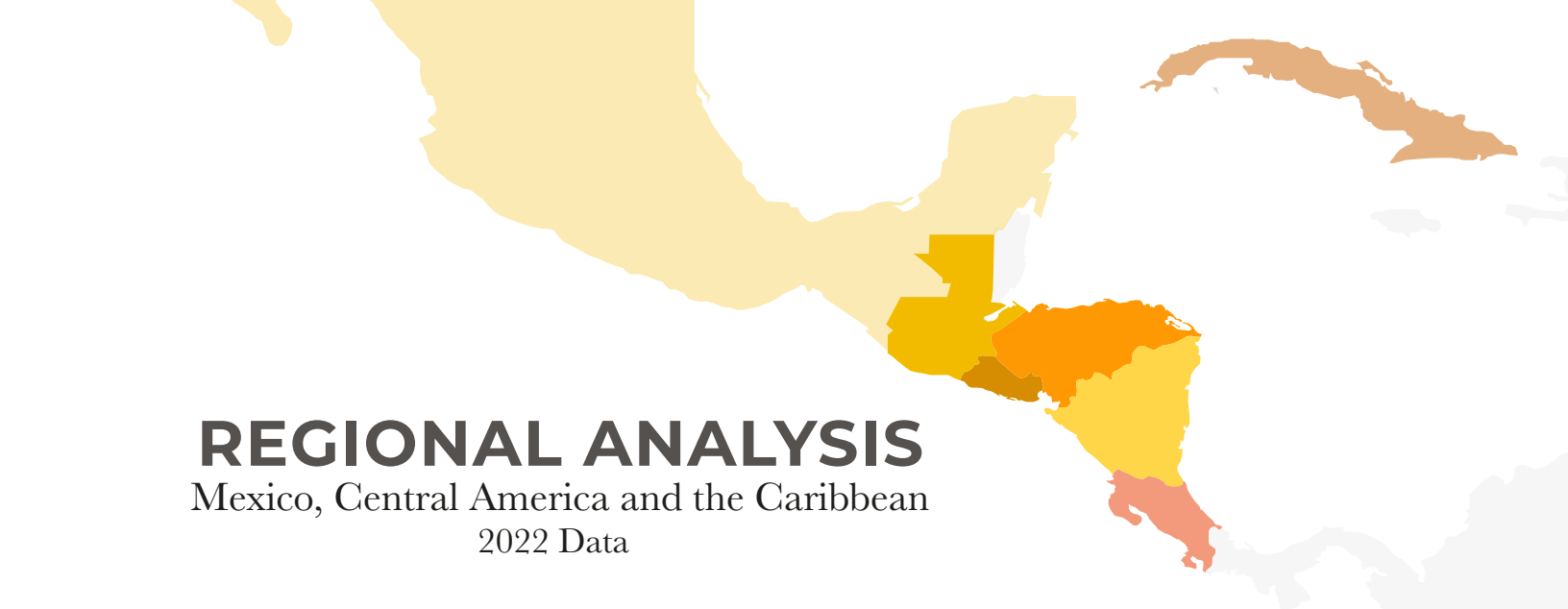
The VDS monitoring methodology was developed through collaborative and experience-based exchanges between the network’s partner organizations. It is consistently reviewed and improved after each implementation. However, the methodology does have limitations.














First, although the UN’s definition of Indicator 16.10.1 includes “trade unionists and human rights defenders,” the VDS network, by nature, focuses exclusively on journalists. Second, monitoring of SDG 16.10.1 depends on the monitoring, documentation, and reporting capacity of CSOs at the national level. Therefore, there is always a potential underreporting of aggressions. At the moment of publication of this report, some alerts are still in the verification stage by member organizations. Therefore, these have not been included in the analysis, which means that actual figures could be higher. In addition, the intimidation and self-censorship generated by acts of violence mean that many cases are not reported for fear of reprisals. VDS network partners are at different stages of adaptation and learning about the cross-cutting gender indicator. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that there may also be underreporting of this form of violence. Finally, alerts are documented and systematized by partners using their own monitoring systems, which are adapted to their unique context. For the purposes of the Shadow Report, the country-level records provided by partners are reduced to the VDS network’s 13 common indicators and the cross-cutting gender indicator. This reduction facilitates comparative regional analysis, but can also result in discrepancies between the data in this report and those reported by organizations at the local level.



# REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean  
2022 Data



	Mexico	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Cuba
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>508</b>
 Murder	15	1		5			
 Kidnapping	2						
 Enforced disappearance				1			
 Arbitrary detention	8	2	4	2	6		211
 Torture							
 Aggressions and attacks	404	10	12	76	160		109
 Stigmatizing speech	107	3	12		15	9	
 Sexual violence		1					
 Civil and criminal proceedings		3		20	9		
 Restrictions of access to information	68	2	6	5	5	1	
 Abusive use of State power	44	11	6	8	497	1	39
 Legal norm contrary to standards				1			
 Internet restrictions	48		19	2	11		149

# REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean  
2022 Data



	Mexico	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Cuba
	34	11	2	7	1	1	-

## VICTIMS

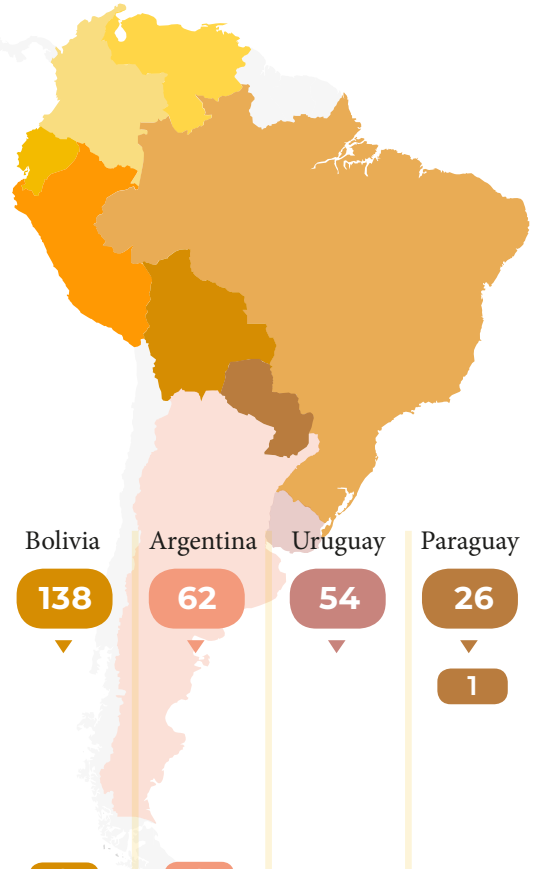
	Mexico	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Cuba
	696	33	59	120	703	11	508
Men	450	16	13	57	47	3	281
Women	178	10	15	16	39	2	214
Not available	68	7	31	41	617	6	13
Non-binary				6			

## AGGRESSORS

	Mexico	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Cuba
	696	33	59	120	703	11	508
State	328	27	27	58	618	6	504
Groups outside the law	86		9	18			
Non-state	118	1	23	21	9	5	
Not identified	164	4		15	73		4
Parastatal		1		8	3		

# REGIONAL ANALYSIS

South America - 2022 Data



	Colombia	Venezuela	Ecuador	Peru	Brazil	Bolivia	Argentina	Uruguay	Paraguay
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>26</b>
Murder	2	1	4		2				1
Kidnapping			4	3					
Enforced disappearance		1	1						
Arbitrary detention	6	2	4	1		2	2		
Torture									
Aggressions and attacks	406	55	266	59	271	77	29	8	11
Stigmatizing speech	70	62	58	2	460	3	9	19	2
Sexual violence	2		3	1	7				6
Civil and criminal proceedings	31	27	17	8	15	24	13	11	6
Restrictions of access to information	108	43	43	13	16	12	5	7	
Abusive use of State power	6	149	10	9	4	16		2	
Legal norm contrary to standards			2	3		3	3	1	
Internet restrictions	26	27	17	2	16	1	1	6	



# REGIONAL ANALYSIS

South America - 2022 Data



  
**GENDER ALERTS**

Colombia	Venezuela	Ecuador	Peru	Brazil	Bolivia	Argentina	Uruguay	Paraguay
24	2	30	2	54	1	1	3	9

**VICTIMS**

- Men
- Women
- Not available
- Non-binary

	Colombia	Venezuela	Ecuador	Peru	Brazil	Bolivia	Argentina	Uruguay	Paraguay
<b>Total</b>	657	367	429	101	791	138	62	54	26
Men	454	123	199	50	264	68	32	18	13
Women	121	75	80	19	158	12	12	6	12
Not available	82	169	150	32	369	58	18	30	1
Non-binary									

**AGGRESSORS**

- State
- Groups outside the law
- Non-State
- Not identified
- Parastatal

	Colombia	Venezuela	Ecuador	Peru	Brazil	Bolivia	Argentina	Uruguay	Paraguay
<b>Total</b>	657	367	429	101	791	138	62	54	26
State	192	193	100	42	427	54	35	36	8
Groups outside the law	112	3			4	9	8		
Non-State	188	88	283	47	135	35	9	12	10
Not identified	165	83	46	7	225	32	8	6	8
Parastatal				5		8	2		

## Context and Trends

2022 has been the most violent year for Latin American press since the VDS network began monitoring 5 years ago. The network's organizations recorded 32 murders of journalists throughout 2022, perpetrated in clear connection to their reporting work. In addition, the network documented thousands of physical and verbal aggressions and hundreds of cases of abusive use of State power. There were also multiple politically motivated judicial processes and restrictions of access to information. The vast majority of crimes committed against journalists remain in impunity, and existing protection mechanisms for security or justice have severe deficiencies that limit their scope and impact. Instead of offering solutions, the public institutions responsible for safeguarding freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information exhibit significant significant shortcomings. They are not effective nor reliable and have not succeeded in structurally improving the security situation of journalists in Latin America. Collusion between corrupt public institutions and political powerholders perpetuates impunity, criminalizes the work of the press, threatens and intimidates journalists, and stifles critical voices. This year, the alerts documented and reported by the VDS network evidence 10 principal trends.

### **1. Escalation of violence**

In 2022, the three deadliest countries for the press in the region were Mexico, Honduras, and Ecuador. Of the 32 documented murders of journalists by the VDS network in 2022, 15 were recorded in Mexico, which suffered the worst wave of violence against journalists since network monitoring began in the country in 2020. Homicides of reporters have seen an alarming increase in Mexico, going from 6 cases reported in 2020 to 9 cases in 2021 and 15 in 2022. During the last 3 years, at least 30 journalists have been killed in this country.

Honduras, with 5 recorded murders, was the second deadliest country for journalists in the region in 2022. The VDS network has recorded 19 murders of journalists in Honduras in the last 5 years.

2022 was also an extremely violent year for the press in Ecuador. The VDS network documented the murder of 4 journalists, raising the total figure to 10 murders in the last 5 years.

In addition to lethal violence, 2,014 aggressions and attacks against journalists were registered in the form of physical assaults, attacks on infrastructure, destruction of equipment, and death threats, among others. Finally, in 2022, 21 cases were recorded under the new sexual violence indicator. It is important to recognize that this type of violence—defined as an unwanted sexual act, attempt, or insinuation—disproportionately affects women and LGBTIQ+ journalists.

### **2. An increase in violence amid protests**

In 2022, the press in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru endured serious attacks and aggressions during social upheavals.

