The
Unfreedom
Monitor

A Methodology for Tracking Digital
Authoritarianism Around the World

BRAZIL
COUNTRY REPORT
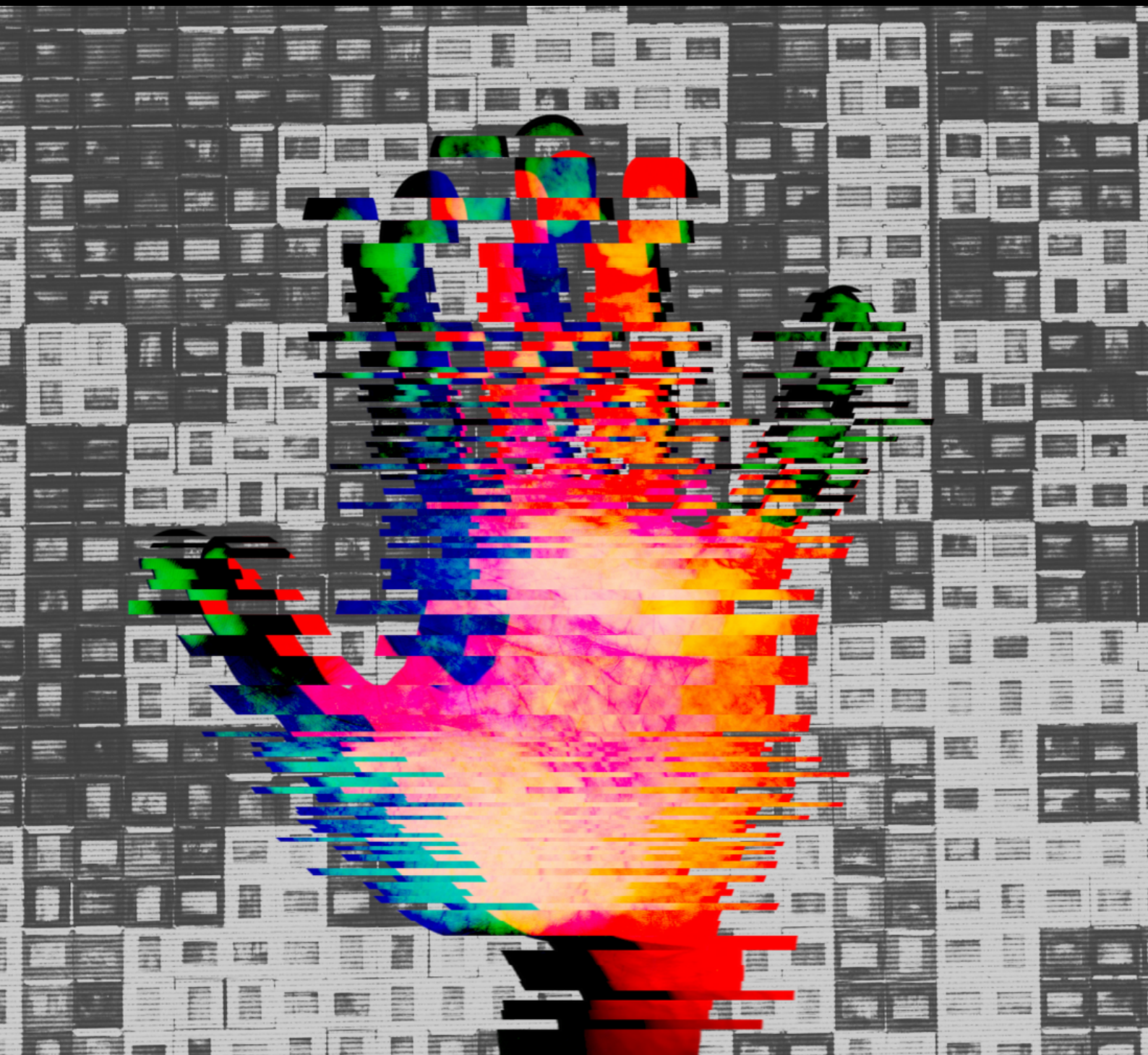
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INTRODUCTION AND POLITICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

Brazil is a representative democracy under a federal presidential constitutional republic system. Elections are held every four years and re-election is possible once. The current president is Jair Bolsonaro, a far-right politician who has been in politics for over 30 years, serving as a federal deputy for Rio de Janeiro state before becoming president. Bolsonaro was elected in 2018 against Fernando Haddad, the Workers' Party candidate.

