



Document #2100721

Freedom House (Author)

Freedom on the Net 2023 - Venezuela

NOT FREE

29

/ 100

A [Obstacles to Access](#) 7 / 25B [Limits on Content](#) 11 / 35C [Violations of User Rights](#) 11 / 40

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

30 / 100 Not Free

Scores are based on a scale of 0 (least free) to 100 (most free). See the [research methodology](#) and [report acknowledgements](#).

Overview

With the government of President Nicolás Maduro firmly entrenched, internet freedom in Venezuela remains precarious. Due in part to the country's worsening social, economic, and political crisis, Venezuelans often struggle to afford internet access, experience difficulties obtaining trusted information due to progovernment disinformation and blocks of independent media, and face potential reprisals for expressing their opinions on politically sensitive topics in the digital space. Infrastructure failures frequently cause disruptions to connectivity, rendering some users effectively disconnected. The state manipulates online discussion through influence operations and online platforms for government services, which also prompt privacy concerns due to their large-scale collection of citizens' personal data. Independent journalists, the majority of whom work in online media, remain subject to arrest and harassment in retaliation for their work.

Venezuela's democratic institutions have been deteriorating since 1999, but conditions have sharply declined in recent years due to harsh government crackdowns on the opposition and the ruling party's use of

thoroughly flawed elections to seize full control of state institutions. The authorities have closed off virtually all channels for political dissent, restricting civil liberties and prosecuting perceived opponents without regard for due process. Although the country's economy has returned to growth after years of recession, a severe, politically driven humanitarian crisis continues to cause hardship and stimulate mass emigration.

Key Developments, June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023

- Infrastructural failures, frequently driven by electricity rationing, and the prohibitive cost of internet services severely restricted access for ordinary Venezuelans. The average cost of many internet packages continued to exceed the country's monthly minimum wage, exacerbating an already significant digital divide (see A1 and A2).
- The Maduro government blocked at least 70 websites in 2022, most of them independent news sites. Both state-owned CANTV and private internet service providers (ISPs) were found to have implemented the blocks (see B1).
- The government's ongoing efforts to restrict or manipulate the online sphere—through website blocks, coordinated disinformation campaigns, and state-run online platforms—severely undermined the ability of Venezuelans to access credible information online, making it more difficult for independent digital journalists to inform the population. At least one progovernment disinformation campaign during the coverage period was generated by artificial intelligence (AI) (see B1, B5, and B7).
- Activists, independent journalists, and ordinary citizens remained under threat from arrests in retaliation for their critical online activities—often on trumped-up charges of incitement to hatred. Most were briefly detained and released under precautionary measures (see C3).

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections? 2 / 6

Venezuela's economic crisis, marked by multiple years of recession and hyperinflation, has hindered the country's electrical and telecommunications infrastructure and the quality of internet access. The country's decaying infrastructure suffers from failures, theft, and vandalism, resulting in frequent blackouts and poor connection speeds.¹

According to statistics from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), mobile-broadband penetration stood at 49 percent in 2022, while fixed-line penetration remained much lower, at 9 percent.² At the start of 2023, there were 17.59 million internet users in Venezuela, according to DataReportal.³

Electricity blackouts and other infrastructural limitations continue to affect connectivity in many states.⁴ According to the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Committee of People Affected by Blackouts (Comité de Afectados por Apagones), Venezuela experienced 138,200 power failures in the first nine months of 2022, with 27,569 failures across all 23 states in September alone.⁵ Electric power rationing schemes—often conducted at unpredictable intervals—persisted in various cities, such as Maracaibo and Mérida.⁶ Damage to the country's fiber-optic cables also causes routine connectivity disruptions. On February 27 and 28, 2023, for example, damage to the fiber-optic infrastructure left users of state-owned provider CANTV without a connection for 18 uninterrupted hours in three states.⁷

During the coverage period, Venezuelan NGO VE Without Filter (VSF) used the Twitter hashtag #ReporteConectividad (#ConnectivityReport) to document connectivity disruptions caused by infrastructure failures in several states.⁸

Though new providers have emerged to fill demand and connection speeds have increased in some cities,⁹ most rural areas are served almost exclusively by CANTV and lack access to high-quality internet service (see A2). According to the Humanitarian Social Observatory (OSH), in 2022, less than 5 percent of CANTV users reported experiencing no connection failures and 30 percent of users reported having no service for several hours.¹⁰ One town in Sucre State has reportedly gone virtually without CANTV service for five years, primarily due to cable thefts.¹¹

According to Ookla's Speedtest Global Index, as of May 2023, Venezuela's median mobile broadband speeds ranked among the slowest in the world, at 135th out of 140 countries reviewed.¹² That month, Venezuelans saw a median mobile download speed of 7.91 megabits per second (Mbps) and median upload speed of 4.06 Mbps, along with a median fixed-line download speed of 26.08 Mbps and median upload speed of 22.05 Mbps.¹³

A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons? 0 / 3

The ongoing economic crisis prevents most of the population from meeting their basic needs. This has impacted Venezuelans' ability to afford internet services and devices, as many must devote their salaries to

cover necessities such as food and health care.¹⁴ The de facto dollarization of the economy has exacerbated the gap between those who have access to US dollars or receive remittances to purchase goods and services and those who do not.

During the coverage period, the minimum wage for Venezuelans remained 130 bolivars per month, but the exchange rate varied from 5 bolivars per US dollar in June 2022 to 25 bolivars per US dollar in May 2023.¹⁵ As a result of this rate, the minimum monthly salary was \$5.26 in May 2023.

Internet services remain unaffordable for most Venezuelans. The 2023 Internet Poverty Index, published by the Internet Society Foundation, found that more than 74 percent of Venezuelans could not afford a basic mobile internet package.¹⁶

The cost of internet service has become more expensive in response to the changing currency exchange rate, making access more unaffordable. CANTV increased its broadband internet rates six times during 2022 and private providers, such as Movistar, increased prices multiple times during the coverage period, as well.¹⁷ CANTV's cheapest plans also tend to be unavailable for new contracts.¹⁸ In May 2022, CANTV began offering high-speed fiber-optic plans in East Caracas, where some of the country's highest purchasing power is concentrated.¹⁹ By April 2023, this service, available with speeds up to 300 Mbps for \$99.99 per month, was present in 15 states. However, the cheapest of these fiber-optic plans is priced at \$8.99 per month, which is still more than the country's monthly minimum wage, as of May 2023.²⁰

New companies, which often provide higher-quality services, tend to offer internet plans that are unaffordable for most workers, with some of these plans reaching at least \$75 per month.²¹ For wealthier Venezuelans who can afford such service, this type of offer has somewhat alleviated connectivity failures. This has created a significant divide between those who can afford to access reliable service—often paid in US dollars—and those who cannot.²² According to a study released by consulting firm ANOVA in April 2021, 86 percent of households in the poorest quintile of Venezuelans lack internet access, compared to 81.2 percent of households lacking access overall.²³

The prices of electronic devices remain out of reach for many Venezuelans. A midrange smartphone, which would cost \$400, represents over 76 months' pay at minimum wage as of May 2023.

In March 2023, the United Socialist Party (PSUV)-controlled National Assembly announced that it would convene a meeting that month with ISPs to address surging rates, generating concerns that government

attempts to lower prices could cause the further deterioration of infrastructure and service quality.²⁴

Venezuelans experience a significant geographical divide in internet access. In some border cities of Táchira and Zulia States, where Venezuelan ISPs aren't available, residents rely on Colombian companies.²⁵ According to the latest available official statistics from the first quarter of 2022, higher rates of internet use are concentrated in the Capital District and states on the more developed northern coast, such as Miranda, Aragua, and Carabobo. The state of Amazonas, which has a high Indigenous population, only reached 10.09 percent penetration, down from the 14.8 percent penetration reported in 2020.²⁶

The lack of service in predominantly Indigenous areas has led to sometimes disastrous consequences, as in March 2022, when four members of the Yanomami community were killed by military officers in a confrontation over a shared Wi-Fi connection.²⁷ Indigenous communities continue to raise concerns that CANTV service is inoperative in remote areas of the country.²⁸

Plans for further expansions of high-speed internet service and the provision of licenses for service providers favor cities and areas with high purchasing power, further exacerbating the disparity in levels of access between high-income and low-income areas.²⁹ In the Chacao municipality of Caracas—the smallest of the city's five—for instance, there are about 50 ISPs.³⁰

A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity? ^{4 / 6}

The state owns most of the infrastructure of the national network through CANTV. Deliberate shutdowns and throttling may seem practically unnecessary given the state of the country's infrastructure and recurring power outages.

Users do not experience intentional, prolonged restrictions on fixed-line and mobile internet connectivity, though the government regularly blocks key websites and communications platforms to minimize coverage of politically sensitive news (see B1).³¹

In March 2020, the National Commission of Telecommunications of Venezuela (CONATEL), the country's regulatory body, launched discussions with private operators about the creation of an internet exchange point (IXP). Academics and activists have opposed such a project, as administration of the IXP would fall to the government. The government's control of this infrastructure would beget high risks of censorship and surveillance that would outweigh the technical benefits of

the IXP's creation.³² CONATEL announced that it would continue with the project, but it had not been implemented by the end of the coverage period.³³

A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict 1 / the diversity of service providers? 6

Although there are private providers, the state dominates the information and communications technologies (ICT) market. Telecommunications companies have struggled to remain financially sustainable during the ongoing economic crisis.

Smaller companies have been able to enter the market since the currency exchange market was partially deregulated in 2018.³⁴ According to CONATEL, there were more than 200 authorized ISPs as of May 2023.³⁵ However, some new operators that began providing services in 2021 were later suspended for noncompliance with CONATEL regulations.³⁶ Representatives of newer ISPs express frustration about not receiving timely responses to their requests or about discriminatory treatment, since companies with government-linked managers are favored.³⁷

According to two telecommunications companies' chief executives, the Venezuelan ICT market is difficult and expensive for large operators that have high fixed costs. With smaller investments, in the absence of exchange-rate controls and the informal relaxation of some economic measures, new companies can provide services for consumers with high and medium purchasing power. Politically, companies must remain neutral and refrain from expressing any kind of opinions against the government.³⁸

According to CONATEL's first-quarter 2022 report, the most recent official data, 63.79 percent of the fixed-line broadband market is held by CANTV, while Digitel, InterCable, Telefónica, and Movilnet hold 19.28, 6.25, 3.14, and 2.76 percent, respectively; other small providers hold the remaining 4.78 percent of the market. The mobile broadband market is led by Movistar with 51.30 percent, followed by Movilnet with 26.55 percent and Digitel with 22.15 percent.³⁹

A May 2019 government decree created a new state-run National Corporation of Telecommunications and Postal Services of Venezuela (CSTSPV), to be headed by CONATEL's president. According to Article 3 of the decree, it aims to manage the state's telecommunications companies, including through acquisitions and mergers.⁴⁰ After the announcement, Maduro also said that Venezuela would sign agreements with Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE to promote the introduction of new technologies.⁴¹

In May 2022, Maduro announced plans to sell 5 to 10 percent of shares of various state-owned companies, including CANTV and its subsidiary Movilnet, to private investors.⁴² The first round of sales of CANTV shares took place in October 2022.⁴³ More than 1.3 million CANTV shares had been sold by the end of the year.⁴⁴

A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner? 0 / 4

CONATEL is responsible for regulating and licensing the telecommunications sector and is administratively dependent on the Ministry of Popular Power for Communication and Information (MIPPCI). The Law on Social Responsibility in Radio, Television, and Electronic Media (Resorte-ME) grants the regulatory body the power to make decisions on the blocking or deletion of content and to sanction service providers, an ability it has exercised without granting due process to the affected parties.⁴⁵

While Article 35 of the Organic Law of Telecommunications provides for CONATEL's operational and administrative autonomy, Article 40 states that the president has the power to appoint and remove the agency's director and the other four members of its board,⁴⁶ highlighting CONATEL's lack of independence from the executive.

In March 2021, Maduro announced the forthcoming promulgation of a set of laws, including a reform of Resorte-ME and a new "Cyberspace Law."⁴⁷ Although the forthcoming cyberspace legislation has not yet been published, a leak of a January 2019 draft indicates that it would establish a new regulator to oversee "policies regarding Venezuelan cyberspace." Under the draft law, the regulator would consist of a director general and four directors who are appointed and can be dismissed by the executive. The regulator is tasked with determining the "correct" use of the online environment, which entails regulating service providers, critical infrastructure, and online speech. Under Article 5, the state would regulate access to the online environment, which is "of public interest... for the comprehensive defense of the nation."⁴⁸ Legislative proposals to regulate social media remained under consideration during the current coverage period (see B3).

B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? 2 / 6

The Maduro government blocked digital media outlets, virtual private networks (VPNs), and online platforms during the coverage period. Several private ISPs—including Movistar, Digitel, InterCable, NetUno, and SuperCable—continued to block news websites that had previously only been blocked by CANTV.

