

CHAPULTEPEC INDEX CONCLUSIONS

The fifth edition of the Chapultepec Index of Freedom of Expression and the Press shows a worrying result regarding the situation of the media, journalists and citizens in the hemisphere. In the study period between August 2, 2023 and August 1, 2024, it was below the intermediate ranges of the barometer, standing at 48.12 as a general average, out of a theoretical maximum of 100.

It is the second consecutive year in which the global average measure of the 22 nations analyzed is below the average range in the rating. Therefore, it could be said that, in the region, Freedom of Expression and the Press is restricted in a generalized way.

The realm of Violence and Impunity against Journalists and the Media has the greatest impact on the barometer's score, with a theoretical maximum of 40 points, contributing 10% more than the other two realms. It is alarming that it is the branch of the instrument with the worst scores, having averaged only 15.23 points. In this category that analyzes protection mechanisms for journalists and the media, respect for media criticism and actions against impunity for crimes against communicators, among others, most nations were below the intermediate value of the measurement.

Fourteen nations were below 20 points of the intermediate value of this realm, that is, most of the countries of the hemisphere do not have positive evaluations regarding institutional actions to safeguard critical journalism and the activity of the news media. With scores below 20/40, Paraguay and Brazil were positioned in the "With Restriction" band; in "High Restriction", Argentina, Bolivia, Honduras, Cuba, Ecuador, Colombia, El Salvador and Peru; while Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela and Nicaragua, in the radius of nations "Without Freedom of Expression" in terms of these aspects related to the life and safety of journalists and companies.

The low global average is also evident in the Analysis Realm "Informed Citizenship and Free to Express Themselves", where an average of 13.25 out of a total of 30 points was obtained, as a theoretical maximum. Although with two countries with positive ranks and "With Freedom of Expression" in this category -Chile and the Dominican Republic-, followed by four in "Low Restriction" -the United States, Brazil, Canada and Uruguay-; and with Jamaica and Panama "With Restriction", but above 15/30; Fourteen nations were rated with values below the intermediate range of 15 points. In this Realm, impacted by the variable "Government Action in the Face of Disinformation", "Free Expression" and "Flow of Information", with 10, 9 and 11 points, respectively, the fourteen countries that resulted in the least favorable levels are, "With

Restriction", Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay and Ecuador; in "High Restriction", Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia and Honduras; and "Without Freedom", Bolivia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela, in descending order.

In the aspect associated with the Disinformation sub realm, concerning whether the Government authorities correctly address the flows of disinformation or if, on the contrary, they omit or even promote them, the five worst evaluated were El Salvador, with 0 points out of 10; Nicaragua, with 0.13; Venezuela, with 0.14; Bolivia, with 0.25; and Cuba, with 0.50.

The Media Control and Journalism Realm was the best evaluated in general terms. Five countries were rated "With Freedom of Expression" in this regard – Chile, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Panama and Brazil; while the United States, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Jamaica, Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, El Salvador, Honduras were positioned in the "Low Restriction" band. Still above the intermediate value of this branch, of 15/30, were Costa Rica and Bolivia, "With Restriction". Below the intermediate value of this dimension, which evaluates direct and indirect pressures against the media, as well as normative regulations to the detriment of journalism, were Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

There is a coincidence in terms of the Media Control and Journalism Realm and the perception of the degree of influence of the Executive environments of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. It was the executive branches of the three countries that were linked to the highest levels of impact in cases adverse to freedom of expression and the press in their respective nations: a very strong influence of the Executive in the cases of Nicaragua (7.77 out of 10) and Venezuela (8.02 out of 10), and a strong influence in the case of Cuba (7.26). Less influence in situations unfavorable to freedom of expression, although also "strong", were presented by the Executive branch of El Salvador (5.83 out of a maximum of 10); Bolivia (5.60); and Honduras (5.41).