Though Brazil is still a democracy, experts and campaigners view the country's democracy as being in its most fragile state since the end of the military dictatorship, 37 years ago (Zanini). Bolsonaro's administration has had the highest number of military personnel working within the executive branch since Brazil's democratic transition. The president and his allies have on more than one occasion (Lellis) made public remarks doubting the legitimacy of the electronic vote, attacking Supreme Court justices, and raising the possibility of military intervention if the election does not roll out as he desires.

The year 2013 was a watershed for Brazil and the origin of the current political uncertainty. Demonstrations erupted around the country in June of that year (winter in the southern hemisphere), with protests initially directed towards an increase in public transportation fares. The movement soon incorporated other grievances, such as police violence, low public spending on health and education, elevated spending on mega sports events (in a window of two years Brazil hosted the World Cup and the Olympic Games), and governmental corruption. While the movement was successful in reversing the public transportation fare increase, many other grievances were left unsolved, which represented a rupture in support for representative politics among Brazilians. With a very diffuse agenda and no clear leadership in the protests, the movement was captured by both leftist and right-wing groups (Odilla).

These right-wing groups remained mobilised and were able to stage protests in subsequent years focused on claims of governmental corruption, the framework of the World Cup investments, and a generalised dissatisfaction towards the Workers' Party governments, led at the time by former president Dilma Rousseff. Some demonstrations were also held in support of the Car Wash movement ("Manifestações A Favor Da Lava Jato"), a criminal investigation by the Federal Police focused on money-laundering schemes and corruption within Brazil's state oil company. In 2015 demonstrations turned to focus more strictly on Dilma Roussef's government and lent support to her impeachment in August 2016, considered by many a coup.

While Rousseff was on trial, the Car Wash investigation was ongoing, specifically targeting politicians associated with the Workers' Party. Over 7 years, the probe arrested and condemned over 100 people, many of them notable politicians who had played important roles in Brazilian politics. Among these was former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The June 2013 demonstrations, followed by Rousseff's impeachment and Lula's arrest, empowered right-wing groups who had rallied on those demands. Soon, actors claiming military intervention and defence of Brazil's military dictatorship — voices that were once peripheral to the demonstrations — began taking centre stage. Buoyed by the skillful employ of social media for organisations, these demands gained traction. These groups found

in Jair Bolsonaro, supposedly an anti-establishment candidate, the personification of these grievances and a belief that he could "clean the mess" left by Workers' Party governments.

By 2018, Brazil had broken into three clear groups: a pro-Bolsonaro group, a pro-Lula group, and a neither-nor group, which failed to see themselves represented in either of the two leading candidates. Bolsonaro was elected (Charner and Reverdosa) in the second round with 55 percent of the valid votes. With his election, Bolsonaro's elevated many regional candidates who had similar ideas. This represented a shift in Congress' composition, with new conservative actors allied to the president taking seats (Della Coletta, and Benites).

> **The president has been able to conserve a share of his electorate, part of which is very radicalised, echoing anti-democratic rhetoric against the Supreme Court, leftist politicians, journalists, and activists**

Since taking office, Bolsonaro and his allies, demonstrating their lack of political skills, have not been able to get Congress to approve many bills that are important to his base. His economic agenda has failed to revamp Brazil's growth and has thrown the country into a deep economic crisis (Betim) and aid programs rolled out amid the pandemic have provided some, but insufficient, support for low-income families. Under his administration, which is strongly aligned with agribusiness groups, environmental conservation efforts have been reduced drastically and deforestation has peaked to record levels.

Bolsonaro saw his popularity plunge ("Popularidade De Bolsonaro Cai Para 19%") during the coronavirus pandemic, during which he and his allies downplayed the severity of the virus, adopted a denialist stance towards lockdown and isolation measures and acted to hinder Brazil's access to vaccines. Nonetheless, the president has been able to conserve a share of his electorate, part of which is very radicalised, echoing anti-democratic rhetoric against the Supreme Court, leftist politicians, journalists, and activists.

