

Repórter Brasil's press release from 13 January 2020 explaining the situation

Repórter Brasil under attack; threats include demands to remove reports

Repórter Brasil has been targeted by a series of online attacks over the last days, culminating in its website (Repórterbrasil.org.br) crashing and being unavailable for readers. Attackers have threatened to continue this criminal action if reports are not removed.

This situation not only flagrantly disrespects rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the press but may possibly fall under the crime of illegal constraint, as defined by Article 146 of the Brazilian Criminal Code.

After a series of attacks succeeded in crashing the website for some hours on January 6th, Repórter Brasil received an anonymous email in Portuguese stating: “As u may have noticed by now, there were some technical issues over the last day. To not face the same problems again, remove reports in the 2003, 2004 and 2005 folders” [translated by Repórter Brasil's team].

As Repórter Brasil did not comply – nor will it comply with any attempt of illegal constraint, especially one that represents self-censorship – the attacks continued. Every single day.

On Thursday (7th) morning, there was an attempt to physically invade the organization's office. Since some neighbors showed up, the breaking of the office's entrance was not successful, but repairs will be needed. Security was also reinforced.

On Friday, January 8th, attackers sent another email, this time with an ultimatum: “We will wait until January 11 for you to comply with our demands...” [translated by Repórter Brasil's team]. And on Monday (11th) the attacks resumed with full force.

Repórter Brasil is not new to attacks – the organization is constantly harassed by those discontent with our work, demanding reports are taken off the air. At the moment, its is not possible to affirm whether one of them is behind these attacks or if the goal here is to simply keep the website unavailable. This will be the object of careful investigation by competent authorities.

Repórter Brasil's online security team has been able to neutralize these actions, but since attackers often change tactics access to the website has been unstable.

With the help of the organization's lawyers, occurrence reports were submitted to the São Paulo Civil Police. Repórter Brasil is also reaching out to the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF, in Portuguese), among other competent institutions, and will closely follow the investigations.

In 2021 the organization's journalism work reaches a 20-year mark. Over these two decades, it has been internationally recognized and awarded for covering environmental crimes and human rights violations.

For instance, on January 4th, Repórter Brasil published a journalistic investigation on slave labor in the beef supply chain (<https://Repórterbrasil.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Monitor-8-Slave-labor-in-Brazils-meat-industry.pdf>), which had huge impact abroad, including reports in [The Guardian](#), [Bloomberg](#) and the [Thomson Reuters Foundation](#).

If, on one hand, attacks like these are a seal stating the quality of the organization's work, on the other, they are an alert to other news agencies and the press in general for a new kind of harassment: censorship by online violence.