

Excerpts on Access to Information in IAPA Reports, 2018 - 2022

78th General Assembly, Spain, October 27-30, 2022

Canada

A culture of unwarranted classification of information of public interest still persists in government, while the Anti-Terrorism Act, in effect since 2015, expanded the authority of government agencies to share information about individuals.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215473-canada>

Colombia

Eight journalists denounced obstacles to access information in the Attorney General's Office.

Since March, there have been.... 34 cases of denied access to information

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215476-colombia>

El Salvador

The government neutralized the Institute of Access to Public Information and the laws governing transparency on the use of public funds.

Data regarding the use of public funds and any purchases or investments made by the government since 2020 is being systematically withheld for a period of seven years. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215512-el-salvador>

Honduras

The legislation, passed in 2014, prevented citizens from finding out about government purchases carried out with neither transparency nor public bidding. It also hindered access to public information, as it allowed more than 20 ministries and government offices to classify information as restricted, confidential, secret and top secret for periods of 5, 10 and up to 25 years. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215478-honduras>

Panama

The National Authority for Transparency and Access to Information (ANTAI) penalized the digital media laverdadpanama.com and journalist Amanda Alvarado for allegedly violating a new data protection law. It later reconsidered and put a hold on the fine. The interpretation given by ANTAI could imply that a publication on a topic of public interest,

supported with official or public documentation, could be subject to a complaint by the affected party for violating the data protection law.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215485-panama>

Paraguay

In May, the Society of Journalists of Paraguay denounced to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) the lack of transparency and compliance with the Law on Access to Public Information by the binational company Itaipu.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215486-paraguay>

Puerto Rico

Access to public information continues to be a serious challenge for citizens and the press - requiring the use of legal action to assert the right to access government-held information.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215449-puerto-rico>

Venezuela

On June 27, Journalist's Day, the National Union of Press Workers (SNTP) revealed that the main obstacles to journalistic activities are the scant access to information, the lack of sources of employment due to the disappearance of the media and low salaries. It also pointed out censorship and that journalists are intimidated, threatened, assaulted and detained while covering the news.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215487-venezuela>

Mid-Year Meeting, virtual, April 19-22, 2022

Colombia

Another issue is the presidential objection to bill 473 on the repeal of term extensions to meet requests for information. For FLIP, the objection of the Presidency is a serious violation of access to public information, which is detrimental to press freedom and the exercise of investigative journalism - since journalists cannot access this type of information in a timely manner. The issue is pending reconsideration in the House

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215063-colombia>

Honduras

This period press freedom was affected during the November elections due to the lack of transparency regarding the funds used in the political campaign, despite the existence of a Clean Politics Office or Unit - which requires pre-candidates to report on the resources used in the political campaign.

President Xiomara Castro had promised in her political campaign to make several changes to combat corruption and promote transparency, such as eliminating the Secrecy Law - which shielded officials from disclosing their administrative decisions, bids and budgets.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215066-honduras>

Peru

The Vigilantes platform - led by Transparencia and integrated by civil society organizations such as the Peruvian Press Council (CPP) to monitor the performance of the rule of law and democracy in the government of Pedro Castillo - has pointed out that out of the seven points it evaluates in terms of freedom of expression and press, four are considered to be on very serious alert: guaranteeing and strengthening the independence of the Peruvian Institute of Radio and Television; guaranteeing transparency and publication of government advertising contracts; not limiting, restricting or prohibiting journalists from freely seeking, receiving or expressing information; and not using the judiciary or political power, directly or indirectly, to intimidate/harass journalists and media outlets critical of the government.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215088-peru>

Costa Rica

Restrictions on access to public information continued during this period. There were tense situations between the government and journalists due to restrictions on information about the pandemic.

