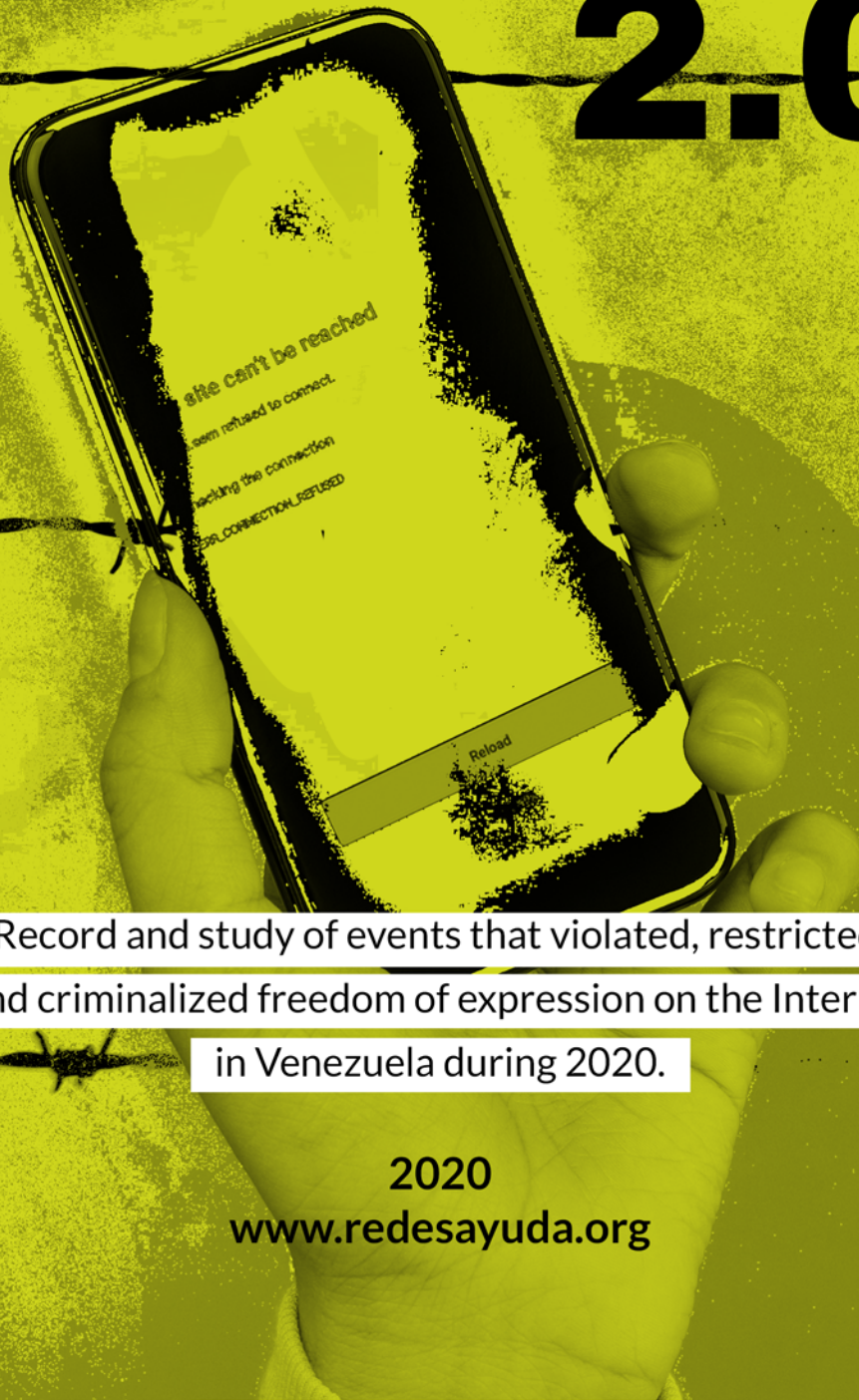


REDESAYUDA'S ANNUAL REPORT

# CONFINED VOICES

## 2.0



Record and study of events that violated, restricted,  
and criminalized freedom of expression on the Internet  
in Venezuela during 2020.

2020

[www.redesayuda.org](http://www.redesayuda.org)

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# REDESAYUDA ANNUAL REPORT

## CONFINED VOICES 2.0

Record and study of the events that violated, restricted, and criminalized freedom of expression and access to information through the Internet in Venezuela during 2020.

## REDESAYUDA

The non-governmental organization RedesAyuda was founded in 2014 to contribute to the promotion, strengthening, and creation of free and independent human social networks (digital and analog) as an indispensable instrument for the promotion and defense of Human Rights in a democratic society.

Among its main areas of interest are human rights, freedom of expression, media, Internet access, and the strengthening, preparation, and training of activists, journalists, leaders, and defenders in digital and information security.

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# MOTIVATION FOR THE REPORT

Considering that the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (UN) established through resolution A/HRC/RES/47/16 in July 2021 that “*the same rights that apply to individuals offline must also be protected online, in particular, freedom of expression, which everyone has the right to exercise regardless of frontiers and through any medium of his or her choice (...)*”. Acknowledging Venezuela’s current context in which traditional media are frequently harassed and social networks have become the principal mean for Venezuelans to stay informed; access to information and the free exercise of freedom of expression in these spaces are increasingly limited due to the control and criminalization of any information or opinion that may be uncomfortable for the Venezuelan regime.

This study proposes to analyze specific cases that occurred in 2020, such as situations, actions, and policies in which the Internet and freedom of expression in the digital space were violated. Additionally, it seeks to demonstrate the systematic Internet censorship in Venezuela and the mechanisms used by the regime to increasingly restrict citizens’ communication and organization spaces to perpetuate its communicational hegemony.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Executive Summary 8**

## **Glossary 9**

## **Introduction 12**

## **Chapter I: Repressive Context 15**

- DirecTV announced the closure of its operations in Venezuela **17**
  - International institutions on Human Rights violations in Venezuela **17**
  - COVID-19 in Venezuela: censorship, surveillance, disinformation, and propaganda **19**
  - Repression of Non-governmental Organizations in Venezuela **21**
    - Prepara Familia **21**
    - Provea **21**
    - RedesAyuda **22**
    - Otro Enfoque **22**
    - Acción Solidaria **22**
    - Caracas Mi Convive and Alimenta la Solidaridad **22**
- Events table 23**

## **Chapter II: Cases in which Freedom of Expression was Violated and Criminalized on the Internet 29**

### **Cases: Website Blockings 31**

- Punto de Corte **31**
- coronavirusvenezuela.info and presidenciave.com **31**
- Alberto News **31**
- Fire at CANTV's offices in Chacao deactivated some blockades pvenezuela.com and teleconsulta.presidenciave.org **31**
- vepresidencia.com **32**
- apoyosaludve.com **32**
- heroesdelasaludve.org and heroesdelasaludve.info **32**
- porlasaludve.com **32**
- apoyoheroessaludve.com **32**
- pvenezuela.com and vepresidencia.com **32**
- heroesdelasalud.org, heroesdelasalud.info and saludvzla.com **32**
- Runrunes **32**
- miconvive.com and robertopatino.com **33**
- planpaisvzla.com **33**
- awscache.com **33**
- airtm.com and airtm.io **33**
- Psiphon, TunnelBear and Anonymouse **33**
- Coinbase and MercaDolar **33**
- Noti-Tarde **33**
- Monitoreamos **34**
- La Patilla **34**
- Voatz **34**



### **Cases: Blocking to Social Media Platforms 34**

- Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Messenger 34
- YouTube, Bing, Google and Android 34
- YouTube and Instagram 34
- YouTube and Periscope 35

### **Cases: Cyber-attacks 35**

- Diario Tal Cual 35
- Provea 35
- Instituto Progresista 35
- heroesdelasaludve.info 35
- saludvzla.com 35
- El Diario 35
- La Gran Aldea 36
- Qué Pasa en Venezuela 36
- Reporte Ya 36
- Nueva Prensa de Guayana 36
- Punto de Corte 36

### **Cases: Arrests and Indictments 36**

- Jesús Castillo and Jesús Torres 36
- Rubén Duarte 36
- Julio Molinos 37
- Darvinson Rojas 37
- Elio Mendoza 37
- Tania Rodríguez 38
- Andrea Sayago 38
- Zuleima Sánchez, Jeison Robles and Sergio Ángel 38
- Eduardo Galindo 38
- Luis Araya 39
- Iván Virgüez 39
- Fernando Antonio Marcano 39
- Daniel Guzmán 40
- José Vásquez 40
- Darío Salcedo 40
- Wilfredo Rodríguez 40
- Andreina Urdaneta 40
- Mimí Arriaga 41
- Marco Antoima 41
- Nicmer Evans 41
- Jesús Medina 41
- Fidel Martínez 42

### **Cases: Harassment and Threats 42**

- Roberto Deniz 42
- Jesús Albino 42
- Gregoria Díaz 42

- Yoyerli Viloria **43**
- Milagros Socorro **43**
- Freddy Pachano **43**
- Melquiades Ávila **43**
- Beatriz Rodríguez **44**
- Charito Rojas **44**
- Luis Gonzalo Pérez **44**
- Adán Contreras **44**
- Alberto Ravell, La Patilla and Chigüire Bipolar **44**
- Eutimio González **44**
- Eduardo Asad **44**
- Lenin Danieri and Karen Aranguibel **45**
- Marianella Salazar **45**
- Diario El Vistazo **45**
- Daniel Molina **45**
- José Gregorio Rojas **45**
- Jean Carlos Rodríguez **46**
- Esteban Echezurúa **46**
- Esther Yáñez **46**
- Daniel Murolo, Pola Del Giudice and Ana Karina Santos **46**
- José Amalio Graterol, Daniel Lara and Juan Viale Rigo **46**
- José Gregorio Ruíz **46**
- Luis Olavarrieta **47**
- Jonathan Petit **47**
- Notitarde **47**
- Luisana Suárez **47**
- Lorena Arráiz **47**
- Tibisay Romero **47**
- Kisme Evaristo and Ana Muñoz **48**
- Víctor Amaya **48**

#### **Other cases of violation of freedom of expression on the Internet **48****

- Ararauna **48**
- Reyes Theis **48**
- La Gran Aldea **48**

#### **Chapter III: Events that Affected Internet Connectivity **51****

#### **Chapter IV: Overcoming Censorship, Campaigning for Access to Information and Freedom of Speech **57****

#### **Chapter V: Applications and tools to overcome Internet censorship **61****

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations **65****

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**D**emocracy and freedom of expression in Venezuela are practically non-existent, which makes digital media and social networks fundamental elements to overcome the communicational hegemony and evade the censorship established by the Venezuelan regime. These are currently the only truly reliable windows of information, dissemination, and denunciation for Venezuelan society.

Since 2007, the Venezuelan State has engaged in a relentless censorship campaign against the traditional media in the country. An example of this was the arbitrary decision by the former president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, not to renew the concession of the open television channel Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV) in 2007.<sup>1</sup> Another example was the arbitrary closure of Radio Caracas Radio (RCR) by CONATEL, with orders from the regime of Nicolás Maduro in 2019.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of these actions and the rise of the Internet and social networks as platforms for communication and deliberation, dozens of digital media have been created and have also

been affected by censorship, blockades, and attacks perpetrated by the State in physical and digital spheres. The purpose of these acts is to control and silence public opinion and discussion as well as the dissemination of free thought, thus trying to prevent journalists, opposition politicians, activists, human rights defenders, personalities, and citizens in general from freely questioning and denouncing the actions of the Venezuelan regime without fear of being subject to the application of judicial and extrajudicial measures carried out by state-controlled and state-supervised agencies.

**At RedesAyuda we annually document, analyze and denounce digital events that threaten freedom of expression, the right to information, and access to the Internet; as well as analyze the country's context and the importance of the Internet to face the Complex Humanitarian Emergency and the economic, social and political crisis as fundamental elements to understand the Venezuelan reality in greater depth.**

<sup>1</sup> Perdomo, W. (2019). Cierre de RCTV: el primer gran golpe a la libertad de expresión [The Closing of RCTV: the first big blow to freedom of expression]. *El Nacional*. [https://www.elnacional.com/entretenimiento/cierre-rctv-primer-gran-golpe-libertad-expresion\\_283606/](https://www.elnacional.com/entretenimiento/cierre-rctv-primer-gran-golpe-libertad-expresion_283606/)

<sup>2</sup> Paz, P. (2020). RCR dejó de transmitir un día de abril [RCR stopped broadcasting on an April day]. *Mediánálisis*. <https://www.medianalisis.org/rcr-dejo-de-transmitir/>



# Glossary

## STATE AGENCIES

- **CANTV (Compañía Anónima Nacional Teléfonos de Venezuela - Telephones of Venezuela Anonymous National Company):** Main Internet provider in Venezuela, a state-owned company.
- **CONATEL (Comisión Nacional de Telecomunicaciones de Venezuela - National Telecommunications Commission of Venezuela):** Venezuelan government agency that regulates, supervises and controls telecommunications in the country.
- **TSJ (Tribunal Supremo de Justicia - Supreme Court of Justice):** Highest judicial body in the country.
- **CNE (Consejo Nacional Electoral - National Electoral Council):** Governing body in national electoral matters.
- **AN (Asamblea Nacional - National Assembly):** Body that exercises the Legislative Power in the country.

### State security forces:

- **PNB:** Policía Nacional Bolivariana – National Bolivarian Police.
- **GNB:** Guardia Nacional Bolivariana – National Bolivarian Guard.
- **SEBIN:** Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional – Bolivarian National Intelligence Service.
- **DGCIM:** Dirección General de Contrainteligencia Militar - General Office of Military Counter Intelligence.
- **CICPC:** Cuerpo de Investigaciones Científicas, Penales y Criminalísticas - Scientific, Criminal and Criminalistic Investigation Department.
- **FAES:** Fuerzas de Acciones Especiales – Special Actions Forces.
- **CONAS:** Comando Nacional Antiextorsión y Secuestro – National Anti-extortion and Kidnapping Command.

## MAIN SOURCES

- **VE Sin Filtro:** A project of Venezuela Inteligente, a Venezuelan non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to defending digital rights. The project focuses on analyzing, documenting, denouncing, and teaching how to circumvent Internet

blockades and censorship in Venezuela.

- **NetBlocks:** NGO dedicated to defending digital rights, cybersecurity, and Internet governance in the world. One of the organization's most important areas of research and action focuses on analyzing, documenting, and denouncing online blockades and censorship, as well as mapping Internet connectivity disruptions and measuring their impact in countries with a high context of repression and censorship.
- **Espacio Público:** Venezuelan NGO promoting and defending the freedom of expression, the right to information, and social responsibility in the media.
- **Instituto Prensa y Sociedad Venezuela (IPYS Venezuela):** Venezuelan NGO formed by journalists focused on investigative journalism, press freedom, and access to information.
- **Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Prensa (SNTP):** Guild of press workers in Venezuela.

## TERMS

- **Hacking:** Activity that seeks to compromise a network, device, or digital account, usually seeking to steal information, attack, or gain control of it.
- **ISP:** Internet service provider.
- **IP:** Internet Protocol. An IP address is a set of numbers that identifies a device so that it can communicate with other devices over a network.
- **TCP:** Transmission control protocol. It ensures that data on the Internet is delivered to its destination without errors and in the same order in which it was transmitted.
- **Server:** Running application capable of handling a client's requests and returning a response accordingly.
- **TCP/IP Blocking:** A type of blocking that prevents connection to the end server, either through the *TCP* protocol or by blocking the server's *IP* address.
- **VPN:** Virtual private network. It is a network technology that allows a secure connection between two or more devices through a virtual point-to-point connection. It evades most types of website blocking by hiding

the traffic from the *ISP* and the origin of the connection to the end server.

- **Host:** Server offering some service.
- **Hosting:** Server that provides a *web* storage service.
- **Domain:** A unique name identifying a sub-area of the Internet. It is used to access websites without the need to know the *IP* address where they are located.
- **DNS:** Domain Name System. *DNS* servers are responsible for translating the domains associated with a website to the *IP* address on which it is hosted.
- **DNS Blocking:** A type of blocking occurring in a *DNS* server, in which the server does not respond with the *IP* address associated with the requested domain.
- **DNS spoofing:** A cyberattack in which a *DNS* server returns a false response, in the form of an *IP* address, aiming to redirect the user to a *website* other than the one he/she wanted to access, usually a malicious website.
- **Phishing:** A cyberattack that seeks to deceive the victim by using social engineering techniques to manipulate them to steal information or make them perform an action that they would not usually do voluntarily.
- **DDoS:** Distributed denial of service. A cyberattack in which a group of computers generates a large flow of information from various points to the same server to saturate it and make it temporarily inaccessible.
- **Hypertext:** A system for organizing and presenting data based on linking textual or graphic fragments to other fragments.
- **HTTP:** Hypertext transfer protocol. A communication protocol that allows the transfer of information on the worldwide computer network.
- **HTTP Blocking:** It is a protocol-based lock, which prevents the transfer of hypertext content to a server.
- **HTTPS:** Secure Hypertext Transfer Protocol. An application protocol based on *HTTP* for the safe transfer of hypertext data. It is a secure version of *HTTP*.
- **TLS:** Transport layer security. It is a cryptographic protocol that encrypts our communication with a website. It is used by the *HTTPS* protocol.
- **Handshake:** Communication establishment. The term refers to the negotiation established between a browser and a server to define the parameters of the channel they will use to communicate securely.
- **SNi:** Server name indicator. Indicates the name of the server you are trying to connect to before the *handshake* completes.
- **SIN Filtering or HTTPS Blocking:** A type of blocking that prevents the *handshake* and *HTTPS* connection from completing, preventing access to the desired website or service.
- **Bot:** A computer program created to execute automatic tasks on the Internet.
- **Troll:** An unknown user who seeks to annoy other users through the Internet.
- **Fake news:** Pseudo-journalistic content, disseminated mainly through social networks and other digital platforms aiming to generate disinformation.
- **OONI Probe:** A tool created by the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) to detect censorship, surveillance, and manipulation of Internet traffic.
- **Zoombombing:** To arbitrarily breaking into a video conference on the Zoom platform without the authorization of the person who created the room or the participants, intending to sabotage it.
- **IXP:** Internet traffic exchange point. A physical infrastructure where different networks, including Internet providers, can connect to exchange local traffic.



# INTRODUCTION

Venezuela is immersed in a growing economic, political and social crisis, controlled by a regime that has caused the absence of the rule of law and the lack of guarantees for the human rights of citizens, preventing the development of a free life in favorable conditions. These circumstances have also produced a severe food and health crisis that has led millions of Venezuelans to migrate searching for better opportunities and living conditions.<sup>3</sup>

2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also by gasoline shortages, interruptions in the electric service at a regional and national level, limitations on access to information, restrictions on the free exercise of journalistic work, harassment, persecution, threats, harassment, and arbitrary arrests by the regime. The principal victims were activists, politicians, human rights defenders, journalists, media, and citizens in general, who in addition to protecting themselves from the virus in a country with a public and private health system seriously affected by the crisis, also had to protect themselves from repression and authoritarianism.

The public health emergency made truthful information and the work of journalists and the media even more important, but keeping citizens informed of the situation generated by COVID-19 in the country was not part of the regime's strategy to face the pandemic. On the contrary, they used pseudo-legal instruments such as the "Law against Hate" to repress those who reported on the conditions of the hospitals and sentinel centers set up to attend patients infected with COVID-19. At the same time, they started a persecution against health sector workers, such as doctors and nurses, who

tried to inform about the actual numbers of infections and deaths caused by the virus.

Digital media have become the only information tool for Venezuelans in the face of the regime's communicational hegemony in the traditional media. However, the poor state of telecommunications services and the restrictions to access these platforms continue to increase. Blackouts, failures in the main Internet providers, blockages and cyber-attacks to news media, political platforms of democratic forces and civil society, blockages to tools for the evasion of censorship, and also temporary blockages to social networking platforms are some of the situations faced by Venezuelans when using digital media for information.

**Censorship in Venezuela's digital space during 2020 resulted in a total of 127 cases, in which violations of freedom of expression on digital platforms were recorded.** These cases include blockages to informative *websites* and social networking platforms, arbitrary detentions for expressing opinions critical of the regime on the Internet, either through social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram or in instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp, threats, and harassment through social networks. This figure represents a 25% reduction in the total number of cases compared to 2019.