A September 2023 report by VSF, covering 2022 and the first half of 2023, detailed widespread and persistent online censorship by the Maduro government.⁴⁹ According to the report, at least 100 URLs belonging to more than 70 websites were blocked in 2022, with the majority of them being independent news sites. The blocks affected independent Venezuelan outlets such as Efecto Cocuyo, Armando.info, and El Pitazo, but also international media such as Infobae, El Tiempo, and NTN24.⁵⁰ Several of the critical news sites found to be blocked during the coverage period had been heavily restricted previously, including Armando.info, which has developed extensive outreach methods through social media and email newsletters to distribute content.⁵¹ Other news sites, such as El Diario, were newly blocked by CANTV in the first quarter of 2023.⁵²

Website blocks extend beyond news sites to other political and social content. Beginning in June 2022, the website of the Venezuelan human rights NGO Justice, Encounter, and Forgiveness (Justicia, Encuentro y Perdón) was also blocked by CANTV and at least one private ISP.⁵³ Likewise, the website of the Venezuelan Finance Observatory, an organization that monitors inflation and other economic indicators, was blocked by CANTV and several private ISPs in May 2023.⁵⁴

Network measurements from the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) indicated disruptions to some online platforms during the coverage period. SoundCloud appeared to be blocked on multiple networks,⁵⁵ while OONI data suggested that Reddit had been blocked by at least one ISP.⁵⁶

Experts have noted that this escalating censorship is becoming more sophisticated and harder to circumvent, as VPNs and anonymization services are needed to circumvent HTTP, HTTPS, and server name identification (SNI) filtering.⁵⁷ According to VSF, the domains of both TunnelBear and Psiphon—two popular VPNs—remained blocked in 2022; in the case of TunnelBear, CANTV and some private ISPs also blocked its application programming interface (API), meaning that the block is more effective.⁵⁸ Commentators have linked these increasingly sophisticated tactics with the Chinese government's influence. Chinese technology firm ZTE notably won a contract with CANTV to implement the Homeland System (Sistema Patria) platform (see B5 and C5).⁵⁹

B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to 1 / delete content, particularly material that is protected by 4 international human rights standards?

Several laws provide avenues for limiting speech by making intermediary platforms and websites responsible for content posted by third parties. This legal framework has resulted in preemptive censorship among reporters and media executives who exert pressure on their reporters' coverage for fear of closure or reprisals.⁶⁰

Recent reporting has illuminated the continued operations of Spanish reputation management company Eliminalia in Venezuela, where it was first detected in 2016. The company has been found to use false copyright claims and legal notices to get online content taken down. According to investigative reports by Armando.info, Eliminalia's work in Venezuela is aimed at laundering the reputation of corrupt individuals linked to the government.⁶¹ As a contributor to the Story Killers project—a collaborative effort among 100 journalists to investigate the global disinformation industry—journalists at Armando.info identified at least 35 Venezuelan clients from a leak of almost 50,000 internal documents from Eliminalia. In one instance, reported by Armando.info in February 2023, María Eugenia Baptista Zacarías, the spouse of a former government minister, paid €30,000 (\$31,084) for Eliminalia to remove at least 61 links from Venezuelan news outlets Tal Cual, El Pitazo, and Armando.info, in addition to international outlets Deutsche Welle (DW), Reuters, and the Associated Press (AP), among others. Baptista and her husband have previously been implicated in a high-profile corruption scandal.⁶²

Separately, anonymous actors have also been behind similar efforts to remove critical content about government-affiliated individuals, filing claims with social media platforms that allege policy violations or damage to personal integrity.⁶³

B3 0-4 pts

Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack 0 / transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an 4 independent appeals process?

In the absence of rule of law and without institutions offering avenues for appeal, Venezuelan authorities have restricted digital content with no independent oversight and accountable procedures.

Blocking has been implemented by state-owned providers CANTV and Movilnet and by private companies (see B1).⁶⁴ For years, digital rights organizations, media outlets, journalists, and activists have denounced the lack of transparency of blocking procedures that are not made public.

Legislation places excessive responsibility on intermediaries and leaves room for abuse. Resorte-ME establishes that intermediary websites can

be held liable for content posted by third parties, and grants CONATEL discretionary capacity to impose severe penalties for violations. Its provisions notably forbid messages that promote anxiety among the population, alter public order, disregard legal authorities, or promote violation of existing laws. Promulgated in November 2017, the Law against Hatred for Peaceful Coexistence and Tolerance (known as the Law against Hatred) establishes that intermediaries must remove content containing "hate speech" within six hours of being posted or face fines. The law also empowers authorities to block websites when, in their opinion, they promote hatred or intolerance.⁶⁵

In recent years, the Venezuelan authorities have considered additional proposals to regulate social media, including the so-called Cyberspace Law (see A5). In October and November 2022, it was reported that the PSUV-controlled National Assembly was discussing a law aimed at regulating social networks, including a requirement that platforms establish a representative office in Venezuela.⁶⁶ A National Assembly commission had previously opened debate on the matter in March 2022.⁶⁷ No social media regulations were passed by the end of the coverage period.

B4 0-4 pts

Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship? 1 / 4

Detentions, imprisonment, and legal and extralegal restrictions on certain forms of online speech have encouraged increased self-censorship and preemptive censorship within media outlets. Impunity for those who threaten or attack journalists in retaliation for their work have reinforced this climate.⁶⁸

In April 2022, the Press and Society Institute of Venezuela (IPYS Venezuela) reported that nearly 54 percent of communication professionals had omitted information of public interest specifically out of fear of reprisals.⁶⁹ According to an annual report from NGO Public Space (Espacio Público) that tracked free expression in 2021 and the first quarter of 2022, less than 40 percent of the media report on the nation's political and economic crisis, in part out of fear of retaliation.⁷⁰

This situation does not only affect opponents of the Maduro regime and independent journalists, but also ordinary citizens—particularly as authorities have escalated arrests of everyday internet users for comments made on WhatsApp groups or social media (see C3). During the coverage period, Venezuelans were detained merely for recording odd situations on the streets,⁷¹ underscoring the potential risks of discussing politically-sensitive topics on social media. Some users report fear of discussing political or social topics online or in group messages, in case a person who cooperates with the government reports them.⁷² Journalists

have also reported that Venezuelans refuse to give statements to the press for fear of reprisal.⁷³

Survey results from human rights NGO A World Without a Gag (Un Mundo Sin Mordaza) indicated that 70 percent of respondents admitted to self-censoring on social media, with most saying that it was out of fear of being detained.⁷⁴ In a June 2022 hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the director of Espacio Público affirmed that self-censorship has grown due to the fear of legal consequences.⁷⁵

The increasingly broad application of the Law against Hatred (see B3) limits the scope of content that people are willing to disseminate.⁷⁶ An August 2022 joint statement by special rapporteurs for freedom of expression from the United Nations and the IACHR criticized several factors that encourage self-censorship in Venezuela, including the regime's disproportionate application of the Law against Hatred.⁷⁷

B5 0-4 pts

Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest? 1 / 4

The government has sought to expand its influence online, using state-controlled media and progovernment trolls and encouraging loyal social media users to harass those with opposing views.⁷⁸ During the coverage period, progovernment propaganda generated by artificial intelligence (AI) was viewed widely on social networks.⁷⁹

Actors aligned with the Venezuelan government have deployed increasingly sophisticated disinformation strategies in recent years, including those that utilize AI. In February 2023, the NGO Fake News Hunters (Cazadores de Fake News) and the Spanish newspaper *El País* reported on the existence of a YouTube channel that used AI-generated avatars to publish progovernment messages.⁸⁰ The channel, called House of News Español, presented itself as a legitimate news outlet and utilized paid advertising to boost its videos on the platform. The presenters, which appeared to be generated with Synthesia software, spread false information to portray a favorable image of the Maduro government and contributed to the broader narrative that "Venezuela is fixed"—an attempt by progovernment actors to downplay or discredit the country's ongoing economic crisis.⁸¹ The videos, which had reportedly been viewed hundreds of thousands of times on YouTube by late February, were also shared widely on TikTok and broadcast on state television.⁸²

Maduro disregarded criticism of the AI-generated propaganda by stating that it was "popular intelligence" and "revolutionary intelligence."⁸³ On February 21, 2023, the MIPPCI also promoted the hashtag

#SomosInteligenciaSocial (#WeAreSocialIntelligence) in order to deflect criticism and control the online narrative. The ProBox Digital Observatory estimated that more than 96 percent of tweets containing the hashtag stemmed from inauthentic activity.⁸⁴

YouTube suspended the House of News channel in March 2023 alongside four other channels that together had formed a wider progovernment disinformation network. At least one of the suspended channels had been active since 2020.⁸⁵

Progovernment accounts often work to manipulate online conversations and regularly receive cues from the government through the MIPPCI. Reporting by ProBox has revealed how the Maduro government works to shape online narratives on Twitter—espousing support for the government, attempting to divert attention from events that could harm the government or benefit the opposition, and seeking to fracture opposition groups.⁸⁶ Several accounts that spread progovernment disinformation, many of them with tens of thousands of followers, have purchased Twitter Blue subscriptions to obtain a verification seal on the platform.⁸⁷

One operation during the coverage period was carried out in February 2023 with the hashtag #AlexNobelDeLaPaz (#AlexNobelPeace), which referred to Alex Saab, a Colombian businessman who is imprisoned in the United States for his alleged involvement in corruption schemes linked with the Maduro government.⁸⁸ After the MIPPCI used the hashtag to amplify Saab's supposed nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, the campaign was quickly adopted by progovernment trolls and appeared in at least 314,000 tweets. According to ProBox, more than 94 percent of tweets using the hashtag were posted by automated or inauthentic accounts aligned with the Maduro government.⁸⁹ The MIPPCI regularly promotes hashtags that attempt to distance the Maduro government from allegations of corruption or discredit such claims.⁹⁰

Though government critics and civil society organizations continue to mobilize online (see B8), progovernment trolls work to undermine these efforts. For example, in January 2023, teachers used the hashtags #ProtestaNacionalDelMagisterio (#NationalTeacherProtest) and #ParoNacional (#NationalStrike) to mobilize national labor rights protests for January 9, during the back-to-school period. The MIPPCI, meanwhile, promoted the hashtag #RegresamosALaEscuela2023 (#WeGoBackToSchool2023) to inauthentically saturate the online sphere with a "discourse of normality."⁹¹

In a September 2022 report, Transparency Venezuela (Transparencia Venezuela) documented the various disinformation and influence strategies that have been jointly developed by Venezuela and Russia in recent years, including the MIPPCI's use of pro-Kremlin social media

campaigns to influence online conversation in Venezuela about Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.⁹²

The government has continued to extend its online influence via Sistema Patria—a centralized online platform that allows users to access key government benefits and services (see C5)—which prominently displays online content associated with the Maduro government. The platform integrates users' social media accounts and recommends who users should follow, primarily recommending accounts belonging to Maduro, and displays Maduro's Twitter feed.

Reporting has revealed how the government coordinates users of Sistema Patria to boost its narratives daily on Twitter. MIPPCI officials position certain trending topics on Sistema Patria, where users are rewarded with "bonuses," which can include both payments and gamified digital achievement symbols, for Twitter posts about those topics.⁹³ At times, the government has failed to pay monetary bonuses owed to these so-called "Homeland Tweeters" (Tuiteros de la Patria),⁹⁴ who sometimes depend on such payments as a considerable source of their monthly income.⁹⁵ A March 2021 report from the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFR Lab) also identified a wide range of opportunities for Venezuelans to receive compensation for sharing government propaganda on social media.⁹⁶ This practice continues and is openly disclosed by progovernment actors.⁹⁷

The government's March 2022 launch of Ven App, a Venezuelan social network and mobile app, sparked further concern about the government's capacity to capture personal data and manipulate online narratives (see C5).⁹⁸ Ven App maintains functions common to most social networking platforms, including messaging and file sharing functions and the option to join groups or channels. The government has promoted the app as a means of consulting and connecting with the public; for instance, the app's "Line 58" channel allows registered users to submit complaints about public services directly to the government.⁹⁹ Digital rights advocates have expressed concern that the app could potentially be used as a state tool for political organizing in the future, including during presidential elections scheduled for 2024.¹⁰⁰ Should the government exclusively offer access to public services through *Chavista* or progovernment Ven App channels, for instance, users will be subject to state-peddled information when attempting to access these services.¹⁰¹ As of December 2022, the app had been downloaded more than one million times in the Google Play store.¹⁰²

The magnitude of content manipulation in the Venezuelan digital sphere has spurred coordinated efforts by digital rights organizations and independent media to fact-check progovernment narratives and expose the government's disinformation strategies. In November 2022, various

organizations formed the C-Informa coalition, including the civil society organizations Medianálisis, Cazadores de Fake News, and ProBox, and the media outlets Efecto Cocuyo and El Estímulo.¹⁰³

B6 0-3 pts

**Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively 1 /
affect users' ability to publish content online? 3**

Digital media face various difficulties in Venezuela, hindered by the cost of equipment, the lack of financing, the exodus of professionals seeking better living conditions abroad, and the broader humanitarian crisis.

Independent media do not receive advertising from public entities. Although it is practically impossible to obtain public statements from private companies regarding the pressures they receive, the few companies that still exist in the country are under pressure to refrain from advertising in independent media. Some publishers have publicly said that independent Venezuelan businesses are not sustainable, and that "digital media exist thanks to Google Ads."¹⁰⁴

Digital media have tried various business and financing models: crowdfunding campaigns, international support, payment gateways, digital advertising, and media alliances.¹⁰⁵ Some individual journalists have attempted to monetize their social media accounts—by posting advertisements for specific brands, for example—to make their work financially sustainable.¹⁰⁶

A so-called International Cooperation Law,¹⁰⁷ which would regulate and undermine the operation of NGOs operating in Venezuela, was introduced in the National Assembly in April 2021 and approved at the first reading in January 2023.¹⁰⁸ If enacted, the law could potentially limit funding sources for independent digital media even further by imposing strict regulations on foreign financing.¹⁰⁹ In a February 2023 statement, more than 400 civil society organizations expressed their opposition to the proposed law, saying that it would violate Venezuela's constitution and international human rights treaties that the country has signed.¹¹⁰

B7 0-4 pts

**Does the online information landscape lack diversity and 1 /
reliability? 4**

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the government's ongoing efforts to manipulate the digital sphere have severely undermined Venezuelans' ability to access credible and diverse information online.