In Bolivia, journalists were targeted by direct, selective attacks during the wave of protests demanding greater legislative representation that paralyzed Santa Cruz for over a month. Reporters were attacked by police forces and civilian shock troops linked to the ruling party.

Towards the end of the year in Peru, confrontation between the government and the press reached a climax during protests sparked by the coup d'état of President Pedro Castillo. The executive attempted to dissolve the judicial and legislative powers to stop his own removal, triggering uprisings throughout the country which inflicted direct violence against the press. Similarly, in Ecuador, the largest number of attacks against journalists were committed by protesters during the national strike in June.

Following Jair Bolsonaro's electoral defeat in Brazil, his supporters initiated a wave of protests rejecting the election's result. Numerous cases of verbal abuse, harassment, physical assaults, and destruction of equipment were reported against journalists covering these events.

### **3. Stigmatization incites further violence**

The VDS network recorded 831 alerts for stigmatizing speech in 2022, accounting for 17% of all alerts in the region. In 2018 and 2019, stigmatizing speech represented around 5% of alerts registered. By 2020, this reached 10% of the total, and in 2021, almost 15%. Speech that stigmatizes the press erodes democratic systems and fosters a climate of self-censorship. The danger is particularly acute when these attacks come from high-level political actors, as they contribute to a permissive environment for other forms of direct and structural violence against journalists.

The data suggest a correlation between increases in rhetorical and other forms of violence. Although it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between these variables, the data reflect that stigmatization against the press often coincides with other types of aggressions, such as direct physical violence against journalists by political sympathizers or structural violence exercised by State institutions. Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador show extremely high levels of stigmatization and are some of the most dangerous countries for journalists in the region. The decline of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information in Argentina, Peru, and Uruguay has also been marked by an increase in stigmatization. Even in Costa Rica, —a country known for its legacies of peace and democracy and where the VDS network monitored aggressions for the first time in 2022—stigmatizing speech constituted 82% of all alerts.

### **4. The State as the main aggressor**

The data from 2022 overwhelmingly confirm that the State is the principal culprit of violations of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and

access to information in Latin America. State and parastate agents are the main aggressors in 56% of cases in the region. In Nicaragua, this percentage reaches 88%, and in Cuba, 99%. Although this trend has fluctuated regionally, State actors have consistently been the aggressors in most alerts during the VDS network's 5 years of monitoring: 55% in 2018, 75% in 2019, 59% in 2020, and 72% in 2021.

### **5. The growing threat of organized crime**

The increase in violence - particularly lethal - also reflects the growth and strengthening of organized crime groups linked to drug trafficking that exert influence over institutions in the region, especially at the local level. This year, around 5% of alerts in the region identified organized crime as the aggressor. In Colombia, organized crime is responsible for almost 20% of alerts issued, most of which were recorded during an "armed strike" in which illegal armed groups blocked roads, imposed mobility restrictions, and inhibited the day-to-day activities of the population in certain parts of the country. Increases in violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the press on behalf of organized crime groups have also been reported in Mexico, Honduras, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina. This is an extremely worrisome trend for a region historically prone to armed violence and the dismantling of democratic institutions.

### **6. The inadequacy of existing protection mechanisms**

In 2022, IDEA reported the murder of journalist Humberto Coronel, who was investigating corruption and organized crime in the Paraguayan city of Pedro Juan Caballero. Months earlier, Coronel and his colleague Gustavo Báez had reported receiving threats. However, their distrust of public institutions prompted them to reject police protection in their homes.

In Colombia, Rafael Moreno, a journalist murdered in 2022, was already given security coverage by the State, while Wilder Córdoba - the second journalist murdered this year in this



country - never requested protection measures, even though he too had received threats against his life. The inadequate protection strategies in Moreno's case and the distrust by Córdoba and Coronel are a tragic reminder of the need to strengthen existing protection mechanisms. The current reactive and militarized measures have not substantially improved the security situation of journalists and must be supported by preventive and coordinated initiatives between authorities, civil society, and journalists.

It is important to recognize where progress has been made and to avoid setbacks in terms of protection policies. Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Paraguay already have some protection system in place for journalists that, despite their limitations, can contribute to preventing violence, reducing risk, and combating impunity for crimes against the press. While these systems are not entirely effective and often lack the autonomy and resources to operate, the response should be to strengthen, not eliminate them.

## **7. The abuse of State power**

Rather than promoting and defending freedom of expression and freedom of the press, public institutions in the region are often weaponized to persecute critical journalism. Political and economic powerholders use the state to silence the press and restrict public interest reporting. In 2022, the VDS network documented 802 alerts of abusive use of State power, 334 restrictions of access to information, and 250 arbitrary detentions. This is especially dire in authoritarian regimes such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, where journalists face arbitrary detentions, rigged trials, and the discretionary use of public regulatory institutions to punish critical journalism. The deployment of prosecutors and police forces against independent journalism has been constant in these regimes. In 2022, the network reported 211 arbitrary detentions in Cuba. In Nicaragua, it documented the imprisonment of 9 journalists, the arbitrary

closure of more than 30 media outlets, and a total of 497 alerts of abusive use of State power. Meanwhile, in Venezuela, the VDS network issued 149 alerts for abusive use of State power, and reported the arbitrary closure of 107 radio stations due to political and administrative pressures.

## **8. Laws and the justice system as instruments to silence**

The VDS network documented 164 civil and criminal judicial proceedings and 13 alerts regarding legislation contrary to international standards in 2022. In El Salvador, President Nayib Bukele has deployed a system of harassment, surveillance, and espionage to silence those who criticize his administration. He has virtually institutionalized a state of exception through presidential decree, suspending the fundamental liberties of a democratic State.

Guatemala witnessed the indictment and subsequent detention of José Rubén Zamora, the president of newspaper El Periódico, on charges of blackmail, influence peddling, money laundering, and conspiracy. In Argentina, though cases against journalists are civil rather than criminal, the justice system continues to be used to exhaust journalists physically, mentally, and financially. Powerful politicians also use the judiciary in Brazil to censor publications and hinder the work of journalists through civil and criminal processes. Finally, Uruguay has seen a worrisome trend of legal proceedings against journalists and media professionals.

In terms of legislation against freedom of expression and freedom of the press, the "Law of Oversight, Regulation, Action, and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations and Related Organizations" bill approved in a first round of discussion by the Venezuelan parliament is similar to regressive legislation in Nicaragua and Cuba (where a similar law is being debated). These laws seek to restrict the human right to freedom of association and close the civic space

by retaliating against forms of independent civil society and facilitating the co-optation of broad sectors of society.

## **9. Impunity**

Crimes against journalists in the region almost always go unpunished, resulting in no justice for victims. According to C-Libre, while at least 96 journalists have been killed in Honduras between 2001 and 2022, only 10% of these cases have been prosecuted. In Mexico, ARTICLE 19 has recorded an impunity rate of 98% in crimes against journalists since 2007. ANP of Bolivia reports that, since the recording of aggressions against journalists began in 2008, not a single crime against journalists has been prosecuted by the justice system. In Ecuador, there have been no significant advances in the investigations of crimes against journalists committed in 2022, and the murders of eight journalists in previous years remain unpunished. The inability or unwillingness of States in the region to respond to the wave of violence against journalists demonstrates a lack of commitment to ensuring the safety of journalists and the complete vulnerability of independent journalists to violent actors, be they estatal, parastatal, organized crime, or others.

## **10. Self-censorship and exile**

Attacks against the press have a self-censoring effect that compromises the essential role of media supervision, oversight, and scrutiny in society. In Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Guatemala, and El Salvador, the very future of journalism is at risk as independent journalists have been forced into exile through persecution, repression, and surveillance. In Cuba, ICLEP documented the exile of at least 90 journalists in 2022. In Nicaragua, FLED recorded an estimated 120 journalists fleeing due to violence, aggression, and government hostility against the press. In Venezuela, in addition to exile, continuous attacks on the press have prompted a significant increase in self-censorship. In an investigation titled “The Orchestration of Silence,” IPYS Venezuela explained how 54% of media professionals admit to having omitted public interest information for fear of retaliation by government authorities. In Ecuador, the increase in violence has “silent zones” or media deserts, where press teams do not enter for fear of attacks. Authoritarian repression and violence lead journalists to opt for silence, reducing the rigor of their oversight of actors suppressing fundamental freedoms.



## Gender and Inclusion

The 21 cases of sexual violence and 192 gender alerts reported in 2022 reveal the differentiated effects of violence against women journalists and LGBTIQ+ individuals. These figures highlight the importance of taking gender-sensitive security and protection measures in the region. Violence affects women journalists differently than their male colleagues. While death threats and physical attacks are more prevalent in the case of men, women are more likely to receive threats against their families, especially their children, or involving other aspects of their lives such as physical appearance or sexual orientation. Additionally, women journalists face specific threats that restrict their ability to work and disproportionately impact their right to freedom of expression, such as inequality in the workplace, sexist and misogynistic comments, and sexual violence. The lack of protection for women journalists, including deficiencies in the mechanisms to respond to these crimes, prevent adequate attention from being paid to violations against the fundamental rights of women journalists.

Just as women journalists face specific threats and challenges based on their gender, indigenous and Afro-descendant persons also face differentiated forms of violence, especially discrimination based on their ethnic and/or linguistic origin. When these vulnerabilities intersect, such as being a woman and indigenous, problems are exacerbated, especially in a multi-ethnic region like Latin America. Finally, the low number of gender alerts reported in countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela indicate that the specific risks faced by women journalists tend to be made invisible in highly repressive contexts. In turn, the large number of cases identified in Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico have been registered thanks in part to the focus and strengthening of the capacity of VDS members in these countries to identify the differentiated patterns of violence experienced by men, women, and non-binary journalists.

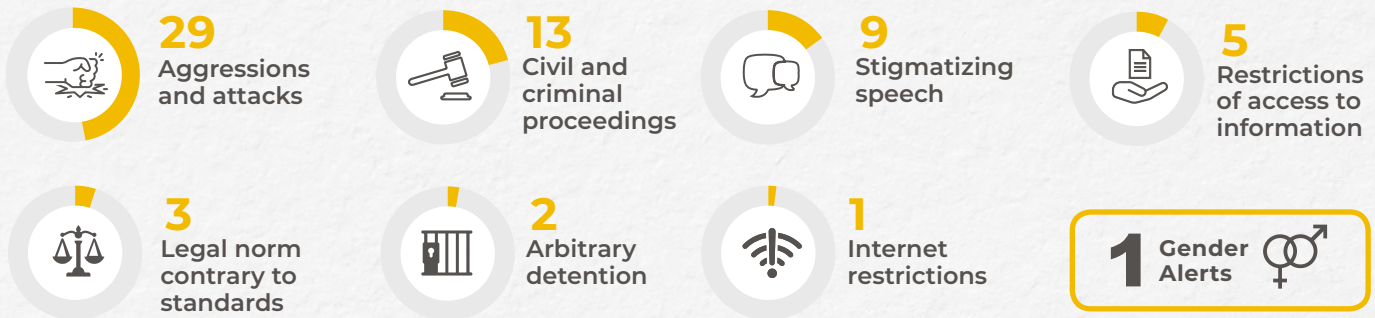


# ARGENTINA

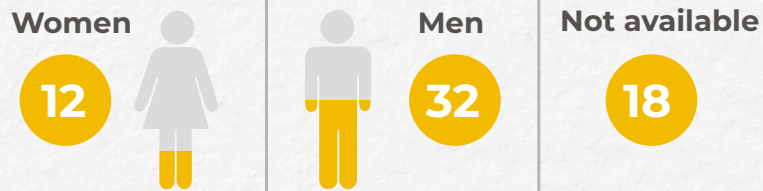
2022 Data

62 Alerts

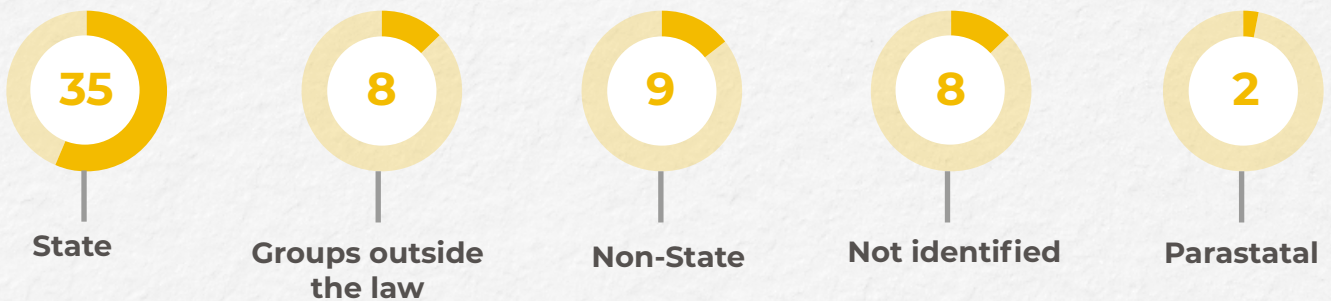
## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS



## AGGRESSORS



## Context and Trends

In 2022, the situation of freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Argentina was marked by the polarization of political discourse, which translated into an increase in attacks on the press. An attack against Vice President Cristina Kirchner only served to exacerbate political polarization in the country. Claims that the news was “prefabricated” or that the attack was “staged” went viral on social media. At the same time, Kirchner’s political allies, including President Alberto Fernández and members of his cabinet, accused the media of allegedly inciting violence against the vice president through “hate speech.” In this context, FOPEA reported 29 alerts for aggressions and attacks and 9 for stigmatizing speech.

Although the State remains the main aggressor in 57% of cases in Argentina, FOPEA reported—for the first time in 5 years—attacks by drug trafficking and organized crime groups. Previous reports had reflected the declining security situation in the city of Rosario. However, 2022 seems to be a turning point. FOPEA documented cases of direct attacks on the press in that city, such as two armed attacks against media outlet Televisión Litoral.

In addition to the polarization of political discourse and the growing threat of organized crime, the manipulation of the Argentine judicial system to harass journalists continues to cause concern. In 2022, FOPEA reported 13 alerts of judicial proceedings and 2 arbitrary detentions. Although legal cases against journalists are pursued through civil means in Argentina and not through the criminal route as in other countries in the region, the judiciary is still being instrumentalized to exhaust journalists physically, mentally, and financially.

## Gender and Inclusion

In 2022, FOPEA reported 1 gender alert and reiterated its concern over the harassment that women journalists face on social media. In Argentina, women reporters are the principal victims of online violence, including false accusations, threats, and personal insults. In its, “Guide of 100 Best Practices for the Defense of Journalists” (FOPEA 2022), FOPEA has warned that these intimidations silence the voices of women journalists, restrict freedom of expression, and contribute to the dissemination of misinformation. In response, FOPEA has advocated for the employment of gender editors in the media as valuable contributors to newsrooms that promote diversity and avoid the perpetuation of inequalities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Argentina still faces extreme polarization of its public discourse. This divergence has repercussions for the media, as journalists are ultimately the targets of attacks. The upcoming elections in 2023 have stoked fears that increasing political polarization will create risks for journalism. In confronting this situation, civil society and the international community must demand that Argentine authorities refrain from stigmatizing the press and work proactively to prevent aggressions against journalists. Argentina’s government must act in consultation with civil society and in accordance with international standards to protect the press from violence. It must address the insecure and vulnerable state of journalism in this country, especially given the growing presence of organized crime groups.



# BOLIVIA

2022 Data

138 Alerts

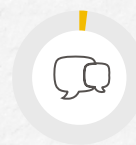
## INDICATORS



2  
Arbitrary  
detention



77  
Aggressions  
and attacks



3  
Stigmatizing  
speech



24  
Civil and  
criminal  
proceedings



12  
Restrictions  
of access to  
information



16  
Abusive  
use of State  
power



3  
Legal norm  
contrary to  
standards



1  
Internet  
restrictions



## VICTIMS

Women

12



Men

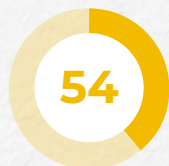
68



Not available

58

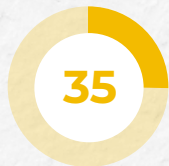
## AGGRESSORS



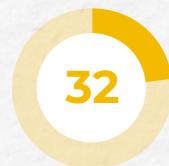
State



Groups outside  
the law



Non-State



Not identified



Parastatal



## **Context and Trends**

In 2022, freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Bolivia was threatened by political, economic, and social instability arising from the wave of protests that paralyzed the province of Santa Cruz at the end of the year. After failed attempts at dialogue, the central government mobilized riot police to repel protesters. In this context, ANP reported 77 aggressions and attacks. Amid the protests, journalists were targeted by direct and selective attacks at the hands of police forces and shock troops linked to the ruling party.

In addition to direct violence, the media suffered persistent judicial harassment and State administrative measures seeking to intimidate and silence media and journalists. Bolivian authorities frequently harass journalists in attempts to learn the identity of their confidential news sources, particularly in reports related to corruption and the abuse of State power. ANP recorded 24 judicial processes and 16 instances of abusive use of State power.

## **Gender and Inclusion**

In 2022, the ANP recorded death threats against a woman journalist for her role in denouncing several femicides. Additionally, women journalists in Bolivia face specific threats that restrict their work and disproportionately impact their right to freedom of expression, such as inequality in the workplace, sexist and misogynistic comments,

and sexual harassment. These problems are exacerbated when vulnerabilities intersect, such as being an indigenous woman reporting from a rural area. This problem is particularly relevant in a predominantly rural and multi-ethnic country like Bolivia.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In the face of violent protests, the State must take measures to guarantee the right to peaceful assembly and the protection of journalists and media in accordance with international standards. This requires instructing police forces on how to ensure the safety of journalists and media workers, investigating and punishing those who exercise violence to censor journalism, and ensuring comprehensive reparation for victims. Another fundamental step for Bolivia is to put an end to impunity for against journalists. More than a year after its occurrence, the case of Las Londras—which involved the kidnapping and torture of a group of journalists in October 2021—remains in impunity, with no arrests made in this case. Bolivia’s judicial system must enforce the constitution, promote rule of law, and guarantee the safety of citizens as a whole, and journalists in particular. This entails taking proactive steps to end impunity. Finally, the State must cease its weaponization of the judiciary, and must annul the actions of prosecutors and judges seeking to violate source secrecy that is guaranteed by Article 107 of the Bolivian constitution and in this country’s Media Law.

# BRAZIL

2022 Data

791 Alerts

## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS

Women

158



Men

264



Not available

369

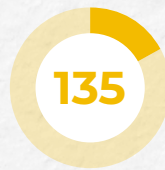
## AGGRESSORS



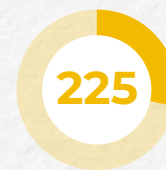
State



Groups outside the law



Non-State



Not identified

## Context and Trends

As expected, 2022 was another challenging year for press freedom in Brazil. The end of the year witnessed tense presidential elections, resulting in the defeat of incumbent president Jair Bolsonaro. After the elections, and despite Bolsonaro leaving power peacefully, his followers initiated a wave of antidemocratic protests. This resulted in numerous cases of verbal abuse, harassment, physical assaults, and destruction of equipment of journalists covering these events. In total, Abrají reported 672 alerts for stigmatizing discourse and 293 alerts for aggression and attacks during the year.

Violence against the press in Brazil manifested tragically with the murder of two journalists: Givanildo Oliveira, founder and owner of Pirambu News, and English journalist Dom Phillips, who was reporting on indigenous populations in the Amazon. The murders remain unsolved. Although there are three people currently under arrest for the murder of Dom Phillips, his family has recently denounced “shameful” delays in the trials (The Guardian, 2023), while Amnesty International Brazil has decried the “incredible negligence” (Ibid) of the judicial system.

Finally, although State actors remain the principal aggressors in Brazil with 467 alerts, aggressions reported by Abrají indicate a highly worrisome trend of violence enacted by ordinary citizens, with 379 alerts. Followers of political actors, encouraged by polarization and stigmatizing discourse, have committed acts of violence against journalists and media outlets. The persecution against journalists is massified, as the radicalization of the general public represents an immense danger for independent and critical journalism in Brazil.

## Gender and Inclusion

In 2022, Abrají reported 66 gender alerts, mostly of aggression and attacks against women journalists on social media. Rather than commenting on their journalism, these attacks instead target their gender and are rife with sexist and/or sexualized connotations. There have also been 6 cases of aggression against LGBTIQ+ journalists through homophobic and transphobic offenses. Finally, Abrají reported 8 cases related to threats of rape, sexual harassment, and other crimes under the new VDS indicator of sexual violence.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The waning of political polarization and the democratic recovery of Brazil must be the first priority on the new government’s agenda. The years of Bolsonaro’s governance dismantled the institutions and discontinued the public policies that had protected journalists and freedom of expression activists. The new government must reestablish these policies and implement new institutional frameworks to support journalists in the crossfire of political polarization.

According to Abrají, hostility against the press is not a simple incident, but a trend that may continue and deepen going forward if the democratic institutions in this country are not rebuilt. This task necessarily requires protecting and defending the press in Brazil.