<sup>3</sup> The UN Refugee Agency. (s.f.). ACNUR - Situación en Venezuela [Situation in Venezuela]. <https://www.acnur.org/situacion-en-venezuela.html>



# **CHAPTER I:**

## **REPRESSIVE CONTEXT**



## Chapter I:

- **DirecTV announced the closure of its operations in Venezuela**
- **International institutions on Human Rights violations in Venezuela**
- **COVID-19 in Venezuela: censorship, surveillance, disinformation, and propaganda**
- **Repression of Non-governmental Organizations in Venezuela**

The political and social context in Venezuela has seriously deteriorated since the arrival of Chavismo to power more than 20 years ago, to the current point where Venezuelans live under totalitarian political control, with a multidimensional crisis that affects their fundamental rights such as access to food, health, education, and other essential services. This situation reflects in the events that unfolded throughout the year 2020.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the already dire condition of essential public services (drinking water and sewage, electricity, domestic gas, telecommunications, and fuel), worsened due to the negligence of the regime of Nicolás Maduro, who with his executive cabinet took advantage of the health crisis as an excuse to further restrict the freedoms citizens and attack dissidence.

On January 5th, 2020, the new Delegate Commission of the National Assembly was scheduled to be elected. One hundred and sixty deputies were to elect the President, first and second Vice President, Secretary, and Undersecretary of the parliament; however, a new anti-democratic maneuver prevented this process from being carried out in a legal and democratic manner.

On the day of the election, GNB officials prevented most of the opposition deputies from entering. In a session without a quorum, deputies from the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), other parties close to the regime, and other representatives accused of corruption, who had already been expelled from the ranks of the opposition political parties, elected Luis Parra (former member of *Primero Justicia*, accused of corruption)<sup>4</sup> as the President of the AN.<sup>5</sup> An alternate session was held at the headquarters of the media outlet *El Nacional*, in which opposition deputies re-elected Juan Guaidó as president of the parliament.<sup>6</sup>

On December 6th, 2020, the regime of Nicolás Maduro carried out a fraudulent electoral process to renew the parliament, which lacked recognition, conditions, and guarantees but served to install itself in the seat of the Federal Legislative Palace, and was marked by a series of arbitrariness. On June 12th, the TSJ, composed of persons close to the regime, appointed the new members of the CNE,<sup>7</sup> a decision that by law corresponded to the Venezuelan Parliament. On July 1st, Indira Alfonzo, president of the CNE imposed by the TSJ, informed that the parliamentary elections would be held on December 6th, 2020 (for the 2021-2026 period). Likewise, she informed that the CNE decided to increase the number of parliamentarians from 167 to 277.<sup>8</sup> Journalist and political analyst, Eugenio Martínez, said that this decision “has no legal or technical justification.

*This is rather a political measure.”<sup>9</sup>*

Historically, Chavismo has been characterized for carrying out electoral processes marked by irregularities and the December 6th process was no exception. On that day, journalists from different media reported that citizens in the Ayacucho School in Barquisimeto, Lara State, denounced that members of the regime were asking for information of senior citizens and offering them money to participate<sup>10</sup> and favor them with their vote. Likewise, it was reported that voting machines were not working<sup>11</sup> and that some voting centers were closing earlier than expected due to abstention.<sup>12</sup>

Journalist Eugenio Martínez denounced that the CNE updated Nicolás Maduro’s polling place while he was voting.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Venezuelan pollster Meganalisis assured that this process had a participation of only 19.13%, representing 80.87% abstention.<sup>14</sup> On December 9th, the Organization of American States (OAS) approved a resolution rejecting the fraudulent elections, seconded by Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The resolution stated the “*rejection of the fraudulent election of December 6th, conducted by the illegitimate regime of Nicolás Maduro with the evident purpose of eliminating the only legitimate and democratic institution elected in Venezuela*”.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Deniz, R. (2019). ¿Necesita lavar su reputación? Se alquilan diputados para tal fin [Do you need to clean up your reputation? Members of Parliament hired for this purpose]. *Armando.info*. <https://armando.info/Reportajes/Details/2614>

<sup>5</sup> Manetto, F. (2020). Golpe de mano del chavismo para evitar la reelección de Guaidó [Chavismo’s coup d’état to prevent Guaidó’s reelection]. *El País*. [https://elpais.com/internacional/2020/01/05/america/1578237490\\_211478.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2020/01/05/america/1578237490_211478.html)

<sup>6</sup> NTN24. (2020). Guaidó fue reelecto como presidente de la Asamblea Nacional [Guaidó reelected as president of the National Assembly]. <https://www.ntn24.com/america-latina/venezuela/guaido-fue-reelecto-como-presidente-de-la-asamblea-nacional-114417>

<sup>7</sup> BBC News. (2020). La polémica designación del Tribunal Supremo de Venezuela de un nuevo Consejo Electoral: ¿qué significa para el conflicto político del país? [Venezuela’s Supreme Court’s controversial appointment of a new Electoral Council: what does it mean for the country’s political conflict?]. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-53031926>

<sup>8</sup> Rodríguez, R. (2020). CNE anuncia elecciones parlamentarias para el 6 de diciembre [CNE announces parliamentary elections for December 6th]. *Efecto Cocuyo*. <https://efectococuyo.com/politica/cne-anuncia-elecciones-parlamentarias-para-el-6-de-diciembre/>

<sup>9</sup> Uricare, J. (2020). Por qué la convocatoria a elecciones del CNE viola la Constitución [Why the CNE’s call for elections violates the Constitution]. *El Diario*. <https://eldiario.com/2020/07/02/por-que-la-convocatoria-a-elecciones-del-cne-viola-la-constitucion/>

<sup>10</sup> El Impulso. [@elimpulsocom]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/elimpulsocom/status/1335606703396704257>

<sup>11</sup> Nicmer Evans. [@nicmerevans]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/NicmerEvans/status/1335606952680943617>

<sup>12</sup> Impacto Mundo. [@impactomundo.]. (2020). Twitter. [https://twitter.com/ImpactoMundo\\_/status/1335662757337829378](https://twitter.com/ImpactoMundo_/status/1335662757337829378)

<sup>13</sup> Eugenio G. Martínez. [@puzkas]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/puzkas/status/1335650204230545408>

<sup>14</sup> Encuestadora Meganalisis. [@meganalisis]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Meganalisis/status/1335708242819870725>

<sup>15</sup> Infobae. (2020). La OEA aprobó una resolución en rechazo a las “elecciones fraudulentas” en Venezuela [OAS approved a resolution rejecting “fraudulent elections” in Venezuela]. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2020/12/09/la-oea-aprobo-una-resolucion-en-rechazo-a-las-elecciones-fraudulentas-en-venezuela/>

## DIRECTV ANNOUNCED THE CLOSURE OF ITS OPERATIONS IN VENEZUELA

On May 19th, 2020, the U.S. company AT&T, owner of DIRECTV LatinAmerica, announced the closure of operations in the country because of the impossibility of complying with the legal requirements imposed by the U.S. government and the Venezuelan regime simultaneously.<sup>16</sup> This occurred after the U.S. government demanded the exclusion of the Globovisión<sup>17</sup> and PDVSA TV, TV channels sanctioned by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).<sup>18</sup> However, CONATEL and Chapter III of the Venezuelan Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television establish that subscription television services must transmit the signals of open television channels, including Globovisión.

On May 22nd, the regime's TSJ ordered CONATEL to “take immediate possession of all movable and immovable property (...)”<sup>19</sup> of the company and immobilized the bank accounts of the company's Board of Directors.<sup>20</sup> On June 5th, journalist Fran Monroy reported on the arbitrary detention of Héctor Rivero, General Manager of DIRECTV Venezuela, and Rodolfo Carrano, Commercial Vice-President,<sup>21</sup> executed by SEBIN responding to an order of the TSJ. Carlos Villamizar, vice-president of Strategy and Business of the company, informed that he would voluntarily surrender to the security forces as proof of his innocence.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently,

on June 10th, they were charged with “swindling, boycott, destabilization of the economy and association to commit a crime”.<sup>23</sup>

Rodolfo Carrano was released on August 12th, while Carlos Villamizar and Héctor Rivero were released on Friday, August 14th, the same day that Scale Capital (an investment and management firm) announced an agreement with the Maduro regime for the restitution of subscription television service in the country.<sup>24</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN VENEZUELA

A delegation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) announced that it would make an *in loco* visit to Venezuela from February 4th, 2020, to observe the human rights situation in the country and meet with victims of human rights violations. However, by orders of the regime, members of the delegation could not board the plane that would take them from Panama to Caracas. As a result, between February 4th and 7th, the IACHR commission met in Bogotá and Cúcuta with opposition leaders and victims of human rights violations, and on May 8 presented a report outlining their observations and recommendations,<sup>25</sup> in which they highlighted:

- The humanitarian crisis as a factor of displacement.
- Violation of the right to life and personal integrity.
- Violation of the rights to liberty and personal integrity in contexts of detention.
- Violation of the right to freedom of expression.
- Repeated failure to comply with precautionary measures.

<sup>16</sup> DIRECTV Venezuela. [@directvve]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/DIRECTVVE/status/1262744624088576005>

<sup>17</sup> Prodavinci. (2020). Estados Unidos impone sanciones a Globovisión y Seguros La Vitalicia [U.S. imposes sanctions against Globovisión and Seguros La Vitalicia]. <https://prodavinci.com/estados-unidos-impone-sanciones-a-globovision-y-seguros-la-vitalicia/>

<sup>18</sup> United States Department of State. (2019). El Departamento del Tesoro de EE.UU. sanciona a la empresa petrolera de propiedad estatal, Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A [The U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctions state-owned oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.]. <https://2017-2021-translations.state.gov/2019/01/28/el-departamento-del-tesoro-de-ee-uu-sanciona-a-la-empresa-petrolera-de-propiedad-estatal-petroleos-de-venezuela-s-a/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> Tribunal Supremo de Justicia. [tsjvenezuela]. (2020). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/3571122989651114/>

<sup>20</sup> Moleiro, A. (2020). Detenidos los gerentes de DirecTV en Venezuela tras la salida de la televisión por cable del país [DirecTV managers arrested in Venezuela following cable TV's exit from the country]. *El País*. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-06-07/detenidos-los-gerentes-de-directv-en-venezuela-tras-la-salida-de-la-television-por-cable-del-pais.html>

<sup>21</sup> Fran Monroy Moret. [@fmonroy]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/fmonroy/status/1268966660150616067>

<sup>22</sup> TVV Noticias. [atvvnoticias]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/TVVnoticias/status/1269058742605185038>

<sup>23</sup> Leonett, V. (2020). Ministerio Público imputa a tres directivos de DirecTV Venezuela por estafa y boicot. [The Public Prosecutor's Office charges three directors of DirecTV Venezuela for fraud and boycott.] *El Pitazo*. <https://elpitazo.net/politica/mp-imputa-a-tres-directivos-de-directv-venezuela-por-estafa-y-boicot/>

<sup>24</sup> DIRECTV Venezuela. [@directvve]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/DIRECTVVE/status/1294740101386379267>

<sup>25</sup> Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. (2020). CIDH presenta sus observaciones y recomendaciones preliminares tras la histórica visita in loco a Venezuela para monitorizar situación de derechos humanos [IACHR presents its preliminary observations and recommendations after the historic in loco visit to Venezuela to monitor Human Rights]. <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2020/106.asp>

- Lack of university autonomy and academic freedom.
- Poverty and violation of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights.

On the other hand, on March 10th, 2020, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, provided an update on her 2019 report on Human Rights violations in Venezuela.<sup>26</sup> This report highlighted:

- The monthly salary is less than one U.S. dollar.
- Food prices have increased 1,800% in one year.
- Limited essential services.
- Reports of extrajudicial executions continue.

Subsequently, on September 16th, the UN Fact-Finding Mission published a report on crimes against humanity, extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, torture for political reasons, the deprivation of liberty for the legitimate exercise of freedom of opinion, and expression for political reasons.<sup>27</sup> They also made some observations that affect the full exercise of digital rights:<sup>28</sup>

#### 244

In terms of selective repression, State intelligence agencies have targeted social and political activists, military dissidents, NGOs, journalists, and social media users. In addition, several health workers and users who criticized the response to the pandemic were detained.

#### 282

According to the Mission's investigation, some acts could be established as ill-treatment, such as denying food or water, with some becoming more serious (systematic torture) with the intent to

extract confessions or information, among them: telephone and social network passwords.

#### 283

The report reveals that, in several cases, SEBIN officials had detainees record an audio or WhatsApp video several times until the agent was satisfied with the statement.

#### 283

In the case of Juan Requesens, they highlighted that SEBIN officials allegedly administered him psychotropic drugs to induce a confession. Cristopher Figuera, former director of SEBIN, confirmed this in an interview with the Mission.

#### 618

The report states that between 2014 and 2019, at least 18 people were arrested for statements and publications on the social network Twitter. Among them stand out Inés González, Lessi Marcano, Ginette Hernández and Pedro Jaimes Criollo.

#### 958

Among the cases of torture was that of Ariana Granadillo, who was beaten and suffocated. In addition, officials accessed her phone, exchanged messages with her contacts pretending to be her, and opened her social networks to ask who her friends were.

#### 1389

The report points to the case of Luis Enrique Ramos, a 29-year-old murdered by the FAES for receiving a WhatsApp audio.

#### 1575

A former SEBIN employee confirmed the practice of planting evidence against protest leaders through infiltrators: they obtained telephone numbers and searched for people, the planting or throw down of grenades, shotguns, pistols, and created "false positives."

<sup>26</sup> Provea. (2021). Informe situación DDHH en Venezuela por la Alta Comisionada para los Derechos Humanos, Michelle Bachelet [Report on the Human Rights situation in Venezuela by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet]. <https://provea.org/actualidad/informe-situacion-ddhh-en-venezuela-por-alta-comisionada-para-los-derechos-humanos-michelle-bachelet/>

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Fact-Finding Mission. (2020). Conclusiones detalladas de la Misión internacional independiente de determinación de los hechos sobre la República Bolivariana de Venezuela [Detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela]. [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFMV/A\\_HRC\\_45\\_CRP.11\\_SP.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFMV/A_HRC_45_CRP.11_SP.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> RedesAyuda. [@redesayuda]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/RedesAyuda/status/1306346742959558657>

## COVID-19 IN VENEZUELA: CENSORSHIP, SURVEILLANCE, DISINFORMATION, AND PROPAGANDA

According to the Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS), in 2020, there were 9,633 protests with an average of 26 per day. In their annual report,<sup>29</sup> they highlighted 8,193 citizens' demands about the improvement of essential services, labor claims, access to health, food, and in rejection of the gasoline crisis. 81% of the protests documented by the OVCS occurred during the COVID-19 state of alarm.

On May 30th, 2020, Nicolás Maduro announced new measures for citizens' access to gasoline; the acquisition of fuel would be under two modalities, one of them with payment in bolívars which they called "subsidized gasoline" and which can only be accessed under the "Sistema Patria" (a system created and controlled by the regime). Once the monthly limit is reached (120 liters for automobiles and 60 liters for motorcycles), gasoline would be charged at 50 cents of a dollar per liter, corresponding to the second modality of fuel acquisition, i.e., paid in foreign currency and outside the "Sistema Patria."

In Venezuela, the opinions, statements, and information of dissidents or those making the regime uncomfortable are censored. Those who express these opinions are attacked, harassed, and, in the worst cases, imprisoned, tortured, disappeared, or murdered. A clear example of this occurred on May 13th, 2020, when in his program *Con el Mazo Dando*, Diosdado Cabello threatened the Academy of Physical, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences to sending them to the State security forces,<sup>30</sup> after they published a report highlighting how the COVID-19 pandemic could evolve in the country.<sup>31</sup>

In turn, the regime has used CONATEL, an institution that should be autonomous and independent in its decisions regarding telecommunications in the country, to increase censorship and digital surveillance and to carry out actions against the media. On June 30th, the European Union sanctioned Jorge Elieser Márquez, former director of CONATEL, for making use of *"his special powers in CONATEL to silence critics and dissidents of the regime by blocking, filtering and hindering Internet websites, as well as revoking existing licenses for radio and television stations and not granting new licenses."*<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, on March 4th, the director of the NGO Venezuela Inteligente, Andrés Azpúrua, informed that CONATEL summoned a group of Internet providers in Venezuela to meetings to discuss the installation of an Internet traffic exchange point (IXP) in the country.<sup>33</sup> On March 13th, civil society organizations met to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the installation of an IXP administered by CONATEL and what it could represent for Human Rights on the Internet,<sup>34</sup> in a context of increasing censorship, surveillance, and attacks on the Venezuelan digital space.

Internet providers in Venezuela have been used to restrict access to information, forcing them to apply blocks to digital media websites and other platforms. In 2020 CANTV was the main responsible for restricting access to social media platforms.<sup>35</sup> On April 29th, in declarations to the news media TV Venezuela Noticias, the former director of SEBIN Cristopher Figuera, expressed that the company Movistar *"has lent itself to contribute to the regime of Nicolás Maduro (...) to take down pages, to hack emails, to duplicate telephones (...) and have supplied information to the repressive agencies of the regime to affect people who oppose the totalitarian pretensions of Nicolás Maduro."*<sup>36</sup>

**29** Observatorio Venezolano de conflictos. (2021). Informe: Conflictividad social en Venezuela en 2020 [Report: Social Conflict in Venezuela in 2020]. <https://www.observatoriodeconflictos.org.ve/tendencias-de-la-conflictividad/informe-anual-situacion-de-la-conflictividad-en-venezuela-en-2020>

**30** Espacio Público. (2020). Diosdado amenazó a académicos por hacer estudio sobre coronavirus en Venezuela [Diosdado threatened academics for doing study on coronavirus in Venezuela]. <http://espaciopublico.org/diosdado-amenazo-a-a#academicos-por-hacer-estudio-sobre-coronavirus-en-venezuela/>

**31** Academia Ciencias Físicas, Matemáticas y Naturales. [@acfinanve]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/acfinanve/status/1260763656716988422>

**32** Official Journal of the European Union. (2020). Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/898. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32020D0898&from=EN>

**33** Andrés Azpúrua. [@andresazp]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/andresAzp/status/1235250929328435200>

**34** VE Sin Filtro. (2020). Conversatorio IXP en Venezuela: de las ventajas a los riesgos [IXP in Venezuela: from advantages to risks]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWZU3IU1dQc>

**35** RedesAyuda. (2020). Dictadura 2.0: Blackout Digital [Dictatorship 2.0: Digital Blackout] (Informe 2019). <https://redesayuda.org/2020/09/07/informe2019/>

**36** TVV Noticias. [@tvvnoticias]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/TVVnoticias/status/1255664163226923009>



The Maduro regime and the entire state apparatus have not only focused on limiting access to digital platforms and suppressing dissenting opinions in these spaces, but they have also increased their surveillance and control of telecommunications in general. A study to detect fake antennas (*IMSI Catchers*), carried out by the Fake Antenna Detection (FADe) project in four Latin American cities, analyzed more than 2 million measurements to 6,331 antennas, of which 87 of them turned out to be suspicious, being Caracas the city with the most cases with 33 fake antennas.<sup>37</sup> These IMSI Catchers can be used to identify SIM cards, listen to phone calls, see what pages you connect to, and know if you are within the antenna's range.

In a report by the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on how the regime in Venezuela has used Chinese technology to expand its control over digital media in the country,<sup>38</sup> it was noted that:

- Venezuela has facial recognition technology and monitoring systems.
- Officials of the regime have traveled to China to participate in seminars on information management.
- The Chinese telecommunications company ZTE helped create the “Carnet de la Patria,” a system used for social control of the population.

On November 30th, OFAC sanctioned the Chinese company CEIEC “for supporting the illegitimate Maduro regime’s efforts to undermine democracy in Venezuela, including its efforts to restrict Internet service and conduct digital surveillance.”<sup>39</sup> In a statement, OFAC assured that this company has provided software, training, and technical expertise to the administration of Nicolás Maduro, who used

**37** Balderas, R., & Martín-Borregón, E. (2020). Datos y llamadas de celulares, en riesgo de espionaje por antenas falsas en América Latina [Cellular data and calls at risk of spying by fake antennas in Latin America]. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/es/post-opinion/2020/05/31/datos-y-llamadas-de-celulares-en-riesgo-de-espionaje-por-antenas-falsas-en-america-latina/>

**38** Voz de América. (2020). Tecnología china ayuda a Maduro a “controlar” a los venezolanos [Chinese technology helps Maduro to “control” Venezuelans]. <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/tecnologia-ciencia/tecnologia-china-ayuda-maduro-controlar-los-venezolanos>

**39** Departamento del Tesoro de Estados Unidos. (2020). Treasury Sanctions CEIEC for Supporting the Illegitimate Maduro Regime’s Efforts to Undermine Venezuelan Democracy. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1194>

these tools against freedom of expression online.

Political propaganda and disinformation in social media are strategies the regime has used to promote and position labels in its favor in social networks. Studies have shown how they put this strategy into practice, and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook have been in charge of eliminating accounts dedicated to supporting the Maduro regime, positioning false information, and attacking dissidence in the country.

