

Mexico

	2016	2017		
Internet Freedom Status	Partly Free	Partly Free	Population:	127.5 million
Obstacles to Access (0-25)	8	7	Internet Penetration 2016 (ITU):	59.5 percent
Limits on Content (0-35)	10	10	Social Media/ICT Apps Blocked:	No
Violations of User Rights (0-40)	20	22	Political/Social Content Blocked:	No
TOTAL* (0-100)	38	39	Bloggers/ICT Users Arrested:	Yes
			Press Freedom 2017 Status:	Not Free

* 0=most free, 100=least free

Key Developments: June 2016 – May 2017

- Four years after introducing reforms to reshape the telecommunications industry, prices for telecommunications services have decreased and internet penetration increased (see “**Availability and Ease of Access**”).
- A series of revelations renewed concerns about illegal surveillance practices in the country, as spying software sold to the government abusively targeted human rights lawyers, journalists, and activists (See “**Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity**”).
- At least two online reporters were killed. Physical and technical violence continued to frequently target digital media covering sensitive stories such as crime, corruption, and human rights violations (see “**Intimidation and Violence**” and “**Technical Attacks**”).

Introduction

While access has steadily improved, Mexico's internet freedom environment declined due to revelations concerning government spyware used against human rights lawyers, journalists, and activists.

Mexico's telecommunications reform has induced some changes in Mexico's ICT market by reducing barriers for foreign investment and slashing prices for telecommunication services. In January 2017, the government formally signed a public-private partnership to deploy the Red Compartida project, a wholesale wireless broadband network expected to boost competition and expand coverage to underserved areas. Nevertheless, Mexico still faces challenges in its quest to increase competition and extend internet access to all citizens, as regional and disparities between urban and rural populations create a stark digital divide.

High levels of violence against journalists continued to severely limit internet freedom. During this period, online publications suffered cyberattacks, and at least two reporters covering sensitive stories online were killed, and many more received death threats and intimidating messages online. While citizens continued to use digital tools to protest against impunity, corruption, and gender violence, online manipulation remained a prominent phenomenon in Mexico's digital sphere. In early 2017, social protests against the steep hike in gas prices were soon delegitimized by social media messages promoting vandalism and chaos.

Using the tense security situation and the war on drugs as justification the government has increased its surveillance powers. A series of investigations have shed light on Mexico's misuse of digital spying technologies intended to pursue criminals and terrorists. As of August 2017, Citizen Lab and Mexican partner organizations had documented at least 21 cases of abusive targeting of journalists, human rights lawyers, activists, and political figures with the spying software Pegasus, developed by the Israeli company NSO Group and sold exclusively to governments.

Obstacles to Access

The implementation of the 2014 Telecommunications Law has brought tangible benefits for internet access in Mexico, by slashing prices of telecommunications services and promoting important investments in infrastructure. Nevertheless, concentration is still high and the real-world impact of these changes in some parts of the country remains to be seen, as the country still suffers from a wide digital divide between urban and rural communities.

Availability and Ease of Access

Four years after introducing reforms to reshape the telecommunications industry, Mexico has noted some tangible improvements in terms of expanding internet connectivity, greater competition, and price reductions.¹ Internet and mobile penetration rates have continued to steadily increase.

Telecommunications reforms promoted by President Enrique Peña-Nieto in 2013 sought to substantially reshape the telecommunications industry and increase access. The reform package

¹ Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones (IFT). "Telecommunications in Mexico. Three Years After the Constitutional Reform", June 2016, <http://bit.ly/29zZ5zh>

seeks to develop a Shared Network (Red Compartida) and Backbone Network (Red Troncal) to improve quality, affordability, and coverage of telecommunication services across the country. In January 2017, the government formally signed a public-private partnership to deploy the Red Compartida project, a wholesale wireless broadband network expected to start operating in 2018. This network would offer data capacity to other operators and expand coverage to regions that lack services.²

Key Access Indicators		
Internet penetration (ITU) ^a	2016	59.5%
	2015	57.4%
	2011	37.2%
Mobile penetration (ITU) ^b	2016	88%
	2015	85%
	2011	79%
Average connection speeds (Akamai) ^c	2017(Q1)	7.5 Mbps
	2016(Q1)	5.9 Mbps

^a International Telecommunication Union, "Percentage of Individuals Using the Internet, 2000-2016," <http://bit.ly/1cblxxY>.

^b International Telecommunication Union, "Mobile-Cellular Telephone Subscriptions, 2000-2016," <http://bit.ly/1cblxxY>.

^c Akamai, "State of the Internet - Connectivity Report, Q1 2017," <https://goo.gl/TQH7L7>.

While Mexico's mobile penetration is still behind other countries in the region, the number of smartphone users has increased significantly. Some 81 million people are mobile phone users, of which 60 million use a smartphone.³ Prices for mobile telecommunications have dropped significantly according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the price for a package of 100 calls and 500MB declined by 65 percent since 2013, from \$44 to \$15 (in USD Purchasing Power Parity), whereas a package of 900 calls and 3GB dropped from \$101 to \$25.⁴ The prevalence of smartphones is due in part to a decrease in prices for mobile phone use, the increasing availability of smartphones, and promotions that narrow the price gap between basic phones and smartphones.⁵

Despite initiatives to increase connectivity, the digital divide between urban and rural regions in Mexico remained significant.⁶ While 47 percent of homes had internet connections in 2016, 7.8 percent higher than the previous year, the proportion of homes with internet connections in some of the poorest states has only improved slightly.⁷ In 2016, only the states of Baja California Sur and Sonora entered the group of states with a penetration above 70 percent. On the other hand, Chiapas

² "Firman contrato para desplegar Red Compartida de telecomunicaciones en México," *El Confidencial (EFE)*, January 24, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2hlmo68>

³ Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), "Aumentan uso de Internet, teléfonos inteligentes y TV digital" [Increase in the use of Internet, smartphones and digital TV], *National Survey on Availability and Use of Information Technologies in Households (ENDUTIH)*, March 14, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2mNucRu>

⁴ "OECD Telecommunication and Broadcasting Review of Mexico 2017," [http://www.oecd.org/sti/OCDE-IFT-ENG-\[Print\].light.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/sti/OCDE-IFT-ENG-[Print].light.pdf)

⁵ "Precios de telefonía móvil, de los más bajos en 1T16" [Mobile telephone prices, the lowest in Q1 2016], *El Financiero*, April 14, 2016, <http://bit.ly/1NjfRpc>

