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SECURITY AND PRESS FREEDOM

Threats to Journalists in Brazil



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Safety Matters:

Research and Education on the Safety of
Journalists in Cooperation between
Norway/Brazil/South Africa and USA

*To journalists and media professionals committed to truth and quality
information—especially those who resist, even in the face of restrictions
and insecurity.*

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Preface

Lizete Nóbrega

The mission of journalism is to narrate history: to report everyday events, follow political and social processes, investigate possible violations... in short, to provide society with a panorama of the world and elements to understand reality. For the most part, the journalist is not the character of journalism — the subject of the reports. The professional positions themselves as a mediator, not as the content. However, this inversion has become increasingly common as violence against journalists intensifies.

This book emerges at an important moment. The year 2025 marks the period in which the largest number of countries have been classified as “very serious” for press freedom since Reporters Without Borders (RSF) began its annual survey in 2013. This means that in 23% of countries, “press freedom is virtually absent and practicing journalism is extremely dangerous.”¹ Only 3.8% of countries are in a zone considered “good” — all of them in Europe.

Currently, one of the most visible examples of violence against journalists is the war in Gaza. Since the beginning of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in 2023, in the context of the broad attacks launched by Israel, over 210 journalists have been killed, at least 57 of them targeted intentionally while performing their work, according to RSF. For comparison, the First and Second World Wars combined claimed the lives of 69 journalists, three times fewer than the current conflict.

However, violence does not manifest itself solely in physical elimination, although this remains its most cruel and extreme form. This work, by bringing

¹ Translated from Repórteres Sem Fronteiras, available in:
https://rsf.org/pt-br/ranking-mundial-da-rsf-2025-enfraquecimento-econ%C3%B4mico-dos-meios-de-comunica%C3%A7%C3%A3o-%C3%A9-uma-das-principais?year=2025&data_type=general

together different episodes, reinforces this point and presents various nuances of violations against these professionals — from covering Carnival to police reporting, no one is spared. Following what has already been well documented in the academic literature (Slavcheva-Petkova et al., 2023), the book starts from the premise that threats to journalism take many forms.

They extend beyond physical violence, which includes murder, assault, detention, kidnapping, disappearance... but also encompass psychological violence, which seeks to silence and emotionally destabilize through intimidation, harassment, hate speech; as well as digital violence, including surveillance and exposure of personal data. Financial precariousness and unstable working conditions further contribute to this scenario, functioning as mechanisms of control and demobilization. These violations erode the institutional foundation of journalism and compromise its public role in guaranteeing the right to information.

In Brazil, the situation has its specificities, but it does not diverge from the global reality. In 2024, the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (Abraji) recorded 210 cases of violations of press freedom in the country². This number is 36% lower than in 2023, though the severity of the cases increased. Brazil also improved in the official Reporters Without Borders ranking³, reaching 63rd place in 2025 — having fallen to 111th place in 2021. The organization notes that the country's political scenario positively impacted this leap, particularly due to the former president Jair Bolsonaro's systematic attacks on the journalism institution during his time in office.

Although, institutionally, the landscape appears more positive, with actions by the Executive Branch aimed at strengthening journalism, the creation of a National Observatory on Violence Against Journalists and Social Communicators, and public discourse in defense of the profession, cases of violations have not ceased

² Monitoring of Attacks Against Journalists in Brazil 2024, available at: <https://www.abraji.org.br/publicacoes/monitoramento-de-ataques-a-jornalistas-no-brasil>

³ <https://rsf.org/pt-br/pais/brasil>

accordingly. In 2024, Brazil held municipal elections, and the Coalition in Defense of Journalism mapped attacks on the press both online⁴ and offline during that period, noting that political polarization fuels the aggressions. In total, more than 57,000 attacks were recorded on X, Instagram, and TikTok, ranging from comments targeting media organizations to personal insults directed at journalists, in which gender played a role in shaping the tone of hostility.

The findings of this survey reinforce what the monitoring conducted by Abraji had already indicated: a shift in the profile of the aggressors. According to the organization's report, for the first time, "the main perpetrators of attacks were not state agents, but rather common citizens, including public figures without elected office." This change in pattern points to something alarming: society is normalising attacks on the press and the deep entrenchment of anti-journalism discourse.

This scenario is both accompanied – and driven – by political, technological, and social transformations. Today, intimidation against journalists and media outlets no longer comes only from those in positions of power or the "targets" of investigative journalism, but from any social media user disturbed by a given coverage, exponentially increasing the potential for aggression, which can begin and end online or spill over into the physical world.

The dynamics of digital platforms that prioritize inflammatory content for the sake of engagement contribute to this scenario, as do new forms of political practice that suffocate healthy debate in the public sphere. The situation may become even more complex when we factor in the growing precariousness of the journalistic ecosystem and the significant advances in artificial intelligence — which can simultaneously pose new threats to professionals, such as deepfakes, as well as further deepen the business model crisis faced by media institutions.

The outlook is not exactly encouraging, and perhaps for that very reason demands deeper examination, especially regarding the Brazilian reality. And this book greatly fulfills that mission for two main reasons: it broadens our

⁴ https://emdefesadojornalismo.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/CDJor_Relatorio_Final_12.12.pdf

understanding of the violations committed against journalists, and it gives names and context to cases that might otherwise be lost when reduced to mere statistics.

Brazil's continental dimensions fit many realities, and the forms of violence can differ from those experienced in other countries — even more so when we consider the dynamics between the Global South and the Global North. Thus, mapping diverse cases that stem from distinct intentions and territorial contexts is essential. Readers of this book will be able to expand their understanding of what constitutes violence, how it manifests across different locations, and how its motivations may vary. Demystifying physical violence — while still recognizing its seriousness — as the only form of violence is necessary for greater awareness and more effective efforts to confront it.

A second key contribution of this work lies in the humanization of these cases. Beyond tallying the number of aggressions — which is an important part of monitoring and assessing press freedom in the country —, the book delves into specific cases, locating the victims and theorizing about these attacks and, in doing so, promoting a more detailed and empathetic perspective on each of these violations. Reflecting on their effects and on the consequences they generate both for individuals and for Brazil's broader informational ecosystem represents a valuable contribution.

More and more, it is necessary to frame violence against journalists as violence against democracy. Without journalism, there is no democracy. Without well-informed citizens, there is no public sphere. Because without the freedom to investigate, question, and narrate facts, the ground is laid for authoritarianism and disinformation to thrive.

October 2025.

Introduction

Freedom of the press, expression, and democracy under tension: a study of recent cases in Brazil

Elizabeth Saad, Daniela Osvald and Aianne Amado

Brazilian insecurity towards journalists has a long history. There are records of incidents dating back to the colonial period, and events have continued to evolve to the present day. In Brazil, the 2024 report issued by the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ) highlights that attacks continue, but have become “more sophisticated and dangerous.” The document warns of a shift from physical violence to “structural forms of silencing, such as judicial harassment and censorship.”

According to a longitudinal analysis from 1982 to 2024, drawn from the open database created by OBCOM – the Observatory of Communication, Freedom of Expression, and Censorship at the University of São Paulo (USP) – and based on FENAJ reports, there have been nearly 300 attacks against journalists in the state of São Paulo alone, the largest in Brazil. When considering all Brazilian states, this number multiplies more than tenfold. In 2024, for instance, 144 attacks were recorded.

In recent decades, there has been a global increase in attacks on democratic regimes and, specifically, on journalistic coverage of these situations. Both in conflict zones and in areas marked by territorial and power disputes, there are continuous reports of killings, kidnappings, censorship, harassment, and various forms of persecution. In the current decade, the Brazilian context of insecurity toward the media, journalists, and representatives of democratic institutions has grown significantly, due to major transformations in our society — such as political

polarization, disinformation, economic crisis, and the dominant role of social media platforms.

At the same time, academic training in undergraduate and graduate journalism programs reveals that most are not fully prepared to address these complexities. The majority of Brazil's 327 undergraduate and 54 graduate programs in Communication — the field to which journalism belongs — lack specific courses dealing with the broad spectrum of insecurities, such as physical safety, conflict coverage, journalist protection, and gender- or race-based violence. Most initiatives in these areas are conducted by NGOs or professional associations rather than universities, and are offered as short training courses.

This scenario has led us to formulate a set of strategies and activities aimed at bridging academic gaps with the Brazilian reality of journalistic practices under tension, especially concerning issues of safety, violence, and harassment. Thus, we have organized a long-term plan to develop and consolidate these actions within the Graduate Program in Communication Sciences at USP.

Two initial and parallel steps have been successfully completed.

The first and most fruitful was the establishment of an international academic partnership led by Oslo Metropolitan University (Norway) and funded by the Research Council of Norway.

This is a five-year program that also includes the University of Tulsa (USA) and Wits University (South Africa). The main goal of this academic initiative is to contribute to the safety of journalists by training doctoral-level journalism researchers in the analytical and practical tools needed to investigate, understand, and improve journalist safety in a transnational and constantly changing landscape, marked by political and physical insecurities.

This e-book is one of the outcomes of that project and will be detailed below.

The second initiative is related to the construction of a common theoretical foundation encompassing the broad themes of the project, while also seeking to

identify the specificities of the Brazilian context. The first stage consisted of conducting a systematic literature review, which remains an ongoing task.

From this process, we revisited the concepts of Johan Galtung (1969; 1990) and his proposal of the layers of violence — direct, cultural, and structural — and incorporated Taylor O'Connor's (2020) perspective, which expands Galtung's typology into a more detailed mapping, correlating it with aspects of broader social forces such as wars, poverty, dominant social actors, and community actions.

According to O'Connor (2020), these occurrences reflect the effects of the levels of latent visibility defined by Galtung within societies — rather than cultural and structural violence itself.

O'Connor (2020) then subdivides direct violence into personal, interpersonal, and community occurrences. Structural violence is more difficult for ordinary citizens to identify, as it is embedded in political and economic structures, organizations, and social groups. Thus, the author classifies the effects of structural violence through events (such as wars and inequalities) and their perpetrators. Cultural violence, also difficult to perceive, manifests itself in symbolic elements such as literature, monuments, linguistic specificities, and civic celebrations.

