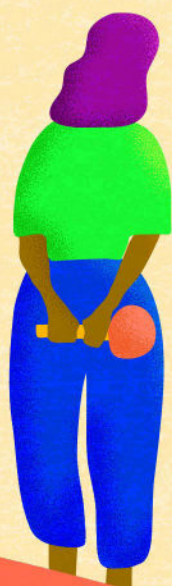


THE DIFFERENTIATED EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PRESS



Shadow Report on the Implementation of SDG 16.10.1 in Latin America



2021

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Shadow Report on the Implementation of SDG 16.10.1 in
Latin America

Voces del Sur Network, 2021

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About the Voces del Sur Network

The Voces del Sur (VdS) Network is a regional network of civil society organizations that promotes and defends freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the right of access to information in Latin America.

The VdS Network monitors aggressions against these fundamental rights through a shared methodology aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16, Target 16.10, Indicator 16.10.1. The monitoring analysis is consolidated in this annual Shadow Report.

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Asociación Nacional de la Prensa de Bolivia -ANP

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Executive Summary



In 2021, the Voces del Sur (VdS) Network recorded 4,930 alerts of violations of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in 14 countries in Latin America. These fundamental rights were violated every two hours on average in the countries monitored this year. In eight of the 13 countries for which there is comparative data for 2020, alerts increased significantly. As in 2018 (55%), 2019 (77%), and 2020 (59%), most alerts in 2021 (72%) identify the State as the main aggressor. States,

the theoretical guarantors of human rights are by action and omission, a major threat faced by journalists and media workers. Of the 13 indicators monitored, those with the greatest increase in 2021 were: arbitrary detentions (198%), abusive use of state power (193%), stigmatizing discourse (83%), restrictions on access to information (50%) and aggressions and attacks (18%). These forms of violence are exercised by and from State institutions.

The data unequivocally confirms the deterioration of the situation of these fundamental rights in the region.

The 2021 Shadow Report includes a gender perspective that seeks to contribute to the understanding of the differentiated effects that violence against journalists and media workers has on women, men, non-binary people, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. The goal is to integrate this perspective into VdS monitoring, to promote spaces for analysis of these differentiated effects, and to contribute to the adoption of protection and attention measures that meet diverse needs. Gender equality and respect for diversity must be pillars for the promotion and protection of these rights, and of sustainable development in general. It is essential that diversity and equal opportunities are promoted

both within newsrooms, as well as in access to protection schemes and mechanisms for individuals, journalists and media workers, women, non-binary persons, and Indigenous and Afro-descendant people (among other identities, conditions, and social categories) in order to comply with SDG 16 and develop plural and inclusive media ecosystems, ultimately serving the public interest.

Introduction

Since 2018, the Voces del Sur (VdS) Network has produced an annual Shadow Report on freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in Latin America. The data used to produce the report comes from monitoring conducted by civil society organizations (CSOs) within the VdS Network, which analyze and report on the state of these fundamental rights in line with Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): peace, justice, and strong institutions. Monitoring efforts focus on Target 16.10: ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms. The Shadow Report measures compliance with In-

dicator 16.10.1: the number of verified cases of diverse types of violence against journalists, media workers, human rights defenders, and trade unionists, using a common regional methodology, designed collaboratively, consulted with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and refined over five years of implementation. The function of this parallel civil society monitoring is to complement, contrast, and enrich State data and reports.

The 2021 Shadow Report is the fourth consecutive report presented by the VdS Network. The scope of the Shadow Report has grown

from covering eight countries in 2018 to 14 in 2021. The concerted work of the VdS Network facilitates the independent and reliable evaluation of trends, achievements, and difficulties in the fulfillment of SDG 16, Target 16.10 in Latin America, through the CSO-led monitoring based on Indicator 16.10.1. The result of this effort is the most comprehensive and methodologically robust record that exists on violations of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in the region.

The systematic collection and processing of data allows the Shadow Report to offer a measurable and comparable vision of the situation of these fundamental rights in the region, increasing understanding of the problems, informing the search for solutions, guiding the analysis

and implementation of public policies, and providing evidence to mobilize international development efforts that contribute to the construction of more just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.

The common methodology of the VdS Network, based on 13 shared regional indicators, is a large part of the success of the collaborative work among the 14 civil society organizations (CSOs) that promote and defend freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in Latin America. This network of CSOs has revised and refined the methodology in a collaborative and participatory manner, based on the accumulated experience of the member organizations.

The 2021 Shadow Report broadens the approach, contributing to the understanding of

the differentiated effects that violence against journalists and media workers can have on women, men, and people within the LGBTIQ+ community.

This year, the VdS Network launched a thirteenth cross-cutting gender indicator. The goal is to incorporate a gender perspective when monitoring violence affecting people who practice or are linked to journalism in the region to ensure that adequate protection and care measures are taken to meet the needs of distinct groups. Gender equality and respect for diversity are pillars of fundamental rights. Ensuring equal opportunities within newsrooms, while guaranteeing differentiated protection schemes and mechanisms for women, non-binary people, and Indigenous journalists, among other identities and conditions, is fundamental to de-

velop independent, plural, and inclusive media ecosystems. This Report shows how violence against journalists manifests distinctly based on gender identity, especially in discourse. Finally, this report promotes and thus deploys the use of non-discriminatory language.

Violence against journalists and media workers is exercised at various levels: symbolic (such as stigmatizing discourse), direct (such as aggressions and attacks), and structural (such as the abusive use of State power). In turn, it is exercised differently towards women, men, non-binary people, Indigenous people, and Afro-descendants. Ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and physical capacity, among other identity factors, also condition the way in which different populations experience violence. In Latin America,

it is important that attempts to improve the state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information recognize that expressions of violence compound and intersect in differentiated and detrimental ways for people from diverse backgrounds and identities.

Methodology

The VdS Network monitors, analyzes, and reports on the state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in Latin America through a shared methodology aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in which alerts for violations against these fundamental rights are registered through 13 common regional indicators. These indicators were designed collaboratively by the CSOs that made up the VdS Network at the end of 2018 with the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and in line with Indicator 16.10.1 of the SDGs. Both the indicators

and the VdS Network have been strengthened each year through intentional reflection to ensure methodological rigor and adaptability and in accordance with the unique characteristics of media ecosystems in Latin America.

The success of the VdS Network is reflected in the growth of its scope, the refinement of its methodology, and the strengthening of its databases which portray the true state of fundamental rights in the region.

The 2018 Shadow Report analyzed these fundamental rights in eight countries, while the 2021 Shadow Report covers 14, incorporating El Salvador for the first time

and allowing greater regional breadth and knowledge about the country's delicate situation. In 2021, the VdS Network launched a thirteenth cross-cutting gender indicator to strengthen monitoring.

The common regional registry resulting from the collaborative work of the VdS Network is the most comprehensive and extensive compendium of data and statistics on the different forms of violence experienced by journalists and media workers in Latin America.

VdS Indicators

The VdS Network indicators serve to systematically document and record alerts of verified cases of violations against freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information. Each alert re-

quires a base of relevant information on the reported situation, including identification of the victim, type of violation, perpetrator, and geographic location of the incident. CSOs compile this data at the national level, each through its own monitoring system that is adapted to its context and experience. The VdS Network then compiles the national data and standardizes it according to common regional indicators. The multilevel approach respects national monitoring systems, preserving knowledge and nuances of local realities that CSOs have cultivated through field experience, whereas regional standardization allows for consistency and comparability between data from different countries over the years, enables the identification of trends and patterns that help to better understand the phenomenon of vio-

lence against the press, and ultimately invites the creation of solutions.

The indicators are intended to be people-centered, gender-sensitive, rigorous, accessible, timely, dependable, and segregated. The definitions of the indicators have been drafted in accordance with international law and with inspiration from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes. The indicators consider each victim separately, as there may be more than one victim in the same incident. The recorded alerts are ordered based on the “most serious crime” rule, which is commonly applied in criminal statistics. If an incident includes elements of more than one crime category, it is coded in the most serious category.

The alerts are classified according to 13 regional indicators: 12 of these are unique and correspond to different types of violence, while the thirteenth is the new cross-cutting gender indicator, which is selected simultaneously with one of the 12 unique indicators if the alert contains elements that indicate discrimination or violence based on gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation of the person.



1

Murder



2

Torture



3

Enforced
disappearance



4

Arbitrary detention



5

Kidnapping



6

Aggressions and
attacks



7

Stigmatizing
speech



8

Restrictions on
access to
information



9

Internet Restrictions



10

Criminal and civil
proceedings



11

Abusive use of
State power



12

Legal framework
contrary to interna-
tional standards



13

Gender alert

Indicator 16.10.1

Goal 16:
**Promoting
 just,
 peaceful,
 and inclusive
 societies.**

Target 16.10:

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

Indicator 16.10.1:

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

The definition of Indicator 16.10.1 originally limited monitoring to five extreme forms of violations of fundamental freedoms: murder, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and torture. However, UNESCO and the other custodian agencies, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Labor Organization (ILO), in an effort to improve the methodology, have agreed on a refinement of the indica-

tor. The proposed redefinition, which serves as the basis for the VdS indicators, is as follows:

Number of verified cases of murder, forced disappearance, torture, arbitrary detention, kidnapping and other harmful acts against journalists, media workers, trade unionists and human rights defenders.

By adding “other harmful acts,” the revised indicator makes it possible to highlight the various viola-

tions against freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information committed against journalists, including restrictions on access to information, aggressions and attacks, stigmatizing speech, judicial proceedings, legal framework contrary to standards, abusive use of state power, and restrictions on the Internet.

The VdS Network's monitoring and Shadow Report focus specifically on journalists, media workers, and the media ecosystem itself. The VdS Network does not monitor or report cases of violations against trade unionists or human rights defenders outside of the media context.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

For the first time, the VdS Network integrates a non-binary and intersectional gender approach in its monitoring.

The concept of “gender” refers to all people across the spectrum, deconstructing the traditional binary approach; it is considered inseparable from issues of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and age, among other identity factors that affect the privilege and vulnerability of journalists and media workers. An attempt has been made in this Shadow Report to analyze the effects that such violence has on different population groups. In addition to the dangers inherent to the journalistic profession, this Report covers acts of violence and discrimination linked to

gender and social categories that intersect and create differentiated effects that must be documented and understood.

The 2021 Shadow Report deploys inclusive language to democratize communication and avoid stigmas, prejudices, and stereotypes that are often borne out of exclusionary terminology. It seeks, through language, to give visibility to all journalists and media workers across the gender spectrum. The state of freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and the right of access to information is studied from a gender and inclusion perspective, analyzing the differentiated effects of violence against journalists and media workers belonging to different population groups and considering their gender identity, race, ethnicity, socioeco-

conomic level, and age, among other factors.

Limitations

The Shadow Report standardizes the monitoring conducted by CSOs within the VdS Network at the national level, building a regional database with a common methodology that is organized according to 12 unique indicators and a thirteenth cross-cutting indicator. In the process, the specificity and complexity of the monitoring and analysis conducted by each of the CSOs in their respective countries is inevitably reduced.

The regional perspective facilitates the comparative analysis and monitoring of SDG 16, Target 16.10, Indicator 16.10.1 in Latin America, but discrepancies also arise between the data contained in the Shadow Report and

data in independent national reports.

When studying the situation of a specific country or group of countries, it is recommended that the Shadow Report be complemented by national reports.

Also, Indicator 16.10.1 is sensitive to under-registration; to a considerable extent, the number of alerts recorded depends on the monitoring and reporting capacity of each CSO. Low reporting rates may exist in authoritarian contexts due to fear of reprisals. It is important to note that lower reporting oftentimes disproportionately impacts people within particularly marginalized groups.

In 2021, the VdS Network launched a thirteenth cross-cutting gender indicator, establishing guidelines

for measuring alerts from a gender and inclusion perspective. However, not all CSOs have implemented this indicator to date. Even so, the differentiated violence experienced by women journalists and media workers has become more visible in the region as availability of evidence has improved.

However, there is still a noteworthy lack of information on violence against journalists who identify as LGBTIQ+, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, or as members of other groups in situations of exclusion or vulnerability. Three VdS member organizations (ARTICLE 19 in Mexico, C-Libre in Honduras, and Abraji in Brazil) have begun to document alerts from a gender approach. However, differences in the information available between organizations make comparative

analysis difficult. The integration of a gender and inclusion perspective should be improved to include segregating data by age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, among other factors in order to better conduct an intersectional analysis. One remaining challenge is to develop methodological criteria to understand whether a violation of fundamental rights occurs specifically because of the gender or sexual orientation of the victim.

Regional Analysis

"Lack of data on differentiated effects of violence hinders progress toward SDG 16.10.1 in Latin America"

Violence, in its various forms and levels, is the main obstacle to freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in Latin America.

Discursive violence, which can manifest symbolically or directly (such as in the case of stigmatizing discourse), justifies other types of violence including aggressions and physical attacks and, in extreme incidents, assassinations, structural violence (abusive use of state power), legal frameworks contrary to inter-

national standards, and other forms of instrumentalizing institutions against fundamental rights. It is worth noting that States are, by action and omission, the main perpetrators of violence against journalists and media workers. If this reality persists, the outlook in the region for achieving Indicator 16.10.1, Target 16.10, and SDG 16 will remain bleak.



The differentiated manner in which violence is exercised towards women, men, and non-binary people is beginning to

be recognized. Ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and physical ability, among other identity factors, condition the way in which different populations experience diverse types of violence.

In 2021, nine countries for which there is comparative segregated data for 2020 showed increases in alerts for violence against women journalists and media workers. Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, and Uruguay registered increases of more than 50% each.

Among the alerts documenting female victims, the use of stigmatizing discourse stands out; more often than not, questions about intellectual and professional capacity for journalism and comments about physical appearance and sexuality were present.

This symbolic violence is frequently used against women and non-binary people. Dis-

crimination and exclusion also manifest themselves against women and non-binary journalists and media workers. Although the presence of women and non-binary people in the media has increased, their participation is still limited, especially in managerial positions.

Violence against women and non-binary people working in media also manifests in labor and sexual harassment, although it is insufficiently recorded.

Gender equality and respect for diversity should be benchmarks for strengthening freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information, as they themselves are fundamental pillars of democracy and peace.



It is essential to promote equal opportunities within newsrooms and to build differentiated protection mechanisms for journalists and media workers identifying as women, non-binary, Indigenous, and/or Afro-descendant, among other identities in order to make considerable progress toward Indicator 16.10.1, as well as develop plural and inclusive media ecosystems that serve the public interest.

The fulfillment of SDG 16 requires, beyond the absence of repression and censorship, that journalists and media workers can conduct their work with psychosocial and financial sustainability, editorial independence, and opportunities for professional growth.

The 2021 Shadow Report, a product of systematic and methodologically rigorous monitoring by the VdS Network, contributes to the consolida-

tion of an evidentiary foundation that can contribute to a better understanding and therefore, a better response, to the differentiated effects of violence against the press in Latin America. As women and non-binary, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant people continue to gain ground in the media, solutions must be designed to meet their needs and priorities to protect from the differentiated violence that impacts them.

The incorporation of the cross-cutting gender indicator in the monitoring conducted by the VdS Network is a positive step, as it will provide information on some of the differentiated effects faced by persons in marginalized situations. However, the lack of disaggregated statistics still limits available information, which should be improved. The efforts made so far by select part-

ners within the VdS Network show that these populations are particularly affected by hate speech, especially online. Any attempt to improve the situation of fundamental rights in Latin America and to meet Target 16.10 of the SDGs must contemplate the interconnected nature of violence's many forms and how this disproportionately impacts media workers with diverse identities.

REGIONAL RESULTS: A GLOOMY PICTURE



Regional Results: A Gloomy Picture

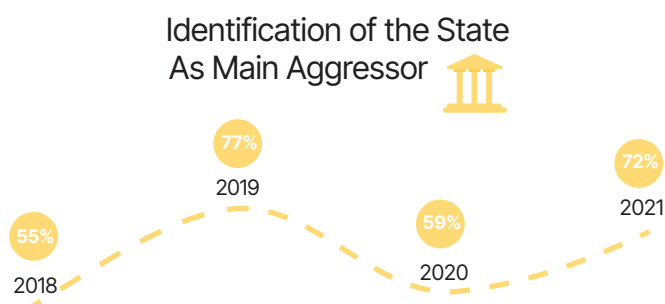
The VdS Network registered 4,930 alerts of violations of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in 14 Latin American countries in 2021. On average, 14 alerts were registered per day, or one every two hours. In eight of the countries monitored for which there is comparative data for 2020 (13 total), there was an increase in the number of registered alerts.

Countries With Largest Increases Recorded:






Cuba	▲ 228%
Nicaragua	▲ 149%
Uruguay	▲ 89%
Ecuador	▲ 80%
Argentina	▲ 52%
Peru	▲ 35%
Brazil	▲ 29%
Colombia	▲ 28%

In the entire region, there is a gloomy picture regarding fundamental rights and the fulfillment of SDG 16.

As in 2018 (55%), 2019 (77%), and 2020 (59%), most alerts in 2021 (72%) identify the State as the aggressor.





States, in theory guarantors of human rights, are by action and omission a major threat faced by journalists and media workers. Of the thirteen indicators monitored, those with the highest increases were:

Indicators With the Highest Increases	
 Arbitrary detentions	▲198%
 Abusive use of state power	▲193%
 Stigmatizing discourse	▲83%
 Restrictions on access to information	▲50%
 Aggressions and attacks	▲18%

These forms of violence are exercised by and from State institutions, which unequivocally confirms that the situation of these fundamental freedoms is deteriorating across the region.

The state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access

to information continued to deteriorate in Uruguay in 2021, especially considering that there was an increase of 450% in alerts regarding stigmatizing speech and 400% in criminal and civil proceedings.

▲450%  Stigmatizing speech	▲400%  Criminal and civil proceedings
--	--

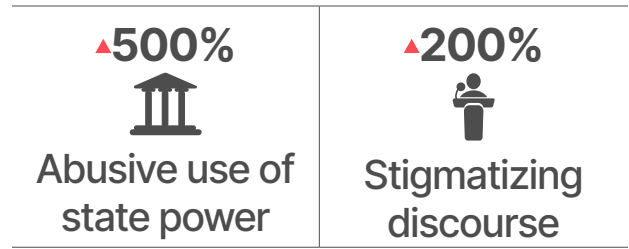
Press freedom and the right of access to information will continue to deteriorate in Uruguay in 2021.

During the early years of the VdS Network's monitoring, Uruguay was considered a bastion of fundamental rights protection. However, the government of President Luis Lacalle Pou has fostered an antagonistic environment towards the press. Peru, a regional success story when VdS Network monitoring began in 2018, is now also in a precarious situation; 13 alerts were registered in

2018, 15 in 2019, 57 in 2020, and 77 in 2021.

Alerts Registered in Peru	
2018	13
2019	15
2020	57
2021	77

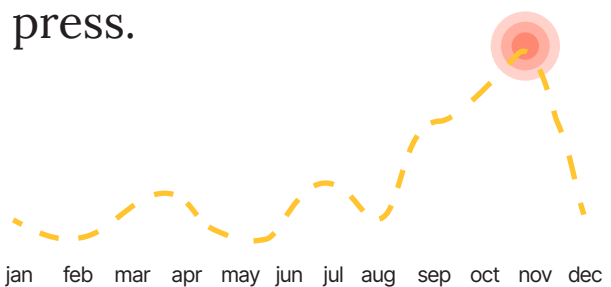
The structural decline is worrisome in a country with a recent history of dictatorship and armed violence. In Argentina, the first year of Alberto Fernandez's government coincided with a decrease in the number of alerts registered, moving from 84 in 2019 to 48 in 2020. Regrettably, the situation worsened in 2021, with 73 alerts and increases of 500% and 200% in abusive use of state power and stigmatizing discourse, amid a context of strong political polarization.



The situation in Argentina worsened in 2021, with 74 alerts and increases of 500% and 200% in abusive use of state power and stigmatizing discourse.

The deterioration in countries whose situations had been characterized as relatively strong is of great concern.

In Bolivia, the government of Luis Arce was initially cautious in its relationship with the press, contributing to a 33% reduction in the number of alerts registered in 2021. However, the increase in the number of alerts registered towards the end of the year reveals that the government is beginning to feel uncomfortable with the oversight of an independent press.



In Ecuador an 80% increase in violations perpetrated by mid-level public officials across State institutions between 2020 and 2021 is significant.