⁶ Christine Murray, "As Mexico lauds telecom reform, rural poor search for connection," *Reuters*, October 27, 2016, <http://reut.rs/2f5JiP4>; René Cruz González, "Sin acceso a Internet, más de 14 millones de campesinos e indígenas" [Without access to the Internet, more than 14 million peasants and indigenous people], *MVS Noticias*, March 21, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2r5lFSW>

⁷ Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), "Aumentan uso de Internet, teléfonos inteligentes y TV digital" [Increase in the use of Internet, smartphones and digital TV], *National Survey on Availability and Use of Information Technologies in Households (ENDUTIH)*, March 14, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2mNucRu>

and Oaxaca recorded a penetration rate of 20.6 and 13.3 percent respectively.⁸

Such disparate connectivity rates are also evident in the relatively small percentage of internet users with broadband access. Although the number of Mexicans with broadband subscriptions has increased over the past decade, growing from 2.72 percent in 2006 to 12.76 percent in 2016,⁹ Mexico still falls significantly below the broadband penetration rates of other OECD countries, averaging 29.76 percent.¹⁰ While prices for mobile broadband services have dropped, high equipment costs and geographical dispersion continue to pose challenges.¹¹

While it is true that the number of users has increased, digital inclusion programs continued to face challenges in reducing the digital divide.¹² Programs such as Connected Mexico (México Conectado), which seeks to bring broadband internet to low income populations free of charge, have recently been affected by financial constraints. In September 2016, the Office of Telecommunications and Transport announced an 80 percent budget cut in 2017 for the program.¹³

Ethnic and linguistic divides are also significant. According to the latest records, 14 million indigenous people and farmers were disconnected.¹⁴ Civil society groups have complained that despite telecommunications reforms, current ICT policies do not guarantee effective access for marginalized communities.¹⁵ On the other hand, 2016 saw a historic move towards creating an autonomous communitarian telecommunications network. In an unprecedented event, the regulator granted two concessions to a nonprofit group representing indigenous and rural communities to operate a telecommunications network. With this concession, at least 356 municipalities in the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Veracruz home of Mixe, Mixtec and Zapotec communities, would be able to access mobile telephony and internet services.¹⁶

Restrictions on Connectivity

There were no recorded activities or public incidents related to government-imposed restrictions on ICT connectivity during this coverage period. Article 190 in the 2014 Telecommunications Law, however, authorizes the “appropriate authority” within the Mexican government to request the

8 Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), “Aumentan uso de Internet, teléfonos inteligentes y TV digital” [Increase in the use of Internet, smartphones and digital TV], *National Survey on Availability and Use of Information Technologies in Households (ENDUTIH)*, March 14, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2mNucRu>

9 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “Historical time series, fixed and wireless broadband penetration. Q2 2016”, *OECD Broadband Portal*, June, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2ppAM3L>

10 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “Historical time series, fixed and wireless broadband penetration. Q2 2016”, *OECD Broadband Portal*, June, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2ppAM3L>

11 Miriam Posada García, “México, de los más rezagados en acceso a la telefonía móvil” [Mexico, behind the average in mobile telephony], *La Jornada*, April 3, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2nADQFk>

12 José Merino and Mariano Muñoz, “México Conectado: más internautas, mismas brechas” [Connected Mexico: more internet users, same gaps], *Horizontal. mx*, January 25, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2q6VrbV>

13 Carla Martínez, “México Conectado, con recorte de hasta 80%” [Connected Mexico, with a budget cut of 80%], *El Universal*, September 12, 2016, <http://eluni.mx/2clhN0Z>

14 René Cruz González, “Sin acceso a Internet, más de 14 millones de campesinos e indígenas” [Without access to the Internet, more than 14 million peasants and indigenous people], *MVS Noticias*, March 21, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2r5fSW>

15 Enjambre Digital, “Organizaciones de la sociedad civil mexicana en IGF 2016 denuncia graves violaciones a derechos humanos” [Mexican civil society organizations in IGF 2016 denounce serious violations of human rights], Enjambre Digital, December 5, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2qAwdUi>

16 Giovanna Salazar, “La emancipación mediática en México da un paso adelante con red de telecomunicaciones para uso social indígena” [Media emancipation in Mexico takes a step forward with the indigenous social use of telecommunications], *Global Voices*, July 22, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2r9u7aW>

suspension of telephone service in order to “halt the commission of crimes.”¹⁷

Although the majority of the backbone infrastructure in Mexico is privately owned, the state-owned company Telecomm has taken on greater control of the infrastructure, after taking over fiber-optic infrastructure from the Federal Electricity Commission.¹⁸ Mexico has only one internet exchange point (IXP), set up by KIO Networks in April 2014, which increases efficiency and reduces costs for Mexican ISPs by helping to manage traffic across networks.¹⁹

ICT Market

Mexico’s recent reforms have sought to improve the ICT market by reducing market dominance and barriers for investment. Under constitutional reforms to the telecommunications sector signed in 2013,²⁰ companies are prohibited from controlling more than 50 percent of the market. The Telecommunications Law published in July 2014 allowed IFT to take measures to reduce the market dominance of América Móvil’s holdings in the mobile (Telcel) and fixed-line (Telmex) market.

Despite regulatory actions, the ICT market remained dominated by a few agents.²¹ By the fourth quarter of 2016, América Móvil (Telmex) continued to dominate the fixed broadband market (57.5 percent), followed by Grupo Televisa (21.5 percent) and Megacable (13.3 percent). América Móvil (Telcel) also dominated the mobile broadband market (71.8 percent), followed by Telefónica (14.2 percent) and AT&T (12.4 percent).²²

Competition is expected to increase with the launch of the shared wholesale wireless network (Red Compartida) in 2018. In January 2017 the Altán consortium, a public-private partnership, was contracted to manage the Red Compartida.²³ The project is coordinated by the Ministry of Communications and Transport (SCT) and the Federal Institute of Telecommunications (IFT). This network aims to deliver mobile voice and data services to underserved areas, and will be available for use in March 2018.²⁴

Regulatory Bodies

In 2013, the government established a new autonomous regulatory agency known as the Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT) as part of a constitutional reform, in order to increase

17 Artículo 189-190 de Ley Federal de Telecomunicaciones y Radiodifusión” [Art. 189-190 of Federal Telecommunications and Radio Law], <http://bit.ly/1zCzcYq>

18 Peralta, “Telecomm venderá conectividad de fibra óptica en 2015” [Telecomm will sell fiber optic connectivity in 2015], *Expansión*, December 11, 2014, <http://bit.ly/2deO119>

19 Julio Sánchez Onofre, “Primer IXP in Mexico, una realidad,” *El Economista*, April 30, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1h3UAQG>. See also: “Inauguración del primer IXP mexicano,” [Inauguration of the first IXP] April 30, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1ULslbw>

20 “Mexican Senate approves telecoms-reform bill,” *Al Jazeera*, May 1, 2013 <http://bit.ly/1KOyU3J>; See also: Dolia Estevez, “Mexico’s Congress Passes Monopoly-Busting Telecom Bill, Threatening Tycoon Carlos Slim’s Empire,” *Forbes*, May 1, 2013, <http://onforb.es/1iFp4cQ>.

