



BRAZIL UNDER CENSORSHIP

SECRECY, DISTORTION OF THE LAW OF DATA PROTECTION AND ATTACKS TO PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ARE THE TRADEMARKS OF BOLSONARO ADMINISTRATION



DE OLHO
NAS ELEIÇÕES



DE OLHO
NOS RURALISTAS
Observatório do agronegócio no Brasil

CONTENT

KEY FINDINGS	3
FOREWORD	4
1. THE STORIES LEFT TO BE TOLD	5
Censored journalism	5
A century of secrecy	7
The misrepresentation of the Access to Information Law	8
Negatives from IBAMA and ICMBio skyrocketed	10
Documented lobby	11
Where is the news that was here?	13
2. THE VICTIMS OF CENSORSHIP	16
Brazil falls in press freedom ranking	16
"The government saw INPE as a stone in the shoe"	18
Gag rule	22
3. CONCLUSION	24
REFERENCES	25

TEAM

Coordenation

Alceu Luís Castilho

Editor

Mariana Franco Ramos

Researchers

Mariana Franco Ramos
Katarina Morais
Larissa Linder
Lorena Izá Pereira
Luís Indriunas
Nanci Pittelkow

Text revision and translation

Bruno Stankevicius Bassi

Cover illustration

Renato Aroeira

Graphic project

Felipe Fogaça



**DE OLHO
NOS RURALISTAS**
Observatório do agronegócio no Brasil

Agribusiness Watch (De Olho nos Ruralistas) is a non-profit organization dedicated to research and investigative journalism about the social, environmental, political and economic impacts of the agribusiness industry in Brazil. From deforestation to human rights violations against indigenous peoples, peasants and other traditional communities. From pesticide overuse to the influence of landowner politicians in the Congress. Founded in 2016, as a website, and formalized as a private association in 2017, it is coordinated by Alceu Luís Castilho, journalist and author of "Partido da Terra – como os políticos conquistam o território brasileiro" (Contexto, 2012).

Published on September, 2022

contato@deolhonosruralistas.com.br
www.deolhonosruralistas.com.br

KEY FINDINGS

- The government of Jair Bolsonaro is responsible for a systematic attack on the free exercise of the press. The cases range from direct assaults on journalists to the suppression of public data, including the use of the General Law of Data Protection (LGPD, in Portuguese) as a justification to deny access to information on environmental violators.
- The president was responsible for 34% of the aggressions registered against press professionals in 2021, according to data from the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ). During his administration, the country fell to the 110th position among 181 countries in the ranking of press freedom and became the 2nd most lethal country for journalists.
- The disregard for public transparency is also expressed in the secrecy and in the denials of requests for access to information via LAI. According to a survey by Estadão, the government has imposed secrecy to at least 65 cases in the last four years.
- Another analysis, from the Fiquem Sabendo platform, showed that the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) has systematically made access to processes difficult, following the directive established by former minister Ricardo Salles.
- De Olho nos Ruralistas interviewed ten specialists, among public servants, scientists and journalists, who reported the increase in persecution - inside and outside government agencies - and the reduction in public transparency during the Bolsonaro government.
- Bolsonaro's censorship policy - of omission of public data - is in line with a privatist government project, as illustrated by the restrictions at IBAMA and the Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA).

FOREWORD

"The first thing you need to understand is that the Amazon belongs to Brazil, not to you". The speech of the president Jair Bolsonaro, in response to a question from British journalist Dom Phillips, was another indication that, in his government, harassment of public servants, threats, censorship, widespread prejudice, and death would go together.

On July 19th, 2019, Bolsonaro was receiving foreign correspondents at a breakfast at the Alvorada Palace. Phillips was there. Almost three years later he would be assassinated in Vale do Javari region, alongside indigenist Bruno Pereira. The journalist was questioning the president about recent deforestation data published by the National Institute for Space Research (INPE).¹

"I even asked to see who the guy is who is in front of INPE," stated the president. "He will have to come here to Brasilia and explain this data that was passed on to the press all over the world, which we feel is not consistent with the truth", he added.

INPE was then directed by physicist and engineer Ricardo Galvão, a professor at the University of São Paulo (USP). The figures revealed an 88% increase in the deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest in June, compared to 2018.² The institute would record new records in the sequence, reaching 1,120 km² of area under alert in the same period of 2022.³

That episode triggered the biggest management crisis in the agency, which culminated with Galvão's resignation.

What has become clear since then is that this is not an isolated case. In this report, the fifth in the series Dossier Bolsonaro, De Olho nos Ruralistas shows that the lies, the withholding of information - or censorship itself - and the harassment of public servants, often followed by dismissals, are part of a project. They are, in fact, the core of this authoritarian, fascist and, as it turns out, genocidal project.

1) THE STORIES LEFT TO BE TOLD

"Secrecy of 100 years? A law from Dilma [Rousseff]'s time. For personal matters, my vaccination card or who visits me at the Alvorada. Nothing more than that.

Jair Bolsonaro, in a presidential debate in August 28th 2022



Press professionals are escorted from anti-democratic demonstration after suffering assaults, May 2020.

(Credit: Poder 360)

Censored journalism

On the eve of the elections, an article published by UOL reporting on the use of cash in 51 of the 107 properties bought by the Bolsonaro family in the last 30 years was censored, reigniting the debate about the duty of the press to inform and society's right to information of public interest.⁴

The injunction was granted on September 23rd, by Judge Demetrius Gomes Cavalcanti, of the Court of Justice of the Federal District, at the request of senator Flavio Bolsonaro (PL-RJ), eldest son of the president.

UOL had to remove from the air two texts and the corresponding posts on its social networks. That same night, the minister of the Supreme Court André Mendonça overturned the decision and the contents returned to the site.