Official secrecy continued despite an injunction filed by Diario Extra. The Constitutional Chamber determined that it is not obligatory for a public official to give explanations during an interview, allowing the option for the official to respond in writing.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215067-costa-rica>

Puerto Rico

During this period, several bills have emerged that seek to rectify the flaws in the laws on access to public information, in particular, the "Transparency and Expedite Procedure for Access to Public Information Act" - No. 141-2019, and the "Puerto Rico Government Open Data Act" - No. 122-2019 - both approved by the ousted governor, Ricardo Rosselló. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215092-puerto-rico>

Cuba

Access to official information is very limited. The government publishes brief statistics and its officials publish messages praising the regime on social networks and the official media continue their propaganda. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215111-cuba>

Dominican Republic

There have been complaints from the media due to the reluctance of public officials or institutions to disclose information of public interest - which is formally requested pursuant to Law 200-04 on Free Access to Information. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215065-dominican-republic>

Paraguay

In November, the Human Rights Commission of the House of Representatives gave a favorable opinion to the bill "For the protection of journalists, communicators and human rights defenders," promoted by deputies Roya Torres and Esmérita Sánchez (PLRA) and Rocío Abed (ANR) - to provide communicators with an adequate legal framework for their profession. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1215096-paraguay>

77th General Assembly, virtual, October 19-22, 2021

Costa Rica

The lack of access to public information was constant during this period - with ministers and officials refusing to issue statements on matters of public interest.

Due to the government's defensive attitude, some media have turned to the courts ("Sala IV") to have the justices force the government to provide information. As part of the actions filed during the last six months, the court forced the president of INCOFER to provide railroad information, as well as the president of the Water and Sewer Department to provide

information on the activities of that entity.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214770-costa-rica>

Ecuador

During this period, there were concerns about limitations to access public information. The Comptroller General's Office denied journalists from El Universo access to sworn statements regarding the assets of a group of officials. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214789-ecuador>

El Salvador

In July, the Executive presented the Legislative Assembly with 11 reforms to the Law on Access to Public Information (LAIP). It seeks to classify as secret any information on illicit enrichment of public officials, official traveling or public contract data, lists of advisors in government offices, and salaries of public employees. One of the reforms allows government offices to declare under "reserve" or hide 25 types of information that until now had to be made available to citizens without a specific request. Another reform indicates that there will be penalties for any person who breaches the LAIP - something that until now only applied to civil servants due to its nature as a regulatory institution.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214769-el-salvador>

Honduras

President Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado has not yet responded to the request made by different sectors to reform the "Law for the Classification of Public Documents Related to National Security and Defense," given that the "Law of Secrets" - as it is popularly known - violates the right of access to public information and the principle of transparency.

The Official Secrets Law - approved on January 24, 2014 - is considered an obstacle to access public information, because it shields documents related to more than 20 ministries and government departments as reserved, confidential, secret and top-secret for 5, 10 and up to 25 years.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214748-honduras>

Panama

The lack of access to information on the use of public funds during the pandemic also continued - ignoring the obligations demanded from officials and institutions under the Transparency Law of the National

Authority for Transparency and Access to Information (ANTAI). In August, the Ministry of the Presidency approved Resolution 71 - which declares the minutes, notes, files and other records of discussions or activities of the Cabinet Council, the president or vice-president as restricted information. These documents may not be disclosed for a period of 10 years. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214778-panama>

Paraguay

There have also been several episodes of non-compliance with the Law on Access to Public Information - especially by the binational entities Itaipú and Yacyretá. This conflicts with an April resolution by the Senate which requests the Comptroller General's Office to audit the use of funds in these companies. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214759-paraguay>

Peru

Pedro Castillo's government limits the access of journalists, media and citizens in general to public information.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214779-peru>

Puerto Rico

The characteristic ambivalence of the government regarding transparency and the right of access to public information persisted during this period. While progress was made at the legislative and municipal levels for the disclosure of information on salaries, wages, and government purchasing and bidding processes, petitioners continue to resort to the courts.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214749-puerto-rico>

Mid-Year Meeting, virtual, April 20-23, 2021

Costa Rica

During this period, no efforts have been made by the national government in favor of speedy processes of transparency and accountability - which resulted in a series of complaints to the Presidential House by journalists from different media due to the lack of a free-flowing relationship with the press.