21 Adrián Arias, “Monopolios mantienen su dominio en telecomunicaciones” [Monopolies maintain their dominions within the telecommunications sector], *Crónica*, April 16, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2ra3umt>; The Competitive Intelligence Unit (CIU), “Sector Convergente -Telecomunicaciones y Radiodifusión en el Marco de Revisión de la Preponderancia [Convergent Sector- Telecommunications and Broadcasting within the framework of Preponderance Revision], 2016, <http://bit.ly/2oqFgp8>

22 Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT), “Cuarto Informe Trimestral Estadístico 2016” [Fourth quarterly statistical report 2016], May 2017, <https://goo.gl/QRJa3>

23 Altán Redes, “Propuesta” [Proposal], 2017, <http://bit.ly/2i1hLwZ>

24 Buddle, “Mexico. Mobile Infrastructure, Broadband, Operators. Statistics and Analyses,” May 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qrAwyy>

transparency of media regulation.²⁵ IFT has the legal mandate to act as an antitrust body, protecting the industry against monopolistic practices.

After secondary legislation was approved in July 2014, IFT began acting on its mandate to unilaterally punish noncompetitive practices through the withdrawal of corporations' licenses, the application of asymmetric regulation, and the unbundling of media services.²⁶ The most notable step taken by IFT was the declaration that América Móvil and Televisa were dominant companies. However, IFT received criticism for authorizing Telcel to exclusively exploit 60 MHz of the 2.5 GHz band.²⁷ Associations such as the Telecommunications Law Institute (IDET) and the Competitive Intelligence Unit (CIU) denounced that this move in fact reinforced the dominant player, contradicting IFT's mandate to guarantee competition and equal conditions for all agents in the sector.²⁸

Limits on Content

Harassment and physical violence has encouraged a climate of self-censorship among journalists and online activists, although many continue to risk physical danger in order to write about crime and corruption. While citizens continued to use digital tools to protest against impunity and corruption, online manipulation has continued to be an ongoing phenomenon in Mexico's digital sphere. In early 2017, social protests against the steep hike in gas prices were delegitimized by social media messages promoting vandalism and chaos.

Blocking and Filtering

No evidence has been documented that the government or other actors blocked or filtered internet and other ICT content.

However, there was at least one case of a governmental institution, the Mexican Institute of Industrial Property, attempting to block the website mymusiic.com because of alleged copyright violations. In April 2017, the Supreme Court of Justice declared that the order to block an entire website was unconstitutional, as it was considered a disproportionate measure that violated freedom of expression.²⁹

Social networking sites and international blog-hosting services are available in Mexico. Nevertheless, technical attacks against media outlets are increasing as a means to limit access to content (See Technical Attacks).

Content Removal

25 Juan Montes, "Mexico Telecoms Reform Bill Advances," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 22, 2013, <http://on.wsj.com/1LXSc6E>

26 Víctor Pavón-Villamayor, "Ifetel, la mayor apuesta en telecomunicaciones," [Ifetel, The Biggest Bet in Telecommunications] *Forbes México*, April 25, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1JyL0Mr>

27 Carla Martínez, "Espectro autorizado a Telcel no afecta la competencia: IFT" [The spectrum authorized to Telcel does not affect competition: IFT], *El Universal*, May 4 2017, <http://eluni.mx/2qJKz4r>

28 Ernesto Piedras, "Empoderando más al preponderante" [Empowering the preponderant], *El Economista*, May 10, 2017, <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/opinion/Empoderando-mas-al-preponderante-20170510-0008.html>

29 Diana Lastiri, "Government can't block web pages by copyright: Court", *El Universal*, April 19, 2017, <http://eluni.mx/2pss7xh>

While the Mexican government does not systematically request the removal of online content from intermediaries, news sites, and hosting services, some social media platforms and search engines recorded an increase in removal requests over the past year.³⁰ From July to December 2016, Facebook registered 25 content restrictions related to the alleged illegal sale of regulated goods in response to requests from the Mexican Federal Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risk (COFEPRIS).³¹ Twitter registered 3 removal requests in the second half of 2016.³²

Although there is no strong legislative framework on intermediary liability, existing legislation offers some protections from liability for ISPs in cases of copyright infringement.³³ A ruling from the Federal Institute of Access to Information and Personal Data Protection (IFAI)³⁴ in January 2015 threatened to introduce greater liability for search engines if they did not comply with requests to remove sensitive personal information from their search results. INAI had ruled in favor of a request from a businessman to remove links from Google search results which included criticisms of his family's business dealings.³⁵

Both Google Mexico and the media outlet *Revista Fortuna*—the latter represented by the digital rights group R3D (Digital Rights Defense Network)—challenged the resolution. In August 2016, a tribunal ruled in favor of *Revista Fortuna's* right to be heard.³⁶ This latest decision rescinded the 2015 ruling, opening way for a new procedure on the matter.³⁷ This resolution was celebrated by NGOs as an example of the public interest prevailing.³⁸

Media, Diversity, and Content Manipulation

Local officials have often been accused of manipulating online content in their favor, or of harassing or otherwise attempting to intimidate journalists to keep them from writing about issues of local corruption and crime.

The climate of violence and harassment towards the media contributes to significant self-censorship in states heavily afflicted by violence. Local media tend to refrain from reporting on stories about drug trafficking or drug-related violence. Nevertheless, independent media outlets strive to follow their own editorial line regardless of political or other kinds of pressures.³⁹

30 Julio Sánchez Onofre, "Gobierno mexicano crece vigilancia en Twitter, Facebook y Google" [Mexican government increases surveillance on Twitter, Facebook and Google], *El Economista*, May 8 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qWmmEF>

31 Facebook, "Solicitudes de datos de México" [Information requests in Mexico], *Informe sobre solicitudes gubernamentales*, July 2016–December 2016, <http://bit.ly/2qlvkxB>

32 Twitter, "Mexico," *Transparency Report*, July 2016–December 2016, <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/countries/mx.html>

33 Jose Camarena, "WILMAP: MEXICO," The Center for Internet and Society, Stanford Law School, <http://stanford.io/1MV98kd>

34 This was the name of the institute at the time of the ruling. However, in May 2015, the institute changed its name to the National Institute of Transparency, Access to Information, and Personal Data Protection (INAI).