Compared to traditional media, the digital sphere presents a relatively open space for political and social expression, though recurring blocks, the digital divide, and connectivity problems hinder access to diverse and independent sources of information online. During the coverage period,

the government's sustained efforts to manipulate the digital sphere saturated the online environment with false or misleading information.

In recent years, the Maduro government has constructed a sophisticated disinformation apparatus, capable of driving progovernment narratives online (see B5). On Twitter in particular, such narratives have come to dominate the online information environment. Between January and June 2023, a span extending one month beyond the coverage period, ProBox recorded 183 million tweets that contained a political or social hashtag in Venezuela. Progovernment posts accounted for over 97 percent of these messages, numbering more than 178 million tweets.¹¹¹

Though independent media outlets and NGOs have introduced online fact-checking initiatives, such as the C-Infoma coalition (see B5), to counter these narratives, false information and manipulation of the digital environment has hampered the efforts of such outlets to keep the public informed.¹¹² According to Venezuelan journalist Andrés Cañizalez, "Venezuelans have seen their ability to construct what is real diminished" due to the pervasiveness of false information,¹¹³ eroding the credibility of the information landscape. In a December 2022 survey conducted by independent think tank Equilibrium CenDe, 76 percent of the 1,275 respondents were not able to provide the name of a specific media outlet that they trust.¹¹⁴

A June 2023 report by IPYS Venezuela, which analyzed data collected between October and December 2022, determined that 72 percent of Venezuelan localities are covered by at least one digital media outlet.¹¹⁵ However, the report also found that 21 percent of the population lives in so-called "news deserts," with virtually no local coverage—an increase from 16 percent in 2020.¹¹⁶

Newspapers have migrated online due to restrictions on printed content, while broadcast media have also forged an online presence. Some long-established media such as El Nacional (which had to discontinue its print edition in December 2018)¹¹⁷ and Radio Caracas Radio (which has a digital broadcast), as well as most of the new digital media that have emerged since 2014, maintain an independent editorial line.¹¹⁸ However, other digital portals, such as La Iguana TV, Lechuguinos, and Orinoco Tribune, are aligned with the government.

Some online news initiatives have emerged in remote areas. The news portal Tana Tanae, for example, is directed by Indigenous Warao journalists. Based in Delta Amacuro State, it covers a range of stories relevant to Indigenous communities.¹¹⁹ In May 2022, independent media outlet El Pitazo launched the weekly Alatakaa podcast, which is disseminated via WhatsApp groups and covers news in the Indigenous Wayuu language.¹²⁰ Efecto Cocuyo, meanwhile, is led by a team of

women, and covers topics little explored by other outlets, such as migration, climate change, and gender and sexual diversity.¹²¹

The use of VPNs and other anonymization tools to access more reliable or diverse media is limited. In addition to being unknown to common users, free VPNs slow down already precarious connections, and some have been blocked (see B1). Digital media often use channels such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and electronic newsletters to spread their work. In March 2020, El Pitazo updated its app on Google Play, allowing its content to be downloaded and consumed offline.¹²²

B8 0-6 pts

Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues? 4 / 6

The repressive policies of the Maduro government restrict the right of Venezuelans to peacefully protest. Amid this repressive climate, and despite limitations to internet access, ordinary citizens and opposition leaders have actively used digital platforms to express their discontent over the country's political and economic crisis and demand change.

ProBox continues to record a significant number of Twitter posts that are tagged with sociopolitical hashtags promoted by civil society organizations; however, these efforts are often overshadowed by the government's disinformation strategies (see B5 and B7),¹²³ as well as the open repression of the groups that are protesting.

During the coverage period, Venezuelans used hashtags such as #MaduroEsCorrupción (#MaduroIsCorruption) to criticize the regime and demand accountability.¹²⁴

Though facing growing restrictions, NGOs and Venezuelan internet users have continued efforts to raise awareness online and create apps with civic uses. For example, programmers and entrepreneurs saw the opportunity to design applications to help internet users during the COVID-19 pandemic, producing online pharmacy and oxygen-rental directories, a directory that displays health-care sites using Google Maps, and a catalog of businesses that implement health measures.¹²⁵ Likewise, NGOs and digital media have launched initiatives to convene online communities, which has allowed them to train citizens, expand their information sources, and build the loyalty of their audiences.¹²⁶

C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts

Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, 1 / 6

including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence?

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of expression,¹²⁷ the government has passed laws and regulations that curtail this right. Several laws, such as the 2017 Law against Hatred and Resorte-ME, provide avenues for limiting speech that is deemed to incite hatred, violence, or "anxiety" among the population, including on the internet. Moreover, the prolonged state of exception, in place since 2016, included provisions on countering cyberthreats and authorizing regulations to prevent "destabilization campaigns."¹²⁸ In December 2020, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice's (TSJ) constitutional chamber declared the state of exception constitutional.¹²⁹

Power has increasingly concentrated in the executive, and the judiciary is highly politicized, often issuing legal decisions that threaten free expression online. For instance, in May 2021, court authorities took possession of the headquarters of El Nacional, an independent newspaper that has published online since authorities restricted its paper supply in 2018, in a civil suit initiated by Diosdado Cabello, PSUV's first vice president. Cabello sued El Nacional in 2015, claiming moral damages after the newspaper republished a report linking him to drug trafficking. The courts agreed to Cabello's request to index the 1-billion-bolivar fine to the current exchange rate, awarding Cabello damages of \$13.2 million (rather than damages of \$13,000 that would have been awarded if the fine was indexed to the article's publication date of 2015).¹³⁰

In August 2021, the TSJ dismissed El Nacional's appeal and subsequently, in January 2022, after a so-called "judicial auction," the headquarters of the newspaper and its land were handed over to Diosdado Cabello. The judge presiding over the case is the sister of the comptroller of the Maduro administration.¹³¹

To bring more power to the executive, and acting against the provisions of the constitution, Maduro convened the National Constituent Assembly (ANC) by presidential decree in May 2017. Installed in August that year and composed exclusively of pro-Maduro supporters, this *de facto* legislative body was handed sweeping powers over other state institutions. Maduro announced the ANC's dissolution in December 2020, after elections for the National Assembly were held.¹³² These elections were deemed fraudulent by the Organization of American States (OAS),¹³³ and the PSUV-controlled National Assembly largely functions as a rubber-stamp for the Maduro government.¹³⁴

C2 0-4 pts

Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?

0 / 4

The Maduro government has tightened its grip on online speech through a series of restrictive laws establishing criminal penalties for online activities. A vaguely worded anti-hate speech law enacted in 2017 imposes hefty prison sentences of 10 to 20 years for those who incite hatred or violence through any electronic means, including social networks. It also establishes that intermediaries can be fined if they do not remove the messages subject to sanctions within six hours of their dissemination, with amounts ranging between 50,000 and 100,000 tax units.¹³⁵

Activists and journalists also face charges of defamation under the penal code, which sets out prison sentences for defamation against public officials and the publication of false information.¹³⁶

Resorte-ME, which was amended by the National Assembly in 2010, also includes vague prohibitions and severe sanctions that grant authorities sweeping discretion to restrict speech (see B3). Article 27, for example, forbids messages that promote anxiety among the population, alter public order, disregard legal authorities, or promote the violation of existing laws.¹³⁷

In March 2021, the National Assembly approved a plan to amend or pass 35 laws, including Resorte-ME and the Cyberspace Law, a leaked draft of which indicates that the government could further restrict freedom of expression online. Recent proposals have also included plans to regulate social networks (see A5 and B3).¹³⁸

C3 0-6 pts

Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those 2 / that are protected under international human rights standards? 6

Arrests for online activities continued to occur during the coverage period, frequently under spurious pretenses alleging instigation to hatred and ending in release under precautionary measures.

Many such charges of incitement to hatred were made in response to online criticisms of law enforcement or public figures. In June 2022, Yohn Alejandro Noguera was detained in the state of Anzoátegui by officials from the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB) after he questioned actions of the security forces in his WhatsApp statuses. He was charged with incitement to hatred and was then detained at the GNB command.¹³⁹ It remains unclear whether Noguera was later released. That same month, a citizen in Apure State, Luis Colina, was also arrested for alleged incitement to hatred after he posted a video on TikTok in which he criticized the Bolivarian National Police (PNB).¹⁴⁰ In November 2022, Denys Custodio and Roberto Yáñez were arrested for allegedly inciting hatred after posting critical tweets about *Chavista* leader Antonio "El Potro" Álvarez, though it is unclear what the posts contained.¹⁴¹ In January 2023, three police employees in Bolívar State were arrested for incitement to hatred

and rebellion after they allegedly used WhatsApp to encourage a state police strike.¹⁴²

Also in January 2023, investigators reportedly interrogated and briefly detained the journalist and news editor of the now digital newspaper El Nacional, José Gregorio Meza, after the outlet published articles alleging links between President Maduro's son and two individuals sanctioned by the US government for illegal gold mining.¹⁴³ Another journalist for El Nacional, Carola Briceño, was the victim of a targeted harassment campaign following the publication of these articles (see C7).

Servando Marín, an architect and a columnist for the digital portal Aporrea, who has scrutinized the government's historic preservation policies,¹⁴⁴ was arrested in May 2023 and released under precautionary measures for allegedly inciting hatred by using social media to call for a press conference to voice criticism of officials.¹⁴⁵

Humor is not exempt from being penalized. In May 2023, well-known comedian Luis Chataing was threatened with "legal action" by the minister of culture after he posted a tweet that alluded to the minister's repeated practice of allegedly hiding facts and lying in official reports.¹⁴⁶ During the previous coverage period, in September 2021, the homes of humorists Napoleón Rivero and Reuben Morales were raided and their work equipment was seized by Venezuelan authorities¹⁴⁷ after they published a parody YouTube video in which they referred to the poor state of public utilities and the scarcity of public services, for which they hold the PSUV responsible. They were charged with hate speech and computer crimes. Venezuelan arrest warrants have been issued for both Rivero and Morales, who live in Colombia.¹⁴⁸

In February 2022, it was publicly announced that the case against Luis Carlos Díaz, a journalist, human rights defender, and cyberactivist, was ordered to be "archived"—meaning it can be reopened if additional evidence emerges—and the precautionary measures he was subject to, including a prohibition on leaving the country, were suspended.¹⁴⁹ The case, over Díaz's alleged involvement in a plot to cause a blackout, had been ongoing for nearly three years; it began when he was arbitrarily detained in March 2019 while covering an electricity blackout. He was released shortly thereafter under precautionary measures. Although the case has been archived, in May 2023, Díaz was again publicly linked with the 2019 power outage by PSUV officials.¹⁵⁰

In October 2022, police confiscated Wikipedia editor Oscar Costero's passport while he was attempting to renew it; Costero has since been prevented from leaving Venezuela. During a police interrogation, authorities informed Costero that he was being investigated for alleged incitement to hatred and money laundering in connection with his work for Wikimedia Venezuela.¹⁵¹

C4 0-4 pts

**Does the government place
restrictions on anonymous
communication or encryption?** 2 / 4

The constitution expressly prohibits anonymity. To buy a cell phone, a SIM card, or a USB modem to access mobile broadband, Venezuelan law requires customers to register their personal identification number, address, signature, and fingerprints.¹⁵² The government does not broadly restrict encryption technologies or other digital privacy tools, though VPNs have been blocked by several providers in recent years (see B1).

C5 0-6 pts

Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy? 2 / 6

Although the constitution recognizes principles applicable to the protection of personal data—such as safeguards for honor, privacy, public image, confidentiality, and reputation, as well as access to information—there are no laws or telecommunications regulations dedicated to data protection. There are concerns about the government's ability to misuse personal data collected for security, welfare services, and public programs. In the absence of personal data protection legislation, the destination, storage, and ultimate purpose of the government's collection of information remains unknown.¹⁵³

Government surveillance and counterintelligence activities have increased since 2013, when the government released its 2013–19 Plan de la Patria, which emphasized strengthening national defense among its priorities.¹⁵⁴ Given the lack of independent oversight, there are concerns about the ease with which systematic content filtering and surveillance could be implemented. Digital activists have also expressed alarm regarding the government's growing interest in investing in intelligence systems and operations.¹⁵⁵

A decree issued in October 2013 created the Strategic Center for the Security and Protection of the Fatherland (CESPPA), a special body charged with monitoring and tracking social media and other online information.¹⁵⁶ Agents of the National Guard have also reportedly been trained by the MIPPCI in the management of social networks for the "implementation of early warnings" in order to "truthfully" inform Venezuelans and detect threats "to defend... national sovereignty."¹⁵⁷

The government also has means of collecting citizens' personal data through the implementation of public programs. The Sistema Patria collects basic data, including users' address and date of birth, as well as other personal information, such as political party membership.¹⁵⁸ According to reports, the Venezuelan government

worked with Chinese telecommunications company ZTE to develop and manage the Patria's database.¹⁵⁹ Through this system, Venezuelans can register to receive social benefits to access a virtual wallet where they can receive payments, such as pensions.¹⁶⁰ The Sistema Patria is also used to collect government-issued "bonuses" for spreading MIPPCI trends on Twitter (see B5). This virtual wallet has also been integrated with the country's biopayment system, a biometric point-of-sale system that is available in the state-owned Banco de Venezuela and some stores.¹⁶¹ Beginning in June 2020, access to subsidized gas prices required the vehicle to be registered in Sistema Patria.¹⁶² Fuel customers are allowed to use Sistema Patria wallets or the biopayment system.¹⁶³

The scope of Sistema Patria continues to expand. As of October 2020, it also incorporates payments for public services, such as water and electricity, and purchasing mobile phone data.¹⁶⁴ In May 2022, the government announced the 1x10 of Good Governance system, which allows users to register through the Sistema Patria and send messages directly to local government officials.¹⁶⁵ Venezuelans will also be able to connect with the 1x10 of Good Governance system through Ven App (see B5).¹⁶⁶ Digital rights advocates have raised serious concerns over Ven App's threats to user privacy. To download the app, users must allow access to their real-time geolocation and phone camera. Once downloaded, the app can modify users' calendars, alter or delete content on SD cards, record audio from device microphones, and send emails from users' accounts without their knowledge.¹⁶⁷

In June 2023, after the coverage period, it was reported that Sistema Patria is requiring its users to update their home address and register the community where they reside. The government has ambiguously said that the updated information is meant for "social mapping,"¹⁶⁸ raising concerns about how this data will be used—particularly ahead of the elections scheduled for 2024.