The media have endured difficulties due to the lack of adequate means to obtain clear, accurate and timely information - and there were no regular

press conferences on matters of public interest.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214508-costa-rica>

El Salvador

The Committee for the Protection of Journalists (MPP) denounced 94 cases of restrictions in the first quarter of 2021 - including stigmatizing statements, blocking access to public information, digital harassment, verbal threats, physical aggressions, sexual harassment and threats to life.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214470-el-salvador>

Guatemala

Political party leaders in Congress attempted to create a National Office of Access to Public Information, which would put at risk the access that currently exists by compromising autonomy - since those in charge of the office could be appointed or removed by a simple majority in Congress. The initiative did not prosper due to complaints from various sectors.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214446-guatemala>

Honduras

The Official Secrets Law - approved on January 24, 2014 - is considered an obstacle to access public information, because it shields documents related to more than 20 ministries and government departments as reserved, confidential, secret and top secret for 5, 10 and up to 25 years.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214425-honduras>

Mexico

The lack of transparency regarding official advertising spending has only resulted in a discretionary distribution in favor of media that he considers allies. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214426-mexico>

Panama

Several pending requests for information on the use of public funds during the pandemic, reiterate the need to improve awareness on the Transparency Law among officials and institutions by the National Authority for Transparency and Access to Information (ANTAI).

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214487-panama>

Paraguay

In this period of social crisis and protests due to the lack of response by the government to the demands of the citizens in the face of the pandemic, aggressions and attacks against journalists continued in the midst of requests by the media and press associations for greater transparency in government agencies.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214506-paraguay>

Puerto Rico

This period saw the inauguration of a new government with promises of greater government transparency.

However, the stumbling blocks continue in cases of access to information - forcing the press and citizens to resort to the courts to obtain official information. In several cases the Government has reached agreements with the petitioners or was forced to hand over what was requested.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214443-puerto-rico>

76th IAPA General Assembly, virtual, October 21-23, 2020

Brazil

On October 6, civil society entities, including the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (Abraji) and Article19, denounced during the 177th hearing period of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the press and of the law of access to information in Brazil, including intimidation, defamation, verbal aggression and other attacks on journalists and communicators, apart from disinformation campaigns by the Federal Government. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214122-brazil>

Canada

Citizen and media group access to public information is often mired in labyrinthine systems, strangling bureaucracy, or obfuscation. Often, police forces and court systems seem reluctant to offer basic information.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214119-canada>

Costa Rica

The petition to the judges seeks an order requiring the administration to adopt a comprehensive, effective, and transparent information system,

with no limitations or restrictions on access to information and the ability to ask questions and obtain answers from public officials dealing with the subject of the pandemic. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214136-costa-rica>

El Salvador

In one of the latest attempts to intervene in one of the institutions that guarantee access to state information and the fight against corruption, the government appointed a former official as a "representative of journalists" in the Institute of Access to Public Information (IAIP).

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214157-el-salvador>

Honduras

President Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado has not responded to the petition to reform the "Law for the Classification of Public Documents Related to National Security and Defense," because the "Law of Secrets," as it is popularly known, violates the right of access to public information and the principle of transparency.

The law - in force since January 24, 2014 - is considered an obstacle to access public documents pertaining to more than 20 ministries and government departments, since it protects information considered reserved, confidential, secret or ultra-secret for 5, 10 and even 25 years.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214126-honduras>

Panama

The Supreme Court of Justice did not admit a habeas data action requesting information on the use of public funds during the pandemic. Due to this decision, the media entities expressed their concern about the lack of compliance with the Transparency Law, and about the performance of the National Authority of Transparency and Access to Information (ANTAI). <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214155-panama>

Puerto Rico

Press freedom problems in this period were marked by decisions and delays on access to public information and lack of transparency.