35 La Razón, "Google litiga contra el IFAI por el derecho al olvido" [Google challenges IFAI over right to be forgotten], March 21, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1JOkolZ>

36 See: "¡Ganamos! Tribunal anula resolución del INAI sobre el falso «derecho al olvido»" [We won! Court overturns INAI's resolution on the false "right to be forgotten"], August 24, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2ekBFpe>; and Manu Ureste, "Derecho al olvido en internet: ¿un derecho, censura o un redituable negocio en México?" [Right to be forgotten on the Internet: a right, censorship, or a profitable business in Mexico?], *Animal Político*, September 13, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2cT4QPA>

37 José Soto Galindo, "Fortuna obliga al INAI a discutir sobre Google y los datos personales otra vez," [Fortuna forces INAI to discuss Google and personal data again], *El Economista*, August 25, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2dn6F5v>

38 *El Economista*, "Anulan resolución del INAI sobre derecho al olvido" [Court overturns INAI's resolution on the right to be forgotten] *The Economist*, August 24, 2016. <http://bit.ly/2bCBdgg>

39 Ernesto Aroche. Editor, Lado B. Personal interview. May 10, 2017.

Online manipulation and disinformation campaigns have been a recurring phenomenon since 2012.⁴⁰ Online trolls have targeted journalists, activists, human rights defenders, academics, or groups whose opinions have been critical of the government, political parties, or politicians. The use of bots to manipulate online debates has been documented in several studies.⁴¹ Amnesty International has in turn noted how certain tactics have evolved to make it harder for platforms to distinguish between bots and real users.⁴² Rumors or misleading hashtags are often disseminated to undermine social protests online. In January 2017, social unrest against the steep hike in gas prices was soon delegitimized by vandalism and chaos spurred from malevolent actors on social media. During the height of protests, the hashtag #SaqueaUnWalmart (#LootAWalmart) gained prominence alongside #gasolinazo (“gasolinazo” is a Mexican slang word for the steep increase in gas prices).⁴³

Economic constraints influence the diversity of media in Mexico. Scarce funding and a lack of interest in online advertising create challenges for individuals and nonprofit seeking to establish sustainable online outlets in Mexico. Reliance on public advertising renders independent media vulnerable to manipulation of content or closure due to lack of funding,⁴⁴ although it is the former that appears to be the more pernicious of the two trends. In Puebla, for example, independent media organizations say the state government uses a combination of state, municipal, and university advertising as a way to control the editorial independence of local media.⁴⁵

Despite such challenges, however, financially independent digital media outlets are appearing in Mexico, enriching the media ecosystem with alternative agendas that support human rights and the right to information.⁴⁶ These independent outlets, such as *Lado B*, an outlet created by freelance and local journalists in Puebla, bring new voices to the public debate. Recently, Lado B launched a crowdfunding campaign to fund 10 open research projects. Digital outlet *Animal Político* has more than a million followers on Facebook and Twitter, and is successfully experimenting with alternative forms of financing.⁴⁷

The social media landscape in Mexico is very dynamic. Mexico has the second largest community of Facebook users in Latin America after Brazil—and the fifth largest in the world.⁴⁸ The number

40 Eva Salgado Andrade, “Twitter en la campaña electoral de 2012” [Twitter in 2012 Mexican electoral campaigns], *Desacatos*, May–August 2013, <http://bit.ly/2pQsUJe>; Sopitas, “Así funciona el millonario negocio de las Fake News en México” [This is how it works the millionaire business of fake news in Mexico], *Sopitas*, April 5, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qmQV9m>

41 Pablo Suárez-Serrato, Margaret E. Roberts, Clayton A. Davis, Filippo Menczer, “On the influence of social bots in online protests. Preliminary findings of a Mexican case study”, *Cornell University Library*, September 27, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2pGMaUW>

42 Tanya O’Carroll, “Mexico’s misinformation wars : How organized troll networks attack and harass journalists and activists in Mexico,” January 24, 2017, <https://medium.com/amnesty-insights/mexico-s-misinformation-wars-cb748ecb32e9>

43 Signa Lab, “Battle of the Hashtags: Mapping the Online Conversation Surrounding Mexico’s Gas Prices”, *Global Voices*, February 15, 2017 <http://bit.ly/2pGT4cG>

44 Alianza Regional, “México,” in *Control estatal de los medios de comunicación* [State control of media], May 3, 2015, 57–60, <http://bit.ly/1GcRe4F>

45 Ernesto Aroche. Editor, Lado B. Personal interview. [May 10, 2017.](http://bit.ly/2pGT4cG)

46 For example: Based in Mexico City, *Pie de Página* is an initiative born from the experience of the *Periodistas de a pie* network and *Rádios Libres*, a project that seeks to boost communitarian radios with free technologies. Another innovative initiative in the digital media landscape is Pictoline, born at the end of 2015. Other examples of independent online news outlets in other states are *Página 3*, <http://bit.ly/2pDS1OE>, based in Oaxaca; and *Chiapas Paralelo*, <http://bit.ly/2pP53oJ>, in Chiapas.

47 Tania Lara, “Popular Mexican news site *Animal Político* seeks to eliminate dependence on government advertising,” *Journalism in the Americas Blog*, Knight Center at the University of Texas Austin, April 30, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1h44YYW>; Daniela Bermúdez, “Animal político, un sitio basado en contenido en lugar de clics”, *El Economista*, June 18 2016, <http://bit.ly/2pE6haf>; *Animal Político*, crowdfunding campaign, <http://bit.ly/2qpCGP5>

48 Notimex, “Twitter tiene 35.3 millones de usuarios en México” [Twitter has 35.3 millions of users in Mexico], *El Universal*, March 16, 2016, <http://eluni.mx/1UgKrBR>

of Twitter users in Mexico has ballooned in recent years, reaching 35.3 million in 2016.⁴⁹ Users or groups concerned about data privacy publish their content on alternative platforms.⁵⁰