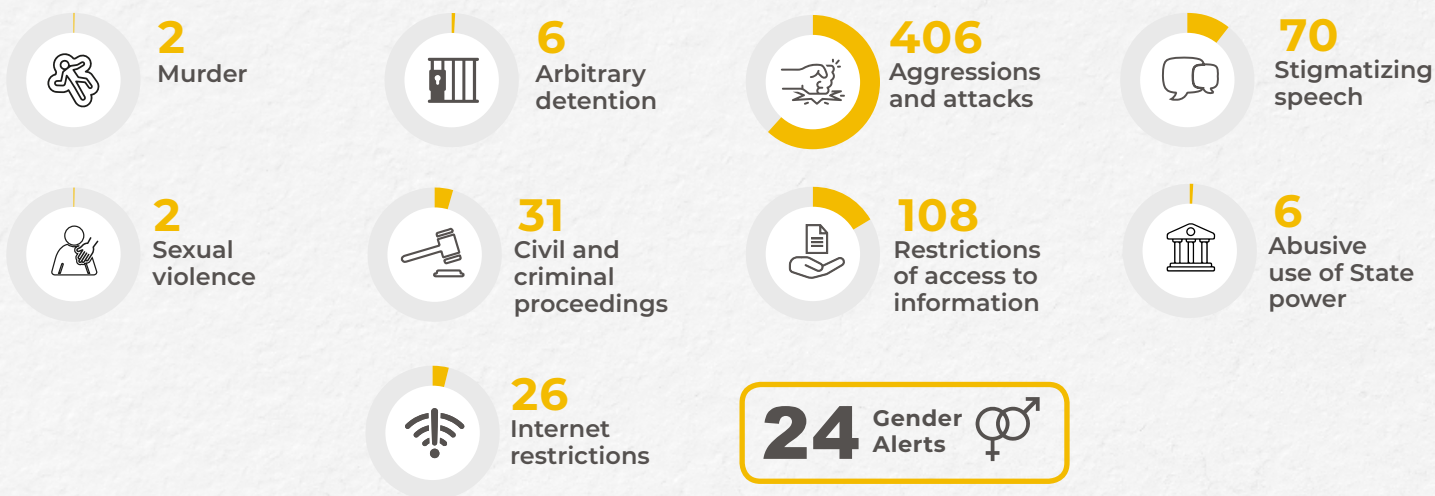


# COLOMBIA

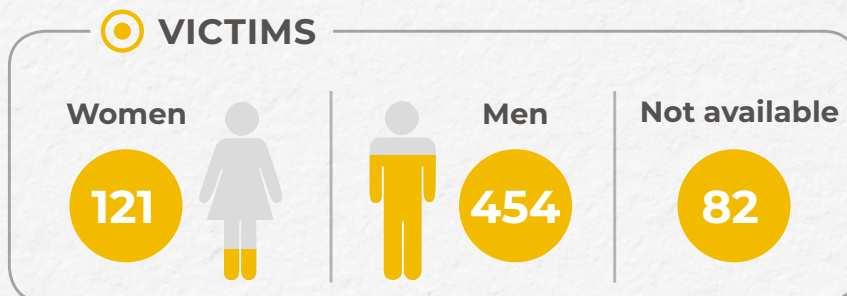
2022 Data

657 Alerts

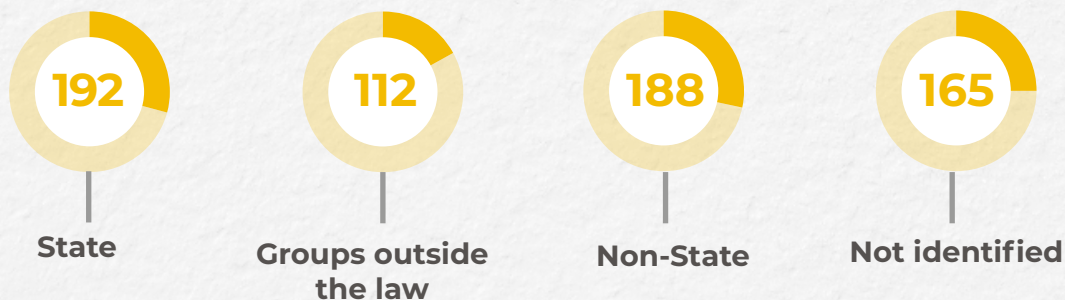
## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS



## AGGRESSORS





## Context and Trends

2022 has been one of the most violent years for the Colombian press in the last decade. The year began with violence in Arauca, a region bordering Venezuela, with confrontations between armed groups vying for territorial control. In the first three months of the year, FLIP reported attacks, threats, and intimidation against the press, mainly coming from armed groups, dissident factions of the FARC, paramilitaries, and criminal gangs operating in this border area. In addition, growing tensions between armed groups and the national government led to an “armed strike” being called in May by criminal group “Clan del Golfo” following the capture of one of its leaders. This resulted in 15 media outlets going off the air due to threats of retaliation.

In March and June of 2022, elections led to an increase in violence against the press. The predominant trend was an increase in stigmatizing discourse by then-candidates and the president-elect, Gustavo Petro, against media professionals. Discursive violence translated into attacks and violent reactions against journalists by political sympathizers and followers. At the end of the year, FLIP counted 406 attacks and issued 70 alerts for stigmatizing discourse. Violence against the media decreased following the election, but spiked again tragically at the end of the year. The last quarter of 2022 saw the murders of two journalists, Rafael Moreno and Wilder Córdoba. Both journalists played important roles in social leadership and conducted incisive public oversight investigations.

## Gender and Inclusion

In 2022, FLIP reported 24 gender alerts and 2 alerts under the new sexual violence indicator. In the wave of violence in Arauca, criminal groups brutally harassed women journalists, even though there are few women journalists covering the armed conflict due to the additional risks that this entails. FLIP has discovered that patterns of sexist and misogynistic attacks occur mostly on digital platforms, which provide aggressors with an intimate space to attack women, as well as a sense of impunity. In these spaces, the femininity of journalists is usually attacked with threats of rape and allusions to harming their families.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The increase in stigmatization against the press by politicians, along with the intensification of violence due to the armed conflict, has made 2022 one of the most intense periods for the Colombian press in the last decade. Peace agreements are currently being negotiated between the new government and armed groups in the country. These agreements do not include provisions for respecting freedom of expression and the protection and security of journalists. FLIP calls on the national government, civil society, and the international community to include protection strategies and focused plans to guarantee the safety and protection of journalists, as well as full respect for freedom of expression and freedom of the press in national discourse. FLIP has also urged the National Protection Unit, a public institution for journalist security dating back to 2000, to update its tools and methodologies to safeguard the lives and integrity of journalists more effectively, given that the national context and dynamics of the armed conflict have changed since this institution’s creation.

# COSTA RICA

2022 Data

11 Alerts

## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS

Women

2



Men

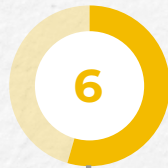
3



Not available

6

## AGGRESSORS



State



Non-State

## Context and Trends

Costa Rica has a strong democratic tradition. Freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information have long been pillars of the country's democratic development. However, President Rodrigo Chaves regularly deploys dangerous stigmatizing discourse against the press, frequently resorting to misinformation. This situation has alarmed Costa Rican CSOs that while accustomed to disagreements between the press and political groups, had never witnessed the levels of hostility and aggressiveness of the current government. The aggressions of the executive towards the press have been sustained and venomous. It has sparked a worrisome chain reaction on social media in which “trolls” and President Chaves's sympathizers reproduce and amplify his misinformation and stigmatizing discourse, insulting and harassing journalists online.

IPLEX's monitoring exhibits 9 instances of stigmatizing discourse by State actors against independent journalists and media in the country. Beyond simple discourse, the executive has already attempted to cut the main source of income for La Nación, one of Costa Rica's most important and critical media outlets. In July, the Chaves administration closed the “Parque Viva” events center, after the president of Grupo Nación, Pedro Abreu, explained that the outlet relied on the venue's revenue to financially support its operations. The government justified this unjust closure by using traffic congestion as a pretext. However, a ruling by the Constitutional Chamber annulled the closure order of the events center, labeling it an indirect attack on freedom of the press.

## Gender and Inclusion

The discursive hostility towards Costa Rican journalism includes sexist and misogynistic content. In 2022, IPLEX reported 1 gender alert for stigmatizing discourse against independent reporter Lilliana Carranza from Teletica, in which social media users—in addition to criticizing her journalistic work—attacked her with sexist and misogynistic comments.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Events in Costa Rica have prompted growing concern over guarantees for freedom of expression and the role of media and journalists in the country. This report should serve as a call to unity for the media and organizations committed to freedom of expression and freedom of the press in the country. The most alarming aspect is the effect that the current discursive and symbolic aggressions may have in the future. The experience of neighboring countries indicates that stigmatizing discourse eventually materializes into physical violence against journalists and their families. The state of freedom of expression in Costa Rica highlights the importance of implementing a regional, proactive, and intersectional approach in monitoring aggressions against the press and to coordinate efforts to raise awareness regarding stigmatization and its effects on society.

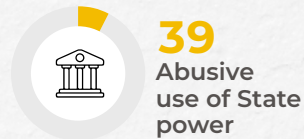


# CUBA

2022 Data

508 Alerts

## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS

Women

214



Men

281



Not available

13

## AGGRESSORS



State



Not identified



## Context and Trends

In 2022, Cuba exhibited a decrease in the number of violations recorded against freedom of expression compared to the previous year. However, this does not correspond to an improvement in the conditions for journalism on the island, but rather to a decline in communication activities overall. ICLEP documented 90 cases of Cuban reporters who opted for exile in 2022. Meanwhile, many other journalists have resorted to self-censorship over fear of reprisals or have publicly resigned from their workplaces due to direct and indirect pressure from Cuba's political police.

Once again, arbitrary detentions have been the Cuban regime's most common method to repress the media, with 211 reported alerts. These detentions are often impositions of house arrest. Police and paramilitary forces stationed in front of reporters' homes prevent them from leaving, threatening them with the use of force. Online restrictions were the second most reported aggression by ICLEP in 2022, with 149 reported alerts. ETECSA, the telecommunications regulatory monopoly in Cuba, selectively cut or slowed down access to calls, messages, and internet connection for independent journalists on important dates to prevent them from reporting. Finally, in 2022, Cuban institutions continued targeting journalists by promoting legislation contrary to international standards of freedom of expression. In December, the new Penal Code came into effect, threatening those who exercise freedom of expression and freedom of the press on the island with foreign financing with up to 10 years in prison.

## Gender and Inclusion

ICLEP did not report any gender alerts or record cases under the new indicator of sexual violence in 2022. However, the cases of journalists Yunia Figueredo and Camila Acosta, who suffered 18 and 16 arbitrary detentions respectively, highlight journalistic repression, with Figueredo being the most attacked journalist throughout the year (with 49 aggressions against her documented).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

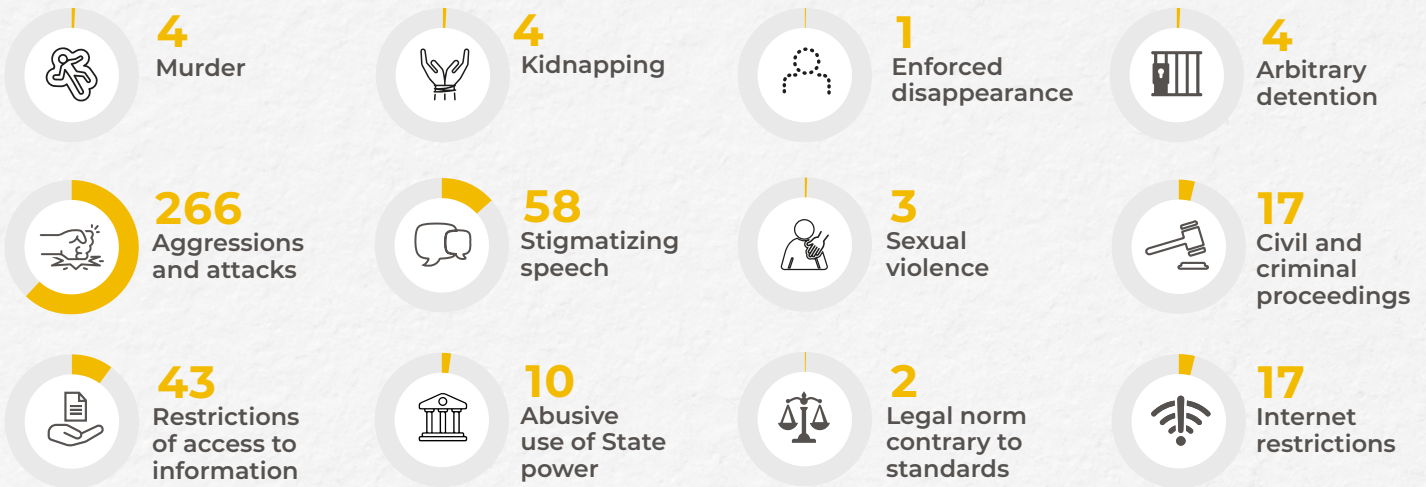
In its annual report, ICLEP describes reporting in Cuba as a road to ruin. Independent journalists on the island have few options. Those who do not self-censor end up in exile or behind bars, with 3 journalists still detained since 2021 protests. Lázaro Yuri Valle Roca was sentenced to 5 years in prison for alleged crimes of “enemy propaganda of a continuous nature and resistance.” Influencer Yoandi Montiel, known as “El Gato de Cuba,” was sentenced to 2 years for the alleged crime of “contempt.” Reporter José Antonio López Piña is currently under house arrest for covering demonstrations from July 11 on social media. The Cuban government plans to approve a new Social Communication Law that would keep independent media illegal, adhering to the idea that the social mission of the media is to act as a mouthpiece for the Communist Party's ideology. This is another turn of the screw in Cuba's draconian legal framework. The international community must continue to denounce the Cuban regime as the main perpetrator in the institutionalized repression and criminalization of independent press and demand the release of imprisoned journalists and the guarantee of respect for and promotion of fundamental freedoms in Cuba.