In another case, after the uproar caused by the discovery of a warehouse with supplies not distributed to victims of disasters, Governor Wanda Vázquez Garced ordered a "thorough investigation" into the allegations of

mishandling of supplies. The media asked for its release, but the requests were denied. The Puerto Rico Journalists Association (ASPPRO) and the Center for Investigative Journalism (CPI) sued the Department of Justice over the document. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214130-puerto-rico>

Dominican Republic

The new government headed by President Luis Abinader promised to respect the free access of the press to sources of public information. In the two months that he has been in office, the President opened a dialogue channel with the directors of newspapers, radio, television and digital media producers, to verify if his instructions for information transparency are being followed.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214124-dominican-republic>

Venezuela

The "Shadow Report" on freedom of expression, freedom of the press and access to information, published in July by the Voices of the South alliance, denounces the systematic abuse of state power, violent aggressions, attacks and threats, disinformation, lack of transparency and censorship, making 2019 the worst year for journalism. 642 alerts were issued - 228% more than the previous year.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1214129-venezuela>

Mid-Year Meeting, virtual, March 28, 2020

Brazil

On March 6 17 bodies of the Brazilian civil society denounced the Bolsonaro government in the 175th meeting of the Inter-American Council on Human Rights (IACHR), held in Haiti, of making systematic violations of freedom of expression in the country, attacks on the press, censorship of artistic and cultural freedoms, stifling of spaces for social participation and access to public information. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213755-brazil>

Canada

During this period, although the Justin Trudeau government open new spaces to citizen's right to know, there is still a generalized perception of a lack of transparency on certain issues, the matter of shared surveillance,

border security and the possible violation of individual liberties through use of digital information on cellphones and other electronic devices by citizens crossing to and from the United States continues to be a delicate issue. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213756->

Jamaica

The Gleaner newspaper said in an editorial "What the Government was proposing goes against international standards and norms where the move is to increase access. In some countries, there is what is called a 30-year rule, which relates to the release of archival records when they are 30 years old." <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213835-caribbean>

Costa Rica

It was made difficult to have access to information in public offices. The officials tend to disrespect the times of response and order that the questions be in writing and thus they avoid journalists.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213767-costa-rica>

El Salvador

Media are facing a growing blockage of access to public information in various institutions. The government named an official of its confidence as head of the Institute of Access to Public Information (IAIP) who had to resign after receiving criticisms.

The IAIP blocked more cases of requests for access to public information and in the face of access by media and citizens it has sought protections in courts serving as shields of governmental institutions in order to continue denying information. The El Diario de Hoy newspaper and other independent media continue suffering the discrimination of officials of the Presidency for making questions in Presidency press conferences.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213771-el-salvador>

Honduras

There has remained unalterable the Law for the Classification of Public Documents Related to Security and National Defense, due to the fact the "Secrets Law," which breaches the right to access to public information and the principle of transparency, and the Cybersecurity Law, which will limit freedom of expression on social media, remain pending being dealt with in Congress. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213742-honduras>

Nicaragua

The Violeta B. de Chamorro foundation made a study of the Law on Access to Public Information in 65 state institutions; 57 have their Web site, but only 26 have a linkage to the Office on Access to Information. There were made 57 requests for information online and only three received a response. Of 31 physical requests only four received a reply. It was observed that party propaganda is the most notable of these Web sites and they lack information.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213743-nicaragua>

Puerto Rico

Law 122-2019 adds obstacles to journalists and citizens in the access to public information. The "Transparency Law" establishes the new process required for requesting public information which allows the government to postpone the delivery of public documents for about two months.

In order to implement that law on March 2 the Justice Ministry issued a document with guidelines to the heads of public agencies and corporations on regulations and administrative orders concerning public information.