Articles 145 and 146 of the Telecommunications Law establish protections for net neutrality. However, net neutrality is a contentious issue due to commercial agreements that allow differentiated prices depending on the destination of internet connections. During the coverage period, operators such as Telcel, AT&T, and Movistar reduced the availability of zero-rating plans—where certain digital services like HBO, Netflix, WhatsApp, or other social networking sites do not count towards a customer's data allowance^{51,52}—but still offered them at a lower rate than other services.⁵³ IFT faces a challenge to issue rules on net neutrality and traffic management in Mexico.⁵⁴

Digital Activism

Digital media have continued to serve as an important forum for internet users in Mexico. Even in the face of cyberattacks, harassment, and physical violence, users make regular use of digital tools to provide critical warnings to local communities about dangerous cartel-related situations and to protest instances of corruption and violence by authorities, political parties, and drug cartels.^{55 56}

Social media channels have helped to raise awareness and mobilize protests against gender violence, using the hashtag #NiUnaMenos (Not one less) every time a woman is killed. In April 2017, a young woman, Lesvy Berlín Orosio, was found dead in the gardens of the National Autonomous University, the biggest public university in the country. Official declarations from the office of the public prosecutor on Twitter revealed private information about her and indirectly blamed her for her own murder, provoking outrage among thousands of Mexicans.⁵⁷ The university community, NGOs, and women joined the online campaign #Simematan ("If they kill me") to share details from their private lives that could be used to smear them if they were victims of femicide, such as going out alone, wearing a skirt, high heels, or taking a taxi.⁵⁸ This protest was one of many reactions to a recent surge in gender violence in the country.

Social media users have also decried violence against journalists in the country. On May 15, Javier

49 The Competitive Intelligence Unit (CIU), "Uso de Redes Sociales al 3T16" [Social Networks Use 3T16], 2016, <http://bit.ly/2g0wKtO>

50 Ehécatl Cabrera Franco, "Redes sociales libres en la universidad pública" [Free social media on public universities], *Revista Digital Universitaria (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)*, January 1 2017, <http://bit.ly/2pDY6uA>

51 Antonio Cahun, "¡Adiós redes sociales ilimitadas! Telcel y Movistar hacen cambios en sus servicios" [Goodbye to unlimited social media access! Telcel and Movistar change their service policies], *Xataka México*, July 5 2016, <http://bit.ly/2ralO1m>

52 Alejandro González, "Elimina AT&T redes sociales ilimitadas" [AT&T cancels unlimited social media access], *Media Telecom*, February 18 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rafpn3>

53 AT&T, "AT&T Unlimited Plus", *AT&T*, <http://soc.att.com/2rjJ2i6>

54 Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales, "Neutralidad de la Red en México: Del Dicho Al Hecho" [Net Neutrality in Mexico: From Talk to Deed], August 2015, <http://bit.ly/1GQTVre>

55 Damien Cave, "Mexico Turns to Twitter and Facebook for Information and Survival," *The New York Times*, September 24, 2011, <http://nyti.ms/1JySbEA>; Miguel Castillo, "Mexico: Citizen Journalism in the Middle of Drug Trafficking Violence," *Global Voices*, May 5, 2010, <http://bit.ly/1WtYP8i>

56 Enrique Galván Ochoa, "La elección del Edomex en redes sociales" [The elections of State of Mexico on social media], *La Jornada*, May 13 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qL27xF>

57 JLCG, "Asamblea pide informes sobre la filtración en caso de Lesvy" [Legislative Assembly asks for information about leaking on the case of Lesvy], *El Universal*, May 10 2017, <http://eluni.mx/2q3NjJj>

58 Animal Político, "#SiMeMatan, la reacción de mujeres ante criminalización de una joven y que llevó a la PGJ a rectificar", [#iftheykillme, women's reaction to young women criminalization by PGJ], Animal Político, May 5, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qMj8i3>

Valdez, an award-winning reporter that founded the weekly newspaper *Riodoce* in Sinaloa, became the sixth reporter killed during 2017.⁵⁹ Valdez was a critical voice against violence, and the author of several books about drug cartels.⁶⁰ Using the hashtags #Niunomás (Not one more), #NoalSilencio (Say no to Silence) and #PrensaNoDisparen (Press, do not shoot), a national protest was organized to demand protection for journalists.⁶¹ Several digital media outlets such as *Animal Político*, *Nexos*, and *Tercera Vía* joined #Undiasinperiodicos (One day without newspapers) on May 16, as a sign of protest.

After revelations about the illegal use of government spyware (see “Technical Attacks”), civil society reacted with the hashtag #GobiernoEspía (#SpyGovernment), which became a global trending topic. Numerous media outlets covered the case and their reports were disseminated on social media for several weeks.⁶²

The digital rights collective Enjambre Digital (Digital Swarm) has operated a Tor node named “Foucault” for two years with the intention of introducing Latin American users to the service,⁶³ which improves anonymity and privacy on the internet.⁶⁴

Violations of User Rights

Mexico continued to be one of the most violent environments in the world for online journalists and bloggers, and the government has used insecurity as a justification to increase surveillance. A series of investigations have shed light on illegal surveillance practices in the country, after they revealed how digital spying technologies sold exclusively to governments were abused to target journalists, human rights lawyers, activists, and political figures.

Legal Environment

The Mexican Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and privacy of personal communications. A constitutional reform in 2013 granted the government expanded powers to curtail monopolies in the telecommunications sector (see “ICT Market”), established internet access as a human right, and guaranteed net neutrality. A Telecommunications Law was subsequently approved in July 2014, but controversial provisions that pose a risk to privacy were largely upheld by the Supreme Court in May 2016 (see “Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity”).⁶⁵

Although defamation was decriminalized at the federal level in 2007, criminal defamation statutes

59 La Jornada,, “Asesinan a Javier Valdez, corresponsal de La Jornada en Sinaloa” [Javier Valdez, correspondent of La Jornada in Sinaloa was killed], *La J*, May 15 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rjZMXh>

60 Javier Lafuente, “Asesinan en México a Javier Valdez, el gran cronista del narco en Sinaloa” [Javier Valdez, the great chronicler of drug trafficking in Sinaloa, killed in Mexico], *El País*, May 15 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rj7jFc>

61 Animal Político, “Convocan a marchas para exigir justicia por el asesinato del periodista Javier Valdez” [They call for marches to demand justice for the murder of journalist Javier Valdez], *Animal Político*, May 15, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2pRyZji>

62 Sofia de Robina Castro & Pepe Flores, #SpyGovernment: 40 days later, R3D, July 28, 2017, <https://r3d.mx/2017/07/28/gobiernoespia-40-dias-despues/>

