

Brazil: President Bolsonaro Targeting Professional Journalists during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and his followers have been accused of continuing to attack journalists in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, in a new report released by the Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas (FENAJ). The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) stands in solidarity with FENAJ and condemned the systematic targeting of media workers by the president.



Credit: EVARISTO SA / AFP Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro talks to supporters as he leaves Alvorada Palace in Brasilia, Brazil on April 6, 2020.

In the last 3 months, Bolsonaro has insulted journalists and their work up to 141 times and their work, according to the results of FENAJ's monitoring project published on April 6.

On 22 March, the president said during a TV interview: that *"people will know soon that a large part of the media has deceived them in this issue of the coronavirus"*.

Along with attempts to minimise the threat posed by the pandemic, Bolsonaro also attacked the press continually during March for reporting on the gravity of the situation, FENAJ said.

In addition to the systematic targeting of journalists, Bolsonaro also passed Provisional Measure 928 (PM928) into law on March 22 suspending deadlines for public authorities and institutions to respond to media requests for information. On March 26, Brazilian Supreme Court Judge Alexandre de Moraes ordered the measure to be suspended temporarily as it could be unconstitutional. The date for the Supreme Court final decision has yet to be fixed.

"This campaign sponsored by the president against journalists, who are essential at this time of a pandemic, is very serious. The president contributes to the environment of misinformation that makes part of his followers ignore the recommendations transmitted by the media, and thus exposes the entire population to risks," said Maria José Braga, president of FENAJ.

IFJ General Secretary, Anthony Bellanger, said: *"Bolsonaro's behaviour towards the media is against democratic values. His insults against journalists become even more serious and dangerous in times of a pandemic as they threaten*

Brazilian society's right to receive quality information. We once again urge Bolsonaro and his government to guarantee media freedom and promote the free circulation of information".