# ECUADOR

2022 Data

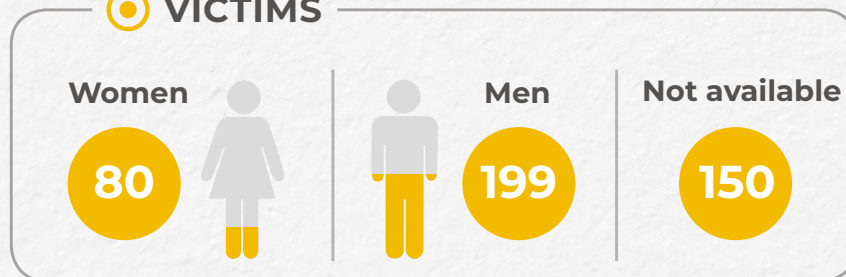
429 Alerts

## INDICATORS

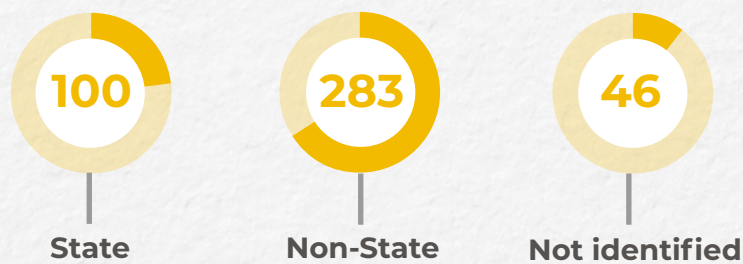


30 Gender Alerts

## VICTIMS



## AGGRESSORS



## **Context and Trends**

2022 was a lethal year for Ecuadorian journalism. FUNDAMEDIOS documented the murders of 4 journalists, all of which remain unsolved. It recorded the killing of reporters Mike Cabrera, Gerardo Delgado, and César Vivanco, the femicide of Johanna Guayguacundo, and the disappearance of Fernando León. These crimes evidence how violence against the press has been institutionalized in Ecuador. In addition to these murders, there have been attacks and death threats against journalists and media outlets. In October, assailants on motorcycles fired at the headquarters of the RedTeleSistema television channel in Guayaquil and left intimidating leaflets with death threats against the director of another media outlet, Diario Extra. These incidents have been attributed to the criminal gang “Nueva Generación.” The increase in violence against journalists in Ecuador confirms a dangerous trend common in several countries in the region: the expansion and consolidation of organized crime groups.

In 2022, FUNDAMEDIOS recorded 429 violations of freedom of expression, the highest figure since the end of Rafael Correa’s presidency in 2018. Most attacks against journalists were committed by protesters during the national strike in June. During these protests, journalists were targeted on account of their profession. Facing these dangers, many journalists opted to self-censor and seek new ways to report. Finally, FUNDAMEDIOS has observed a troublesome trend regarding the mental health of journalists in the country. Research shows that the post-COVID context and the increase in levels of violence have left many media workers at risk for depressive episodes, with burnout and post-traumatic stress increasing.

## **Gender and Inclusion**

In 2022, FUNDAMEDIOS began monitoring attacks against women journalists in Ecuador. This year, the cases of journalists Xiomara de la Torre and Cinthya Chanatasig, who were sexually assaulted while covering events, and the femicide of journalist Johanna Guayguacundo, stand out. Although the femicide is apparently unrelated to the victim’s reporting work, FUNDAMEDIOS considers it essential to highlight this type of extreme violence against women journalists. Finally, FUNDAMEDIOS also recorded 27 gender alerts, mostly consisting of sexist and misogynistic comments.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Although an agreement to create the Interinstitutional Committee for the Protection of Journalists and Communication Workers was signed in April of 2019, the lack of government leadership, insufficient coordination between relevant institutions, and insufficient funds have caused the proposal to go unimplemented. A challenge for 2023 is the development of a regulation that allows for the agreement’s proper implementation. Civil society must continue promoting this initiative, as well as other mechanisms to protect journalists in adverse conditions. The current levels of violence in Ecuador are undoubtedly exacerbated by widespread impunity. To date, there has been no significant progress in the investigation of any of the crimes or attempted murders against journalists in Ecuador in 2022. The killings of 8 other journalists in previous years also remain unresolved. To begin reversing the trend of violence against the press, the first step is to put an end to impunity for the murders of journalists.

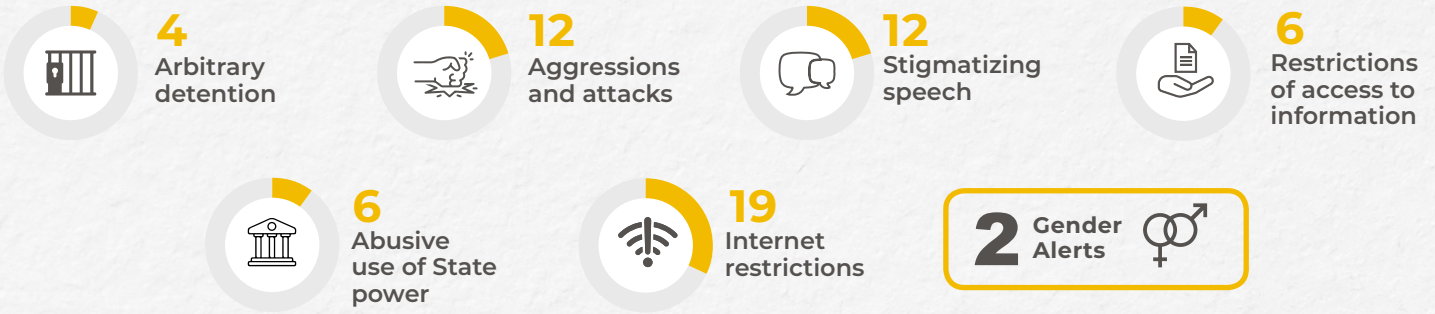


# EL SALVADOR

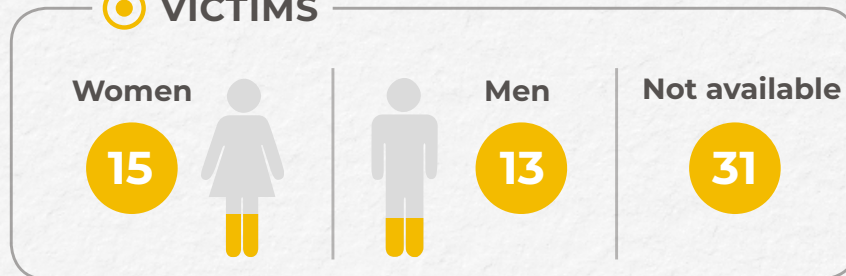
2022 Data

59 Alerts

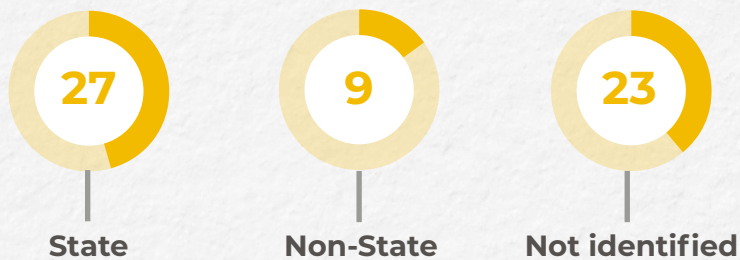
## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS



## AGGRESSORS





## **Context and Trends**

2022 was a critical year for Salvadoran press freedom. In January, a joint investigation by Access Now and Citizen Lab confirmed the widespread use of the NSO Group's Pegasus spyware against journalists and members of civil society organizations in El Salvador. Technical experts from Amnesty International independently verified forensic evidence demonstrating the abusive use of Pegasus in the country. To date, it has been confirmed that at least 23 devices belonging to media workers affiliated with various Salvadoran media outlets were infected, evidencing a sophisticated campaign of illicit espionage targeting journalists and media outlets. While the party responsible for this surveillance has not been clearly identified, NSO Group has repeatedly claimed that it only sells Pegasus technology to governments.

Additionally, in March 2022, the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly declared a state of exception to combat the increase in violence, specifically the rise of murders committed by gangs and organized crime groups. During this state of exception, a law regarding criminal groups was reformed. Decree No. 350 allows for media outlets to be prosecuted for “reproducing or transmitting messages or communications originating from or allegedly originating from criminal groups that could generate unrest and panic in the population” (El Salvador, 2022). The penalties for these crimes can lead to up to 15 years in prison. As a result of this escalation in persecution and harassment of the press, APES recorded the exile of 11 journalists forced to leave the country for investigating issues related to gangs and government abuses committed during the state of exception. APES also recorded 12 cases of assaults and attacks, 12 of stigmatizing speech, and 6 of abusive use of State power.

## **Gender and Inclusion**

In 2022, APES reported 2 gender alerts and discovered through monitoring that women are victims of harassment due more to their gender than their profession. While a man journalist may be attacked for the content of his coverage or his treatment of sources, women journalists are subjected to hate speech with a significant misogynistic burden referencing their gender, physical appearance, and maternal role. This demonstrates the differentiated violence to which women journalists are subjected. In addition to enduring the typical violence suffered by journalists, these women also deal with sexist and discriminatory aggressions.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Since President Nayib Bukele took office in 2019, freedom of expression has been rapidly deteriorating. APES and other civil society organizations have raised alarms about the absence of control mechanisms to regulate and limit the power of state agents. They have also denounced the use of surveillance tools that are allowed by the extraordinary powers granted by the state of exception and other regulations that violate the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Salvadoran authorities must cease efforts to restrict freedom of expression and conduct an impartial and exhaustive investigation to identify those responsible for the attacks against the press.

# GUATEMALA

2022 Data

33 Alerts

## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS

Women

10



Men

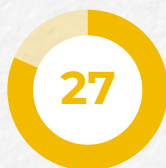
16



Not available

7

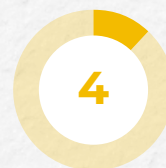
## AGGRESSORS



State



Non-State



Not identified



Parastatal

## **Context and Trends**

2022 was a transformative year for freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Guatemala. DEMOS recorded 11 alerts for abusive use of State power, 10 alerts for aggression and attacks, 3 for judicial processes, and 2 for arbitrary detentions. The founder and president of the media outlet El Periódico, José Rubén Zamora, was arrested on charges of blackmail, influence trafficking, money laundering, and conspiracy. His arrest led to an indefinite halt to the print circulation of El Periódico, restricting a medium that provided important public interest information. In addition, his capture sends powerful messages that promote self-censorship in other media outlets. Zamora, his family, and colleagues have denounced that this is retaliation for El Periódico's news coverage of alleged acts of corruption involving President Alejandro Giammattei and Attorney General Consuelo Porras. Several international press and human rights organizations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the Inter-American Press Association (SIP) have called José Rubén Zamora's arrest a serious attack on freedom of expression. DEMOS also documented the exile of journalist Juan Luis Font, director of the media outlet Con Criterio. In March, former Minister of Communications, Alejandro Sinibaldi, testified to prosecutors that Font had received bribes. Font stated that although authorities have not formally notified him of any criminal charges, he decided to temporarily leave Guatemala to avoid harassment.