63 Jacobo Nájera, “Anonimato en Internet: El nodo Foucault” [Anonymity on Internet: the Foucault node], *Enjambre digital*, June 20 2016, <http://bit.ly/2qpk1CQ>

64 *Tor Project*, <http://bit.ly/1dZ2zvZ>

65 “El Supremo mexicano avala la retención de datos de los usuarios” [Supreme Court ratifies retention of user data], *El País*, May 6, 2016, <http://bit.ly/1ryEk4>

continue to exist at the state level.⁶⁶ The penal code in Tabasco, for example, establishes penalties ranging from six months to three years of prison for libel. Other provisions at the local level may be equally problematic for journalists, such as Article 333 of the Penal Code in Chihuahua, which criminalizes those who, “for a profit or to cause injury, improperly produce or edit, by any technical means, images, texts or audio, which are totally or partially false or true.”⁶⁷

Despite legislation intended to increase the security of journalists and human rights defenders, the government has had little success in deterring attacks on journalists, bloggers, and activists, which are rarely punished in a country that ranks near the top in global surveys on impunity.⁶⁸ The Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, passed in 2012, established a new institutional body of government officials and civil society members charged with protecting threatened human rights workers and journalists.⁶⁹ Among the law’s provisions is a requirement that state governments work in conjunction with federal authorities to ensure that protection is effectively extended to those under threat.⁷⁰ However, an evaluation made by civil society organizations in July 2015 pointed to a lack of funding, lack of coordination between federal and state authorities, and widespread impunity in most cases of aggression against journalists and human rights defenders.⁷¹

Prosecutions and Detentions for Online Activities

While there were no documented cases of individuals prosecuted or sanctioned by law enforcement agencies on charges related to disseminating or accessing information on the internet, online reporters have risked harassment and arrest while covering demonstrations or political events such as electoral processes.

The website *Periodistas en Riesgo* (Journalists at Risk) recorded at least two cases of digital reporters arrested during the report’s coverage period:

- On June 5, 2016, two digital reporters and another reporter covering local elections in Chihuahua were detained by members of the Nuevo Casas Grandes Chihuahua Municipal Police. Cecilia Fuentes, reporter for the newspaper *El Noroeste*; Saturnino Martínez Nava, a reporter for *LarevistaNCG.com*, and Karina Hernández Acuña, a reporter for *Akronoticias*, were attempting to cover complaints about a possible case of vote buying by members of the Institutional Revolutionary Party.⁷²

66 Commission on Human Rights, Congress General of the United States of Mexico, *Gaceta Parlamentaria, Número 3757-VIII*, [Parliamentary Gazette, No. 3757-VIII], Thursday April 25, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1NXOcYf>; See also: Committee to Protect Journalists, Thomson Reuters Foundation and Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, “Mexico” in *Critics Are Not Criminals: Comparative Study of Criminal Defamation Laws in the Americas*, March 2016, <http://tmsnr.rs/2eAZQiu>

67 Código Penal del Estado de Chihuahua [Penal Code of the State of Chihuahua], updated June 13, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2dcyGhq>; See also: Gerardo Cortinas Murra, “Artículo 133,” *El Diario*, May 2, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2dlFVz6>

68 Committee to Protect Journalists, “Getting Away with Murder: CPJ’s 2015 Global Impunity Index spotlights countries where journalists are slain and killers go free,” October 8, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1G1HEGQ>

69 Leah Danze, “Mexico’s Law to Protect Journalists and Human Rights Activists Remains Ineffective,” Latin America Working Group, June 30, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1LY0MIV>

70 PIB and WOLA, “El mecanismo de protección para personas defensoras de derechos humanos y periodistas en México: desafíos y oportunidades,” <http://bit.ly/1DNcNwK>; See also: Peace Brigades International, “Qué Hacemos,” [What we do], April 15, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1KOE1kC>

71 Espacio de OSC, “Mecanismo Federal de Protección a DDHH y periodistas sin respaldo financiero ni voluntad política,” propuestacivica.org, July 28, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2e7rAIN>

72 *Periodistas en Riesgo*, “Detienen a reporteros que cubrían elecciones” [Electoral reporters are arrested], *Periodistas en Riesgo*, June 5 2016, <http://bit.ly/2epuhbO>

- On August 18, 2016, Manuel Morales, a photojournalist for the digital newspaper *Ultimátum*, was arbitrarily detained for 24 hours and threatened by municipal police and escorts of the Luis Miguel Pérez Ortiz, mayor of Pichucalco in Chiapas, after covering a public event.⁷³

Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity

A series of revelations involving Mexico's surveillance apparatus and the abuse of digital spying technologies intended to investigate criminals and terrorists have raised serious questions about illegal surveillance practices in the country.

As of August 2017, Citizen Lab and Mexican partner organizations had documented at least 21 cases of journalists, human rights lawyers, activists, and political figures being targeted with the spying software Pegasus. The software, developed by the Israeli company NSO Group, is sold exclusively to governments.⁷⁴ In August 2016, Citizen Lab reported that Mexican investigative journalist Rafael Cabrera, journalist for the media outlet *Aristegui Noticias*, was targeted after reporting on a conflict of interest involving the president and first lady of Mexico.⁷⁵ In February 2017, it was revealed that three public health advocates and researchers who were involved in promoting a tax increase for sweetened drinks were also victims of Pegasus spyware.⁷⁶ The report by Citizen Lab concluded that NSO's government-exclusive espionage tools may have been used by a government entity on behalf of interests other than national security or fighting crime.⁷⁷ More attacks have been uncovered since then, especially targeting those involved in investigations into government involvement in corruption or human rights abuses.⁷⁸ Evidence collected since 2011 has shown that the Mexican government spent at least \$80 million on such spyware across at least three security agencies.⁷⁹

Civil society and several international human rights organizations, as well as experts from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and United Nations, have called on the government of Mexico to conduct an independent investigation into illegal spying.⁸⁰ As of July 2017, however, the government had not responded to their demands.