We combined the approaches of both authors to reach a shared concept:

“Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (Galtung: 1969, p. 168). Thus, to encompass the objectives of this paper, the term violence includes, but is not limited to, verbal and digital acts and actions, physical assaults, obstructions and obstacles to journalists' work, judicial and law enforcement practices, and restrictions on freedom of expression and, consequently, freedom of the press, which prevent journalists from fully exercising their ability to investigate and report facts following appropriate journalistic methods (Ramos & Saad, 2022, p. 3).

Next, we compared and adapted these concepts to Brazilian studies. To this end, in 2022, we created an annual course in the Graduate Program in Communication at USP, with the goal of disseminating and consolidating concepts

and practices related to safety in journalism. The course, *“New Paradigms and Dimensions of Violence in the Field of Communication: Harassment and Threats Against Journalists and Communicators,”* has already trained 43 graduate students and specialists.

In parallel with the course, we provided training for 13 PhD candidates from PPGCOM-USP who spent a research period at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), developing academic projects within multicultural research groups. The proposal for these group activities, in addition to providing exchange among different contexts and realities, adds to our field by bringing together a network of journalist-researchers who are now actively disseminating knowledge and awareness about violence and harassment in the field.

Lastly, all the mobilization carried out since the first contacts and invitations from OsloMet has resulted in the creation and availability of an open, interactive public database hosted by OBCOM-USP (obcom.net.br/vis/), in partnership with FENAJ. This platform enables different correlations of information — such as types of violence and harassment, perpetrators, locations of incidents, gender, among other variables.

We hope that the continuation of these activities, now consolidated within the scope of our graduate program, can foster collective awareness in the fields of Journalism and Communication Sciences regarding an issue that affects us on a daily basis.

About the book

The chapters gathered in this e-book are the result of academic work by graduate students from the University of São Paulo, presented as final papers for the course *“New Paradigms and Dimensions of Violence in the Field of Communication:*

*Harassment and Threats Against Journalists and Communicators*⁵, taught by Prof. Dr. Daniela Osvald Ramos and Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Nicolau Saad-Correa.

The proposal presented to the students consisted of articulating the theoretical framework discussed throughout the course with concrete cases from the contemporary Brazilian context. The book, therefore, presents case studies that, while reflecting on the conditions of (in)security and vulnerability of journalists in the country, also function as a documentary record of recent democratic violations of freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Brazil.

Although it is situated within a well-established body of literature on journalistic safety, press freedom, and violence against communicators, this work stands out for its specifically and profoundly Brazilian character. The thematic breadth of the studies gathered here reflects the complexity of the threats faced by journalists and communicators in Brazil. Therefore, each chapter begins with events that not only occurred in Brazil, but could only have emerged from the country's particular circumstances — marked by structural inequalities, systemic violence, tensions between the State and civil society, and the intersection of political, economic, and symbolic power. In doing so, this work goes beyond being merely a description of isolated episodes of violence, also consisting in an effort to understand the structural dynamics that make the practice of journalism in Brazil an act of democratic resistance.

In several Latin American countries, it is not uncommon to find territories where the formal power of the State is replaced or overlapped by mechanisms of control exercised by criminal organizations, a phenomenon known as *criminal governance*. However this configuration reaches a distinct and extensive level in Brazil – according to data published by Cambridge University Press (Uribe et al., 2025), the country has the highest percentage of its population living under power regimes imposed by criminal groups in the entire subcontinent: it is estimated that

⁵The course syllabus can be accessed at:
<https://uspdigital.usp.br/janus/componente/disciplinasOferecidasInicial.jsf?action=3&sgldis=CJE5041>.

about 26% of Brazilians (between 50.6 and 61.6 million people) are, in some way, subjected to this kind of parallel rule. It is within this context that the first chapter of the book is situated, authored by Natália de Sena Carneiro and Edgar Wilfford Miranda Alvino, and dedicated to the analysis of two paradigmatic episodes of violence against Brazilian journalists who, in fulfilling their duty to inform, jeopardized the interests of organized factions. The first case dates back to 2006, when reporter Guilherme Portanova, from TV Globo, was kidnapped and held hostage by the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC) in São Paulo (SP). The second, which occurred fourteen years later, in 2020, concerns the assassination of journalist Léo Veras in Ponta Porã (MS), executed inside his home after publishing a series of investigative reports on drug trafficking along the Brazil-Paraguay border. The joint analysis of these cases reveals the scale and sophistication of criminal governance in Brazil, which, in addition to imposing its own logic of territorial control, establishes silencing mechanisms that directly affect investigative journalism.

The second chapter addresses structural inequalities deeply rooted in Brazilian society: racism and gender-based violence. Racial discrimination in Brazil is a direct legacy of a long and brutal slaveholding period, responsible for the abduction and trafficking of more than four million Africans to Brazilian lands – a key historical fact for understanding our social formation, given that, since our colonization, there were 388 years of legally established slavery and a mere 137 years outside of that regime. Even after the abolition of slavery in 1888, the Brazilian State remained negligent regarding the social, economic, and political integration of the Black population, denying them minimum conditions of citizenship and perpetuating a system of exclusion – so that the consequences of this tragic “past” remain profoundly present in our society: in 2025, 84% of Black Brazilians report having experienced racial discrimination at some point (Moura, 2025).

Brazilian sexism, although not rooted in a single historical event, echoes the gender roles historically imposed on society, those that associate men with leadership and the public sphere, and women with domestic and family care. Brazilian women won the right to vote in 1932, formal equality of rights in the 1988 Constitution, and only in 2022 gained reproductive autonomy to undergo tubal ligation without spousal consent⁶. With such rights achieved at a sluggish pace, gender inequality persists alarmingly: around 84.5% of people in the country, regardless of gender, express some form of prejudice against women. The most severe indicators concern physical integrity: every six minutes, a woman is the victim of sexual violence, and every six hours, a woman is murdered in cases of femicide (UN, 2023; Nossa Causa, 2025).

The statistics become even more dramatic when intersecting with gender and sexual dissidence: in 2022, over 11,000 LGBTQIA+ people were victims of some form of aggression motivated by their sexual orientation or gender identity, with transgender and cross-dressing individuals being the most affected (38.5%) (Barbosa, 2025). For the 16th consecutive year, Brazil leads the world ranking in murders of trans people (Narcisa & Bonets, 2025).

Riza Amaral Lemos and Rafael Rodrigues Pereira address these wounds by shedding light on the violence suffered by journalists Joyce Ribeiro, a Black woman; Alana Rocha, a trans woman; and Sara York, a travesti woman. All were victims of attacks motivated by the exercise of their professions, but intensified by their social markers. By portraying these cases, the authors highlight the symbolic dimension of aggression against journalists, and, more specifically, the multiple layers of vulnerability that overlap certain bodies and identities within the field of communication.

⁶ See:

<https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2023/03/03/entra-em-vigor-lei-que-dispensa-aval-do-conjuge-em-procedimentos-de-esterilizacao>.

Despite being considered a digitally connected country, Brazil also faces low levels of digital literacy, given that, among our population, there is a stark contrast between access to technology and the critical capacity to use it: only 24.4% of the economically active population have mastery of basic digital skills (Amaral, 2023). This low digital literacy is worsened by regional inequalities, low education levels, and the insufficient digital education provided in schools. It can also be explained by the rapid expansion of digital devices and connectivity, which was not accompanied by structured public policies for digital education. Thus, although over 89% of the population has internet access and Brazil ranks among the world's largest consumers of digital media, much of this use remains superficial, focused mainly on entertainment and personal communication, without fostering the ability to critically evaluate, interpret, and produce information: studies from 2024 reveal that 9 out of 10 Brazilians have believed in fake news (Mello, 2024), making the country's population the least able to identify misinformation (Cozman, 2024).

The low level of digital literacy among Brazilians became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period in which the population became heavily dependent on the internet and the political context was centered on the government of Jair Bolsonaro, who not only failed to combat misinformation but, on several occasions, *spread* false news about the health crisis himself. Users thus became easy targets for fake news, conspiracy theories, and misleading health advice, which spread rapidly through social media. This is the backdrop of the third chapter, written by Letícia Assis Almeida da Silva and Vitória Paschoal Baldin, which analyzes the legal violence experienced by communicators and scientists Ana Bonassa and Laura Marise, who were judicially prosecuted – and convicted in the first instance – for publicly opposing misinformation and correcting false claims. The case illustrates how judicial mechanisms can be weaponized to intimidate and threaten critical voices committed to truth and the public interest.

We are a country widely recognized for our cultural effervescence, which reaches its peak during the month of February, when the entire country mobilizes to

celebrate Carnival, considered the largest popular festival in the world. Across all states, the holiday takes different forms: from the samba schools in Rio de Janeiro to the floats in Salvador, passing through the street parties that take over the hillsides of Olinda. In 2025 alone, it is estimated that Carnival generated around R\$ 12 billion in the national economy, consolidating itself as one of Brazil's main revenue engines (Alves, 2025), while also attracting approximately 287,000 international tourists (Embratur, 2025). However, behind the costumes and joyful music, Carnival also exposes deep social contradictions, which often lead to increased violence and hostility during the festivities. The cases reported in the fourth chapter – experienced by journalists Marcelo Rubens Paiva, Bruno Santos, Josué Amador, Bianka Carvalho, and Fabrício Lobel – describe different forms of aggression faced by media professionals during event coverage (sometimes while broadcasting live!) or even after being recognized off duty. By highlighting these episodes, authors Aianne Amado and Mario Sergio Assumpção de Andrada e Silva draw attention to desks that are rarely addressed in the debate on safety in journalism, specifically culture and entertainment — whose risks are not as explicit as investigative journalism, for example, but are nonetheless relevant.

