

15 May 2018

Venezuela: Human rights organisation, VENDATA, target of cyber attack

On 8 May 2018, the website of civil association **VENDATA** was the target of a cyber attack. According to the last registered error log, the attacks came from several compromised computers, which infected vendata.org and the Blue Host server where data was being stored. The attack forced the website's administrators to block the site and to turn off the server. Nothing is known about those responsible for the attack.

VENDATA was created by the human rights organisations, **Press and Venezuelan Society Institute** (Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad Venezolana - IPYS) and **Transparencia Venezuela**, the national chapter of Transparency International. IPYS have been monitoring the freedom of expression and access to information since 2002, and they have documented thousand of incidents of intimidation, threats, and violence affecting journalists working in Venezuela. Transparencia Venezuela, which focuses on the eradication of corruption, recently published a comprehensive [report](#) on Venezuelan government officials' involvement in the Odebrecht corruption scandal, which has plagued South America since it broke in 2016.

On 18 April 2018, the Ministry for the President's Office (Ministerio del Poder Popular del Despacho de la Presidencia y Seguimiento de la Gestión de Gobierno) published an [article](#) from the newspaper "Correo del Orinoco" on its website. The article wrongly refers to Transparencia Venezuela as a subversive organisation that is funded by the United States' government and that is dedicated to accusing the Venezuelan government of corruption.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern at the cyber attack on VENDATA's website and at the ongoing defamation of Transparencia Venezuela, which it believes to be an attempt to delegitimise its work to uncover corruption in the country. Front Line Defenders is concerned that such attacks and smear campaigns can lead to an increase in violence against human rights defenders in Venezuela.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Venezuela to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the cyber attack on VENDATA's website with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights organisation Transparencia Venezuela and its members;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Venezuela are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.