In July 2015, a leak of internal documents from the surveillance company Hacking Team also revealed that Mexico was the company's biggest client worldwide, having signed more than 14 contracts with various state and federal agencies. Civil society organizations argued that these

73 Periodistas en Riesgo, "Detención arbitraria de fotoperiodista en Chiapas" [Arbitrary arrest of a photojournalist in Chiapas], Periodistas en Riesgo, August 18 2016, <http://bit.ly/2stXfxm>

74 Citizen Lab, "RECKLESS IV: Lawyers for Murdered Mexican Women's Families Targeted with NSO Spyware," August 2, 2017, <https://citizenlab.ca/2017/08/lawyers-murdered-women-nso-group/>

75 Citizen Lab, "THE MILLION DOLLAR DISSIDENT: NSO Group's iPhone Zero-Days used against a UAE Human Rights Defender," August 24, 2016, <https://citizenlab.ca/2016/08/million-dollar-dissident-iphone-zero-day-nso-group-uae/>

76 R3D, "Destapa la vigilancia: promotores del impuesto al refresco, espionados con malware gubernamental" [Unveil surveillance: promoters of the soft drink tax, spied on with government malware], R3D, February 11, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2IBDa4S>

77 Citizen Lab, "Bitter Sweet: Supporters of Mexico's Soda Tax Targeted With NSO Exploit Links", Citizen Lab, February 11, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2kWDIVn>

78 Citizen Lab, "RECKLESS EXPLOIT: Mexican Journalists, Lawyers, and a Child Targeted with NSO 'Spyware'" June 19, 2017, <https://citizenlab.ca/2017/06/reckless-exploit-mexico-nso/>

79 Azam Ahmed and Nicole Perlroth, "Using Texts as Lures, Government Spyware Targets Mexican Journalists and Their Families," *The New York Times*, June 19, 2017, <http://nyti.ms/2sHyduf>; Sofía de Robina Castro & Pepe Flores, "#GobiernoEspía: 40 días después" [#SpyGovernment: 40 days After], R3D, July 28, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2vfChml>

80 Reuters, "U.N. experts seek halt to use of spyware in Mexico and want full probe", July 19, 2017, <http://reut.rs/2fnMSpL>; <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expressions/showarticle.asp?artID=1069&ID=1>

contracts were illegal because many of the agencies involved in the contract lack constitutional or legal authority to conduct surveillance or espionage.⁸¹ The media outlet *Animal Político* accused the state government of Puebla of using Hacking Team products to target the political opposition and journalists.⁸²

The Mexican government has used the poor security situation in the country as an excuse to dramatically increase surveillance. The 2014 Telecommunications Law expanded on and partially replaced previous legislation that increased surveillance and allowed for real-time geolocation. In May 2016, the Supreme Court ruled that requirements for data retention and real-time geolocation included in the 2014 Telecommunications Law were constitutional. Under that law, Article 189 forces companies to provide users' geolocation data to police, military, or intelligence agencies in real time. Reforms to the National Code on Criminal Procedure, published on June 17, 2016, now require a judicial warrant for geolocation except in exceptional cases, such as kidnapping investigations, when a person's life or physical integrity is in danger.⁸³

Article 190 similarly requires providers to maintain records of their users' metadata for a period of two years, and grant security agencies access to metadata at any time.⁸⁴ Digital activists have argued that such provisions contradict international human rights standards, in particular the right to privacy.⁸⁵ However, the ruling did establish the need for a judicial warrant to access historical metadata.⁸⁶ The Supreme Court ruling also provided some clarification as to which authorities can access said user data, notably the Federal Prosecutor, Federal Police, and the authority directly in charge of applying and coordinating the National Security Law.

Government requests to social media companies for information regarding their users increased during the coverage period. Between July and December 2016, Facebook received 600 requests from the Mexican government for information related to 1,032 users; 573 of the requests were associated to legal processes. In some 72 percent of the cases, Facebook released some information.⁸⁷ During the same period, Twitter received 19 requests (up from 6 in the previous reporting period), with 21 percent of information produced related to 33 accounts.⁸⁸ Google received 179 requests from the Mexican government for data on 230 users or accounts. The company produced information in 54 percent of such cases.⁸⁹

81 For more information about the revelations of Hacking Team's operations in Mexico see Julio Sánchez Onofre, "Vulneración a Hacking Team confirma abuso de espionaje en México," [Breach of Hacking Team confirms abuse of espionage in Mexico] *El Economista*, July 6, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1JRDtIA>; See also: Daniel Hernandez and Gabriela Gorbea, "Mexico is Hacking Team's Biggest Paying Client -- By Far," *Vice News*, July 7, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1LWGbmO>.

82 Ernesto Aroche, "El gobierno de Puebla usó el software de Hacking Team para espionaje político," *Animal Político*, July 22, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1TQO7rh>.

83 Código Nacional de Procedimientos Penales [National Code on Criminal Procedure], updated June 17, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2deCKxz>.

84 Artículo 189-190 de Ley Federal de Telecomunicaciones y Radiodifusión.

85 Global Voices, "Suprema Corte en México valida retención de metadatos y geolocalización de Ley Telecom," [Supreme Court of Mexico validates data retention and geolocation of the Telecom Law], May 6, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2d8sicb>; R3D, "La SCJN y la #LeyTelecom: Lo malo, lo bueno, lo absurdo y lo que sigue" [The SCJN and Telecom Law: the bad, the good, the absurd, and what comes next], May 5, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2fsPDm0>

86 Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN), "Inviolabilidad del contenido de las comunicaciones y de los datos que permitan identificarlas: segunda sala," May 4, 2016, <http://bit.ly/23TtOfR>

87 Facebook, "Mexico", *Global Government Requests Report, July-December 2016*, <http://bit.ly/2ddCj4e>

88 Twitter, "Information Requests Mexico", *Transparency Report, July-December 2016*, <http://bit.ly/2pFHD47>

89 Google, "User Data Requests – Mexico", *Transparency Report, July-December 2016*, <http://bit.ly/2dQwj1I>

Intimidation and Violence

Threats and violence from drug cartels, members of local governments, and other actors have continued to put journalists' lives at risk and curtail the safe practice of journalism. Article 19, an NGO, reported 72 online threats against journalists in 2016.⁹⁰ In 2016, Reporters Without Borders declared that Mexico remained the most dangerous country in Latin America for journalists and one of the most dangerous in the world. As of May of 2017, it ranked 147 out of 180 countries.⁹¹

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, five journalists were killed (motive confirmed) in Mexico between June 2016 and May 2017. This included at least two online reporters:

- Maximino Rodríguez, who reported on crime and police matters for the blog *Colectivo Pericú* in Baja California Sur, was killed by unknown assailants on April 14, 2017.⁹²
- Cecilio Pineda Birto, who contributed to several outlets and published crime stories on social media, was shot dead in Guerrero state on March 2, 2017. He had been frequently threatened on social media in retaliation for his reporting.⁹³