The Venezuelan government has taken other steps to build upon its surveillance capacities. According to human rights organizations, arrests of trade unionists, health workers, journalists, and others for messages on platforms such as WhatsApp and Twitter indicate that the government is exercising surveillance in these spaces.¹⁶⁹

In November 2020, the US Treasury Department sanctioned Chinese technology firm China National Electronics Import & Export Corporation (CEIEC) for supporting the Venezuelan government's digital surveillance efforts.¹⁷⁰ An expert on the relationship between Beijing and Caracas affirmed that technological support for surveillance and social control is a central component.¹⁷¹

In September 2020, *Haaretz* reported that, despite US sanctions prohibiting exports to Venezuela, Israeli firm Cellebrite sold telephone

hacking technology to the Maduro government, according to statements from government officials.¹⁷² In October 2021, the General Directorate of Military Counter-Intelligence (DGCIM) broadcast via state television their use of Cellebrite's UFED, allegedly for crime-fighting purposes. The tool can unlock and extract data from mobile phones, including encrypted data. The broadcast raised alarm for human rights activists in the country, in part due to the DGCIM's history of human rights abuses, including the torture of detainees in their custody.¹⁷³ A September 2022 report by the fact-finding mission of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to Venezuela affirmed that the DGCIM uses a variety of means—including digital surveillance—to collect information on real or perceived opponents of the government, often without judicial authorization.¹⁷⁴

In late May 2020, the Fake Antenna Detection Project reported that it had found anomalous activity in at least 33 cell antennas in Caracas, potentially indicating the use of international mobile subscriber identity (IMSI) catchers. These antennas were found near the offices of critical media outlets, human rights organizations, and areas of protest, along with multiple fake antennas on the Colombia-Venezuela border.¹⁷⁵ The project's study, which observed that the teams operating the equipment are in headquarters of security agencies, led researchers to believe that the antennas can be operated by security forces for intelligence purposes.¹⁷⁶

Reports indicate that the Operational Strategic Command of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (CEOFANB) has a so-called cyberdefense room that monitors campaigns to discredit the military, as well as official statements made against Venezuela and information that authorities believe could lead to a national crisis. The group also reportedly perpetrates cyberattacks against Venezuelan websites, including news sites (see C8), and coordinates with CANTV to block media outlets.¹⁷⁷

C6 0-6 pts

Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy? ^{2 / 6}

Mandatory data retention requirements are in place for telephone companies, including those providing mobile telephone services. An administrative ruling issued by CONATEL in October 2017 established that operators must provide collected information to security services upon request, without specifying the need for a judicial order. Data to be collected includes internet protocol (IP) addresses, dates and times of connections, geographic locations, and details of calls and text messages sent or received. The regulation also states that to register for a mobile phone, customers must provide data such as email, fingerprints, and a digital photograph taken at the site of the transaction.¹⁷⁸

Manuel Ricardo Cristopher Figuera, a former Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) director and refugee living in the United States, revealed in April 2020 to independent news outlet Tal Cual that telecommunications companies in Venezuela facilitate the state's surveillance of opponents. One operation, for example, had companies clone phone numbers, intercept emails, and take down webpages. Figuera identified Movistar as one of the companies that have taken such action. In one instance, phone numbers belonging to soldiers who had opposed the government in April 2019 and fled Venezuela were reportedly cloned by the Maduro administration with telecommunications companies' knowledge. Figuera further claimed the government then used the cloned phone numbers to create fake social media accounts purporting to be the soldiers, which were then used to reach out to other users and persecute or detain anyone who expressed support.¹⁷⁹

In a 2021 transparency report, published in August 2022, Telefonica, which owns Movistar, revealed that more than 1.5 million phone lines belonging to Movistar users had been affected by the interception of communications that year. This represents around 20 percent of all Movistar users in the country.¹⁸⁰ According to one analyst, this was evidence that "state surveillance has reached a massive scale" and is dependent on the cooperation of telecommunications companies.¹⁸¹

Other measures affect companies offering online services such as banking. In November 2020, the government agency that oversees banking operations, the Superintendency of Institutions of the Banking Sector (SUDEBAN), introduced a requirement to monitor the business and financial operations of nonprofit organizations, purportedly to demonstrate the existence of supporters linked to criminal activities; the monitoring requires the handover of bank customers' sensitive information.¹⁸²

C7 0-5 pts

Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities? ^{2 / 5}

Journalists, including those who work online, face violence, intimidation, threats, and sometimes physical attacks from the state, security forces, and civilians, within an environment of impunity.

In its September 2022 report, the fact-finding mission of the UNHRC to Venezuela identified torture in detention and extrajudicial executions during security operations among the human rights abuses perpetrated by the government. While the report noted that incidents of torture following arrests appear to have declined from a 2019 peak, it attributed this to the fact that "political dissent has been largely crushed" in Venezuela.¹⁸³

Intimidation and harassment campaigns against journalists, sometimes promoted by state actors, are common. Some journalists have been forced into exile due to such threats,¹⁸⁴ and the Venezuela-based family members of journalists living in exile sometimes face harassment from authorities. In October 2021, during the previous coverage period, Venezuelan authorities raided the Caracas home of Armando.info investigative journalist Roberto Deniz's parents. The previous day, officials had issued an arrest warrant for Deniz, who was living in exile in Colombia at the time, on charges of incitement to hatred. The search reportedly lasted several hours; authorities did not confiscate anything, but brought Deniz's brother to police headquarters and interrogated him, before releasing him without charge.¹⁸⁵ Deniz was also targeted with coordinated online campaigns to discredit, harass, and spread disinformation about him, which continued during the current coverage period.¹⁸⁶ Harassment campaigns against Deniz—connected with his reporting on businessman Alex Saab—are forged on social media, but are also disseminated through state television and radio.¹⁸⁷

During the coverage period, another victim of this type of attack was Carola Briceño, a journalist for El Nacional. In January 2023, a targeted online campaign labeled Briceño as belonging to an "extortion network" after she helped write a series of articles on alleged corruption plots linked to President Maduro's son, Nicolás Maduro Guerra.¹⁸⁸ Other employees of El Nacional were detained and interrogated by authorities in response to the reporting (see C3). Following the online campaign against her, Briceño, who has lived in Colombia since 2019, expressed concern for her physical safety if she were to return to Venezuela and sought protective measures from the Colombian government.¹⁸⁹

Independent journalists and activists, especially women, are frequently harassed for spreading critical content on social networks. Espacio Público has documented a trend of online, gender-based violence against women users and journalists. Such violence takes the form of online harassment and threatening language, sometimes directly from state actors, as well as blackmail threatening to expose women's personal information.¹⁹⁰ A June 2023 report, published after the coverage period by Espacio Público and other Latin American digital rights organizations, noted that women in Venezuela often face difficulties reporting and accessing justice in a timely manner in cases of online gender-based violence.¹⁹¹

C8 0-3 pts

Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack?

Technical attacks often target digital media outlets and human rights organizations, and there is strong suspicion that the state is frequently

behind them. During the coverage period, several media sites reported cyberattacks.

In September 2022, the digital news portal Alberto News reported being the victim of a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack. The attack against the outlet, which is blocked by various ISPs, lasted for approximately one day and caused temporary outages of the website.¹⁹² In May 2023, independent digital outlet Aporrea also suffered a DDoS attack over the course of two days. Its cofounder stated that the attack was carried out by an international actor "at the request of 'someone' who pays for it in Venezuela."¹⁹³

Cyberattacks and hacking attempts have also targeted the social media accounts of digital media outlets. In November 2022, unidentified actors hacked El Pitazo's YouTube channel; the hackers uploaded two videos before staff members retook control of the account.¹⁹⁴ In December 2022, Palpitar Trujillano, a media outlet with more than 100,000 followers on its primary Instagram account, was the victim of a series of hacks on that platform throughout the month. At least three new accounts that Palpitar Trujillano attempted to open were subsequently suspended by Meta, making it difficult for the outlet to resume operations on Instagram.¹⁹⁵

In April 2022, VSF reported documenting an increase in phishing attempts over WhatsApp over the past few years. The organization also reported that it had assisted more journalists, activists, and civil society members targeted with these attacks in 2021 than in previous years. In one incident, an NGO lost control of a WhatsApp account that it used to communicate with victims of human rights violations in an attack that was likely perpetrated by or in coordination with state actors.¹⁹⁶

The Special Law against Computer Crimes, in force since 2001, has provisions that penalize these cyberattacks, though they have not been applied.¹⁹⁷

Footnotes

- 1Juan Bautista Salas, "Cedice-Libertad: In February 2021 100% of Venezuelan households had telecommunications failures," El Impulso, March 18, 2021, <https://www.elimpulso.com/2021/03/18/cedice-libertad-en-febrero-2021-el...>; "Movistar recovers 15 vandalized stations, but the operator is still under attack," Opinión y Noticias, August 18, 2020, <http://www.opinionynoticias.com/noticiascorp/37508-movistar>.
- 2"Digital Development Dashboard: Venezuela," ITU, accessed September 2022, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Dashboards/Pages/Digital-Develo...>
- 3Simon Kemp, "Digital 2023: Venezuela," DataReportal, February 14, 2023, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-venezuela>.

- 4"Fallas eléctricas y de proveedores estatales afectan conexión a internet [Electrical and state supplier failures affect internet connection]," Espacio Público, February 10, 2023, <https://espaciopublico.org/fallas-electricas-y-de-proveedores-limitan-a...>
- 5Albany Andara Meza, "Fallas eléctricas y racionamiento en Venezuela: cómo se ha apagado el país en 2022 Electrical failures and rationing in Venezuela: how the country has turned off in 2022]," Efecto Cocuyo, November 7, 2022, <https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/fallas-electricas-y-rationamiento....>
- 6Gustavo Ocando Alex, "Se agravan los apagones por racionamiento en media Venezuela [Blackouts due to rationing worsen in half of Venezuela]," VOA, May 24, 2023, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/se-agravan-los-cortes-de-luz-por-rationa...>; "Apagones y racionamientos de electricidad hacen imposible producir en la ciudad de Mérida [Electricity blackouts and rationing make it impossible to produce in the city of Mérida]," Uniandes, May 19, 2023, <http://uniandes.org/la-gente-prpone/apagones-y-rationamientos-en-merida/>.
- 7"En 2023 usuarios del oriente del país han pasado más de 50 horas sin ABA Cantv #2Mar [In 2023, users in the east of the country have spent more than 50 hours without ABA Cantv #2Mar]," El Impulso, March 2, 2023, <https://www.elimpulso.com/2023/03/02/en-2023-usuarios-del-oriente-del-p...>; "Varias entidades de Venezuela sin Internet tras corte de fibra óptica de Cantv [Several Venezuelan entities without internet after CANTV fiber optic cut]," NTN24, June 8, 2023, <https://www.ntn24.com/noticias-actualidad/varias-entidades-de-venezuela....>
- 8See #ReporteConectividad on Twitter.
- 9Jhoalys Siverio, "Fallas de conectividad abren espacio a empresas privadas de telecomunicaciones en el oriente del país [Connectivity failures open space for private telecommunications companies in the east of the country]," Correo del Caroní, January 26, 2023, <https://correodelcaroni.com/laboral-economia/fallas-de-conectividad-abr...>
- 10Yakary Prado, "Observatorio Social Humanitario: ABA Cantv fue el servicio con más fallas en 2022 [Humanitarian Social Observatory: ABA Cantv was the service with the most failures in 2022]," runrún.es, February 25, 2023, <https://runrun.es/noticias/495649/observatorio-social-humanitario-aba-c....>
- 11"En la parroquia Macarapana reportan ausencia de servicio de Cantv desde hace cinco años [In the Macarapana parish they report absence of Cantv service for five years]," El Tiempo VE, June 8, 2023, <https://eltiempove.com/en-la-parroquia-macarapana-reportan-ausencia-de-....>

- **12**Speedtest Global Index, "Median Country Speeds: May 2023," Ookla, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230619205748/https://www.speedtest.net/gl...>
- **13**Speedtest Global Index, "Venezuela Median Country Speeds August 2023" Ookla, accessed September 2023, <https://www.speedtest.net/global-index/venezuela>.
- **14**Héctor Escandel, "Saldo insuficiente [Insufficient balance]," Venezuelan Fake News Observatory, March 2021, <https://fakenews.cotejo.info/en-profundidad/saldo-insuficiente/>; " Jackson Pérez, psicólogo venezolano: 'El sueldo que gano básicamente me alcanza para recargar saldo' [Jackson Pérez, Venezuelan psychologist: 'The salary I earn is basically enough to recharge my balance']," Noticias Todos Ahora, May 30, 2021, <https://www.todosahora.com/venezuela/carabobo/jackson-perez-psicologo-v...>
- **15**"Cronología Salario Mínimo Aplicable a las Cotizaciones del SSO [Minimum Wage Chronology Applicable to SSO Quotes]," Organización Jurisprudencia del Trabajo, accessed September 2023, <https://www.ojdt.com.ve/cronologias/cronologia-salario-minimo-aplicable...>; OANDA Currency Converter, <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/?from=USD&to=VES&amount=1>.
- **16**"Internet Poverty Index: Venezuela," Internet Society Foundation, 2023, <https://www.isocfoundation.org/2023/05/internet-poverty-index-more-than....>
- **17**"Precios de internet y telefonía registran un crecimiento mensual del 50 % desde 2022 [Internet and telephone prices register a monthly growth of 50% from 2022]," El Pitazo, May 24, 2023, <https://elpitazo.net/economia/precios-de-internet-y-telefonia-registran...>; "Movistar inicia el 2023 con otro aumento en sus planes [Movistar begins 2023 with another increase to its plans]," El Pitazo, January 4, 2023, <https://elpitazo.net/economia/movistar-inicia-el-2023-con-otro-aumento-....>
- **18**Georgette Sahhar, "Cantv ABA Service: What is known about the rates?", El Diario, February 11, 2021. <https://eldiario.com/2021/02/11/nuevas-tarifas-aba-cantv/>; "Nuevas tarifas de Cantv publicadas en redes sociales generan molestia en usuarios", El Pitazo, 5 de febrero de 2021, <https://elpitazo.net/economia/tarifas-de-cantv-generan-polemica-en-las-...>
- **19**Katherine Dona, "Cantv ofrece plan de fibra óptica a zonas del este de Caracas [Cantv offers fiber optic plan to eastern areas of Caracas]," El Pitazo, May 22, 2022, <https://elpitazo.net/gran-caracas/cantv-ofrece-plan-de-fibra-optica-a-z...>