Brazil, once inhabited exclusively by Indigenous peoples, is now home to about 1.7 million individuals – equivalent to 0.83% of the national population – belonging to 305 distinct Indigenous groups and speaking 274 languages (National Geographic Brazil, 2025). In recent years, the country has advanced in developing new public and private initiatives aimed at protecting this population, culminating in the creation of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (MPI), established at the beginning of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's third term. Led by Minister Sônia Guajajara, the first Indigenous woman ever to hold a ministerial position in Brazil, the MPI's core mission is to defend the territorial, cultural, and physical security rights of Indigenous communities. These actions, however, respond to a persistent and alarming reality of violence: despite the legal guarantees of demarcated lands, Indigenous peoples continue to suffer systematic invasions by land grabbers,

farmers, hunters, loggers, and miners, driven by the economic exploitation of legally protected territories. In 2024 alone, 1,241 cases of violence against Indigenous property were recorded across the country (Cimi, 2024), revealing the continuity of colonial practices and the weakening of the state's presence in land conflict zones.

The fifth chapter focuses on one such episode, which occurred in 2023 in the Guarani-Kaiowá reoccupation area in Iguatemi (MS). The case involved Canadian journalist Renaud Philippe and his team, who were threatened, assaulted, and robbed while investigating the struggle of Indigenous peoples to reclaim their ancestral lands. Beyond the physical violence, the episode exposes deeper structural and symbolic dimensions – the normalization of violence against both communicators and Indigenous peoples, as well as the slowness of institutions to deliver effective and just responses.

The cases presented here give names and faces to journalists affected by insecurity and violence tied to their profession — not to victimize them, but to highlight their commitment to the duty of informing and their courage to persist despite adversity. Moreover, each chapter includes a map marking the Brazilian states where the incidents occurred, locating the episodes. By doing this, we do not aim to delineate or restrict supposed “hotspots” of violence but to situate the reader, emphasizing that, while regional differences exist and must be acknowledged, the safety of journalists is a topic that needs to be widely debated throughout Brazil.

May the reading of this book serve as an invitation to action – academic, political, and professional. Freedom of the press remains one of the vital pillars of democracy, and this work is, above all, a manifesto in its defense.

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Chapter 1

Narco violence, state negligence, and threats to the duty to inform

*Natália de Sena Carneiro and
Edgar Wilfford Miranda Alvino*



In Brazil, being a journalist means living with the risk that the written or spoken word could become a death sentence. In 2024, although there was a 54% reduction in the number of attacks on journalists in the country, the press still suffered some form of aggression every five days, totaling 72 cases of non-lethal violence (Abert, 2025). Coverage of crimes involving drug trafficking, corruption, and state omission is one of the areas that puts press professionals on a direct path to violence.

Two recent episodes help illustrate the gravity of violence against journalists in Brazil. In both cases, professionals fulfilling their duty to inform found themselves torn from the role of reporters and turned into hostages. In 2006, reporter Guilherme Portanova was kidnapped by Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and held captive until TV Globo complied with an unprecedented demand: to broadcast, on national television, the manifesto of a criminal faction. The network, which should set the public agenda, was instead dictated by the logic of crime. Fourteen years later, in 2020, journalist Léo Veras was executed inside his own home, in front of his family, for persisting in investigating the presence of the same parallel power on the Brazil–Paraguay border.

In this chapter, we take these two episodes as starting points to reflect on the persistence of violence against journalists in Brazil. Between the blackmail that

forced a major network to yield and the execution that silenced a voice on the frontier, a scenario emerges in which journalistic activity is inseparable from constant risk, and in which the right to information depends on the resilience of those who, despite fear, choose to keep speaking.



*From left to right: Guilherme Portanova, Alexandre Calado, and Leo Veras.
(Imagens: Virgula; Globoplay; Abraji)*

The kidnapping of Guilherme Portanova

On August 12, 2006, reporter Guilherme Portanova and technician Alexandre Calado, both from TV Globo, were kidnapped by members of the criminal faction PCC in São Paulo. The incident took place at a time when the city was still reeling from a series of coordinated attacks by the faction, which, months earlier, had paralyzed the state and spread fear among its residents.

The two were ambushed as they arrived for work at the TV station. Calado was released hours later, carrying a DVD in his hands. The message was direct: the reporter would only be freed alive if TV Globo aired the video recorded by the group in full.

Portanova remained in captivity for more than 40 hours. During that time, the network negotiated in silence. The case mobilized newsrooms, authorities, and families alike. The journalist was kept as a bargaining chip in exchange for the television reach that the faction could have at that moment.

The three-minute video featured a hooded man reading the group's demands. He called for "more dignified treatment" of prisoners, denounced mistreatment in penitentiaries, and demanded changes to the Differentiated Disciplinary Regime (RDD), which isolated the PCC leaders.

The video was a show of strength. The faction turned the evening news into its stage, proving that it could dictate both media and state agendas. The message was simple yet alarming: those who control communication hold power.

In the early hours of August 14, TV Globo decided to air the video. Before its broadcast, journalist César Tralli read a statement explaining that the decision had been made to preserve his colleague's life. The video was then shown once, nationwide.

Airing the video a single time was a calculated institutional choice. The network sought to minimize the impact of the blackmail and preserve its autonomy, complying with the demand without turning the kidnapping into an ongoing spectacle.

The kidnapping of Guilherme Portanova remains a case that exposed journalism's vulnerability to coercion and revealed that, in this country, informing the public can be a dangerous act, even within the most protected newsrooms.

The case of Léo Veras and the extremes of violence against journalists

On the border between Brazil and Paraguay, journalist Léo Veras was murdered for doing precisely what is expected of an investigative reporter: uncovering hidden information of public interest. Founder of the website *Porã News*, Veras dedicated the final years of his life to covering the rise of drug trafficking in the region spanning Ponta Porã (Brazil) and Pedro Juan Caballero (Paraguay), a

territory where the State and organized crime vie for control, and silence is often enforced at gunpoint.

Between 2018 and 2020, Veras investigated the activities of the PCC, exposing executions, trafficking schemes, and the use of forged documents by faction leaders to cross borders undetected. In late 2019, he identified Ederson Salinas Benítez, known as “Ryguasú,” as one of the PCC’s leaders in Paraguay and alerted Brazilian authorities about his movements. By that point, Veras knew he had been marked. He received veiled threats but continued his work — as someone who understands that certain truths must be spoken, even in fear. On February 12, 2020, while having dinner with his family, the journalist was executed with twelve gunshots. He died at home, the place where he should have been safest. He died for insisting to inform.

In a statement⁷ mourning the journalist’s murder, the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ) emphasized that violence against media professionals does not arise from nowhere. It is fueled by delegitimizing discourse, institutional omission, and the trivialization of truth. It is in this climate that attacks thrive.

The inclusion of the case in Abraji’s Tim Lopes Program⁸ represented a collective effort to bring visibility to the crime and to pressure for justice. Even so, the sense of helplessness remains. Brazil continues to record high rates of attacks against the press, as monitored by FENAJ. These cases reveal how an environment of hostility, one that begins with delegitimization and hate speech, can ultimately culminate in physical violence and death.

⁷ See:

<https://fenaj.org.br/nota-oficial-fenaj-lamenta-assassinato-de-jornalista-brasileiro-em-cidade-na-fronteira-brasil-paraguai/>.

⁸ The *Tim Lopes Program* was created by the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (Abraji) in 2017, inspired by journalist Tim Lopes, murdered in 2002 in Rio de Janeiro while investigating drug trafficking in favelas. The program supports the continuation of investigations interrupted by violence against reporters, providing visibility, security, and institutional support to threatened professionals. More information is available at: <https://abraji.org.br/programa-tim-lopes>.

The press and regimes of truth

The cases of Guilherme Portanova and Léo Veras demonstrate that violence against journalists cannot be reduced to a mere succession of isolated tragedies: more than attacks on individuals, these are blows against the right to information and the freedom of the press. Violence against journalists is inscribed within power structures that cut across the media and often use it to operate. As Michel Foucault (1979; 2008) reminds us, power is not concentrated in a single instance: it circulates through networks, bodies, discourses, and the apparatuses that define what can or cannot be seen and said.

The kidnapping of Guilherme Portanova, in 2006, exemplifies the mediatization and spectacle of violence. Guy Debord (1997) observes that, in the society of the spectacle, reality presents itself as representation and image. In this episode, the PCC did not confine itself to operating in the underground world of illegality: it imposed its presence on national television. Muniz Sodré (2006) also shows how the media can be captured as a device of power, turning into a stage for performances of force. By forcing TV Globo to broadcast its manifesto, the faction transformed the newscast into a political performance, expanding its symbolic power by converting crime into news under its own control.

The execution of Léo Veras, in 2020, represents the most extreme form of violence against journalism: silencing through death. Unlike spectacularized forms of violence, here there is no public stage to occupy, but rather the physical elimination of a defiant voice. According to Foucault (1979), power operates both through the production of discourse and through its interdiction. The death of a journalist is the ultimate interdiction. It not only censors the news but extinguishes, once and for all, the very possibility of enunciation. In this sense, Veras's murder confirms what FENAJ and Abraji have denounced as the ultimate limit of violence

against the press—when the right to inform and the right to exist merge and are simultaneously denied.

Journalism thus finds itself torn between two poles. On one hand, its function is to reveal and denounce, ensuring society's access to what power seeks to conceal. On the other, its language is partially captured by the strategies of the spectacularization of violence. When a newscast is forced to air a gang's video, or when the execution of a reporter becomes a headline, it is not merely a matter of narrating facts, but of reproducing, under duress, the choreography of a power that feeds on fear (Sodré, 2006; Bucci, 2021).

This paradox is constitutive: the press resists silencing, yet it is also summoned to take part in the very scene staged by violent power. In contexts of impunity, the journalist's courage becomes a discursive act of resistance.