Physical attacks against online reporters and online death threats were also frequently reported during this period.⁹⁴ In late May 2017, attackers threatened online journalist Carlos Barrios and cut off part of his ear, warning him against further reporting.⁹⁵ In January 2017, journalist Héctor de Mauleón, who ran a column on crime and violence in a trendy neighborhood in Mexico City, received death threats through the @slyden Twitter account.⁹⁶ The aggressor was identified as José Castrejón and detained in March. A jury prohibited Castrejón from approaching the journalist online.⁹⁷ In March 2017, Tamara de Anda, a blogger for *El Universal* known under the alias "Plaqueta", received numerous insults, hate messages, and death threats on social networks, after she reported verbal harassment by a taxi driver on Twitter.⁹⁸

Robberies have also sought to intimidate journalists. In November 2016, five people entered the office of digital media outlet *Aristegui Noticias* and reportedly stole a laptop that contained confidential legal information about the journalist Carmen Aristegui.⁹⁹ In May 2017, unknown people

90 Article 19, "Libertades en Resistencia: Informe 2016" [Freedoms in resistance: 2016 Report], *Article 19*, April 6 2017, <http://bit.ly/2pE6OsI>

91 Reporteros sin fronteras, "Clasificación mundial 2017" [World Classification 2017], *Reporteros sin fronteras*, April 26 2017, <http://bit.ly/1c2ucyc>

92 See: <https://cpj.org/killed/2017/maximino-rodriguez.php>

93 See: <https://cpj.org/killed/2017/cecilio-pineda-birto.php>

94 See for example: Álvaro Delgado Gómez, "Usted está muerto, dice una voz. Ahora amenazan mediante grabaciones" [*You're dead, says a voice. Now criminals threaten using recordings*], *Proceso*, August 25 2016, <http://bit.ly/2biLvr0>; ARTICLE 19, "Continúan las agresiones contra periodistas en Yuriria, Guanajuato" [Attacks on journalists continue in Yuriria, Guanajuato], *ARTICLE 19*, May 7 2017, <http://bit.ly/2pZd9Mg>

95 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Reporter threatened and has part of ear cut off in Mexico's Quintana Roo state," June 1, 2017, <https://cpj.org/2017/06/reporter-threatened-and-has-part-of-ear-cut-off-in.php>

96 Sin Embargo, "El Periodista Héctor de Mauleón recibe amenazas tras denunciar violencia en la colonia Condesa" [Journalist Hector de Mauleón receives threats after denouncing violence in Condesa], *Sin Embargo*, September 22, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2cVK52d>

97 Juan Antonio Jiménez, "Presentan ante autoridades al probable responsable de amenazas a Héctor de Mauleón con Denise Maerker" [The suspect of threats against Héctor de Mauleón and Denise Maerker faces justice], *Radio Fórmula*, March 2 2017, <http://bit.ly/2mk5I2Z>

98 Tamara De Anda, "Crónica de un acoso denunciado" [Chronicle of a reported harassment], *El Universal*, March 18 2017, <http://eluni.mx/2nT32qf>

99 "Irrumpen en oficina de Aristegui y roban computadora," *Zócalo*, <http://www.zocalo.com.mx/seccion/articulo/irrupen-en-oficinas-de-aristegui-y-roban-computadora>

broke into the home of political analyst and blogger Genaro Lozano. The aggressors stole only one symbolic personal belonging. After the event, he received death threats, homophobic messages, and intimidation on social media.¹⁰⁰ Days before the assault, Lozano had strongly criticized candidates for the election of the State of Mexico.¹⁰¹

Technical Attacks

Technical attacks have become a central tactic in attempts to suppress freedom of expression in Mexico, and perpetrators do so with relative impunity.¹⁰² The ongoing threat of Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks has led outlets to enlist the help of projects like Deflect a system developed by eQualit.ie, a Canadian nonprofit organization protecting websites of human rights organizations and independent media publications.¹⁰³ The techniques involved in these attacks range from DDoS attacks, hijacking, and malware infections.¹⁰⁴

Journalists and activists have frequently reported cases of digital surveillance and cyberattacks, including DDoS attacks and malicious software, often in retaliation for coverage of corruption or human rights-related issues:

- On June 29, 2016 the outlet *Masde131* reported it had been under attack since June 15, and that attackers had managed to modify and eliminate data.¹⁰⁵ A subsequent analysis of the attack found that a botnet of at least 25,000 IP addresses were weaponized in the attack.¹⁰⁶
- On June 28, 2016, the independent online TV portal *Rompevientotv.com* reported cyberattacks affecting the website for several days, by breaching the security system, blocking access, saturating the bandwidth of the site, and erasing information. On July 4, 2016, they reported the site had been recovered.¹⁰⁷
- On June 17, 2016, student-run community radio *Radio Zapote* announced that access to the site was temporarily lost because of a cyberattack, which also destroyed part of their historical archive.¹⁰⁸

100 Genaro Lozano, "¿Qué les molesta?" [What bothers them?], *Reforma*, May 9 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qACcZd>

101 ARTICLE 19, "Allanan domicilio de periodista que sigue el proceso electoral de Edomex" [Break into journalist's home], May 6 2017, <http://bit.ly/2pTUwvo>

102 Animal Político, "Aumentan los ataques digitales contra medios de comunicación en México: Google" [Digital attacks against journalists and media on Mexico are on the rise: Google], *Animal Político*, October 14 2016, <http://bit.ly/2dTJann>

103 Jacobo Nájera, "Sobrevivir a los ataques de denegación de servicio distribuido" [How to survive DDoS attacks], *Enjambre Digital*, March 25 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qpC2RG>

104 Jacobo Nájera. Enjambre Digital. Personal Interview. May 2, 2017.

105 "Editorial | Ataque Informático Sistemático Contra Masde131.Com," *Másde131*, June 29, 2016, <https://www.masde131.com/2016/06/editorial-ataque-informatico-sistematico-contra-masde131-com/>

106 Jacobo Nájera, "Botnet contra medios independientes en México" [Botnet against independent media in Mexico], *Enjambre Digital*, August 2, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2ukGrKP>

107 Rompevientotv, "Rompevientotv reanuda transmisiones" [Rompevientotv renews broadcasting], *Rompevientotv*, July 4, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2vL3BKQ>

108 "Reporta Artículo 19 ataques cibernéticos a Más de 131 y Radio Zapote," *Página Abierta*, <http://paginabierta.mx/reporta-articulo-19-ataques-ciberneticos-a-mas-de-131-y-radio-zapote/>