## **Gender and Inclusion**

In 2022, DEMOS reported one alert under the new sexual violence indicator. This refers to the case of Carolina Gamazo from digital media outlet No-Ficción, who has been targeted with constant sexual harassment through social media. Additionally, DEMOS recorded 11 gender-related alerts. In one of the most notable cases, journalist

Andrea Dominguez of the outlets Prensa Libre and Guatevisión, endured stigmatizing insults from Gerardo Hernandez, director of the San Juan de Dios General Hospital, for reporting on various problems at this facility. Similarly, journalist Irma Alicia Velásquez was personally attacked after criticizing prosecutor Rafael Curruchiche. DEMOS has also documented public complaints of harassment and hate speech on social media against reporters Pia Flores, Kimberly Lopez, Francelia Solano, and Jody Garcia from the now-defunct alternative digital media outlet Nómada. The Commission on Press Freedom of the Guatemala Journalists Association (APG) has also expressed concern over the constant attacks on women journalists that seek to silence them and prevent their coverage of issues within or related to State institutions.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The government of President Giammattei continues its systematic attacks on freedom of expression through the aggressive judicial, administrative, and financial persecution of the press to intimidate, stifle, and ultimately silence critical journalism. Before imprisoning José Rubén Zamora, tax authorities had accused his media outlet of tax evasion. El Periódico has also reported a commercial boycott in which the government and the president have threatened large companies, prohibiting them from advertising in this media outlet. The judicial harassment that led to the exile of journalist Juan Luis Font is the most recent evidence that the Guatemalan government is determined to silence independent journalism. The Guatemalan state must dismiss the charges against journalists José Rubén Zamora and Juan Luis Font, allow them to work freely and without fear of reprisals, and refrain from using criminal proceedings to harass members of the press.



# HONDURAS

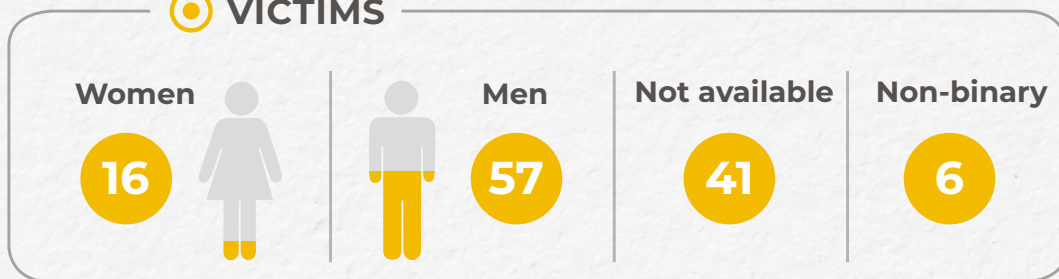
2022 Data

120 Alertas

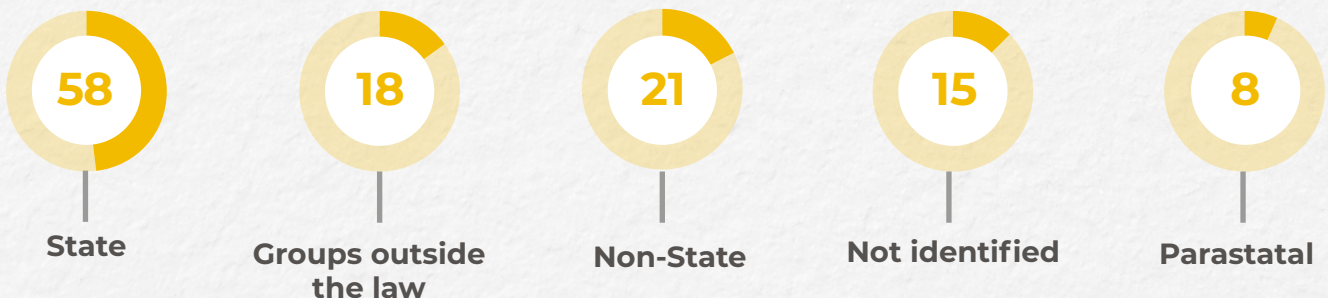
## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS



## AGGRESSORS





## Context and Trends

In January, Xiomara Castro assumed the presidency of Honduras, ending 12 years of National Party government. At her inauguration, the new government announced the repeal of the “Law for the Classification of Public Documents Related to Security and National Defense,” popularly known as the “Official Secrets Law,” one of the most important tools of previous governments to conceal public interest information. The new government also announced a penal code reform to decriminalize so-called crimes against honor. The new government’s stance of respect for human rights and freedom of expression created enthusiasm and positive expectations among social movements and civil society organizations.

Despite these expectations, violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the press have continued. In 2022, C-Libre reported the murder of 5 journalists and social communicators, as well as 76 aggressions and attacks. In this sense, normative reforms have not translated into a safer environment for the exercise of freedom of expression.

In 2022, alerts were mainly concentrated in areas with a strong presence of criminal and drug trafficking organizations. This new trend creates a chilling effect of fear and self-censorship. Another worrisome development is the abusive use of State power. C-Libre has denounced that the recent creation of the General Directorate of Information and Press promotes the concentration of public discourse within the State, places conditions on State advertising, facilitates censorship, and grants undue responsibilities to the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL).

## Gender and Inclusion

In 2022, C-Libre reported 7 gender alerts, which were aggressions against journalistic sources within the LGTBIQ+ community who were assaulted or silenced in retaliation for providing information to journalists or media outlets. C-Libre also documented 1 case of stigmatizing speech against members of this community, which occurred through digital channels and included sexist, misogynistic, and homophobic comments.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

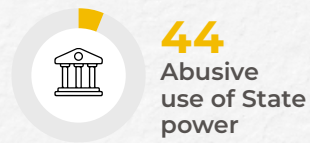
The first year of Xiomara Castro’s government raised high hopes for civil society. However, these hopes have not materialized into progress in terms of freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Although the Official Secrets Law was repealed in 2022, a mechanism to guarantee and promote access to public interest information has not been established. The promised reform of the penal code has not yet been carried out, and violence against journalists and violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the press have shifted focus but not stopped. The new government of Honduras must act to adapt the country’s institutional framework to international standards for the protection of freedom of expression. An essential component of this framework is the strengthening of the national protection system and its implementation mechanisms. This system has gone from having its own budget to depending on the national treasury. Its structure has been modified, reducing its capacity for action and restricting its independence. Finally, there is no substantial investigation to date into the murders of the journalists killed in 2022. It is crucial that deliberate efforts be made to find the perpetrators of these crimes and to break the cycle of impunity that perpetuates violence.

# MEXICO

2022 Data

696 Alerts

## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS

Women

178



Men

450



Not available

68

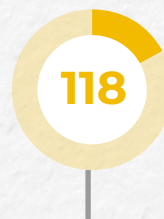
## AGGRESSORS



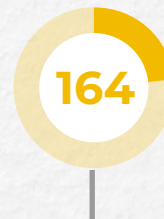
State



Groups outside the law



Non-State



Not identified

## Context and Trends

2022 has been one of the deadliest years for the Mexican press since ARTICLE 19 began documenting violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the press in 2007. This year, 12 journalists were murdered as a direct result of their work. Additionally, there were 3 murders of non-editorial media personnel, bringing the total number of journalists and media workers killed during the year to 15. ARTICLE 19 documented a total of 696 alerts, meaning that a journalist or media outlet is attacked in Mexico every 13 hours.

ARTICLE 19 reported 107 cases of stigmatization against the press in 2022, which places journalists at further risk. Since 2021, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has used a weekly section of his morning conferences called “The Who’s Who of Lies?” in which he points to news articles on public interest topics and labels them “fake news,” while taking advantage of the opportunity to stigmatize the press and human rights organizations.

Finally, according to ARTICLE 19, official advertising in Mexico has traditionally been used to exert control over editorial stances. 10 media outlets receive over 50% of allocated resources; of these, three media outlets—Televisa, la Jornada (Demos) and Tv Azteca—received 30.6% of official advertising resources. In 2022, the Senate fast-tracked a reform of laws regulating public financing for media outlets, but this does not comply with international standards on freedom of expression, nor does it address the lack of transparency in the allocation or concentration of resources. It also fails to prevent the instrumentalization of official advertising as a mechanism for controlling the media.

## Gender and Inclusion

In 2022, ARTICLE 19 reported 34 gender alerts. This organization highlighted a troublesome trend in the context of protests, where women journalists reported being victimized more often than men. In terms of online violence, around 95% of cases against women have some gendered factor or sexual connotation. In addition to enduring the typical violence suffered by men, women are also subjected to threats related to their gender.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the increase in lethal violence against the press in Mexico is largely attributable to organized crime, solely focusing on these groups absolves the State of its responsibilities in terms of security and protection of journalists, as well as the defense of freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Instead, civil society must also denounce the role of the government in exacerbating this violence through daily stigmatization of the press and its effect on the increase in attacks and aggressions. It must decry the weakening of rule of law in the face of corruption and the collusion between government institutions and organized crime to maintain impunity. The robust monitoring carried out by ARTICLE 19 has identified a clear link between aggressions and the investigative journalism carried out by victims. The two areas of investigative journalism in Mexico that entail the highest risk for reporters are political corruption and security and justice. This demonstrates the concerted efforts to silence the media in Mexico, which is aided by an impunity rate of 98%, higher than the average for all other types of crimes. ARTICLE 19 calls on public authorities across government to carry out actions urgently in prevention, protection, and the prosecution of attacks against the press, as well as to promote proactive measures through comprehensive and intersectional, gender-centered public policies on freedom of expression.