Two months earlier, the Amazonas Justice Court forced Amazônia Real to delete the report "Amazon Immersion yacht was without authorization". All because, unlike Fantástico, the Sunday program of TV Globo that first reported the

clandestine party in Rio Negro, held at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the agency pointed out who were the owners of the boat.⁵

De Olho nos Ruralistas pointed out that one of them, Waldery Areosa, is accused of deforestation and sexual exploitation of teenagers.⁶ Although only parts of the report were contested, Judge Mônica Cristina Raposo da Câmara Chaves do Carmo ordered the removal of all journalistic content.

Many stories like these have not even come to the public's attention. Among them are allegations of slave labor, exploitation of child labor, and environmental destruction.

According to Folha's survey, since January 2019, the government has accumulated at least thirteen measures to hinder or withhold information from the country.⁷ During this period, Bolsonaro tried to change the Access to Information Law (LAI) twice, hide research from the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) on drugs and remove data on police violence from the yearbook on human rights.

"We are experiencing this increasingly serious context in the country, which has impacted the independent media in a frightening way," highlights Elaíze Farias, cofounder and content editor of Amazônia Real. "It is a global context, it affects all the press, but especially the independent media." ⁸

Censorship also appeared as the main type of violation in the Violence against Journalists and Press Freedom Report 2021, with 140 cases. The National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ) registered another fifteen situations of curtailment of the activity by lawsuits.⁹

"There were several attempts to reduce transparency," comments Ana Paula Valdiones, coordinator of the environmental transparency program at the Instituto Centro de Vida (ICV). "Fortunately, civil society positioned itself and put pressure to the point that this eventually did not materialize," she adds, in relation to the attempt to change the LAI deadlines.¹⁰

"Beyond transparency, we see a very large closure of the institutional space for dialogue, with a reduction in participation and even in the government's propensity to listen to civil society in a more proactive way," he says. "We accompany some spaces and we have felt this difficulty." ICV is part of the MapBiomass network of researchers, which publishes data on deforestation.

A century of secrecy



Bolsonaro yells at journalists during an interview in his "paddock" in Brasília.

(Credit: GloboNews)

The same government that established the “secret budget” – amendments made by the General Rapporteur on the country’s Budget that are destined by congressmen allied to Bolsonaro to their voting base – was the one that decreed secrecy for a century, the maximum period foreseen in the LAI. The practice has become recurrent in the Bolsonaro administration. According to a survey by Estadão, from 2019 to 2022 the government imposed secrecy to at least 65 cases that had requests via the access law by press agencies.¹¹

One of the most controversial was the vaccination card of the president. According to the Palácio do Planalto, the data “concern intimacy, private life, honor, and image” of him. The president was the only one not vaccinated against Covid-19 among the G20 leaders who attended the 76th General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), in September 2021.¹²

Even after the deaths of thousands of Brazilians due to infection by the virus, he continued to come out against immunizers. He delayed the purchase of vaccines, debauched the seriousness of the disease, and defended proven ineffective (as well as harmful to health) drugs to “prevent” it, such as chloroquine and ivermectin.

The process in which the Brazilian Army decided not to punish General Eduardo Pazuello for climbing on a stage with Bolsonaro in May 2021, details of spending on his corporate card and visits to the Planalto Palace by guests of the president's sons and first lady, Michelle Bolsonaro, were also not disclosed. Former Minister of

Health, Pazuello was investigated for violating the 2002 Army Disciplinary Regiment.

The government has also ordered a 100-year secrecy on information about badges issued to Carlos Bolsonaro (Republicans-RJ) and Eduardo Bolsonaro (PL-SP). And the IRS did the same with the process of the "rachadinhas" of senator Flávio Bolsonaro (PL-RJ) – a corruption scheme in which the politician's staff returns part of the salaries to him. The justification is repeated: the documents would have personal information, with access restricted to public officials and those involved.

In the case of the contracts for the acquisition of the Indian vaccine Covaxin, the Ministry of Health was the one that requested secrecy. The agreement, signed in February 2021, at a cost of R\$ 1.6 billion, was investigated by the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission of Covid, which managed to overthrow the access restriction.

Leader in the polls for president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (PT) has promised, during debates and rallies, to revoke the measure if he is elected. "On the first day of government we will make a decree to end the 100-year secrecy," he wrote on September 26th on his Twitter account. "The people must see what they are hiding."¹³

"People always have to think about the reason for establishing secrecy," says Charlene Miwa Nagae, founder and executive director of TornaVoz. "It can never exist to hide something of public interest. It can serve to safeguard national security, ensure that investigations will proceed, or preserve information from children and teenagers, for example." ¹⁴ The association was created in March 2022, with the purpose of guaranteeing specialized legal defense to those who suffer lawsuits due to the manifestation of thought and expression.

The misrepresentation of the Access to Information Law

Sanctioned in 2011 by then-President Dilma Rousseff (PT), the Access to Information Law (LAI) provides, in Article 31, that personal information related to intimacy, private life, honor, and image have restricted access for a period of up to one hundred years. Experts consulted by the observatory question, however, the indiscriminate use of the provision to veto issues of public interest.

In the evaluation of Danielle Bello, advocacy and research coordinator at Open Knowledge, there has been an undeniable advance both from the point of view of active and passive transparency since the promulgation of the law. However, especially in the last four years, the scenario has been retrogressive.¹⁵

"We are seeing this contrary movement, including the distortion of what the law ensures," she says. "These are changes in interpretation and in understandings that were already consolidated." She cites, besides the succession of secrecy cases, denials of information and setbacks from the point of view of open data, falling back on active transparency.

"These are precedents, especially in the federal government, which impact nationally on the discussion about public transparency, since the federal government is a reference for the other entities and fulfills this role of coordinating policies."

According to Bello, in cases such as Pazuello's there is a series of justifications taken in a "twisted way" to support the denials. "The LAI is quite explicit when it says that personal information is relative to private life, honor, and image, and clearly we are not talking about this classification," she points out. "It is a process of reinterpretation of the law. The understanding of the Office of the Comptroller General (CGU) itself has been changing."

Another concern is with the growing attempt to use the General Law of Data Protection (LGPD), whose function is to regulate information from the private sector as well. "There is a mobilization of resources distorting the proposal of the legislation to deny information of public interest," Bello reinforces.