▲80%

Alerts in Ecuador Compared to 2020

Stigmatization, which began during the government of Rafael Correa and continued throughout that of Lenín Moreno, remains unabated under President Guillermo Lasso. Brazil continues to see an annual rise in alerts, with 130 in 2019, 419 in 2020, and 541 in 2021.

Alerts Registered in Brazil

2019	130
2020	419
2021	541

Alerts over stigmatizing speech in this country increased 137%. In all three countries, stigmatization of journalistic work has contributed to the overall deterioration of fundamental rights at an accelerated pace. Even as authorities change, stigmatization remains throughout social and political structures.

In Mexico, the number of alerts decreased by ten percent;¹ however, at least one alert was registered in all regions of the country in 2021.

In Colombia, the total amount of alerts grew by 28% in Colombia. Both countries share a common tragic thread of intense and increasing direct violence against journalists and media workers. Nine journalists were murdered in Mexico and one in Colombia in 2021.

¹ Even though from 2020 to 2021 ARTICLE 19 registered a lower number of alerts, the first three years of López Obrador's term in office, this organization documented 1,053 alerts, meaning that the first three years of López Obrador's term represent almost 85% more attacks against the press than the first three years of the previous president

Guatemala and Honduras recorded reductions in the total number of annual alerts (74% and 44% respectively), yet also reported increases in direct violence.

Both countries reported one murder and high levels of assaults and attacks against journalists and media workers.

 Recorded Murders	
Mexico	9
Colombia	1
Guatemala	1
Honduras	1

The percentage of alerts corresponding to aggressions and attacks in each country is disproportionately high: 80% in Colombia, 65% in Mexico, 62% in Honduras, and 45% in Guatemala.

Cuba and Nicaragua are among the countries that ex-

perienced the most dramatic increase in alerts for violations against freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information among all with comparative data from 2020. In Nicaragua, 92% of the alerts identify the State as the perpetrator, whereas Cuba reports 99%.



Percentage of Cases in Which the State Was Identified As Aggressor	
Cuba	99%
Nicaragua	92%

Cuba registered an increase of 425% in alerts corresponding to arbitrary detentions and 614% in restrictions of access to information. In Nicaragua, alerts related to the abusive use of State power increased by 815%. Meanwhile, Venezuela saw an 11% decrease in total alerts.


▼11%
Alerts in Venezuela Compared to 2020

This does not mean, however, that the situation has improved at a structural level; rather, it reflects a deepening of adaptation strategies to combat State repression across the Venezuelan media ecosystem.

While El Salvador is included for the first time in this Shadow Report, evidence of structural violence against the press in the country is already apparent: 53% of alerts in 2021 corresponded to restrictions of access to information and 37% to aggressions and attacks, with an alarming 67% identifying the State as the aggressor.

Disturbing Trends in El Salvador	
 Restrictions of access to information	53%
 Aggressions and attacks	37%

In the VdS Network’s first year deploying its cross-cutting gender indicator, 165 alerts were registered across 11 countries.

 **165 alerts were registered with the gender cross-sectional indicator.**

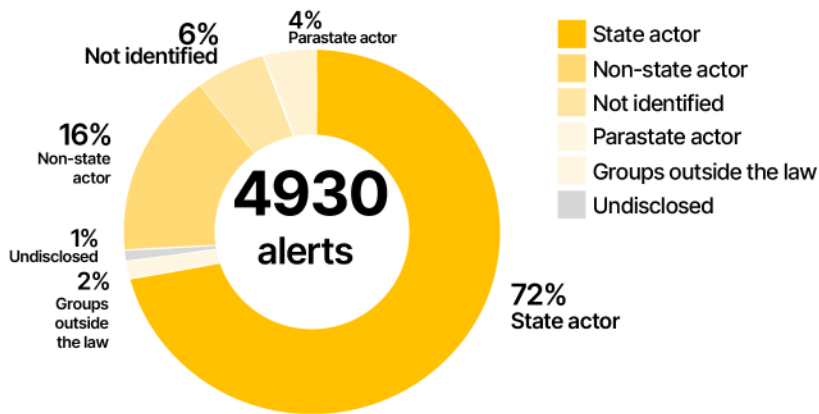
The country with the highest number of gender alerts was Brazil (50), followed by Ecuador (42), Mexico (40), Uruguay (8), Colombia (7), Venezuela (7), Guatemala (4), Nicaragua (3), Argentina (2), El Salvador (1), and Peru (1). Of the 165 gender alerts, 76 (44%) correspond to stig-

matizing speech, 68 (42%) to aggressions and attacks, eight (5%) to civil and criminal proceedings, six (4%) to access to information, three (2%) to internet restrictions, two (1%) to abusive use of State power, one (1%) to murder, and one (1%) to arbitrary detention.

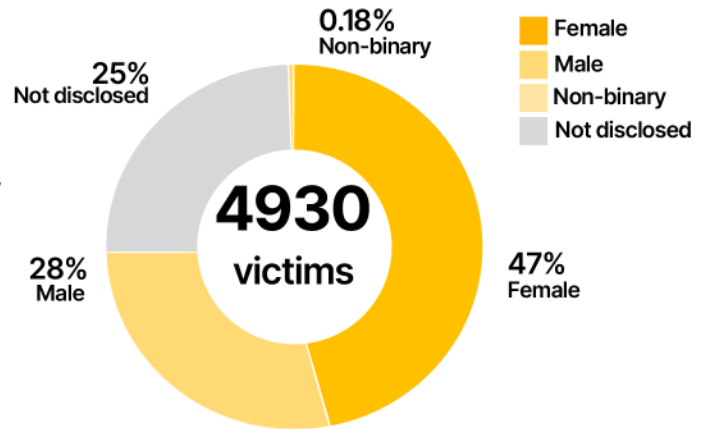
* Gender Indicator	
Brazil	50
Ecuador	42
Mexico	40
Uruguay	8
Colombia	7
Venezuela	7
Guatemala	4
Nicaragua	3
Argentina	2
El Salvador	1
Peru	1
Total	165

Regional Indicators

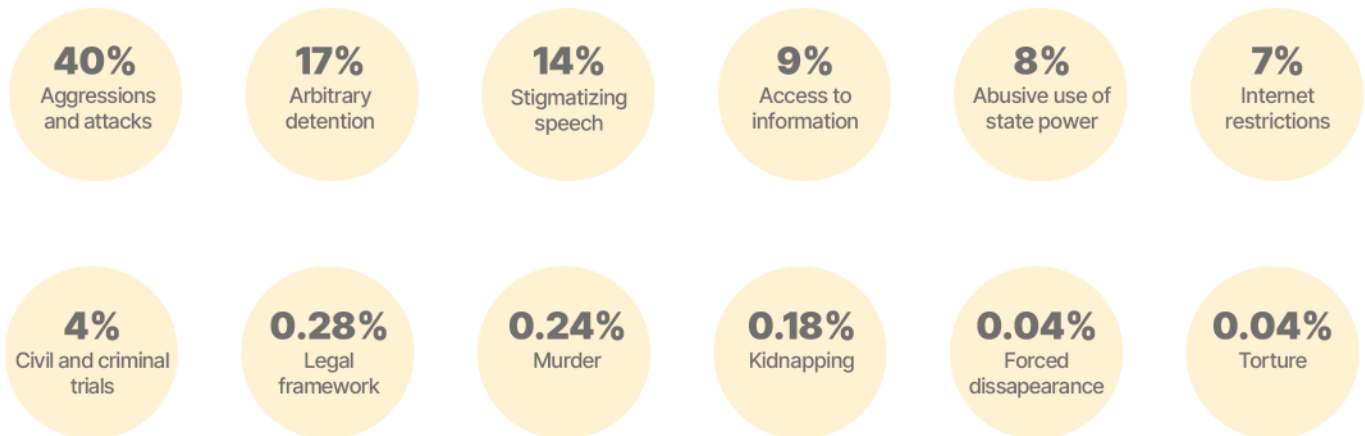
Distribution by aggressor



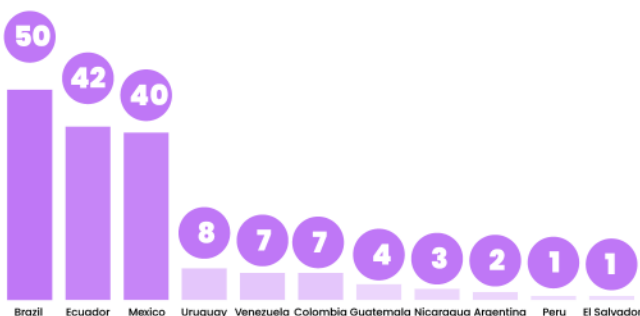
Distribution by gender



Total percentage of alerts by aggression type



Countries with gender-based alerts



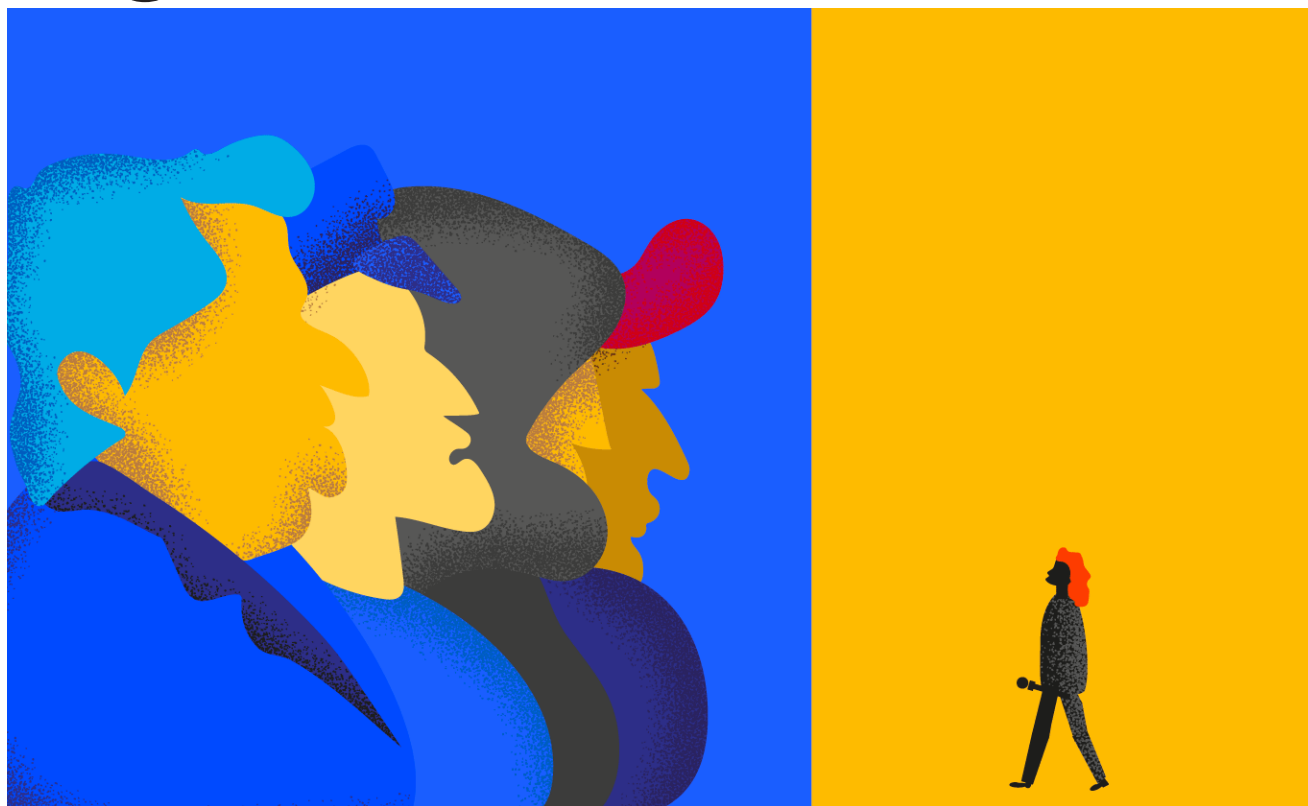
Gender Based Alert Indicator



Regional Annual Variation

		2018	2019	2020	2021
Argentina	Alerts	51	84 ▲	48 ▼	73 ▲
	Annual variation %		65%	-42%	52%
Bolivia	Alerts	65	162 ▲	117 ▼	77 ▼
	Annual variation %		149%	-28%	-33%
Brazil	Alerts		130	419 ▲	541 ▲
	Annual variation %			222%	29%
Colombia	Alerts			499 ▲	638 ▲
	Annual variation %				28%
Cuba	Alerts			344	1129 ▲
	Annual variation %				228%
Ecuador	Alerts	83	197 ▲	129 ▼	232 ▲
	Annual variation %		137%	-35%	80%
El Salvador	Alerts				219
	Annual variation %				
Guatemala	Alerts			112	29 ▼
	Annual variation %				-74%
Honduras	Alerts	80	131 ▲	117 ▼	66 ▼
	Annual variation %		64%	-11%	-44%
Mexico	Alerts			692	626 ▼
	Annual variation %				-10%
Nicaragua	Alerts	234	1267 ▲	282 ▼	701 ▲
	Annual variation %		441%	-78%	149%
Peru	Alerts	13	15 ▲	57 ▲	77 ▲
	Annual variation %		15%	280%	35%
Uruguay	Alerts	12	26 ▲	37 ▲	70 ▲
	Annual variation %		117%	42%	89%
Venezuela	Alerts	196	744 ▲	510 ▼	452 ▼
	Annual variation %		280%	-31%	-11%
Total	Alerts	734	2756 ▲	3363 ▲	4930 ▲
	Annual variation %		275%	22%	47%

Argentina



Polarization incites violence against media

Fundamental freedoms have deteriorated in Argentina as a result of a political context that normalizes the stigmatization of journalists. In 2021, VdS Network member FOPEA registered a total of 73 alerts, 52% more than 2020. Aggressions and attacks accounted for 45% of alerts, followed by civil and criminal proce-

edings (26%), stigmatizing speech (12%).

The 50% growth in assaults and attacks committed between 2020 and 2021 raises alarms about a normalization of violence. Several noteworthy cases exist within this series of attacks. Nine hooded men threw Molo-

to cocktails at a building of the iconic Grupo Clarín media group.

In another incident, a group of approximately 100 individuals, later identified as trade unionists, vandalized property, and threatened journalists of the newspaper Río Negro.

In 2021, authorities in the Formosa province continued to harass journalists who have covered the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic since April 2020. Police resorted to intimidation, short-term detentions, and stigmatization campaigns against journalists, as well as targeted them during citizen demonstrations.

With the State As the Main Aggressor, Stigmatization and Criminalization Are of Concern

According to FOPEA, “there is a process of deterioration and mutation of the forms of attacks on freedom of expression,” that has resulted in the normalization of violent antagonism towards the press. The State was identified as the aggressor in 63% of alerts in 2021. Alerts related to the abusive use of State power increased by 500%, while those corresponding to a legal framework contrary to standards and arbitrary detentions both increased 50%.

The proposed reform of the Organic Law of the Public Prosecutor's Office could invite judicial harassment against journalists by facilitating the politicization of

the Public Prosecutor's Office and normalizing appointing prosecutors dependent on circumstantial political majorities. The abuse of State power, prosecution of journalists, and stigmatizing discourse from those in power also occur at the provincial level. FOPEA has expressed its concern over the offensive statements made by the Mayor of Villa de Merlo, Juan Álvarez Pinto, against journalist Vanina García of FM Lafinur. The mayor called the journalist a “liar,” an act detrimental to her credibility. These tendencies weaken the situation of fundamental freedoms in Argentina and seek to silence journalists.

Alerts related to stigmatizing discourse grew by 200%. This violation is beginning to become culturally accepted across the country—especially onli-

ne—which opens the door to other types of aggressions and creates “a breeding ground” for political attacks against journalists. Dangerous State-led rhetoric also invites attacks against journalists in the streets, as many citizens now perceive of them as representing the interests of economic groups that control the media, which polarizes society into viewing the “party” as “the good guy” and journalists and media as “the bad guys.” Criminalization of journalists continues to be a main threat to the profession; at least 19 complaints related to prosecution and civil and criminal proceedings against journalists were registered in 2021. Journalist Daniel Santoro was accused of attempted extortion and criminally prosecuted for the third consecutive year Santoro explained that the accusations derive from his relationship

with his sources, which reflects a lack of understanding of the work of reporters by authorities.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

In 2021, 15 alerts were registered against women journalists and 47 against men, annual increases of 88% and 47% respectively. Assaults and attacks were the most significant type of violation committed against women journalists. FOPEA followed up on two gender alerts, both cases of sexual abuse in the province of Tucumán. In these cases, two party militants sexually assaulted journalists Carolina Ponce de León and Mariana Romero in the Government Palace while they were conducting their journalistic work. As a result, a new dialogue was opened in Argentina on violence against women journalists,

which has historically been normalized and made invisible due to a lack of reporting and protection mechanisms for victims. At the institutional level, the new Law on Gender Equality in the Media was approved by the government in July 2021, which aims to promote the substantive equality of rights, opportunities, and treatment of people in the media, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. This law also seeks to promote parity in the participation of women and trans journalists, ultimately raising awareness of the need to consider the differentiated effects of violence against journalists. Finally, FOPEA registered two alerts corresponding to the cross-cutting gender indicator, one for access to information and one for aggressions and attacks.

Recommendations

The State is the main obstacle to the fulfillment of SDG 16.10.1 in Argentina. The media has played an essential role in the consolidation of Argentina's democracy; thus, stigmatization and attacks against media weaken the country's democratic practices, creating a culture of censorship and fear amongst journalists. This polarization is a clear existential threat to democracy, sustainable development, and fundamental freedoms. As such, authorities, CSOs, and society more broadly must commit to protect the journalistic exercise above sectarian agendas. In this regard, it is necessary to foster and consolidate effective support for civil society to fulfill distinct roles, including monitoring fundamental freedoms and promoting safe, healthy, and favorable conditions and environments for practicing

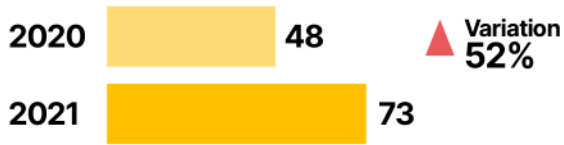
journalism. Priorities include mobilizing public opinion to demand that the State desist from stigmatizing and criminalizing journalism, as well as ensuring that journalists facing malicious prosecution receive comprehensive support.

It is important to strengthen support for the development and production of public interest journalism, as well as to promote journalistic approaches that better include people across the gender spectrum in reporting, editorial leadership, and source engagement. Public interest journalism must be diverse, inclusive, and pluralistic. Likewise, the gender-conscious monitoring of violence against journalists should continue to be strengthened. By collecting and analyzing data with a gender lens, a rigorous body of evidence will exist

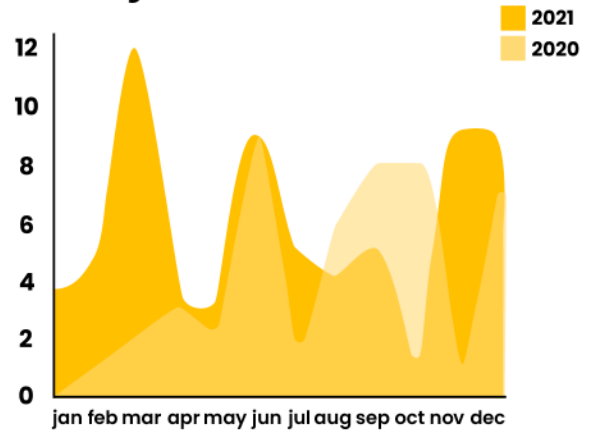
and allow for better understanding of the differentiated effects of violence against journalists and how to attend to them. This can help authorities, civil society, and other relevant actors to assume their respective roles in protecting women and LGBTIQ+ journalists—especially in the face of severe violence such as sexual abuse—and to investigate and prosecute cases so that justice is served.

