

Call for Inputs

UN OHCHR report on shutdowns and connectivity
initiatives

TEDIC

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About TEDIC

TEDIC (Technology and Community) is a non-profit organization that defends and promotes human rights in digital environments, focusing on gender inequalities and their intersections in Paraguay and the Latin American region.

The occurrence of mandated disruptions of communications

a) Information on the occurrence of any government-mandated disruptions of access to mobile or telephone communications networks over the past 5 years. Including their duration, geographical scope, whether or not there were official orders for these interventions and whether there were any legal measures taken to reverse the disruptions or to hold accountable those responsible.

Situation in Paraguay

The Paraguayan Northern Area¹ has been militarized for several years, directly affecting how people exercise their rights.

An international observation mission that visited the country in 2013 warned that such militarization has affected people's rights to access to justice, association and demonstration, life and physical and psychological integrity, access to health care, and children's rights, among others (1).

Human rights organizations have particularly pointed out the responsibility of the Joint Task Force.²and their total lack of respect and actual flagrant violation of the fundamental rights of the populations in which they intervene (2). Other arguments point to a lack of results in the fights against guerrilla groups in the area, the expenditure of very high state budgets, and the corruption of the funds allocated to such institutions (2)

Signal interference in the area

Until recently, there has not been much attention to potential human rights violations in the digital and communication sphere. However, last year the CODEHUPY³conducted an observation mission in the northern part of the eastern region of Paraguay (departments of Concepción, San Pedro, and Amambay).

Among numerous findings of human rights violations by the Joint Task Force, they have documented potential internet shutdowns in the area through testimonies of people living in the regions intervened.

¹ Departments of Amambay, Concepción and San Pedro.

² The Joint Task Force is a unit of the Paraguayan Armed Forces. It is composed by the Paraguayan Armed Forces, the Paraguayan National Police, and the National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENAD) agents. It's present in San Pedro, Concepción, and Amambay. It seeks to end the strategic plan of the guerrilla group Paraguayan People's Army (EPP), mainly in the north of the country. More information https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuerza_de_Tarea_Conjunta_de_Paraguay

³ Founded in 1991. It is a network that brings together social and non-governmental organizations that have the defense and promotion of human rights in common. It is also the National Chapter of the Inter-American Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development (PIDHDD). More information <https://codehupy.org.py>

Concretely, the Observation mission report points out that local residents denounce constant surveillance through communication interceptions by intelligence personnel in the specific areas under the control of the Joint Task Force (3).

Numerous testimonies point out that cell phone communications is affected in the area every time an event⁴ approaches. For example, testimonies document that in the days leading up to a Joint Task Force intervention, all users in one area are left without any service coverage. None of the lines work until the end of the intervention. Only then is communication restored (3).

It is vital to emphasize that the interruption of Internet access hinders the full enjoyment of the rights to freedom of expression and opinion, access to information, and freedom of assembly and association (4). Furthermore, a joint statement by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression of the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Special Rapporteur of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on freedom of expression and access to information, established that cutting off or slowing down access to the Internet is not justified in any case, not even for reasons of public order or national security (5).

4 In this context, an event is understood as a particular intervention by the Task Force in a specific community within the Northern area

References

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