- [20](#)Nelson David Alueida, "Cantv: conoce las tarifas de los planes Aba de fibra óptica en Venezuela [Cantv: know the rates of the Aba fiber optic plans in Venezuela]," Morocotacoin News, April 26, 2023, <https://morocotacoin.news/economia-digital/cantv-aba-fibra-optica/>.
- [21](#)"En Venezuela una buena señal de internet cuesta alrededor de 75 dólares mensuales, 10 veces más que el salario mínimo [In Venezuela a good internet signal costs around 75 dollars a month, 10 times more than the minimum wage]," El Nacional, March 4, 2023, <https://www.elnacional.com/ciencia-tecnologia/en-venezuela-una-buena-se...>
- [22](#)Brian Contreras, "Internet llega de la mano de 190 empresas privadas que cubren ineficiencia de Cantv (IV) [Internet comes from the hand of 190 private companies that cover Cantv's inefficiency (IV)]," TalCual, October 6, 2022, <https://talcualdigital.com/internet-llega-de-la-mano-de-190-empresas-pr...>
- [23](#)ANOVA, Covid-19 and vulnerability of households in Venezuela: One year after the start of the pandemic, April 1, 2021, <https://thinkanova.org/2021/04/01/covid-19-y-vulnerabilidad-de-los-hoga...>
- [24](#)Carlos Ramiro, Chacín, "AN 2020 revisará precios de cableoperadoras e internet para 'disminuir costos sin impactar la calidad' [AN 2020 will review prices of cable operators and internet to 'reduce costs without impacting quality']," Caraota Digital, March 2, 2023, <https://www.caraotadigital.net/venezuela/an-2020-revisara-precios-de-ca...>
- [25](#)"Neighborhoods on the border use the Colombian internet", La Nación, May 19, 2021, <https://lanacionweb.com/frontera/barriadas-de-la-frontera-usan-el-inter...>
- [26](#)"Informe cifras del sector primer trimestre 2022 [Report sector figures first quarter 2022]," CONATEL, 2022, <http://www.conatel.gob.ve/informe-cifras-del-sector-primer-trimestre-20...>
- [27](#)Oswin J. Barrios, "¿Qué pasó en Amazonas donde 4 yanomamis fueron asesinados? [What happened in Amazonas where 4 Yanomami were killed?]," Radio Fe y Alegría Noticias, March 26, 2022, <https://www.radiofeyalegrianoticias.com/que-paso-en-amazonas-donde-4-ya...>
- [28](#)Abner Ramos, "'Estamos incomunicados': piden internet para la selva Deltana [We are cut off: they ask for internet for the Deltana jungle]," Radio Fe y Alegría News Venezuela Information Agency, November 9, 2022, <https://www.radiofeyalegrianoticias.com/estamos-incomunicados-piden-int...>

- [29](#)Julián C., "Get to know the companies that will offer high-speed fiber-optic Internet in Venezuela", El Diario, February 2, 2021, <https://eldiario.com/2021/02/02/empresas-ofreceran-internet-fibra-optic...>; <https://twitter.com/williampm/status/1488332025182494727>
- [30](#)Fran Monroy, "Desafíos de conectividad en Venezuela con Fran Monroy [Connectivity challenges in Venezuela with Fran Monroy], Conservatorio Virtual, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/KQEunqmyphA>.
- [31](#)Carolina Alcalde and Luisana Solano, "On the rise and with their own characteristics: digital censorship in Venezuela [En aumento y con sus propias características: la censura digital en Venezuela]," VOA News, May 6, 2020, <https://www.voanoticias.com/portada/censura-digital-en-venezuela-en-aum...>
- [32](#)"Conatel convenes first meeting to promote Internet IXP in Venezuela [Conatel convoca primera reunion para potenciar Internet IXP en Venezuela]," VTV, March 3, 2020, <https://www.vtv.gob.ve/conatel-convoca-primera-reunion-pinstalar-intern...>; See also: Roison Figuera, "Cantv and Conatel Project will increase control of communications in Venezuela [Proyecto de Cantv y Conatel aumentará control de las Comunicaciones en Venezuela]," Tal Cual, March 13, 2020, <https://talcualdigital.com/191292-2-proyecto/>
- [33](#)"Implementation of the IXP for the welfare of the Venezuelan people", Conatel, April 7, 2021, <http://www.conatel.gob.ve/implementacion-del-ixp-para-el-bienestar-del-....>
- [34](#)"Venezuela aprueba relajar el estricto control de cambio vigente desde hace 15 años [Venezuela approves relaxing the strict exchange control in force for 15 years]," BBC News, August 2, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-45014762>.
- [35](#)"Operadores: Servicios de Internet [Operators: Internet Services]," CONATEL, accessed May 2023, <http://www.conatel.gob.ve/telecomunicaciones-2/?target=operadores>.
- [36](#)Kemberlyn Talero, "Usuarios advierten sobre suspensión a proveedores de Internet por parte de Conatel," El Pitazo, March 17, 2021, <https://elpitazo.net/tecnologia/usuarios-advierten-sobre-suspension-a-p....>
- [37](#)Meeting with ISP staff, 2021.
- [38](#)Personal interview with two executives of two Venezuelans new ISPs who asked to remain anonymous, October 10, 2019, Panama City, Panama.

- 39 "Informe de las Cifras del Sector, I Trimestre 2022," CONATEL, 2022, <http://www.conatel.gob.ve/informe-cifras-del-sector-primer-trimestre-20....>
- 40 Decree 3854, Official Gazette No, 41.639; "Created National Telecommunications Corporation of Venezuela [Creada Corporación Nacional de Telecomunicaciones de Venezuela]," MINCI, May 23, 2019, <http://www.minci.gob.ve/creada-corporacion-nacional-de-telecomunicacion...>
- 41 Andrelys Carrasquel, "Created National Corporation of Telecommunications of Venezuela [Creada Corporación Nacional de Telecomunicaciones de Venezuela]," Ministry of Popular Power for Information and Communication, May 23, 2019, <http://www.minci.gob.ve/creada-corporacion-nacional-de-telecomunicacion...>
- 42 Regina Garcia Cano, "Venezuela rompe con modelo socialista con venta de acciones [Venezuela breaks with the socialist model with the sale of shares]," Los Angeles Times, May 14, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/espanol/internacional/articulo/2022-05-14/venez...>
- 43 "CANTV ya prepara venta de acciones para 2023 [CANTV is already preparing the sale of shares in 2023]," Primicia, October 22, 2022, <https://primicia.com.ve/economia/cantv-ya-prepara-venta-de-acciones-par....>
- 44 "Cantv celebra en su balance de 2022 la venta de 1,3 millones de acciones en la bolsa [CANTV celebrates the sale of 1.3 million shares on the stock market in its 2022 balance sheet]," TalCual, December 27, 2022, <https://talcualdigital.com/cantv-celebra-en-su-balance-de-2022-la-venta....>
- 45 National Assembly, Law of Social Responsibility in Radio, Television and Electronic Media, July 2012, <http://www.leyresorte.gob.ve/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Ley-de-Responsa....>
- 46 National Legislative Commission, Organic Law of Telecommunications, Art, 35-48, http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/cyb_ven_ley_telecomunicaciones.pdf.
- 47 Florantonia Singer, "Chavismo prepares measures to control social networks and the work of NGOs in Venezuela", El País, March 04, 2021. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2021-03-05/el-chavismo-prepara-medidas...>
- 48 "Draft. Constitutional Law of the Cyberspace of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela," January 2019, <https://www.accessnow.org/cms/assets/uploads/2019/01/ley-del-ciberespac....>

- [49](#)"Sin Derechos en #InternetVE: Reporte 2022-2023H1 [Without Rights on the #InternetVE: 2022-2023H1 Report]," VE Sin Filtro, September 16, 2023, <https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2022-2023/>.
- [50](#)"Sin Derechos en #InternetVE: Reporte 2022-2023H1 [Without Rights on the #InternetVE: 2022-2023H1 Report]," VE Sin Filtro, September 16, 2023, <https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2022-2023/>.
- [51](#)Telephone interview with engineer Gustavo Jiménez, IT director of Armando.Info, conducted on March 8, 2021.
- [52](#)"Sin Derechos en #InternetVE: Reporte 2022-2023H1 [Without Rights on the #InternetVE: 2022-2023H1 Report]," VE Sin Filtro, September 16, 2023, <https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2022-2023/>.
- [53](#)"Bloquean en Venezuela el sitio web de la ONG Justicia, Encuentro y Perdón [The website of the NGO Justicia, Encuentro y Perdón is blocked in Venezuela]," VE Sin Filtro, June 22, 2022, <https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2022-06-22-bloqueo-jep/>.
- [54](#)"Operadoras bloquean sitio web del Observatorio Venezolano de Finanzas [Operators block the website of the Venezuelan Finance Observatory]," Espacio Publico, May 9, 2023, <https://espaciopublico.org/bloquean-sitio-web-del-observatorio-venezola....>
- [55](#)OOONI Measurement Aggregation Toolkit (MAT), "Web Connectivity Test, soundcloud.com," accessed September 2023, https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=VE&since=2022-06-01&until=....
- [56](#)OOONI Measurement Aggregation Toolkit (MAT), "Web Connectivity Test, reddit.com," accessed September 2023, https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=VE&since=2022-06-01&until=....
- [57](#)"Press release on the blocking of tor and websites in Venezuela," [in Spanish,] ISOC Venezuela, July 2018, accessed August 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190915004301/https://isocvenezuela.org/no....> .
- [58](#)"Sin Derechos en #InternetVE: Reporte 2022-2023H1 [Without Rights on the #InternetVE: 2022-2023H1 Report]," VE Sin Filtro, September 16, 2023, <https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2022-2023/>.
- [59](#)William Peña, "Special ND: China, the mastermind behind the censorship of the Internet regime [Especial ND: China, la mente maestra tras la censura del regimen a Internet]," Noticiero Digital, March 1, 2019, <http://www.noticierodigital.com/2019/03/especial-nd-la-empresa-china-zt...>
- [60](#)Pedro Rodríguez, "Conditional Freedom, a censored text by Ricardo Azuaje [Libertad Condicional, un texto censurado de Ricardo Azuaje]," Esto tampoco es una pipa (Blog), June 10,

2018, <https://estotampoco.es/unapipa.wordpress.com/2018/06/10/libertad-condicio...>

- ⁶¹Patricia Marcano, "Censuran a la prensa, engañan a Google, y hacen plata con eso [They censor the press, cheat Google, and make money from it]," Armando Info, July 18, 2021, <https://armando.info/censuran-a-la-prensa-enganan-a-google-y-hacen-plat...>; Peter Guest, "Exposed documents reveal how the powerful clean up their digital past using a reputation laundering firm," Rest of World, February 3, 2022, <https://restofworld.org/2022/documents-reputation-laundering-firm-eli...>
- ⁶²Patricia Marcano and Carlos Crespo, "Con Eliminalia sacas las manchas más rebeldes de tus negocios con Pdvsa [With Eliminalia you remove the most stubborn stains from your business with PDVSA]," Armando.info, February 19, 2023, <https://storage.googleapis.com/qurium/armando.info/con-eliminalia-sacas...>
- ⁶³Irene Sarabia M., "Naman Wakil: el vendedor de carne que quiere ocultarse en internet [Naman Wakil: the meat seller who wants to hide on the internet]," El Pitazo, August 3, 2021, <https://elpitazo.net/internacional/naman-wakil-el-cunado-de-carlos-osor...>
- ⁶⁴National Communication Center, "Internet service providers are denounced for blocking the main digital communication media in Venezuela", March 5, 2021, <https://presidenciave.com/regiones/denuncian-a-prestadoras-del-servicio...>
- ⁶⁵Marianela Balbi, "The law against hatred seeks to end the vestiges of democracy in Venezuela [La ley contra el odio busca acabar con los vestigios de democracia en Venezuela]," The New York Times, November 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2017/11/20/la-ley-contra-el-odio-busca-acaba...>
- ⁶⁶Andres Azpurua, @andresAzp, "Estas son las declaraciones más peligrosas que he escuchado sobre la #leyControlDeRedesSociales. Es una amenaza real a los #derechosHumanos. Todo el tema oficinas locales esconde poder exigir censura y vigilancia, con posibles bloqueos si no responden," Twitter, October 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/andresAzp/status/1582508170433695744>; "AN discute proyecto de ley para regular las redes sociales: ¿Puede controlar lo que se publica? [AN discusses bill to regulate social networks: Can it control what is published?]," El Estímulo, November 1, 2022, <https://elestimulo.com/venezuela/2022-11-01/an-discute-proyecto-de-ley-...>
- ⁶⁷National Assembly, "Comisión del Poder Popular inicia debate de propuestas de Ley de Redes Sociales [People's Power Commission

begins debate on Social Network Law proposals],” March 23, 2022, <https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ve/index.php/noticias/comision-del-pod...>