Argentina

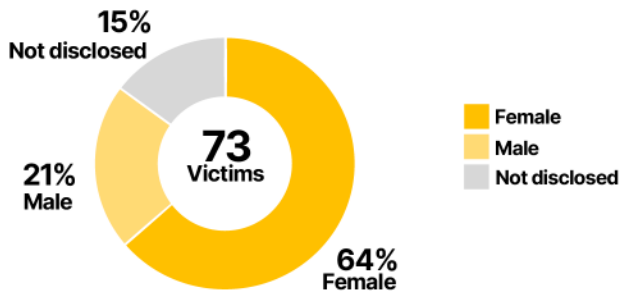
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



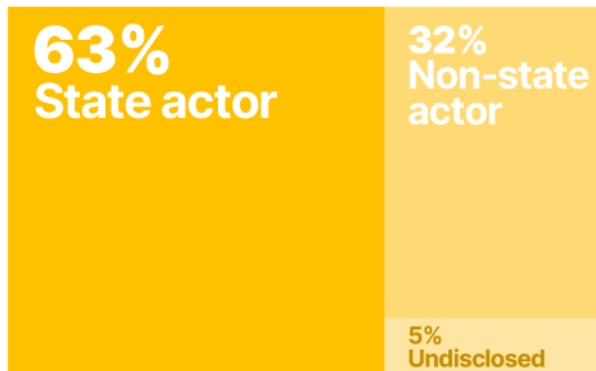
Victims by gender



Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **73**
♀ Gender alerts: **2**

Aggressors



Aggressions and attacks



Civil and criminal trials



Stigmatizing speech



Abusive use of state power



Arbitrary detention



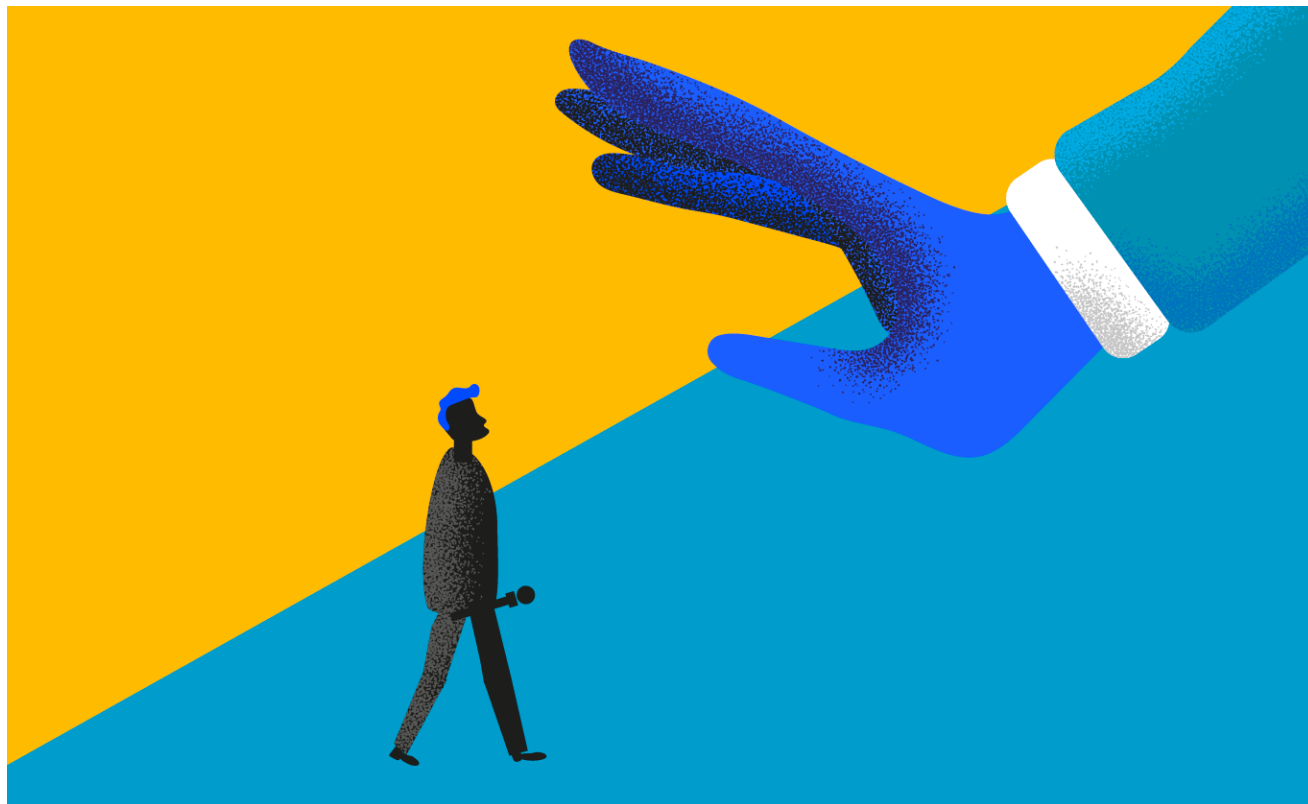
Legal framework contrary to international standards



Access to information



Bolivia



Fundamental freedoms already bother Luis Arce's government

Freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information have remained under threat in Bolivia during the administration of President Luis Arce, just as they were under Interim-President Jeanine Áñez and during the almost 14 years of Evo Mora-

les. Although Arce began his term with a more cautious relationship with the press, current data indicates that journalism is beginning to bother Arce's government and his followers. VdS partner ANP registered 77 alerts in 2021, a 33% decrease compared to 2020. However,

the situation of SDG 16.10.1 in Bolivia in 2021 was marked by two extremely worrying facts: 71% of alerts were registered in the second half of the year and 53% identify State or State-owned actors as aggressors.

Stigmatization, Harassment, and Violence: Pillars of Abuse of Power

In Bolivia, verbal attacks against the press are frequently registered from government institutions. In 2021, there was a 100% increase in alerts corresponding to stigmatizing speech. The Attorney General's Office has used social networks to attack independent media, accusing them of deceiving, lying, misrepresenting, and manipulating. For their part, militants of the ruling party translate

authorities' stigmatizing discourse into hatred and violent actions. Most of the 2021 alerts (54%) correspond to aggressions and attacks. The data reflects an increase in violence in conflict zones linked to land seizures and coca leaf cultivation.

On October 28, 2021, six media workers in the department of Santa Cruz were victims of kidnapping, torture, and death threats for seven hours by a group of hooded individuals illegally occupying land in the province of Guarayos. Additionally, other acts of extreme violence have been reported in the Yungas region, including an explosives attack on press teams covering clashes amongst coca leaf growers and a kidnapping and stripping of work equipment from a radio correspondent covering a protest by transport drivers.

In 2021, ANP reported a 100% increase in restrictions on access to information and 150% in legal framework contrary to international standards, as well as three alerts of abusive use of State power and one of judicial proceedings, all of which evidences the State's role in attempting to silence independent journalism. Prosecutors have begun to issue subpoenas against journalists, including to the director of Radio Yungas, Eliana Ayaviri, and the director of Radio FM Bolivia, Galo Hubner, in the investigations into the death of a policeman, as well as to an investigative journalist working for the newspaper El Deber, for an investigation into the use of seized assets to support shock troops of the ruling party. Harassment from the State—meant to serve as the guarantor of justice, peace,

freedom, and democracy—is particularly perverse.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

Of all alerts in 2021, 10% and 38% were related to acts of violence against female and male journalists, respectively. Aggressions and attacks accounted for 88% of all alerts against women. Violence against journalists in Bolivia has been normalized through a system of State-led intimidation.

As a result, a fear of reporting has emerged, which limits the accuracy of data detailing the differentiated effects of violence against women and LGBTIQ+ journalists. Furthermore, a generalized culture of discrimination across society against the LGBTIQ+ population further complicates the possibility of recording attacks against

journalists within this community. Among the alerts, cases of extreme violence against women journalists were recorded. One female journalist was amongst the group kidnapped and tortured in October 2021. Additionally, a woman journalist was almost lynched during the November protests in La Paz. It is evident that gender violence and violence against journalists are creating vicious cycles of mutual reinforcement that increase vulnerabilities and risks for women and LGBTIQ+ persons. ANP did not register any alerts corresponding to the cross-cutting gender indicator in 2021. However, it is imperative that monitoring continue to better understand and mitigate this problem.

Recommendations

The outlook for achieving SDG 16.10.1 in Bolivia is difficult. Stigmatization, harassment, and violence—which originate in the highest echelons of power—weaken the ecosystem of people and organizations dedicated producing quality journalism and to promoting and defending press freedom, freedom of expression, the right of access to information, both of great public interest. These trends can be reversed by strengthening the organizations and programs that monitor, document, and accompany these violations. Active support and solidarity from the international community is important. In the case of the kidnappings in Santa Cruz, joint pressure created public outrage and favored the release of victims. Advocacy on the role of fundamental rights in sustain-

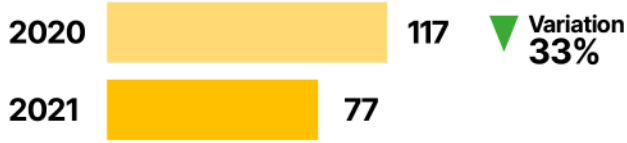
nable development, as a pillar of peace and democracy, must continue to be promoted to maintain the interest of citizens and the international community in these issues. It has been shown that public pressure can effectively influence the actions of the State in the face of attacks against journalists.

It is essential to invest more resources from international cooperation and private philanthropy in the development and production of public interest journalism, as well as in the catalytic work of civil society, which seeks to ensure safe, healthy, and favorable conditions and environments for those who practice journalism and for their audiences. This investment would lead to initiatives and solutions, for example, to strengthen the collection and analysis of data on attacks on jour-

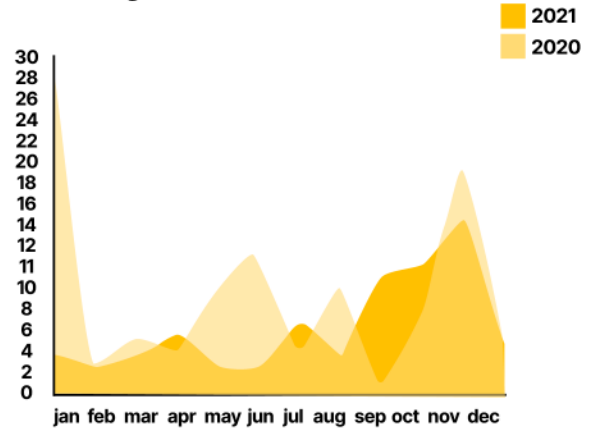
nalists with a gender focus, promote innovation, inclusion and diversity in journalism and in the development of the public interest media sector, improve the capabilities of audiences, provide legal support to journalists facing malicious prosecution, and design effective and innovative campaigns to position appreciation for public interest journalism as part of a democratic culture. These and other diverse and bold approaches are necessary to address the great challenges and obstacles that Bolivia faces in terms of achieving SDG 16.10.1.

Bolivia

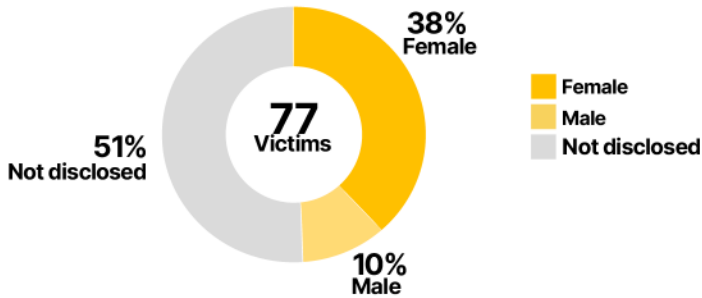
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



Victims by gender



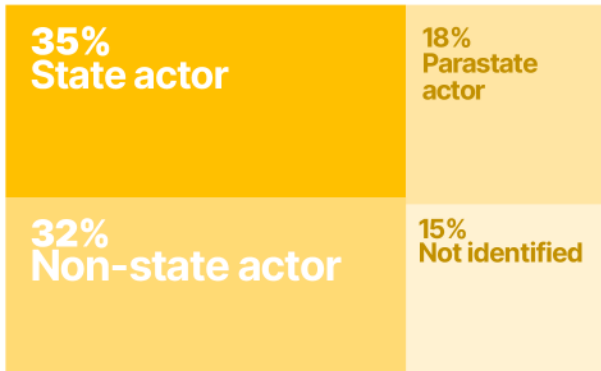
Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **77**

Aggressions and attacks

42

Aggressors



Arbitrary detention



1

Civil and criminal trials



1

Internet restrictions



1

Abusive use of state power



3

Legal framework contrary to international standards



5

Kidnapping



6

Access to information



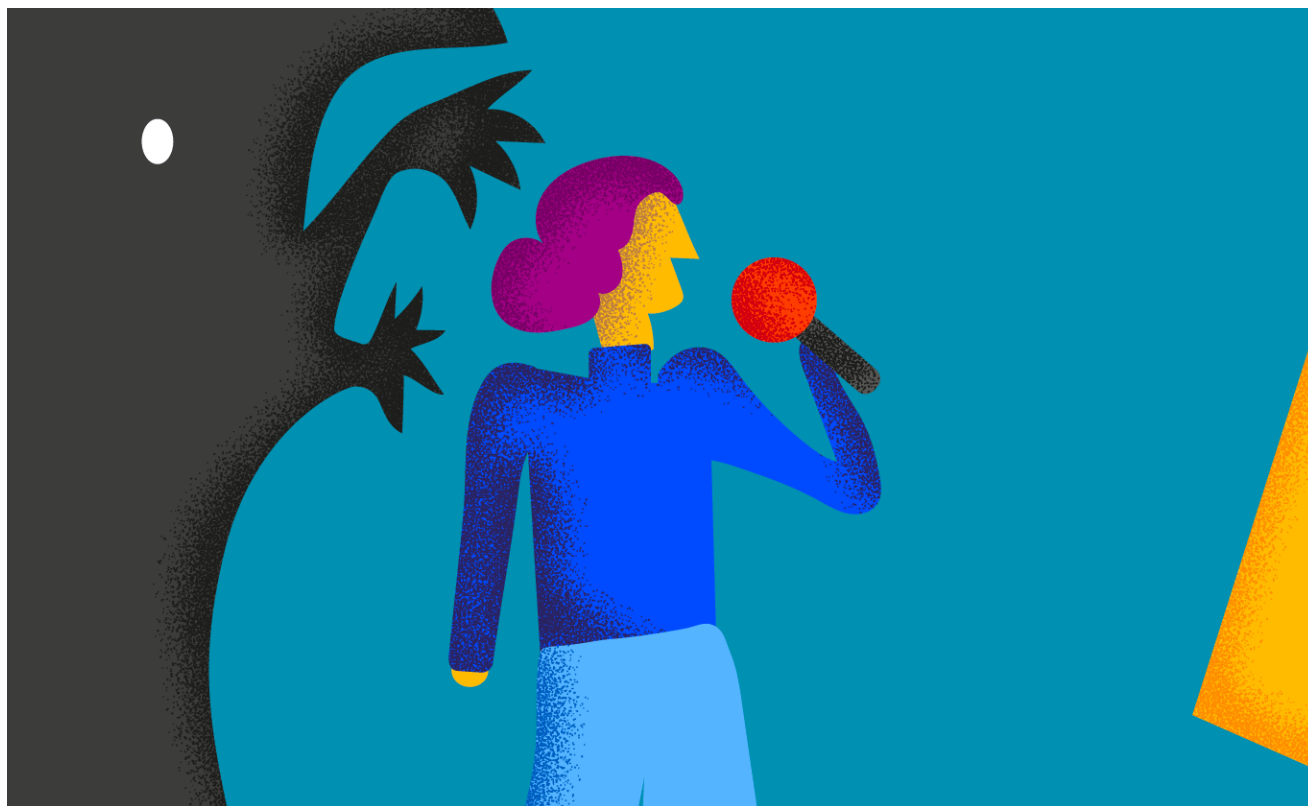
8

Stigmatizing speech



10

Brazil



Worrying increase in attacks against freedom of expression

In the third year of President Jair Bolsonaro's mandate, the situation of press freedom in Brazil has greatly deteriorated due to the stigmatization of the media by the executive branch and its supporters, who see journalists as enemies. In 2021, partner Abraji recorded 541 alerts, a 29% increa-

se over last year. State actors were identified as aggressors in 73% of alerts. The political environment and State officials follow the example set by President Bolsonaro, who uses stigmatizing discourse as a weapon of direct aggression against journalists on social media and in inter-

views and press conferences, amongst other forums. Alarmingly, the rise of stigmatizing discourse has clearly encouraged other types of organized and consistent attacks including physical and verbal aggressions and digital harassment against journalists and media outlets. Abraji reported that 70% of all alerts in 2021 were cases of stigmatizing speech. 377 cases of stigmatizing speech demonstrate a 137% rise in comparison to the previous year.

Censorship Through Prosecution, Verbal, and Physical Violence

The instrumentalization of justice through criminal and civil proceedings against journalists reporting on issues perceived as sensitive by politicians remains a huge issue in Brazil,

even if official alerts dropped slightly in 2021. Abraji recorded 8, 39, and 25 cases in 2019, 2020, and 2021. Most of the cases come from State actors seeking to censor the work of journalists, although non-governmental allies of President Bolsonaro have also intervened (primarily through lawsuits) to impose a climate of harassment towards the press. This structural violence instrumentalizes State institutions, meant to be the guarantors of these fundamental rights, to in fact do the opposite and hinder freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information.

This year, 122 alerts of aggressions and attacks were registered in Brazil, representing 23% of all alerts and an increase of 9% from last year. One particularly disturbing case was a fire at the fa-

cilities of the newspaper Folha da Região in the city of Olimpia. In the days prior to the attack, the newspaper received threats for its coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic and its support for vaccination and prevention efforts. As in 2020 during the onset of the pandemic, 2021 was marked by the massive spread of disinformation, both from the government and other social entities such as churches and social groups. This represented a formidable challenge for journalists who had to make enormous verification efforts to provide truthful information to the public. Fake news continues to be an instrument used to stigmatize journalists and justify attacks against them.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

In 2021, Abraji recorded 50 gender alerts, 36 were related

to stigmatizing speech, 12 for aggressions and attacks, and 2 for Internet restrictions. Attacks included those on social networks, which were often homophobic or transphobic. In total, 116 attacks were committed against women journalists and 151 against men, an annual increase of 79% and 32% respectively. 71% of all alerts issued against women journalists were for stigmatizing speech, a 720% rise in comparison with 2020. On average, these attacks occurred every three days in 2021. Led by President Bolsonaro and his supporters, Brazil has seen a significant increase in hate speech from State and political actors towards women journalists, who they identify as enemies. Attacks have multiplied on social networks, where groups supporting the President attack women journalists by criticizing their

physical appearance, questioning their qualifications, and revealing their personal data. Furthermore, aggressions against female journalists are not limited to digital spaces. In September 2021, a journalist for the Globo media group was pelted with stones while covering a Brazilian national team soccer match in Recife, northeastern Brazil.

Recommendations

The anti-democratic and anti-rights tendencies of President Bolsonaro—made more powerful by his alliance with the country's conservative and religious sectors—define the lack of progress toward SDG 16.10.1 in Brazil. Bolsonaro and his allies have managed to spread fake news and build a parallel, false flow of reporting to that of mainstream media. This reality will surely intensify po-

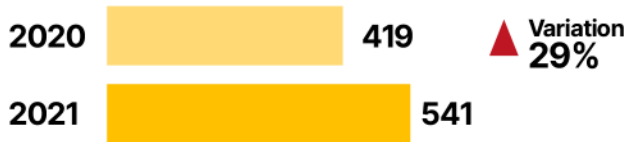
litical polarization and aggravate risks for journalists in the run-up to the presidential election in October 2022. A coalition of CSOs, journalists, and public officials must come together to strengthen efforts to verify public discourse. This type of alliance should go a step further, promoting strategies and campaigns that serve to position the importance of public interest journalism in the collective imagination as a cornerstone of democratic culture. Based on public pressure, both authorities and international organizations should join efforts to strengthen mechanisms to protect journalists. The State should also combat impunity and investigate the murders of journalists in the last decade, as leaving them unsolved sends a harmful signal regarding the value of journalism in Brazil.

Civil society needs support from the international and private philanthropic communities to build and defend safe and healthy conditions and environments for fundamental freedoms in Brazil. Similarly, it is essential to support the development and production of public interest journalism in an effective and strategic manner. This can stimulate better inclusion across the gender spectrum in journalistic production, content creation, editorial leadership, and source diversity. Abraji has worked to integrate a gender perspective and intersectional inclusion in the monitoring of press freedom violations in Brazil in recent years, seeking to document the differentiated effects of violence against journalists. This allows for a more complete understanding of how violence impacts certain population groups in diverse ways and, conse-

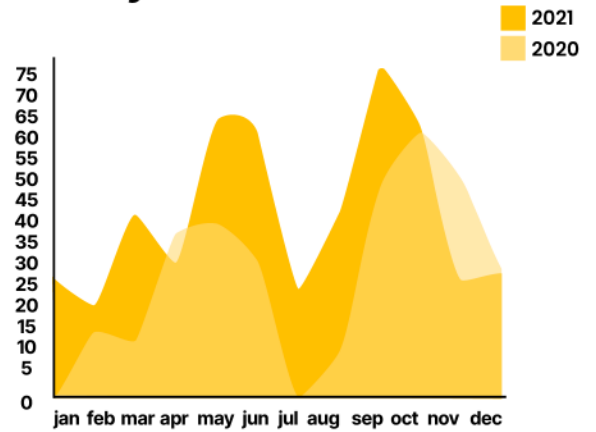
quently, can help improve prevention and care systems for those suffering labor-related violence, ultimately promoting pluralism and diversity as pillars of achieving SDG 16.