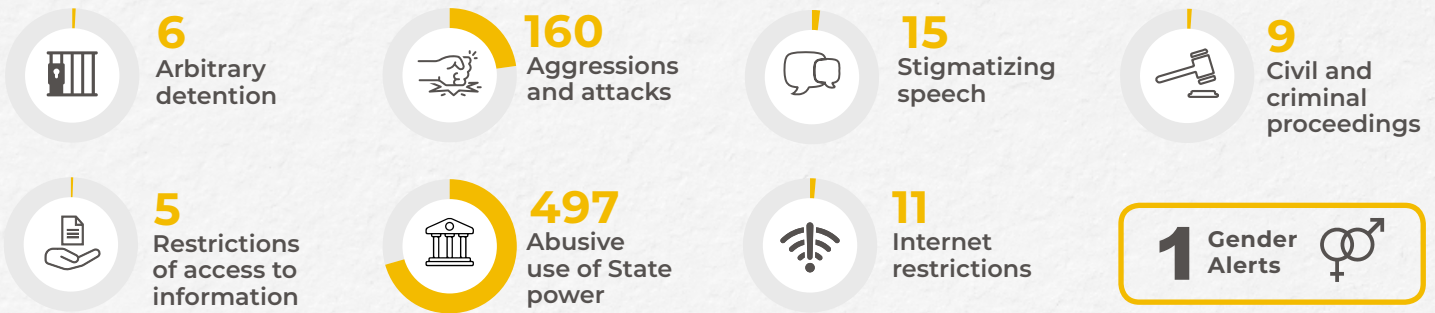


# NICARAGUA

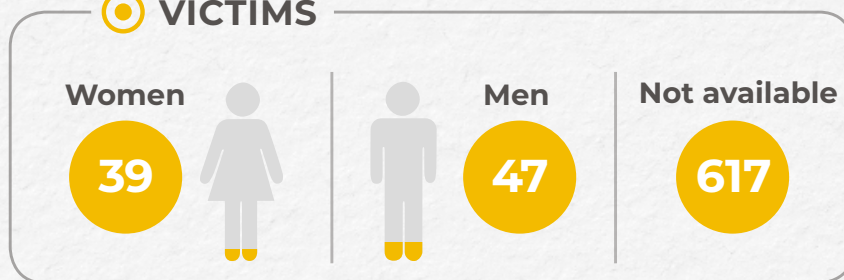
2022 Data

703 Alerts

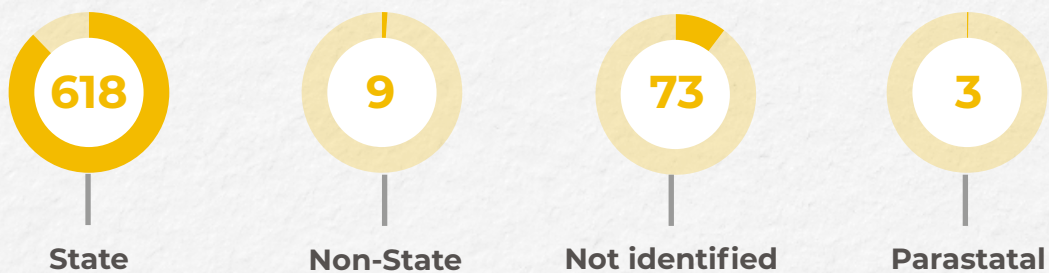
## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS



## AGGRESSORS



## Context and Trends

The situation of freedom of expression in Nicaragua is grave. In 2022, 9 journalists and media workers were sentenced to between 8 and 13 years in prison for alleged crimes such as money laundering, treason, and spreading fake news. The 9 convicted journalists and other media workers were imprisoned, exiled, and stripped of their Nicaraguan citizenship, along with hundreds of other political prisoners, in February 2023. The current government has cancelled the citizenship of journalists who oppose its authoritarian regime. Additionally, due to persecution, harassment, and poor working conditions, a reported 93 journalists were forced into exile in 2022. At least 4 Nicaraguan journalists were prevented from entering their own country by orders of the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners (DGME). Meanwhile, journalists who remain in Nicaragua are under “house arrest” and are prevented from leaving the country or forced to do so illegally. Several journalists have reported the confiscation of their passports at migration checkpoints when trying to leave Nicaragua, and others have been denied the opportunity to renew their expired documents or process new ones by public authorities.

FLED also documented the closure of at least 31 media outlets in 2022, most of which were Catholic and community-based media. At least 8 news and opinion programs were also canceled in different parts of the country. The Ortega-Murillo government has evolved from persecuting and harassing critical media to closing them down completely. Surviving national traditional media that continue their reporting have been warned by the Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Mail (TELCOR) to stop broadcasting political news and citizen complaints or face immediate closure. In total, FLED reported 497 alerts for abusive use of State power.

## Gender and Inclusion

FLED reported a gender alert for death threats against non-binary journalist Wilmer Benavides. The threats against them contained hateful messages referencing their sexual orientation. Additionally, 2 women journalists from the southern Caribbean coast were the most victimized reporters in the country according to the alerts emitted by FLED. Kalúa Salazar and Yahaciela Barrera suffered 12 and 8 cases of aggression, respectively. Attacks against these women journalists have consisted mainly of the police and paramilitary siege of Salazar’s home, and threats and harassment against Barrera. Both cases are considered retaliation for their criticism of public authorities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

At least 4 Nicaraguan journalists enjoy precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), finding them to be current victims of irreparable harm. However, Nicaragua’s government remains in contempt of these measures. It is important that civil society organizations and the international community recognize the findings of this and other international organizations and raise awareness of the stances of the IACHR, urging the Nicaraguan government to respect and comply with its obligations to protect fundamental freedoms.

Faced with the closure of media outlets and the danger of practicing their profession, several Nicaraguan journalists who remain in the country opted for other lines of work. This is reflected in the drastic decrease in enrollment for communications-related university degrees, demonstrating that this has become a high-risk profession in Nicaragua. This trend should motivate the international community to adopt specific and gender-sensitive measures that to aid the development of media and the professional training of Nicaraguan journalists.



# PARAGUAY

2022 Data

26 Alerts

## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS

Women

12



Men

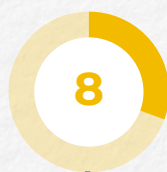
13



Not available

1

## AGGRESSORS



State



Non-State



Not identified



## Context and Trends

IDEA reported the murder of Humberto Coronel, a journalist who was investigating corruption and organized crime in the Paraguayan city of Pedro Juan Caballero. Coronel was shot dead as he left the radio station where he worked. Months earlier, Coronel and his colleague, Gustavo Báez, had reported to threats to the police. However, they had rejected police protection at their home due to distrust in this institution. This murder is yet another episode of violence in this region bordering Brazil, which is rife with drug trafficking and organized crime activity.

Additionally, IDEA recorded 11 alerts for assaults and attacks and 6 cases in which the judiciary was used to silence journalism. IDEA reported a case of judicial persecution of journalist Juan Carlos Lezcano and the management of media outlet, ABC Color, for disseminating public information about issues with public management by a former government tax official. The organization denounced the use of judicial resolutions to censor public interest information and the use of criminal law, or threats of its use, to intimidate journalists.

## Gender and Inclusion

In 2022, IDEA recorded 6 cases under the new sexual violence indicator and 9 gender alerts. This year, the Paraguayan Prosecutor's Office charged journalist Carlos Granada with sexual harassment and sexual coercion against 6 women journalists. The Prosecutor's Office indicated that the accused used his position of hierarchy and influence over the victims to commit acts of harassment and sexual abuse against women journalists from television channels of the Albavisión group, which includes the SNT and C9N television media. Victims reported resigning due to the permanent harassment they suffered from their boss, who acted with apparent impunity and took advantage of his power and the complicity of the group's executives.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The tragic murder of journalist Humberto Coronel has generated fear of deadly violence in Paraguay, particularly in the department of Amambay. With Coronel's death, the number of media workers killed in that area has risen to 8, a notable uptick since the 1991 murder of reporter Santiago Leguizamón. Coronel's homicide rekindled the debate about the need for a law to protect journalists, as well as protection resources beyond the existing mechanism, which only functions as a channel for coordination between civil society and the government. Strengthening this requires an operational mechanism that can act reactively and preventively to guarantee the safety and protection of journalists. It is especially critical that protection mechanisms be gender-focused so that they can capture the violence experienced by women journalists both within newsrooms and in the digital sphere.

IDEA also considers it essential to make progress in terms of legal protections. Paraguayan criminal law does not consider activism in human rights or journalism as an aggravating circumstance in crimes. Under the current criminal code, the investigation of a journalist's murder is treated as an ordinary homicide. This goes against international standards that mandate the classification of these crimes as threats to the country's democratic institutions. This shortcoming is compounded by the prescription of criminal action. By constitutional provision, the murders of politicians in Paraguay are non-prescriptive, and IDEA believes that it should be the same for the murders of journalists. Finally, provisions in the criminal code for libel and slander should be repealed when they concern cases of public interest.

# PERU

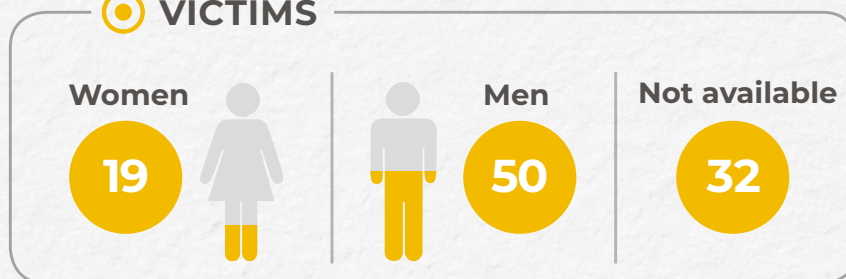
2022 Data

101 Alerts

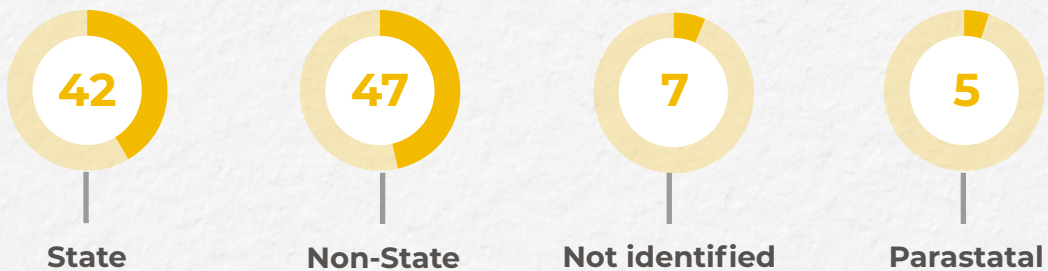
## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS



## AGGRESSORS



## Context and Trends

Since the start of President Pedro Castillo's government in July 2021 and until his abrupt departure from power in December 2022, Peruvian media had systematically denounced corruption and the lack of transparency in public management. In response, Castillo's government launched an intense campaign against critical independent journalism. The President, Prime Minister, and several members of the ministerial cabinet maintained confrontational stances against journalism. Legislative initiatives sought to penalize the dissemination of information on criminal investigations, journalists were constantly threatened with legal actions, and news coverage was constantly obstructed, including the exclusion of independent media from official press conferences.

IPYS Peru reported 13 alerts for restrictions on access to information, 9 for abusive use of State power, 8 for judicial processes, and 3 for regulations contrary to international standards. This institutional onslaught by the Peruvian government against the press quickly translated into direct physical violence by its pro-Castillo sympathizers, resulting in 59 alerts for assaults and attacks. One notorious case was the kidnapping of journalists Eduardo Quispe Palacios and Elmer Valdivieso in July 2022, after they reported on a case of embezzlement involving Castillo's daughter. Both journalists were kidnapped by Castillo's supporters and forced to publicly apologize.

## Gender and Inclusion

In 2022, IPYS Peru reported 2 gender alerts. On November 7, 2022, the Prime Minister, Aníbal Torres, made misogynistic attacks against journalist Sol Carreño, calling her a bad mother, bad wife, and bad daughter after she reported on the poor state of public roads in a southern region of the country. He also referred to the journalist's children, accusing her of deforming them. The stigmatizing and sexist discourse of the Prime Minister constitutes a gender-based attack, referring to her condition as a woman and directly involving her family, something that does not happen in attacks directed at men journalists. With this aggression, the Prime Minister himself gave a classic example of the type of differentiated violence faced by women journalists in retaliation for exercising their critical journalism.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

After Castillo's detention, Peruvian politics continued in deadlock, with persistent confrontations between protesters and government forces. Amid this instability, the independent press has been frequently victimized by police aggressions. In the first 60 days of protests, 112 attacks against journalists and media professionals were recorded, most of them at the hands of the police force itself.