“*We get to another level of discussion, which are the setbacks in active transparency. You see a historically consolidated database, of clear public interest, having its disclosure reversed without any debate, leading to a mistaken interpretation. It is an artificial conflict, which is not in the essence of the two legislations.*

Danielle Bello, coordinator of Open Knowledge

This is how the Mato Grosso state government denied De Olho nos Ruralistas a request, made on July 25th, for the list of landowners and people fined in Operation Abafa, conducted by the Military Firefighting Corps (CBM) in 2022. In the response, granted on August 3rd, Lieutenant Jusciery Rodrigues Marques mentioned the LGPD to claim that the CBM data would be "of a confidential nature."¹⁶

Luiz Fernando Toledo, director of the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI) and cofounder of Fiquem Sabendo platform, recalls that practically every source of journalistic work has personal information. "When the

LGPD was approved, this concern came, regardless of government, because servers are afraid to open data. They think they can be punished," he explains.¹⁷

"It was something that was run over, there was no preparation for the law. There should have been a preparation, to put it in a more organized way," he opines. "And this is added to the fact that Bolsonaro comes from a military culture, totally anti-transparency. If you take the history of LAI, the military has always been the most opposed."

Negatives from IBAMA and ICMBio skyrocketed



Former Minister Ricardo Salles led unprecedented initiative to conceal public data on environmental issues.

(Credit: Poder360)

An analysis of the Fiquem Sabendo platform in the microdata of information requests released by CGU showed that the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) refused more information and hindered access to processes in 2019, 2020, and 2021.¹⁸

The main reason cited was precisely that the information requested was classified as confidential under LAI (32% of denials), followed by "request requires additional data processing" (15%), which is when the agency claims not to have the capacity to process all the information requested. According to the survey, the proportion of denied requests has more than doubled since the law came into effect.

Among the unanswered questions, there are requests for access to data on operations against deforestation in the Legal Amazon, the number of inspection actions carried out by the agency, IBAMA's Specialized Inspection Group expenses, and the Petrobras report on oil slicks on the coast of the Northeast.

Under the same argument, the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) denied access even to basic data of individuals and companies fined in conservation units. "They sent a list, but taking out the names of the companies, with the argument that the LGPD protected," Toledo reported. "It is a problem of public administration added to the bureaucracy commanded by the current government, which does not encourage transparency," he adds.¹⁹

The NGO appealed, went to the last instance, and the autarchy ended up releasing the information. The action resulted in a report in Agência Pública about who the deforesters are.²⁰

"The strategy is not to deny," Toledo explains. "They say they could give it, but for that they would need to read 400 pages of a process, tar all the names of people and documents, and this will generate additional work." In other words, since the agency does not have enough staff, also due to lack of funding, it denies the information.

“*It brought together the problem of public management with a political problem, of disinterest and lack of motivation for transparency. And it is the raw material of journalism. Today, that we live in a virtual world, people no longer trust journalists. It's no use just talking to an off-line source. You have to have documents, proof of what you are talking about. It becomes much more difficult to do a complete report, with credibility".*

Luiz Fernando Toledo, director of ABRAJI

Documented lobby

Another place with a record of negatives in the Bolsonaro government is the Institutional Security Cabinet (GSI). The body controls the records of entry and exit from the Planalto Palace, such as those of evangelical pastors and the president's sons, as well as data from rural landowners who appear in the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR).

According to ABRAJI's director, the monitoring is important to verify where lobbying occurs. "Suddenly some agencies started denying it and it became a

problem," Toledo reports. "Usually you appeal to the CGU and get it, but it is a bureaucracy and the citizen gives up."

An equally important issue is democratization. "Instead of being a user-friendly law, it became a specialist law," he comments. "You have a lawyer who keeps appealing and asking you to hand over something that should be public. If you work with a shorter deadline, you give up."

For Toledo, the GSI has an interest in the lobbies not being made public. "They claim it's for the president's security, that there are outsourced employees and the name can't be disclosed, but it's all excuses," he says. "There are ways to release the data without exposing it, because it's relatively easy information."

According to the NGO founder, the Ministry of Health had a media alert for when a person made a request through LAI. "Basically it was, 'we're going to find out if the person is a journalist or not, and if they are, instead of the technical server, we're going to direct the press office to respond.'" He informed that the case happened between 2019 and 2020: "It is an absurd thing, because the law says that you cannot favor or disfavor someone based on who the person is," he opined. "The advisory will answer only what matters, cutting it out."

Reporter Fernando Pires reported in *Estado* on an LAI request in which the government circulated that it might be better not to disclose, claiming "political error." "It's an explicit case," Toledo comments. "And in 2017 I did a story on this in the João Doria government [in São Paulo]. "It's not something new. It's recurrent."²¹

In *De Olho nos Ruralistas*, a similar situation happened during the production of the dossier *The Financiers of Destruction*, about the relationship between agribusiness multinationals and the Pensar Agro Institute (IPA), the thinking brain behind the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA).²²

A few hours after sending a request for information to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA), the observatory team was contacted by the IPA press officer. She informed that she "heard" of the questions directed to the government about the relationship with the institute and demanded access to the data.

Neither the IPA nor the FPA officially sought a response to the information in the publication.

Where is the news that was here?

