



Press Freedom Slipping in Brazil



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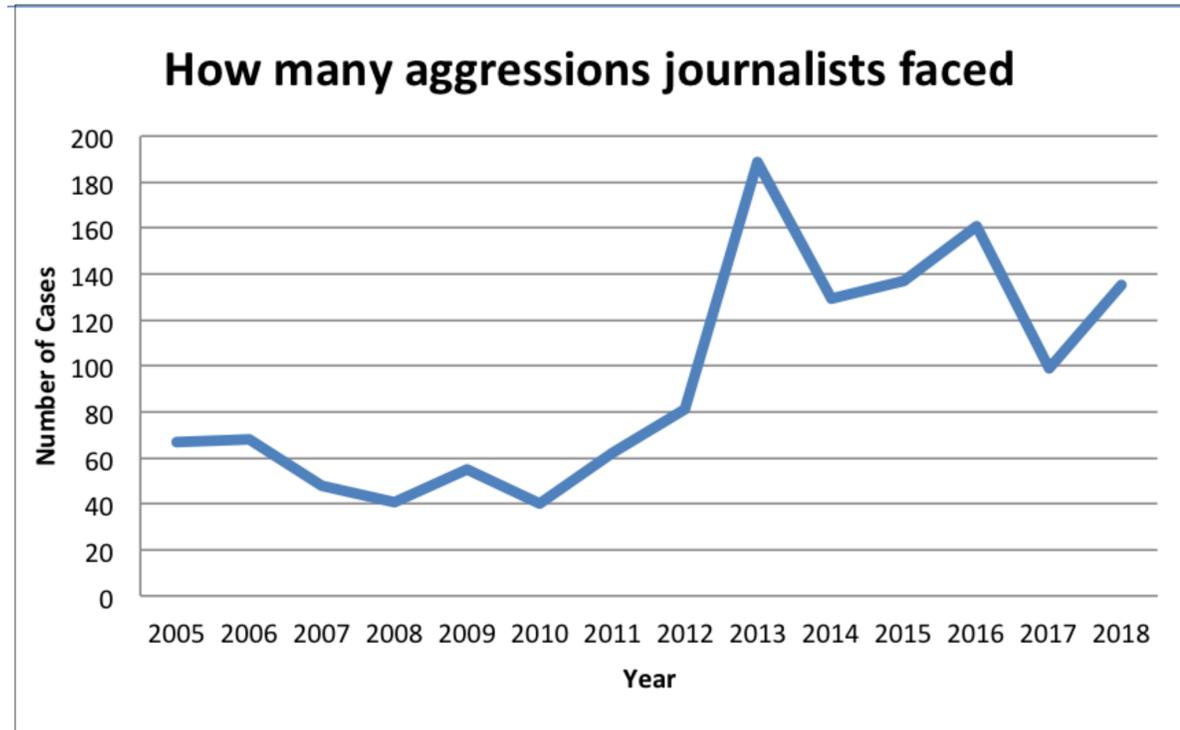
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VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS INCREASED IN THE LAST DECADE

Introduction

In the last decade, Brazil has taken several steps backward when it comes to how free and safe journalists are—from the number of reporters harassed and beaten to the number of uninvestigated assassinations. Several trends are worrisome, especially for the world’s fourth-largest democracy. Because the situation is not as bad as in neighboring Venezuela or Mexico, Brazil’s problems with press freedom largely fly under the international radar. They shouldn’t. Below are five key take-aways:



“Aggressions” are defined by the Brazilian National Federation of Journalists as any physical or verbal assaults, violent threats, cases of censorship and interference by judges, and assassinations.

Spike in verbal attacks also concerning

Between 2017 and 2018, verbal aggressions and threats increased more than 100%. President Bolsonaro’s hostile rhetoric toward journalists is likely partly to blame. In May 2018, one conservative group even created a 300-page dossier accusing 40 fact-checking journalists of leftist bias and encouraging people to air their frustrations with the reporters by attacking them on social media.

Media professionals murdered every year

The Committee to Protect Journalists counted 30 journalists murdered for their work between 2011 and 2018 in Brazil. The Brazilian National Federation of Journalists includes other media professionals, so its count is even higher. These numbers aren’t the worst in the world, but Brazil is also not at war, not near any conflict zones or bordering countries that are at war, and calls itself a democracy. From 1992 to 2014 Brazil was the 11th-deadliest country in the world for journalists, ranking one spot

below war-torn Afghanistan, per CPJ. In 2018 it was tied with Colombia and Israel as the 8th-deadliest. For the same year, FENAJ recorded nine media workers murdered, which is the same number of journalists CPJ reported murdered that year in Syria.

Violence explodes in 2013

From 2005 to 2018, FENAJ recorded over 1,300 cases of aggression against over 1,500 journalists and other media professionals. Note the giant spike in 2013, the year more than a million Brazilians protested first increased bus fares, then police brutality, a fading economic boom, and anger at public money being squandered by corruption. Journalists were attacked by the police and the protestors. But why have Brazil’s levels of violence against the press still not fallen to pre-2013 levels five years later?

Physical attacks are most common

Journalists in Brazil are regularly punched, kicked, scratched, put into headlocks and more. According to the data, physical assaults are more common than all other attacks combined. This high number of physical assaults is one of the key things that makes Brazil, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, one of the most dangerous countries excluding active war zones for journalists.