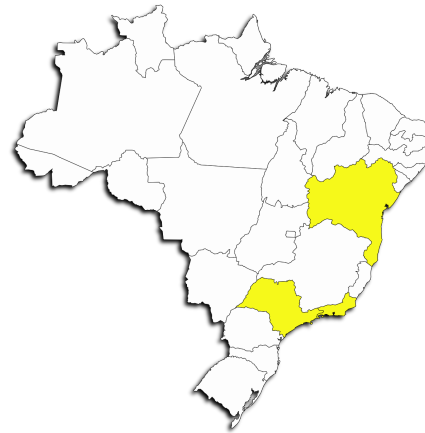
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Chapter 2

Silenced voices: racism, transphobia, and gender-based violence in Brazilian journalism

*Riza Amaral Lemos and
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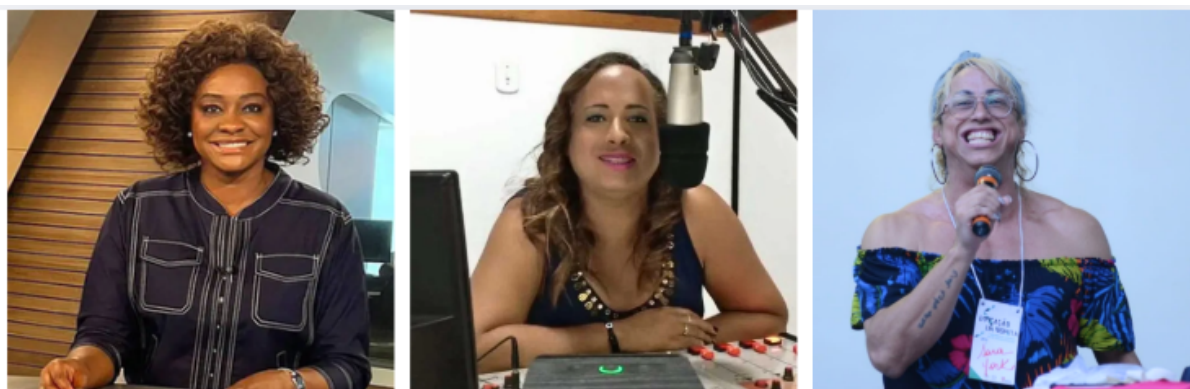


Violence against journalists is a recurring phenomenon worldwide, manifesting in various forms and often failing to receive due attention from authorities and responsible institutions. Such attacks are not limited to physical aggression but also extend to symbolic, psychological, and digital violence, affecting both the professional and personal integrity of journalists. Although frequently minimized or ignored by society, these acts of violence play a significant role when it comes to issues of freedom of expression and democracy.

Among the forms of violence most visible in society, racism and gender-based violence stand out, which, beyond being expressions of discrimination, directly impact victims' ability to perform their work fully and safely. Structural racism, as pointed out by Almeida (2017), permeates multiple social spheres, including journalism, creating a hostile environment for Black professionals who face not only barriers to achieving outstanding positions but also constant attacks on their credibility and identity. Similarly, gender-based violence, as discussed by Butler (2015), imposes additional obstacles on women journalists, especially trans women, who frequently deal with harassment, objectification, and the denial of their professional authority. These forms of violence not only undermine journalists' work

but also have a devastating effect on their mental health, self-esteem, and ability to produce quality journalism.

Among the many expressions of racism and gender-based violence that exist in Brazilian society and are reflected within the journalistic field, two emblematic cases stand out: that of journalist Joyce Ribeiro, as an example of racial discrimination, and those of Alana Rocha and Sara York, which highlight the specific forms of violence directed at trans journalists. This chapter seeks to analyze these cases, bringing visibility to the dynamics of exclusion and vulnerability that they reveal.



*Journalists Joyce Ribeiro, Alana Rocha, and Sara York, respectively.
(Imagens: Instagram; Correio Braziliense; Uol)*

Ethnic-racial dimension of violence: the case of Joyce Ribeiro

In 2014, Joyce Ribeiro, a journalist at SBT (one of Brazil's largest television networks), exemplified the racial violence that many non-white professionals face throughout their careers. While covering controversial topics and due to her consistent presence on social media, Joyce became the target of racist attacks. These attacks occurred on digital platforms, particularly on X and Instagram, where aggressors posted derogatory and offensive comments about her race, appearance, and professional competence. The attacks began in isolated instances but quickly intensified, reflecting the toxic and discriminatory environment that persists within

Brazilian society. Amid this situation, Joyce became not only the target of personal insults but also a victim of symbolic violence, a distinctive characteristic of the structural racism embedded in Brazil's social and cultural institutions.

In response to the case, colleagues and media organizations expressed solidarity with Joyce, emphasizing the importance of combating racism both in the workplace and in society at large. This reaction demonstrates a growing awareness of the need for institutional action to confront racial violence, while also exposing the media's limitations in addressing such violence in a more assertive way. Following the attacks, Joyce received public support from SBT, which took an official stance against racial violence and stated it would pursue appropriate legal measures (Jornalista...). The network, along with some organizations, reaffirmed the importance of diversity and respect for Black representation in the media. However, many considered this response insufficient, arguing that concrete actions are necessary to effectively confront racism within the industry.

Experts such as Professor Paulo Eduardo Alves da Silva, from the University of São Paulo, highlight the underrepresentation of Black professionals in journalism and other prestigious fields (Luque, 2025). Data from the study *Perfil Racial da Imprensa Brasileira* ("Racial Profile of the Brazilian Press"), conducted by Jornalistas&Cia, Portal dos Jornalistas, Instituto Corda, and I'MAX (2021), illustrate the racial violence faced by Black journalists, particularly within the media context. The disparity becomes evident when comparing the proportion of self-declared Black people in Brazil (56% of the total population) to the percentage of journalists who identify as Black (only 20%, according to the survey). The same publication further reveals that Black journalists mainly occupy operational roles, while white professionals dominate leadership positions. This imbalance reflects the structural racism entrenched in the sector, highlighting the degree of exclusion and the ongoing struggle of Black professionals for proper recognition.

On an individual level, the psychological impact must also be acknowledged. Racism, as a form of oppression perpetuated over time, manifests in many ways and is as devastating as physical violence, since it dehumanizes its victims and limits

their potential. Videos and audio recordings of Joyce Ribeiro's own statements can be used to illustrate her experience and the emotional pain she endured in this and other situations, as well as to raise public awareness about the consequences of racism (CartaCapital, 2024; Tedx Talks, 2011). Racism, especially in its symbolic form, has profound consequences for the mental health of its victims. Black journalists like Joyce endure the constant stress of racist attacks, which undermine their confidence and emotional well-being, making psychological support a crucial element in the process of facing the issue.

Excerpt on gender-based violence: the cases of Alana Rocha and Sara Wagner York

In 2023, two emblematic episodes of violence against trans and cross-dresser journalists highlighted the persistence of transphobia and the fragility of institutional guarantees for safety in Brazil. The first incident involved journalist Alana Rocha, a radio host at Gazeta FM in Riachão do Jacuípe (state of Bahia). During a live broadcast of her program, Alana's car, parked in front of the station, was violently stoned. The windows and windshield were shattered by rocks in an attack that, according to the journalist herself, was likely linked to her criticism of the city council's suspension of its activities. Although she filed a police report, Alana faced institutional barriers: the local police station classified the case merely as property damage, disregarding its violent and symbolic nature as both an assault on press freedom and on her gender identity.

The second case involves journalist and researcher Sara Wagner York, a cross-dresser with visual impairment. During her coverage of a Carnival event in São Pedro da Aldeia (Rio de Janeiro), Sara was physically assaulted by a city secretary and municipal security guards, despite having official authorization to be present at the venue. She was forcibly removed from the stage where she was reporting and suffered physical aggression. The incident led to legal action against

the city government and was incorporated into the Legal Protection Program for Journalists of the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (Abraji, 2023a), which began providing legal support to the journalist.

Data from the report *“Silencing the Messenger: The Impacts of Political Violence Against Journalists in Brazil”*, published by Abraji, recorded 40 cases of violence against women journalists, either cis or trans, as well as explicit gender-based attacks against communicators in Brazil. In just the first four and a half months of the year, gender-based violence was identified in 18 instances, meaning that 45% of the cases monitored by the project Gender Violence Against Journalists presented at least one of the seven subcategories recorded.

Most of the attacks occurred on digital platforms, including doxxing, defamation campaigns, and threats of death and rape. Carvalho’s (2024) report on the study also highlights the phenomenon of underreporting, especially among trans and non-binary journalists, whose presence in the field remains disregarded and delegitimized. These professionals face a combination of symbolic, physical, sexual, and digital forms of violence, becoming recurrent targets of attacks that transcend professional boundaries and expose their personal lives.

Abraji (2023b) provides data that illustrate the range and intensity of these aggressions: sexist and misogynistic comments accounted for 27.8% of cases; sexual violence episodes, 16.7%; differentiated digital violence, 16.7%; transphobic acts, 11.1%; transphobic comments, 5.5%; questioning of professional competence based on gender identity, 5.5%; and differentiated work-related violence, 5.5%.

Analysis: for the collective right to diverse, plural, and democratic information

It is important to highlight that the cases presented here are reflections of the social structures that sustain these forms of discrimination. According to Johan Galtung’s (1969) concept of Structural Violence, the attacks discussed here represent

mechanisms of devaluation and marginalization, contributing to the exclusion of minorities, reinforcing negative stereotypes, and perpetuating a distorted view of society.

The digital nature of the attacks against Joyce Ribeiro further aggravates this discussion, considering that social media platforms have the potential to amplify violence and hate speech, making the impact more immediate and long-lasting, deeply affecting victims' emotional health. The inability of platforms to prevent or moderate such violence perpetuates a cycle of hate, leaving victims in a constant state of vulnerability. The journalist was attacked by anonymous individuals, but also by a culture that, historically, has marginalized Black professionals in prominent fields such as journalism. In this sense, the victims in this case were both Joyce and the broader community of Black journalists itself, who daily face the weight of institutional racism.

It must be recognized that structural racism is a historical and systemic phenomenon, one that influences a nation's social, political, and economic practices, producing harm that goes beyond individual victims, also affecting the social and cultural development of an entire country. In Brazil, it has deep roots in the enslavement of Africans and their descendants and continues to be sustained through social attitudes and norms that exclude the Black population from opportunities and privileges, perpetuating inequality and violence.