The document contains bigger obstacles to access to public information and inconsistency with the requirements of the Transparency Law and public policy of openness and transparency that the government proclaims. It creates bureaucratic layers and additional processes absent from the Transparency Law that have to be complied with in order to receive public information that the government has in its custody.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213746-puerto-rico>

7th General Assembly, Coral Gables, USA, October 4-7, 2019

Brazil

The political party Rede Sustentabilidade filed lawsuits for unconstitutionality with the Federal Supreme Court (STF) against the provisional measures that eliminate the publication of balance sheets and bidding documents. The National Association of Newspapers (ANJ) participates in these actions, as amicus curiae.

Basically, both lawsuits state the following: the urgency of the provisional measures is not justified; considering that the president's real intention - made publicly - is to harm the press; considering that Congress recently approved a transition from print to digital publication of balance sheets - sanctioned by the president; considering that Congress is also debating a transition to the publication of bidding documents; and finally that both measures undermine the transparency of information of public interest. The Supreme Court has not yet ruled on this issue.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213412-brazil>

Canada

With the heightened crisis faced by the Liberal Government as it dealt with its former Attorney General, Jody Wilson-Raybould and former Liberal Member of Parliament Jane Philpott in the wake of the SNC-Lavalin corruption investigation, there were several pleas for greater transparency and access to the information that was being discussed at the higher levels of government. Then came the positions of the government regarding the scandal, which then led to a perception that it needed an urgent Democratic Reform and a stronger stance in the Legislative and Judicial Branches in the contemplation of Accountability of government authorities.

As a "historic" victory for freedom of the press is consider the September 27th Supreme Court ruling which set aside a disclosure order issued by the Superior Court of Quebec that would have forced the Radio-Canada journalist, Marie-Maude Denis, to disclosure her source. The highest court said that the protection of the sources is important and it has to be in the highest public interest to force a journalist to reveal their sources.

The upcoming Federal Election on the 21st of October 2019, the debate about the transparency of the government has acquired a life of its own, as it becomes the fodder for political manipulation and heated promises of a constitutional reform. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213383-canada>

Jamaica

There have been some whispers that the proposed Data Protection Act will return to parliament imminently for debate. Hopefully the requested exclusions for media/journalism have been strengthened as per the lobby of the media and press associations.

There has been no further development on the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica's urging the Government to increase its oversight responsibility beyond free-to-air electronic media to policing social media platforms.

The media and press associations have called for the abolition of a provision in the Criminal Justice and Administration Act which prohibits still photography or sketches of defendants on courthouse premises. Penalties for breaching this provision include fines and imprisonment. This troubling element of the law returned to the spotlight as parliament sought to modernize fines associated with breaches of the act. During this general process, the fine for this infraction was raised to the near equivalent of 10,000 US dollars.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213413-caribbean>

El Salvador

In June, the Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP) confirmed the appointment of Javier Portillo as executive director. As former advisor to the Transparency Department, he was known for defending secrecy in several areas related to the Presidential House, including travel information, travel allowances, advertising expenses and internal audit of the administration of former president Mauricio Funes – now prosecuted for the diversion of 351 million dollars and nationalized in Nicaragua. Portillo resigned from the IAIP.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213431-el-salvador>

Honduras

President Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado has not responded nor reacted to the petition of various sectors for amendment of the "Law for the Classification of Public Documents Related to Security and National Defense," due to the fact that the "Law on Secrecy," as it is popularly known, violates the right to access to public information and the principle of transparency. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213420-honduras>

Nicaragua

There continues unchanged in this period, since the government was installed in 2007, official secrecy regarding public information, where only First Lady and Vice President Rosario Murillo is authorized to speak, which goes against the Law on Access to Information approved in 2007. The government maintains its communication predominance through an

oligopoly of television, aggravated by the close down of television channel 100% Noticias and of all the opinion programs of Canal 12, as well as the close down of Confidencial. It in addition maintains discrimination in official advertising, which it gives exclusively to media of the Ortega family. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213422-nicaragua>