Brazil

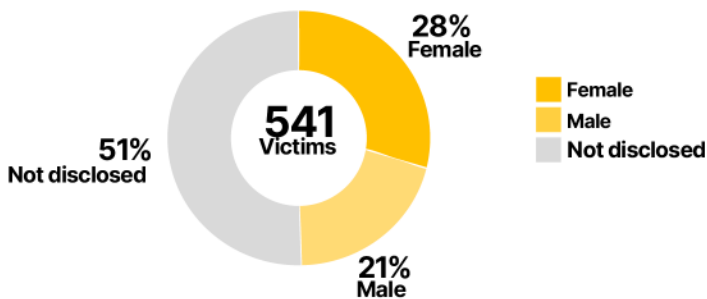
Alerts per year



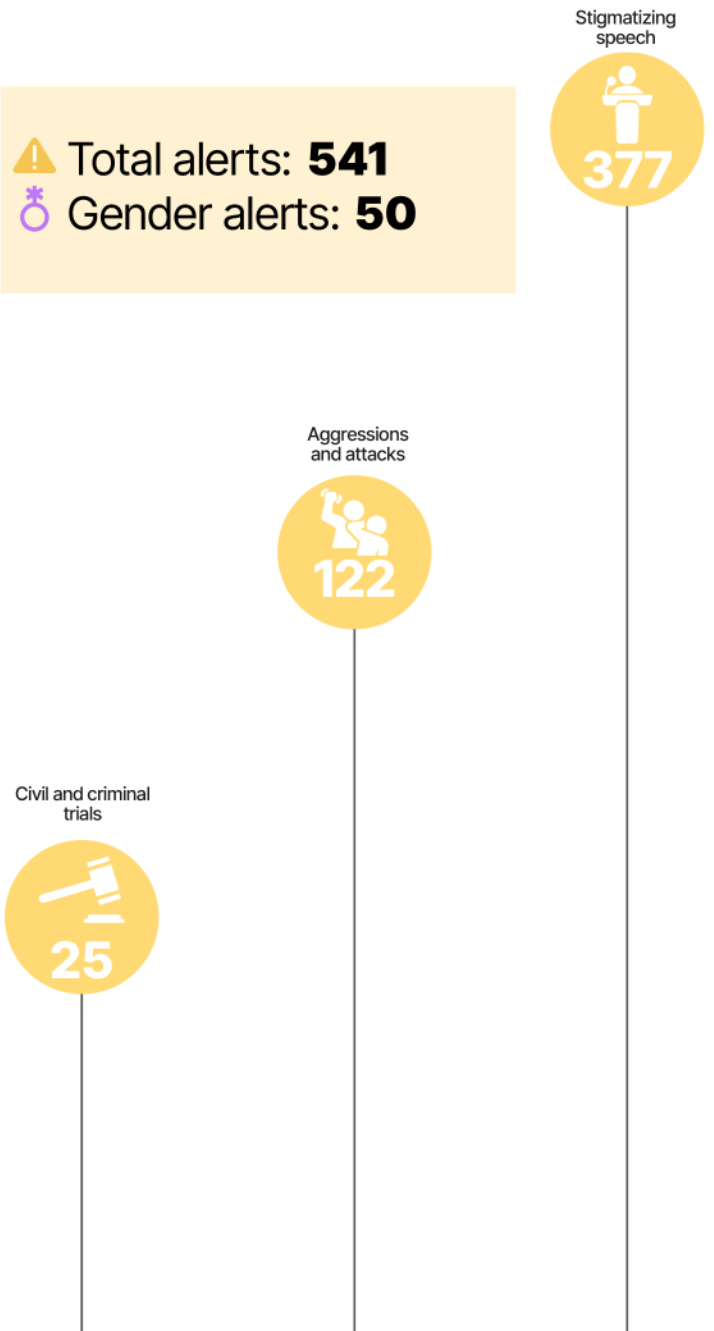
Alerts by month



Victims by gender



Indicators



Aggressors



Colombia



Unprecedented violence against the press and the state as perpetrator

For the second consecutive year, the state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information faced setbacks in Colombia. VdS Network member FLIP registered 638 alerts in 2021, a 28% increase from 2020 and the highest wave of violence

against the press recorded since the organization began its mandate in 2006. This year, the State was identified as the aggressor in 50% of cases. State-led violence against the press during the mass demonstrations was unprecedented; 44% of all alerts were concentrated be-

tween April and July. The Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ES-MAD) fired pellets at clearly identifiable journalists, a violation that remains unpunished. If public authorities deploy stigmatizing discourse against journalists and independent media rather than supporting and protecting fundamental freedoms, progress towards SDG 16.10.1 in Colombia is in jeopardy.

Journalism is Threatened by Targeted and Contextual Violence

Violence against journalists and media outlets covering corruption and armed conflict in Colombia is concerning. Alerts on aggressions and attacks increased by 73% in 2021. On September 19, unknown individuals murdered journalist Marcos Montalvo in Tuluá, Valle del Cauca. Marcos was critical of the

administration of the mayor of Tuluá, John Jairo Gómez, and denounced corruption within the Secretariat of Transit. Four journalists in the department of Córdoba who reported on illegal armed groups and irregular management of public funds in the municipalities of Montelíbano, Tierralta, and Puerto Libertador, received death threats. These cases are evidence of a resurgence of the violent environment that had hoped to be overcome after the peace accords. These situations occurred in areas with the presence of guerrillas such as the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), organized crime groups such as the Gulf Clan and the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC), and criminal gangs operating along the border with Venezuela.

Local and parliamentary authorities, including mayors and senators, maliciously accused journalists and the media of promoting disinformation and conducting smear campaigns. This pattern of stigmatization of journalistic practice is dangerous, as it indicates that threats and attacks to the integrity and lives of journalists are permitted. In 2021, there was a 100% increase in alerts related to abusive use of State power and a 64% increase in alerts related to arbitrary detentions. Abusive and disproportionate decisions and actions by the authorities promote fear, self-censorship, psychological damage, and financial losses. Journalist Hernán Muñoz was fired from Telemedellín, a public media outlet, as a result of having criticized the mayoral administration of Medellín. This act of censorship was perpetrated

by the general manager of Telemedellín.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

FLIP recorded 113 aggressions against women journalists and 466 against men in 2021. Aggressions and attacks (46%), arbitrary detentions (50%) and stigmatizing discourse (100%) increased, including notably differentiated harassment of women journalists through sexist commentary and stigmatizing discourse that ignores the work of women journalists. FLIP points to the case of Jineth Bedoya Lima as emblematic of differentiated violence faced by women journalists, which resulted in a milestone for press freedom in Colombia. In October 2021, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a judgment against the State, condemning it for

the use of sexual violence to control and silence a woman journalist. The Court found the State responsible for the violation of Bedoya Lima's right to personal integrity and liberty, honor and dignity, and freedom of thought and expression for her 2000 kidnapping and inhumane treatment (including physical, sexual, and verbal aggression) which occurred while she was reporting on crimes and human rights violations inside the Modelo prison in Bogota in 2000. FLIP also registered seven alerts corresponding to the cross-cutting gender indicator of the VdS Network: six aggressions and attacks and one civil and criminal proceeding.

Recommendations

The situation of SDG 16.10.1 has continued to deteriorate between 2020 and 2021 in

Colombia. Discursive, physical, and legal violence by the State creates insecurity for those who practice journalism and is a structural threat to the viability of public interest media, hindering achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Pressure must be put on authorities elected in June 2022 to develop effective and articulate public policies that improve the state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information. The authorities must desist from promoting stigmatizing discourse against journalists and the media. It is essential to mobilize public opinion to put an end to impunity in cases of violence against journalists. The country's Program for the Protection of Journalists (born 21 years ago) must be comprehensively strengthened, moving from a disjointed to a coordinated protection model that is pre-

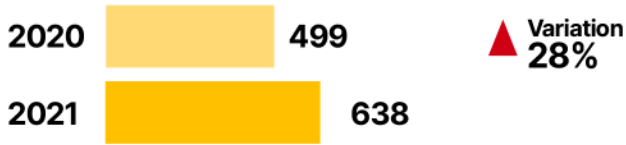
ventive and seeks to strengthen human and economic resources to ensure safe, healthy, and favorable conditions and environments for journalists.

The mobilization of resources and political will on the part of international and private actors is necessary to promote the development and production of public interest journalism and to facilitate the role of civil society in providing safe, healthy, and favorable conditions and environments for press freedom and freedom of expression. Amongst the priorities that could be addressed with effective and strategic support include enhancing the development of innovative journalistic content and mechanisms to enrich media interaction with audiences, strengthening feasibility models to sustain public interest journalism, promoting

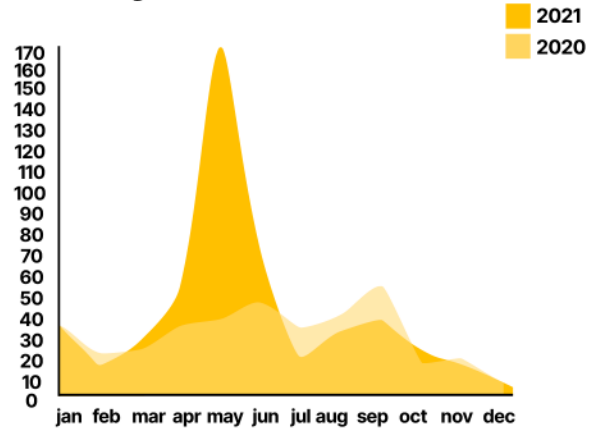
inclusion and diversity, developing mitigation measures for online violence (which disproportionately affects women journalists) and finally, designing and deploying cross-sectoral and ambitious campaigns to ensure that the importance of fundamental freedoms under the SDG framework is recognized by citizens, national authorities, and all multilateral stakeholders.

Colombia

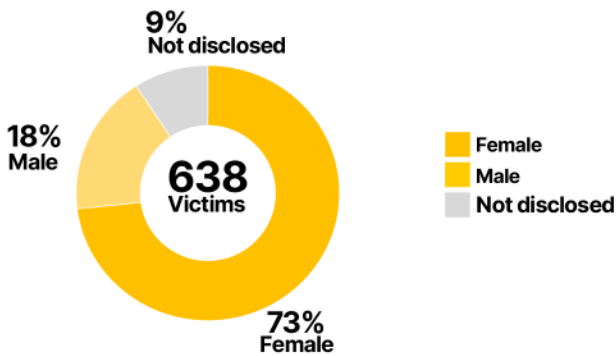
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



Victims by gender



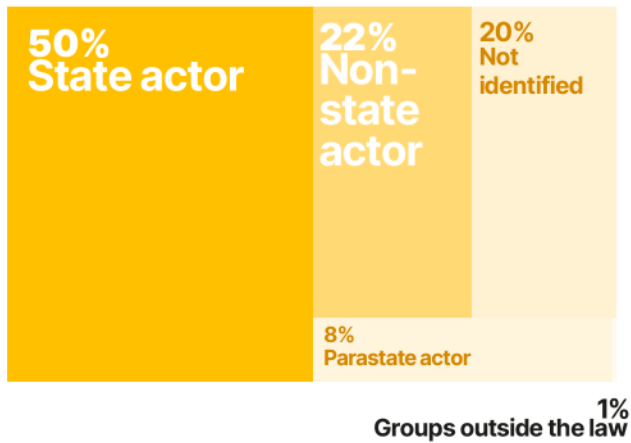
Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **638**
 ♀ Gender alerts: **7**

Aggressions and attacks



Aggressors



Stigmatizing speech



Civil and criminal trials



Access to information



Arbitrary detention



Murder



Kidnapping



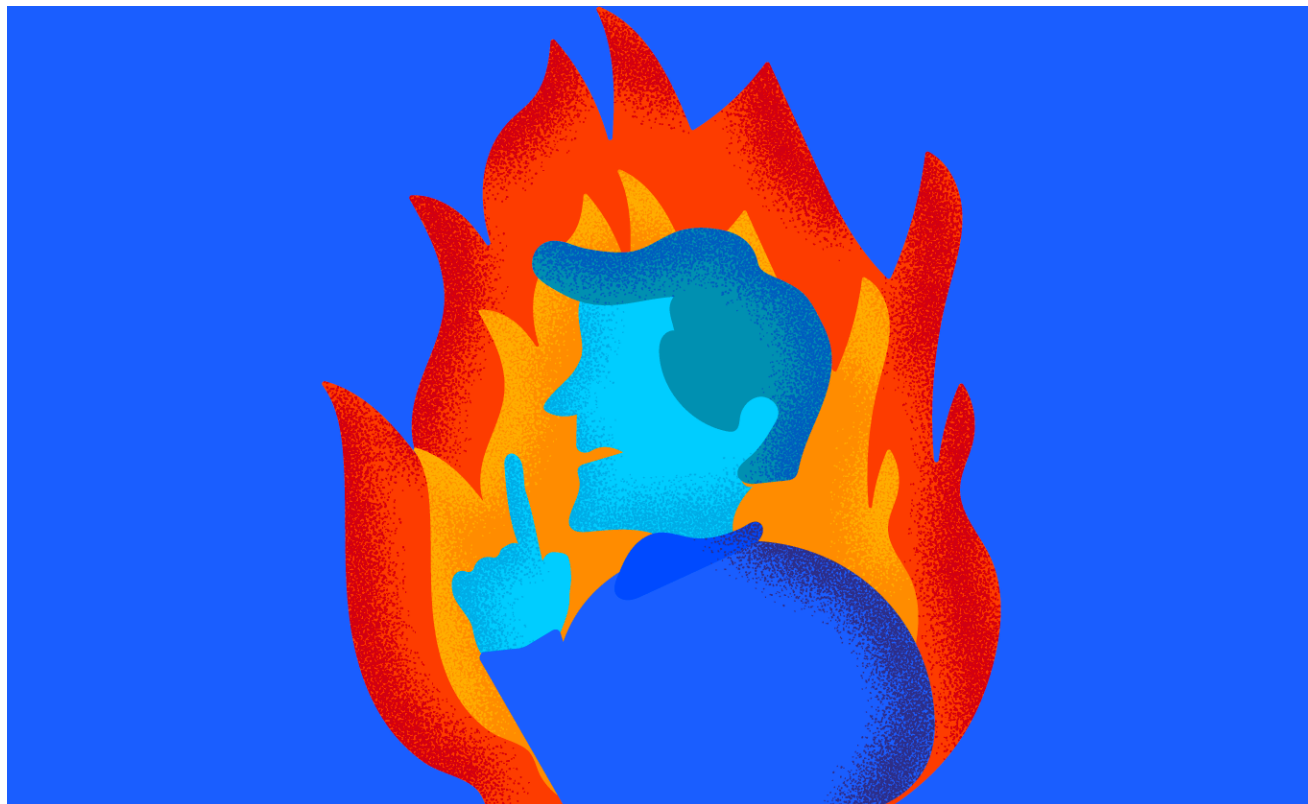
Internet restrictions



Abusive use of state power



Cuba



No right to freedom of expression

The presidency of Miguel Díaz-Canel – a continuation of the repressive regimes of Raúl and Fidel Castro – has never demonstrated a serious commitment to protecting fundamental freedoms. On the contrary, the administration has exercised continuity of the autocratic, violent, and pro-

foundly undemocratic political project that has ruled Cuba for more than 60 years. Although Cuban law explicitly prohibits the existence of an independent press, several media outlets challenge this ban to report on what is happening on the island. VdS Network partner ICLEP reports on attacks on the-

se media outlets that work without access to public information and under permanent state harassment. In 2021, ICLEP reported 1,129 alerts, representing an increase of 228% compared to 2020. Of these, 66% correspond to arbitrary detentions, 22% to internet restrictions, and 7% to aggressions and attacks.

Arrests and Reprisals Amid Anti-Government Protests

The State, through forces such as the police or security agents, is the main aggressor against journalists, representing an overwhelming 99% of all registered alerts. Alerts of arbitrary detentions increased by 425%. On July 11, 2021, in the context of anti-government protests, there were at least 50 arrests of journalists and media workers. In most

cases, the detainees were released in the following days. However, this didn't happen for journalist Lázaro Yuri Valle Roca, who has been in preventive detention in Havana since June 15, 2021, where he is accused of contempt and enemy propaganda for covering social and political issues on his YouTube channel. Similarly, influencer Yoandi Montiel (El Gato de Cuba) is serving a two-year sentence in a Havana jail for alleged contempt of court and speaking "badly" of the Cuban regime. At least a dozen journalists have faced house arrest for extended periods of time, while others have been prevented from leaving their homes for days without a court order. These measures have obstructed the practice of journalism and caused anxiety throughout entire families and communities. Anti-government protests were subject to cruel

repression. The continual climate of harassment of journalists provokes unprecedented levels of self-censorship and exile, which are difficult to quantify.

Reprisals also took other forms. At the institutional level, changes are being made to the legal framework to facilitate and justify the actions of State forces such as in cases of arbitrary detentions. There were 26 alerts related to the abusive use of State power in 2021. ICLEP accused the State-run telecommunications company, ETECSA, of activating an eavesdropping system to spy on and intercept communications of journalists and the media, as well as creating internet blackouts during protests. During 2021, 257 alerts of Internet restrictions were registered, representing an increase of 614% in one year. Interrupting and

spying on the communications between Cuban journalists is a widespread practice orchestrated by the regime's counter-intelligence services, which deepens the hindrance of press expression on the island. Authorities' response to protests has been to intensify censorship, repression, and surveillance to maintain control and power.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

According to ICLEP, independent journalists who criticize the State are generally repressed, although the organization has not yet documented any coherent pattern in the differentiated effects of violations against groups in vulnerable situations. ICLEP did not register alerts corresponding to the thirteenth cross-cutting gender indicator in 2021. The

organization recorded 550 alerts against men and 538 alerts against women journalists. The latter reflected an annual increase of 449%, whereas alerts against male journalists increased 153% in the same period. The main increase in violence against women journalists is attributable to a 1,800% increase in Internet restrictions and 600% of and arbitrary detentions. In the case of women journalists, these detentions increased from 50 registered cases in 2020 to 372 in 2021, while Internet restrictions increased from 7 to 136 in the same period.

Recommendations

If freedom of the press and expression continue to be criminalized at the constitutional level in Cuba, any hope of achieving SDG 16.10.1 will remain unfeasible. Economic openness, democratic values,

and human rights must all be realized in order for Cuban citizens to enjoy the universal freedoms of peaceful, free, and just societies. Repressive laws and other instruments that censor and structurally repress freedom of the press, expression, and association must be repealed. The role of civil society in the construction and defense of favorable conditions and environments for journalists and their audiences is also stigmatized and criminalized. Bold, effective, and strategic support to help CSOs overcome obstacles such as the criminalization of funding for their work and that of the media are desperately needed. At the political level, the international community should advocate for the release of journalist Lázaro Yuri Valle Roca, influencer Yoandi Montiel, and all prisoners of conscience in Cuban jails.

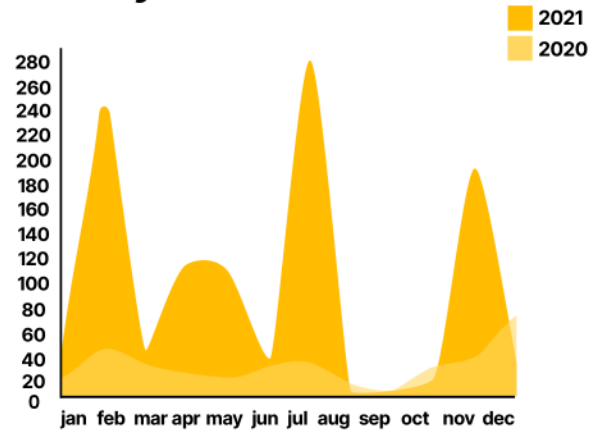
It is also extremely important to mobilize support for the development and production of public interest journalism, as journalists are forced to resist repression and find creative ways to report in a very hostile environment, all while maintaining high journalistic standards. Difficulties in terms of financial sustainability are even more challenging in a country where economic sanctions condition the functioning of markets and where audiences face important limitations in terms of capacity and payment methods. Solutions should take into consideration gender disparities. In order to do so, it is necessary to build consensus and actionable commitments to incorporate a gender and diversity perspective in the SDG 16.10.1 monitoring processes.

