



The Citizen Lab

Latin America and the Caribbean CyberWatch: April 2013

A monthly report on trends in online censorship, information operations,
and Internet use in Latin America and the Caribbean

Table of Contents

- Brazil (page 1)
- Uruguay (page 2)
- Mexico (page 2)
- Cuba (page 3)
- Jamaica (page 3)

BRAZIL

Brazilian court ranks highest in requests for censorship

According to the latest [Google Transparency Report](#), which breaks down the traffic, content removal and data requests for the period of July-December 2012, [Brazil](#) is the country with the [highest number](#) of court ordered content removal requests. Google received 640 requests from Brazilian courts to remove 1,654 items online, most of which were hosted on YouTube. This number of requests is up 265 percent from the previous Transparency Report. Google has identified that the reason for this increase was the large number of removal requests for content accused of violating the Electoral Code during the 2012 Brazilian Elections, which took place during that time period. Google is in the process of appealing these court orders. However, it has been reported that Google has removed other types of content as per government requests, such as the word “favela,” meaning “slum,” [from many of its maps](#). Many bloggers have expressed outrage over this effort to draw attention away from Brazil’s poorest areas in the run up to the [2016 Olympic Games](#).

URUGUAY

ECLAC signs commitment to reach ICT development targets

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) closed the [Fourth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) with the signing of the Montevideo Declaration, which [reaffirms](#) participating nations' commitment to reaching targets for information communications development. Held in Uruguay this year, the conference seeks to examine the development of information communications technology through dialogues with leaders across the region. ECLAC presented a document at the conference that outlines the [inequalities in technological development](#) in the Caribbean, explaining how some nations are developing at a much lower rate than others. The Declaration seeks to address this issue and further technology in the region as a whole.

MEXICO

Constitutional amendment passed to protect journalists

The Mexican Senate recently passed a landmark [constitutional amendment](#) that would protect the lives of journalists, the first of its kind in the country. The amendment, which was passed unanimously, would make any crime against a journalist a federal offense, to be investigated by senior levels of government. The ruling has come at a time when murders of journalists are at an all time high. [Reports](#) state that 50 journalists have been killed in the last six years, and many more are [threatened](#) or living in dangerous conditions. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has released a [statement](#) expressing their approval of this new legislation. In 2011, Mexico ranked eighth on CPJ's worldwide [Impunity Index](#).

Twitter used as war reporting tool

A new report released by Microsoft Research entitled "[The New War Correspondents: The Rise of Civic Media Curation in Urban Warfare](#)," illustrates how anonymous Twitter accounts have become reliable [sources of information](#) about the drug wars for many followers in Mexico. The report identifies several Twitter accounts with large followings that act as de-facto war correspondents, providing up to date news to the public. Prominent Mexican news organizations have even begun using these Twitter accounts as sources of information for their own reports. The report describes how many of the Twitter account creators refused to be identified due to fear that doing so would endanger their lives. However, Mashable [got in contact](#) with one account holder, [@BalaceraMTY](#) who is based in Monterrey, and who says that their motivation for starting the Twitter account was based on the need to protect themselves and others. On April 3, a prominent Facebook and Twitter account under the name "Valor por Tamaulipas," [went offline](#) after receiving threats, and a spokesperson announced that they would remain temporarily on hiatus.

CUBA

Dissident Blogger Completes World Tour

Cuban dissident blogger Yoani Sanchez has completed her 80-day world tour after visiting [Europe](#), South America, various locations in the US, including visits to [Washington](#), [New York](#) and Miami. At her recent appearance at the [Spanish parliament](#), she praised the solidarity of the Spanish people with the Cuban struggle for democracy. There, she also met with members of the Foreign Affairs Committee where she discussed recent political developments in Cuba. In Washington, she [appeared](#) at the Embassy of the Czech Republic with Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo, another prominent Cuban blogger and artist. They presented a [photo exhibit](#) on Cuban life, and spoke about the use of digital photos and media by independent citizens to tell the real story of the Cuban people.

JAMAICA

Proposed amendment to Cyber Crime bill could criminalize defamation

The [Press Association of Jamaica](#) (PAJ) is campaigning for Jamaican parliament to reject proposed [amendments](#) to the 2010 Cyber Crime law that would make defamation and libel a criminal act. Members of the parliament committee deliberating these [amendments have](#) come out in support of making online defamation a crime, but Dionne Jackson-Miller, a representative of PAJ, [argues](#) that this move would go against a Jamaica's history of free speech and would also go against global trends against censorship. The Cyber Crimes law has already been used to prosecute citizens in cases of [identity theft](#).

[Read previous editions](#) of the Latin America and the Caribbean.