Panama

The EPASA Group has repeatedly stated that it is under pressure from the Public Prosecutor's Office and denounced that said institution is carrying out an information blockade by denying access to public information. In particular, recently, they denounced that they had received information that their facilities would be raided by a group of prosecutors. They have publicly questioned the failure of the Public Prosecutor's Office to respond to their requests for information. After publication of the denunciation, the Public Prosecutor's Office issued a statement denying the raid and accusing EPASA of disinforming in order to damage the image of the institution. The journalistic and media guilds issued a statement saying they considered "the approach of the Public Prosecutor's Office to be correct" in denying the search, and that "freedom of expression and information is an inalienable right of every human being, and they will always be vigilant so that nothing or no one attempts or violates this right." <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213469-panama>

Paraguay

During this period, journalistic practice has been affected by isolated events such as a bill which, even though aimed at protecting personal information, could in practice limit free access to public information; and by corruption involving the media and journalists.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213423-paraguay>

Peru

In the area of transparency and access to public information the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights has - since the end of 2018 - promoted the creation and formation of various entities such as the National Authority for Transparency and Access to Public Information and the Tribunal for Transparency and Access to Public Information, the last at the national level. In 2018 the three members of the First Chamber of the Court were

presented, and in mid-2019 the selection of members of the Second Chamber began. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213424-peru>

Puerto Rico

During this period the media and journalists were attacked and the public was denied information, whereas the government passed legislation that hinders and delays the right to access to public information.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213425-puerto-rico>

Dominican Republic

Several newspapers editorialized on the difficulties in receiving information from the Ministry of Public Health and the directors of state hospitals about fatal victims of the dengue epidemic that has plagued the country for the past three months - despite the existence of a law on access to public information. At the end of September, television commentator Marino Zapete, one of the strongest critics of the government, denounced the forced closure of his evening program on Channel 45 of Teleradio América. The journalist said that his departure was the result of a pressure exerted before his owners by the Attorney General of the Republic, Jean Alain Rodríguez, after revelations that his sister had allegedly benefited from contracts with the Ministry of Public Works for some 15 million Dollars. The sister of the Attorney General of the Republic summoned Zapete to present the evidence she claims to have on said contracts or to retract. The journalist presented at a press conference and on a television program the documents on which he relied to make the accusations.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213430-dominican-republic>

Mid-Year Meeting, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, March 29-31, 2019

Canada

According to a survey conducted by Nanos Research for Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE), more than half of the population perceives that the democracy is under threat because of lack of transparency by the authorities in the handling of information released to the public. 67% of Canadians believe that journalists should not be required to provide police with their source material.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213058-canada>

Ecuador

Access to public information tends to be interrupted. On November 13 Quito journalists revealed via Twitter the restriction to enter the State Attorney General's Office in the capital to obtain information. On November 19 journalist Luis Muñoz complained on social media about the impediment that he had to carry out coverage outside the Social Rehabilitation Center (CRS) in Latacunga, this on the part of the National Police, a constant practice since the country's former Vice President, Jorge Glas, was hospitalized there, according to Fundamedios.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213064-ecuador>

Honduras

Serious is the deterioration in access to public information, limited by laws that violate international principles. There is maintained a marked interest on the part of the government in favoring lack of transparency in public affairs, weakening the principles of transparency and maximum dissemination. The government continues ignoring repeated calls by the international community that it adjust its legislation in this regard.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213067-honduras>

Panama

There continues pending in the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino), headquartered in Panama, a bill submitted by Ecuadorean Congressman Octavio Villacreces that seeks to enact a Communications Framework Law for the country members of the Parlatino "on the right to free access to communication" and to establish mechanisms of control on the part of the government in order "to monitor, warn and promote" concerning news media contents. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213110-panama>

Paraguay

In February, Minister Karina Gómez – head of the National Department for the Administration of Seized and Commissioned Property (Senabico), the agency responsible for safeguarding and administering property confiscated by law, refused to provide the press with the information requested regarding the rental of the mansion of drug trafficker Javier