<div>SIGEF</div> <div>Inicio</div> <div>Consultar</div> <div>Documentos</div> <div>Sobre</div> <div>Entrar com gov.br</div>					
Nome	Área (ha)	Detentor(a)	CNS	Matrícula	Ações
FAZENDA POTREIRO - Área 01-A	210,9683	XXXXXXo de Odete Rodrigues XXXXXX	06.238-0	13071 (1 de 5)	
FAZENDA POTREIRO - Área 01-B	134,5604	XXXXXXO SEBASTIÃO RODRIGUES XXXXXX	06.238-0	13364	
FAZENDA POTREIRO - Área 02-A	260,2114	XXXXXXo de Odete Rodrigues XXXXXX	06.238-0	13071 (2 de 5)	
FAZENDA POTREIRO - Área 03-A	68,5707	XXXXXXo de Odete Rodrigues XXXXXX	06.238-0	13071 (3 de 5)	
FAZENDA POTREIRO - Área 06-A	200,1643	XXXXXXo de Odete Rodrigues XXXXXX	06.238-0	13071 (4 de 5)	
FAZENDA POTREIRO - Área 08-A	153,5508	XXXXXXo de Odete Rodrigues XXXXXX	06.238-0	13071 (5 de 5)	
Fazenda Potreiro - Área 02-B - Área Desmembrada I	12,1400	XXXXXX GELLER XXXXXX	06.238-0	13365 (1 de 3)	
Fazenda Potreiro - Área 02-B - Área Desmembrada II	6,1170	XXXXXX GELLER XXXXXX	06.238-0	13365 (2 de 3)	
Fazenda Potreiro - Área 02-B - Área Remanescente	87,1787	XXXXXX GELLER XXXXXX	06.238-0	13365 (3 de 3)	

INCRA's Land Management System was one of the bases that had data restricted during the Bolsonaro government, using LGPD as a justification.
(Credit: INCRA)

Shortly after assuming the presidency, Jair Bolsonaro signed the Decree no. 9,756, of April 11th, 2019, instituting a "single portal" of the federal government, the "gov.br". The goal of the measure would be to "centralize" institutional information, news and public services provided by the administration's bodies.

Servers heard by this observatory, however, say that, in practice, what happened was a concealment of the data. "You only have to access the site to see that there is no information at all," comments environmental analyst Tânia Maria de Souza, director of the Association of Servers of the Ministry of Environment (ASCEMA) and a civil servant for seventeen years.²³

"In the very first week of the new portal, we had a very significant loss. A lot of information simply disappeared from there," he recalls. "After demands, some came back and some didn't. She cited as an example a map with the priority areas for conservation. "It is an indication for local and state public policies," she explained. "It disappeared."

At the end of September, the ICMBio page was already changed. IBAMA's, in turn, was undergoing a migration process. As a result, it was possible to access part of the old site. The more informative content, with environmental data, gradually gave way to purely institutional publications. The public agendas of ministers, directors and advisors are also incomplete in the new portal.

Tânia says that it is necessary to know exactly what and where to look. "The whole part about biomes is inside environmental services", she exemplifies, about the MMA's site. "The access to external information has become much worse," she says. "It is basically an image advisory, with pictures of the minister from beginning to end."

“*You have a government as a whole that disregards knowledge, and this is no different in the environmental area. And inside we also have a hard time accessing information and passing it on to the public.”*

Tânia Maria de Souza, director of ASCEMA

When it comes to withholding information, it is not only the LAI that is circumvented. The Conflict of Interest Law (Law No. 12,813/2013) requires certain public officials, such as ministers of state, to disclose their daily agenda.

According to the dossier *The Financiers of Destruction*, the multinationals that maintain the Pensar Agro Institute met at least 278 times with high-ranking members of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA). The survey took into account official meetings between January 2019 and June 2022.²⁴

However, the records of entries in MAPA, obtained via LAI, tell another story. During this period, Bayer's former head of Public Affairs, Silvia Menicucci, was in person 25 times at the ministry's headquarters. Of these, 16 were not registered in an official agenda. At the House of Representatives, the executive was there 14 times between 2018 and 2019.

In the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), the situation is no different than at IBAMA and ICMBio. In August of this year, the agency removed the names of landowners from its most up-to-date database, the Land Management System (Sigef).

Information that was public until then, such as the property code, process number, date and area, is no longer available on the website, frequently accessed by researchers and journalists.

A government official, who asked not to be identified, also pointed out the lack of internal disclosure of normative acts and the absence of direct communication with the press by the regional superintendencies as problems.

"We found out that in August 2021, the agency revoked several norms without internal disclosure," he said. "The most that happens is the publication in the Federal Register, which means that if you don't open it every day, you won't get to

know about it." According to him, at other times the publication was widely publicized by e-mail and on the internal electronic network. "There is an advance in the fact that the processes are electronic, but there is a curtailment of information."²⁵

According to the government official, in the past, INCRA superintendencies produced information for reporters directly. Under the current government, however, employees who are in the regional offices throughout Brazil cannot communicate with the press. "Everything that they are going to talk about, about any agenda, has to go through INCRA's management".

The employee recalled that in 2021 there was the revocation of a 2008 norm related to the creation and recognition of settlements. "It was tacitly revoked and nothing was put in place," he said. "Today, Incra is an agrarian reform organ that has no internal norm for the creation of settlements."

He decided to make a request via LAI, in the name of a friend, to find out which settlements were created after the revocation. "And they responded with an extremely bureaucratic document, full of acronyms, with vague answers," he criticized. "If I were an ordinary citizen, I wouldn't even be able to understand it."

For Danielle Bello, seeing information that was previously available disappear makes this scenario even more serious:

“*It is undeniably disproportionate the movement made by the federal government, and I have never seen this before, to build parallel social networks to avoid running into electoral legislation. You have something disproportionate in the interpretation of the law, to take away massive information of public interest that is not related to political propaganda, about the actions of the State, because of the possibility of it being misinterpreted. In the same way that it is disproportionate to see a denial because of one line. You can't deny access to an entire administrative process because of a piece of personal data.*

Danielle Bello, coordinator of Open Knowledge

2) THE VICTIMS OF CENSORSHIP

"The environmental issue, the whole world takes into account. Other countries that are negotiating the EU-Mercosur agreement, or even bilateral agreements, make it difficult for us to disclose this data. We have to take responsibility".

Jair Bolsonaro, at July 22nd 2019



Servers from several federal agencies went to the Senate Social Affairs Committee, in August 2022, to denounce persecution and threats.