As for the episodes involving Alana and Sara, they can also be understood as visible expressions of a system that marginalizes dissident identities, in those cases, undermining the professional practice of LGBTQIA+ journalists. These are manifestations of a structural and symbolic context in which cisheteronormativity operates as a dominant norm, determining who has legitimacy to occupy spaces of speech, production, and circulation of knowledge in the public sphere. Trans and cross-dressing journalists, by challenging this norm through their presence and professional activity, become targets not only for what they say or write, but above all for who they are. Their public existence in journalism represents a rupture with the historically established standard of neutrality and universality, which has

traditionally been embodied by cisgender and male bodies.

The marginalization of minorities in journalism does not occur only through direct violence but also through a complex web of exclusions that include institutional omission, the absence of specific protection policies, symbolic silencing, and barriers to professional advancement. In many cases, these professionals receive no support even from the news organizations they work for, being forced to confront physical, symbolic, and digital aggression without legal, emotional, or technical support. This precariousness, therefore, also reflects the fragility of democratic guarantees within newsrooms themselves and within the institutions that should safeguard the right to communication.

The forms of violence faced by the professionals mentioned here can be analyzed through the lens of Galtung's (1969) Violence Triangle Model, which distinguishes three main types of violence: direct, structural, and cultural. This typology is fundamental to understanding how different levels of aggression interconnect, reinforce one another, and sustain the exclusion of dissident bodies within the journalism field.

Direct violence refers to explicit, visible, and measurable physical or verbal aggression. An example of this category is the case of journalist Sara Wagner York, who was physically assaulted by a municipal secretary and security guards during the coverage of a public event, a clear instance of intentional violence, aiming to obstruct her professional activity through force. Likewise, Alana Rocha was a victim of direct violence when her car was stoned as she left the radio station where she worked. The rocks that shattered the car's windows and windshield represented an explicit act of intimidation, evidencing physical attack as a method of silencing. Verbal attacks against Joyce Ribeiro, although carried out through digital media, also constitute explicit aggression, with the same intention of oppression and restriction.

Structural violence, in turn, concerns the invisible and systematic forms of oppression that prevent certain social groups from meeting their basic needs or fully exercising their rights. Marginalization in the professional environment, the

lack of specific protection policies, and institutional negligence in the face of complaints are concrete expressions of this form of violence. When the Civil Police of Bahia, for instance, classified the attack on Alana Rocha merely as property damage, disregarding its symbolic, identity-based, and professional dimensions, it exposed the functioning of a structure that obviates violence against trans people. This structure operates daily, limiting access to resources, safety, and recognition, making journalism an exclusionary space for dissident identities and bodies still.

Cultural violence manifests itself in the symbolic, ideological, and discursive aspects that legitimize and naturalize both direct and structural violence. Racist, transphobic, and misogynistic comments serve this function – they not only offend journalists directly but also reaffirm cultural norms and values that devalue their racial and gender identities, embodying symptoms of a culture that enables prejudice and exclusion as acceptable practices.

Therefore, the theoretical analysis of these cases through Galtung's (1969) categories reveals how the forms of violence against journalists are multiple, interconnected, and sustained by a system that goes beyond the individual aggressor. They are part of a broader ecosystem of exclusion that encompasses discourse, institutions, and everyday social practices. Recognizing this complexity is essential for building effective protection policies that consider the specificities of violence against minorities within the field of communication.

In the face of this alarming scenario, it becomes urgent to develop integrated prevention and protection strategies. The prevention of symbolic violence can be achieved through inclusive public policies, such as affirmative actions that ensure the presence of marginalized groups in positions of power and leadership. With that in mind, it becomes essential to promote safe work environments where discrimination, of any kind, is explicitly prohibited and actively countered.

From a physical standpoint, it is vital to create specific safety protocols, especially for on-site reporting, with the support of unions and trained law enforcement agencies.

In the digital sphere, it is recommended to adopt cybersecurity practices such as the use of VPNs, two-factor authentication, and mapping of coordinated attack networks. Social media platforms must adopt strict measures to combat discriminatory attacks, including content-monitoring systems, algorithms to detect hate speech, and the creation of effective reporting mechanisms. Digital education is also of great importance as a tool to raise users' awareness of the consequences of digital violence.

Psychological prevention includes access to specialized therapeutic support, the creation of collective listening spaces, and the strengthening of peer support networks among minority journalists—essential measures for emotional recovery after violence.

Last but not least, we must acknowledge the crucial work of organizations such as Abraji in defending and supporting these victims.

The cases of Joyce Ribeiro, Alana Rocha, and Sara Wagner York reaffirm the urgency of rethinking communication through an ethics of care, listening, and recognition of diversity. Ensuring the safety of these professionals means not only protecting individuals but also defending the collective right to diverse, plural, and democratic information.

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Chapter 3

Legal violence against science communicators in Brazil: the case of *Nunca Vi 1 Cientista*

Letícia Assis Almeida da Silva and
Vitória Paschoal Baldin



Traditionally, the public consumed information indirectly, mediated by news outlets such as newspapers and television. Today, the internet and social media have become central sources of information, transforming the dynamics of communication. The crisis in traditional journalism, marked by the loss of space in mass media and migration to the digital environment, has worsened this scenario. Scientific journalism, in specific, though more necessary than ever – in times of infodemic and denialism – faces structural difficulties such as lack of funding, the dismantling of public policies, and the emptying of newsrooms.

The digital age has brought, at the same time, both challenges and opportunities for journalism and science dissemination: on one hand, the internet broadens access to sources and allows faster fact-checking; on the other, it facilitates the spread of misinformation (Dunwoody, 2021). The proliferation of fake news and echo chambers deepens public polarization around issues such as climate change and vaccination, creating isolated groups that reinforce preexisting beliefs and hinder dialogue with science (ibid.).

In this vacuum, projects such as *Nunca Vi 1 Cientista* (NV1C, *I have never seen a scientist*, in English) have emerged as responses to the lack of quality science coverage, proposing new forms of dissemination marked by accessible language,

informal aesthetics, and the protagonism of minorities. However, precisely because they democratize access to knowledge and challenge traditional monopolies of science and information, such projects are systematically attacked.

The channel was created by Dr. Ana Bonassa and Dr. Laura Marise and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, became a target of attacks and reprisals due to its stance against misinformation about the disease. In 2020, for instance, the scientists exposed fake news related to hydroxychloroquine treatment and suffered attempted hacks of their channel (Watanabe, 2020). In 2024, the two were sued after debunking misinformation about diabetes



*From left to right: Ana Bonassa and Laura Marise, responsible for NV1C.
(Image: Youtube)*

(Karpov, 2024). The year before, The communicators published a video refuting the link between diabetes and worms, information promoted by a health influencer. The video included screenshots of the nutritionist's public posts (who was selling a “deworming protocol” as a supposed cure for diabetes) and warned about the dangers of abandoning scientifically proven treatments.

The influencer sued the scientists for moral damages. Initially, Instagram denied the request to remove the video, but the court later ruled in his favor. In September 2024, the São Paulo Small Claims Court sentenced Ana Bonassa and Laura Marise to pay R\$ 1,000 in moral damages, plus a daily fine for noncompliance. The case⁹ sparked major repercussion and concern within the academic and science dissemination communities, as it set a dangerous precedent for the censorship of

⁹ See: <https://youtu.be/bvbUmZEy9I8>

scientific content. Later, The Supreme Federal Court suspended the ruling, recognizing that the video represented a legitimate expression of critical thought and was in the public interest.

In this chapter, the case is analyzed from an approach that conceives public science dissemination as a liminal field between journalism, education, and knowledge production. We take as a starting point the conceptual framework by Slavcheva-Petkova et al. (2023), in dialogue with the theoretical-epistemic structure developed in the course *New Paradigms for Dimensions of Violence in the Field of Communication: Harassment and Threats Against Journalists and Communicators*, offered by the Graduate Program in Communication Sciences at the University of São Paulo, taught by Professors Daniela Osvald Ramos and Elizabeth Nicolau Saad-Correa. We therefore propose broadening the understanding of communicators' occupational safety beyond physical violence, incorporating psychological, digital, and financial dimensions, as well as the subjective and structural factors that shape experiences of risk.

Within this framework, the safety of the NV1C communicators — young women, scientists, and science communicators — is analyzed at the intersection of power dynamics that operate on multiple aspects. The case lays bare the intersection between science, communication, and gender in contemporary Brazil, revealing how structural sexism operates within these fields and intensifies in contexts of misinformation and attacks on democracy. The scientists behind the project became targets of orchestrated campaigns of gendered violence, disinformation, and attempts at silencing. Thus, we recognize that the risks faced are not isolated incidents, but rather part of a multi-level threat ecosystem: on the *micro* level, they affect the communicators' emotional and psychological integrity; on the *meso* level, they expose the institutional fragility of autonomous scientific dissemination initiatives; and on the *macro* level, they reveal political disputes over who is authorized to speak publicly in the name of science.

Historically, both science and journalism have been constructed as male-dominated domains (Krook & Sanín, 2016). In science, the sexual division of labor and the process of specialization over centuries excluded women from knowledge production, relegating them to invisibility or auxiliary roles even when they co-authored scientific discoveries (Ahlqvist, London & Rosenthal, 2013). In journalism, despite women's growing presence in newsrooms, inequalities in pay, representation, and topic assignment persist: men still occupy most senior positions and are assigned to "serious" or more prestigious beats (Figaro, 2018). Beyond newsrooms and academic settings, female scientists, science communicators, and journalists have been targeted with online harassment, threats, and disinformation campaigns (Sobieraj, 2018). This gendered violence reflects efforts to discredit women's voices in the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge.