On April 15th, an article published in *Global Americans* highlighted that nearly 4.8 million tweets from at least 639,000 Twitter accounts that used hashtags in favor of the protests and riots in Chile in 2019 originated mainly from Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. Another study that analyzed 7.6 million interactions on digital platforms about the unrest in Colombia and Chile found that 0.5% of users generated 28% of the total number of posts analyzed; of that group, 58% of the accounts sharing their geolocation publicly were in Venezuela.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding the positioning of trends on the social network Twitter, an article entitled “Fake profiles and coordination with Venezuela: how Cuba’s propaganda disseminates on Twitter”,<sup>41</sup> shows how Cuba and Venezuela coordinate strategies on social networks to disseminate false information about both regimes. They even highlight that an analysis carried out by the Digital Forensic Research Laboratory (DFRLab) of the Atlantic Council and the digital observatory ProBox, discovered that accounts linked to the regimes of these countries coordinated efforts to position at least six tags criticizing the embargo maintained by the U.S. government against Cuba and supporting Cuban medical missions.

According to ProBox, in 2020, from the account of the Ministry of People’s Power for Communication and Information of Venezuela (MIPPCI), at least 33 monthly tags were generated, constantly occupying first place in the country’s trends. These tags added up to more than 4 million tweets per month in favor of the regime. For the most part, the positioning

**40** Farah, D., & Yates, C. (2020). Turmoil in the Western Hemisphere. *Global Americans*. <https://theglobalamericans.org/2020/04/turmoil-in-the-western-hemisphere/>

**41** Gámez, N. (2020). Fake profiles and coordination with Venezuela: How Cuba’s propaganda spreads on Twitter. *Miami Herald*. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article243927322.html>



of these tags was achieved through automated accounts or bots. Iria Puyosa, a researcher specialized in the use of information in social networks and political conflicts, explained that there are characteristics that help determine this type of accounts:

- Excessive use of tags and retweets.
- Little or no conversation with other users.
- Very regular or irregular tweet patterns.
- Content is identical or very similar to that of other accounts.
- Abrupt changes in topics of interest.
- Constant linking content from very partisan or outrageous news sources.

Although in Venezuela the use of *bots* by the regime to promote disinformation is not uncommon, Iria Puyosa pointed out that “*more relevant are trolls, puppet accounts or sockpuppets, brigades, cyborgs, identity communities and influencers*”.<sup>42</sup>

On July 8th, Facebook reported that it deleted a total of 38 accounts and 76 pages, in addition to 55 Instagram accounts, for violating its policy against foreign interference,<sup>43</sup> by showing inauthentic and coordinated behavior in favor of a foreign or governmental entity. These deleted accounts were used to disseminate content supporting leftist leaders in Latin American countries and generate opinion matrixes against opposition leaders, including Juan Guaidó.

These accounts and pages were detected thanks to a study by DFRLab, who ensured that the operation of these accounts was almost exclusively in the electoral campaigns of various Latin American countries, including Venezuela in 2018, and warned that there were accounts that pushed for the re-election of Nicolás Maduro, that same year in which the regime carried out a fraudulent presidential election.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Schlenker, O. (2020). Desinformación digital, una estrategia política en Venezuela [Digital disinformation, a political strategy in Venezuela]. *Deutsche Welle*. <https://www.dw.com/es/desinformaci%C3%B3n-digital-una-estrategia-pol%C3%ADtica-en-venezuela/a-54158879>

<sup>43</sup> Gleicher, N. (2020). Removing Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior. *Facebook*. <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/07/removing-political-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior/>

<sup>44</sup> Bastardo, V. (2020). Facebook elimina cuentas por “comportamiento inauténtico coordinado”, los casos de Venezuela [Facebook deletes accounts for “coordinated inauthentic behavior”, Venezuela cases]. *Observatorio Venezolano de Fake News*. <https://fakenews.cotejo.info/noti-fake/facebook-elimina-cuentas-por-comportamiento-inautentico-coordinado-los-casos-de-venezuela/>

## REPRESSION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VENEZUELA

### PREPARA FAMILIA

The PNB illegally raided the headquarters of the NGO Prepara Familia on Tuesday, January 14th. Without a warrant, officers of this police force entered Prepara Familia’s offices and tried to take medical supplies destined for children at the J. M. de Los Ríos hospital. They also threatened to arrest the director of the organization, Katherine Martínez.<sup>45</sup>

### PROVEA

On February 19th, in his program *Con el Mazo Dando*, Diosdado Cabello stated that the National Constituent Assembly (ANC - illegitimately constituted through a fraudulent process) would promote a review of the laws related to the financing of NGOs from other countries to apply all sanctions to those who “*receive financing from the United States to attack the homeland*.”<sup>46</sup> He also indicated that Provea is one of the organizations that receive financing.

Subsequently, on May 4th, the Twitter account of Cabello’s program published an article in which Provea was accused of “*condoning terrorism*”,<sup>47</sup> after the organization blamed the regime for the violence that occurred in the country after the so-called “Operación Gedeón”,<sup>48</sup> in which a group of dissident Venezuelan military dissidents who were in exile tried to enter Venezuela to oust Nicolás Maduro. This operation resulted in arbitrary detentions, torture, and extrajudicial executions by the regime.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Espacio Público. [@espaciopublico]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/espaciopublico/status/1217190703954059264>

<sup>46</sup> Gabriel Bastidas. [@gbastidas]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Gbastidas/status/1230297804268068873>

<sup>47</sup> Con El Mazo Dando. [@conelmazodando]. (2020). Twitter. [https://web.archive.org/web/20200509235342if\\_/https://twitter.com/ConElMazoDando/status/1257420107506241536](https://web.archive.org/web/20200509235342if_/https://twitter.com/ConElMazoDando/status/1257420107506241536)

<sup>48</sup> Provea. [@\_provea]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Provea/status/1257384762488115206>

<sup>49</sup> Infobae. (2020). Operación Gedeón: las fotos presentadas en La Haya que prueban las ejecuciones extrajudiciales de la dictadura de Maduro [Operación Gedeón: the photos presented in The Hague that prove the extrajudicial executions of the Maduro dictatorship]. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2020/10/14/operacion-gedeon-las-fotos-presentadas-en-la-haya-que-prueban-las-ejecuciones-extrajudiciales-de-la-dictadura-de-maduro/>

## REDESAYUDA

On April 6th, RedesAyuda's general coordinator Luis Serrano and workers of the Farmarato pharmacy were detained by PNB officers in San Bernardino, Caracas.<sup>50</sup> Serrano was receiving medical supplies (antibacterial, gloves, and masks) that RedesAyuda, in alliance with Free Press Unlimited, has donated to Venezuelan journalists during the COVID-19 pandemic, when PNB officers parked at the entrance of his residence, seized the items and demanded that they accompany them to a local command, where they were held for more than one hour.<sup>51</sup>

## OTRO ENFOQUE

On May 22nd, Caracas Police officers stole several bags of food from the NGO Otro Enfoque at a control point on Francisco Solano Avenue,<sup>52</sup> in Caracas when members of the organization were on their way to Cota 905 to donate food to families in this area. The officials threatened them that they would be detained in other police control points and proposed other to reach a "happy conclusion," which resulted in the theft of bags of food that could have benefited five families.

## ACCIÓN SOLIDARIA

FAES officers broke into the headquarters of the NGO Acción Solidaria on September 7th. The organization's director, Feliciano Reyna, reported this via Twitter and clarified that it was a procedure of which they had no "information or knowledge of its motives or purposes".<sup>53</sup> After the raid, eight workers of Acción Solidaria were arbitrarily detained and taken to the FAES headquarters for interrogation.<sup>54</sup> Hours after the arrest, they were released thanks to the pressure and work of their lawyers and different organizations focused on the defense of human rights.

<sup>50</sup> Melanio Escobar. [@melaniobar]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/MelanioBar/status/1247304006059339778>

<sup>51</sup> RedesAyuda. [@redesayuda]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/RedesAyuda/status/1247314445522612226>

<sup>52</sup> Yohana Marra. [@yohanamarra]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Yohanamarra/status/1264021052742664197>

<sup>53</sup> Feliciano Reyna. [@fjreyna]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/fjreyna/status/1303050435343855616>

<sup>54</sup> NTN24. (2020). FAES allanó sede de ONG Acción Solidaria [FAES raided Acción Solidaria NGO headquarters]. <https://www.ntn24.com/america-latina/venezuela/denuncian-irrupcion-del-faes-en-sede-de-ong-accion-solidaria-125692>

## CARACAS MI CONVIVE AND ALIMENTA LA SOLIDARIDAD

In a press release, Alimenta La Solidaridad and Caracas Mi Convive informed that a delegation of the PNB raided their former headquarters located in El Rosal, in Caracas. In addition, the organization's bank accounts were frozen by orders of the Venezuelan Superintendence of Banking Sector Institutions (SUDEBAN). They also informed that PNB officers raided the house of Roberto Patiño's parents, director and co-founder of both organizations. They emphasized that "*these actions seriously compromise the operations of our dining halls and put at risk the attention to more than 25 thousand Venezuelan children and their families in our communities*".<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Caracas Mi Convive. [@miconvive]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/MiConvive/status/1331677904812593154>

# EVENTS TABLE

2020		
MONTH	DATE	CASE
JANUARY	Sunday 5	Bloqueo a Twitter Bloqueo a YouTube Bloqueo a Facebook Bloqueo a Facebook Messenger Ataque DDoS al sitio web de Diario Tal Cual
	Saturday 18	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Sunday 19	Roberto Deniz fue hostigado en Twitter
	Wednesday 22	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
FEBRUARY	Saturday 1	Bloqueo al sitio web de Punto de Corte
	Wednesday 5	Jesús Albino fue hostigado en Twitter
	Monday 17	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Tuesday 18	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Friday 21	Gregoria Díaz fue amenazada y hostigada en redes sociales
	Wednesday 26	Yoyerli Vilorio fue amenazada y hostigada en redes sociales
MARCH	Sunday 1	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Tuesday 3	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Wednesday 4	CONATEL inició reuniones para instalación de un IXP en Venezuela
	Thursday 5	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Sunday 8	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Monday 9	Freddy Pachano fue amenazado por publicaciones en Twitter Milagros Socorro fue hostigada en redes sociales
	Thursday 12	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Friday 13	Detuvieron a Jesús Castillo y Jesús Torres por publicar un video en Facebook
	Saturday 14	Melquiades Ávila fue amenazado por publicaciones en Facebook
	Tuesday 17	Detuvieron a Rubén Duarte por difundir video en redes sociales Detuvieron a Julio Molinos por denuncia en redes sociales
	Wednesday 18	Bloqueo a <a href="https://coronavirusvenezuela.info">coronavirusvenezuela.info</a> y <a href="https://presidenciave.com">presidenciave.com</a>
	Friday 20	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet

	Saturday 21	Detuvieron a Darvinson Rojas por publicaciones en Twitter
	Tuesday 24	Beatriz Rodríguez fue citada a Fiscalía por una nota publicada en un sitio web
	Thursday 26	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
APRIL	Wednesday 1	Bloqueo a Alberto News Detuvieron a Elio Mendoza por reenviar mensaje en WhatsApp Charito Rojas fue amenazada en redes sociales Luis Gonzalo Pérez fue amenazado a través de WhatsApp
	Thursday 2	Adán Contreras fue amenazado por publicaciones en redes sociales
	Friday 3	Detuvieron a Tania Rodríguez por reenviar mensaje en WhatsApp y redes sociales Alberto Ravell y los medios La Patilla y el Chigüire Bipolar fueron amenazados en redes sociales
	Saturday 4	Detuvieron a Andrea Sayago por difundir un mensaje de WhatsApp
	Sunday 5	Incendio en las instalaciones de CANTV en Chacao afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Tuesday 7	Incendio en las oficinas de CANTV en Chacao inactivó algunos bloqueos
	Monday 13	Zoombombing a Provea
	Tuesday 14	Detuvieron a Zuleima Sánchez, Jeison Robles y Sergio Ángel por publicar un video en Instagram
	Wednesday 15	Bloqueo a <a href="http://pvenezuela.com">pvenezuela.com</a> y <a href="http://teleconsulta.presidenciave.org">teleconsulta.presidenciave.org</a> Detuvieron a Eduardo Galindo por publicación en su página web Detuvieron a Luis Araya por publicar un estado en WhatsApp
	Friday 17	Eutemio González fue amenazado y difamado en redes sociales Zoombombing al Instituto Progresista Eutimio González fue amenazado y difamado en redes sociales
	Saturday 18	Detuvieron a Iván Virgüez por publicaciones en Facebook
	Sunday 19	Eduardo Assad fue amenazado de muerte en redes sociales
	Tuesday 21	Bloqueo a YouTube Bloqueo a Bing Bloqueo al Traductor de Google Bloqueo a servidores backend de Android
	Wednesday 22	Bloqueo al sitio web <a href="http://vepresidencia.com">vepresidencia.com</a>
	Thursday 23	Bloqueo al sitio web <a href="http://apoyosaludve.com">apoyosaludve.com</a>
	Friday 24	Lenin Danieri y Karen Aranguibel fueron amenazados en Twitter

	Sunday 26	Bloqueo a <a href="http://heroesdesaludve.org">heroesdesaludve.org</a> y <a href="http://heroesdesaludve.info">heroesdesaludve.info</a> Ataque de phishing y DNS spoofing a <a href="http://heroesdesaludve.info">heroesdesaludve.info</a> Detuvieron a Fernando Marcano por publicaciones en Facebook
	Tuesday 24	Beatriz Rodríguez fue citada a Fiscalía por una nota publicada en un sitio web
	Thursday 26	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Monday 27	Bloqueo a <a href="http://porlasaludve.com">porlasaludve.com</a> Detienen a Daniel Guzmán por publicaciones en redes sociales
	Tuesday 28	Bloqueo a <a href="http://apoyoheroessaludve.com">apoyoheroessaludve.com</a> Ataque de phishing y DNS spoofing a <a href="http://saludvzla.com">saludvzla.com</a>
	Wednesday 29	Bloqueo a <a href="http://pvenezuela.com">pvenezuela.com</a> y <a href="http://vepresidencia.com">vepresidencia.com</a> Bloqueo a <a href="http://heroesdesaludve.org">heroesdesaludve.org</a> Bloqueo a <a href="http://heroesdesaludve.info">heroesdesaludve.info</a> y <a href="http://saludvzla.com">saludvzla.com</a> Exdirector del SEBIN acusó a Movistar de colaborar con el régimen de Nicolás Maduro
MAY	Tuesday 5	Detuvieron a José Vásquez por publicaciones en WhatsApp y Facebook Detuvieron a Darío Salcedo por publicaciones en Twitter y WhatsApp Marianella Salazar fue hostigada por una publicación en Twitter Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Wednesday 6	Diario El Vistazo fue difamado luego de publicar un servicio público en redes sociales
	Thursday 7	Detuvieron a Wilfredo Rodríguez por publicaciones en Facebook
	Friday 15	Bloqueo al sitio web de Runrunes
	Saturday 16	Daniel Molina fue hostigado por una publicación en redes sociales
	Sunday 17	Mantenimiento al cable submarino Panamá - Saint Croix afectó la conectividad a Internet en algunos de los principales ISP del país
	Monday 18	Bloqueo a <a href="http://miconvive.com">miconvive.com</a> y <a href="http://robertopatino.com">robertopatino.com</a>
	Wednesday 20	CONATEL prohibió la renovación del dominio web <a href="http://ararauna.com.ve">ararauna.com.ve</a>
	Tuesday 26	Detuvieron a Andreina Urdaneta por estados publicados en WhatsApp
	Sunday 31	Bloqueo a YouTube Bloqueo a Instagram Investigación reveló presencia de al menos 33 IMSI Catchers en Caracas
JUNE	Wednesday 3	José Gregorio Rojas fue hostigado en redes sociales
	Thursday 4	Bloqueo a <a href="http://planpaisvzla.com">planpaisvzla.com</a>

	Sunday 7	Periodista Reyes Theis denunció que El Nacional censuró una entrevista publicada en el sitio web del medio
	Thursday 11	Bloqueo a YouTube Bloqueo a Periscope
	Thursday 18	Detuvieron a Mimí Arriaga por supuesto vínculo con cuentas anónimas en redes sociales
	Saturday 20	Detuvieron a Marco Antoima por supuesto vínculo con cuentas anónimas en redes sociales
	Tuesday 30	Unión Europea sancionó a Jorge Elieser Márquez por acciones desde CONATEL
JULY	Wednesday 1	Bloqueo a <a href="https://aws.cache.com">aws.cache.com</a>
	Thursday 2	Publicaron estudio sobre cómo Venezuela y Cuba coordinan estrategias en redes sociales para difundir propaganda de ambos regímenes
	Monday 6	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Thursday 9	Jean Carlos Rodríguez fue amenazado por realizar una denuncia en redes sociales
	Monday 13	Detuvieron a Nicmer Evans por publicaciones en Twitter
	Thursday 16	Esteban Echezuría fue hostigado por publicaciones en Facebook
	Wednesday 22	Informe de la Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores del Senado de los Estados Unidos señaló cómo el régimen venezolano ha utilizado tecnología china para controlar los medios digitales
	Sunday 26	Ataque DDoS al sitio web de El Diario
	Monday 27	Esther Yáñez fue hostigada y amenazada en Twitter
AUGUST	Sunday 2	Daniel Murolo, Pola Del Giudice y Ana Karina Santos fueron hostigados y difamados en redes sociales
	Monday 17	José Amalio, Daniel Lara y Juan Viale Rigo fueron amenazados en Twitter
	Thursday 20	Bloqueo a <a href="https://airtm.com">airtm.com</a> y <a href="https://airtm.io">airtm.io</a>
	Wednesday 26	José Gregorio Ruíz fue hostigado por publicaciones en Facebook
	Friday 28	Bloqueo al sitio web de Psiphon Bloqueo al sitio web de TunnelBear Bloqueo al sitio web de Anonymouse
	Monday 31	Detuvieron a Jesús Medina por publicaciones en redes sociales
SEPTEMBER	Tuesday 8	Bloqueo al sitio web de Coinbase Bloqueo al sitio web de Mercadolar
	Thursday 10	Ataque DDoS al sitio web de La Gran Aldea
	Saturday 12	Bloqueo al sitio web de Noti-Tarde
	Wednesday 16	Bloqueo al sitio web de Monitoreamos Actualización del informe de la Misión de Determinación de Hechos de la ONU con señalamientos sobre la afectación de los derechos digitales



	Tuesday 22	Acusaron a Gregoria Díaz de presuntamente estar vinculada con cuentas anónimas de Instagram
	Wednesday 23	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Friday 25	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Saturday 26	Detuvieron a Fidel Martínez por convocar protestas en WhatsApp y Facebook
	Sunday 27	Hostigaron a Gregoria Díaz en grupos de WhatsApp de funcionarios públicos
	Tuesday 29	Luis Olavarrieta fue hostigado en Twitter
<b>OCTOBER</b>	Friday 2	Apagón afectó la conectividad a Internet
	Friday 9	Ataque DDoS al sitio web de Qué Pasa En Venezuela Sitio web de La Gran Aldea fue temporalmente suspendido
	Monday 12	Jonathan Petit fue hostigado y amenazado en redes sociales
	Saturday 17	Hostigaron en redes sociales al medio Notitarde
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	Monday 2	Luisana Suárez fue amenazada por WhatsApp
	Wednesday 4	Lorena Arráiz fue víctima de una campaña de acoso en redes sociales
	Tuesday 10	Tibisay Romero fue víctima de una campaña de acoso en redes sociales
	Friday 20	Kisme Evaristo y Ana Muñoz fueron amenazados en Facebook
	Friday 27	Hackeo a la cuenta de Instagram de Reporte Ya
	Monday 30	La OFAC sancionó a la empresa china CEIEC
<b>DECEMBER</b>	Tuesday 1	Hackeo a la cuenta de Instagram del diario Nueva Prensa de Guayana
	Sunday 6	Hackeo a la cuenta de Instagram de Punto de Corte
	Monday 7	Víctor Amaya fue hostigado en Twitter
	Tuesday 8	Bloqueo al sitio web de La Patilla
	Wednesday 9	Bloqueo a servidores utilizados por la aplicación Voatz

*\*The cases and digital events registered in the previous table are in the public domain; the current is the result of the sum of these data on all those digital events that violate and affect freedom expression of Venezuelans on the Internet.*

# **CHAPTER II:**

**CASES IN WHICH FREEDOM OF  
EXPRESSION WAS VIOLATED AND  
CRIMINALIZED ON THE INTERNET**

## Chapter II:

- **Cases: Website Blockings**
- **Cases: Blocking to Social Media Platforms**
- **Cases: Cyber-attacks**
- **Cases: Arrests and Indictments**
- **Cases: Harassment and Threats**
- **Other cases of violation of freedom of expression on the Internet**