Cuba

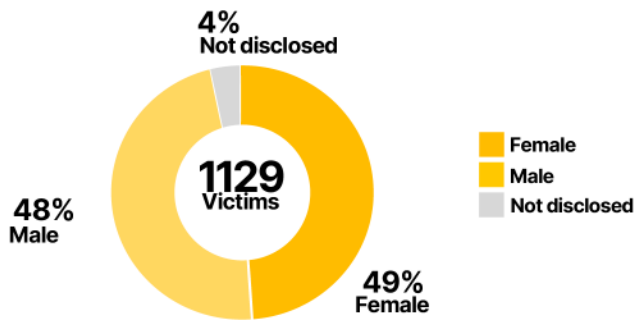
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



Victims by gender



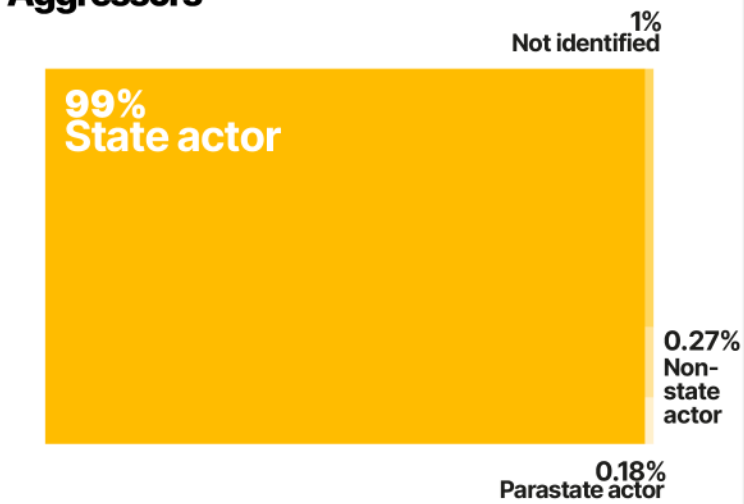
Indicators



Arbitrary detention



Aggressors



Internet restrictions



Aggressions and attacks



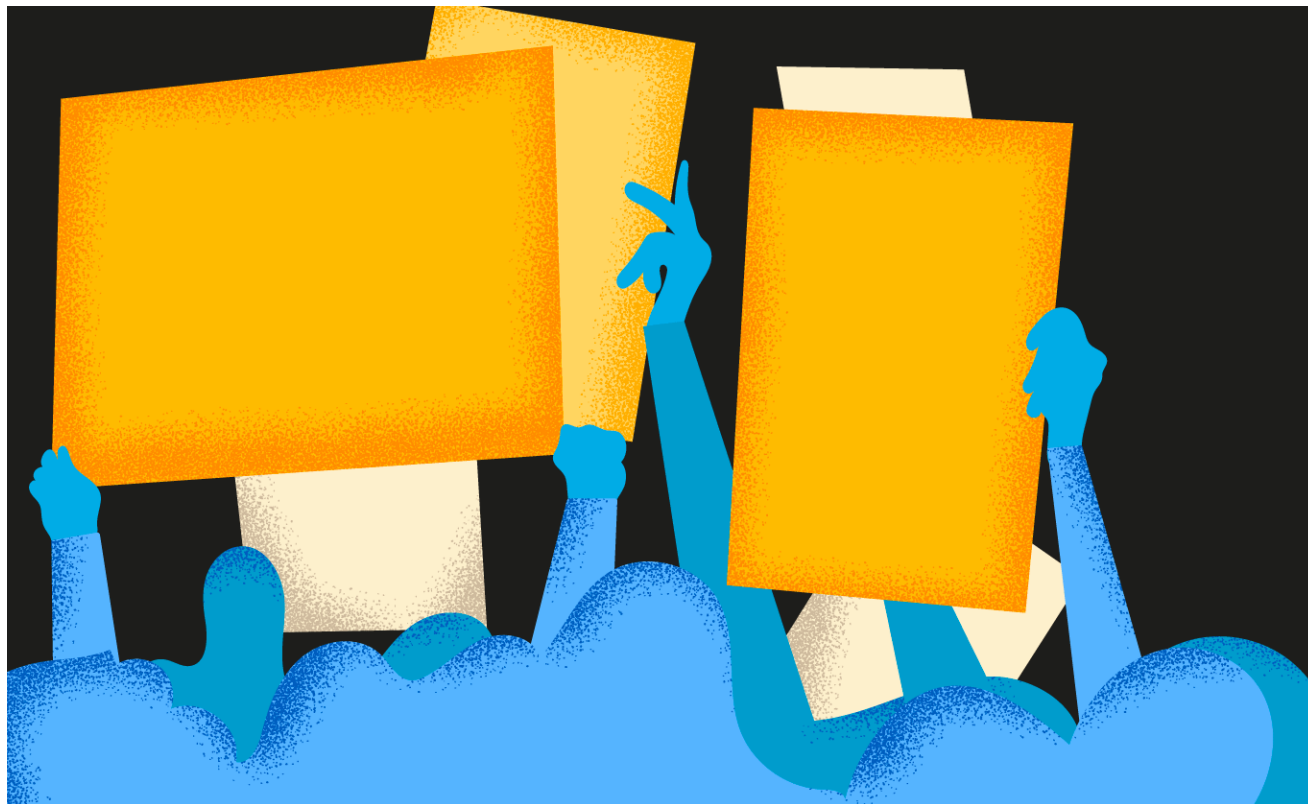
Stigmatizing speech



Abusive use of state power



Ecuador



Stigmatization of the press: a difficult legacy to break

In 2021, 232 alerts were registered in Ecuador, of which 117 occurred between January and May during the administration of outgoing President Lenín Moreno and a turbulent electoral situation. As Moreno—who attempted to take some steps to reverse the legacy of stig-

matization against the press built by his predecessor Rafael Correa—left office, the election of Guillermo Lasso to the presidency raised hopes of continued progress. During the campaign, Lasso promised to return full freedom of expression to Ecuador. On his first day in office,

he introduced a draft Organic Law of Free Expression and Communication, which was in line with international standards and promised to replace the 2013 Communication (or “Gag”) Law. However, since Lasso's inauguration, 115 alerts were registered, mirroring the amount registered during the electoral period. Despite changes in governance, discourse, and legislation, the quantity of alerts grew 80% in 2021. Most alerts correspond to aggressions and attacks (44%) and stigmatizing discourse (25%), the latter of which experienced an increase of 743%. This clearly reflects that much remains to be done to break the legacy of stigmatization and establish safe, healthy, and favorable conditions and environments for journalists and media.

Organized Crime and Lack of Protection: A Lethal Combination

Although the State is the main aggressor against journalists in Ecuador, increased hostilities from transnational organized crime is an extremely dangerous trend. State agents perpetrated 49% of all alerts, with the executive branch and national police as the most common offenders. Non-state and unknown actors were identified in 25% and 16% of alerts, respectively. VdS Network member Fundamedios registered 18 alerts (8%) in which organized crime was the aggressor, a significant rise considering none were registered in 2020. This 1,800% increase represents a tangible surge in insecurity for those who practice journalism at national and subnational levels. An

organized crime group called Los Fantasma threatened the media outlet La Posta for its publication that revealed mafia networks within prisons. Journalist Calixto Zambrano suffered an attack in Manabí in which he was shot twice and survived but later left the profession. In Durán, a team from the newspaper La Hora suffered an armed attack while investigating Big Money, a pyramid scheme that illegally collects money.

Violence perpetrated by organized crime both violates fundamental freedoms and aggravates the risks and consequences that result from a lack of protection and impunity for crimes committed against journalists. In Colombia and Mexico, existing State-provided protection mechanisms have been insufficient to mitigate threats and attacks

by organized crime, largely because the State is the main aggressor in both countries and because it can be difficult to measure the degree of organized crime infiltration within the State itself. It is worrisome that Ecuador is seeing an increase in alerts of violations committed by organized crime while journalists still have no protection mechanism.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

Fundamedios registered 120 alerts against men and 65 against women journalists. Alerts registered for violence against women journalists grew 160% and 111% for men. The sharpest rises in alerts pertaining to women journalists, were seen in stigmatizing discourse (500%) and restrictions on access to information (800%). Fundamedios reported 42 gender

alerts, including 18 for aggressions and attacks and 16 for stigmatizing discourse. Five emblematic cases of gender violence stand out. After presenting a series of reports covering corruption involving a powerful political family, journalist Dayana Monroy was attacked, harassed, and threatened through smear campaigns on social media. Journalist Alondra Santiago was attacked through stigmatizing speech, aggressions and attacks, threats of legal proceedings, restrictions of access to information, attempts at censorship, and restrictions in digital spaces. Likewise, journalist Carla Maldonado has been systematically cyberbullied for her critical stance towards alleged corruption cases related to the administration of former President Rafael Correa, and Blanca Moncada, investigative journalist, was affec-

ted by a smear campaign by the mayor of Guayaquil. Journalist Galo Arellano, who worked for Univision, received threats loaded with hate speech and homophobia for sharing a photo of his family, including his partner, on social media. The aggressions include questioning his work and journalistic ethics because of his sexual orientation. Gender-based violence intersects with profession-related aggressions, intensifying the risks for women and LGBTIQ+ journalists.

Recommendations

Persistent stigmatization of the press, the rise of violence perpetrated by organized crime, and a lack of protection for journalists define the worrisome situation of SDG 16.10.1 in Ecuador. With staunch support from the international community,

civil society and authorities must establish protection mechanisms for journalists and media workers. This is made all the more urgent considering the increase in aggressions committed by organized crime. One priority should be ending impunity in attacks against journalists, including ensuring access to information on the case of the murdered journalists of newspaper El Comercio, which remains classified. This is a constant demand of the victims' families, and while there is hope that the new government will declassify the information, there has been no political will or concrete indications that this will happen. Finally, approving the new freedom of expression law should be a priority, but the current political context is complex and as such, there is no guarantee that this will happen.

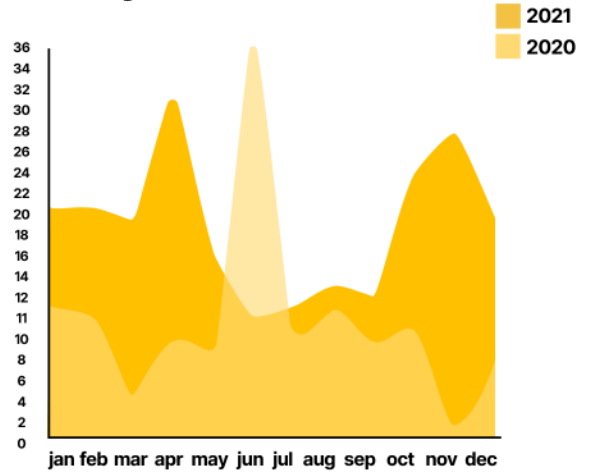
Political support and funding from the international community is required to facilitate the work of CSOs in promoting safe, healthy, and favorable conditions and environments for public interest journalism. It is also essential to support the production and development of this type of journalism, which serves to scrutinize power and educate citizens. A comprehensive strategy should be built to ensure a healthy journalistic environment and pluralize the media ecosystem; focusing on these two prongs will help to mitigate stigmatization against the press and ultimately achieve broader inclusion of journalists across the gender spectrum in all aspects of journalism.

Considering that press stigmatization is a profound and structural issue, it is important to develop strate-

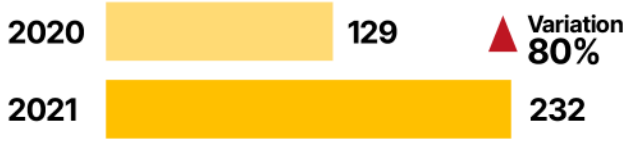
gies and campaigns that help position the value of public interest journalism in the collective imagination and within the perception of what is necessary to have a culture of peace and democracy in the country.

Ecuador

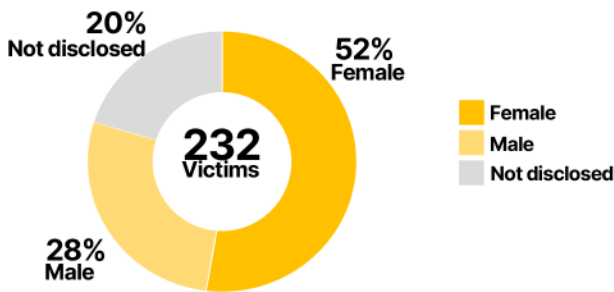
Alerts by month



Alerts per year



Victims by gender



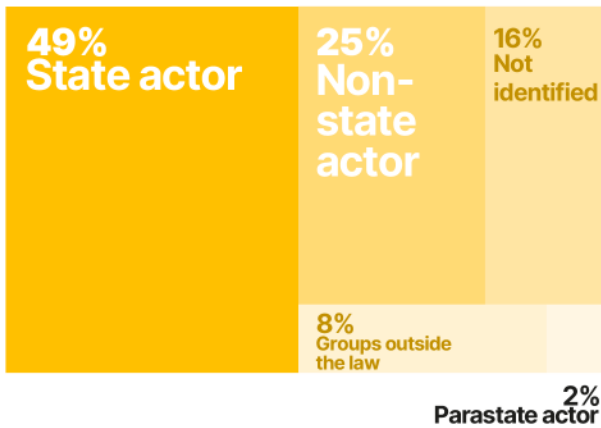
Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **232**
 ♀ Gender alerts: **42**

Aggressions and attacks



Aggressors



Stigmatizing speech



Access to information



Civil and criminal trials



Arbitrary detention



Legal framework contrary to international standards



Abusive use of state power



Internet restrictions



El Salvador



Bukele declares himself an enemy of the independent press

Since assuming power in 2019, President Nayib Bukele has laid the groundwork for his anti-democratic project with worrying popular support (as reflected in approval polls) and with antagonism towards the press as a central axis. Bukele, considered the

“millennial” president due to his regular use of social networks, maintains continual smear campaigns against media that question his leadership, especially those reporting on corruption during his administration. The impact of Bukele's stigmatizing rheto-

ric is reflected in the 219 alerts documented by the Association of Journalists of El Salvador (APES), which joined the VdS Network in 2021. Of these 219 alerts, 53% correspond to restrictions of access to public information, 37% to aggressions and attacks, and 10% to stigmatizing discourse. Although this is the first year the VdS methodology has been deployed to track progress toward SDG 16.10.1 in El Salvador, it is apparent that the country is experiencing a setback in freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information, and therefore, an overall erosion of democracy.

The State Systematically Violates Fundamental Freedoms

The Bukele government excludes independent media from its press conferences. The president and much of his cabinet often accuse the media of spreading fake news, which stigmatizes the independent press. These accusations are often a complement to massive attacks by pro-government trolls, who threaten and harass journalists, especially in the digital sphere. Violence transcends the digital realm when the president and members of the ruling party, Nuevas Ideas, verbally disqualify and attack journalists during public appearances, and when their supporters attack journalists in the streets. Threats and stigmatization of journalists on social networks and

in public appearances are a priority concern, even in a context marked by widespread violence linked to local gangs.

Bukele has amassed enormous control over state institutions, which he uses discretionally in favor of his political will. The repeated blockage of access to public information—especially considering that El Salvador has a law protecting this right—is alarming. State-led persecution of journalists was constant. In July 2021, Mexican journalist Daniel Lizarraga, editor of the prestigious media outlet El Faro in El Salvador, was expelled from the country for allegedly violating immigration laws. Lizarraga stated that his expulsion was linked to his work as a journalist. The media outlets Factum and Gato Encerrado were forced by court

order to remove investigative reporting from their websites in what can only be viewed as direct acts of censorship. The government was also accused of using Pegasus, a spying software, to tap the communications of journalists and human rights defenders. According to an investigation by El Faro, at least 22 journalists had their phones wiretapped between 2020 and 2021. Although it is not known who operated the software, NSO—the Israeli company that created Pegasus—has it only sells the program to governments.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

APES registered 70 alerts for attacks and aggressions against women journalists, 99 against men, and 2 against journalists of the LGBTIQ+ population, inclu-

ding a case of labor and digital harassment against a trans journalist. The organization also documented one alert corresponding to the thirteenth cross-cutting gender indicator for sexual abuse. During vote counting during the mayoral and legislative elections of 2021, a journalist from the government's Canal 10 was sexually harassed while reporting live by a political party representative. Women journalists are particularly affected by stigmatizing discourse that attacks their professional and personal integrity, especially in the digital sphere. The result of these aggressions is a growing tendency towards self-censorship that significantly and negatively impacts their professional careers. It is important to recognize the diverse ways in which gender-based and journalistic violence reinforce one

another, causing different risks and dangers for women and LGBTIQ+ journalists.

Recommendations

The benchmark established by the 2021 alerts reflects a discouraging lack of progress toward SDG 16.10.1 in El Salvador. President Bukele's government is steadily heading toward complete authoritarianism, failing in the State's duty to guarantee human rights. Civil society and the international community must help halt the aggression against the media and journalists. It is essential to articulate effective pressure at the national and international level, demanding that authorities desist in the use of stigmatization and other forms of violence, be held accountable for abuses committed, and establish protection

mechanisms for journalists and media workers in the country. Finally, demands for transparency in the use of Pegasus for spying on journalists must grow so that the State is forced to publicly acknowledge the issue.

While El Salvador remains in the early stages of authoritarianism compared to Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, it is still critically important to build national and international consensus on the severity of the deterioration of fundamental freedoms and progress toward SDG 16.10.1 in the country. Once this is recognized and societally accepted, international donors must lean in to help CSOs promote a friendlier environment for journalism and strengthen the development of independent media. It is important to implement strategies that intentionally

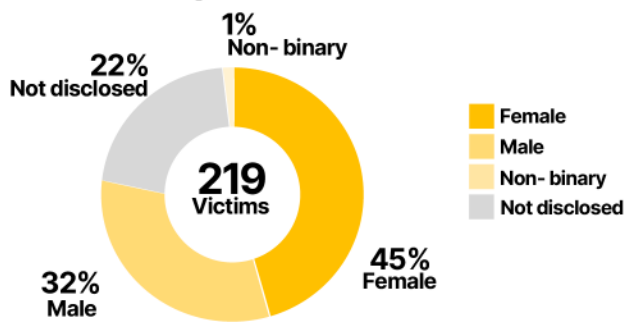
foster inclusivity within the media ecosystem. One of the most significant challenges to SDG 16.10.1 in El Salvador, is a lack of public respect for journalism, as the vast majority of citizens support President Bukele and his stigmatization of the media. To combat this, civil society will need to create broad coalitions of actors that are capable of designing and implementing highly effective and innovative strategies and campaigns.

El Salvador

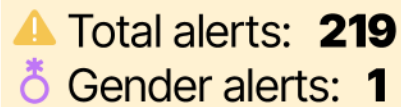
Alerts per year



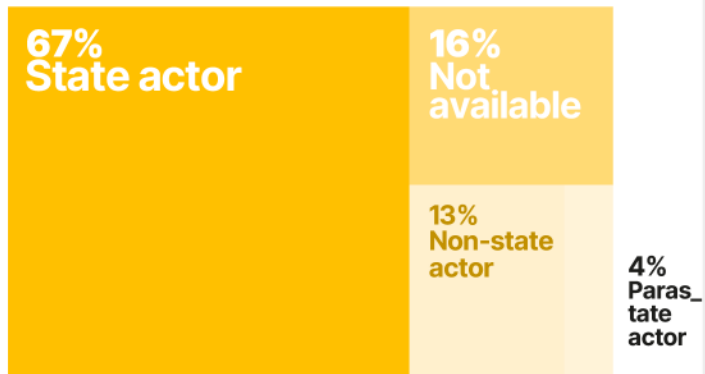
Victims by gender



Indicators



Aggressors



Access to information



Aggressions and attacks



Stigmatizing speech



Guatemala



Guatemalan democracy regresses

Guatemalan democracy is at a decisive moment, which is reflected in the fragile status of SDG 16.10.1 implementation. Institutional strengthening achieved by the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) has deteriorated since the agency's departure in 2019. In the

face of this setback, the media have become the last line of defense against corruption and abuses of power. President Alejandro Giammattei has demonstrated that he has no intention of respecting democracy or his mandate to guarantee human rights by escalating attacks against the press

that has interrogated his administration's attempts to dismantle anti-corruption efforts. In 2021, VdS Network member Demos reported a total of 29 alerts, of which 45% correspond to aggressions and attacks, 31% to abusive use of State power and 17% to obstruction of access to public information. One alert for murder was registered in relation to the case of journalist Pedro Guadrón who was murdered in July in Concepción las Minas, Chiquimula.