- [68](#)RELE-IACHR, Annual report of the office of the special rapporteur for freedom of expression, 2022.
- [69](#)Luis Daniel Cambero, “IPYS Venezuela: El periodismo en el país se ejerce con reservas #20Abr [IPYS Venezuela: Journalism in the country is exercised with reservations #20Apr],” El Impulso, April 20, 2022, <https://www.elimpulso.com/2022/04/20/ipys-venezuela-el-periodismo-en-el...>
- [70](#)Wincarlys Ramos, “Por temor a represalias menos de 40% de los medios reportan la crisis política y económica del país [For fear of reprisals, less than 40% of the media report the country's political and economic crisis],” Cronica Uno, May 2, 2022, <https://cronica.uno/por-temor-a-represalias-menos-de-40-de-los-medios-r...>
- [71](#)Ronny Rodríguez Rosas, “Detienen a hombre en Apure por criticar a la PNB en Tik Tok [They arrest a man in Apure for criticizing the PNB on TikTok],” Efecto Cocuyo, June 18, 2022, <https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/detienen-a-hombre-en-apure-critic...>; “Funcionarios del Cicpc detuvieron a una abogada por grabar un video [Cicpc officials detained a lawyer for recording a video],” Espacio Público, June 13, 2022, <https://espaciopublico.org/funcionarios-del-cicpc-detuvieron-a-una-abog...>
- [72](#)Bautista de Alemán, P. (2021). Reflections on the anthropological damage in Venezuela. Forma (41-55).
- [73](#)Valentina Lares (@valentinalares), "To the immense limitations to do journalism in Venezuela we must add terror. People are terrified of giving a detail, telling a story, confirming a data, providing a telephone. The off the record -que It must be exceptional- today it is a rule and few matter ", June 25, 2020, <https://twitter.com/valentinalares/status/1276247621758332929>
- [74](#)Gustavo Ocando Alex, “Denuncian aumento de la autocensura en Venezuela por ley que penaliza opinar en las redes [They denounce the increase in self-censorship in Venezuela due to a law that penalizes giving opinions on the networks],” VOA, June 27, 2022, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/opinar-whatsapp-venezuela-crimen/6632339...>
- [75](#)Gustavo Ocando Alex, “Denuncian aumento de la autocensura en Venezuela por ley que penaliza opinar en las redes [They denounce the increase in self-censorship in Venezuela due to a law that penalizes giving opinions on the networks],” VOA, June 27,

2022, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/opinar-whatsapp-venezuela-crimen/6632339...>

- **76**Keneth Barjas, "Three years after the law against hate", Espacio Público, <http://espaciopublico.org/a-tres-anos-de-la-ley-contra-el-odio/amp>
- **77**Pedro Vaca Villarreal and Irene Khan, "Libertad de expression en Venezuela: estado de la cuestión y líneas de actuación [Freedom of expression in Venezuela: state of affairs and lines of action]," Rapporteurs of the UN and IACHR, August 30, 2022, <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/expresion/informes/VEN-UN-OAS-Statement-AUG...>
- **78**"Networks of Maduro trolls influence trends over the UN Assembly", Fake News Hunters, September 19, 2019, <https://cazadoresdefakenews.info/redes-de-trolls-maduristas-influencian...>; See also: Maolis Castro, "The virtual troops of the Chavista revolution have their Matrix [Las tropas virtuales de la revolución chavista tienen su Matrix]," ArmandoInfo, January 14, 2018, <https://armando.info/Reportajes/Resume/2385>; See also: Abril Mejías, "Constituent Tuitometer | The aircraft carrier of grievances [Tuitómetro Constituyente | El portaviones de los agravios]," Instituto Prensa y Sociedad Venezuela, August 10, 2017, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/2017/08/10/tuitometro-constituyente-portaavio...>
- **79**Carl Miller, "Venezuelan deepfakes and propaganda," BBC News, May 20, 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct5d92>.
- **80**Fake News Hunters, @cazamosfakenews, "#YouTubeGanda | la persona de este video NO existe: es un avatar creado con un programa de Inteligencia Artificial. Alguien está pagando para que aparezca como publicidad en YouTube y desinformar a los venezolanos. Ya tiene 110.000 vistas en el servicio de streaming 1/2," Twitter, February 5, 2023, <https://twitter.com/cazamosfakenews/status/1622289114186891264?>
- **81**Tony Frangie Mawad and Pablo Andrés Quintero, "Into the 'Venezuela's Fixed' Social Media Rabbit Hole," Caracas Chronicles, November 16, 2022, <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2022/11/16/into-the-venezuelas-fixed-...>; Adrian Gonzalez, @adrian_CFN, "The 'Venezuela is fixed' narrative is fueled by small hoaxes and lies like these. Stories like this arise from anonymous sources, fake 'newscasts' on social networks, newly created YouTube channels or are published by irrelevant, unknown tweeters 1/n," Twitter, February 13, 2023, <https://twitter.com/aaaadriaa/an/status/1625120333719011334>.

- [82](#)Florantonia Singer, "They're not TV anchors, they're avatars: How Venezuela is using AI-generated propaganda," El País, February 22, 2023, <https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-02-22/theyre-not-tv-ancho...>
- [83](#)Osmar Hernández, "'Yo soy un robot,' ironizó Maduro al responder a las denuncias de uso de la inteligencia artificial para desinformar en Venezuela ['I am a robot,' said Maduro ironically when responding to complaints about the use of artificial intelligence to spread misinformation in Venezuela]," CNN, February 24, 2023, <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2023/02/24/soy-robot-maduro-denuncias-uso-in...>
- [84](#)C-Informa, "Chavismo reacciona con 'inteligencia social' tras denuncias de uso de avatares en noticieros falsos [Chavismo reacts with 'social intelligence' after complaints of the use of avatars in fake newscasts]," ProBox, March 3, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/publicacion/chavismo-reacciona-con-inteligencia-so...>
- [85](#)"YouTube suspende a House Of News y a red asociada de canales desinformativos [YouTube suspends House of News and an associated network of disinformation channels]," Cazadores de Fake News, March 6, 2023, <https://www.cazadoresdefakenews.info/youtube-suspende-a-house-of-news-y...>
- [86](#)"El Oficialismo y su control de Twitterzuela en lo que va de 2023 [The Official Party and its control of Twitterzuela so far in 2023]," ProBox, September 19, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/publicacion/el-oficialismo-y-su-control-de-twitter...>
- [87](#)"Cuentas de Twitter de desinformantes oficialistas pagan suscripción a Twitter Blue [Twitter accounts of pro-government disinformers pay subscription to Twitter Blue]," Cazadores de Fake News, January 24, 2023, <https://www.cazadoresdefakenews.info/cuentas-de-twitter-de-desinformant...>
- [88](#)"Alex Saab," InSight Crime, updated January 27, 2023, <https://insightcrime.org/venezuela-organized-crime-news/alex-saab/>.
- [89](#)"¿Alex Saab candidato a Premio Nobel de la Paz? Tropa chavista hace su trabajo y posiciona narrativa en Twitter [Alex Saab candidate for Nobel Peace Prize? Chavista troop does his job and positions narrative on Twitter]," ProBox, February 8, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/publicacion/alex-saab-candidato-a-premio-nobel-de-...>
- [90](#)"Chavismo promueve 'lucha anticorrupción' de Maduro en Twitter en medio del nuevo escándalo del desfalco a PDVSA [Chavismo

promotes Maduro's 'anti-corruption fight' on Twitter amid the new PDVSA embezzlement scandal]," ProBox, March 22, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/es/publicacion/chavismo-promueve-lucha-anticorruptc...>

- [91](#)C-Informa, "Protesta del gremio docente es opacada en Twitter por tropas y bots de Maduro [Protest by the teachers' union is overshadowed on Twitter by Maduro's troops and bots]," ProBox, January 29, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/publicacion/protesta-del-gremio-docente-es-opacada...>
- [92](#)Transparencia Venezuela, "Russia and Venezuela: Allies in Disinformation," September 2022, <https://transparenciave.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Russia-and-Venez...>
- [93](#)Cazadores de Fake News, "Without RT, there is no paradise: how does Nicolás Maduro's Twitter propaganda machine work?," February 13, 2021, <https://cazadoresdefakenews.info/sin-rt-no-hay-paraiso-maquinaria-de-pr...>; "10 preguntas sobre los Tuiteros de la Patria que nadie te quiere responder [10 questions about the Tweepsters of the Homeland that nobody wants to answer]," Cazadores de Fake News, February 9, 2022, <https://www.cazadoresdefakenews.info/10-preguntas-sobre-los-tuiteros-de...>; Bonos Protectores Social Al Pueblo, @BonosSocial, "Se le informa que la asignación de los logros de los #TuiterosActivos a través del @CarnetDLaPatria estan suspendido hasta nuevo aviso. #FlexibilizaciónResponsable @NicolasMaduro @Mippcivzla @ViceVenezuela [You are informed that the assignment of the achievements of the #TuiterosActivos through the @CarnetDLaPatria are suspended until further notice. #FlexibilizaciónResponsable @NicolasMaduro @Mippcivzla @ViceVenezuela]," March 1, 2021, <https://twitter.com/BonosSocial/status/1366418321512534018?s=03>
- [94](#)"Los Tuiteros de la Patria protestan: el régimen de Maduro tampoco les paga [The Tweepsters of the Homeland protest: the Maduro regime does not pay them either]," ProBox, May 30, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/publicacion/los-tuiteros-de-la-patria-protestan-el...>
- [95](#)"I am a venezuelan 'Tuitera de la Patria': 'I didn't even know what a bot account is,'" Cazadores de Fake News, March 26, 2023, <https://www.cazadoresdefakenews.info/i-am-a-venezuelan-tuitera-de-la-pa...>
- [96](#)"Digital Autocracy. Maduro's control of the Venezuelan information Environment," Atlantic Council, Digital Forensic Lab (DFRLAB), Washington DC, March 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/digital-autocracy/>
- [97](#)MSVOnline, @MSVEnLinea, "#BREAKING || The awarding of Mention Awards begins to people who stood out on social networks

(Twitter) through the System @CarnetDLaPatria during the week between #17Oct to #23Oct 2022.," Twitter, October 24, 2022, <https://twitter.com/MSVEnLinea/status/1584646136362463233>; Social Protective Bonds for the People, @BonosSocial, "#Entérate: En el día de ayer se inicio la entrega de los logros, premio o mención en redes sociales a través del Sistema @CarnetDLaPatria a los más destacados en #Twitter en la semana comprendida del #06Feb al #12Feb de 2023.," Twitter, February 14, 2023, <https://twitter.com/BonosSocial/status/1625541491941691392>.

- 98"Red Social VenApp ofrecerá Línea 58 para canalizar denuncias ciudadanas [VenApp Social Network will offer Line 58 to channel citizen complaints]," VTV, May 20, 2022, <https://www.vtv.gob.ve/red-social-ven-app-linea-58/>
- 99Jose Luis Carrillo, "Con VenApp su queja será escuchada, pero a costa de toda su información personal [With VenApp your complaint will be heard, but at the cost of all your personal information]," TalCual, June 4, 2022, <https://talcualdigital.com/venapp-ofrece-conexion-con-el-gobierno-el-te...>
- 100Adriana Núñez Rabascall, "Ven App, la aplicación gubernamental que preocupa a defensores de derechos digitales [Ven App, the application that worries digital rights defenders]," VOA, August 25, 2022, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/ven-app-la-aplicacion-gubernamental-que-....>
- 101Jose Luis Carrillo, "Con VenApp su queja será escuchada, pero a costa de toda su información personal [With VenApp your complaint will be heard, but at the cost of all your personal information]," TalCual, June 4, 2022, <https://talcualdigital.com/venapp-ofrece-conexion-con-el-gobierno-el-te...>
- 102"VenApp," Google Play Store, accessed December 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20221208233535/https://play.google.com/stor...>
- 103Katherine Pennacchio, "In Venezuela, fact-checking coalition created to show how disinformation works," LatAm Journalism Review, January 27, 2023, <https://latamjournalismreview.org/articles/in-venezuela-fact-checking-c....>
- 104PENVenezuela, @PenVenezuela, "Iniciamos nuestro conversatorio #CierranLosMediosAlzamosLaVoz ¡sigue nuestra transmisión!," video of David Morán, editor of digital outlet La Patilla in a PEN Venezuela's forum, November 2, 2019, <https://twitter.com/PENVenezuela/status/1058367217908084736>.
- 105Nilsa Varela Vargas, "In Venezuela, the Rebel Alliance innovates commercially in independent journalism [En Venezuela, la Alianza

Rebelde innova comercialmente en el periodismo independiente],” Sembramedia (blog), January 31, 2017, <https://www.sembramedia.org/en-venezuela-la-alianza-rebelde-innova-come...>