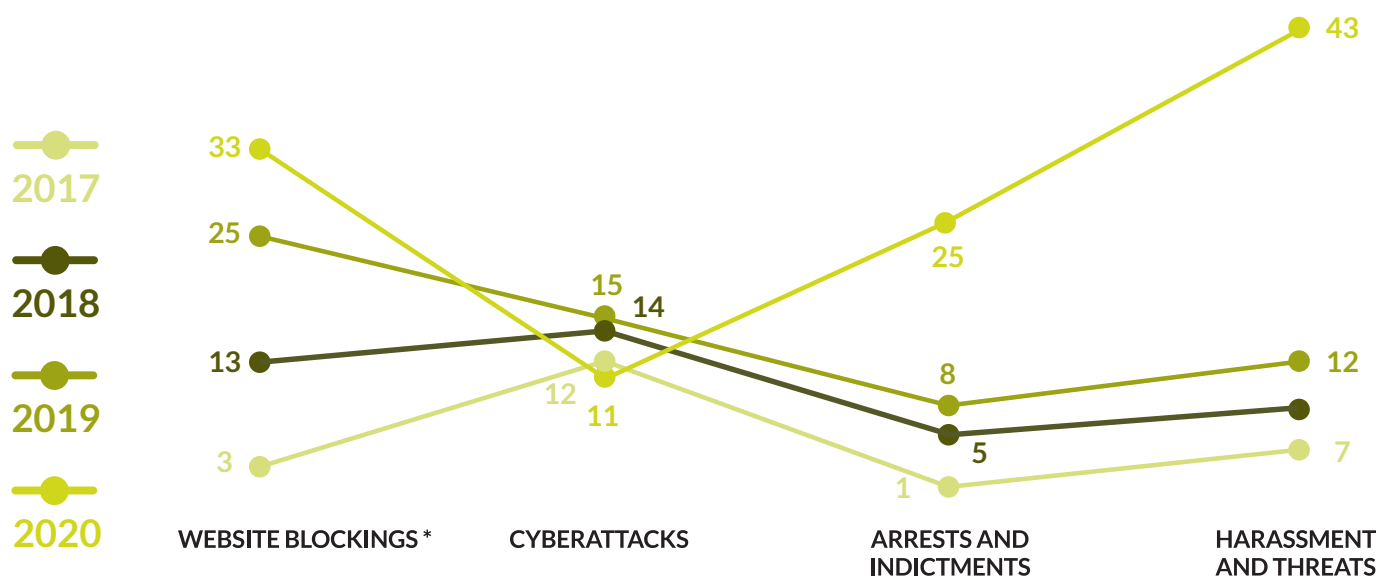
Censorship on digital platforms and violations of users' rights in these spaces has caused Venezuela to be classified since 2017 as a "not free" country by the organization Freedom House in its report "Freedom On The Net."<sup>56</sup> It has also caused that activists, human rights defenders, journalists, and citizens in general, have been and continue to be threatened, harassed, and in the worst cases, arbitrarily detained for informing, expressing their opinion, and denouncing the regime's actions.

On the other hand, during the year 2020, the regime of Nicolás Maduro reinforced the repression and control against news web portals and social networks amid the COVID-19 pandemic. These aggravated the economic, political, and social crisis in the country. Blockades to news websites and social networks, cyber-attacks, arbitrary arrests, harassment, and threats are the most common practices of the regime to continue restricting access to the Internet and reinforcing censorship in digital platforms.

A total of 127 cases were documented during 2020, a 25% decrease in total cases from 2019.

**56** Freedom House. (2017). Venezuela: Freedom on the Net 2017 Country Report. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/venezuela/freedom-net/2017>

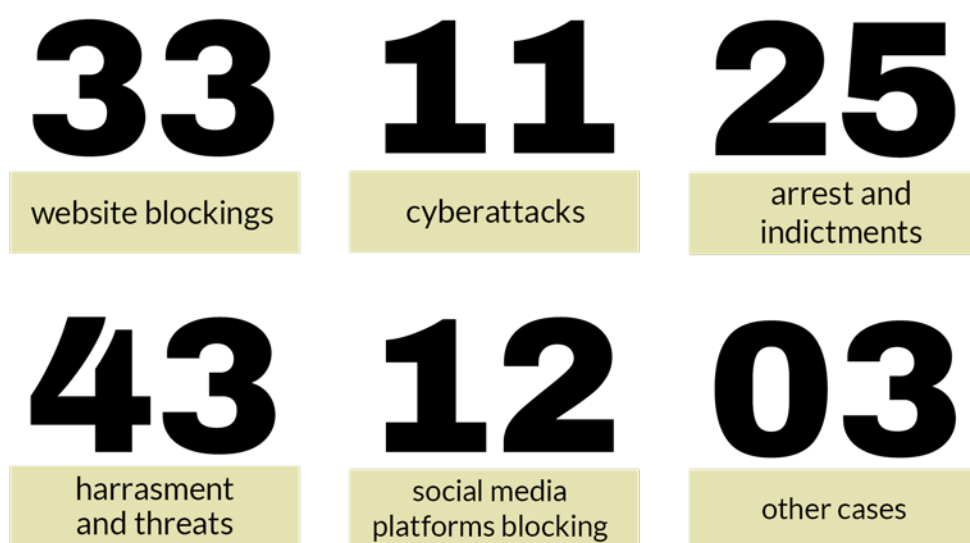
## CASES IN WHICH FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION WAS VIOLATED AND CRIMINALIZED ON THE INTERNET



\*Doesn't include blocks to social media platforms

	Website blockings*	Cyberattacks	Arrests and indictments	Harrasment and threats	Social media platforms blockings	Other cases	Total
2017	3	12	1	7			23
2018	13	14	5	9			41
2019	25	15	8	12	110		170
2020	33	11	25	43	12	3	127
Increase vs. 2019	32%	-27%	213%	258%	-89%		-25%

\*Doesn't include blocks to social media platforms



## CASES: WEBSITE BLOCKINGS

### PUNTO DE CORTE

(Saturday, February 1st):

Access to the website of the digital media Punto de Corte was blocked by some of the principal ISPs in Venezuela, among them CANTV, Inter, Movistar, Digitel, Supercable, and Movilnet. According to VE Sin Filtro, it was a blocking based on DNS servers;<sup>57</sup> after the media published an article entitled “CANTV in ruins,” where they showed the critical conditions of one of the facilities of Venezuela’s main telecommunications company.

Nicmer Evans, director of Punto de Corte, said that this action was against the “*right to inform and denounce the truth with evidence*.”<sup>58</sup> On the same day, February 1, journalists Johan Álvarez and Alexandra Villán were run over in the vicinity of Baralt Avenue in Caracas. The SNTF reported that Álvarez suffered a skull fracture and Villán a fracture of the tibia and fibula.<sup>59</sup>

### CORONAVIRUSVENEZUELA. INFO AND PRESIDENCIAVE.COM (Wednesday, March 18th):

CANTV applied an HTTP and HTTPS block to the information portal coronavirusvenezuela.info,<sup>60</sup> created by the National Assembly and the office of President (E) Juan Guaidó to provide information on the COVID-19 pandemic. The same applied to the website of the National Communication Center of the Presidency, presidenciave.com. Other operators such as Movistar, Digitel, and Supercable, maintain a blocking based on DNS servers to the latter.

### ALBERTONEWS

(Wednesday, April 1st):

The independent news portal albertonews.com was blocked by the country’s principal ISP, CANTV, and other private operators such as

**57** VE Sin Filtro. (2020). Bloquean Punto de Corte luego de publicar reportaje ‘CANTV en las ruinas’ [Punto de Corte blocked after publishing report ‘CANTV in ruins’]. <https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/alerta-2020-01-31/>

**58** Nicmer Evans. [@nicmerevans]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/NicmerEvans/status/1223394424052301826>

**59** SNTF. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1223722164383309824>

**60** VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1240312542251155456>

Movistar, Digitel, and Supercable.<sup>61</sup> According to VE Sin Filtro, CANTV applied a block based on DNS servers and SNI filtering, while the private operators applied a DNS blocking.

### FIRE AT CANTV’S OFFICES IN CHACAO DEACTIVATED SOME BLOCKINGS

(Tuesday, April 7th):

On April 5th, a fire at CANTV’s facilities in Chacao, Miranda state, was reported.<sup>62</sup> two days later, VE Sin Filtro informed that all HTTP, SNI filtering, and TCP blocks were inactive as a possible result of this fire. DNS blocks, the most used to restrict access to informative websites, remained active.<sup>63</sup> This meant that access to some information portals was not restricted. Subsequently, on Monday, October 12th, VE Sin Filtro identified at least 30 blocks to websites originating from CANTV, most of them being blocks that had been in place before the fire at its facilities in Chacao. On October 16th, VE Sin Filtro updated the information to reflect that, according to its measurement points, the HTTP blocks mentioned in its article, except for the one applied to the vamosbien.com site, were deactivated.<sup>64</sup>

### PVENEZUELA.COM AND TELECONSULTA.PRESIDENCIAVE. ORG (Wednesday, April 15th):

CANTV blocked by DNS the information portal of the Office of the Presidency, [pvenezuela.com](http://pvenezuela.com). Likewise, the company Movistar applied a DNS

**61** VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1245542992385118210>

**62** Efecto Cocuyo. (2020). Incendio en edificio de la Cantv Chacao fue controlado por bomberos [Fire in Cantv Chacao building was controlled by firefighters].

<https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/incendio-en-edificio-de-la-cantv-chacao-fue-controlado-por-bomberos/>

**63** VE Sin Filtro. (2020). Levantados bloqueos sofisticados de CANTV luego de incendio en una de sus instalaciones [CANTV’s sophisticated blockings lifted after fire in one of its facilities]. [https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2020-04-06-levantados\\_multiples\\_bloqueos\\_cantv](https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2020-04-06-levantados_multiples_bloqueos_cantv)

**64** VE Sin Filtro. (2020). 30 nuevos eventos de bloqueo: CANTV reactiva bloqueos HTTP [30 new blocking events: CANTV reactivates HTTP blockings]. [https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2020-10-12-30\\_nuevos\\_bloqueos\\_cantv/](https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2020-10-12-30_nuevos_bloqueos_cantv/)

blocking to [teleconsulta.presidenciave.org](https://teleconsulta.presidenciave.org), a medical orientation service on COVID-19.<sup>65</sup>

### **VEPRESIDENCIA.COM**

**(Wednesday, April 22nd):**

CANTV applied a DNS server blocking to another portal of the Presidential Office, [vepresidencia.com](https://vepresidencia.com), after they published information about the COVID-19 situation in Venezuela.<sup>66</sup>

### **APOYOSALUDVE.COM**

**(Thursday, April 23rd):**

Venezuelan Internet providers CANTV, Movistar, Inter and Supercable, applied a DNS blocking to the website [apoyosaludve.com](https://apoyosaludve.com), belonging to the platform Héroes de la Salud. This platform was created by Juan Guaidó's office to register health workers in Venezuela and grant them economic aid of \$100 during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>67</sup> This same day, VE Sin Filtro reported that the website [coronavirusvenezuela.info](https://coronavirusvenezuela.info) was blocked again by CANTV.<sup>68</sup>

### **HEROESDESALUDVE.ORG AND HEROESDESALUDVE.INFO**

**(Sunday, April 26th):**

The websites [heroesdesaludve.org](https://heroesdesaludve.org) and [heroesdesaludve.info](https://heroesdesaludve.info) joined the list of blockings executed by CANTV to the platforms created by the presidency of Juan Guaidó and the National Assembly elected in 2015 to provide economic support to medical personnel in the country and to provide information on the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, private operators Movistar and Digitel also blocked access to both websites.

### **PORLASALUDVE.COM**

**(Monday, April 27th):**

Just two hours after its launch, CANTV blocked access to [porlasaludve.com](https://porlasaludve.com), a new portal of the Héroes de la Salud platform.<sup>69</sup>

### **APOYOHÉROESSALUDVE.COM**

**(Tuesday, April 28th):**

Another portal of the Héroes de la Salud platform, [apoyoheroessaludve.com](https://apoyoheroessaludve.com), was blocked by DNS in some of the country's main Internet providers, including CANTV, Movistar, Digitel, Supercable and Movilnet.<sup>70</sup>

### **PVENEZUELA.COM AND VEPRESIDENCIA.COM**

**(Wednesday, April 29th):**

VE Sin Filtro reported that [pvenezuela.com](https://pvenezuela.com) and [vepresidencia.com](https://vepresidencia.com) were blocked by private Internet providers such as Movistar, Supercable, and Digitel. Both platforms had already been blocked in previous days by CANTV. On this day, it was reported that 14 domains used by the interim presidency remained blocked.<sup>71</sup>

### **HEROESDESALUDVE.ORG, HEROESDESALUDVE.INFO AND SALUDVZLA.COM**

**(Wednesday, April 29th):**

Some of the country's main Internet providers, including CANTV, Movistar, Digitel, Supercable, and Movilnet, applied a DNS server-based block to the websites [heroesdesaludve.org](https://heroesdesaludve.org), [heroesdesaludve.info](https://heroesdesaludve.info), and [saludvzla.com](https://saludvzla.com), all of which are associated with the Heroes de la Salud platform.<sup>72</sup>

### **RUNRUNES**

**(Friday, May 15th):**

CANTV applied a blocking based on DNS servers to the website of the digital media Runrunes: [runrun.es](https://runrun.es).<sup>73</sup> Subsequently, on May 17th, the Internet provider Inter also imposed a DNS blocking.<sup>74</sup> It is important to note that this portal was blocked after publishing information on the so-called "Operación Gedeón" and the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>65</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1250571183579373568>

<sup>66</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1253122594976468993>

<sup>67</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1253423468273471490>

<sup>68</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1253423488825622531>

<sup>69</sup> NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1254964667111350274>

<sup>70</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1255601655501991940>

<sup>71</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1255601705657552898>

<sup>72</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1255889388539645957>

<sup>73</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1261978668945018880>

<sup>74</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1262128767478173699>



### **MICONVIVE.COM AND ROBERTOPATINO.COM**

**(Monday, May 18th):**

Some of the main Internet providers in the country applied a DNS blocking to Caracas Mi Convive NGO's website, as well as the personal website of its coordinator and co-founder, Roberto Patiño. Among the providers that applied the blocking are CANTV, Movistar, Digitel, Inter, and Supercable.<sup>75</sup>

### **PLANPAISVZLA.COM**

**(Thursday, June 4th):**

ISPs CANTV, Movistar, and Digitel blocked access to the website [planpaisvzla.com](http://planpaisvzla.com),<sup>76</sup> a project that proposed actions and public policies of the interim government to overcome the complex humanitarian emergency in Venezuela.

### **AWSCACHE.COM**

**(Wednesday, July 1st):**

Internet providers CANTV, Movilnet, Movistar, Digitel, Inter, and Supercable applied a DNS blocking to the alternative domain of the digital media Alberto News, [awscache.com](http://awscache.com).<sup>77</sup> Its main domain, [albertonews.com](http://albertonews.com), had previously been blocked on April 1st of this year by the principal ISPs of the country.

### **AIRTM.COM AND AIRT.MIO**

**(Thursday, August 20th):**

As part of the economic support program for health workers in Venezuela, Juan Guaidó informed payments of the "Héroes de la Salud" aid would be made through the financial exchange platform AirTM. This same day, CANTV, Movilnet, Movistar, Digitel, and Supercable applied a DNS server blocking to the website.<sup>78</sup>

On that day, the SUDEBAN, through a communiqué issued through its prevention and control systems, informed that they identified "*risks and unusual operations through the digital platform called 'AirTM', which presents characteristics under the modality of a virtual*

*account that allows collecting, receiving and sending money using a data storage model based on computer networks commonly called 'CLOUD', all this outside the controls established in the financial sector*".<sup>79</sup>

They also urged banking institutions to carry out exhaustive monitoring of transactions related to the AirTM platform and to report "intermediaries that lend themselves to transactions with this type of platform." On the other hand, on August 26th, the VPN service provider, TunnelBear, announced that it would grant 10 GB of free traffic to its users in Venezuela,<sup>80</sup> to help health workers to access the platform for the collection of the "Heroes of Health" bonus, evading the AirTM blocking.

### **PSIPHON, TUNNELBEAR AND ANONYMOUSE**

**(Friday, August 28th):**

Internet providers CANTV, Movistar, Digitel, and Supercable, blocked access VPN Psiphon, TunnelBear, and the web proxy service Anonymouse websites.<sup>81</sup> VE Sin Filtro indicated that this blocking mainly affected access to the websites of these platforms. On Psiphon, there was no restriction on logging on directly from the application, and users who had already registered on the TunnelBear application could use the service regularly.

### **COINBASE AND MERCADOLAR**

**(Tuesday, September 8th):**

The most important Internet providers in Venezuela blocked access to financial platforms Coinbase and MercaDolar.<sup>82</sup> According to VE Sin Filtro, both sites were blocked by DNS through CANTV, Movistar, Digitel, Inter, and SuperCable.

### **NOTI-TARDE**

**(Saturday, September 12th):**

Founder of the news media Noti-Tarde, Luis Borjas, notified that access to the media's

<sup>75</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1262506927214530562>

<sup>76</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1268744372700549123>

<sup>77</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1278373058601005057>

<sup>78</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1296564174198276102>

<sup>79</sup> SUDEBAN. [@sudebaninforma]. (2020). Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CEH7DWtFtIO/>

<sup>80</sup> TunnelBear. [@thetunnelbear]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/theTunnelBear/status/1298631408034942977>

<sup>81</sup> VE Sin Filtro. (2020). Bloquean VPNs y herramientas anti-censura para impedir acceso a beneficio para el personal médico [VPNs blocked and anti-censorship tools to prevent access for the benefit of medical personnel]. <https://vesinfiltro.com/noticias/2020-08-28-bloqueo-VPNs/>

<sup>82</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1303485637715259393>

website was blocked by CANTV.<sup>83</sup> It came after Twitter account @Lechuginos\_com, with a pro-government editorial line dedicated to threaten and harass media and press workers, threatened Borjas, saying: “I’m coming for you, you will cry when you are blocked by Internet throughout the country.”

### **MONITOREAMOS**

**(Wednesday, September 16th):**

CANTV, Movistar, Inter, Movilnet, Digitel, and Supercable applied a DNS blocking to the website of the digital media Monitoreamos.<sup>84</sup> This blocking occurred after a national speech in which Nicolás Maduro described this media as “bandits,” “manipulators,” and “communicational sewer,”<sup>85</sup> referring to a tweet in which Monitoreamos expressed: “Maduro announces that on December 6, the military will look for voters in their homes to take them to vote, due to biosecurity measures”.<sup>86</sup>

### **LA PATILLA**

**(Tuesday, December 8th):**

Movistar applied a DNS server blocking to La Patilla.<sup>87</sup> This news media has been a victim of blocking before. In 2018 CANTV blocked access to the platform.

### **VOATZ**

**(Wednesday, December 9th):**

VE Sin Filtro reported that CANTV applied an IP address-based blocking to some servers used by the Voatz application during the Popular Consultation promoted by the interim government presided by Juan Guaidó in Venezuela,<sup>88</sup> carried out between December 7th and 12th.

This consultation aimed to ratify the desire for a legitimate electoral process and reject the fraudulent electoral process of December 6th. VE Sin Filtro confirmed that by December 11, one

day before the end of the Popular Consultation process, CANTV was still applying a partial blocking,<sup>89</sup> which prevented the registration of new users on iOS.

## **CASES: BLOCKING TO SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

### **TWITTER, YOUTUBE, FACEBOOK AND MESSENGER**

**(Sunday, January 5th):**

NetBlocks reported that CANTV applied a block to digital platforms Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Messenger during the morning of January 5th.<sup>90</sup> Likewise, VE Sin Filtro confirmed that CANTV had applied a blocking by SNI filtering and was not operating with 100% efficiency.<sup>91</sup>

The blocking occurred on the same day in which the new Board of Directors of the National Assembly was to be elected and while irregular events were taking place in the areas near the Federal Legislative Palace. Two and a half hours later, NetBlocks confirmed that access to the platforms had been reestablished.<sup>92</sup>

### **YOUTUBE, BING, GOOGLE AND ANDROID**

**(Tuesday, April 21st):**

The NetBlocks observatory confirmed that CANTV applied an SNI filtering block that affected access to YouTube, Bing, Google Translator, and some Android *backend* servers.<sup>93</sup>

This blocking occurred during an ordinary session of the National Assembly elected in 2015, in which deputies discussed the COVID-19 situation in Venezuela.

