



NewMUN: Chapter VI BACKGROUND GUIDE Press Corps

Contents

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS.....	3
INTRODUCTION	4
DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS	4
GENERAL OVERVIEW	5
MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED	7
TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS	7
PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE	8
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.....	8
APPENDIX	9
BIBLIOGRAPHY	9
Possible Moderated caucus Topics	10
AGENDA 2:.....	11
Examining the challenges to press freedom in Brazil under President Jair Bolsonaro's Administration.....	11
INTRODUCTION	11
GENERAL OVERVIEW	11
MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED	13
TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS	14
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.....	14
POSSIBLE UNMODERATED CAUCUS TOPICS	15
BIBLIOGRAPHY	15

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS

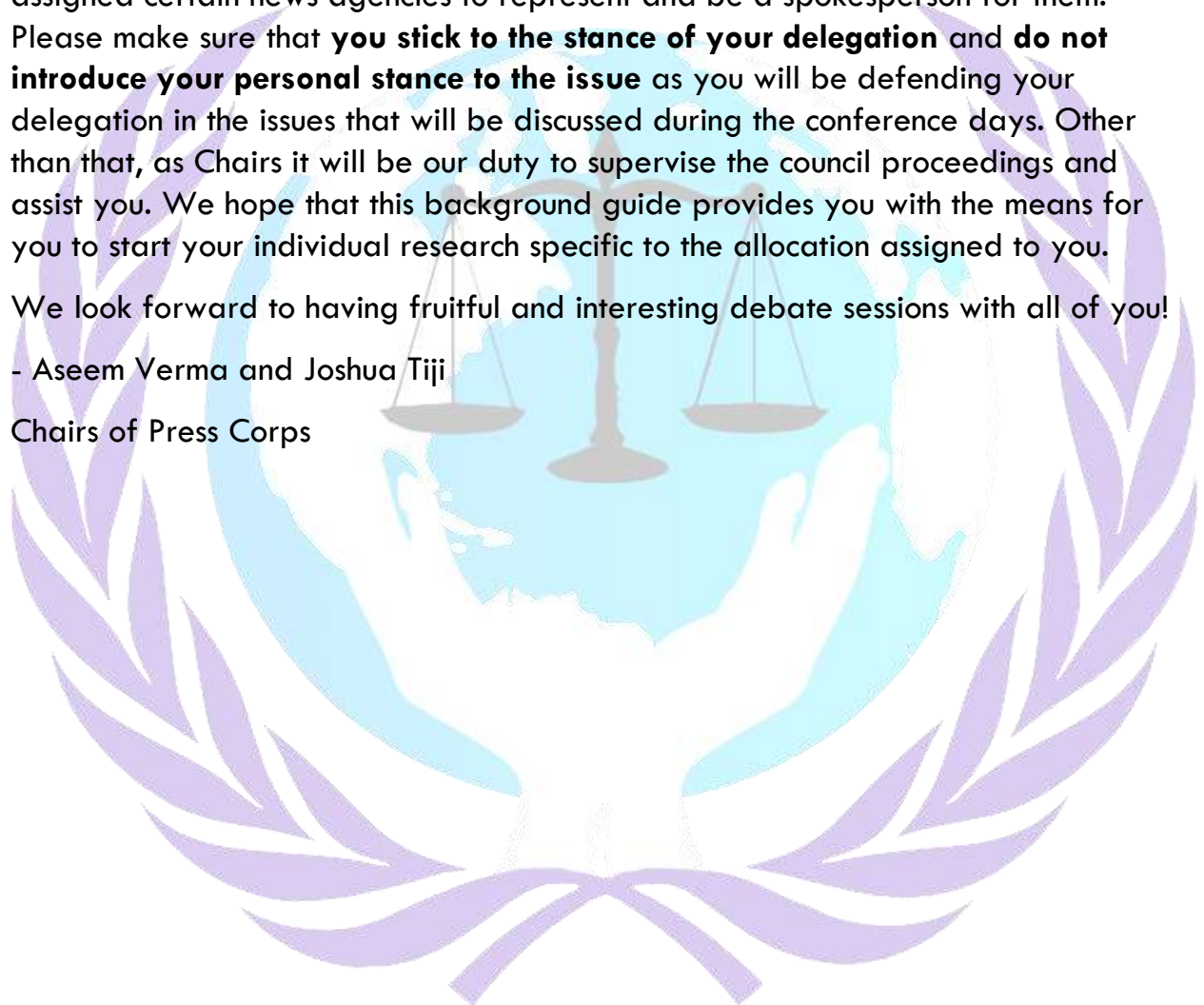
Greetings Delegates!