(Credit: Waldemir Barreto/Agência Senado)

Brazil falls in press freedom ranking

In June 2022, in a public hearing in the Senate, communication professionals denounced the growth of attacks during the Bolsonaro government.²⁶ According to Reporters Without Borders, Brazil currently ranks 110th in the world press freedom ranking among 181 countries and is the 2nd most lethal place for journalists on the continent, behind only Mexico.²⁷

There have been at least thirty murders of professionals in the last decade. In the first half of 2021 alone, the NGO recorded 330 attacks, an increase of 74% over the previous year. Bia Barbosa, advocacy coordinator at Reporters Without Borders, says the positions of Bolsonaro, his sons and close allies corroborate the data: "We monitor hostility hashtags of attacks on journalists and communicators on a social network and, in three months, we collected more than half a million posts."

According to the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ), Bolsonaro was responsible for most of the aggressions against press professionals in 2021, with

147 of the 430 offenses reported in the period, which included episodes of censorship (140 cases) and attempts to disqualify information (131 cases). Compared to 2018, when 135 cases were recorded, the increase was 218%.²⁸

The government's disregard for press freedom has affected even public communication agencies. In early September, a committee of employees of the Empresa Brasil de Comunicação (EBC) released a report denouncing editorial interference and curtailment by the Bolsonaro government. According to the dossier, from August 2021 until July this year there were 228 cases of governmentalism and 64 episodes of censorship.²⁹

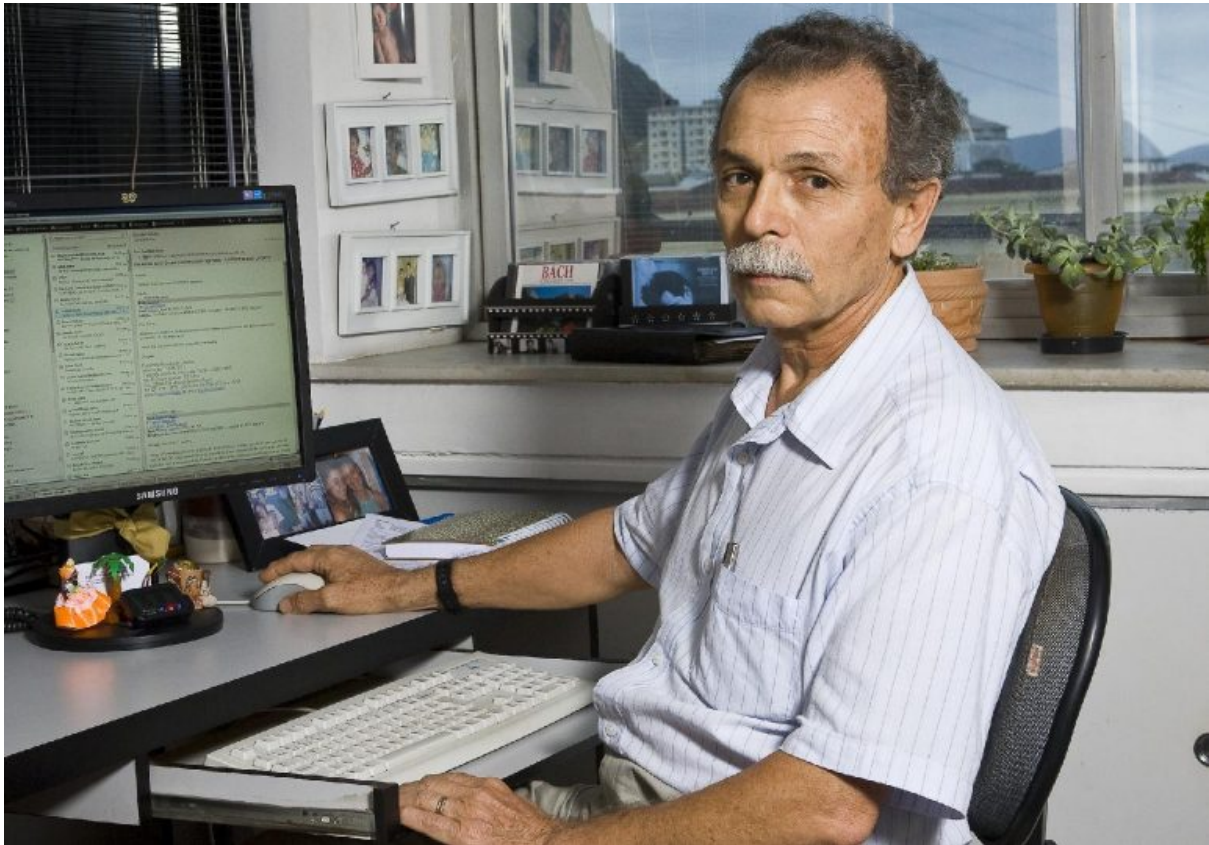
The document was prepared jointly by EBC employees and the Unions of Journalists and Broadcasters of Distrito Federal, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. According to the employees, the preferred targets are reports on topics such as human rights, indigenous issues, conflicts in the countryside, dictatorship, and any subject that requires a government position. "The tactic of knocking down ready-made news stories is recurrent when the official body does not send responses to the report," the publication reports.

In a live presentation of the numbers, journalist Letycia Bond, from EBC, said that the data is underreported. "There is a persecutory climate inside the company, because those who testify are afraid," she revealed. "We have no intention of establishing this report as a mirror, an extremely reliable evaluation."³⁰

The publication cites agendas that were no longer covered by decision of the boss or, in her words, placed in an even "pathetic" way. "At the UN General Assembly, Estadão and Folha gave 'Bolsonaro deceives or lies,' they portrayed it critically, but in Agência Brasil the headline was 'Bolsonaro promises more private investment,'" she highlighted. "And there was even a minister swearing at the door of the event."

Charlene, from TornaVoz, reinforces that the conjuncture not only in Brazil, but in other countries, is of dialogue difficulty. "Our view is that the press plays a fundamental role in criticizing the government and that we live in a moment of great authoritarianism worldwide," she says. She said that the institute sees the situation with a lot of concern, but that is exactly why it was created: to confront the attempts to intimidate journalistic work.³¹

"The government saw INPE as a stone in the shoe"³²



Former director of INPE, Ricardo Galvão was fired from the agency after being pressured by Bolsonaro.