### **YOUTUBE AND INSTAGRAM**

**(Sunday, May 31st):**

CANTV applied a DNS server-based block to YouTube and Instagram<sup>94</sup> during an extraordinary session of the elected National Assembly in 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Borjas, L. (2020). Noti-tarde.com fue bloqueado por Cantv Aba [Noti-tarde.com blocked by Cantv Aba]. *Noti-Tarde*. <https://noti-tarde.com/2020/09/noti-tarde-com-fue-bloqueado-por-cantv-aba/>

<sup>84</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1306253490629599232>

<sup>85</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1306211527150784512>

<sup>86</sup> Monitoreamos. [@monitoreamos]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/monitoreamos/status/1305988930123202563>

<sup>87</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1336086635059015680>

<sup>88</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1336272380147216385>

<sup>89</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1337525759318110210>

<sup>90</sup> NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1213798185841430528>

<sup>91</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1213809726359781376>

<sup>92</sup> NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1213842944932884480>

<sup>93</sup> NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1252649121632092167>

<sup>94</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1267133917192208388>

Access was restored approximately one hour later.

### **YOUTUBE AND PERISCOPE**

**(Thursday, June 11th):**

During the transmission of the forum “Transición en Venezuela es Posible” (Transition in Venezuela is Possible), with the participation of Interim President Juan Guaidó and the former Prime Minister of Spain, Felipe González, CANTV applied a DNS blocking to YouTube.<sup>95</sup>

The blocking restricted access to the platform during the transmission of the forum. NetBlocks documented the blocking of YouTube and reported that access to Periscope was restricted this day.<sup>96</sup>

### **CASES: CYBER-ATTACKS**

#### **DIARIO TAL CUAL**

**(Sunday, January 5th):**

The newspaper Tal Cual reported that on the afternoon of January 5th, its Instagram account, @talcualdigital, was hacked.<sup>97</sup> Attackers also managed to deactivate the media outlet’s account, so its content was temporarily unavailable.

Subsequently, on February 18th, journalist Víctor Amaya reported the Instagram account was recovered.<sup>98</sup> However, they lost the 100,000 followers that the profile had before the cyberattack.

#### **PROVEA**

**(Monday, April 13th):**

Provea denounced that at least 15 users carried out a Zoombombing attack on its conference “Golpe 2002: Rol de las Organizaciones” (Coup 2002: role of the organizations), so they could not continue with the event.<sup>99</sup>

### **INSTITUTO PROGRESISTA**

**(Friday, April 17th):**

Instituto Progresista was the victim of a Zoombombing attack, as reported on their Twitter account,<sup>100</sup> in which they apologized for the “security and hacking” problems that occurred during a virtual activity on the Zoom platform.

### **HEROESDESALUDVE.INFO**

**(Sunday, April 26th):**

The [heroesdesaludve.info](https://heroesdesaludve.info) site, an alternative portal of the Héroes de la Salud platform, was the target of a *phishing* attack.<sup>101</sup> In addition, CANTV also applied a DNS spoofing attack to redirect user traffic to the phishing site ([heroesdesaludve.co](https://heroesdesaludve.co)). On April 29th, the malicious site was suspended.<sup>102</sup>

### **SALUDVZLA.COM**

**(Tuesday, April 28th):**

Another portal of the Héroes de la Salud platform ([saludvzla.com](https://saludvzla.com)) was the victim of new phishing and DNS spoofing attack by CANTV. According to VE Sin Filtro, these types of attacks were aimed at “capturing the data of medical personnel registering for the \$100 assistance”.<sup>103</sup>

### **EL DIARIO**

**(Sunday, July 26th):**

The media outlet El Diario reported that its website, [eldiario.com](https://eldiario.com), was offline for three hours due to a DDoS attack.<sup>104</sup> In less than one hour, they received 18.23 million requests, of which 1.5 million came from a single IP address. El Diario reported on its Twitter account that the attack came from IP addresses located in Russia, China, and Nigeria. They also thanked their technical team, who helped to restore access to the site.

<sup>95</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1271178517309542408>

<sup>96</sup> NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1271187395493466114>

<sup>97</sup> Tal Cual. (2020). Nos atacaron en Instagram, pero no nos callarán [They attacked us on Instagram, but they won't silence us]. <https://talcualdigital.com/nos-atacaron-en-instagram-pero-no-nos-callaran/>

<sup>98</sup> Víctor Amaya. [@victoramaya]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/victoramaya/status/1229920756525654017>

<sup>99</sup> Provea. [@provea]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Provea/status/1249798439174574087>

<sup>100</sup> Instituto Progresista. [@progresistasve]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ProgresistasVE/status/1251269134291210241>

<sup>101</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1254594734800154624>

<sup>102</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1255607570024353799>

<sup>103</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1255163692125163521>

<sup>104</sup> Castillo, J. (2020). Ataques DDoS, un mecanismo de censura a medios de comunicación [DDoS attacks, a mechanism for media censorship]. *El Diario*. <https://eldiario.com/2020/07/27/ataques-ddos-un-mecanismo-de-censura-a-medios-de-comunicacion/>

**LA GRAN ALDEA****(Thursday, September 10th):**

The media outlet La Gran Aldea reported that its website, [lagranaldea.com](http://lagranaldea.com), was the victim of a DDoS attack,<sup>105</sup> that prevented access to users for two days.

Most of the requests came from Venezuelan IP addresses,<sup>106</sup> receiving an average of 700 visits per minute.

**QUÉ PASA EN VENEZUELA****(Friday, October 9th):**

In a press release, journalist of Qué Pasa En Venezuela (What Happens in Venezuela), Carlina Isava, denounced the news media's website had been the victim of at least four cyber-attacks,<sup>107</sup> possibly of the DDoS type, which temporarily prevented access to the website.

**REPORTE YA****(Friday, November 27th):**

The Instagram account of ReporteYa, dedicated to citizen journalism, was hacked as reported by the NGO Espacio Público,<sup>108</sup> The NGO highlighted that on the same day, its Twitter account also received several hacking attempts.

This attack occurred days after the administrators of the profiles responded to an email.

**NUEVA PRENSA DE GUAYANA****(Tuesday, December 1st):**

The Instagram account of the newspaper Nueva Prensa de Guayana was hacked, according to the organization IPYS Venezuela.<sup>109</sup> Despite several attempts to recover the profile, which had more than 122,000 followers, the newspaper decided to open a new profile, @soynuevaprensa, because

<sup>105</sup> La Gran Aldea. [@lagranaldea]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/lagranaldea/status/1304472949534191616>

<sup>106</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Portal de La Gran Aldea sufrió ataque de DDoS que impidió accesos orgánicos de lectores [La Gran Aldea portal suffered a DDoS attack that prevented organic access by readers]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-portal-de-la-gran-aldea-sufrio-ataque-de-ddos-que-impidio-accesos-organicos-de-lectores/>

<sup>107</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1314758403135283201>

<sup>108</sup> Espacio Público. [@espaciopublico]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/espaciopublico/status/1332414912904261632>

<sup>109</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Alerta IPYSve Cuentas en Instagram de dos medios de comunicación fueron hackeados [IPYSve Alert Instagram accounts of two media outlets were hacked]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-cuentas-en-instagram-de-dos-medios-de-comunicacion-fueron-hackeados/>

the team was not able to regain access to their original account.

**PUNTO DE CORTE****(Sunday, December 6th):**

During the fraudulent electoral process that was carried out by the regime of Nicolás Maduro on December 6th, the Instagram account of the news media Punto de Corte was hacked, according to its director Nicmer Evans.<sup>110</sup>

Subsequently, the media managed to recover access to its account.

**CASES: ARRESTS AND INDICTMENTS****JESÚS CASTILLO****AND JESÚS TORRES****(Friday, March 13th):**

After publishing a video on the social network Facebook about two possible COVID-19 cases in the hospital "Victorino Santaella" in Los Teques, Miranda State, presenters of Radio Cima Jesús Castillo and Jesús Manuel Torres were detained by FAES officers.<sup>111</sup> They were subsequently transferred to the PNB headquarters in La Macarena at the request of the hospital, from where they assured that the information disseminated by the announcers was false.

On March 14th, they attended the CICPC headquarters in Los Teques,<sup>112</sup> and on March 16th, the Third Control Court issued a substitute measure of liberty, which obliges the broadcasters to appear before the court every eight days and prohibits them from leaving the State.<sup>113</sup>

**RUBÉN DUARTE****(Tuesday, March 17th):**

Officials of the DGCIM detained nurse Rubén

<sup>110</sup> Nicmer Evans. [@nicmerevans]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/NicmerEvans/status/1335746934460571649>

<sup>111</sup> Del Giudice, P. (2020). Obtienen libertad condicional locutores que difundieron video sobre supuestos casos por coronavirus [Radio hosts who broadcast video of alleged coronavirus cases are released on parole]. *El Pitazo*. <https://elpitazo.net/gran-caracas/otorgan-libertad-condicional-a-locutores-que-difundieron-video-sobre-supuestos-casos-de-coronavirus/>

<sup>112</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1238911542105706499>

<sup>113</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). Excarcelan a locutores que difundieron video sobre presuntos casos de coronavirus [Broadcasters who broadcast video of suspected coronavirus cases released from jail]. <http://espaciopublico.org/excarcelan-a-locutores-que-difundieron-video-sobre-presuntos-casos-de-coronavirus/>



Duarte,<sup>114</sup> after he disseminated on social networks a video in which he appears with other health workers denouncing the situation of the Hospital Central de San Cristóbal, which did not have the necessary medical supplies and cleaning products to attend the COVID-19 pandemic. In the early morning of March 18th, the NGO FundaREDES reported on its Twitter account that Duarte had been released<sup>115</sup> and expressed not to be afraid because he was right in denouncing the conditions of the hospital.<sup>116</sup>

### **JULIO MOLINOS**

**(Tuesday, March 17th):**

GNB officers detained doctor and leader of Voluntad Popular, Julio Molinos,<sup>117</sup> after denouncing on social media the precarious conditions of the Manuel Núñez Tovar hospital in Maturín, Monagas state, following the decision of Nicolás Maduro's regime to convert this hospital into a center for the attention of patients with COVID-19.

On March 19th, Molina was presented in court and charged with "inciting panic and anxiety in the community, incitement to hatred and aggression."<sup>118</sup> The court also ordered a measure of house arrest because Molina was 72 years old at the time.

### **DARVINSON ROJAS**

**(Saturday, March 21st):**

At around 8:30 on March 21st, journalist Darvinson Rojas reported on his social media that FAES officers wanted to arbitrarily enter his house to take him into custody. The SNTP denounced that 15 hooded and armed officers detained Rojas and his parents, taking computers

and cell phones.<sup>119</sup> After at least 50 minutes of detention, Rojas' parents were released and informed that Darvinson Rojas remained in custody in a FAES command located in La Quebradita, Caracas.

The following day, officials of this agency refused to provide information on the whereabouts of the journalist. After relatives and human rights defenders visited several police centers, it was known he was at the FAES headquarters in the UD5 of Caricuao, where he had been transferred from the La Quebradita command the night before. On March 23rd, the journalist was clandestinely presented and accused of "instigation to hatred and public instigation" under the unconstitutional "Law against Hate."<sup>120</sup> The journalist's father reported that the arrest responded to a tweet posted by Rojas related to COVID-19 in the country.<sup>121</sup> On April 2nd, 12 days after the arbitrary detention by FAES, Rojas was released.<sup>122</sup>

### **ELIO MENDOZA**

**(Wednesday, April 1st):**

Elio Mendoza, a Siderúrgica del Orinoco (SIDOR) employee, was arrested by officials of the DGCIM for having forwarded a WhatsApp message in which Maikel Moreno, president of the TSJ of the Venezuelan regime, was pointed out as a member of the gang "Los Enanos." Mendoza's sister reported that he had received a call from SIDOR's Plant Chief to "do a nightguard," despite having the day off. He was also told he would not be picked up by the usual transportation but by a pick-up truck.<sup>123</sup>

When he left the guardhouse, around 10:00 p.m., was the last time his relatives saw him, and they did not hear from him until the afternoon of the following day when he called his wife and told her that he was detained at the DGCIM headquarters in Puerto Ordaz for forwarding

<sup>114</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). Dgcim detiene a enfermero que exigió dotación de equipos de bioseguridad [DGCIM detains nurse who demanded biosecurity equipment]. <http://espaciopublico.org/dgcim-detiene-a-enfermero-que-exigio-dotacion-de-equipos-de-bioseguridad/>

<sup>115</sup> FundaREDES. [@fundaredes\_]. (2020). Twitter. [https://twitter.com/FundaREDES\\_/status/1240143453780168705](https://twitter.com/FundaREDES_/status/1240143453780168705)

<sup>116</sup> Crónica.Uno. [@cronicauno]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/CronicaUno/status/1240647493521756162>

<sup>117</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Alerta IPYSve Imputaron por incitación al odio a dirigente de salud en Monagas [IPYSve Alert: Health leader in Monagas charged with incitement of hatred]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-imputaron-por-incitacion-al-odio-a-dirigente-de-salud-en-monagas/>

<sup>118</sup> Rodríguez, R. (2020). Imputan a dirigente de salud en Monagas y le dictan arresto domiciliario [Monagas health leader charged and placed under house arrest]. *Efecto Cocuyo*. <https://efectococuyo.com/sucesos/imputan-a-dirigente-de-salud-en-monagas-y-le-dictan-arresto-domiciliario/>

<sup>119</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1241550145365389312>

<sup>120</sup> RedesAyuda. [@redesayuda]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/RedesAyuda/status/1241821070539227138>

<sup>121</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1241537178582294534>

<sup>122</sup> CNP Caracas. [@cnpccaracas]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/CNPCaracas/status/1245879795818340352>

<sup>123</sup> Flores, G. (2020). Dgcim detiene a trabajador de Sidor por reenviar mensaje de Whatsapp [DGCIM detains Sidor worker for forwarding Whatsapp message]. *El Pitazo*. <https://elpitazo.net/guayana/dgcim-detiene-a-trabajador-de-sidor-por-reenviar-mensaje-de-whatsapp/>

a WhatsApp message. On Friday, April 3rd, 53-year-old Elio Mendoza was presented in court and charged with “instigation to hatred and defamation” to Maikel Moreno. He was released in September under a “*presidential pardon*.”<sup>124</sup>

### **TANIA RODRÍGUEZ**

**(Friday, April 3rd):**

Tania Rodríguez, a former Ferrominera worker, was arbitrarily detained at her home by CONAS officials. The detention occurred after Rodríguez forwarded a message through WhatsApp and other social networks about Cilia Flores.<sup>125</sup> On Sunday, April 5th, she was presented in court and, although the charges against her were unknown, she received a custodial measure under house arrest. In September, Jorge Rodríguez announced that Rodríguez, together with a group of press and health sector workers, trade unionists, and political leaders, had been released under a “*presidential pardon*.” IPYS Venezuela reported that “at the discretion of the Venezuelan authorities,” she was serving a sentence for crimes under the “*Law against Hate*.”

### **ANDREA SAYAGO**

**(Saturday, April 4th):**

After posting a test order for a patient who tested positive for COVID-19 in a WhatsApp group, bioanalyst Andrea Sayago was arbitrarily detained in Trujillo state by State police.<sup>126</sup> Sayago was charged with “*treason, violation of privacy and incitement to hatred*.”<sup>127</sup> On April 6th, her presentation hearing was held, and she was placed under house arrest for alleged “*improper use of privileged information by a Public Server*.”<sup>128</sup>

<sup>124</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Trabajadores de la prensa entre las personas anunciadas por Jorge Rodríguez en el “*indulto presidencial*” [Press workers among those announced by Jorge Rodríguez in “*presidential pardon*”]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-trabajadores-de-la-prensa-entre-las-personas-anunciadas-por-jorge-rodriguez-en-el-indulto-presidencial/>

<sup>125</sup> Siverio, J. (2020). Privan de libertad a dos personas en Bolívar por reenvío de mensajes en redes [Two people arrested in Bolívar for forwarding messages on social media]. *Crónica Uno*. <https://cronica.uno/privan-de-libertad-a-dos-personas-en-bolivar-por-reenvio-de-mensajes-en-redes/>

<sup>126</sup> Espacio Público. [@espaciopublico]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/espaciopublico/status/1247156654879027200>

<sup>127</sup> Danieri, M. (2020). Detienen a bioanalista en Trujillo por publicar órdenes para pruebas de coronavirus [Bioanalyst arrested in Trujillo for publishing orders for coronavirus tests]. *El Pitazo*. <https://elpitazo.net/los-andes/detienen-a-bioanalista-acusada-de-traicion-a-la-patria-en-trujillo/>

<sup>128</sup> Provea. [@provea]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Provea/status/1247313382929285122>

### **ZULEIMA SÁNCHEZ, JEISON ROBLES AND SERGIO ÁNGEL**

**(Tuesday, April 14th):**

Tal Cual journal reported that the First Control Court of the Criminal Judicial Circuit of Táchira State, San Antonio extension, ordered the preventive detention of Zuleima Sánchez, Jeison Robles, and Sergio Ángel “*for allegedly committing the crimes of incitement to hatred and resistance to authority*.”<sup>129</sup>

They were accused after posting a video on Instagram in which they sowed the conditions of at least 1,000 Venezuelans in a shelter in “*Las Tienditas*” bridge (pedestrian road connecting the north of Santander, Colombia with Venezuelan Táchira State).<sup>130</sup> In a press release, the TSJ of the regime notified (according to its criteria) that in the videos “*the instigation to hatred and the call to the general population to disrespect the Decree issued by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in virtue of the COVID-19 pandemic is evidenced*.”<sup>131</sup>

### **EDUARDO GALINDO**

**(Wednesday, April 15th):**

The SNTP denounced on its Twitter account that CONAS officials took journalist Eduardo Galindo,<sup>132</sup> from his home in San Fernando de Apure to make him give statements on a publication of his website [www.senderosdeapure.net](http://www.senderosdeapure.net).<sup>133</sup> Approximately two hours later, the officers returned to Galindo’s house to take his laptop, and upon the refusal of his relatives, they took the electronic equipment by force. The journalist’s wife and brother were also detained.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Tal Cual. (2020). Privadas de libertad tres personas por denunciar en Instagram los albergues en Tienditas [Three people arrested for denouncing Tienditas shelters on Instagram]. <https://talcualdigital.com/privadas-de-libertad-tres-personas-por-denunciar-en-instagram-los-albergues-en-tienditas/>

<sup>130</sup> La Patilla. (2020). Las condiciones inhumanas en las que se encuentran más de 1.000 venezolanos en el puente Las Tienditas [The subhuman conditions in which more than 1,000 Venezuelans find themselves on the Las Tienditas bridge]. <https://www.lapatilla.com/2020/04/06/las-condiciones-inhumanas-en-las-que-se-encuentran-mas-de-1000-venezolanos-en-el-puente-las-tienditas-videos/>

<sup>131</sup> Tribunal Supremo de Justicia. [tsjvenezuela]. (2020). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/691681391464606>

<sup>132</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1250544126665375749>

<sup>133</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1252743083323723776>

<sup>134</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1250551992566546432>

On Sunday, April 19th, the presentation hearing of Eduardo Galindo and his wife and brother at the Third Court of Control. Galindo's relatives were charged with resisting arrest, while Galindo was charged with disseminating false information. The three individuals were sentenced to an alternative measure of liberty with a court appearance every 15 days.

The journalist's wife and brother were released that same day but Galindo was asked for five bondsmen for his release order to be executed. His documents were not reviewed until the court's next session. Therefore, the journalist was released on Monday, May 4th, when the review of the documents was completed and the release was approved.<sup>135</sup>

### LUIS ARAYA

(Wednesday, April 15th):

Gynecologist Luis Araya, an assistant physician at the Pastor Oropeza Riera Hospital in Carora, Lara State, was arrested without a warrant by officials of the DGCIM on the afternoon of Wednesday, April 15th, at his private practice. According to the NGO Provea, the arrest *"has to do with a WhatsApp status where he criticizes an official"*<sup>136</sup> of the regime of Nicolás Maduro.