1   SOCIAL MEDIA AS A KEY STRATEGY

Dating back to his campaign, social media has been a key element of Bolsonaro's strategy. A Folha de S. Paulo report (Campos Mello) published between the first and second round of the 2018 presidential elections revealed that his campaign used mass messaging on WhatsApp, spreading messages against the Workers' Party, whose candidate was eventually defeated. The practice has now been ruled illegal by the Supreme Court. But, to this day, social media is still a core strategy of Bolsonaro's government. There are three main aspects to this strategy.

1.1   Use of official channels to promote Bolsonaro

The first is the use of official government channels to promote the administration and the president. A great example of this use is seen in the Secom channels (Secom), which used to be institutional accounts for the Special Secretariat for Social Communication, a department directly tied to the president. Under Bolsonaro, these institutional accounts have been remodelled to promote the president and the government's actions, edging close to what could be considered propaganda. But this is also illegal per Brazilian law. The country's Constitution establishes a series of principles to be followed by any administration, one of them being *impersonality*, which states that the "public administration should be in full alignment with society's interests, forbidding volitional actions, of subjective character, that can benefit oneself or third-parties" (Frizzo and Paranhos). In May 2020, federal deputy Tabata Amaral sought justice against Bolsonaro for what she understood as a violation of this principle. She argued that the government was overly emphasising the president on social media. A Reuters report (Paraguassu and Simões) about the lawsuit highlighted that this type of post, focused on the president, was not common in past governments.

In fact, the Secom account has gone to great lengths to serve the president's agenda, for example, by promoting false and misleading information. A report by newspaper *O Globo* (Prazeres and Almeida) also revealed that this department paid for over 2 million ads on Youtube channels, websites, and mobile apps which broadcast inappropriate content such as fake news, pornography, and illegal investments. The official discourse, however, is that the account is publishing "real information" as opposed to the "fake news" produced by the mainstream media. Not coincidentally, the Twitter bio of this account reads: "Here we will maintain straight dialogue and fight fake news".

This relates to the second facet of Bolsonaro's strategy: bypassing the press through the use of social media. In 30 years in politics, Bolsonaro was never really included in traditional media coverage, mostly because he belonged to small and irrelevant parties. This led him to establish a very direct style of political communication, preferring to speak directly to his supporter base rather than being mediated by mainstream outlets. This continued during his campaign, during which he made a habit out of setting up live transmissions on Facebook and Youtube to speak to his supporters. To the surprise of many who thought he would abandon this informal communication style when he was elected, the habit of the live transmissions continued into into the presidency. Bolsonaro not only kept the live transmissions going but institutionalised them in a weekly format, to happen every Thursday night. The transmissions are held on his Facebook page, which has over 14 million followers, and are posted to his YouTube page , where he has 3.9 million followers, in sequence.

Media outlets have assigned journalists to follow these live transmissions and report on them. Usually, these journalists are the same reporters assigned to cover the president in place. The timing of the live transmission is unfortunate: it happens right before the broadcast of *Jornal Nacional*, the most important news program, and at a time when newspapers are closing their print editions for the next day. This makes it difficult for journalists to include in the day's coverage any information the president has disclosed in his live transmission. With little time to fact-check or put the president's claims into context, his live transmission is either left out of coverage or covered in a very declaratory format. The president has also repeatedly resorted to social media, especially Twitter, to make big announcements, similar to former President Donald Trump. "The 140-character president" (Ingram) also raises a challenge to journalists, who have to come up with strategies to cover his declarations while adding context and depth, something that is not always achievable. Ultimately, the president achieves his desired outcome of bypassing the media. This also has implications for press freedom, which we will come to later on in this report, as journalists are somehow constrained in doing their jobs.

1.2   Platforms begin to crack down

Recently however, social networks have begun to push back against Bolsonaro, and as such the third facet of Bolsonaro's strategy is cracking down on platforms operating in Brazil. The relationship between the president and these platforms began to sour in March 2020, when Twitter first excluded two of the president's tweets for violating their guidelines ("Twitter Apaga Publicações De Jair Bolsonaro"). In both of the tweets, Bolsonaro denied the validity of isolation measures as effective tools to stop the spread of COVID-19. In the coming months, similar measures followed. In February 2021, Bolsonaro suggested increasing the taxes paid by social media platforms in Brazil, which pay "too little to operate inside the country" (Della Coletta and Machado). Perhaps the most blatant demonstration of platforms' willingness to demonstrate that there are limits to the freedom of expression, even when it comes to a president, came from Facebook in October 2021. During one of his weekly live transmissions, Bolsonaro falsely associated COVID-19 vaccines with AIDS. While he was still transmitting live, Facebook cut him off and later disclosed the decision was made because the president violated FB guidelines which prohibit any allegations that COVID-19 vaccines kill or harm people (Galf). YouTube followed suit and a few days later removed Bolsonaro's live from his channel and suspended him from uploading new content for a week. In addition to the president, some of his cabinet ministers and his sons have also been targeted by social media moderation enforcement.