- **106**Fabiana Rondón, “Periodistas venezolanos recurren a las redes sociales para monetizar en medio de la crisis y la censura [Venezuelan journalists turn to social networks to monetize amid the crisis and censorship],” VOA, June 27, 2023, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/los-periodistas-venezolanos-recurren-red...>
- **107**En español: Ley de Fiscalización, Regularización, Actuación y Financiamiento de las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales y Afines (Law on Inspection, Regularization, Action and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations).
- **108**“Venezuela: La draconiana ley de ONG amenaza a las organizaciones de la sociedad civil [Venezuela: Draconian NGO law threatens civil society organizations],” CIVICUS, February 21, 2023, <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2023/02/21/venezuela-draconian-ngo-....>
- **109**John Otis, "Proposed Venezuelan foreign funding law could have 'huge impact' on independent outlets", CPJ, April 19, 2021, <https://cpj.org/2021/04/proposed-venezuelan-foreign-funding-law-could-h...>
- **110**“Proyecto de ley intenta suprimir el derecho de libre asociación en Venezuela [Bill attempts to suppress the right of free association in Venezuela],” Espacio Público, February 11, 2023, <https://espaciopublico.org/proyecto-de-ley-intenta-suprimir-el-derecho-....>
- **111**“El Oficialismo y su control de Twitterzuela en lo que va de 2023 [The Official Party and its control of Twitterzuela so far in 2023],” ProBox, September 19, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/publicacion/el-oficialismo-y-su-control-de-twitter...>
- **112**“Informational disorders spread in Venezuela, via WhatsApp and social networks, amid the COVID-19 pandemic”, ININCO-Universidad Central de Venezuela – Venezuela Inteligente, Caracas, March 2021, <https://covid.infodesorden.org/nota-lanzamiento/>; "The patria system challenges Twitter to republish the« home remedy against the coronavirus," El Nacional, March 24, 2020, <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/el-sistema-patria-reta-a-twitter-a...>
- **113**Andrés Canizález, “Cómo se vive la desinformación en Venezuela [How disinformation is experienced in Venezuela],” Medianálisis, November 3, 2022, <https://www.medianalisis.org/como-se-vive-la-desinformacion-en-venezuel...>

- [114](#)Alvaro Algarra and Carolina Alcalde, "El 64% de la población cree que existen estrategias desinformación en Venezuela, según estudio [64% of the population believes that there are disinformation strategies in Venezuela, according to a study]," VOA, May 23, 2023, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/el-64-de-la-poblacion-cree-existen-estra....>
- [115](#)IPYS Venezuela, "Atlas del Silencio: Revieve [Atlas of Silence: Relief]," June 2023, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/atlas-del-silencio/relieve/index.html>.
- [116](#)IPYS Venezuela, "Atlas del Silencio: Paisaje [Atlas of Silence: Landscape]," June 2023, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/atlas-del-silencio/paisaje/index.html>.
- [117](#)"The National will stop circulating in its print edition [El Nacional dejará de circular en su edición impresa]," El Nacional, December 13, 2018, <http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/mundo/nacional-dejara-circular-edic...>
- [118](#)César López Linares, "Independent digital media is helping to regain the trust of people in Venezuela, says journalist Laura Weffer," Journalism in the Americas, February 27, 2019, accessed March 2019, <https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-20622-independent-digital-media....>
- [119](#)Tane tanae, <https://tanetanae.com/mundo-indigena/>; See also: Natalie Southwick, "From power cuts to powerful threats, Venezuela's indigenous journalists face a series of challenges in their reporting," Committee to Protect Journalists, September 13, 2017, <https://cpj.org/blog/2017/09/from-power-cuts-to-powerful-threats-venezu...>
- [120](#)"Alatakaa: El Pitazo suena en wayuunaiki [Alatakaa: The Pitazo sounds in wayuunaiki]," El Pitazo, May 11, 2022, <https://elpitazo.net/podcast/alatakaa-el-pitazo-suena-en-wayuunaiki/>
- [121](#)María Victoria Fermín, "Efecto Cocuyo strengthens coverage of gender violence together with its audience and experts", Efecto Cocuyo, May 19, 2021, <https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/efecto-cocuyo-robustece-cobertura....>
- [122](#)El Pitazo app, Google Play, accessed spring 2020, <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.elpitazo.app>
- [123](#)C-Informa, "Protesta del gremio docente es opacada en Twitter por tropas y bots de Maduro [Protest by the teachers' union is overshadowed on Twitter by Maduro's troops and bots]," ProBox, January 29, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/publicacion/protesta-del-gremio-docente-es-opacada....>

- [124](#)"Chavismo promueve 'lucha anticorrupción' de Maduro en Twitter en medio del nuevo escándalo del desfalco a PDVSA [Chavismo promotes Maduro's 'anti-corruption fight' on Twitter amid the new PDVSA embezzlement scandal]," ProBox, March 22, 2023, <https://proboxve.org/es/publicacion/chavismo-promueve-lucha-anticorruptc....>
- [125](#)"Looking for a hospital? Oxygen? Citizen apps against covid-19 in Venezuela", El Nacional, May 28, 2021, <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/buscar-un-hospital-oxigeno-apps-ci...>
- [126](#)Cesar Lopez Linares, "El Pitazo lleva sus foros comunitarios a WhatsApp y crea un producto capaz de fidelizar audiencia [El Pitazo brings its community forums to WhatsApp and creates a product capable of building audience loyalty]," Fundación Gabo, September 8, 2020, <https://fundaciongabo.org/es/blog/laboratorios-periodismo-innovador/el-....>
- [127](#)"Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela," Art, 56 and 57, http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/normativa_electoral/constitucion/indice.php.
- [128](#)"New state of exception contemplates "forceful regulations" to Internet content [Nuevo estado de excepción contempla "regulaciones contundentes" a los contenidos en Internet]," Instituto Prensa y Sociedad Venezuela, May 17, 2017, <http://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/nuevo-estado-excepcion-contempla-regula...>; See also: "TSJ certifies constitutionality of new extension of the state of economic emergency [TSJ certifica constitucionalidad de nueva prórroga del estado de emergencia económica]," Banca y Negocios, July 24, 2019, <http://www.bancaynegocios.com/tsj-certifica-constitucionalidad-de-nueva...>
- [129](#)VTV, "TSJ declared constitutionality of the State of Exception and Economic Emergency", January 8, 2021, <https://www.vtv.gob.ve/tsj-constitucionalidad-estado-excepcion-emergenc...>
- [130](#)'IPYSve Alert | Diosdado Cabello reactivated legal process against El Nacional", IpysVenezuela, March 9, 2021, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-diosdado-cabello-reactiv...>; Miguel Henrique Otero on embargo on the headquarters of El Nacional: "It is an outrage that we must denounce to the world", El Nacional, May 14, 2021, <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/miguel-henrique-otero-sobre-embarg...>; "Miguel Henrique Otero on embargo on El Nacional: It is not the end of the digital edition", Tal Cual, May 14, 2021, <https://talcualdigital.com/miguel-henrique-otero-sobre-embargo-a-el-nac...>; Kejal Vyas and Ginette Gonzalez, "Venezuela Seizes Offices of Independent Newspaper", Wall Street Journal, May

15, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/venezuela-seizes-offices-of-critical-newsp....>

- 131 "Entregan sede de El Nacional a Diosdado Cabello [They hand over the headquarters of El Nacional to Diosdado Cabello]," Espacio Público, February 10, 2022, <https://espaciopublico.org/entregan-sede-de-el-nacional-a-diosdado-cabe...>
- 132 "Venezuela's Maduro to Shut All-Powerful Legislative Assembly," Deutsche Welle, December 19, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/venezuelas-maduro-to-shut-all-powerful-legislativ....>
- 133 "OAS Resolution Condemns the Fraudulent Elections in Venezuela," US Mission to the Organization of American States, December 9, 2020, <https://usoas.usmission.gov/oas-resolution-condemns-the-fraudulent-elec....>
- 134 Kejal Vyas, "Venezuela's Political Crisis Deepens as Regime Installs Rubber Stamp Congress," The Wall Street Journal, January 5, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/venezuelas-political-crisis-deepens-as-reg....>
- 135 Official Gazette, Ley constitucional contra el odio, por la convivencia pacífica y la tolerancia, No.41.271, November 8, 2017, http://www.defensoria.gob.ve/images/pdfs/GO41.274_081117.pdf.
- 136 Official Gazette, Criminal Code of Venezuela , Art, 444, October 20, 2000, www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/mesicic3_ven_anexo6.pdf.
- 137 "RESORTEME restricts freedom of expression on the internet and electronic media," Espacio Público, December 10, 2010, <http://espaciopublico.org/ley-resorte-restringe-la-libertad-de-expresio....>
- 138 "Discussion of the reform proposal of the Resorteme Law advances", Conatel, April 12, 2021, <http://www.conatel.gob.ve/avanza-discusion-de-la-propuesta-de-reforma-d...>; El Universal, "National Legislative Plan starts with 35 priority laws", March 3, 2021, <https://www.eluniversal.com/politica/91675/plan-legislativo-nacional-ar...>; ¿Puede controlar lo que se publica? [AN discusses bill to regulate social networks: Can it control what is published?], "El Estímulo, November 1, 2022, <https://elestimulo.com/venezuela/2022-11-01/an-discute-proyecto-de-ley-....>
- 139 "GNB detuvo a un ciudadano en Anzoátegui por publicar críticas en estados de WhatsApp [GNB arrested a citizen in Anzoátegui for publishing criticism in WhatsApp statuses]," Espacio Público, June 13, 2022, <https://espaciopublico.org/gnb-detuvo-a-ciudadano-por-criticas-en-estad....>

- 140 Ronny Rodríguez Rosas, "Detienen a hombre en Apure por criticar a la PNB en Tik Tok [They arrest a man in Apure for criticizing the PNB on TikTok]," Efecto Cocuyo, June 18, 2022, <https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/detienen-a-hombre-en-apure-critic....>
- 141 "Detienen a dos hombres por publicar mensajes en Twitter contra Antonio 'El Potro' Álvarez [Two men are arrested for posting messages on Twitter against Antonio 'El Potro' Álvarez]," NTN24, November 15, 2022, <https://www.ntn24.com/america-latina/venezuela/detienen-a-dos-hombres-p....>
- 142 "Monitoreo, de persecución, y criminalización en Venezuela – Enero 2023 [Monitor of persecution and criminalization in Venezuela – January 2023]," CEPAZ, February 24, 2023, https://cepaz.org/documentos_informes/monitoreo-de-persecucion-y-crimin....
- 143 "Venezuelan authorities question 2 El Nacional employees, summon 3 others," Committee to Protect Journalists, January 27, 2023, <https://cpj.org/2023/01/venezuelan-authorities-question-2-el-nacional-e...>; "Otero denuncia nueva 'arremetida' de Maduro [Otero denounces new 'attack' by Maduro]," El Universo, January 27, 2023, <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/mundo/otero-denuncia-nueva-arremetida-de....>
- 144 Mayber Marquez, "Arquitecto fue señalado de instigar al odio por defender el patrimonio histórico de Cumaná [Architect was accused of instigating hatred for defending the historical heritage of Cumaná]," Crónica Uno, May 8, 2023, <https://cronica.uno/acusan-a-servando-marin-por-defender-patrimonio-de-....>
- 145 "Detienen y excarcelan a arquitecto Servando Marín por opinar y denunciar irregularidades [Architect Servando Marín is arrested and released for giving his opinion and reporting irregularities]," Espacio Público, May 8, 2023, <https://espaciopublico.org/detienen-y-excarcelan-a-arquitecto-servando-....>
- 146 "Ministro de Cultura amenazó a humorista y locutor Luis Chataing [Minister of Culture threatened comedian and announcer Luis Chataing]," Espacio Público, May 22, 2023, <https://espaciopublico.org/ministro-de-cultura-amenazo-a-humorista-y-lo....>
- 147 Angel Monagas, @AngelMonagas, #CaigaQuienCaiga Ve a el video que causó el allanamiento y persecución de los humoristas Ve a opinar [#CaigaQuienCaiga See the video that caused the raid and persecution of the comedians See your opinion]," Twitter, September 10, 2021, <https://twitter.com/AngelMonagas/status/1436367180497657863>

- **148**"Humoristas Napoleón Rivero y Reuben Morales: Lo que hacemos es «humor político» [Comedians Napoleón Rivero and Reuben Morales: What we do is 'political humor'],” TalCual, September 10, 2021, <https://talcualdigital.com/cicpc-allano-viviendas-de-humoristas-napoleo....>
- **149**Katherine Pennacchio, “Hay que seguir trabajando en denunciar y reducir la censura actual, sin inmolarse’: 5 preguntas para el ciberactivista y periodista venezolano Luis Carlos Díaz [‘We must continue working to denounce and reduce current censorship, without immolating ourselves’: 5 questions for the Venezuelan cyberactivist and journalist Luis Carlos Díaz],” LatAm Journalism Review, September 6, 2022, <https://latamjournalismreview.org/es/articles/hay-que-seguir-trabajando....>
- **150**Interview with Luis Carlos Díaz on June 5, 2023 via Signal.
- **151**“Comunicado conjunto contra la persecución de Oscar Costero,” Access Now, May 22, 2023, <https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/comunicado-oscar-costero/>.
- **152**Gaceta Oficial No. 38.157, Providencia Administrativa Contentiva de las normas Relativas al Requerimiento de Información en el Servicio de Telefonía Móvil, April 1, 2005, <http://www.conatel.gob.ve/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Providencia-Admini....>
- **153**“Quantifying identities in Latin America” , Asociación por los Derechos Civiles, 2017, <https://adcdigital.org.ar/portfolio/cuantificando-identidades-en-america....>
- **154**Plataforma de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional, “Plan de la Patria: Segundo plan socialista de desarrollo económico y social de la nación, 2013-2019,” September 28, 2013, <https://plataformacelac.org/politica/232>.
- **155**Juan Alonso, “Government will spend almost 14 billion bolivars on intelligence in 2017 ,” Crónica Uno, March 1, 2017, <http://cronica.uno/gobierno-gastara-casi-14-millardos-de-bolivares-en-i....>
- **156**“CESPPA regulations contain provisions contrary to freedom of expression” ,” IPYS Venezuela, February 25, 2014, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/2014/02/25/reglamento-del-cesppa-contiene-dis...>; Danny O’Brien, “Venezuela’s Internet Crackdown Escalates into Regional Blackout,” Deeplinks Blog, Electronic Frontier Foundation, February 20, 2014, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2014/02/venezuelas-net-crackdown-escalates>.