Institutionalized Violence, Judicial Harassment, and Problematic Laws

State actors—especially members of the police and army—were the aggressors in 62% of alerts registered in 2021. Journalists operating in areas far from

the capital—for example, when covering protests in areas such as Alta Verapaz and Izabal—were particularly exposed to constant harassment. In October, the government used a state of emergency in Izabal as an excuse to raid the facilities of the community radio station Xyaab' Tzuultaq'a, as well as the home of Prensa Comunitaria reporter Carlos Choc, who has been repeatedly harassed. Choc continues to be prosecuted for his coverage of a protest in 2017 and is regularly and arbitrarily forced to appear for judicial processes. The instrumentalization of the justice system to persecute and censor journalists occurs frequently. The malicious use of laws that have nothing to do with the practice of journalism, such as the gender-based violence law, is a political manipulation tactic used to hinder

corruption investigations. In June, journalists Sonny Figueroa and Marvin del Cid were accused by María Luis Martínez, a family member of former executive power cabinet member Miguel Martínez, of purported psychological violence against women after these reporters published their investigations related to her family's wealth. Public officials have frequently sued the president of *El Periódico*, José Rubén Zamora, also using the same gender-based violence law to censor this outlet's investigative work.

Although Guatemala has a comparatively robust institutional framework for a Central American country—including a special prosecutor's office for crimes against journalists and a journalist protection mechanism, whose impact is still in doubt—a new regulatory

law from July 2021 meant to intimidate non-governmental organizations could issue a severe blow to media and civil society organizations. This new provision gives power to the State to cancel the legal status of organizations in a discretionary manner alleging “violations of public order.” These types of laws and instruments that allow vague and ambiguous accusations against civil society are part of the authoritarian repertoire in cases such as Venezuela, Nicaragua, and recently, El Salvador.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

Demos registered four alerts corresponding to the thirteenth cross-cutting gender indicator in 2021, all for aggressions and attacks. The organization explains that, in Guatemala, women

journalists continue to be stigmatized for simply having a job.

Social networks have given women journalists an opportunity to increase their presence and representation within the media. While this is promising for the professional development of women journalists, all trends indicate that digital and discursive violence disproportionately affects them. Gender-based violence and violence against journalists reinforce and aggravate one another, which is why it is important to continue developing a capacity to monitor from a gender and inclusion perspective. Demos also highlights that it is critical to observe, understand, and mitigate the disproportionate violence faced by Indigenous women journalists, community communicators, and female

media professionals in local and national outlets.

Recommendations

Impunity and corruption should not be overlooked and normalized. In fact, they are among the main obstacles to progress in achieving SDG 16.10.1 in Guatemala. Civil society organizations and the international community must be more assertive with Guatemalan authorities to halt institutional deterioration and democratic backsliding. Existing agreements and mechanisms for the protection of journalists and investigations of unpunished crimes against journalists must be implemented and become a national priority. The justice system must not give way to lawsuits that seek to censor journalists and instead put a stop to the malicious use of impor-

tant laws, such as those that protect women from gender-based violence, which have been instrumentalized to attack fundamental freedoms.

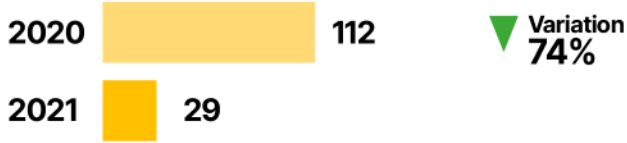
The CICIG demonstrates that it is possible to strengthen democratic institutions in societies with major structural challenges (such as corruption, impunity, and poverty) if there is sufficient political will and the deployment of strategic and transparent resources.

However, it also demonstrates that progress can be quickly dismantled based on political and governmental shifts. It is important that the lessons gleaned from this experience be incorporated into national and international efforts to facilitate the promotion of safe conditions and environments

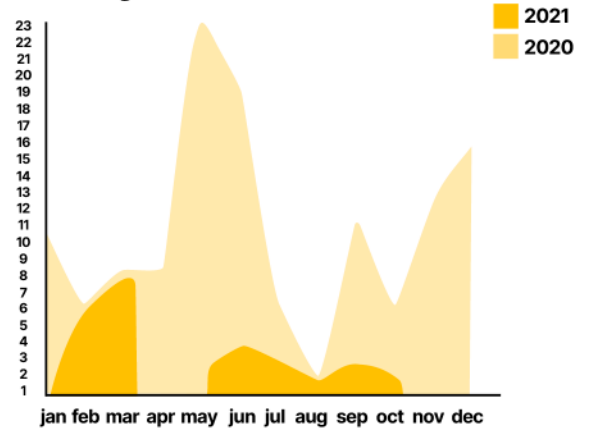
for the practice of journalism. Constructive efforts to produce and develop journalism working for the public interest can ultimately strengthen political and financial support from citizens and other key actors.

Guatemala

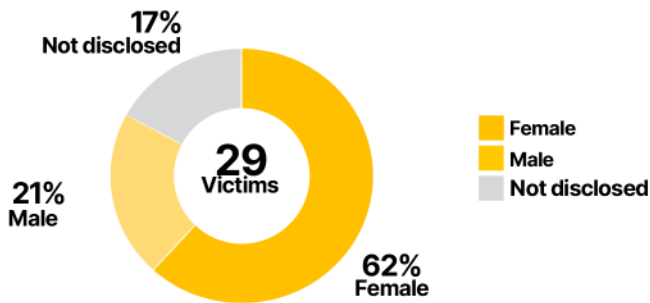
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



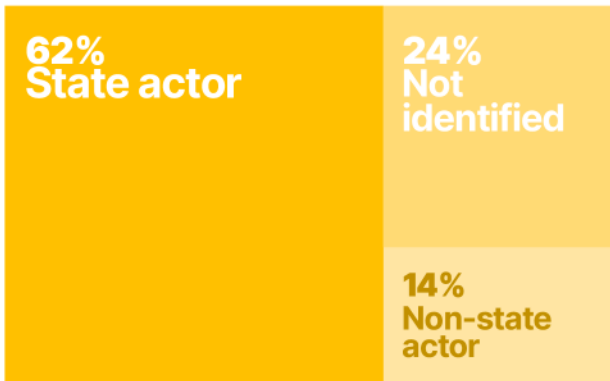
Victims by gender



Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **29**
♀ Gender alerts: **4**

Aggressors



Aggressions and attacks



Abusive use of state power



Access to information



Murder



Stigmatizing speech



Honduras



A new government leads to positive expectations

In Honduras in 2021, the state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information was marked by a turbulent electoral process and the prevalence of political violence. Since the call for primary elections in September 2020, at least

28 deaths related to political-electoral violence were recorded. C-Libre, a VdS Network member, registered 66 alerts of violence against the media, journalists, and media workers. Despite a 44% decrease compared to the number of alerts registered in 2020, at least one

journalist was murdered for the third consecutive year.

The prevalence of alerts related to aggressions and attacks is of concern, as they account for 62% of the total, reflecting that direct violence continues to be a serious issue in Honduras. At least two members of C-Libre's technical team were victims of serious threats against their lives, resulting in their forced displacement outside the country. This reveals that even CSO members who monitor freedom of the press and expression are at risk. The election of Xiomara Castro on November 28 has led to certain positive expectations, but Honduras continues to be a structurally dangerous country for journalists.

Perpetrators Have Connections to Power, Yet Are Unknown

The perpetrator is unknown in 30% of 2021 alerts.

C-Libre estimates that the perpetrators are likely actors from the public and private spheres with links to organized crime and who are affected by the topics raised by investigative journalism. Meanwhile, the State—especially the national police, congress, judiciary, and presidential honor guard—perpetuated 42% of the alerts, with parastatal elements accounting for 17%. Violations committed by ex-military, ex-police, and private security agents were also documented.

Although difficult to prove, the collusion of corrupt actors in the public and private sectors with organi-

zed crime has been cited as a breeding ground for extreme violence against journalists and media workers in Honduras. Since October 2001, C-Libre has registered 96 violent deaths of social communicators, journalists, and media workers. In 2021, unknown subjects murdered Wilmer Joel Fúnez Ochoa, operator of Radio HRN, in Cerro Cantagallo, located in Tegucigalpa. Although it is not registered among the alerts because they focus exclusively on violations against formal journalists and media workers, unknown subjects murdered three *tiktokers* in September.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

Anyone who exercises journalism or communications assumes a high-risk life in Honduras, but especially those who are

plagued by hetero-patriarchal norms, such as women and LGBTIQ+ persons. Symbolic and structural violence is exercised against women journalists and communicators. State response to violence against women social communicators and journalists has been limited to the creation of the National Protection System (SNP) and the National Protection Mechanism (MNP). No differentiated gender protocols to protect women and LGBTIQ+ journalists are applied by judicial authorities or press associations.

Acting independently, both the courts and the MNP issue protection orders and assign police officers to protect anyone deemed at risk. This is tragically ironic for women and LGBTIQ+ journalists, as police and military forces, who have

assaulted, persecuted, threatened, harassed, and criminalized them, are then tasked with their protection.

The College of Journalists has chosen to disassociate itself from the MNP in the face of this contradiction. In 2021, C-Libre did not register alerts corresponding to the thirteenth cross-cutting gender indicator.

Recommendations

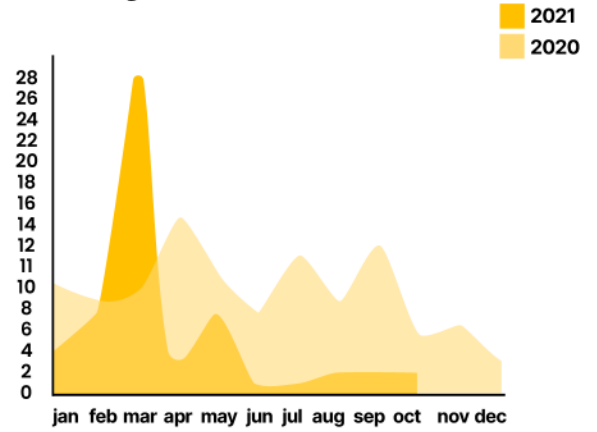
The lack of safe and healthy conditions and environments for those who practice journalism—especially elevated levels of impunity for crimes committed against journalists and the instrumentalization of State power to censor and repress—define the outlook for SDG 16.10.1 in Honduras. Civil society and the international community must pressure authorities

to establish a national plan against impunity, including refining policy to effectively comply with the reception, investigation, and prosecution of these cases. This must incorporate plans and activities articulated by civil society and as well as gender sensitive and differentiated attention. The SNP and the MNP must be strengthened, especially the rate of effectiveness in investigations of reported crimes of intimidation, harassment, and attacks against women, LGBTIQ+, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant journalists. It is also important to demand that authorities eliminate the criminalization of the mere exercise of fundamental freedoms, which serve to instrumentalize crimes such as “crimes against honor” against journalists.

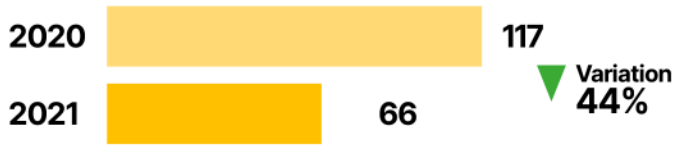
To create a favorable environment for journalism, civil society must be well supported by international organizations. It is important that these actors also incorporate support for the production and development of public interest journalism. This approach is indispensable to the broader inclusion of people across gender spectrum and to the overall construction of a diverse, pluralistic, and healthy independent media ecosystem.

Honduras

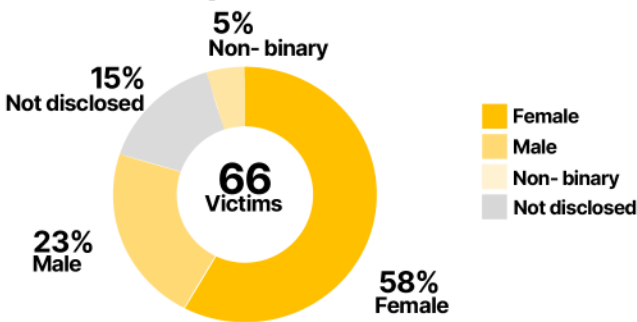
Alerts by month



Alerts per year



Victims by gender



Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **66**

Aggressions and attacks

41

Aggressors



Access to information

13

Stigmatizing speech

5

Abusive use of state power

2

Internet restrictions

2

Civil and criminal trials

1

Legal framework contrary to international standards

1

Arbitrary detention

1

Mexico



Stigmatization and abuse of power deteriorate public freedoms

The outlook for SDG 16.10.1 is dire in Mexico. In 2021, 626² alerts were registered for violations against the press and freedom of expression, including nine alerts for murders of journalists and media workers, representing a 50% increase in lethal violence compared to

2020. Alerts for stigmatizing discourse grew 30%. Discursive violence seeks to make violence against the press justifiable and acceptable within the political culture. The chain of stigmatization starts at the highest level of power; President López Obrador uses his podium to

² ARTICLE 19 documented 644 aggressions with its own methodology. It directs readers towards its 2021 Annual Report: Denial. The differences in the alerts registered in the present report are due to adjustments made in accordance with the Voces del Sur methodology, such as the non-inclusion of aggressions against media professionals' family members.

accuse journalists and media of spreading false news and disinformation. There were 27 alerts for abusive use of State power, including the discretionary allocation of State advertising to favor media allied with the ruling party, which represents an increase of 93% over the previous year. The State was identified as the aggressor in 43% of alerts.

Murders Continue in a Context of Impunity and Collusion by Power-holders

Seven journalists, two of their family members, and two media workers were murdered in 2021. This extreme violence is a consequence of impunity. Since 2000, VdS Network member ARTICLE 19 has documented 153 murders of journalists in Mexico, 141 men

and 12 women, of which 22% occurred during the López Obrador administration³. Veracruz is the most lethal state for the practice of journalism, with 31 murders since 2000, 18 of which occurred under the government of Governor Javier Duarte between December 2010 and November 2016. An astounding 98.1% of crimes committed against journalists between 2010 and 2021 remain unpunished. These crimes are increasing in frequency given they carry no consequences, which ultimately weakens the impact of the two existent State protection mechanisms: the Special Prosecutor's Office for Attention to Crimes Committed against Freedom of Expression (FEADLE) and the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists and the Executive Commission

³ As of the date of publication of this report, ARTICLE 19 recorded one more murder, bringing the total number of homicides since 2000 to 154.

for Attention to Victims. Collusion and corruption between public authorities, the private sector, and organized crime is at the core of the problem. Most murdered journalists were investigating or had revealed links between these actors; 16 of the 34 journalists murdered under the current administration's tenure were covering corruption and politics, while the remaining 16 were covering security and justice issues.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

ARTICLE 19 monitors SDG 16.10.1 from an inclusive lens, segregating data to broadly include people across the gender spectrum. The organization recorded 365 alerts for attacks against journalists identified as cisgender men, 192 against cisgender women, 2

against trans women and 2 against non-binary journalists. There were 40 alerts corresponding to the new cross-cutting gender indicator: 21 for aggressions and attacks, 16 for stigmatizing speech, one murder, one arbitrary detention, and one Internet restriction. Aggressions—including threats, intimidation, and harassment—were the most frequent alert against journalists who identify as cisgender women, non-binary, or as trans women (66%). These attacks against women journalists and LGBTIQ+ journalists carry overtones of sexist violence, discourse, threats, and smear campaigns.

The repression of feminist protests in 2021 was made possible by an enormous deployment of security forces, who used firearms to physically attack, intimi-

date, and threaten journalists. In November 2020 (#9N), journalist Cecilia Solís covered a protest in Cancun following the femicide of Bianca Alexis. Police dispersed the protest with gunshots in the air and the journalist was injured by the bullets. The shooting was followed by arbitrary arrests and acts of physical and sexual violence against protesters. In 2021, Solís continued coverage of #9N and was harassed by police and unknown subjects.

ARTICLE 19 explains that the media outlet for which she works has not provided her with support or protection and that they have tried to fire her. Violence against trans journalists is also a growing problem that is only beginning to be documented. For example, Laurel Miranda, a trans woman journalist

and former head of information at Milenio, had her work obstructed; two of her columns on the exclusion of trans women by feminist groups were censored.

Another social category that increases the risk of violence for journalists and media workers is sexual orientation⁴. In 2021, 11 attacks were registered against journalists who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community in Mexico. It is important to mention that there is little diversity in the profession and that there could also be an underreporting of attacks against journalists of non-heteronormative sexualities due to heteropatriarchal norms⁵. The IACHR affirms that violence and “discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity can often contribute to

⁴ The Yogyakarta Principles define sexual orientation as “each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.” “Yogyakarta Principles,” March 2007, p. 6, footnote 1, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/48244e602.pdf>

⁵ The term “heteronormativity” refers to the cultural bias in favor of heterosexual relationships, under which such relationships are deemed “normal, natural and ideal” and are preferred over same-gender or same-sex relationships. Heteronormativity is composed of legal, social, and cultural rules that require individuals to act according to dominant and ruling heterosexual patterns. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, “Violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Persons in the Americas,” OAS/Ser.L/V/II.rev.1. Doc. 36, November 12, 2015, p. 36, <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/violencegbtpersons.pdf>

dehumanize the victim.⁶⁷ Violence against women, trans and other non-binary gender identities, and non-heterosexual journalists also reflects a lack of inclusion and violence within the media.

Recommendations

Impunity and the absence of safe, healthy, and favorable conditions for journalists define the hostile environment that prevents sustainable progress toward SDG 16.10.1 in Mexico. Public authorities - who have this very obligation-, civil society, and the international community must prevent, protect, and diligently investigate all crimes and aggressions against the press, especially murders, to combat impunity. The Special Prosecutor's Office for the Investigation of Crimes against Freedom of

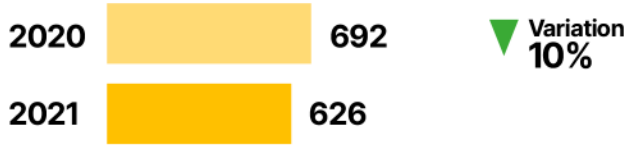
Expression, FEADLE, the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, and the Executive Commission for Attention to Victims must be strengthened through greater institutional coordination, civil society participation, and cooperation with specialized international organizations. Also, authorities must be urgently pressured to desist from stigmatizing discourse, as it undermines the flow of information, weakens public debate, and increases the risk for further violence. On the contrary, authorities—beginning with the executive branch—must condemn violence against the press. It is also important to regulate the general law of social communication, setting standards for the use of state advertising.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

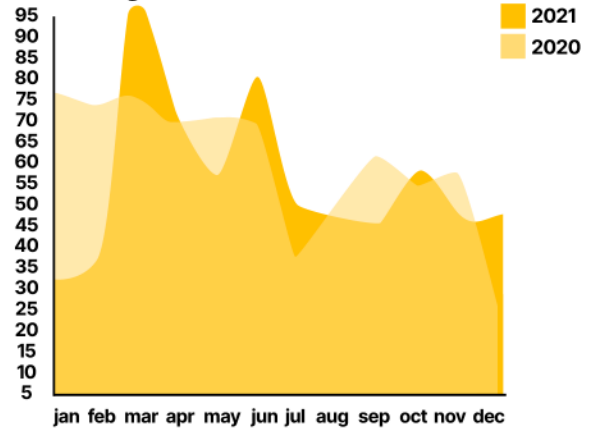
Effective and strategic support from international actors is essential if civil society is to fulfill its role in the construction and defense of safe, healthy, and favorable conditions and environments for freedom of the press and expression. In Mexico, gender inclusive monitoring of SDG 16.10.1 has shown a clear need to support the development of public interest media that is inclusive of people across the gender spectrum in all facets of journalism. Given the effectiveness of stigmatizing discourse, strategies and campaigns are needed to build public consensus over the necessity of a free press to sustain democracy and sustainable development.