Araya's brother informed in an interview with El Pitazo that they did not know the whereabouts of the specialist until midnight of April 16th. He also stated that the reason for the arrest was *"because he published a video that he is shooting against the government."*<sup>137</sup>

The doctor was transferred to the headquarters of the Operative Zone of Integral Defense (ZODI) in the city of Barquisimeto, Lara State, where he spent the night in custody. On April 16th, after his presentation hearing, he was charged with "instigation to hatred" and received a precautionary measure of presentation every 30 days.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Rodríguez, R. (2020). Excarcelan a periodista Eduardo Galindo Peña en Apure [Journalist Eduardo Galindo Peña released from jail in Apure]. *Efecto Cocuyo*. <https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/excarcelan-a-periodista-eduardo-galindo-pena-en-apure/>

<sup>136</sup> Provea. [@provea]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/provea/status/1250610644363116544>

<sup>137</sup> Gascón, L. (2020). Dgcim detiene a médico de Carora por un estado de WhatsApp [DGCIM detains Carora doctor for a WhatsApp status]. *El Pitazo*. <https://elpitazo.net/occidente/dgcim-detiene-a-un-medico-de-carora-por-un-estado-de-whatsapp/>

<sup>138</sup> Movimiento Vinotinto. [@movinotinto]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/movinotinto/status/1250879238296698880>

### IVÁN VIRGÜEZ

(Saturday, Saturday 18th):

Lawyer and human rights defender Iván Virgüez was detained by Yaracuy Regional Police officers after posting an opinion on Facebook<sup>139</sup> about the gasoline shortage and the decision by the governor and mayor of Yaracuy state to turn the University Village into a center to keep people returning to the country from Colombia in quarantine.

In the evening hours of Monday, April 20th, his presentation hearing was held, officiated by the Municipal Control Judge, Nexal Bustillo. The court imposed house arrest and a prohibition from speaking or expressing his opinion on State matters. On the other hand, Virgüez's brother, Aner Virgüez, declared that *"he was detained in subhuman conditions, he spent more than four hours bent over, handcuffed, which caused his legs to swell."*<sup>140</sup> The human rights defender had to be taken to a hospital to undergo surgery with a catheter as a result of the police abuse.

### FERNANDO ANTONIO MARCANO

(Sunday, April 26th):

A CONAS commission arrested teacher Fernando Marcano in the morning hours of Sunday, April 26th, in La Asunción, Nueva Esparta State, after he denounced on his Facebook account the shortage of water and gasoline during the COVID-19 pandemic in Venezuela.<sup>141</sup>

On April 27th, he was transferred to the Palace of Justice in Nueva Esparta, where he was sentenced to prison and charged with "incitement to hatred."<sup>142</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Prieto, J. (2020). Juez en Yaracuy impone casa por cárcel a activista por criticar cuarentena [Judge in Yaracuy imposes jail term on activist for criticizing quarantine]. *El Pitazo*. <https://elpitazo.net/occidente/juez-en-yaracuy-impone-casa-por-carcel-a-activista-por-criticar-cuarentena/>

<sup>140</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). Detienen a abogado en Yaracuy por opinar en las redes sociales [Lawyer arrested in Yaracuy for commenting through social networks]. <http://espaciopublico.org/detienen-a-abogado-en-yaracuy-por-opinar-en-las-redes-sociales/>

<sup>141</sup> Runrunes. (2020). Conas detuvo en La Asunción a un profesor que publicó en Facebook mensajes contra el gobierno [Conas arrested a teacher in La Asunción who posted anti-government messages on Facebook]. <https://runrun.es/noticias/405488/conas-detuvo-en-margarita-a-un-profesor-que-publico-en-facebook-mensajes-contras-el-gobierno/>

<sup>142</sup> Tal Cual. (2020). Dictan privativa de libertad a profesor en Nueva Esparta por quejas en RRSS sobre el país [Teacher in Nueva Esparta sentenced to prison for complaining about the country on social networks]. <https://talcualdigital.com/dictan-privativa-de-libertad-a-profesor-en-nueva-esparta-por-quejas-en-rrss-sobre-el-pais/>

On May 16th, due to health problems, Marcano was placed under house arrest.<sup>143</sup>

### **DANIEL GUZMÁN**

**(Monday, April 27th):**

Espacio Público reported on its Twitter account that university professor Daniel Guzmán had been arbitrarily detained by CICPC, PNB, and GNB officers at his residence in Barinas state, after criticizing Nicolás Maduro's regime on his social networks. According to his wife, Daniela Guzmán, he was charged with "incitement to hatred".<sup>144</sup>

### **JOSÉ VÁSQUEZ**

**(Tuesday, May 5th):**

After denouncing in his Facebook account and WhatsApp statuses the gasoline crisis in Cantaura, Anzoátegui State, citizen José Vásquez was arrested by GNB officers.<sup>145</sup> Vásquez was taken to the courts of El Tigre, where he was charged with "incitement to hatred."

He was released from prison under a 45-day presentation regime, a measure he had to comply with for three months.<sup>146</sup>

### **DARÍO SALCEDO**

**(Tuesday, May 5th):**

The secretary of the Organization of the National Union of Workers of Fishing, Aquaculture and Related Activities, Darío Salcedo, was arbitrarily detained by CICPC officials 20 days after denouncing on Twitter and WhatsApp irregularities regarding the delivery of food, a labor benefit of the Socialist Institute of Fishing and Aquaculture (Insopesca).

Salcedo was charged with "instigation to hatred." In his presentation hearing, the worker was ordered to be detained in the 26 de Julio Judicial

Process Center in Guárico State.<sup>147</sup> According to Espacio Público, he was placed under house arrest one month and 28 days after his arrest.<sup>148</sup>

### **WILFREDO RODRÍGUEZ**

**(Thursday, May 7th):**

Broadcaster Wilfredo Rodríguez was arbitrarily detained by CONAS officials<sup>149</sup> after denouncing in a publication in his Facebook illicit activity regarding GNB officials reselling gasoline in Delta Amacuro State. He was charged before the First Control Court, where Judge Lizgreana Palma charged him with the crime of "insulting a public official," and he was released from prison on May 11 under a 30-day reporting regime.<sup>150</sup>

### **ANDREINA URDANETA**

**(Tuesday, May 26th):**

CICPC officers arbitrarily detained Andreina Urdaneta, a resident doctor assigned to the Adolfo D'Empaire Hospital in Cabimas, Zulia State, for posting in her WhatsApp. The status showed a photographic montage of Nicolás Maduro appeared "*hanging with a rope and a mocking emoji next to it*."<sup>151</sup>

For this publication, Urdaneta was presented in the Judicial Circuit of Cabimas, where she was sentenced to imprisonment and charged with "offense to the President of the Republic, with aggravating hate crimes." On June 11th, NGO Espacio Público reported that Urdaneta had been released from prison<sup>152</sup> with a 30-day appearance regime.

<sup>143</sup> Reporte Confidencial. (2020). Otorgan «casa por cárcel» a profesor Fernando Marcano detenido 26 de abril por el Conas [Professor Fernando Marcano arrested on April 26th by Conas is granted "house arrest"]. <https://www.reporteconfidencial.info/2020/05/16/ultima-hora-otorgan-casa-por-carcel-a-profesor-fernando-marcano-detenido-26-de-abril-por-el-conas/>

<sup>144</sup> Espacio Público. [@espaciopublico]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/espaciopublico/status/1255322012509224964>

<sup>145</sup> Espacio Público. [@espaciopublico]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/espaciopublico/status/1258163875868000261>

<sup>146</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). GNB detiene a ciudadano por expresarse en redes sociales [GNB detains citizen for expressing himself on social media]. <http://espaciopublico.org/gnb-detiene-a-ciudadano-por-expresarse-en-redes-sociales/>

<sup>147</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). Detenido empleado de Insopesca por expresar inconformidad en el aumento de alimentos [Insopesca employee arrested for expressing dissatisfaction with food price increases]. <http://espaciopublico.org/detenido-e-expresar-inconformidad-aumento-alimentos/>

<sup>148</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). Excarcelan al trabajador de Insopesca tras casi dos meses detenido [Insopesca worker released from jail after almost two months in custody]. <http://espaciopublico.org/excarcelan-al-trabajador-de-insopesca-tras-casi-dos-meses-detenido/>

<sup>149</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). Excarcelan a locutor detenido por denunciar irregularidades con la gasolina en Delta Amacuro [Radio host detained for denouncing gasoline irregularities in Delta Amacuro released from jail]. <http://espaciopublico.org/excarcelan-a-locutor-detenido-por-denunciar-irregularidades-con-la-gasolina-en-delta-amacuro/>

<sup>150</sup> Espacio Público. [@espaciopublico]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/espaciopublico/status/1260368849372930053>

<sup>151</sup> Tomillo, M. (2020). Detenida médico en Cabimas por publicar foto contra Maduro en sus redes sociales [Doctor arrested in Cabimas for posting anti-Maduro photo on social media]. *Efecto Cocuyo*. <https://efectococuyo.com/sucesos/detenida-medico-en-cabimas-por-publicar-foto-contra-maduro-en-sus-redes-sociales/>

<sup>152</sup> Espacio Público. [@espaciopublico]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/espaciopublico/status/1271068711588429825?s=20>



**MIMÍ ARRIAGA****(Thursday, June 18th):**

The SNTP denounced the arbitrary detention of journalist and O800Noticias coordinator Mimí Arriaga<sup>153</sup> by CICPC officers who raided her house in El Hatillo, Miranda state. The incident occurred days after an anonymous account linked her to the management of other anonymous accounts in social networks, @vvsincensura, and @vvperiodistas, which allegedly posted messages against Delcy Rodríguez and Nicolás Maduro. The journalist was charged with “incitement to hatred,” and on June 22nd, the 47th Control Court of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas ordered house arrest, as well as a ban on leaving the country and a ban on disseminating in the media messages that incite hatred.<sup>154</sup>

**MARCO ANTOIMA****(Saturday, June 20th):**

On June 20th, two days after the arbitrary detention of journalist Mimí Arriaga, the SNTP denounced on its Instagram account that CICPC officials detained journalist Marco Antoima “for the same investigation for which Mimí Arriaga is being held, linked to the alleged handling of anonymous accounts on social networks.”<sup>155</sup> They also reported that the officials “pressured him with his son and the mother of his son,” so he decided to turn himself in. Like Arriaga, Antoima was charged with “incitement to hatred,” and on June 22nd, the 47th Control Court of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas issued house arrest to Marco Antoima, as well as a prohibition to leave the country and disseminate in the media messages that incite hatred.

**NICMER EVANS****(Monday, July 13th):**

On Sunday, July 12th, CICPC and DGCIM officers arrived at the home of Punto de Corte director Nicmer Evans with an alleged arrest warrant for the journalist. The officers held his wife, his minor son, his mother, and his mother-in-law hostage. On April 13th, Evans reported that his family was released “from the kidnapping that

were subjected to” in their home for more than four hours. However, the officials took his lawyer, Alvaro Herrera, “as a witness.”<sup>156</sup> This happens after the journalist published tweets related to Fidel Madroñero, who according to the journalist had been infected with COVID-19.<sup>157</sup>

On April 13th, Nicmer Evans reported in a video posted on his Instagram account<sup>158</sup> that CICPC officers intercepted him with an arrest warrant signed by the 21st Court of First Instance of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas, in charge of Judge José Márquez, being accused of “instigation to hatred.”<sup>159</sup> Evans decided to turn himself in due to the harassment his family was being subjected to. He appeared in court on July 17th when the arrest warrant against him was ratified.<sup>160</sup> Evans was released in September<sup>161</sup> under a “presidential pardon” after being unjustly imprisoned in the DGCIM headquarters for at least two months.

**JESÚS MEDINA****(Monday, August 31st):**

Photojournalist Jesús Medina was arbitrarily detained by GNB officer J.P. Montilla in the Sucre municipality of Miranda state. Medina told IPYS Venezuela that while he was having breakfast, he noticed that an officer of this military body was photographing him. After a few minutes, other officers entered the establishment, among them Montilla, who harassed him and threatened to cause him physical harm.<sup>162</sup> The photojournalist told him that he had a precautionary measure and that he was not committing any crime, to which

<sup>156</sup> Nicmer Evans. [@nicmerevans]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/NicmerEvans/status/1282788674149609472>

<sup>157</sup> Nicmer Evans. [@nicmerevans]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/NicmerEvans/status/1282435881064792066>

<sup>158</sup> Nicmer Evans. [@nicmerevans]. (2020). Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CCmgE4unJD9/>

<sup>159</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1282838654055002113>

<sup>160</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1284266458118328320>

<sup>161</sup> Infobae. (2020). Nuevas excarcelaciones en Venezuela tras el “indulto” de la dictadura chavista: Demóstenes Quijada y Nicmer Evans fueron liberados [New releases from prison in Venezuela after the “pardon” of the chavista dictatorship: Demosthenes Quijada and Nicmer Evans were released from jail]. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2020/09/01/nuevas-excarcelaciones-en-venezuela-tras-el-indulto-de-la-dictadura-chavista-demostenes-quijada-y-nicmer-evans-fueron-liberados/>

<sup>162</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Jesús Medina Ezaine fue detenido por tercera vez en tres años [Jesús Medina Ezaine arrested for the third time in three years]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-jesus-medina-ezaine-fue-detenido-arbitrariamente-por-tercera-vez-en-tres-anos/>

<sup>153</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1273837296052289536>

<sup>154</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). Tribunal dictó arresto domiciliario a Mimí Arriaga y a Marco Antoima [Mimí Arriaga and Marco Antoima placed under house arrest by court]. <http://espaciopublico.org/tribunal-dicto-arresto-domiciliario-a-mimi-arriaga-y-a-marco-antoima/>

<sup>155</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1274335907177431042>

Montilla responded that “*he did not care about Maduro, or anyone else*” and that he would be taken into custody for the denunciations he had made against him through social networks.

Jesus Medina was taken to a GNB command in Altamira, and that afternoon, he announced on his Twitter account that he had been released: “*Major J Montilla P, abusing his authority, detained me for some publications I made against him in previous months, precisely for abuse of authority,*”<sup>163</sup> said Medina.

### **FIDEL MARTÍNEZ**

**(Saturday, September 26th):**

Professor Fidel Martínez was arbitrarily detained by officials of the Directorate of Intelligence and Preventive Strategies (DIEP) of Aragua State without a court order after he called for protests through WhatsApp and on his Facebook account. The NGO Espacio Público reported that the officers forcibly took Martínez from his home to the DIEP headquarters in Maracay. Likewise, they also confiscated his computer, cell phones, and other personal belongings.<sup>164</sup>

Meanwhile, the news media Crónica Uno reported Martínez had been presented before the 10th Control Court of Aragua state “*with the pre-qualification of the crime of public instigation.*” The lawyers who handled his case were from the Human Rights Commission of the Aragua Bar Association, but despite their efforts, Martínez “*was imposed a precautionary measure of presentation of two bondsmen, periodic presentation before the court and to be pending of the case.*”<sup>165</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Jesús Medina Ezaine. [@jesusmedinae]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/jesusmedinae/status/1300524209861464065>

<sup>164</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). Detienen a profesor por llamar a manifestar en Aragua [Teacher detained for calling to protest in Aragua]. <http://espaciopublico.org/detienen-a-profesor-por-llamar-a-manifestar-en-aragua/>

<sup>165</sup> Díaz, G. (2020). Un profesor y dos comerciantes de Aragua fueron imputados de instigación pública por protestar [A teacher and two store owners in Aragua were charged with public instigation for protesting]. *Crónica Uno*. <https://cronica.uno/un-profesor-y-dos-comerciantes-de-aragua-fueron-imputados-de-instigacion-publica-por-protestar/>

## **CASES:**

## **HARASSMENT AND THREATS**

### **ROBERTO DENIZ**

**(Sunday, January 19th):**

José Brito, a deputy accused of acts of corruption and expelled from the political party Primero Justicia (opposition to the regime), defamed the work of Armando Info's journalist Roberto Deniz. Brito expressed in his Twitter account: “*I present to you Roberto ‘Rokola’ Deniz. For a few \$\$\$ he ‘sets up’ whomever you want. The client who gave him the most money this year was the ‘rojo rojito’ (alternative and jokingly term for Chavista) @RRamirezVE. PS. Robertico the publicity is free.*”<sup>166</sup> This statement responded to a tweet in which Deniz refers to a piece to be published in Armando Info about trips made by Parra and other deputies to places they never reported to have visited.<sup>167</sup>

### **JESÚS ALBINO**

**(Wednesday, February 5th):**

The SNTP reported that the correspondent of Televen, EVTVMiami, and FM Center in Anzoátegui State, Jesús Albino, denounced being the victim of false content in a publication on the social network Twitter,<sup>168</sup> through the account @juventudrebeld, currently suspended, which attempted to generate controversy against him.

### **GREGORIA DÍAZ**

**(Friday, February 21st):**

The Crónica Uno and IPYS Venezuela correspondent Gregoria Díaz was the victim of threats and harassment on Twitter and Instagram,<sup>169</sup> in which users called her “palangrista” (journalist or news media that receives illicit money) and “liar.” She was also the victim of a smear campaign by public officials of Aragua State after she reported on the procedure to rule out a possible case of COVID-19 to a citizen from China.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>166</sup> José Brito. [@diputadobrito]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JoseBritoVe/status/1218878294151630848>

<sup>167</sup> Roberto Deniz. [@robertodeniz]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/robertodeniz/status/1218678673831792644>

<sup>168</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1225467156898492416>

<sup>169</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Balance Especial IPYSve | 2020: Agresiones a mujeres periodistas en Venezuela [IPYSve | 2020 Special Report: Assaults on women journalists in Venezuela]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/balance-especial-ipysve-2020-agresiones-a-mujeres-periodistas-en-venezuela/>

<sup>170</sup> IPYS Venezuela. [@ipysvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ipysvenezuela/status/1231322551512653824>

It was not the only time in which Gregoria Díaz was the victim of threats, accusations, or harassment on social networks. On Tuesday, September 22nd, the SNTP denounced that the account @aragualucha on Instagram mentioned her as the author of the content developed therein.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, on Monday, September 28th, the SNTP denounced that the journalist was being harassed by officials of the governor's office of Aragua state and the mayors' offices of the state. They also held them responsible for the safety of Diaz and her family members.

According to IPYS Venezuela, on Sunday, September 27th, in a WhatsApp group called "Prensa Unida Aragua,"<sup>172</sup> made up of public officials and journalists of the governor's and mayor's offices of Aragua state, they disseminated a screenshot of a tweet of the journalist about a denunciation by Congresswoman Liz Carolina Jaramillo,<sup>173</sup> with the word "palangrista."

### **YOERLI VILORIA**

**(Wednesday, February 26th):**

IPYS denounced that the journalist of Diario Los Andes Yoyerli Viloria received "attacks and offensive statements" by Conrado Pérez, father of Conrado Pérez Linares, one of the deputies linked to acts of corruption concerning the Local Supply and Production Committee (CLAP), according to an investigation published by Armando.info. Viloria was accused of being "palangrista by trade" and "evil and calculating."<sup>174</sup>

### **MILAGROS SOCORRO (Monday, March 9th):**

She questioned the fact in her social media that as of March 9th, no cases of COVID-19 had been detected in Venezuela. She also highlighted

the shortcomings of the health system and the existence of robust censorship and persecution of medical personnel.

A user identified as William Castillo Bollé (@planwac) quoted the journalist's tweet with a text in which he expressed: "First case of #CoronaVirus in Venezuela. It is discovered that it also affects the brain, as we see here. Urgent attention!"<sup>175</sup> Two days later, Milagros Socorro denounced on her Twitter account that she was being a victim of "persecution and threats by dozens of users who identify themselves as followers of Venezuela's dictatorial regime."<sup>176</sup>

### **FREDDY PACHANO** **(Monday, March 9th):**

The governor of Zulia State, Omar Prieto, threatened in statements with the media to take legal action against the director of postgraduate studies of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zulia, Freddy Pachano after the doctor reported on his Twitter account about two suspected cases of COVID-19 at the University Hospital of Maracaibo (HUM).<sup>177</sup>

Prieto stated: "This Mr. Pachano has to be investigated. The investigation is for him to inform us. Now, if the information is false and he is openly communicating it, I am going to immediately ask the Public Prosecutor's Office to immediately file a proceeding against this gentleman."<sup>178</sup>

### **MELQUIADES ÁVILA** **(Saturday, March 14th):**

Governor of Delta Amacuro State Lizeta Hernández asked the commander of the Operational Zone of Integral Defense (ZODI), in a regional radio address, to summon the correspondent of El Pitazo, Melquiades Ávila, after he shared on his Facebook account a publication in which he questioned the technical and operational capacity of the Razetti Hospital of Tucupita to attend cases of COVID-19. In his statement Hernandez expressed: "Do me a favor Vice Admiral and quote me to Mr. Melquiades Avila."