In September 2021, a presidential provisional measure to alter Brazil's Internet Bill of Rights came as a strong reaction to the crackdowns.("Bolsonaro Edita MP Que Limita Remoção"). With one stroke of the pen, Bolsonaro tried to overturn the way social media platforms operate in Brazil. The provisional measure would limit platforms' actions to conditions pre-established by the government, enable serious fines to platforms who acted outside of these government guidelines, and place on users the onus of going to court to have their content removed or restored. A provisional measure is also a largely authoritarian, unilateral, and opaque process, ignoring the role of other elected members of congress and civil society entities in shaping legislation. The president's authoritarian escalation was blocked by the Senate president, who decided to not submit it to a vote (De Mari).

Yet another of Bolsonaro's responses to this crackdown is trying to migrate his supporter base to other platforms, ones that claim to defend "free speech" (Mendes). In January 2021, one day after Twitter permanently banned former United States President Donald Trump, the Brazilian president created his channel on Telegram. Although it is the biggest Telegram channel in Brazil with 1.3 million subscribers, in contrast, on Twitter he has 7.4 million subscribers. Still, Telegram has become a haven for radical right-wing figures who were de-platformed from mainstream social media. One example is Allan dos Santos, a pro-Bolsonaro blogger and YouTuber currently under investigation by the Supreme Court for spreading fake news and for his involvement with anti-democratic demonstrations ("Quem É Allan Dos Santos E Quais São"). With no other medium to communicate with his supporters, Dos Santos embraced Telegram. As of March 2022, he has also been banned from Telegram, as CEO Pavel Durov decided to comply with court orders in Brazil and disable him from using his account or creating new ones. How long that will last is to be seen, as within two days he had already created a backup channel that was also eventually removed (Martins).

Other political figures — not only from the right — have also adhered to the messaging service as a way to communicate with their bases, though less prominently. As of August 2021, Telegram was installed in 53 percent of smartphones in Brazil, compared to 35 percent in 2020, according to a survey (Paiva) about mobile messaging. This significant migration to Telegram — a platform known for its soft if not absent content moderation allied to its history of tense relationships with authorities around the globe — raised concerns among Brazilian authorities from the Supreme Court and the Superior Electoral Court. There is some concern about what role the messaging service could play in the run-up to the presidential elections, set to happen in October 2022. Until recently, Telegram has not, for example, responded to communication attempts by Brazilian authorities, or to court requests about the absence of a legal representative for the company in the country , and has not adhered to the Electoral Superior Court's Program to Fight Disinformation. After numerous attempts to establish dialogue over months, on March 17, 2022, Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, judging a request by the Federal Police, decided that Telegram should be blocked in the country within 72 hours if the platform did not meet a series of demands (Martins et al.).

The Federal Police request was linked to an order forwarded to Telegram from the Supreme Court to interrupt two accounts belonging to Allan dos Santos. Due to the platform's lack of response and because it was allegedly also being used for other criminal activity, the Federal Police suggested a nationwide ban to address the issue. Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who is also the leading Justice on the Fake News probe, understood there were grounds to ban Telegram and made the decision. The ban never went into force, however.In an unusual show of responsiveness to governments, Telegram CEO Pavel Durov responded hours after the decision by Justice Moraes leaked claiming that the emails and letters were never delivered or had gone to a deactivated mailbox. Telegram fulfilled the conditions

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established by the Supreme Court, which included deleting a message in President Bolsonaro's channel which included links to a confidential Federal Police probe. The president used the opportunity to once again criticise Justice Moraes, a figure antagonistic to his administration, and said the ban was a "crime" (Lopes). To fulfil the requests, Durov also appointed a law firm to legally represent the service in Brazil and signed a cooperation agreement to formally become part of the Supreme Electoral Court's program to fight disinformation ("Telegram Assina Adesão Ao Programa De Enfrentamento").

