



The World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)

69 Rue du Chevaleret

75013 Paris,

France

12 August 2019

His Excellency Jair Bolsonaro

President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

Palácio de Planalto

Brasília, Brazil

Your Excellency,

We are writing on behalf of the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum (WEF), to express our deep concern at recent actions taken by you and your administration targeting journalists and news media, specifically provisional measure 892 that amends the Brazilian Companies Act of 1976 and which seriously jeopardizes the ongoing ability of a free press to hold power to account in Brazil.

The decree suspends the obligation of publicly traded companies to publish their corporate balance sheets in media with national circulation and instead establishes that they only be published on official digital websites, including that of the Brazilian Stock Exchange. Despite your assertion to the contrary, we see this action as a deliberate form of economic reprisal against media which - in your own words - will suffer "retribution" for their coverage of your presidency and your election campaign.

Your Excellency, we view this as an act of soft censorship, a global phenomenon increasingly documented by our organization and that, amongst other tactics, deliberately channels economic pressures and forms of intimidation levied by the State or its official organs and that are aimed at silencing critical reporting and rewarding positive coverage.

Especially devastating in times of economic instability, governments around the world are increasingly aware that soft censorship does not generate the international outcry evoked by the killing of journalists or shuttering of publications. Although it may be less visible, soft censorship can be equally insidious and must be recognized for the very serious threat to media independence and press freedom it is.





Furthermore, in addition to going against the spirit of transparency of information required by an informed society, and jeopardizing the right of Brazilian citizens to a free and independent media that can report fairly and accurately on the activities of government, political parties and other institutions or other civic matters, your provisional measure violates part of Law 13,818, recently approved by the House and Senate and sanctioned by yourself in April 2019. We implore you to reconsider this decision and to terminate any efforts - official or otherwise - to sanction or reprimand media through financial or other means.

Finally, we are dismayed to hear your frequent comments since being elected to office disparaging media and targeting individual outlets - seemingly for no other reason than personal retribution for critical reporting of you or your administration. As the democratically elected President of Brazil, we believe that you should instead welcome and encourage the kind of rigorous self-criticism a free media engenders as a means of ensuring the highest attainable standards of governance. Media should not be seen as a hindrance to achieving this.

We thank you for your attention to these matters and look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fernando'.

Fernando de Yarza López-Madrado, President WAN-IFRA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren Fernandez'.

Warren Fernandez, President World Editors Forum

#### ABOUT WAN-IFRA

WAN-IFRA is the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers. Its mission is to protect the rights of journalists across the world to operate free media, and provide its members with professional services to help their business prosper in a digital world and perform their crucial role in open societies. With formal representative status at the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, it derives its authority from its global network of leading news publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs, and its legitimacy from its 80 national association members representing 18,000 publications in 120 countries.