(Credit: INPE)

Dismissed from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) after the release of deforestation data in the Amazon, physicist and engineer Ricardo Galvão talked to the observatory's report about his time at the agency and the clashes he had with president Jair Bolsonaro and ministers Ricardo Salles (Environment) and Marcos Pontes (Science and Technology).

Before returning as director, "on loan" from USP, he had already held other positions at the institute, the first of them in 1970.

How was your work at INPE? Were there any other attempts to curtail it?

Ricardo Galvão: I didn't do data collection, but in my job there is the scientific part and I was aware of everything that was done. The director always had to protect INPE in relation to the data. Historically, it is a very respected disclosure, since 1988, and there have always been attacks. It doesn't come from this government. When the program started, there was an attack by the Sarney government and it was solved. Later, under the Lula government, in 2008, a large increase in deforestation was shown, mainly in the north of Mato Grosso. The then governor Blairo Maggi accused, said that the data had been falsified. Marina Silva

was the minister and, unlike the bad minister Ricardo Salles, what she did was simple: she called a meeting here in Brasilia with the director of INPE, president Lula and governor [Blairo] Maggi. It was a difficult discussion and she proposed to fly over the areas. This was enough to verify that the data was correct. Dilma was never passionate about the environment, but she never put any pressure on INPE or spoke against IBAMA's inspection. In the Temer government, there was a certain problem with IBAMA and we solved it too. And I knew I had to be careful, because of Bolsonaro's speech during the campaign. I knew that, if he was elected, there would be some problem.

When did the problems start?

RG: We had a signed collaboration agreement with IBAMA that had been in place for many years. IBAMA has direct access to INPE data. This agreement was valid until November or December 2018, and when the government came in it was not renewed. So, I started to get worried and I had already been preparing myself. But strong attacks on INPE started. Of course the government has an ideology that preserving the Amazon, fighting deforestation and mining, was contrary to economic development. This was perceptible. Even he [Bolsonaro] doesn't see the data. The Amazon Research Institute shows that from 2004 to 2012, more or less, when deforestation was reduced, profit and productivity increased.

How were these attacks?

RG: The government saw INPE as a stone in the shoe. Besides the data on deforestation in the Amazon, fires and other biomes, INPE carries out very interesting studies. For example: how much the occupation of land by cattle is growing. When President Bolsonaro came in, former minister Ricardo Salles started making violent attacks. As recently as January 2019, he gave an interview to Folha saying that the data was not accurate enough. In fact, what he wanted was to buy the data from an American company called Planet. Of course a company working for the government is going to give the data he wants. Despite being a government institution, INPE has always been independent. The scientists worked independently and with great international respectability.

And you responded in what way?

RG: All the attacks I responded by sending information to the Minister of Science and Technology, because I couldn't report directly to the Minister of Environment. It is the federal structure. Even in June 2019, General Heleno gave an interview to the BBC saying that the INPE data were manipulated. An hour later, the BBC contacted me wanting to know, but I didn't answer. I wrote a detailed letter to Marcos Pontes, warning that this attitude would be very harmful to Brazil and that they did not understand the respectability of the INPE data. In 2015, to have an idea, when Brazil signed the Paris Agreement, there was a very interesting work done by scientists from Harvard and Columbia University, in the United States, talking about what countries should do to meet the self-determined

commitments they made. And they called everyone to follow Brazil's example. Although others monitored forests with satellites, none did it with the precision of INPE or by leaving the data open. INPE always left the data open.

So I called the government's attention and said that the attacks would be harmful to Brazil. I offered the Minister of Science and Technology computational tools for them to better see the data, I explained how the data was made available, and they never answered me. When there was the famous attack on July 19, by President Bolsonaro, in that interview with foreign correspondents, he responded aggressively to Dom Phillips' question, saying that the Amazon was not theirs. Then I realized that this was a clearly elaborated plan to disqualify the work of INPE. They started to reduce resources for the monitoring satellites. I spent the night thinking about it and realized that this was a serious attack that would have more consequences. If I went to the press, if I spoke clearly, I would bring up the problem and, with the prestige that INPE has in the scientific community, it would be very difficult for the government to continue treating it this way. Even with all the attack and the dismissal of me, INPE continued to give the data the way it did, openly. There was no way the government could stop it. The entire scientific community manifested itself strongly.

Was there intimidation of researchers as well?

RG: Not directly. After I left, yes. Lúbia Vinhas was removed from her position. She couldn't be fired because she was a career employee. But she was removed from the head of service. It was in 2020.

Were there other kinds of problems, besides the criticism and this targeted harassment?

RG: It is a matter of attacking the scientific community. His speech encourages it. We had before I left a program in collaboration with China, of developing Earth observation satellites. This program was considered by Unosda, the UN Office for the Peaceful Use of Space, a paradigmatic example of successful South-South collaboration in space. These satellites even allowed us to provide the images for free. The Bolsonaro government cut the whole program and did not renew the agreement with China. We had a project to develop the Amazônia 2 satellite. We developed Amazônia 1, which was launched during the Bolsonaro government, but was done before. And we had the whole project to do the Amazônia 2. He cut it completely.

Before I left, we had a working group coordinated by the Brazilian space agency. The military also participated. It was to develop Earth observation satellites using radar, because the greatest specialists in Brazil in this technique are at INPE. But they were all made here in Brazil, using the Brazilian space industry. The government did not approve, and instead gave the military resources to import two satellites from Norway, which a colleague of mine calls chloroquines from

space. They will serve no purpose. So, there were actions thought out on several issues, as also occurs in the universities.

What was it like after you left?

RG: They put in an intervenor for one year, a retired colonel from the Air Force. The first thing he did was to change the whole administrative structure of INPE. It became a military structure, although they are all civilians. INPE has several coordinations from several areas and I always received the coordinators personally. We had collegiate body meetings with everyone to discuss the use of the budget. This was eliminated. There is the director, who only talks to the main chiefs. It is a military hierarchy. Resources have been heavily cut. The budget this year is about half of what I had at the beginning of my term. The space programs have been cut and there is a lot of discouragement among the researchers.