1.3   The 'Hate Cabinet'

A third and more serious aspect of the government's social media strategy relates to influence campaigns. The Bolsonaro administration understands influencer culture on Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube can be used to spread narratives and opinions about the government. In late March 2021, a report by Agência Pública (Fleck and Martins) revealed that the government had paid approximately BRL 23,000 to a few Instagram influencers to promote the "early treatment," a protocol pushed by the government that consisted of prescribing medications and pills that had been ruled ineffective against COVID-19, such as hydroxychloroquine. The campaign was coordinated by Secom, the communication department directly tied to the presidency. But this influence campaign is also taking place on a more widespread basis.

Reports and ongoing investigations by the Federal Police and the Supreme Court (Falcão and Vivas) also indicate that there is a group formed by government aides that act from within the presidential headquarters responsible for "dealing offensive attacks to many people, authorities, and institutions, with hateful content, subversion of the democratic order and incentives to break with institutional normalcy" (Said). This group, popularly named the "Hate Cabinet" has been deemed a "digital militia" by the Federal Police. Details about how the group functions became known either through information leaked from the investigations or through former Bolsonaro allies (Said) who have now parted ways with the president. The three main people identified by investigations are presidential aides who also happen to be close to Carlos Bolsonaro, one of the president's sons who is considered to be Bolsonaro's social media strategist. These three aides are connected to other parliamentary aides in states and cities, people who administer many social media pages and profiles, as well as WhatsApp groups, to promote hateful content. According to federal deputies Joice Hasselman and Alexandre Frota, both former-allies-turned-foes of Bolsonaro, the leaders of this group build narratives and study ways to disseminate them as fast as possible, using hashtags, for example.

Another line of action for the Hate Cabinet is their relationship with pro-Bolsonaro bloggers and YouTubers. One of the aides allegedly serves as the point-of-contact between president Bolsonaro and Allan dos Santos, the pro-Bolsonaro blogger investigated by the Supreme Court. According to a December 2020 report by the newspaper O Globo, these presidential aides have a tight network with many of these bloggers, whom they feed with privileged information on the president (Camporez et al.) and with whom they discuss "governmental matters." An investigation by the Prosecutor General's Office aiming to track down who funded antidemocratic demonstrations in April and May 2020 identified that many of these channels and social media pages earned money from broadcasting Bolsonaro's speeches during the demonstrations (Mascarenhas).

2 CITIZEN DATA

Examples of digital authoritarianism are emerging from other government spheres, not limited to the executive branch under Jair Bolsonaro. One worrisome trend is attempts by government agencies to consolidate citizen data into unified databases and to share this data among many agencies, on the federal and state levels.

2.1 Government databases

In September 2019, just a few months into his term, Bolsonaro signed a presidential decree that created the *Cadastro Base do Cidadão*, a unified database to integrate all citizen data. The objective, according to the government, was to "enhance public policy management, increase trust in citizen registries that exist within the public administration, and facilitate citizen data sharing between public administration organisms" ("Bolsonaro Publica Decreto Que Cria Cadastro"). The decree was immediately criticised by civil society entities in Brazil, such as Data Privacy and Internet Lab, which pointed to the increased risks to citizens' data protection and privacy. They also identified gaps between the decree's proposition and the Brazilian General Law on Data Protection (LGPD, in Portuguese), which would go into force in August 2020. The Brazilian Order of Lawyers (OAB, in Portuguese) took the matter to the Supreme Court with an action against the decree, arguing it violated the Brazilian LGPD, failed to establish concrete mechanisms for transparency and control, and allowed for data sharing without objective criteria (Peron). The Supreme Court has yet to render a verdict on the decree.

> *A report by The Intercept Brazil and Núcleo Jornalismo showed that GovData, a data governance project from the previous federal administration which unifies at least 29 citizen databases, is at risk of falling into the hands of the private sector*

Similarly, Abin, the Intelligence Agency that directly serves the president, asked Serpro, Brazil's Data Processing service, to share data on 76 million people — including name, parentage, address, telephone, vehicle data, and pictures for every driver's licence holder, as reported by The Intercept Brazil (Dias and Moro Martins). Furthermore, a report by The Intercept Brazil and Núcleo Jornalismo showed that GovData, a data governance project from the previous federal administration which unifies at least 29 citizen databases, is at risk of falling into the hands of the private sector (Spagnuolo et al.). This is because there are plans to privatise Serpro, the government agency responsible for overseeing the project.