Mexico

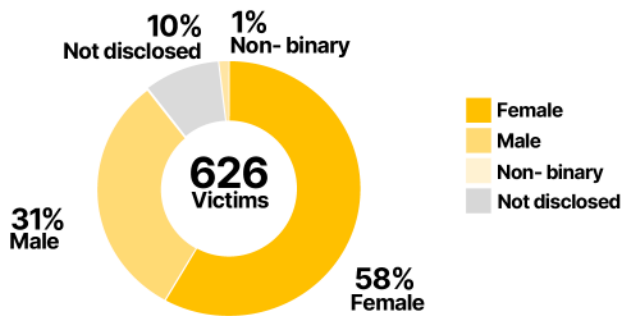
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



Victims by gender



Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **626**
 ♀ Gender alerts: **40**

Aggressions and attacks



Aggressors



Internet restrictions



Access to information



Arbitrary detention



Abusive use of state power



Civil and criminal trials



Kidnapping



Torture



Forced disappearance



Nicaragua



Increased repression within an electoral context

From the beginning of 2021 and in anticipation of November elections, the Ortega Murillo regime launched new aggressions against independent media and journalists in addition to opposition groups and the broader citizenry. The government deployed the

use of repressive laws passed in 2020 related to foreign agents, cyber-crimes, and national security to prosecute seven presidential hopefuls, including Cristiana Chamorro who was President of VdS Network member Violeta Barrios de Chamorro

Foundation (FVBCH) until February 2021. Chamorro, two FVBCH administrative workers, Walter Gómez and Marcos Fletes, and chauffer Pedro Vásquez, were convicted of money laundering and abusive management in fraudulent trials; they are currently imprisoned. The case was used to subpoena, interrogate, and harass more than 30 journalists who engaged with FVBCH. The situation of SDG 16.10.1 in Nicaragua is dreary, with a total of 701 alerts registered in 2021, an increase of 149% compared to 2020. Of these, 43% correspond to the abusive use of State power, 41% to aggressions and attacks, and 9% to civil and criminal judicial proceedings.

Jail, Confiscation, and Exile Plague Nicaraguan Journalism

The VdS Network documented the cases of two imprisoned journalists, Miguel Mendoza and Miguel Mora, as well as that of political commentator Jaime Arellano. News outlet La Prensa board member Cristiana Chamorro has been captured and incarcerated, as well as her brother Pedro Joaquin, who was also on the board, and her cousin Juan Lorenzo Holmann, who served as head of this newspaper's board of directors and general manager.

Holmann was detained in the early hours of August 14, hours after authorities seized the premises of La Prensa (the only newspaper with national circulation), citing an investigation into the media company for

customs fraud and money laundering. Digital magazine *Confidencial* was also raided, and its office and equipment were confiscated for the second time in three years on May 20.

Persecution against journalists in Nicaragua occurs in all spheres, including in the digital space. The Ortega Murillo regime deploys a permanent campaign against journalists and independent media outlets, in which they are accused of being “coup plotters,” an allusion to the citizen protests of 2018 that the government tapped an “attempted coup d'état.” The regime deploys as many government institutions as possible in its quest to silence journalists. In addition to using prosecutorial harassment as a bullying mechanism, it has also manipulated the body that governs private property to

harm journalists. In August, the Intendent of Property expropriated the house of Patricia Orozco, director of the digital site *Agenda Propia*. Orozco stated that the State had given her the house in Managua in the 1980s, but that the government is now claiming it as its own. In this dangerous operating environment, dozens of Nicaraguan journalists left the country to preserve their freedom and continue practicing journalism.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

There were 146 alerts of attacks against men and 83 against women journalists. Among the attacks against women journalists, aggressions, and attacks (57%) and civil and criminal proceedings (30%) prevailed. There is also a tendency to name

the family of women journalists in the threats. The case of Kalúa Salazar—head of press at Radio La Costeñísima, one of the few independent media on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast—is emblematic. Police have maintained a regular presence outside her home in the city of Bluefields since the beginning of 2021. Police officers frequently harass Salazar in front of her underage daughters, who have suffered psychological consequences. More disaggregated information is needed on violence against journalists in Nicaragua to truly understand its differentiated effects. However, it is worth noting that the pandemic had a differentiated impact on women journalists due to the norms established within some media organizations to avoid contagion, such as working 24-hour shifts. In Nicara-

gua, women are still disproportionately responsible for family care activities, and as such, many had to resign from their jobs. Gender asymmetries are also observed in the country's media, where wage gaps are common, affecting the remuneration of women journalists. The VdS Network registered four alerts corresponding to the new cross-cutting gender indicator, two for aggressions and attacks, one for access to information, and one for stigmatizing discourse.

Recommendations

The authoritarian and dynastic political project of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo in Nicaragua is antithetical to democracy and sustainable development; it represents the first and primary obstacle to progress on SDG 16.10.1

in the country. Civil society and the international community must work to strengthen the psychological, legal, physical, and digital security of journalists in the face of the State's violence, surveillance, and repression. It is also important to provide comprehensive support to forcibly displaced journalists, as many now live in extremely precarious situations in countries such as Costa Rica, Spain, and the United States. Considering the total absence of any national avenues for institutional support, it is imperative that all possible mechanisms of international law and political advocacy be activated to demand the release of journalists and media workers who are detained and to ensure that crimes against journalists don't remain in impunity, beginning with the murder

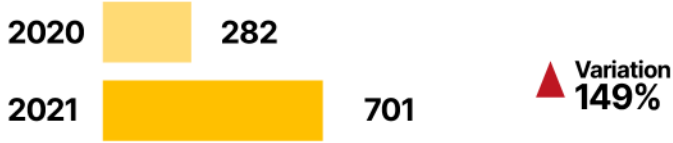
of journalist Ángel Gahona in 2018 on the Caribbean coast. In order to monitor from a gender and inclusion perspective and, it is necessary to disaggregate information on violence against journalists in the country. It is also important to rigorously document all manifestations of violence to fill the information gap on the differentiated effects that violence and discrimination have on journalists across the country.

Nicaraguan CSOs, journalists, and the media must continue to learn to operate with the miniscule yet indispensable existing possibilities within the country, which are supported by institutional structures outside the country. For example, media personnel should avoid the risk of conducting any administrative tasks pertaining to

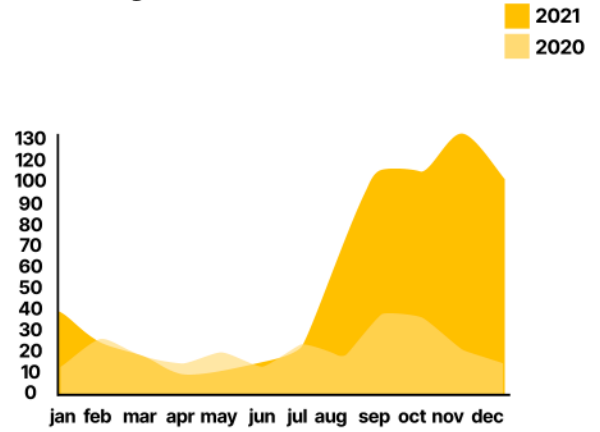
monitoring violence against journalists inside Nicaragua, instead focusing on providing the highest level of security possible to those documenting realities on the ground. Support from international cooperation agencies and private philanthropy groups is required to build a comprehensive and long-term strategy that includes the active participation of civil society and the role of media and journalists who are working to overcome horrific censorship.

Nicaragua

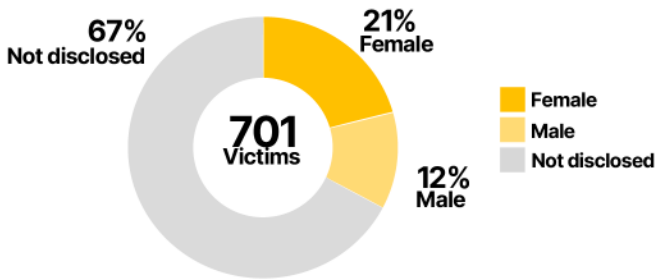
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



Victims by gender



Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **701**
♀ Gender alerts: **3**

Aggressors



Abusive use of state power



Aggressions and attacks



Civil and criminal trials



Stigmatizing speech



Arbitrary detention



Access to information



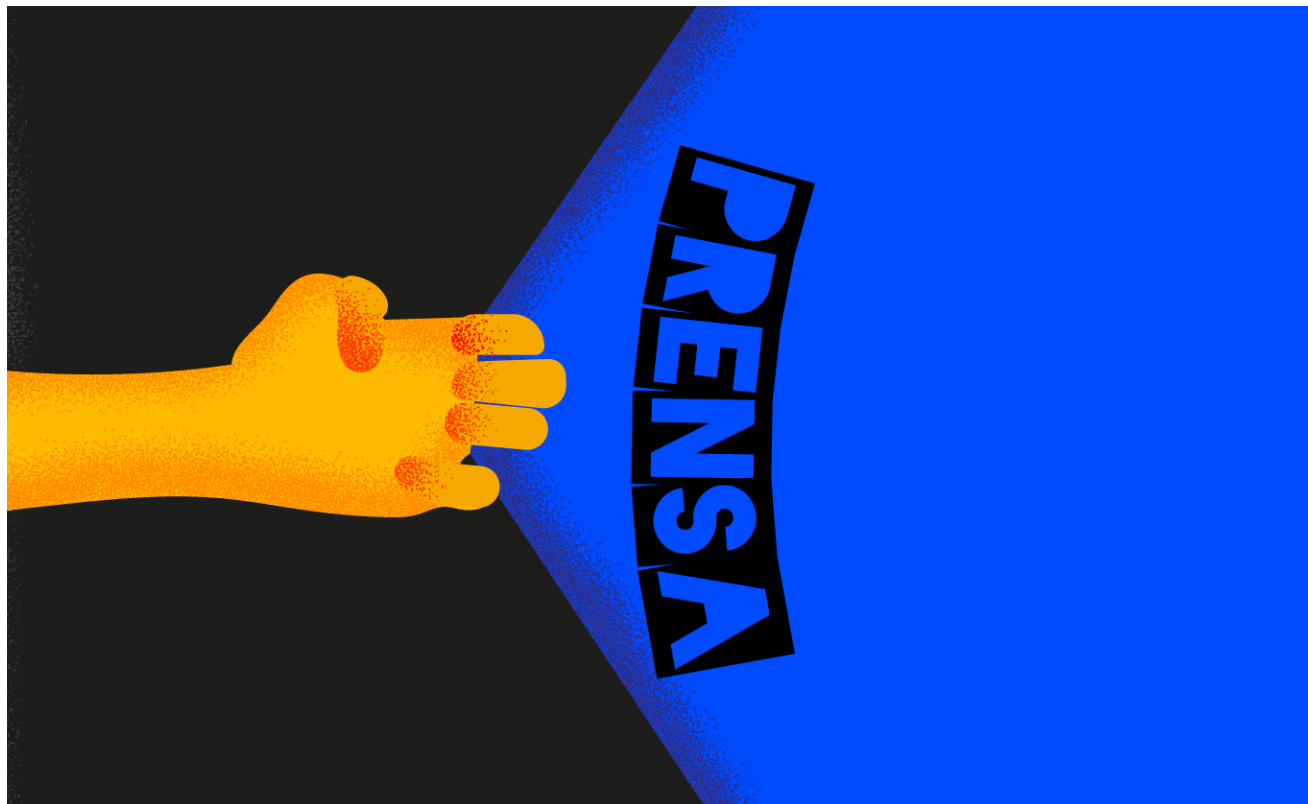
Internet restrictions



Kidnapping



Peru



Tension arises between authorities and the media

The situation of SDG 16.10.1 in Peru is in sharp deterioration. During 2018 and 2019, the first two years of monitoring conducted by VdS Network member IPYS Peru, the country presented some of the best figures in the region, reporting just 13 and 15 alerts, respecti-

vely. However, the situation of fundamental freedoms has been rapidly worsening in the country since 2020, and particularly in the wake of the wave of protests that shook the country in November of that year. In 2020, IPYS Peru reported 57 alerts. This

trend deepened in 2021, especially after the inauguration of Pedro Castillo in July, ending the year with 77 alerts. In an atmosphere of political turmoil and polarization, the new Peruvian government maintains a hostile attitude towards the press. Public officials refuse to give interviews and do not answer uncomfortable questions, something that clashes head-on with the strong tradition of oversight that has been cultivated by journalists and independent media in Peru since the fall of Fujimori. In 2021, alerts registered in Peru increased by 35%, driven by a 100% increase in restrictions of access to information, 75% in abusive use of State power, 65% in aggressions and attacks, and 50% in judicial proceedings.

Violence Against the Press Grows and Intensifies

Mere days after its inauguration, the new administration showed its disdain for press freedom. On July 29, journalists from an array of media outlets found themselves forced outside of the Grand National Theater in Lima, having been prevented from entering to cover the swearing in of the ministerial cabinet. Again, on the morning of August 5, all media was prevented from entering the Government Palace to cover the official ceremony in which President Pedro Castillo was recognized as Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces and National Police. These are unprecedented events in Peru's recent history. Also, on at least two occasions, presidential security personnel have physically assaulted

journalists. These patterns of restrictions of access to information and abusive use of State power are repeated at all levels of government, from the Minister of Energy and Mines, Eduardo Gonzalez, who has stated that he will only make statements to “media that do not make problems for him,” to the presidential advisor, Ricardo Belmont Cassinelli, who publicly threatened to withdraw advertising from the El Comercio group.

The deterioration of the situation of freedom of expression in Peru is also evident in the legal system. On November 10, journalist and former director of a radio program, Denis Flores Díaz, was sentenced defamation against Javier Cárdenas Guevara, director of a Local Education Management Unit. In 2021, IPYS Peru recorded the opening of six

judicial proceedings against journalists in Peru, including investigations against Ernesto Cabral of Ojo Público, for revealing audios from the infamous Lava Jato case, investigations against journalist Paola Ugaz for the alleged crime of money laundering in apparent retaliation for her revelations about abuses committed within the religious organization Sodalicio Vida Cristiana, and an investigation against journalists of Willax TV for alleged crimes of conspiracy to commit sedition. Growing governmental animosity towards the press and independent journalism increases the levels of violence committed against them. In 2021, 56 aggressions and attacks against journalists were recorded, including the planting of a Molotov bomb in the car of journalist Roberto Sánchez Mamani

at the doors of the radio station where he works and the burning and total loss of the car of journalist Carlos Padilla Castillo in retaliation for his journalistic work.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

IPYS Peru reported 21 alerts of violence against women journalists—an annual increase of 133%— and 42 against men—an annual increase of 17%. Aggressions and attacks account for 81% of alerts against women journalists. Harassment through social networks is identified as the most common form of attack against women journalists. This has been consolidated through defamation campaigns, including comments on the physical appearance or sexuality of female journalists. IPYS Peru highlights the case

of activist Amanda Meza, who runs a community media outlet, Wayka, that promotes human and labor rights, gender equality, and non-discrimination. The journalist has been severely harassed across social media through sexist comments about her physical appearance. IPYS Peru emphasizes that salary gaps and a lack of parity in gender representation within media organizations are significant issues. They also explain that the traditional media organizations have greater rates of gender-based discrimination, including cases of labor harassment that are not documented or formally addressed. In 2021, one alert of aggressions and attacks was registered corresponding to the new cross-cutting gender indicator.

Recommendations

Civil society, the international community, and especially citizens should not underestimate the deterioration of the situation of SDG 16.10.1 in Peru. It is imperative to recognize the seriousness of the threat to freedom of the press and expression and to heed lessons learned from other countries in the region where a disrespect for these rights has led to a vicious cycle of democratic backsliding from which it is exceedingly difficult to escape. A broad, multi-sectoral coalition that is supported by the international community can demand transparency, access to public information, and respect for the role of scrutiny and oversight of the press. This includes discontinuing the prosecution of journalists, decriminalizing crimes related to the

practice of journalism, and promoting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as the correction of content. Authorities must refrain from abusing their power through acts like allocating official advertising support to reward loyal media and punish those that are critical. The State must fulfill its duty as guarantor of fundamental freedoms, starting by ensuring that crimes against journalists do not go unpunished and by taking measures to address the increase and escalation of violence against the press.

To fulfill its catalytic role in the construction of healthy and safe conditions and environments for journalism, civil society needs support from international actors. This type of support is also necessary for independent media and

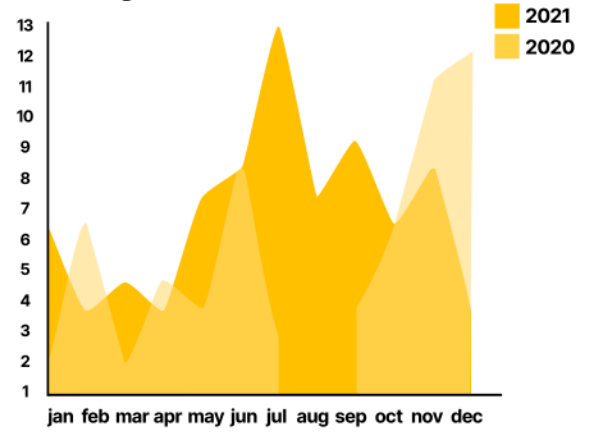
individual journalists to produce and develop quality journalism. The further development of the media ecosystem also presents a fantastic opportunity to include those across the gender spectrum in all facets of journalism.

Peru

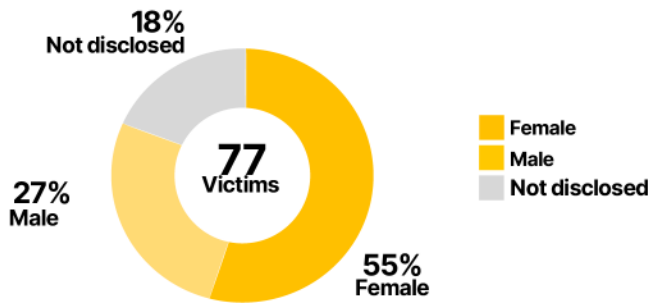
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



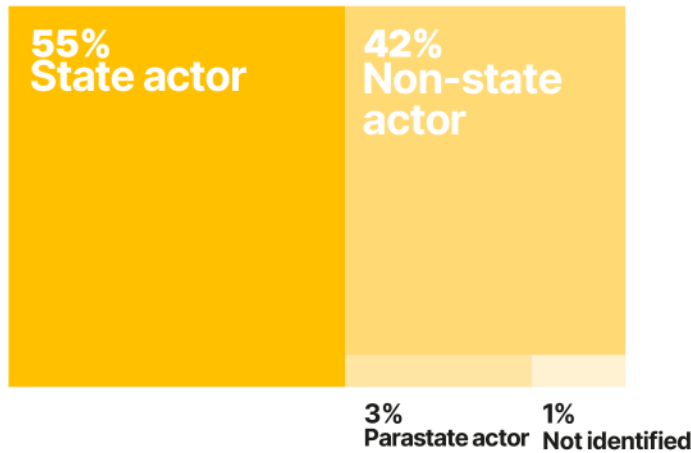
Victims by gender



Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **77**
♀ Gender alerts: **1**

Aggressors



Aggressions and attacks



Abusive use of state power



Civil and criminal trials



Stigmatizing speech



Access to information



Uruguay



The Uruguayan state is no longer the great protector of freedoms

Data from 2021 clearly indicates that it is no longer possible to consider Uruguay a role model for the protection of fundamental freedoms in Latin America. There was a 90% increase in the total number of alerts between 2020 and 2021 (from 37⁷ to 70 total).

This deterioration was driven by a 450% increase in stigmatizing speech, 400% in criminal and civil proceedings, 67% in restrictions to access to information, which demonstrates a decline in compliance with the access to information law, which for years was respected

⁷ Correction: CAinfo reported 24 alerts in the 2020 Shadow Report. Upon revision, CAinfo increased this figure to a total of 37 alerts for 2020.

in Uruguay. CAinfo, a VdS member, raises alarms due to the troublesome increase in hostility toward the Uruguayan media.