# URUGUAY

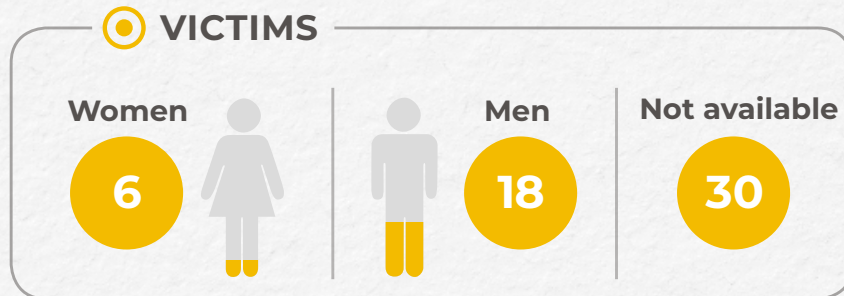
2022 Data

54 Alerts

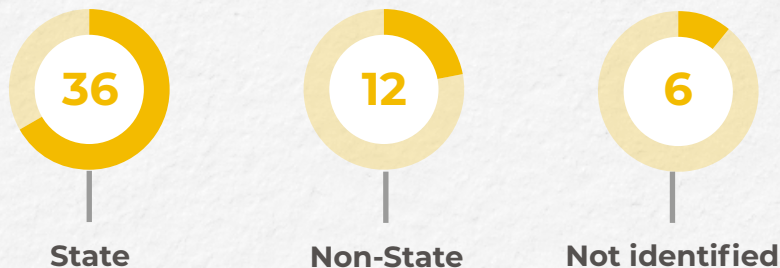
## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS



## AGGRESSORS



## **Context and Trends**

In 2022, CAinfo published a critical report on the sustained and systematic decline of freedom of expression in Uruguay. The CAinfo report generated a strong reaction from the government of Luis Lacalle Pou, who accused the organization of manipulating figures in an interview broadcast by the BBC. However, multiple international organizations have agreed with CAinfo, expressing their concern over the state of freedom of expression and press in Uruguay. In 2022, Uruguay fell from 18 to 44 in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom ranking. Additionally, the country dropped out of the top 10 in the 2022 Global Expression Report published by ARTICLE 19.

Furthermore, both the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the IACHR and the United Nations Human Rights Committee issued documents expressing their concern about the challenges to freedom of expression in Uruguay. The Uruguayan government's hostile attitude toward the press is reflected in the 19 alerts for stigmatizing speech, 11 legal cases against media and journalists, 7 restrictions on access to information, and 6 restrictions on the internet, discrediting journalistic work and further deteriorating the country's democratic institutions.

## **Gender and Inclusion**

Media coverage of the group sexual assault suffered by a woman in Montevideo put the relationship between gender equality and freedom of expression in Uruguay at the center of public discourse. This difficult case has kickstarted a debate across the region on the right to freedom of expression and the need to carry out gender-centered journalism. The publication of this incident in different media generated enormous controversy for its disrespect and lack of ethical principles, as well as violating

Uruguay's gender violence law by disseminating audio material without the victim's authorization. However, the response of the Uruguayan judiciary compromises freedom of expression and establishes a dangerous precedent for this sort of coverage. The prosecution requested, and the court conceded, to access mobile devices and computer equipment of journalists. This disproportionate order creates risks for information sources. It may also inhibit any potential source willing to provide information on public interest cases due to the risk of their identity being revealed. This event harms the democratic debate and violates the citizenry's right to public information.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This year has been a turning point for freedom of expression in Uruguay, as it breaks with the exemplary image that the country previously boasted. The data from 2022 validate the calls for concerns in the previous years shared by CAinfo and other Uruguayan civil society organizations, even in the face of international skepticism.

The journalistic coverage of the woman's assault that resulted in prosecutors accessing the mobile devices and computer equipment of journalists presents complex questions. While CAinfo acknowledges poor practices that violate ethical principles of journalism, this judicial response is excessive, compromises freedom of expression, and sets a negative precedent for the journalistic profession. It is essential that responses to poor practices contribute to deepening the State's commitment to fostering a free and independent press and to improving journalistic practices, especially in gender-sensitive coverage. The measures taken by the judiciary cannot serve to intimidate the press and expose news sources.



# VENEZUELA

2022 Data

367 Alerts

## INDICATORS



## VICTIMS

Women

75



Men

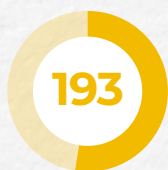
123



Not available

169

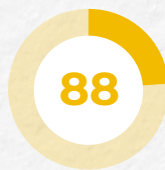
## AGGRESSORS



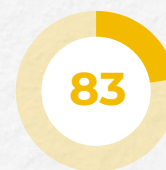
State



Groups outside  
the law



Non-State



Not identified



## Context and Trends

In Venezuela, journalism has been severely constrained by a government policy of censorship, intimidation, and abuse of State power. Over the last two decades, the legal frameworks that ought to regulate and guarantee freedom of expression and access to public information in Venezuela have been redesigned to institutionalize censorship. The IPYS Venezuela (2022) report “Laws to Silence,” exhibits how laws enshrined in the governments of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro establish excessive limitations with intimidating effects, disproportionate criminal sanctions, and vague terminologies that allow discretionary interpretations. As a result of this repressive institutional and legal framework, IPYS Venezuela recorded 201 alerts for restrictions on access to information and the arbitrary closure of 107 radio stations in 2022. In parts of Venezuela where the only means of communication available is radio, these closures have created information deserts, which promote fear of expressing public opinion amongst citizens and create areas where media exercises no oversight of State power and narratives.

The official and self-censorship imposed by the Venezuelan government are not limited to radio. In 2022, IPYS reported 69 instances of internet restrictions. The Spanish company Movistar Telefónica, one of the main internet service providers in Venezuela, revealed the alarming frequency with which the Venezuelan State has made requests for information from its users, including personal data, communication records, and locations. IPYS investigations also show that the Venezuelan government regularly tries to control internet use and impose digital censorship from the executive power and through State communications regulation entities, ordering arbitrary blockages of websites and social networks.

## Gender and Inclusion

Nilsa Varela, a journalist from outlet El Vistazo, reported receiving misogynistic messages, some of which came from municipal officials. Additionally, reporter Roberto Deniz from Armando Info, has been targeted with stigmatizing speech regarding his sexual orientation for his investigations of Alex Saab, a businessman with ties to the Maduro government. The IPYS Venezuela investigation “The Orchestration of Silence” (2022) revealed that 19.9% of media workers reported having suffered some form of gender-based violence.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Venezuelan media landscape indicates that the policy of censorship, intimidation, and abuse of State power that has prevailed in this country for the last two decades continues to operate at an institutional level. Currently, a bill dubbed the “Law on Oversight, Regulation, Action, and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations and Related Organizations” is looming over the media ecosystem and civil society organizations. If approved, this law would have a direct impact on organizations working to protect journalists and media outlets that receive external funding. The ongoing process of approving the bill must be decried, instead encouraging the recognition of the right to free constitution, operation, action, and legal status of all forms of non-profit associations in accordance with international standards of the right to freedom of association.

In 2022, the expropriated headquarters of El Nacional newspaper was awarded to Diosdado Cabello a member of the Venezuelan National Assembly and vice president of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela. This event highlighted the lack of independence between the branches of government and how the judiciary can be used to persecute the media. It is imperative to continue denouncing violations of freedom of expression and demand the restitution of confiscated media outlets.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the increasing violence against the press in the region, VDS members have already identified several ways to address these challenges:

## **1. Civil society must continue to hold authorities and public institutions accountable in the struggle against impunity.**

In Latin America, states fail to fulfill responsibilities such as ensuring the safety and protection of journalists, safeguarding press freedoms, and guaranteeing access to information. Ironically, public authorities and institutions perpetrate most attacks on the press in the region. Where the justice system is absent, civil society's monitoring, documentation, and dissemination tasks are an alternative in the fight against impunity. These efforts help establish the truth and provide evidence of offenses that could prove valuable in future judicial proceedings. This will still require that State institutions strengthen and advance vigorous independent investigations to effectively confront crimes against freedom of expression. Police forces and judicial institutions must be trained on how to ensure the safety of journalists and press workers. We must also investigate and sanction those who exercise violence to censor journalism and ensure full reparation for victims.

## **2. The devastating, growing threat of organized crime must be addressed comprehensively across sectors.**

Public and private spheres must work together with civil society to mitigate organized crime violence against the press in the region. The weakening of the rule of law due to corruption and the links between authorities and organized crime guarantee impunity and place journalists in grave danger.

## **3. A combination of alliances and strategies is required to combat stigmatizing discourse against the press.**

In various instances, the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Organization of American States has reiterated that those in positions of public leadership must maintain a favorable stance on freedom of expression. Public figures must ensure their statements do not violate the rights of those who contribute to public debate through the expression and dissemination of their thoughts, such as journalists and media outlets. However, evidence indicates that the opposite is true. Powerful actors frequently stigmatize the press. Confronting their rhetoric requires a broad alliance of public interest media and the public they serve, along with civil society, public servants, and the private sector. This alliance can serve to inoculate the public against perpetuating stigmatization of the media, by reiterating the critical role of the media. Public officials must be called on to cease sexist attacks and personal disqualifications against women reporters who inform the public and denounce wrongdoing. Broad recognition of the role of journalism as a pillar of democracy is imperative in order to confront these aggressions.

## **4. State power and public institutions should be strongholds of freedom, not silencers of it.**

The decriminalization of so-called “crimes against honor”, such as defamation and slander, is simply a first step in ensuring the full enjoyment of freedom of the press. Civil and administrative trials are still being used to impose financial, emotional, and reputational costs that seek to stifle and silence critical press. All powers of the State and public institutions, from the local to the regional

levels, must fulfill their mandate as guarantors of freedom of expression, press, and access to information. The creation of norms is not enough for journalists to be able to exercise their profession safely. These norms require institutions to ensure compliance, as well as an environment that allows them to be implemented in practice. Those who attempt to restrict and violate these fundamental rights must be sanctioned. Guarantees for freedom of expression are especially necessary for smaller media outlets, especially local media and outlets directed by women, LGBTQI+, indigenous, and Afro-descendant persons.

### **5. Mechanisms for the protection of journalists and public interest journalism must be strengthened.**

Despite some progress in guaranteeing the rights of journalists, protection mechanisms are dysfunctional. Currently, they are unable to protect journalists from the wide array of threats faced. It is necessary to strengthen these mechanisms in countries where they exist and implement

them in countries where they do not. States must provide material and professional resources for them to function efficiently and support them with comprehensive public policies that include prevention and coordination with other institutions. Experiences with these programs at the regional level should inform the development of protection mechanisms that are more efficient in preventing, protecting, and seeking justice in violations against freedom of expression and the press. Due to the number of differentiated gender violations, it is essential that these resources include a gender and inclusion focus. Otherwise, government agencies will continue to be inefficient in protecting the lives of journalists in the region. It is also imperative to establish prevention strategies to help journalists protect themselves emotionally, physically, and legally. While this will not solve all the problems journalists face, it will certainly mitigate risks. Maintaining the viability of public interest media is a complex challenge, and must be a top priority for international development, private philanthropy, and the public policies of the state.



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**2022**