<sup>171</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1308533149782208512>

<sup>172</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Alerta IPYSVe | Periodista Gregoria Díaz denunció campaña de acoso por parte de funcionarios públicos en Aragua [Alerta IPYSVe | Journalist Gregoria Díaz denounced harassment campaign by public officers in Aragua]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-periodista-gregoria-diaz-denuncio-campana-de-acoso-por-parte-de-funcionarios-publicos-en-aragua/>

<sup>173</sup> Gregoria Díaz. [@churuguara]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/churuguara/status/1310252071959003143>

<sup>174</sup> Institución de Prensa y Sociedad. (2020). Balance Especial IPYSVe | 2020: Agresiones a mujeres periodistas en Venezuela [IPYSVeSpecialReport | 2020: Assaults on women journalists in Venezuela]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/balance-especial-ipysve-2020-agresiones-a-mujeres-periodistas-en-venezuela/>

<sup>175</sup> William Castillo Bollé. [@planwac]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/planwac/status/1236401422477950979>

<sup>176</sup> Milagros Socorro. [@milagrossocorro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/MilagrosSocorro/status/1236646626141376513>

<sup>177</sup> Freddy Pachano Arenas. [@fpachano]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/fpachano/status/1237039308965662720>

<sup>178</sup> Diario La Verdad. (2020). Omar Prieto amenaza al doctor Freddy Pachano [Omar Prieto threatens doctor. Freddy Pachano]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bplkPumQLg8>

*Either they learn or they learn. By hook or by crook. There must be respect. Creating distress.”<sup>179</sup>*

### **BEATRIZ RODRÍGUEZ**

**(Tuesday, March 24th):**

The director of the newspaper La Verdad de Vargas, Beatriz Rodríguez,<sup>180</sup> was twice summoned to the Prosecutor’s Office to make statements on a news item published by the portal about a nurse of the Venezuelan Social Security Institute (IVSS) infected with COVID-19. On her second summons, on March 25, she was ordered not to make any statements to the media.

### **CHARITO ROJAS**

**(Wednesday, April 1st):**

Unión Radio journalist Charito Rojas received threats on her social networks after being mentioned by Diosdado Cabello on his program *Con el Mazo Dando*.<sup>181</sup>

### **LUIS GONZALO PÉREZ**

**(Wednesday, April 1st):**

NTN24 journalist Luis Gonzalo Pérez reported on his Twitter account having received multiple threats from unknown numbers.<sup>182</sup>

Those who wrote to him claimed to have the journalist’s location and named his mother as part of this harassment.

### **ADÁN CONTRERAS**

**(Thursday, April 2nd):**

Journalist Adán Contreras was summoned by the captain of the GNB in Tovar, Mérida State, to “talk” about a social media post in which he replied to a message of the municipal council official Belkis Contreras who said: “*It does not matter if there was no food, what matters is health.*”<sup>183</sup>

Furthermore, after this publication, the official threatened to sanction him with the “Law against Hate.”

<sup>179</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Balance Especial IPYSve | COVID-19: La información no es el virus [IPYSve Special Report | COVID-19: Information is not the virus]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/balance-especial-ipysve-covid-19-la-informacion-no-es-el-virus/>

<sup>180</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1242527808280240129>

<sup>181</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1245548909365211137>

<sup>182</sup> Luis Gonzalo Pérez. [@luisgonzalopr]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/luisgonzalopr/status/1245546637981880320>

<sup>183</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1245798711801925639>

### **ALBERTO RAVELL, LA PATILLA AND CHIGÜIRE BIPOLAR**

**(Friday, April 3rd):**

After journalist Alberto Ravell published a tweet in which he stated: “A fury is just around the corner in Venezuela and it is not exactly *Bolivarian*,”<sup>184</sup> the host of the program *Zurda Konducta* broadcasted on Venezolana de Televisión (VTV), the main state-owned television channel, threatened Ravell and the media La Patilla and El Chigüire Bipolar. Pedro Carvajalino expressed in his Twitter account: “*Finnnnnally! I want to smash your house! The Bolivarian fury has already started! And let’s go for the offices of la patilla, chiguire bipolar and everything that smells like you, bruja!*”<sup>185</sup>

### **EUTIMIO GONZÁLEZ**

**(Friday, April 17th):**

Journalist Eutimio González denounced that accounts on social networks associated to the administration of Yulisbeth García, Mayor of the Municipality of Piar, Bolívar State, disseminated threatening and defamatory messages against him. These accounts accused him of “*malandro (delinquent)*” and “*political operator*.”<sup>186</sup> In an interview for Infobae, the journalist assured that the mayor pointed out that he was responsible for an anonymous account in which “gossip and half-truths of the current environment of the Mayor were published, pointing her out for acts of corruption.”

Likewise, he expressed: “*it is disrespectful to call me a delinquent crook when I have not stolen anything (...) The mayor has made her whole team attack me in an unjust and unconscious manner.*”<sup>187</sup>

### **EDUARDO ASSAD**

**(Sunday, April 19th):**

The host and director of the Barinas state radio station Monumental 94.1, Nelson García Mora, accused the director of Noti21, Eduardo Assad, of

<sup>184</sup> Alberto Ravell. [@albertoravell]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AlbertoRavell/status/1246099194399645698>

<sup>185</sup> Pedro Karvajalino. [@pedrokonductaz]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/PedroKonductaz/status/1246099934694293504>

<sup>186</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1251190442135375877>

<sup>187</sup> Barráez, S. (2020). Militares venezolanos detienen y amenazan a periodistas por reseñar protestas o denunciar a funcionarios castrenses [Venezuelan military detain and threaten journalists for reporting protests or denouncing military officials]. *Infobae*. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2020/04/16/militares-venezolanos-detienen-y-amenazan-a-periodistas-por-reseñar-protestas-o-denunciar-a-funcionarios-castrenses/>



being “a murderer, a prostitute, a coward, a monster, a scumbag, and a human scum.” He also threatened him with death, stating that “he would not last a minute alive in any local street (in Santa Bárbara).”

In a tweet, the news media Noti21 made Nelson García responsible for the physical integrity of the journalist, who in an interview for IPYS Venezuela assured that he was afraid even though he was not in the country.<sup>188</sup>

### **LENIN DANIERI AND KAREN ARANGUIBEL**

**(Friday, April 24th):**

The SNTP denounced that journalists Lenin Danieri and Karen Aranguibel of El Venezolano TV received constant threats from an account on the social network Twitter.<sup>189</sup> Twitter account @AdolfoOrtizA has been sending false and threatening messages to journalists in Zulia state since March 26th. In one of the tweets, the user threatened journalist Aranguibel saying, “The order has already been given. You, your father, and the sisters you have left here.”<sup>190</sup>

Moreover, in one of the last mentions, the user accused both journalists of having symptoms of COVID-19 and indicated to the Ministry of People’s Power for Health (MPPS) that it was “necessary to visit them to avoid a spreading.”<sup>191</sup>

### **MARIANELLA SALAZAR**

**(Tuesday, May 5th):**

Jorge Rodríguez harassed, through the state television channel VTV, the journalist of El Nacional Marianella Salazar, accusing her of knowing about the events that took place in the early morning of May 3rd in Macuto, Vargas State, in the so-called “Operación Gedeón.”<sup>192</sup> Likewise, the TV channel Globovisión stated that the journalist knew about the alleged “terrorist action” in Macuto.<sup>193</sup> Both facts were based on a

tweet taken out of context, in which the journalist expressed that “it would not be easy to fall asleep,” referring to the confrontation between gangs in the José Félix Ribas sector of Petare.<sup>194</sup>

### **DIARIO EL VISTAZO**

**(Wednesday, May 6th):**

Officials of the Mayor’s Office of the municipality of Simón Rodríguez, in Anzoátegui, accused in a press release the newspaper El Vistazo of defaming them and “being a tabloid.”<sup>195</sup> The accusation was made after the newspaper published a public service for a deceased person in which they stated that the public entities did not provide assistance for the burial.

The Mayor of the municipality, Ernesto Raydán, also accused and exposed the media in social networks, according to a statement published by the media.<sup>196</sup>

### **DANIEL MOLINA**

**(Saturday, May 16th):**

GNB officers took Daniel Molina, correspondent of Pico Bolívar and Sureña 103.3 FM, out of his house for an alleged interview.<sup>197</sup> The incident occurred after the journalist published information on a disinfection team against COVID-19 in the center of the city of Tovar, Mérida state.

Molina was released at the GNB command in Tovar after being held incommunicado for an hour.

### **JOSÉ GREGORIO ROJAS**

**(Wednesday, June 3rd):**

The SNTP denounced that a reporter of the media outlet VPITV in Mérida State, José Gregorio Rojas, was accused of disseminating information that “harms Merideños (citizens of Merida)” by the Twitter user

<sup>188</sup> Linares, W. (2020). Director de Noti21 fue amenazado por locutor de Barinas [Director of Noti21 threatened by a broadcaster from Barinas]. IPYS Venezuela. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-director-de-noti21-fue-amenazado-por-locutor-de-barinas/>

<sup>189</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1253848550997254144>

<sup>190</sup> Adolfo Ortiz. [@adolfoortiza]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AdolfoOrtizA/status/1245680707529314305>

<sup>191</sup> Adolfo Ortiz. [@adolfoortiza]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AdolfoOrtizA/status/1253338333326925824>

<sup>192</sup> IPYS Venezuela. [@ipysvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ipysvenezuela/status/1257821826249613313>

<sup>193</sup> Globovisión. [@globovision]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/globovision/status/1256995686819610624>

<sup>194</sup> Marianella Salazar. [@aliasmalula]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AliasMalula/status/1257772545526452224>

<sup>195</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1259814105197789184>

<sup>196</sup> Varela, N. (2020). Diario El Vistazo denuncia difamación e instigación al odio por parte de alcalde de El Tigre, Ernesto Raydán [El Vistazo news paper denounces defamation and incitement to hatred by the mayor of El Tigre, Ernesto Raydán]. *Diario El Vistazo*. <https://diarioelvistazo.com/diario-el-vistazo-denuncia-difamacion-e-instigacion-al-odio-por-parte-de-alcalde-de-el-tigre-ernesto-raydan/>

<sup>197</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1261760912358354946>

@capuchabolivariana”<sup>198</sup>, due to the publication of reports related to the distribution of gasoline in the state made by the journalist.

### **JEAN CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ**

**(Thursday, June 9th):**

The journalist of the newspaper La Voz, Jean Carlos Rodríguez, reported being threatened by the supervisor of the police of the municipality of Independencia, in Miranda state, José Manuel Acevedo, who called the newspaper’s editorial office and said that *“the journalist knew whom he was messing with and that he would send Interpol to Colombia to look for him.”*<sup>199</sup>

Rodríguez is in exile due to threats received in the exercise of his profession.<sup>200</sup> These threats came after the journalist publicly denounced the privileges of PSUV councilwoman Lisbeth Arteaga.

### **ESTEBAN ECHEZURÍA**

**(Thursday, July 16th):**

Citizen Esteban Echezuría was harassed by officers of the Municipal Police of Sucre (PoliSucre), who attempted to take him to testify on a subpoena issued by the municipal police on July 15th.<sup>201</sup> According to Espacio Público, Echezuría did not leave until the officers left his residence. The harassment occurred after the citizen denounced on his Facebook account the shortage of domestic gas.

### **ESTHER YÁÑEZ**

**(Monday, July 27th):**

Journalist Esther Yáñez was harassed by the Twitter account @lechuginos\_com, which expressed messages such as “I’m coming for you” directed at the journalist.<sup>202</sup>

They also described her as a “delinquent” and accused her of having tried to enter an event with Nicolás Maduro with a false credential from

the Telesur channel. However, Yáñez clarified that after being fired from this media due to ideological differences, she immediately returned her credential as a journalist of this channel.

### **DANIEL MUROLO, POLA DEL GIUDICE AND ANA KARINA SANTOS**

**(Sunday, August 2nd):**

The SNTP denounced that journalists Daniel Murolo, Pola del Giudice, and Ana Karina Santos were harassed on social networks by Pedro Farfán,<sup>203</sup> a member of Voluntad Popular, whom from his Twitter account described the journalists as “irresponsible,” “tabloid-behaving” and “palangristas” for allegedly carrying out a campaign against him.

The journalists informed that this persecution “is due to a note published in the newspaper El Tequeño, in January, which reported the arrest of Farfán by the CICPC for the alleged rape of an underage girl working in his fast-food business.”<sup>204</sup>

### **JOSÉ AMALIO GRATEROL, DANIEL LARA AND JUAN VIALE RIGO**

**(Monday, August 17th):**

Esteban Arvelo, a member of the ruling party, denounced before the Public Prosecutor’s Office<sup>205</sup> the lawyer and human rights defender, José Amelio Graterol, and journalists Daniel Lara and Juan Viale for “instigation to hatred,” alleging that the three expressed hate messages about the death of the ruling party’s Darío Vivas.

### **JOSÉ GREGORIO RUÍZ**

**(Wednesday, August 26th):**

The governor of Delta Amacuro state, Lizeta Hernández, described journalist José Gregorio Ruíz as “irresponsible,” after he published on his Facebook account some images showing the transfer of a deceased person to the Tucupita morgue by a man in a biosecurity suit. He also described this action on the part of the journalist

<sup>198</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1268173243132903424>

<sup>199</sup> Jean C. Rodríguez. [@jeancrodriguez\_]. (2020). Twitter. [https://twitter.com/JeanCRodriguez\\_/status/1281303681489678336](https://twitter.com/JeanCRodriguez_/status/1281303681489678336)

<sup>200</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1281319641005031424>

<sup>201</sup> Espacio Público. (2020). PoliSucre intentó detener a ciudadano por denunciar la escasez del gas [Poli Sucre tried to arrest citizen for reporting domestic gas shortage]. <http://espaciopublico.org/polisucre-intento-detener-a-ciudadano-por-denunciar-la-escasez-del-gas/>

<sup>202</sup> Esther Yáñez. [@estheryez]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/EstherYez/status/1287703322271547392>

<sup>203</sup> SNTP. [@sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuelastatus/1289946603151753217>

<sup>204</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Periodistas de Los Teques fueron acosados vía Twitter por funcionario público [Journalists from Los Teques were harassed via Twitter by public official]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-periodistas-de-los-teques-fueron-acosados-via-twitter-por-funcionario-publico/>

<sup>205</sup> Esteban Arvelo. [@arveloesteban]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ArveloEsteban/status/1295390013010608129>

as “gafedad y mongolismo (being “retarded”).”<sup>206</sup>

### LUIS OLAVARRIETA

(Tuesday, September 29th):

Journalist Luis Olavarrieta was the victim of attacks by the Twitter account @luchuginos\_com, in which he was accused of breaking the law and calling for violence.<sup>207</sup> This occurs after Olavarrieta published a tweet about the protests in several regions of the country.

### JONATHAN PETIT

(Monday, October 12th):

Journalist Jonathan Petit denounced that accounts on social media accused him of promoting hatred, of being a “palangrista” and threatened him with the arrival of “operation tun-tun” (which consists of having State Security Forces officials knocking on your door to carry out raids and/or arrests).<sup>208</sup>

The incident occurred after the dissemination of a video about irregularities in Morrocoy National Park.<sup>209</sup>

### NOTITARDE

(Saturday, October 17th):

The governor of the state of Carabobo, Rafael Lacava, published a tweet attacking the media Notitarde and calling on “all the troops to keep their eyes open and knees to the ground.”<sup>210</sup>

After this tweet, IPYS Venezuela denounced that a campaign of attacks and aggressions against the media was started on social networks.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>206</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Gobernadora de Delta Amacuro arremetió contra reportero de El Periódico del Delta [Governor of Delta Amacuro lashed out at El Periódico del Delta reporter]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-gobernadora-de-delta-amacuro-arremetio-contra-reportero-de-el-periodico-del-delta/>

<sup>207</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020) Periodista Luis Olavarrieta fue atacado por el portal pro oficialista Lechuguinos [Journalist Luis Olavarrieta attacked by pro-government portal Lechuguinos]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-periodista-luis-olavarrieta-fue-atacado-por-el-portal-pro-oficialista-lechuguinos/>

<sup>208</sup> Revilla, I. (2020). Periodista en Falcón fue amenazado tras publicar investigación sobre el parque Nacional Morrocoy [Journalist in Falcón was threatened after publishing an investigation on Morrocoy National Park]. IPYS Venezuela. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-periodista-en-falcon-fue-amenazado-tras-publicar-investigacion-sobre-el-parque-nacional-morrocoy/>

<sup>209</sup> Jhonattam Petit. [@soypetitygarcia]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/soypetitygarcia/status/1315767618788302848>

<sup>210</sup> Rafael Lacava. [@rafaellacava10]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/rafaellacava10/status/1317442115106897921>

<sup>211</sup> IPYS Venezuela. [@ipysvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ipysvenezuela/status/1317470938460528640>

### LUISANA SUÁREZ

(Monday, November 2nd):

The journalist Luisana Suárez was threatened by the director of Emergencias 171 in the municipality of Anzoátegui, Cojedes State, Jhoannelis Coronel, after she published on her social networks the denunciation of a community that demanded the return of an ambulance. Coronel wrote to her through the instant messaging application WhatsApp, expressing to her to “avoid messing with the wrong person” and “I’m just telling you, you expose me again, and the problem will be worse.”<sup>212</sup>

### LORENA ARRÁIZ

(Wednesday, November 4th):

Journalist Lorena Arráiz denounced in her Twitter account a campaign of harassment against her. She said: “The text has the same argument of those who have harassed me for years and whom I had to denounce in Venezuela and Colombia for violence and harassment.”<sup>213</sup> On Sunday, November 1st, a video was published on YouTube by the account “Anonymous Venezuela”,<sup>214</sup> which for more than eight minutes directed threatening messages and false accusations against her. IPYS Venezuela denounced that this material was also being spread on social networks.<sup>215</sup>

### TIBISAY ROMERO

(Tuesday, November 10th):

The SNTP denounced that accounts on social networks carried out a campaign of harassment and intimidation against journalist Tibisay Romero.

The SNTP held the accounts administrators responsible for Romero’s safety and urged “public officials to condemn and not take part in these

<sup>212</sup> Olvera, A. (2020). Periodista de Class 98.7 FM fue amenazada por la directora de 171 en Cojedes [Journalist of Class 98.7 FM was threatened by the director of 171 in Cojedes]. IPYS Venezuela. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-periodista-de-class-98-7-fm-fue-amenazada-por-la-directora-de-171-en-cojedes/>

<sup>213</sup> Lorena Evelyn Arráiz. [@loreaarraiz]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/loreaarraiz/status/1324021888473997313>

<sup>214</sup> Anonymous Venezuela. (2020). ¡LA PERIODISTA MÁS CORRUPTA DE VENEZUELA! LORENA ARRÁIZ | Anonymous Venezuela [THE MOST CORRUPT JOURNALIST IN VENEZUELA! LORENA ARRÁIZ | Anonymous Venezuela]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adf0Ct42vf8>

<sup>215</sup> IPYS Venezuela. (2020). Periodista Lorena Arráiz fue nuevamente acosada por redes sociales [Journalist Lorena Arráiz was once again harassed in social media]. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-periodista-lorena-arriz-fue-nuevamente-acosada-por-redes-sociales/>



practices that violate the right to information and free thought”.<sup>216</sup>

**KISME EVARISTO AND  
ANA MUÑOZ**  
(Friday, November 20th):

The former political leader of the Primero Venezuela party in Amazonas state, Romel Despas, threatened on his Facebook account to denounce communicators Ana Muñoz and Kisme Evaristo, after both mentioned in their radio programs the reason for Despas’ expulsion from the party in which he was a militant.

Subsequently, on Monday, November 23th, Romel Despas denounced the communicators before the Public Prosecutor’s Office for defamation.<sup>217</sup>

**VÍCTOR AMAYA**  
(Monday, December 7th):

The SNTP denounced that the former member of the Primero Justicia political party, José Brito, “offended and accused” journalist Víctor Amaya<sup>218</sup> through direct messaging on Twitter, after Amaya published a photo about the participation of voters in the irregular and fraudulent electoral process carried out on December 6th by the regime of Nicolás Maduro.

**OTHER CASES OF VIOLATION  
OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION  
ON THE INTERNET**

**ARARAUNA**  
(Wednesday, May 20th):

On May 20th, the media outlet Ararauna ([www.ararauna.com.ve](http://www.ararauna.com.ve)) informed that their provider notified them that the renewal of their web domain had been disabled and that it had to be approved by CONATEL.<sup>219</sup>

In view of this decision, Ararauna reiterated its commitment to inform citizens and to continue

its informative work they acquired a new domain ([www.araraunanews.com](http://www.araraunanews.com)).

**REYES THEIS**  
(Sunday, June 7th):

Independent journalist Reyes Theis denounced in his Twitter account that an interview he conducted with former PDVSA’s president, Rafael Ramírez,<sup>220</sup> in which he assured that Cilia Flores’ nephew diverted resources that should have been used for the refining of gasoline, was censored from El Nacional.

The journalist said the interview was taken down hours after being published in the media, and he was told that it was an editorial decision: *“I suspect that there were pressures to eliminate the interview inopportunely, in which the former president of PDVSA makes some accusations about the nephew of the Maduro-Flores couple,”* said the journalist.

