

LACIGF 12 Report

Title of the session: Session 2 – Surveillance Technologies in Our Region: A View on How to Work towards a Safer Digital Environment Based on Experience and Practice

Session summary:

The Session 2, Surveillance technologies in our region: a look from experience and practice to work for a safer digital environment, moderated by Martha Tudon (Article 19), was divided into 2 parts: the first was a session for panelists and the second a workshop session by working groups. Martha Tudon presented the three panelists and introduced the topic. The topics and questions led by the moderator focused on the following topics:

- a. Physical surveillance
- b. Ubiquitous devices
- c. Communications interference
- d. Biometric data

The moderator raises the following slogans:

1. Tell from your experience if surveillance technologies have been used to monitor activists.
2. How can regulation mitigate the excessive use of these technologies?

The first panelist, **Daniela Alvarado (IPYS, Venezuela)**, began by alerting that, in Venezuela, censorship of information sources is taking place. The Institute has recently published the diagnosis of 881 episodes of digital blockages that even affected powerful media. The majority (555) of these episodes were carried out by the state provider, but there are also cases in the private sector or with its action. That is, they identified that there is complicity between the government and the private sector to carry out censorship. The Venezuelan scenario is particular, because despite the recommendations of the inter-American commission on human rights, journalists have been censured, much of the investigative production migrated to digital media, which are now also attacked.

Daniela Macías (DINARDAP, Ecuador) affirmed that the personal images of someone constitute personal data and must be protected and legislated as such; understanding that it is a fact that allows to identify a specific person. She highlighted the challenge in legislating when technologies advance so quickly. The representative of the government sector pointed out that it is still necessary to work in this direction, also disseminating initiatives from Ecuador, such as “Digital Ecuador” and the effort to constitute a data protection law. The government's points of attention should be, for Macías: government insurance that the technology developed is safe and constructive and that the user with a certain level of digital skills, has a notion and knowledge of their rights and ways of protecting their personal data.

Lía Hernández (IPANDETEC, Panama) began by asking the audience if we knew how much countries had spent on surveillance technologies in recent years and presented data from countries such as Panama and Guatemala. She pointed out that the discourse of

implementing a surveillance technology is frequently legitimized by the national security discourse, questioning whether the objective is really to protect or monitor. This implementation also occurs simultaneously with punishments of journalists, although in Panama that is not as frequent as in other countries. The panelist also questions the interests of foreign countries that offer surveillance technologies to other countries, as China does with Panama. While it seems that Panamanians do not consider it as a problem to allow greater vigilance to the detriment of their privacy, she states that one must think further and evaluate the relevance of the protection of our personal data.

To end the first part of the session, a question session was held. The questions focused on cases in the region (such as Ecuador and Brazil) related to the management of biometric data and the balance between national security and data protection. It was asked about the need for regulation and whether it exists in the countries. It was also asked about gender biases and the use of these surveillance technologies.

Finally, in the second part of the session, the audience was divided into three working groups. The first group was led by **Rogelio López (Access Now)** whose title was "Evaluating our digital security practices anti surveillance: when the game becomes true." The second group was led by **Pablo Arcuri (Internews)** whose title was "Myths and realities of instant messaging: WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram ... what should I use to make my communications safe?" The third group was led by Juliana Guerra (Digital Rights / Cybersecurity) whose title was "Your technologies, your decisions. Methodologies based on conscious and informed decisions".

Outputs and other relevant links:

- Full session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8nHHLkBb34>
- [Reporte IPYSve | La escalada de la censura digital en Venezuela](#)
- [DINARDAP](#)
- [IPANDETEC](#)
- [Access Now](#)
- [Internews](#)
- [Derechos Digitales](#)
- [Ciberseguras](#)
- [Artículo 19](#)

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