Gag rule



IBAMA and ICMBio employees protest against political interference in the agencies.
(Credit: Asibama-ES)

In December 2021, the president said, before laughter and applause at the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP), that he had fired directors of the Institute of National Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) because of an embargo on a Havan construction project. The speech led the advisory board of the autarchy to collectively sign an open letter with ten items of attention.³³

To control its activities, the government has used budget cuts and lack of responses. "The strategy is silencing," explained Hermano Fabrício Guanais e Queiroz, former director of the department of intangible heritage of the autarchy. "I would send a process for consultation and the answer would take three, four months, always asking for a complement. And when the final answer came, the process was unworkable. It is the politics of the unspoken." "An eloquent silence".³⁴

In the Ministry of Environment, Ordinance no. 411 of 2020, nicknamed the "Gag Rule", forbids ICMBio public officials from releasing studies, research, opinions, and other information without authorization from the directorate. The autarchy is commanded primarily by military police officers from the state of São Paulo - mostly appointed by former minister Ricardo Salles.

"You take a military police officer, put him as the director of a research department and he starts saying yes or no to any researcher," criticizes an employee, who asked not to be identified. "It's a very rampant attempt at censorship, which has been going on since 2019." According to her, everything goes through the editorial committee, formed by commissioners from the ministry, IBAMA, and ICMBio.³⁵

"The editorial board has always existed, but this centralization of everything having to pass through the blessing, through the gag, was a radicalization," she explains, also remembering the extinction of the social participation councils. "The councilors are tied down by their positions and follow the management primer."

An IBAMA employee reported that when the fires in the country took a very large proportion, the government created forums to respond to what was happening, but they did not necessarily dialogue. "IBAMA, ICMBio, the Federal Police and the Federal Highway Police already have a know-how in relation to environmental issues that is sometimes ignored within this militarization of government".³⁶

In his opinion, Bolsonaro has intentionally worked to spread lies about environmental management in the country. "We are sure that the story that it is the poor, the little guy who sets fire to the Amazon is not true," he says, in relation to false news spread by the administration itself. "It is very common to have fires in protected areas that border private properties, because the producer takes the opportunity to go over it, causing the vegetation to be cut down."

The second-to-last director of the agency, he recalls, was a colonel of the Rondas Ostensivas Tobias de Aguiar (Rota), a troop of the general command of the São Paulo Military Police, who had never worked with environmental issues. He defends a restructuring, with competitive examinations, an increase in the number of employees and the hiring of managers with proven curriculum and experience in the area.

3) CONCLUSION

The anti-democratic vein of Jair Bolsonaro's government is not only expressed in the systematic violence committed against journalists, civil servants, and social movements. The withholding of information and the dismantling of transparency mechanisms are a direct attack on the public interest.

But this attack does not occur for the simple pleasure of preventing the effectiveness of democratic mechanisms. The curtailment of data serves the interests of the same economic groups that benefit from the ongoing implosion of social and environmental rights - the "herd" defined by Ricardo Salles.

The instrumentalization of public agencies by private actors is the main theme of the Dossier Bolsonaro series, which mapped in the four previous reports how this invasion of IBAMA, ICMBio, INCRA and ANM by politicians and multinational companies took place.

The explicit censorship imposed by the federal government in the last four years, therefore, is not an exclusive goal of Bolsonaro and his entourage. The erosion of spaces for public debate is a project of the big capital - of private conglomerates and their representatives in Congress and the Executive.

The alliances displayed in this series show that these impositions occur at the same measure that the meetings between government leaders and agribusiness representatives are multiplying in Brasília. The silencing has its counterpart: much is said in the corridors of power and little is shown to society.

Once another president is elected, this economic power will act to hide its participation in these authoritarian policies, as if they were only characteristics of a president with a poor education. But the authoritarian policies, among them censorship, are part of a great project of income concentration and emptying of public power.

REFERENCES

- [1] TV Cultura, “Dom Phillips se encontrou com Bolsonaro em 2019”, 08.jun.2022, <https://youtu.be/-Jjm0SIJRuI>
- [2] Rede Globo, “Inpe registra em junho aumento de 88% de desmatamento na Amazônia”, 04.jul.2019, <https://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2019/07/04/inpe-registra-em-junho-aumento-de-88percent-de-desmatamento-na-amazonia.ghtml>
- [3] O Eco, “Desmatamento na Amazônia bate recorde em junho e chega a 1.120 km²”, 08.jul.2022, <https://oeco.org.br/noticias/desmatamento-na-amazonia-bate-recorde-em-junho-e-chega-a-1-120-km/>
- [4] UOL, “Justiça censura UOL e manda apagar reportagens sobre imóveis dos Bolsonaro”, 23.set.2022, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/eleicoes/2022/09/23/justica-censura-uol-e-manda-apagar-reportagens-sobre-imoveis-dos-bolsonaro.htm>
- [5] De Olho nos Ruralistas, “Após pedido de empresários, Justiça censura reportagem da Amazônia Real”, 22.jul.2022, <https://deolhonosruralistas.com.br/2022/07/22/apos-pedido-de-empresarios-justica-censur-a-reportagem-da-amazonia-real/>
- [6] De Olho nos Ruralistas, “Iate da festa clandestina no AM pertence a acusado de desmatamento e exploração sexual de adolescentes”, 12.abr.2021, <https://deolhonosruralistas.com.br/2021/04/12/iate-da-festa-clandestina-no-am-pertence-a-acusado-de-desmatamento-e-exploracao-sexual-de-adolescentes/>
- [7] Folha de S. Paulo, “Jornalismo reage a ataques e recuo na transparência na gestão Bolsonaro”, 07.jun.2022, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/06/jornalismo-reage-a-ataques-e-recuo-na-transparencia-na-gestao-bolsonaro.shtml>
- [8] Interview with Elaíze Farias, recorded 21.jul.2022.
- [9] Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas-FENAJ, “Violência contra jornalistas e liberdade de imprensa no Brasil | Relatório 2021”, Janeiro 2022, <https://fenaj.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/FENAJ-Relat%C3%B3rio-da-Viol%C3%Aancia-Contra-Jornalistas-e-Liberdade-de-Imprensa-2021-v2.pdf>
- [10] Interview with Ana Paula Valdiones, recorded 29.jul.2022.
- [11] Estado de S. Paulo, “Governo Bolsonaro decreta sigilo de 100 anos até em visitas a Michelle”, 26.set.2022, <https://www.estadao.com.br/politica/governo-bolsonaro-decreta-sigilo-de-100-anos-ate-e-m-visitas-a-michelle/>
- [12] BBC Brasil, “Bolsonaro é único dos presidentes do G20 sem vacina na Assembleia Geral da ONU”, 20.set.2021, <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/internacional-58604456>
- [13] G1, “Lula diz que, se eleito, revogará decretos de Bolsonaro sob sigilo de 100 anos no 1º dia de governo”, 01.set.2022,