Cabaña, alias Cucho, violating Law 5282/14 on free access to public information and government transparency. After the publication of the case in the newspaper ABC Color, the National Anti-corruption Department recommended the publication of the information - including the rental contract. Gómez resigned her office this month. Carolina Llanes – ex-comptroller of the Ciudad del Este Municipality, accepted to assume as the new head of Senabico.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213070-paraguay>

Peru

At the same time, there is a lack of political will regarding transparency and access to public information, which has led to the shelving of bills that seek to strengthen the National Transparency Authority. In recent months, there have been new judicial proceedings against journalists as a direct consequence of the investigative work they do, the most well-known being the case against journalists Paola Ugaz and Pedro Salinas for their work on the alleged cases of abuse committed by members of the Sodalicio de Vida Cristiana. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213071-peru>

Puerto Rico

There does not exist a law that regulates the right to access to information, although there do exist several laws that define the nature of what amounts to a public document, and/or that contain rules on how to ease or restrict their access.

There continue to be obstacles and battles (within and outside the courts) regarding access to public information.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1213072-puerto-rico>

74th General Assembly, Salta, Argentina October 19-22, 2018

Costa Rica

Concerning legal matters, there currently exist two bills, for the Law on Freedom of Expression and of the Press number 20362 and the Law on Access to Information. In both cases there are sought limits on the practice of journalism. In the case of the access to public information the bill reiterates more than 30 rules in national juridical statutes and rulings by the Constitutional Court that restrict such access.

Under discussion is approval of a fiscal amendment under Law 20580 on the Strengthening of Public Finances, which exempted from payment of value added tax on advertising television and radio stations, but not print media.

The text includes value added tax on "services of telecommunications, of radio and television, independently of the media outlet or technological platform by means of which said service is provided," imposing higher tax rates and exonerating large corporations such as cooperatives and exporters. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1212735-costa-rica>

Honduras

Access to public information continues to be limited – generating opacity in public affairs and institutional weakening to fight corruption, despite the demands made by the IAPA and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Regarding a draft bill on cybersecurity, the UN and OAS Rapporteurs on Freedom of Expression asked the Legislative Branch to conform to international standards and "on how the restriction of freedom of expression obeys the three conditions established in Article 19.3 of the ICCPR and Article 13.2 of the American Convention." The request was due to the fact that the draft bill contains ambiguous and vague language.

The Mission of Support Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) filed a petition to amend the "Law for the Classification of Public Documents Related to National Security and Defense," because it violates the right of access to public information and the transparency principle.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1212750-honduras>

Uruguay

On July 31, in a parliamentary commission, Chancellor Nin Novoa referred to the Law of Public Access to Information – annoyed by the requests and the way it is being applied. "We have received requests for access to public information from people who want to do a doctorate. Well, let them look for it! We are not going to do the doctorate for them!"

The law was used by journalists from the weekly Búsqueda to find out about the personal expenses of the country's former vice president, Raúl

Sendic, using a credit card from the main state-owned company – which later led to his resignation. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1212748-uruguay>

Mid-Year Meeting, Medellín, Colombia, April 13-15, 2018

Argentina

The law on access to public information - enacted in 2016 and regulated a year ago, became operational last October with the implementation of the law and the appointment of its director through an open and transparent mechanism. This organization - the Agency for Access to Public Information - must deal with issues related to citizens' personal data. Among its areas of action is also the deletion of certain references from official databases, which are included on its website as "the right to be forgotten." While it refers to the power of any citizen to ask for the removal of his or her name from any public database in relation to credit information services after five or more years from delinquency, it is not the most appropriate for an agency in charge of promoting access to public information. <https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1212202-argentina>

Panama

In the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino), based in Panama, there continues pending a bill submitted by Ecuadorean Congressman Octavio Villacreces, who seeks to have a Communications Law for Palatinto member countries "on the right to free access to communication" and establish mechanisms of control by the government in order "to monitor and warn of" media contents.

<https://en.sipiapa.org/notas/1212236-panama>