The police and military agencies have also been implicated in growing digital authoritarianism. In September 2020, The Intercept Brazil reported that Córtex, an artificial intelligence system developed by the Justice Ministry that reads licence plates using cameras spread throughout the country to track real-time moving targets, is being expanded (Rebello). This system is also able to cross-check the collected information with other government databases in a matter of seconds. The same Justice Ministry is also equipping state police forces with a project that would enable them to extract and analyse data from mobile phones. There is, however, a trade-off: by using this system that was launched in 2020 to

fight organised crime, states are feeding a country-wide database managed by the ministry. It is worthy to note that the main tools in this project were developed by the Israeli firm Cellebrite.

Overall, these proposals to merge and unify databases pose heightened risks to citizen data privacy and protection (running counter to Brazilian legislation on the topic), opens up the potential use of this data for authoritarian purposes, such as citizen surveillance and persecution, and the possibility this data might make its way to the private sector. The case of Serpro, which detains and controls a massive amount of citizen data, is particularly alarming.

2.2. Facial recognition

One other dismaying trend emerging across the country related to citizen data is the use of facial recognition technologies for security purposes. The racist bias and discriminatory potential of such technologies have been amply documented based on other countries' experiences, leading some governments to back down on their decisions to adhere to such systems or to regulate them to specific uses. Yet Brazil is ramping up the use of facial recognition instead. This is particularly problematic in a country where 56.1 percent of the population declares itself Black (Afonso).

One telling example is the state of Bahia, currently governed by the leftist government of Rui Costa, a Workers' Party politician. As The Intercept Brazil put it, Costa has turned his state into a "lab of facial recognition surveillance" (Falcão). In July 2021, the state decided to expand its facial recognition program through a BRL 665 million partnership with telecoms Oi and Avantia, enabling the implementation of over 4,000 cameras in 78 cities. Bahia has plenty of examples of how facial recognition for policing does not work: in a 2019 street event, less than 4 percent of the system's alerts were ultimately converted into arrest warrants. But neither local nor global experiences are enough to discourage the government from ramping up investments in such technologies. Salvador, Bahia's capital, will be the stage for a piloting round of an BRL 18 million system introduced by Spanish firm Iecisa in partnership with Huawei. The Chinese firm is also behind a system being rolled out in the state of Rio de Janeiro (Roncolato and Dias).

In São Paulo, Brazil's biggest state, a judge recently ordered that the Metro company, which transports nearly 5 million people a day, should stop using facial recognition technology in its stations and trains (Fernandes). The court order was made in response to public civil action by a group of civil society entities that claimed the system violated plenty of legal instruments, from the Constitution to the Statute for Children and Adolescents (Sakamoto). The judge's decision will have an impact beyond São Paulo. It sets an important precedent to limit the indiscriminate use of facial recognition in a country whose legal framework still fails to directly encompass such technologies.

3   PRESS FREEDOM

Attacks against journalists have also become a central hallmark of Bolsonaro's and his allies' styles. Past governments have had antagonistic relationships with the press, but none have gone as far as Bolsonaro. On more than one occasion, the president has verbally attacked reporters standing right in front of him, telling them to shut up (UOL) or saying that they have a "terrible homosexual face" (Poder360). From January to September 2020, the National Journalists Federation recorded nearly 300 attacks by the president ("Em Nove Meses, Bolsonaro Cometeu 299 Ataques Ao Jornalismo").

There is also a clear gender aspect to these attacks. A study by the Brazilian Association on Investigative Journalism (Abraji) published in March 2022 revealed that every three days a woman journalist is attacked in Brazil, with more than half of these attacks coming from elected officials (Bergamo). One that became widely known targeted the Folha de S. Paulo reporter Patricia Campos Mello, who broke the story about Bolsonaro's campaign using mass messaging tools in 2018. The attack against Campos Mello began during the Congressional hearing for an employee of the mass messaging company who had been the journalist's source during her reporting. In front of senators and federal deputies, he falsely accused her of exchanging sexual favors for the scoop (TV Senado). The allegation was spread on Twitter by Eduardo Bolsonaro, the president's son. Then, during a press gaggle, Bolsonaro repeated the false claim, saying she had given her body in exchange for the scoop (in Portuguese, the word used for scoop — furo — is also a vulgar term for a woman's genitalia). Campos Mello sued the president, his son and the employee and won all cases ("Após Eduardo E Jair Bolsonaro, Hans River É Condenado"). Online violence against journalists also targets women more frequently than men, found an analysis by the website AzMina (Santana).