<https://g1.globo.com/ba/bahia/eleicoes/2022/noticia/2022/07/01/lula-diz-que-se-eleito-revogara-decretos-de-bolsonaro-sob-sigilo-de-100-anos-no-lo-dia-de-governo.ghtml>

[14] Interview with Charlene Miwa Nagae, recorded 21.jul.2022.

[15] Interview with Danielle Bello, recorded 26.jul.2022.

[16] Secretaria de Estado de Segurança Pública/Governo de Mato Grosso, "Corpo de Bombeiros inicia nova fiscalização contra uso irregular de fogo durante período proibitivo", 12.jul.2022, <https://www.mt.gov.br/-/22443136-corpo-de-bombeiros-inicia-nova-fiscalizacao-contra-uso-irregular-de-fogo-durante-periodo-proibitivo>

[17] Interview with Luiz Fernando Toledo, recorded 25.jul.2022.

[18] Fiquem Sabendo, "Crimes ambientais no sigilo: Ibama recusa mais informações e dificulta acesso a processos", 06.jun.2022, <https://fiquemsabendo.substack.com/p/crimes-ambientais-no-sigilo-ibama?s=r>

[19] Interview with Luiz Fernando Toledo, recorded 25.jul.2022.

[20] Agência Pública, "Quem está destruindo as unidades de conservação da Amazônia", 14.mar.2022, <https://apublica.org/2022/03/quem-esta-destruindo-as-unidades-de-conservacao-da-amazonia/>

[21] Estado de São Paulo, "Governo frauda Lei de Acesso à Informação por 'risco político'", 18.set.2021, <https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,governo-frauda-lei-de-acesso-a-informacao-por-risco-politico,70003843822>

[22] De Olho nos Ruralistas, "Os Financiadores da Boiada", Julho de 2022, <https://deolhonosruralistas.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Os-Financiadores-da-Destruicao-2022-ptbr.pdf>

[23] Interview with Tânia Maria de Souza, recorded 20.jul.2022.

[23] Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento, "Agenda de Autoridades", <https://www.gov.br/agricultura/pt-br/acesso-a-informacao/agendas>

[25] Interview with servidor anônimo, recorded 15.ago.2022.

[26] Agência Senado, "Jornalistas denunciam aumento de ataques à imprensa durante governo Bolsonaro", 15.jun.2022, <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2022/06/15/jornalistas-denunciam-aumento-de-ataques-a-imprensa-durante-governo-bolsonaro>

[27] UOL, "Brasil aparece em 110º lugar em ranking de liberdade de imprensa de ONG", 03.mai.2022, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/afp/2022/05/03/brasil-aparece-em-110-lugar-em-ranking-de-liberdade-de-imprensa-de-ong.htm>

[28] Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas-FENAJ, "Violência contra jornalistas e liberdade de imprensa no Brasil | Relatório 2021", Janeiro 2022, <https://fenaj.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/FENAJ-Relat%C3%B3rio-da-Viol%C3%Ancia-Contra-Jornalistas-e-Liberdade-de-Imprensa-2021-v2.pdf>

[29] UOL, “Dossiê de funcionários aponta 292 denúncias de censura e governismo na EBC”, 29.ago.2022, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/carla-araujo/2022/08/29/dossie-de-funcionarios-aponta-248-denuncias-de-censura-e-governismo-na-ebc.htm>

[30] Sindicato dos Jornalistas Distrito Federal, “Lançamento da 4ª edição do Dossiê de Censura e Governismo na EBC”, 31.ago.2022, <https://youtu.be/X0Sk9lC2gZ4>

[31] Interview with Charlene Miwa Nagae, recorded 21.jul.2022.

[32] Interview with Ricardo Galvão, recorded 29.jul.2022.

[33] De Olho nos Ruralistas, “Desmonte do Iphan paralisa processos e ameaça proteção a comunidades tradicionais”, 22.mar.2022, <https://deolhonosruralistas.com.br/2022/03/22/desmonte-do-iphm-paralisa-processos-e-a-meaca-protecao-a-comunidades-tradicionais/>

[34] Interview with Fabrício Guanais e Queiroz, recorded 04.mar.2022.

[35] Interview with servidor anônimo, recorded 19.jul.2022.

[36] Interview with servidor anônimo, recorded 8.set.2022.

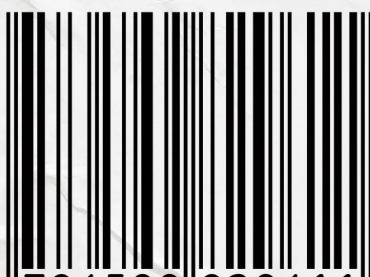


DE OLHO NOS RURALISTAS

Agribusiness Watch

ISBN: 978-65-998296-1-1

CDL



9 786599 829611



/deolhonosruralistas



/deolhonoagro



/deolhonosruralistas



/deolhonosruralistas