By taking the lead in science communication — a space still marked by the logic of the "male expert" as the legitimate bearer of knowledge — Bonassa and Marise defied normative gender expectations. What is at stake in the attacks they have suffered is not limited to the content they produce, but is aggravated by the fact that they are women, daring to occupy the public sphere with authority. The scientists face not only professional delegitimization but also a dual assault that combines structural sexism with hostility toward science dissemination.

This episode also highlights the value and the vulnerability of evidence-based science communication (Bucchi & Trench, 2021), understood simultaneously as the transmission of data and as a situated social and cultural practice. By promoting an inclusive, accessible, and socially grounded communication of science, NV1C embodies an expanded conception of science dissemination (*ibid.*) that goes beyond traditional formats and manifests itself through popular languages.

It is important to note that misinformation does not operate in isolation: attacks on communicators' credibility are part of a coordinated ecosystem aimed at undermining the work of those who combat fraud and pseudoscience. By constructing "alternative truths" grounded in beliefs, moralism, and resentment

(Cabañes, 2020), far-right populism discredits evidence, relativizes facts, and mobilizes hatred. Misinformation, therefore, is not a simple mistake: it is a political strategy to erode the credibility of science and its communicators (Kapantai et al., 2021), especially when they are women, LGBTQIAP+ community members, racialized individuals, or advocates of progressive causes.

Judicial harassment thus emerges as a weapon, consuming time, money, and energy, often leading to exhaustion or self-censorship. Although still ongoing, the legal process against the scientists raises an alert about the use of the judiciary as an instrument of persecution. Even the mere threat of lawsuits, however unfounded, can generate fear, paralyze initiatives, and weaken the willingness of scientists and communicators to occupy public space. In this context, such actions serve as an institutional extension of online violence: an attempt to transfer symbolic aggression from digital networks to the courts. Besides being emotionally and financially exhausting, this type of harassment is used to induce self-censorship —whether in direct victims or in the entire scientific and communications community, which begin to self-restrain for fear of becoming the next targets.

The NV1C case also exposes a central conflict in the contemporary Brazilian legal landscape: the tension between local court rulings and the principles established in the Supreme Federal Court's jurisprudence concerning freedom of expression, scientific critique, and the right to information. The decision of the São Paulo Small Claims Court judge, in favor of the plaintiff — a health influencer promoting an unscientific treatment — ignored the constitutional principle of freedom of expression and the public interest inherent in substantiated critique, as recognized in multiple STF decisions.

Prevention Recommendations

The tensions experienced by Dr. Ana Bonassa and Dr. Laura Marise expose the vulnerability of science communicators in the face of disinformation, abusive litigation, and symbolic violence, especially when these communicators belong to historically underrepresented groups. In light of this, it is possible to propose actions at multiple levels to address the risks associated with the practice of critical scientific dissemination in digital environments.

Science communicators who face lawsuits or defamation campaigns suffer direct impacts on their mental health. The stress associated with fear of retaliation, legal uncertainty, and media pressure can lead to self-censorship, isolation, and, in extreme cases, abandonment of the activity altogether. It is essential that psychological support and legal guidance initiatives be developed within universities, NGOs, and collectives to provide assistance to threatened researchers and communicators. In addition, Strengthening adaptive strategies, such as social support and seeking safety nets, may contribute to resilience and the continuity of autonomous work.

The support of the online science communication community was central in responding to the NV1C case. The mobilization of communicators, scientists, and influencers in the field not only helped to amplify the visibility of the process, but also served to denounce judicial harassment and mobilize legal and financial support. This solidarity network played a crucial role in maintaining the authors' online presence and combating the isolation that often affects communicators under attack. Strengthening such networks — through alliances, associations, and collaborative platforms — is essential to protect science dissemination actors and to ensure the diversity of voices in the public debate.

Technology companies must also assume greater responsibility in protecting science communicators and combating disinformation. This case illustrates the limitations of current guidelines: although Instagram initially kept the published content online, the platform did not offer effective support mechanisms for the authors. It is urgent to implement more robust and transparent corporate policies

against online harassment, as well as to strengthen partnerships with scientific and journalistic institutions to identify and flag misleading content that could harm public health. Improved reporting tools, contextual moderation, and greater transparency in content removal decisions must also be demanded.

Finally, the Brazilian State also has a strategic role in building a healthy informational environment. This includes implementing regulatory measures that protect critical freedom of expression, curb abusive litigation, and promote the appreciation of science communication. The acknowledgment by the Supreme Federal Court (STF) of the public relevance of the content published by the scientists is an important, though still isolated, step. It is necessary to formulate public policies that guarantee the legal security of science communicators, especially those engaged in combating disinformation. Furthermore, programs to promote science dissemination should be expanded and integrated with media literacy initiatives, the critical education of the population, and the encouragement of diversity in science.

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Chapter 4

What about the culture desk? the (lack of) safety of journalists during Carnival 2025

*Aianne Amado and
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According to historians, the origins of Carnival date back as far as 10,000 BCE, linked to pagan festivals in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, associated with seasonal changes (Arantes, 2013). However, it was in Brazil that this celebration became one of the nation's most powerful cultural symbols, a metonymic reference in itself. Here, during the pre-Lenten holiday — which officially lasts four days but, in many places, extends throughout the month — takes place what is considered the largest popular festival in the world (Palmares, 2025). Dressed in colorful costumes and covered in glitter, hundreds of thousands of people fill the streets across all Brazilian states. Whether in free or paid street blocs, in exclusive concert areas, or in samba school parades, there is always a vibrant crowd singing and dancing. Not by chance, Carnival has become a temporal landmark in the Brazilian calendar, representing for many the real beginning of the year: as Jorge Ben Jor (1969) sings, in this “tropical country blessed by God,” “in February, there’s Carnival.”

By its popular and collective nature, Carnival also represents a space of resistance. In Salvador, for example, the band Olodum echoes verses of protest – “Strength and dignity / Freedom to the people of Pelô (...) Declare the nation / Pelourinho against prostitution / Make protest, make demonstration / And off I

go.”¹⁰ (Olodum, 1988) – while in Rio de Janeiro, samba schools bring to the avenue narratives of denunciation, such as Mangueira’s 2019 parade theme: “Since 1500 there’s been more invasion than discovery / There’s dark blood trampled / Behind the framed hero / Women, tamoios, mulattos / I want a country that’s not in the picture.”¹¹ Yet, in a somber counterpoint, we must recognize that the festival also exposes a darker side. Year after year, the Carnival period registers a spike in Brazil’s already alarming rates of violence (Ribeiro, 2025). Excessive alcohol consumption, permissiveness, and large crowds often result in traffic accidents, sexual harassment, domestic violence, theft, assault, and even homicide.

On a smaller but still significant scale, one must also note the violence directed at journalists, whether they are covering or simply attending the festivities. In 2025, the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ) highlighted the growing



*Marcelo Rubens Paiva being honored at the Acadêmicos do Baixo Augusta parade
(Image: G1, photo by Tomzé Fonseca/ Agnews)*

¹⁰ Translated from the original: “*Força e pudor / Liberdade ao povo do Pelô (...) Declara a nação / Pelourinho contra a prostituição / Faz protesto, manifestação / E lá vou eu*”. Pelourinho, also referred to as Pelô, is a historic neighborhood in downtown Salvador, marked by its vibrant Afro-Brazilian culture and a legacy of social inequality.

¹¹ Translated from the original: “*Desde 1500 tem mais invasão do que descobrimento / Tem sangue retinto pisado / Atrás do herói emoldurado / Mulheres, tamoios, mulatos / Eu quero um país que não está no retrato*”. The year 1500 marks the arrival of the Portuguese in what is now Brazil, considered the beginning of the country’s colonial period. The Tamoios were an Indigenous group from the Tupinambá linguistic family who inhabited the southeastern coast of Brazil and resisted Portuguese colonization in the 16th century. The term “mulatos” historically designated people of mixed African and European ancestry; it is now considered outdated due to its colonial and racialized connotations.

number of attacks on media professionals during Carnival celebrations, warning that these cases “raise an alert for the need of effective measures to guarantee the safe practice of journalism, which is essential to maintaining a democratic and well-informed society” (FENAJ, 2025). This chapter seeks to shed light on a global trend of violence against journalists, looking at how it takes shape in Brazil through episodes that unfold amid one of the nation’s most traditional festivities. It first presents emblematic cases that reveal different forms of insecurity and attacks suffered by members of the press. The discussion then deepens through theoretical frameworks linked to the recent and emerging field of journalist safety studies. Finally, the concluding section proposes best practices and behavioral guidelines aimed at mitigating risks and preventing the recurrence of such incidents.

Between festivity and hostility: narratives of insecurity in the 2025 Carnival coverage

On Sunday, February 23, journalist, writer, and playwright Marcelo Rubens Paiva was honored by the São Paulo street parade Acadêmicos do Baixo Augusta. At the time, the film *Still Here* (Walter Salles, 2024), based on Paiva’s book of the same name about his family’s story, had been nominated in several categories for the Academy Awards, the most prestigious prize in world cinema. Shortly before the parade began, however, the author was struck by a backpack, a beer can, and a T-shirt thrown at him by an unidentified reveler. Fortunately, Paiva was not injured. In an interview with GloboNews (Patriarca & Meirelles, 2025), he stated that it was his 16th Carnival, yet the first time he had ever experienced such an episode.

At the same event, a photojournalist for *Folha de S. Paulo*, Bruno Santos, was covering the parade when, noticing a disagreement between security guards and attendees, he approached to document the situation – which was contested by one of the guards. Santos reports that he tried, unsuccessfully, to explain that he was

simply doing his job before being surrounded by a group of guards and kicked twice. The assault ended only after the intervention of one of the event's organizers (*Folha*, 2025).

Five days later, this time in Rio de Janeiro, journalist Josué Amador, a reporter for Inter TV RJ (an affiliate of Rede Globo), was also attacked. Amador was covering the Rio Carnival when, during a live broadcast, he was hit in the face with a spray of foam by a group of revelers who then stole his cell phone. The live transmission was interrupted, and Amador was promptly assisted by the security team of the samba school União de Maricá, who provided both physical and emotional support and successfully recovered the journalist's phone (CNN, 2025; Oliveira, 2025).