**LA GRAN ALDEA**  
(Friday, October 9th):

The news media La Gran Aldea denounced being the victim of a “legal attack” promoted by Haiman El Troudi,<sup>221</sup> which caused its website ([www.lagranaldea.com](http://www.lagranaldea.com)) to be temporarily offline. According to the news portal, the attack was aimed at rendering inaccessible an article published on its website entitled “The new pretty face of Haiman El Troudi.”<sup>222</sup> This article mentions information on El Troudi’s participation as a congressman, in addition to his trips to Paris and *“the freezing of 48 million dollars to his wife and mother-in-law.”*

For this publication, the media received an email from representatives of El Troudi in which they specified that the information exposed in the article *“seriously violates the right to honor of my client.”* Subsequently, the news portal received a notification from its service provider about a complaint about alleged plagiarism, explaining that *“they used the Digital Millennium Copyright Act Form,”* which obliged them to download the article to avoid the suspension of the service. However, representatives of La Gran Aldea explained that their content was duplicated and the date

<sup>216</sup> SNTP. [sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1326145713957429248?s=20>

<sup>217</sup> Azavache, C. (2020). Dos locutores en Amazonas fueron denunciados ante el Ministerio Público [Two broadcasters in Amazonas were denounced to the Public Prosecutor’s Office]. IPYS Venezuela. <https://ipysvenezuela.org/alerta/alerta-ipysve-dos-locutores-en-amazonas-fueron-denunciados-ante-el-ministerio-publico/>

<sup>218</sup> SNTP. [sntpvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1336059406384033803>

<sup>219</sup> Ararauna. [ararauna\_ve]. (2020). Twitter. [https://twitter.com/ararauna\\_ve/status/1263254588083392516](https://twitter.com/ararauna_ve/status/1263254588083392516)

<sup>220</sup> Reyes Theis. [reyestheis]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/reyestheis/status/126966637775951872>

<sup>221</sup> La Gran Aldea. [lagranaldea]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/lagranaldea/status/1315024387846877185>

<sup>222</sup> Fuente, E. (2020). La nueva cara bonita de Haiman El Troudi [The new pretty face of Haiman El Troudi]. La Gran Aldea. <https://www.lagranaldea.com/2020/05/28/la-nueva-cara-bonita-de-haiman-el-troudi/>

modified to simulate that the copied piece was published before the original.

This type of attack has been used on other occasions against other media outlets and civil society organizations, and was even investigated in an article by Armando.Info.<sup>223</sup>

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**223** Marcano, P. (2021). Censuran a la prensa, engañan a Google, y hacen plata con eso [They censor the press, cheat Google, and make money with it]. *Armando.Info*. <https://armando.info/censuran-a-la-prensa-enganan-a-google-y-hacen-plata-con-eso/>

# **CHAPTER III:**

## **EVENTS THAT AFFECTED INTERNET CONNECTIVITY**

### Chapter III

- **Power Outages**
- **Fiber Optic Outages**
- **Other events that affected Internet connectivity**

In Venezuela, access to essential public services, including telecommunications and the Internet, is constantly deteriorating. In a study conducted by the Venezuelan Observatory of Public Services (OVSP), between May and April 2020, it was observed that 44.4% of those surveyed stated that they had lost their Internet connection during the last 23 months. Likewise, 65.3% reported that the Internet service in their homes had failures every day, and 62.2% of those consulted assured that their Internet service “is not of sufficient quality to keep them informed and communicated during the contingency” generated by the COVID-19.<sup>224</sup>

Since 2019, Venezuelans have faced blackouts that significantly affected Internet connectivity. The NetBlocks observatory reported on March 7, 2020, one year into the national blackout, that they had documented a total of 60 power outages that limited Venezuelans’ rights “to education, communication, prosperity, and a daily life.”<sup>225</sup> This year, 73 events were documented, including power outages, fiber optic cuts, and other events that affected Internet connectivity throughout the country:

<sup>224</sup> Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social. (2020). 33% de los encuestados por el OVSP indicó haber perdido el servicio de internet en el hogar [33% of those surveyed by the OVSP reported having lost Internet service at home]. <https://www.observatoriovosp.org/33-de-los-encuestados-por-el-ovsp-indico-haber-perdido-el-servicio-de-internet-en-el-hogar/>

<sup>225</sup> NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1236450685908135940>

# Power Outages

During 2020, there were at least 16 power outages that affected the Internet connection, as documented by the NetBlocks observatory and the VE Sin Filtro project.

POWER OUTAGES (2020)		
DATE	MOST AFFECTED STATES	% CONNECTIVITY
January, 18 <sup>1</sup>	Táchira	6
	Mérida	12
January, 22 <sup>2</sup>	Táchira	7
	Mérida	9
February, 17 <sup>3</sup>	Táchira	6
	Mérida	11
February, 18 <sup>4</sup>	Táchira:	≈14
	Mérida:	≈15
March, 1 <sup>5</sup>	Táchira	6
	Mérida	12
	Trujillo	19
March, 3 <sup>6</sup>	Táchira	4
	Mérida	17
March, 5 <sup>7</sup>	Bolívar	4
	Táchira	17
	Portuguesa	21
March, 8 <sup>8</sup>	Suce	10
	Anzoátegui	15
	Zulia	29

- 1** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1218714426049794048>
- 2** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1220150202981593088>
- 3** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1229554967557570561>
- 4** VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1229844106735648769>
- 5** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1234246761461493761>
- 6** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1234920593184739331>
- 7** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1235626581432901634>
- 8** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1236742576386039809>

<b>March, 12<sup>9</sup></b>	Táchira	<b>5</b>
	Mérida	<b>7</b>
	Barinas	<b>21</b>
<b>March, 20<sup>10</sup></b>	Táchira	<b>4</b>
	Mérida	<b>9</b>
<b>March, 25<sup>11</sup></b>	Táchira	<b>≈1</b>
	Mérida	<b>≈14</b>
<b>May, 5<sup>12</sup></b>	Táchira	<b>22</b>
	Barinas	<b>28</b>
<b>July, 6<sup>13</sup></b>	Táchira	<b>19</b>
	Mérida	<b>32</b>
	Barinas	<b>37</b>
<b>September, 23<sup>14</sup></b>	Nacional	<b>≈63</b>
<b>September, 25<sup>15</sup></b>	Nacional	<b>≈75</b>
<b>Octubre, 2<sup>16</sup></b>	Táchira	<b>35</b>
	Carabobo	<b>47</b>
	Lara	<b>48</b>

**Source:** VE Sin Filtro y Netblocks

- 9** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1238158141239504896>
- 10** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1241144364484739075>
- 11** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1243083700331577344>
- 12** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1257770328778031105>
- 13** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1280312227015335937>
- 14** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1308848230919221253>
- 15** NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1309649481386930176>
- 16** VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1312045078240800768>

### FIBER OPTIC OUTAGES (REPORTED BY MAJOR ISPs):

Some of the major Internet providers in Venezuela reported fiber-optic outages in different states of the national territory through their Twitter accounts.

In total, RedesAyuda documented, based on the information published by ISPs, a total of 54 fiber optic outages that affected Internet access.<sup>226</sup>

CANTV	INTER	NETUNO	MOVISTAR	TOTAL
22	15	13	4	54

### OTHER EVENTS THAT AFFECTED INTERNET CONNECTIVITY:

- Fire at CANTV's offices in Chacao on April 7 caused a decrease of almost 50% in Internet traffic for users of this ISP.<sup>227</sup>
- Maintenance of the Panama - Saint Croix submarine cable, carried out on May 17, affected Internet connectivity in some of the major Internet providers in the country, among them: Movistar, Inter, Supercable, NetUno, IFX, Gandalf, and Century Link.<sup>228</sup>
- The NetBlocks observatory documented a partial interruption of Internet traffic through the state-owned CANTV that affected the states of Apure, Aragua, Guárico, and Cojedes on the night of April 18.<sup>229</sup>

<sup>226</sup> RedesAyuda. (2020). Cortes de fibra que afectaron la conectividad a Internet en Venezuela durante 2020. [Fiber cuts that affected Internet connectivity in Venezuela during 2020]. <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1U6ZAdNFgV48jzKn6mRidiNw0kxAdFb82?usp=sharing>

<sup>227</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1246976409370845185>

<sup>228</sup> VE Sin Filtro. [@vesinfiltro]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/vesinfiltro/status/1261938518269538305>

<sup>229</sup> NetBlocks. [@netblocks]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1251687708868608001>





# **CHAPTER IV:**

## **OVERCOMING CENSORSHIP**

**Campaigns in favor of acces to information and  
freedom of speech**

**Contenido del Capítulo IV:**

- **Empower Rangers**
- **Condemnation of the events that happened on January 5 at the National Assembly**
- **RightsCon**
- **National Collage of Journalists**
- **ICANN votes against the sale of “.org” domains**
- **Together for reliable information**
- **Journalism to reveal the hidden**
- **Save the Internet Freedom Tech**

## EMPOWER RANGERS

The Empower Rangers is a series of animated videos created by RedesAyuda with the Venezuelan illustrator Kevin “El Politigato” Monsalve, which is based on the popular television series Power Rangers. The goal of the videos is to educate and communicate on issues related to human rights in a fun and attractive way for the general public.

The first stage of the series featured the blue Empower Ranger, who talks about digital security issues, gives recommendations and explains some of the dangers and bad practices that can increase the level of risk when browsing on the Internet. In the first episode, topics like strong passwords and 2-step verification are covered.<sup>230</sup>

## CONDEMNATION OF THE EVENTS THAT HAPPENED ON JANUARY 5 AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

RedesAyuda, together with more than 70 civil society organizations, signed a statement rejecting the events that took place on January 5th, 2020, in the National Assembly, where pro-Chávez parliamentarians tried to impose a board of directors without the required quorum. We also reject the obstructions, repression, and aggression against journalists present to document and report the event.

## RIGHTSCON

Melanio Escobar, journalist, human rights defender, and Director of RedesAyuda, was invited by Access Now to be part of the RightsCon 2020 program committee,<sup>231</sup> a global summit that brings together activists, journalists, technology experts, and human rights defenders to discuss human rights and technology agenda items.

Escobar became the first Venezuelan to be part of the RightsCon committee, which, together with a group of experts in human rights issues, curated the content to be presented at the conference that brought together more than 3,000 people from around the world.

<sup>230</sup> RedesAyuda. (2020). RedesAyuda presents: The Empower Rangers. <https://redesayuda.org/2020/12/11/theempowerrangersuno/>

<sup>231</sup> Melanio Escobar. [@melaniobar]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/MelanioBar/status/1215680950123757568>

## NATIONAL COLLEGE OF JOURNALISTS

In alliance with the National College of Journalists, Caracas branch, RedesAyuda donated 5,000 mAh power banks to the press workers affiliated with this institution.<sup>232</sup>

## ICANN VOTES AGAINST THE SALE OF “.ORG” DOMAINS

In 2019, RedesAyuda joined more than 870 organizations and 27,000 individuals in a campaign led by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) to stop the sale of “.org” domains management to Ethos Capital. On April 30th, 2020, EFF reported that the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Board of Directors voted against the sale of this domain management to Ethos Capital,<sup>233</sup> marking a victory for civil society organizations around the world.

## TOGETHER FOR RELIABLE INFORMATION

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the beginning of the quarantine in Venezuela, the journalistic and documentation work in the country did not stop. In that regard, RedesAyuda joined the Free Press Unlimited campaign “Together for reliable information”,<sup>234</sup> to provide hygiene kits that would allow Venezuelan journalists to stay protected from COVID-19 during the exercise of their work of documenting, reporting and communicating.

In Venezuela, journalists also face other types of challenges, such as assaults, robberies, criminal charges, and imprisonment, so, as part of this campaign, they were provided with legal assistance in cases that required it.

## JOURNALISM TO REVEAL THE HIDDEN

IPYS Venezuela held its first virtual course on investigative journalism, “Journalism to reveal the hidden.” This initiative had the goal of updating and reinforcing the knowledge on investigative journalism of the participants who took part in

<sup>232</sup> CNP Caracas. [@cnpccaracas]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/CNPCaracas/status/1230666601734836224>

<sup>233</sup> EFF. [@eff]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/EFF/status/1256053946289774594>

<sup>234</sup> RedesAyuda. [@redesayuda]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/RedesAyuda/status/1271532727624400897>

the workshop. RedesAyuda's general coordinator, Luis Serrano, was in charge of developing the module on physical and digital security for journalists.<sup>235</sup>

## **SAVE INTERNET FREEDOM TECH**

The Open Technology Fund (OTF) is an Internet freedom organization that has historically supported projects such as Psiphon, Signal, Tor, Tails, and Lantern to address Internet censorship and surveillance, as well as initiatives such as the Internet Freedom Festival that serves as a space for coordinating and promoting the digital rights agenda globally.

In June 2020, a group of activists, experts, and OTF members launched a campaign to request support in light of the Donald Trump administration's decision to appoint Michael Pack as executive director of the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), OTF's principal source of funding.

Pack's appointment as USAGM director came amid the introduction of the "Open Technology Fund Authorization Act," which focused on OTF's independence and long-term sustainability. USAGM's new leader fired directors of projects such as Radio Free Asia, Middle East Broadcasting, and Radio Free Europe and subsequently attempted to dissolve the OTF board of directors. RedesAyuda joined hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals in the #SaveInternetFreedom campaign, which demanded the U.S. Congress intervention to protect the OTF, restore its board and core professionals, and called for the unblocking of the unjustly withheld.<sup>236</sup>

**235** IPYS Venezuela. [@ipysvenezuela]. (2020). Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ipysvenezuela/status/1241472148213919744>

**236** Save Internet Freedom. (2020). The #SaveOTF Story. <https://saveinternetfreedom.tech/information/the-story/>

# **CHAPTER V:**

**APPLICATIONS AND TOOLS TO  
OVERCOME INTERNET CENSORSHIP**

## **Chapter V:**

- **VPN**
- **Tor Browser**
- **Change of DNS Servers**
- **2-Step Verification**
- **OONI Probe**
- **The Amnesic Incognito Live System**
- **Deflect**



## VPN (VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORK)

A VPN, or virtual private network, is a tool that allows two or more devices to be connected securely through a virtual point-to-point connection. It makes it possible to bypass most types of website blocking by hiding the user's browsing from their *ISP*. Similarly, VPNs hide the user's IP address from the servers of the websites they visit, preventing them from tracing the original location of the connection.

These are some recommended secure and reliable VPN providers:

- **Psiphon:** <https://psiphon.news/humanoderecho>
- **TunnelBear:** <https://www.tunnelbear.com>
- **RiseupVPN:** <https://riseup.net/es/vpn>

## TOR BROWSER

Tor Browser is a *web* browser part of the Tor project, focused on preserving the privacy and anonymity of Internet users, allowing them to evade Internet blocks and censorship. The connection and traffic of the browser are made through the network of Tor servers, distributed around the world, so the user's *IP* address gets hidden from the server of the website it accesses, and browsing gets hidden from the user's *ISP*.

In addition, Tor Browser has several features to block trackers, hide the type of device and operating system from which the user connects, and deletes browsing data once the application is closed.

- **Tor Browser:** <https://www.torproject.org/download/>

## CHANGE OF DNS SERVERS

A Domain Name System (*DNS*) server is responsible for translating the domains associated with a website to the *IP* address where the website is hosted, for example: translating from "redesayuda.org" to "104.31.64.195".

Changing the *DNS* servers on our devices allows us to bypass *DNS* server-based blocking imposed by *ISPs*.

**Instructions for changing DNS servers:**  
<https://1.1.1.1/dns/#setup-instructions>

## Google:

- **IPv4:** main "8.8.8.8" and secondary "8.8.4.4".
- **IPv6:** main "2001:4860:4860::8888" and secondary "2001:4860:4860::8844".
- **Intra (Android):** <https://getintra.org/>

## Cloudflare:

- **IPv4:** main "1.1.1.1" and secondary "1.0.0.1".
- **IPv6:** main "2606:4700:4700::1111" and secondary "2606:4700:4700::1001".
- **1.1.1.1 (iOS and Android):** <https://1.1.1.1/>

## IBM:

- **IPv4:** main "9.9.9.9" and secondary "149.112.112.112".
- **IPv6:** main "2620:fe::fe" and secondary "2620:fe::9".
- **Quad9 Connect (Android):**  
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.quad9.aegis>

## 2-STEP VERIFICATION

Internet censorship also manifests itself through hacks, which seek to steal access to users' accounts to prevent them from using them to share and spread information.

2-step verification adds an extra security barrier to accounts on digital platforms, based on the principle of something you know and something you have, being your password what you know, and your 2-step verification method, what you have. The sites or applications will request the 2-step verification once the user submits their password correctly.

- **Authy:** <https://authy.com/download/>
- **YubiKey:** <https://www.yubico.com/store/>

## OONI PROBE

OONI Probe is a tool developed by the Open Observatory on Network Interference (OONI), created to document and measure Internet censorship through the detection and diagnosis of blockings aimed at websites, instant messaging applications and online censorship bypass tools.

Data collected by the application is published in near real-time and is accessible through the OONI browser for independent third-party analysis.

- **OONI Probe:** <https://ooni.org/install/all>
- **OONI Explorer:** <https://explorer.ooni.org/>

### ■ THE AMNESIC INCOGNITO LIVE SYSTEM (TAILS)

Tails is a Debian-based Linux distribution focused on user privacy and anonymity. All Internet traffic you make through Tails is encrypted and routed through the Tor network, so it has the same privacy and anonymity features.

Likewise, once Tails is closed, all logs (including files) created during the user's session will be deleted, unless the user wishes to keep them available and configures the appropriate settings to do so.

- **TAILS:** <https://tails.boum.org/install/>

### ■ DEFLECT

Deflect is a free website protection service for civil society organizations and human rights defenders. Among other things, it serves to protect against *DDoS* attacks.

- **Deflect:** <https://deflect.ca/nonprofit>

# **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The regime of Nicolás Maduro continues to increase its efforts to control digital platforms in Venezuela, amid the economic, social, and political crisis that the country is going through, which has deepened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making the exercise of freedom of speech and access to information even more crucial elements for citizens.

**A total of 127 documented cases during 2020 evidenced how the regime, as in previous years,** continued censoring against civil society in various Internet spaces, using tools such as the illegitimate “Law against Hate” to carry out arrests, threats, and harassment to restrict freedom of speech and promote self-censorship of those who dare to expose arbitrariness and violations of fundamental rights through digital platforms, focusing mainly on journalists, activists, human rights defenders and workers in the public sector. Despite evidencing a 25% decrease in the total number of cases compared to 2019, there were significant increases in cases of detentions and indictments (213%) and in cases of threats and harassment (258%).

Likewise, troll accounts and bots were used to harass and carry out defamation campaigns in social networks against dissidents. The development of this report also showed an increase of 32% in cases of website blocking and a decrease of 89% in instances of social network blocking, and 27% in cases of cyber-attacks compared to the past year.

Since 2016, RedesAyuda has documented the advance of the regime’s repressive practices in the Venezuelan digital space, while analyzing the socio-political context of the country to provide a broader perspective that allows visualizing the impact on human rights and the work of activists, journalists, defenders, info citizens, media and other civil society organizations in the country, to document, denounce, and communicate these events.

# RedesAyuda makes the following recommendations, demands, and suggestions:

1.

To continue disregarding the “Law against Hate, for Peaceful Coexistence and Tolerance” due to its unconstitutionality and the arbitrary use that has been given to it to persecute civil society.

2.

To reject the legislative package proposed by the regime of Nicolás Maduro, which includes the approval of a “Cyberspace Law” and a reform to the “Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television”, considering that such instruments could be used to increase control over digital platforms and increase censorship in the country, as the latter would encompass the electronic media.

3.

We reiterate the demand for guarantees for the development and exercise of digital rights in Venezuela, the creation of public policies for the improvement of the infrastructure of state and private Internet providers, as well as the promotion of a free Internet for the exercise of freedom of speech and access to information in digital media, without limitations or censorship.

4.

We reiterate the recommendation to continue strengthening alliances between civil society and digital media, to promote the use of tools to avoid online censorship, as well as the execution of projects aimed at creating measures to encourage the reconstruction of democracy on the Internet.

5.

We reiterate our commitment to continue reporting despite censorship, defending and demanding guarantees for human and digital rights, responsibly using social networks as a channel to inform and articulate the citizenry.

6.

We reiterate our commitment to continue promoting free and open Internet access, where Venezuelans can decide what content to access for information and use digital platforms to exercise the right to freedom of speech without any restrictions, censorship, or blockages.







[www.redesayuda.org](http://www.redesayuda.org)  
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