- 157"MINCI instructed state security agents in social media supervision" ,," IPYS Venezuela, April 23, 2015, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/caracas-minci-instruyo-a-agentes-de-se...>
- 158Marianne Díaz, "The 'card of the country' and the insatiable thirst for data from the Venezuelan government," Acceso Libre, March 3, 2017, accessed March 2017, <http://accesolibre.org.ve/index.php/2017/03/03/carnet-la-patria-la-insa...>
- 159Angus Berwick, "How ZTE helps Venezuela implement social control in the Chinese style," [Spanish,] Reuters, November 14, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/venezuela-zte-es/>; Ramon Cardozo Alvarez, "Los instrumentos chavistas de control social en Venezuela [Chavista instruments of social control in Venezuela]," DW, July 28, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/es/los-instrumentos-chavistas-de-control-social-en-v...>
- 160"Retirees and pensioners will receive their pension via the "virtual purse" of the patria system [Jubilados y pensionados recibirán su pension vía "monedero virtual" del Sistema patria]," TalCual, January 6, 2020, <https://talcualdigital.com/jubilados-y-pensionados-recibiran-su-pension...>
- 161Telephone interview with Journalist Margaret López on February 18, 2020; See also: Margaret López, "Biopago is the king in the new payment system in the public bank [Biopago es el rey en el nuevo sistema de pagos de la banca pública]," Efecto Cocuyo, December 31, 2019, <https://efectococuyo.com/economia/biopago-es-el-rey-en-el-nuevo-sistema...>; See also: Margaret López, "Sistema Patria enables the payment of electricity and drinking water in bolivars or in petros [Sistema Patria habilita el pago de la electricidad y agua potable en bolívares o en petro]," Efecto Cocuyo, April 17, 2020, <https://efectococuyo.com/economia/sistema-patria-habilita-el-pago-de-la...>; See also: Carlos Aponte, "The card of the motherland: symbol of an illicit clientelism [El carnet de la patria: símbolo de un clientelismo ilícito]," Transparency Venezuela, 2019, <https://transparencia.org.ve/project/el-carnet-de-la-patria-simbolo-de-...>
- 162Ronny Rodríguez, "To buy gasoline at Bs. 5,000 a liter, you must be in the homeland system [Para comprar gasoline a BS. 5000 el litro se debe estar en el Sistema patria o inscrito en el Intt," Efecto Cocuyo, May 31, 2020, <https://efectococuyo.com/economia/para-comprar-gasolina-a-bs-5-000-el-l...>
- 163Margaret López. "The" Gasoline Wallet "is born in the Patria System for the subsidized price [Nace el "Monedero Gasolina" en el Sistema Patria para el precio subsidiado]," Efecto Cocuyo, June 1,

2020, <https://efectococuyo.com/economia/nace-el-monedero-gasolina-sistema-pat...>

- 164 Margaret López, "Sistema Patria now allows phones to be recharged", October 24, 2020, <https://efectococuyo.com/economia/sistema-patria-recargar-telefonos/>
- 165 Odry Farnetano, "They activate the 1x10 System of the Good Government to shield the participation of the people," Ultimas Noticias, May 20, 2022, <https://en.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/politica/activan-sistema-1x1...>; "Papayita! Conozca los pasos para registrar el 1x10 en plataforma patria [Daddy! Know the steps to register the 1x10 on the homeland platform]," DiarioVea, May 24, 2022, <http://diariovea.com.ve/papayita-conozca-los-pasos-para-registrar-el-1x...>
- 166 "Red Social VenApp ofrecerá Línea 58 para canalizar denuncias ciudadanas [VenApp Social Network will offer Line 58 to channel citizen complaints]," VTV, May 20, 2022, <https://www.vtv.gob.ve/red-social-ven-app-linea-58/>
- 167 Maria Jose Dugarte, "Ven App: ¿Qué es y cuál es su vínculo con el chavismo? [Ven App: What is it and what is its link with Chavismo?]," El Estimulo, March 11, 2022, <https://elestimulo.com/de-interes/2022-03-11/venapp-que-es-y-cual-es-su...>
- 168 Lenys Vargas, "Sistema Patria pide a usuarios actualizar datos de residencia: aquí el paso a paso [Sistema Patria asks users to update residence data: here is the step by step]," El Pitazo, June 11, 2023, <https://elpitazo.net/gran-caracas/sistema-patria-pide-a-usuarios-actual...>
- 169 Sofía Nederr, "Government establishes persecution and surveillance of the internal enemy in social networks [Gobierno afinsa persecución y vigilancia del enemigo interno en redes sociales]," Tal Cual, April 9, 2020, <https://talcualdigital.com/gobierno-afinca-persecucion-y-vigilancia-del...>
- 170 U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions CEIEC for Supporting the Illegitimate Maduro Regime's Efforts to Undermine Venezuelan Democracy", November 30, 2020, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1194>
- 171 Personal interview with Jesús Hermoso, Director of Journalism at the Andrés Bello Foundation - Latin American Chinese Research Center, via Jitsi on April 12, 2021.
- 172 Oded Yaron, Despite Sanctions, Israeli Firm Cellebrite Sold Phone-hacking Tech to Venezuela, Haaretz, September 10, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/tech-news/.premium-despite-sanction...-sold-phone-hacking-tech-to-venezuela-1.9144879>

- **173**"Behind the Resale of Cellebrite Technology That Can Hack Your Phone," ITEMP, February 20, 2022, <https://www.itempnews.org/2022/02/20/cellebrite-hacking/>; <https://twitter.com/cazamosfakenews/status/1454212859819343876>; "Rastros Digitales: ¿Cuántos datos has dejado en la red? pone la lupa sobre la información personal [Digital Traces: How much data have you left on the network? puts the magnifying glass on personal information]," IPYS Venezuela, March 4, 2022, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/2022/03/04/rastros-digitales-cuantos-datos-ha...>
- **174**A/HRC/51/43: Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, OHCHR, September 20, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/es/hr-bodies/hrc/ffmv/report-ffmv-september2022>.
- **175**Fake Antenna Detection Project, https://fadeproject.org/?page_id=1402&lang=es ; See also: Ricardo Balderas and Eduard Martín-Borregón, "Data and cell phone calls, at risk of espionage by false antennas in Latin America [Datos y llamadas de celulares, en riesgo de espionaje por antenas falsas en América Latina]," The Washington Post, May 31, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/es/post-opinion/2020/05/31/datos-y-llama...>
- **176**Personal interview with Carlos Guerra, Main Researcher, via email on July 4, 2020
- **177**Hernán Lugo, "FANB activated hacker protocols while attacking media portals [FANB active protocolos ante hackers mientras ataca a portales de medios de comunicación]," Crónica Uno, October 5, 2019, <https://cronica.uno/fanb-activo-protocolos-ante-hackers-mientras-ataca-...>
- **178**CONATEL, Providencia Administrativa N° 171, Normas relativas a la recopilación o captación de datos personales de los solicitantes de los servicios de telefonía móvil y telefonía fija a través de redes inalámbricas o número no geográfico con servicio de voz nómada, October 2017, <http://www.conatel.gob.ve/gaceta-oficial-n-41265-fecha-26-oct-2017-3/>; Marianne Díaz, "Sin lugar dónde esconderse: retención de datos de telefonía en Venezuela," Derechos Digitales, February 15, 2018, <https://www.derechosdigitales.org/11932/sin-lugar-donde-esconderse-rete...>
- **179**"Ex-director of Sebin accuses Movistar of providing information for political persecution [Exdirector del Sebin acusa a Movistar de proveer información para persecución política]," TalCual, April 30, 2020, <https://talcualdigital.com/exdirector-del-sebin-acusa-a-movistar-de-pro...>
- **180**David Aragort, "The Reality of Digital Authoritarianism in Venezuela," CIMA, September 22,

2022, <https://www.cima.ned.org/blog/the-reality-of-digital-authoritarianism-i...>

- ¹⁸¹David Aragort, "The Reality of Digital Authoritarianism in Venezuela," CIMA, September 20, 2022, <https://www.cima.ned.org/blog/the-reality-of-digital-authoritarianism-i...>
- ¹⁸²Ministerio de Economía, Finanzas y Comercio Exterior, "Sudeban instructs monitoring of financial operations through non-profit organizations", November 21, 2020, <http://www.mppef.gob.ve/sudeban-instruye-monitoreo-de-operaciones-finan...>
- ¹⁸³A/HRC/51/43: Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, OHCHR, September 20, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/es/hr-bodies/hrc/ffmv/report-ffmv-september2022>.
- ¹⁸⁴"Periodistas Perseguidos", de IPYS Venezuela, retrata la migración forzada, el acoso y la persecución [Persecuted Journalists', by IPYS Venezuela, portrays forced migration, harassment and persecution], IPYS Venezuela, November 5, 2021, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/2021/11/05/periodistas-perseguidos-de-ipys-ve...>
- ¹⁸⁵"El acoso online contra Roberto Deniz y su conexión con la campaña de defensa a Alex Saab (#PeriodistasDifamados I) [The online harassment against Roberto Deniz and his connection to the defense campaign against Alex Saab (#PeriodistasDefamados I)]," Cazadores de Fake News, December 11, 2021, <https://www.cazadoresdefakenews.info/acoso-online-contra-roberto-deniz-...>
- ¹⁸⁶"Alerta IPYSve | Continúa campaña de ataques contra Roberto Deniz en Twitter [IPYSve Alert | Campaign of attacks against Roberto Deniz continues on Twitter]," IPYS Venezuela, October 14, 2021, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-continua-campana-de-ataq...>; IPYS Venezuela, @ipysvenezuela, "1/2 #AvancelIPYSve | Los periodistas @Ewalds6, @robertodeniz y @GerardoReyesC fueron atacados y amenazados desde la cuenta llamada "Julio Denuncia" ligada a sectores que defienden a Alex Saab. #18Sep [1/2 #AvancelIPYSve | The journalists @Ewalds6, @robertodeniz and @GerardoReyesC were attacked and threatened from the account called "Julio Denuncia" linked to sectors that defend Alex Saab. #18Sep]," Twitter, September 18, 2021, <https://twitter.com/ipysvenezuela/status/1439294904329543682?s=03>
- ¹⁸⁷"Continúa el hostigamiento contra periodista de investigación [Harassment against investigative journalist continues]," Espacio

Público, June 16, 2022, <https://espaciopublico.org/oficialista-pedro-carvajalino-hostiga-una-ve....>

- 188C-Infoma, "¿Cómo se usan las campañas de difamación en Internet para manipular a la sociedad civil venezolana? [How are Internet smear campaigns used to manipulate Venezuelan civil society?]," Cazadores de Fake News, January 29, 2023, <https://www.cazadoresdefakenews.info/campanas-de-difamacion-para-manipu....>
- 189"Periodista venezolana teme ser deportada desde Colombia [Venezuelan journalist fears being deported from Colombia]," VOA, February 8, 2023, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/6953265.html>.
- 190"Violencia digital de género contra las mujeres en Venezuela [Digital gender violence against women in Venezuela]," Espacio Público, June 30, 2021, <https://espaciopublico.org/violencia-digital-de-genero-contra-las-mujer....>
- 191Ricardo Rosales and Marysabel Rodriguez, "On their own against online gender-based violence: Public and private responses to complaints filed in Venezuela," Espacio Público, June 2023, https://www.derechosdigitales.org/wp-content/uploads/DD_Glimpse_23_ENG....
- 192"Alerta IPYSve | Portal de Alberto News fue víctima de ataque DDoS [IPYSve Alert | Alberto News portal was the victim of a DDoS attack]," IPYS Venezuela, October 13, 2022, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-portal-de-alberto-news-f....>
- 193"Portal de Aporrea sufrió un ataque DDoS [Aporrea Portal suffered a DDoS attack], Espacio Público, May 9, 2023, <https://espaciopublico.org/portal-de-aporrea-sufrio-un-ataque-ddos/>.
- 194"Canal de YouTube de El Pitazo fue hackeado [El Pitazo's YouTube channel was hacked]," El Pitazo, November 17, 2022, <https://elpitazo.net/tecnologia/canal-de-youtube-de-el-pitazo-fue-hacke....>
- 195"Alerta IPYSve | Plataformas digitales de dos medios se vieron vulnerados en diciembre [IPYSve Alert | Digital platforms of two media outlets were violated in December]," IPYS Venezuela, December 29, 2022, <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-plataformas-digitales-de....>
- 196Ve Sin Filtro, "#2021Report: Digital rights, censorship and connectivity in Venezuela," April 6, 2022, https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2021_annual_report/
- 197CONATEL, Ley Especial contra los Delitos Informáticos, October 30, 2001, <http://www.conatel.gob.ve/ley-especial-contra-los-delitos->

[informaticos-2.](#)

ecoi.net description:

Report on digital media and internet freedom (reporting period June 2022 - May 2023)

Country:

Venezuela

Source:

[Freedom House](#) (Author)

Original link:

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/venezuela/freedom-net/2023>

Document type:

Expert Opinion or Position

Language:

English

Published:

4 October 2023

Available on ecoi.net since:

28 November 2023

Document ID:

2100721

Austrian Red Cross	Wiedner Hauptstraße	Contact
Austrian Centre for	32, 1041 Wien	Imprint & Disclaimer
Country of Origin and	T +43 1 589 00 583	F.A.Q.
Asylum Research and	F +43 1 589 00 589	Data Protection Notice
Documentation	info@ecoi.net	
(ACCORD)		

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