Also during a live broadcast, this one on March 1, journalist Bianka Carvalho, from TV Globo Pernambuco, was harassed by revelers at the Recife Carnival. First, a man offered her "a house, food, and clean clothes so we can move in together." Then another reveler proposed marriage, saying he would "wait for her" (*Diário do Nordeste*, 2025).

Finally, on March 3, journalist Fabrício Lobel, from SP1, went live covering the Charanga da França parade in downtown São Paulo. However, he could barely speak over the loud and persistent comments from revelers admiring his looks throughout the broadcast. Lobel appeared visibly uncomfortable with the situation (*Notícias da TV*, 2025).

Institutional and union responses

In February 2025, FENAJ (the National Federation of Journalists) issued a public alert and expressed its repudiation of the escalating violent attacks against media professionals. The organization urged public authorities and the organizers of Carnival parades and street blocs to adopt concrete measures to ensure the safety of

both participants and media workers. Moreover, it also advised journalists of their right to suspend their activities whenever their physical integrity is threatened. The statement reads: “In cases of aggression or attempts to restrict journalistic work, FENAJ recommends that victims contact their local union, file a police report, try to obtain footage and identify the aggressors, and seek witnesses who can corroborate the events.” (FENAJ, 2025)

The Union of Professional Journalists of the State of São Paulo (SJSP), aligned with FENAJ’s position, reinforced the seriousness of the situation by adopting an operational approach: during the Carnival period, it implemented an emergency hotline to provide immediate assistance to journalists who experienced harassment or violence, offering support in filing police reports and ensured follow-up to hold perpetrators accountable. On its website, the union wrote: “Unfortunately, in a society where hate speech and hateful practices persist, the spectacle of joy can become a risk factor for our profession, which will be out there covering the festivities.” (SJSP, 2025)

What these cases reveal about the debate on journalists’ safety

The growing academic interest in journalists’ safety reflects the intensification of situations of vulnerability experienced by media professionals around the world. Kristin Skare Orgeret and William Tayeebwa (2020) point out that, whereas during the entire First World War only two correspondents were killed, today the average is one journalist murdered every five days as a direct result of their professional activity. In this context, major initiatives such as the Global Conference on World Press Freedom Day, organized by UNESCO, and the Annual Conference on the Safety of Journalists, held at Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway, represent

significant efforts to address the issue by bringing together academics, media professionals, and both governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Research in this field, as well as monitoring reports, has traditionally focused on documenting and analyzing situations in which journalists' lives or full freedom are at risk – such as murder, imprisonment, kidnapping, forced exile, or legal restrictions – usually associated with political or crime reporting. This focus stems from the fact that academic literature tends to approach journalists' safety from the standpoint of its *absence*, privileging contexts of acute danger, such as coverage of armed conflicts, investigations into criminal organizations, or direct confrontations with political forces (Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023).

Nonetheless, Slavtcheva-Petkova et al. (2023) argue for broadening this scope in order to achieve a more holistic understanding of the problem. In that sense, they expand the concept of “journalists' safety” to “the extent to which journalists can perform their work-related tasks without facing threats to their physical, psychological, digital, and financial integrity and well-being.” (ibid., p. 1214). This definition allows the debate to include not only threats to life but also those affecting mental and emotional health, dignity, and, more broadly, the collective integrity of the journalistic profession itself.

The cases here analyzed illustrate the relevance of such conceptual, and, consequently epistemological, expansion. They involve situations in which there was no imminent risk of death or loss of freedom, and which occurred mainly within the cultural beat, during coverage of a national festivity. Bruno Santos and Josué Amador suffered physical assaults – though non-lethal –, with Amador also being the victim of theft; Bianka Carvalho and Fabrício Lobel had their dignity violated while being subjected to unwanted advances from revelers during live broadcasts. Marcelo Rubens Paiva, in turn, was not on professional duty but participating in the celebration as a private citizen. Even so, it is reasonable to assume that the attack against him was connected to his public visibility, heightened at that time by the

international acclaim of *I'm Still Here* (Walter Salles, 2024), which was receiving widespread recognition across Brazil.

Except for Santos, who was assaulted while trying to document a brawl between security staff and revelers, the attacks were not aimed at preventing the dissemination of any potentially damaging news. On the contrary: Amador's aggressors attacked and robbed him in the middle of a live broadcast, while those targeting Carvalho and Lobel actively participated in the coverage, making mocking romantic or sexual comments toward the reporters. Therefore, violence against journalists during Carnival does not stem from individual motives but rather manifests as a symptom of a wider process of delegitimizing journalism in the public sphere, intensified by the disorder inherent to the festive context.

Lima, Cunha, and Barbosa (2024) note the rise of "anti-journalist" and "anti-media" hate speech, which diminishes the profession's social role and normalizes practices of humiliation and derision. They particularly highlight the intensification of political polarization as a factor that amplifies this phenomenon, making journalistic impartiality itself appear, to certain groups, as a political stance or even an act of hostility. Consequently, it has become increasingly common for communication professionals — especially those with greater public visibility — to be targeted not because of their individual work, but for essentially ideological reasons. As the authors explain:

The journalist experiences the effects of practicing a "public" profession that can attract acclaim, criticism, or even violent reactions on a large scale.

Journalistic work presupposes a commitment to the transmission of impartial facts; however, many journalists become marked by the 'flag' of the media outlet they represent, or by the thematic focus of their reporting, which may align more or less with controversial issues or with political matter. Journalists' productions can be received in a highly personal manner by audiences who are emotionally involved with the topics portrayed. The audience that takes side assigns a position to the journalist, identifying them as either an ally or a rival in the ideological dispute. (Lima, Cunha & Barbosa, 2024, p. 8)

It is in this sense that Marcelo Rubens Paiva, after the attack, stated: “Brazil is harsh right now, and he [the aggressor] probably hasn’t seen the film” (Patriarca; Meirelles, 202.), referencing to his work recounting the repression suffered by his family during the extremest years of the Brazilian military dictatorship. Both the film and the book on which it was based have become symbols of resistance amid the rise of the far right, which, in defense of former president Jair Bolsonaro, went so far as to call for amnesty for those involved in the failed coup attempt of 2023, and for military intervention.

The cases analyzed also underscore the urgency of broadening safety discussions within newsrooms themselves, ensuring that protective measures are not limited to beats traditionally associated with risk but rather integrated across all journalistic domains, which means developing specific safety protocols for different coverage contexts, considering their singularities and vulnerabilities. Cultural journalism, in particular, demands special attention both in on-site coverage of events involving large crowds and in the digital aftermath of published pieces. In these scenarios, risks emerge on two fronts: in physical spaces, where overcrowding, euphoria, and the lack of proper safety infrastructure heighten vulnerability; and in digital environments, where the interpretive nature of cultural journalism often provokes intense reactions from engaged audiences, fans and haters alike – dynamic that fosters the spread of hate speech, personal attacks, and coordinated defamation campaigns, creating a field of risk that transcends the physical dimension and extends into the psychological and symbolic realms.

In the case of Carnival, an event often marked by fights, thefts, and harassment, it is worth questioning whether media companies should not be required to assign security staff to accompany reporters. The absence of such measures reveals not only the normalization of precarious working conditions but also news organizations’ failure to recognize that cultural festivities can represent risk environments comparable to those of traditionally “dangerous” assignments.

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Chapter 5

The Renaud Philippe case: assault on journalists covering indigenous land reoccupations in Mato Grosso do Sul



Diego Macedo and Mylena Fraiha

The violence faced by journalists covering Indigenous issues, such as the demarcation of ancestral lands and the fight for environmental conservation, is recurrent and manifests in various ways in Brazil and Latin America. A recent case that gained significant repercussion, both nationally and internationally, was that of British journalist Dom Phillips and Brazilian Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira, murdered in June 2022 in the Vale do Javari Indigenous Territory, in Amazonas. The killings were committed by illegal fishermen operating in the region, led by Amarildo da Costa Oliveira, known as “Pelado.” He and others involved were arrested and confessed to participating in the crime. According to Federal Police investigations, this was a criminal group that exploited fishing in Indigenous lands, which is prohibited by law.

This chapter analyzes a case of lesser notoriety but of equal relevance, which occurred in 2023 in a Guarani-Kaiowá reoccupation area at Fazenda Maringá, in Iguatemi (MS), 460 km from Campo Grande. The episode took place on November 22, when a group of gunmen, hired by local farmers, surrounded a group of documentarians – consisting of Canadian journalist Renaud Philippe and anthropologist Ana Carolina Mira Porto, accompanied by forestry engineer Renato Farac Galata.



Seated, from left to right: Renaud Philippe, Ana Carolina Porto, and Renato Farac Galata.

Surrounding them are indigenous people with whom they have worked.

(Photo: The Media Co-op)

The reporting duo (Renaud and Ana Carolina) was in southern Mato Grosso do Sul to capture images and information for the book *Retomada*, an unpublished photo-documentary portraying the struggle of Indigenous peoples to recover their ancestral territories. After visiting some filming sites and participating in the Guarani-Kaiowá Aty Guasu Assembly in Caarapó (MS), they headed toward the Iguatemi region, but were intercepted by a blockade of 30 pickup trucks on a rural road. Before reaching the conflict site, the three were surrounded and assaulted with punches and kicks by masked men in the trucks, allegedly hired by local landowners. Philippe was the main target and, in addition to being beaten, his hair was cut with a knife. The attackers also stole cell phones, cameras, and documents from the team. The case was recorded on video and reported in local newspapers. According to reports, the assaults occurred at the MS-295 intersection, in the Pyelito Kue area, where Guarani-Kaiowá had occupied farmland.

In an interview with Campo Grande News, Ana Carolina stated that the attackers were armed and broke into their vehicle, beating the group. She also reported that the stolen equipment caused losses of about 20,000 dollars (Fraiha, 2025).