In other internal dynamics, the executive branch of the other nations remained moderately influenced in situations adverse to freedom of expression and of the press: Colombia (4.44 out of 10), Costa Rica (4.38), Costa Rica (4.25), Argentina (3.77), Mexico and Ecuador (3.46), Panama (2.81) and Paraguay (2.75). The least influential in situations adverse to freedom of expression and of the press, according to the professionals consulted, were the Executives of Jamaica (0.11 out of 10), Chile (0.38), the Dominican Republic (0.58) and the United States (0.72), followed by Canada (0.89), Brazil (1.05) and Uruguay (1.14).

Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba also attribute to their Judicial and Legislative branches strong influences in situations adverse to freedom of expression and the press. In the cases of El Salvador and Honduras, the legislative branch also appears to have a strong influence on these incidents.

It should be noted that in this edition, no country was placed in the "With Freedom of Expression" strip, unlike the three previous editions where, in some cases, up to two countries with these characteristics were found.

Chile, which in the previous edition was in second place, in this edition leads the index sharing with seven other countries the "Low Restriction" band. With a difference of 17.92 points between the first and the last and representing 36% of the total number of countries analyzed, this group is made up of: Chile (79.65), Dominican Republic (77.25), Canada (75.78), United States (68.53); Brazil (66.55), Uruguay (66.43), Jamaica (65.64) and Panama (61.73).

Of the eight countries mentioned above, six have remained in the "Low Restriction" band, some of them varying in their positions, one dropped from the band (Dominican Republic, who led in the last edition) and one that climbed eight places (Brazil).

Next, the group of countries where Freedom of Expression and the Press is "In Restriction" is made up of: Paraguay (56.80), Costa Rica (55.23), Argentina (51.18) – these still above the global average of the region-, Ecuador (46.03), Mexico (43.50 and Colombia (40.34). All of them, representing 27% of the total number of countries analyzed. Of the six countries, 50% are below the global average, with a difference of 16.46 points between the first and the last.

Paraguay, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico and Colombia have remained in the range with respect to the immediately last edition. Only Costa Rica, which showed a drop of three positions, changed its slot. It should be noted that, despite remaining in the group, Colombia experienced a drop of five positions in relation to the previous edition, being the one who dropped the most position among all the countries observed.

The countries with "High Restriction" are Honduras (39.85), Peru (36.16), Guatemala (33.98), Bolivia (32.56) and El Salvador (31.53). Corresponding to 23% of the total representation of the index, Peru's decrease of four positions in relation to the previous period stands out, which reflects an unfavorable change in the band. In this group, the gap between the extremes is 8.32 points. Honduras repeats as the group leader, and the rest exchange positions in relation to the previous edition.

Finally, in the "No Freedom of Expression" band, Cuba (16.94); Venezuela (6.52) and Nicaragua (6.51) in the same positions for two previous editions. Venezuela shows a drop of 6.23 points, the largest difference in results between the 3 countries in this group.

Indeed, with a gap of 10.43 points between Cuba and Nicaragua, it is worth paying attention to the variation reflected by Venezuela.

On the other hand, the positive variation of Brazil stands out, of 18.14 points in relation to the results of the last edition, representing an increase of eight positions.

In contrast, Peru subtracted 14.53 points from its previous immediate result, dropping four positions, followed by Colombia, with five lower positions and 11.96 points less and Jamaica, which decreased by 11.14 points and four positions.

The changes generated by electoral processes in countries have represented the greatest influence on the variations, as well as the enactment of laws that affect the full exercise of

Freedom of Expression and the Press, and access to information for citizens through the increasing regulation of social networks.

The development of technologies that make it difficult to control bots, fake news and even deep fakes, increase disinformation with increasingly audacious strategies. Indeed, Artificial Intelligence has gained ground in the world of Freedom of Expression and in the practice of journalism in general, which is generating new positive advances but at the same time, the risks for prompt regulation by States have increased.

Freedom of Expression and the Press continues to be threatened in the region.