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In addition to attacks and scapegoating by the president himself, journalists have increasingly been attacked and harassed by civilians. In 2020, a man with a knife broke into the headquarters of TV Globo in Rio de Janeiro with one specific target in mind: the news anchor Renata Vasconcellos (Batista Jr. and Pedroso de Campos). In 2021, for the first time in 20 years, Brazil was placed by Reporters without Borders in its red zone for media freedom ("Brasil Cai Quatro Posições Em Ranking"). Since Bolsonaro ascended to power, the country has lost more than 10 positions in the ranking. The president has also limited journalists' access to his declarations by blocking them on social media (Martins), a practice that is criticised by journalism associations.

Limiting access to information is also a hallmark of the Bolsonaro administration. One example is curtailing journalists' access to him by holding live transmissions rather than press conferences, but he also denies transparency on information that is in the public interest. In June 2020, for example, amid criticism of its handling of the pandemic, the government removed the Health Ministry's data on new infections and deaths, leaving

journalists and researchers in the dark about the evolution of the pandemic (Martins and Monteiro). The solution came from media organisations, which put together a consortium to manually collect the data and make them available every day.

4   RESPONSES TO DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM

Brazil has a growing pool of civil society entities focused on the topic of internet and digital civil rights. These organisations have played crucial roles in protecting digital democracy and preventing a faster slide into digital authoritarianism. In September 2021, when Bolsonaro attempted to overturn rules for platforms through a provisional measure, these organisations helped politicians to use the Supreme Court to question the constitutionality of the measure, also requesting to be admitted as *amicus curiae* (Martins).

In an op-ed for the website Rest of World in partnership with the UCLA Institute for Technology Law and Policy, Artur Pericles, a Brazilian lawyer and researcher working on freedom of expression and privacy raised a very important point about how Congress, in particular, is reacting. Bolsonaro's agenda on the tech front is so radical that, in order to protect institutions from his authoritarian grabs, Congress is drafting measures and legislations that are equally — if not more — harmful to democracy.

> *"Brazil was once hailed as a model for democratic internet regulation, with its 2014 Civil Framework of the Internet standing out in the Latin American region. Today, pressured to act to protect institutions from the very real risks posed by the president, Brazil's polity is responding with measures that may ultimately prove even more harmful to the democratic order." (Pericles Lima Monteiro)*

Pericles argues, for instance, that in response to the Hate Cabinet, Congress is coming forward with speech-restrictive laws. In reaction to Bolsonaro's provisional measures, leftist politicians publicly defended the right of private enterprises to conduct their business without regulation, he writes, while pointing to the irony.

The greatest example is perhaps the [Fake News Bill](#), a complex and divisive legislative project. What began as an attempt to combat misinformation after the 2018 elections has the potential to radically change the internet in Brazil. Big tech companies in Brazil are uniting forces to publicly lobby against the bill, going so far as buying full-page ads in major newspapers. Though the bill has come a long way in making improvements to become more conscious of data protection and to preserve freedom of expression, civil society entities still point to an array of problems ("10 Pontos De Atenção Sobre O PL Das Fake News (PL 2630/20)"). Instead of focusing on criminalising behaviour, for instance, the bill still insists on criminalising content, a decision that paves the way for political abuse. It grants parliamentary immunity, which effectively makes it difficult for platforms to moderate senators and deputies. The icing on the cake, however, is that the bill has as a core principle "the free formation of preferences and of a personal world perspective." In other words, the bill that was conceived to fight misinformation grants a waiver to those who promote mis/disinformation and any type of violating speech under the pretext of "personal world perspectives." The bill is still being discussed and is likely to change before its final vote — which is expected to happen in the coming weeks.

Apparently members of Congress — at least those who believe in internet regulation — are ready to "go with anything," even though it might be flawed, controversial or harmful. Fearing another election eroded by social media influence, it might be more important to rush to get anything approved than to go into another presidential vote unprotected, in the dark.

It is symptomatic of the state of things. Bolsonaro's authoritarian agenda has skewed democracy so much in Brazil that responses to fight back also come with their own touch of authoritarianism and disregard for fundamental rights.

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