After the incident, a police report was filed at the Civil Police station in Amambai (MS), however the case was later transferred to the Federal Police in Naviraí, which took over to assess the “possible connection between the conflict involving Indigenous peoples and farmers in the region” (Frias, 2024, n.p.), which would fall under federal jurisdiction. For this purpose, the documentarians gave testimony.

On December 4, 2023, delegate Adenilton Figueiredo do Carmo, in a statement forwarded to the Federal Prosecutor’s Office (MPF), argued that the case did not occur in the “context of a land conflict involving the Pyelito Kuê Indigenous community and local farmers” (Frias, 2024, n.p.):

(...) it is clear that the victims are not Indigenous, and the location of the events is not considered Indigenous territory (...) The fact that the victims were traveling to cover the Indigenous reoccupation near Fazenda Maringá, and were intercepted en route, is not sufficient to establish federal jurisdiction over the case and, consequently, the Federal Police would not have legal authority to continue the investigation, under penalty of usurping the functions of the Civil Police of Mato Grosso do Sul (ibid., 2024, n.p.).

In August 2024, at the Iguatemi Single Court, Judge Antônio Adonis Mourão Junior ordered the State Public Prosecutor’s Office (MPE) to be notified and the inquiry to be referred to the Civil Police of Iguatemi for continuation. However, at that time, the Iguatemi police station had not received any notification regarding the case, leaving the investigation in a state of uncertainty. To date, none of the perpetrators have been held accountable or punished.

At the time, the Canadian Embassy was informed of the incident and has been providing consular assistance to the journalist. Organizations such as Apib (Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil) and Abraji (Associação Brasileira de

Jornalismo Investigativo) expressed concern about the progress of the investigation and demanded punishment for those responsible (Apib, 2023; Ferreira, 2023).

After the attack, Philippe and Ana Carolina left the state, returning in May 2024 under National Force escort to complete the documentary project they were working on. The result of this work is the book *Retomada* (Philippe; Mira, 2025), a photo-documentary that portrays the struggle of Indigenous peoples, including the reoccupation areas in Mato Grosso do Sul.

Context of the conflict

The Iguatemipeguá I Indigenous Land is located in the municipality of Iguatemi, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, and is traditionally inhabited by the Guarani-Kaiowá and Nandeva people. Covering approximately 41,571 hectares, this land includes the *tekoha* (traditional territories) of Pyelito Kue and Mbarakay.

The official recognition process of the Iguatemipeguá I indigenous land made significant progress on January 7, 2013, when the National Indian Foundation (Funai) approved the studies of identification and delimitation of the area. This approval was formalized through an order published in the *Diário Oficial da União* on January 8, 2013.

Despite this initial progress, the demarcation process did not advance to subsequent stages. To this day, the Indigenous land remains at the designed “delimited” stage, according to the database on Indigenous Lands in Brazil maintained by the Instituto Socioambiental (n.d.). This means that although the area has been identified and delimited, it has not yet been officially declared, ratified, or registered – essential steps for fully guaranteeing Indigenous territorial rights over the land. To date, there is no record of the issuance of a declaratory ordinance by the Ministry of Justice, a necessary step for the continuation of the process.

The uncertainty surrounding the demarcation process has contributed to a scenario of intense land conflicts in the region. In October 2012, for example, the Pyelito Kue/Mbarakay community gained national and international attention by releasing a letter declaring their willingness to resist until death in the face of threats of expulsion from their traditional territory.

In addition, there are reports that in September 2015, Indigenous people who had reoccupied part of their traditional territory were forcibly removed. At the time, according to information from Funai in Ponta Porã, at least eight people were injured — including elderly individuals and a pregnant woman (Carvalho, 2015).

The stagnation in the demarcation process has left the Guarani-Kaiowá communities of Mato Grosso do Sul in a situation of extreme vulnerability, subject to constant threats and without full access to their traditional territory. In this context, emerged the so-called *retomadas* (reoccupations) — a term used by Indigenous peoples, especially the Guarani-Kaiowá, to describe the process of reclaiming territories that are rightfully theirs but were invaded and appropriated by farmers, particularly during the expansion of agricultural business and the yerba mate cycle in Brazil's Center-West region between the 17th and 20th centuries. Faced with the slowness of the Brazilian state in demarcating lands, many Indigenous groups are compelled to reclaim their areas on their own, even at the risk of violence.

According to data from ISA (n.d.), Mato Grosso do Sul has 68 identified Indigenous lands, representing only 3% of the state's territory. Among them, only 22 Guarani-Kaiowá and Nandeva areas have been demarcated, totaling 25,356 hectares. Another 10 lands have already been identified or declared as traditional Guarani occupation, but remain without demarcation, totaling 185,000 hectares. There are also another 16 lands in the process of identification.

Analysis

During the episode of aggression against a journalist in Mato Grosso do Sul, different forms of violence emerged that went beyond physical assault. Physical violence occurred through punches, kicks, and even the forced cutting of one of the professionals' hair, constituting not only bodily harm but also symbolic humiliation.

In the material sphere, the attackers broke and stole equipment such as cameras, cell phones, and microphones, compromising the journalistic work and causing significant financial losses. State violence, in turn, was expressed through the omission and lack of collaboration by police forces during and after the events, the slowness of investigations, and the absence of accountability for the perpetrators, all of which reinforce a scenario of impunity and institutional neglect toward press professionals working in conflict contexts.

The violence suffered by journalist Renaud Philippe and his team cannot be understood merely as an isolated episode of physical aggression. The case reveals deeper dimensions of the phenomenon, which fit within the definitions of structural and cultural violence formulated by Johan Galtung (1969, 1990) and further developed by Taylor O'Connor (2020).

Structural violence is evident in the State's slowness to provide an effective institutional response to the attack, in judicial decisions that refused to classify the investigation under federal jurisdiction, and in the longstanding uncertainty surrounding Indigenous land demarcation, an impasse that perpetuates land conflicts and exposes journalists and human rights defenders to insecurity.

Cultural violence, meanwhile, manifests in the normalization of such aggressions, in the symbolic silencing of journalists who cover sensitive issues such as Indigenous struggle, and in the frequent delegitimization of these narratives within institutional arenas. As Galtung (1990) observes, when aspects of culture — such as political ideologies, social discourses, or institutional practices — serve to justify or minimize violence, we are confronted with a pernicious form of symbolic domination that makes violence itself harder to recognize.

This layer of invisibility was reinforced by the Federal Police's argument that, because the victims were not Indigenous and the attacks occurred outside the reoccupation area, the case did not constitute a land conflict. This bureaucratic reasoning obscures the context of the aggression and disregards the journalist's role as a legitimate observer of social conflicts. The result is the perpetuation of institutionalized violence, which weakens not only press professionals but also society's very right to information.

The case also clearly demonstrates the importance of the concept of newsafety as a contemporary paradigm for understanding the risks faced by journalists. As discussed by Westlund, Krøvel, and Orgeret (2023), newsafety offers a crucial lens for analyzing such episodes, since it moves away from a reductionist view of safety as mere physical protection and aligns with a sociotechnical and integrated understanding of journalistic practice. According to the authors, journalistic safety must be analyzed along three interdependent dimensions: infrastructures, practice, and consequences. In the case under analysis, all three pillars were compromised:

- **Infrastructures:** The attack resulted in the destruction of equipment, loss of data, and the disruption of material working conditions, exposing the technological vulnerability of journalists in the field;
- **Practice:** The very act of investigative reporting was interrupted. The team was forced to abandon the coverage and return to their home state, only able to complete the project months later under the protection of the National Force — a situation that reverses the logic of press freedom, turning it into journalism under surveillance;
- **Consequences:** The psychological aftermath and trauma caused by the attack are not visible but must be considered within a comprehensive analysis of journalistic safety. The emotional and symbolic impact of such assaults can trigger chronic stress, fear, professional withdrawal, and even self-censorship, producing negative effects across the entire information production chain.

The assault on Renaud Philippe and Ana Carolina Mira Porto is also part of a broader movement of delegitimization of the press and symbolic criminalization of journalists working in zones of social conflict. Based on the works of Burgess & Hurcombe (2019) and Seabra (2020), it can be inferred that current journalism operates within a paradoxical environment: on one hand, it is essential for democracy; on the other, it is increasingly perceived as a threat by groups seeking to preserve political, economic, or cultural hegemonies.

In regions such as southern Mato Grosso do Sul, where agribusiness interests are dominant, the figure of a journalist working alongside Indigenous communities is often equated with the “external enemy” — someone perceived as attempting to destabilize a historically imposed territorial order. This logic of “symbolic warfare” against investigative journalism is reinforced by regimes of selective visibility, in which only certain narratives are validated and legitimized, while others are targeted with hate speech, threats, or direct violence.

The case of Philippe and Mira Porto exposes the institutional fragility underlying this situation. Even with media coverage, support from organizations such as Abraji, and international attention, the Brazilian State proved incapable of delivering justice. This demonstrates that beyond physical aggression, there is an attack on the very legitimacy of journalism as a professional and a public activity, endangering not only journalists, but also the democratic foundations of press freedom and the right to information themselves.

Finally, it is crucial to discuss how violence against journalists generates a vicious cycle of self-censorship (Larsen, Fadnes & Krøvel, 2020; Julie Posetti, 2021). When journalists are assaulted, persecuted, or discredited without any effective accountability for the aggressors, the result is a depletion of journalistic coverage on sensitive topics. In the case under analysis, even after returning to the region, the team required National Force protection to complete their work. This need for armed

protection to practice journalism reveals the extreme level of hostility faced by professionals in certain regions and on certain subjects.

Self-censorship, here, can operate on several levels: journalists that avoid specific topics; editors that refuse to publish stories for fear of reprisals; and news organizations that cut investments in so-called “problematic” coverage. The result is a mutilated public sphere, where democratic debate is impaired by the absence of information and by the use of fear as a mechanism of control.

This scenario, worsened by impunity and institutional negligence, underscores the urgent need for public policies to protect journalists, enhanced safety protocols, and a cultural commitment to valuing press freedom as a cornerstone of democracy

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