

Journalist Glenn Greenwald's persecusion: Authoritarianism follows its march in Brazil

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Brazilian Federal Public Ministry offered a complaint against Glenn Greenwald, sending message to journalists working in Brazil: they maybe subject to judicial persecution. The second year of Bolsonaro's era in Brazil begins with new attacks on democracy.

To general amazement, the special secretary of culture emulated Goebbels in a criminal video presentation of a project to promote artists aligned with the ultraractionary values of the federal government, sending several signals to the hundreds of neo-Nazi cells scattered throughout the country. Next, STF Minister Luiz Fux decided to remove from the legislation recently approved in Congress the figure of the judge of guarantees, an amendment proposed by Marcelo Freixo (PSOL-RJ) with a view to reducing the arbitrariness committed by magistrates during the criminal process. Finally, the Federal Public Ministry (MPF) offered a complaint against Glenn Greenwald, without any preliminary investigation or remote evidence of a crime, sending a very direct message to journalists working in Brazil: the professional or the vehicle that bothers the country's authorities will be subject to judicial persecution.

Responsible in 2019 for revealing a series of illegalities committed by state agents during Operation Lava Jato, the founder of The Intercept website is being accused of "the crime of criminal association and the crime of telephone, computer or telematic interception, without judicial authorization or with objectives not authorized by law," resulting from an exchange of messages with a source, communication that presupposes the basic exercise of journalistic activity. From the outset, the complaint violates an injunction of the Federal Supreme Court (STF), which determined in August 2019 that Glenn was protected by the constitutional confidentiality of the source and could not be the target of devastation about his life. And the MPF also decided to go against the Federal Police, which, during Operation Spoofing, had already analyzed the material supporting the accusation and ruled out the possibility of criminal conduct by Glenn.

This whole Kafkaesque plot becomes even more scandalous when it is discovered that Wellington Divino de Oliveira, the public prosecutor who signs the inquisitorial proceedings against Glenn, is the same one who recently tried to impute the crime of slander to the president of the OAB, Felipe Santa Cruz, for criticising the Minister of Justice, Sergio Moro. And, "coincidentally," this attack on Glenn occurs at a time when Moro has decided to increase his public exposure in large audience interview programs, with a perceptible intention to project himself into larger political flights.

In fact, there is a strategy on the part of the far right to erode the credibility of journalism. It can be said that the favorite hobby of the President of the Republic and his assistants is to offend press professionals on a daily basis. A more objective question about any of the various government scandals is enough for a shower of disqualifications to precipitate the reporters who follow the presidential agenda. A few days ago, Bolsonaro even cursed the mother of one of the journalists and claimed that the place of a Brazilian reporter of Japanese descent was Japan. The Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub, who was gripped by the serious failure in the application of ENEM,

called a conservative commentator critical of the government a “sewer mouth.”

This festival of verbal insults has as one of its most explicit objectives to stimulate Bolsonaro’s digital militia to reproduce the same behavior on social networks against the press, when it does not encourage physical constraint in the streets during demonstrations. In this way, one of the pillars of control and inspection of civil society, the free and independent press, is seen against the ropes by an obscurantist avalanche that comes from various instances of the Brazilian State.

Repercussion and international solidarity

Glenn Greenwald’s attempt to silence has aroused a broad repudiation in Brazilian society, driven to the left of the political spectrum until it reaches the mayor and some STF ministers.

Parliamentarians and leaders of the PSOL were the first to classify the denunciation as “the criminalization of journalism”. Rodrigo Maia, president of the National Congress, described it as “a threat to press freedom”. Gilmar Mendes and Marco Aurélio Mello, ministers of the STF, publicly positioned themselves against the authoritarian rapture of the MPF, and a column of the *Estadão* informed that if the denunciation goes to the STF, it should be filed.

Internationally, Glenn Greenwald has also received important demonstrations of support. The New York Times, El País and The Guardian, for example, have published editorials and opinion articles alerting to the risks that press freedom runs in Brazil. Presidents of the US Democratic Party, such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, have also expressed their solidarity with Glenn. Edward Snowden, a former U.S. intelligence agent who revealed details of the NSA’s global surveillance program, posted the following statement on Twitter: “This is an unbelievably naked retaliation for revealing extreme corruption at the highest levels of the Bolson government, and an existential threat to investigative journalism in Brazil.”

Considering that attacks on press freedom and other democratic rights should only increase in Brazil this year, as the extreme-right apparatus of the state is consolidated as Viktor Orban did in Hungary, this campaign in solidarity with Glenn Greenwald is urgently needed to gain more strength and join other global campaigns such as the #FreeAssange campaign. At a time when the international community is normalising the G-20 presidency with Mohamed Bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, who had a journalist killed and quartered, a great wall must be erected around democratic values. The criminalization of journalism is a decisive step towards the march of global neo-fascism.

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