State Aggressions and Criminalization

In 2021, the State was identified as the aggressor in 73% of alerts in Uruguay. It is undeniable that the government of President Luis Lacalle Pou has fostered antagonism towards the press. A clear example of this is the prevalence of cases of stigmatizing speech by public officials, ministers, and senators. The lawsuits brought against journalists by Lacalle's supporters are also extremely worrisome. In terms of criminalization, it is important to highlight the case of a lawsuit for defamation and libel against journalists of the magazine *Caras y Caretas* and the

newspaper *La Diaria*, which was filed by conservative leader Pilar Silvestre. The plaintiff accused the journalists of having prevented her appointment to a position in the Ministry of Social Development with comments made in an article published in 2020. Beyond this case, the tendency to use the judicial system to inhibit journalistic investigations is notorious—a form of Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP)—and has been one of the most profound consequences of stigmatizing discourse from public officials. The climate of confrontation born out of the 2020 elections has not diminished, but rather more acute with the COVID-19 pandemic given the media's role in scrutinizing governmental responses and verifying public discourse, including that of political figures.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

CAinfo registered 41 alerts of violence against male journalists and 10 against women, increases of 116% and 150% respectively. The organization explains that the greatest challenge in gender-sensitive monitoring is the invisibility of these crimes and a lack of representation in the media. While Uruguay boasts gender parity among journalists—women represent most of the student base in the field of journalism—most executive and managerial positions are occupied by men who receive better salaries and greater recognition. This lack of representation is even greater in the case of trans journalists. CAinfo also points out that cases of abuse and sexual harassment have been reported within media

circles. In 2021, several online #metoo campaigns were launched and a specific account was created for cases that occurred within the media ecosystem. Until a formal and secure reporting system exists, there will be little to no data to explain this phenomenon. CAinfo registered eight alerts corresponding to the new cross-cutting gender indicator, three for stigmatizing speech, two for access to information, two for civil and criminal proceedings, and one for abusive use of State power.

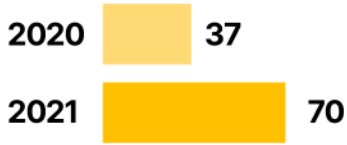
Recommendations

It is worrying that one of the strongest democracies in the region is deteriorating so rapidly. Uruguayan civil society and the State must work to protect freedom of the press and freedom of expression above partisan

interests. President Lacalle Pou must be held accountable for his administration and its allies' negative impact on the press and immediately halt the criminalization and stigmatization of journalists. Likewise, work must be done to recover and strengthen a clear institutional framework that protects the work of journalists above the will of those in power. Both national and international organizations should commit themselves to closely monitor the situation in the country to stop the deterioration.

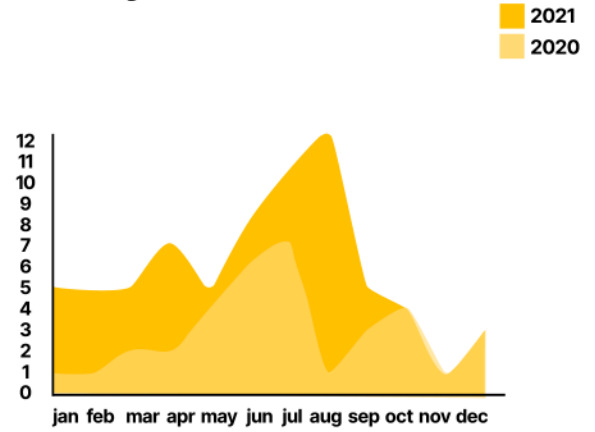
Uruguay

Alerts per year

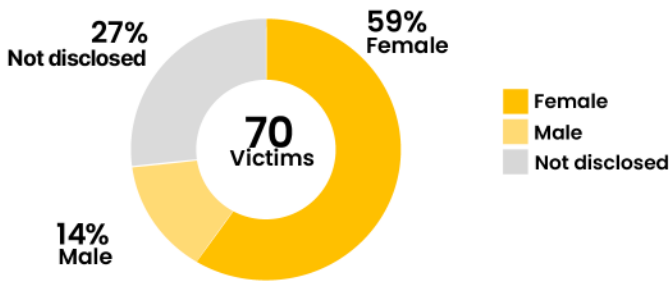


Variation **89%**

Alerts by month



Victims by gender



Indicators

Access to information

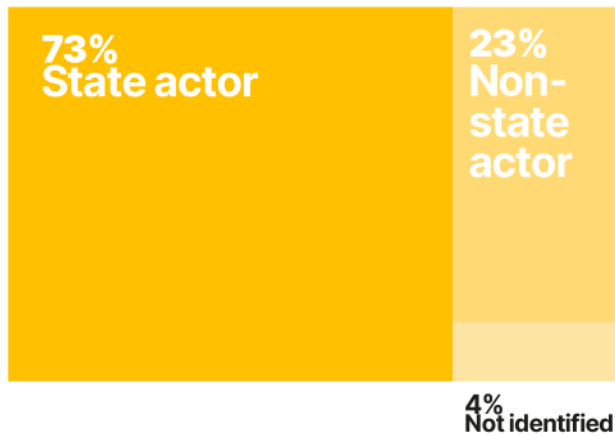


30

⚠ Total alerts: **70**

♀ Gender alerts: **8**

Aggressors



Civil and criminal trials



15

Stigmatizing speech



11

Internet restrictions



2

Aggressions and attacks



4

Legal framework contrary to international standards



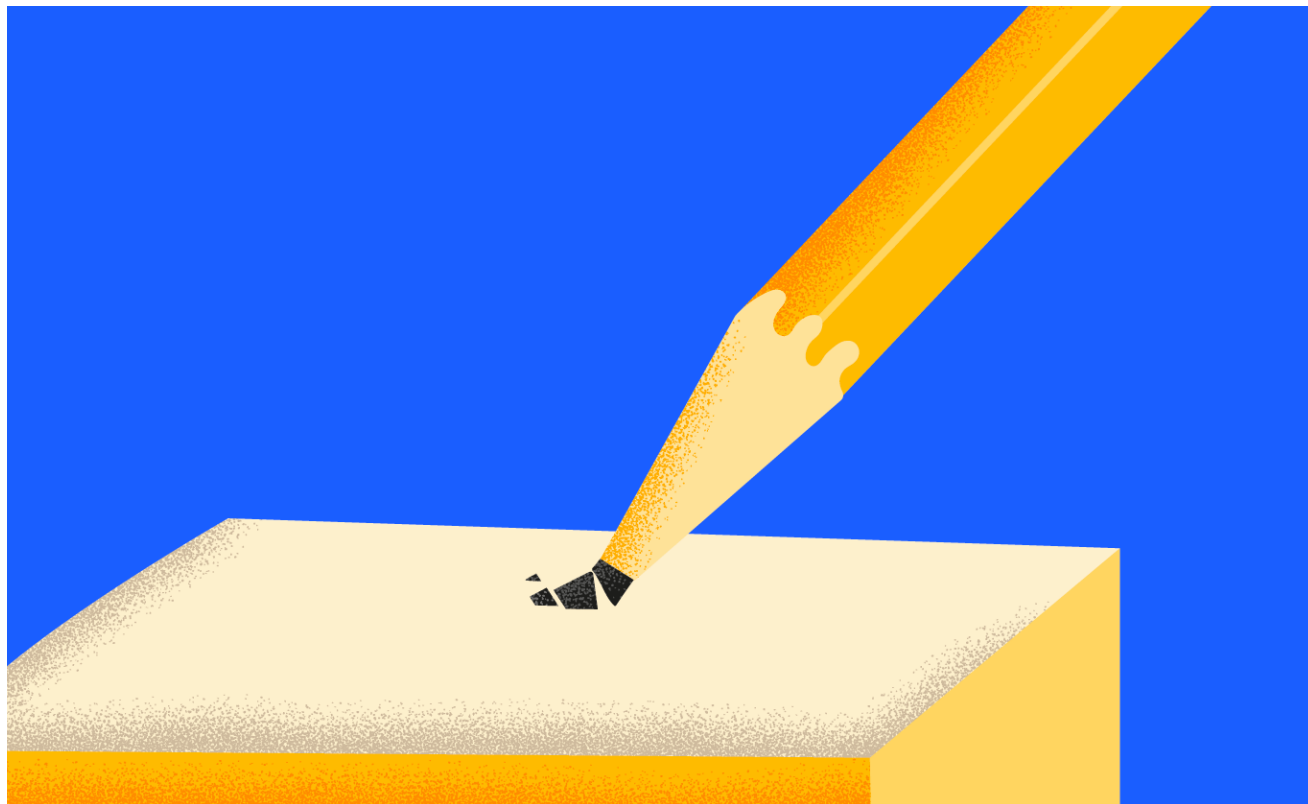
4

Abusive use of state power



4

Venezuela



The instrumentalization of fear to censor journalists

The state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information continues to be serious in Venezuela. Demands for regional and municipal elections in Venezuela framed 2021. In this context, VdS Network member IPYS

Venezuela registered 452 alerts, which represents a slight decrease (11%) compared to the previous year. There was an increase in the number of cases of restrictions of access to information (102%), such as obstruction of coverage and entry to public spaces.

Stigmatization and criminalization of journalists were also conducted in an insistent manner. These cases increased by 50%. The fear of expressing oneself has led to self-censorship, based on the latent and permanent threat of violence against any critical voice. Venezuelan media and journalists have had to develop survival strategies to adapt to the limitations forced by the political context. The independent press has turned to the Internet and social networks for its reporting, as it is impossible to find space in the traditional media ecosystem.

Most members of the digital media have managed to circumvent the self-censorship imposed by the State, although they have often had to pay with exile. Even so, they face constant attacks. In 2021, 160 aggres-

sions and attacks and at least 20 civil and criminal prosecutions were registered. The Venezuelan State is responsible for 70% of all alerts.

Media Deserts and the Limitations of Digital Journalism

Fear has pushed journalists and media in Venezuela to self-censor. Fear over the dissemination of critical content is palpable and caused by unending repression, especially within in the country's interior regions.

Censorship is a reality forced onto journalists and the media. This has created an atmosphere in which journalists are accustomed to evading sensitive issues and opt out of telling select stories to protect themselves, which makes realities invisible across swaths of

the country. Traditional media, such as television, constantly avoids reporting on reality. However, digital media groups and journalists have managed to break the self-censorship, especially those working in exile.

Not only have Venezuelan digital media outlets managed to survive in an impossible context, but their capacity for innovation in this context has helped create a resurgence of high-quality journalism in Venezuela. However, the reach and impact of these platforms remains limited by unstable and inconsistent access to the Internet, which is caused by economic shortcomings, lack of infrastructure, and repressive online policies. This has created information deserts in the country, entire areas of the national territory where the

population has no access to independent information. The State has proven it can coordinate with Internet providers CANTV, Movistar and Digitel, to apply online censorship, which is worrisome. IPYS Venezuela has reported blockages of news portals and shutdowns of social networks reporting on the socioeconomic situation to prevent coverage and public debate on citizen protests.

Gender and Diversity Perspective

IPYS Venezuela registered 193 alerts against men and 126 against women journalists. The organization is beginning to monitor from a gender and inclusion perspective and mentioned that aggressions and insults against women journalists include a differentiated component, where

comments are directed at their physical appearance, sexuality, and capacity to perform journalism. An emblematic case is that of a women journalist who denounced a possible link between a murdered criminal and a public official. An aggressive campaign was launched to smear the journalist who fled the country due to the threats. The comments and aggressions had a sexual connotation, which has become increasingly common. Diosdado Cabello's program is used as a platform to attack women and LGBTIQ+ journalists, deploying stigmatizing discourse in the form of denigrating nicknames and smear messages. The issue of sexual harassment against women journalists has also been elevated in the “Yo Te Creo” movement, part of #metoo, where several

journalists have publicly reported sexual aggressions. Seven alerts corresponding to the new cross-cutting gender indicator were registered, four for stigmatizing discourse and three for aggressions and attacks.

Recommendations

It is essential to recognize that any progress toward achieving SDG 16.10.1 in Venezuela represents an existential threat to the corrupt and authoritarian regime that reigns in the country. Civil society and the international community must find effective and innovative ways to strengthen the conditions and environment for the exercise of journalism to the extent possible in a context in which the State clearly considers journalists and independent media as enemies to be defeated. On

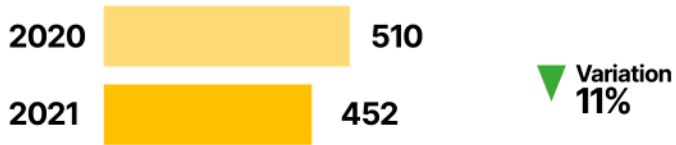
October 26, 2021, journalist and political activist Roland Carreño completed one year in arbitrary detention. Carreño was charged with conspiracy, illicit trafficking of weapons of war, money laundering, and criminal association. Since the beginning of the proceedings, his defense has denounced irregularities such as the manipulation of evidence and violations of due process. IPYS Venezuela has condemned the prosecution of journalists and demands their full and immediate release. In the absence of national mechanisms to protect journalists from abuses of State power, international pressure must be maintained to demand Carreño's release.

The reality is that both civil society and independent media manage to continue operating in Venezuela

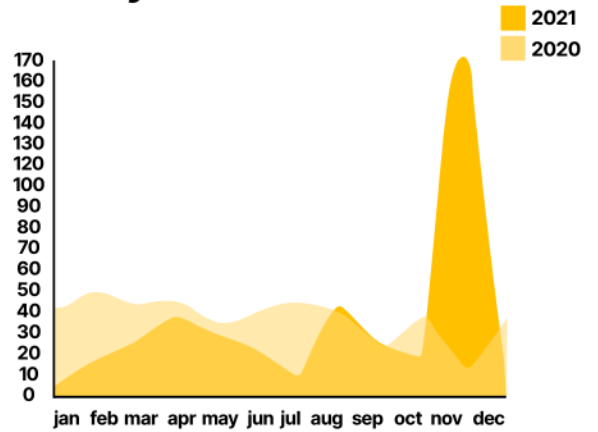
because they have installed capabilities outside the country that complement the complex and dangerous operations inside the country. International development actors must recognize this reality, deploying effective and strategic support CSOs as they work to protect journalism.

Venezuela

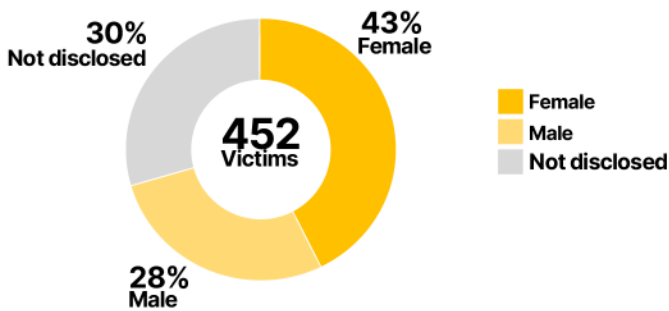
Alerts per year



Alerts by month



Victims by gender



Indicators

⚠ Total alerts: **452**
♀ Gender alerts: **7**

Access to information

172

Aggressions and attacks

160

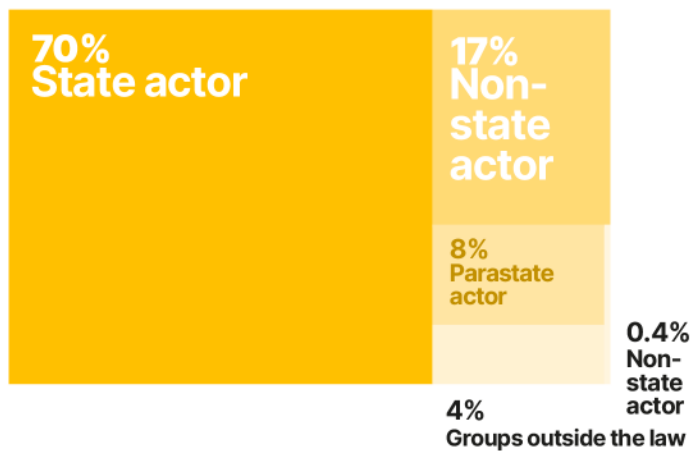
Stigmatizing speech

72

Civil and criminal trials

20

Aggressors



Arbitrary detention

17

Internet restrictions

7

Abusive use of state power

3

Forced disappearance

1

Conclusions and Recommendations

The state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in Latin America is dismal. The data collected and systematized by the VdS Network confirms deteriorating trends that were noted in previous reports. In particular, the exercise of extreme violence and pervasiveness of stigmatizing discourse persist. Careful analysis of the 2021 data and reflections from Network members together reflect patterns of violence ranging from symbolic—stigmatizing discourse, threats and intimidation—to material and direct violence, such as attacks and aggressions,

kidnappings, torture, and murder. Violence is institutionalized at the structural level through the abusive use of State power, judicial and administrative harassment, and repressive legislation. This violence, in turn, is exercised in a differentiated manner towards women, men, non-binary people, and those within the LGBTQ+ community. Likewise, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and physical capacity, among other identity factors, condition the way in which different populations experience diverse types of violence. While the presence and participation of women and non-binary journalist in the media has been

increasing, their participation continues to be restricted, especially in managerial positions, and they continue to suffer disproportionately from workplace and sexual harassment.

To meet SDG Target 16.10, journalists and media workers need much more than freedom from repression. Among other things, they need psychosocial stability, financial sustainability, editorial independence, and greater opportunities for growth and development. As women, non-binary persons, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community continue to gain space in the media, society must ensure and guarantee equal opportunities and differentiated protection programs for them. The design of responses and solutions to the needs of vulnerable groups, inclu-

ding Indigenous populations and Afro-descendants, must respond to the differentiated characteristics of violence against those facing marginalization. The systematic and methodologically robust monitoring and reporting work of the VdS Network is key to understanding these characteristics and being able to design and implement appropriate responses and solutions.

Any attempt to improve the state of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information in Latin America and to ultimately meet SDG Target 16.10 must begin by understanding how different forms and levels of violence interrelate with each other, and how they intersect with diverse identities.

Gender and Inclusion Recommendations

The analysis of freedom of press and expression from a gender and inclusion perspective shows significant challenges, including a lack of gender-sensitive disaggregated data, which is affected by an established fear of reporting violent acts; scarcity of reliable systems to report gender-based violence against journalists; the emergence of new spaces for violence, such as in social networks where stigmatizing discourse against journalists has become normalized and gender-differentiated attacks are clearly perceived; the persistence of misogyny and homophobia within the media sector; a lack of awareness of gender-based violence issues across the media ecosystem; a generalized tendency to question

the professional capability of women journalists; and attacks that include comments about physical appearance or sexuality.

Therefore, it is critical to make differentiated violence within the sector visible. It is also important to promote awareness of gender and inclusion issues within organizations and at the institutional level, including relevant state actors and the media itself.

Finally, it is necessary to create an effective, accessible, and transparent system for reporting violations against journalists from a gender and inclusion perspective.

It is also necessary to introduce protocols for the prevention of gender-based violence to develop preventive actions and adequate responses to the growing

presence of this violence against journalists in Latin America.

Other Recommendations

To Civil Society

- Strengthen the role of civil society in building, defending, maintaining, and monitoring conditions and environments that are safe, healthy, and favorable to freedom of the press and freedom of expression.
- Develop advocacy processes with authorities, the international community, and media groups to create public policies and best practices that favor freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information at the structural level and in the management of journalism

and the media.

- Collaborate with public interest media and the international community to position the importance of media development, including building approaches that serve to include diverse genders in the construction of new narratives, in editorial leadership, and in sources.
- Promote monitoring of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right of access to information from a gender and inclusion perspective within media systems.

To the International Community

- Develop a clear call to action for international development and private investment organizations on the importance of their support in developing bold, effective, and innova-

tive initiatives capable of changing the bleak outlook of SDG 16.10.1 and therefore supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda more broadly in the region.

- Construct broad coalitions of actors with a high capacity to design and execute social marketing and communication campaigns to help develop a widespread and public recognition of the value of a free press for democracy and sustainable development.
- Collaborate with public interest media and civil society to position the importance of media development and the production of public interest journalism, including the promotion of approaches that serve to broadly include people across the gender spectrum in new

narratives, editorial leadership, and source diversity.

To State Institutions

- Raise awareness among public authorities of the importance of helping recognize the value of the press and the dangers that exist should they instead foster hostility.
- Promote conflict resolution mechanisms and tools as the proper channels for processing disagreements with the press to avoid and reduce harmful and disproportionate actions such as judicial proceedings and the application of administrative and criminal sanctions.
- Establish or improve existing protection mechanisms and host sensibilization trainings for authorities who implement them to better attend to the

differentiated needs of people across the gender spectrum and in other situations of marginalization.

To the Media

- Design and implement protection protocols and safe and dignified working conditions for journalists and media workers
- Promote equal opportunities, protection, and alert mechanisms within media organizations to prevent and prosecute gender-based violence.
- Create accountability frameworks to guarantee greater diversity and representation amongst journalists .
- Develop measures to promote diversity and inclusion in terms of new narratives, information sources, and editorial leadership, among other key aspects.
- Conduct data and investigative journalism to contrast and verify the evidence base created by civil society monitoring and tell stories that inspire empathy and appreciation for journalists and media workers.
- Collaborate with civil society and the international community to position the importance of media development and the production of public interest journalism, deploying a gender and inclusion perspective.