We, the Chairs of Press Corps for NewMUN'24, would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you to the Press Corps Council. Press Corps is one of the most interesting and engaging councils in this year's conference and plays a key role in independent journalism and reporting. As a delegate in this council, you will be assigned certain news agencies to represent and be a spokesperson for them. Please make sure that **you stick to the stance of your delegation and do not introduce your personal stance to the issue** as you will be defending your delegation in the issues that will be discussed during the conference days. Other than that, as Chairs it will be our duty to supervise the council proceedings and assist you. We hope that this background guide provides you with the means for you to start your individual research specific to the allocation assigned to you.

We look forward to having fruitful and interesting debate sessions with all of you!

- Aseem Verma and Joshua Tiji

Chairs of Press Corps



AGENDA 1:

Assessing whether corporate owners have specific political affiliations or agendas that may shape the content and tone of news reporting, potentially leading to partisan bias in the promotion of certain ideological perspectives over others.

INTRODUCTION

Corporations, private companies, and organizations hold major stakes in many different sectors and industries, influencing various aspects of the global economy and society. Their involvement has been seen in Finance, the Healthcare sector, the Real Estate sector, Transportation and Logistics and many more. Their relationship with such sectors and industries is obvious, however, what isn't apparent is their relationship with the media.

Corporations harness this leverage that they gain by acquiring news agencies to propagate information that they find beneficial for themselves. Moreover, media bias is evident in news agencies owned or funded by the government or state.

Nowadays, news agencies struggle to distance themselves from persistent media bias due to funding or investment from investors that may hold relations to corporations.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Media Bias:** This occurs when journalists and news agencies show bias in the reporting of news.

- **Layout Placement:** When the editorial staff of a news agency decides the importance of a topic by its placement in the article. Stories can be buried in a section that is less read.
- **Commercial Bias:** The type of media bias where editors select stories or interpretations of stories that draw in larger audiences to meet sponsor demands.
- **Stereotyping:** This bias can be used to understand groups and situations which are not a regular part of our lives. However, classifying and categorizing people or events can affect that way in which a story is perceived.
- **Sensationalism Selection:** Media focus on stories that emphasize fear, anger and excitement.
- **Federal Communications Commission:** the FCC is an independent government agency that regulates communication made by radio, television, satellite, wire, etc. across the United States of America

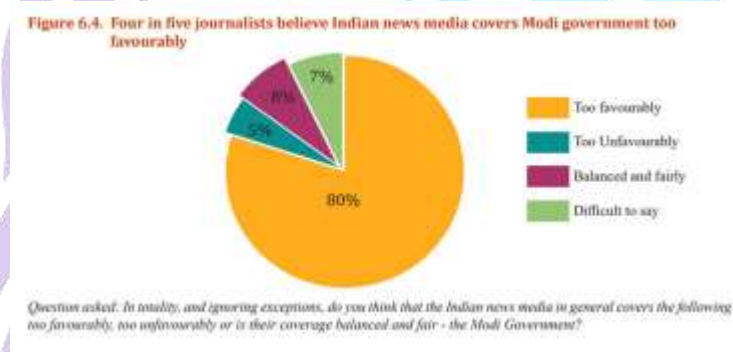
GENERAL OVERVIEW

There are numerous instances of Media Bias that are evident nowadays. News Agencies show their likeness or are biased towards particular individuals or political parties. A great example would be the Bias towards the Republican Party and the Democrat Party of the United States of America. Cable News Network (CNN) is an American News Agency that leans left, often promoting liberal viewpoints and supporting Democratic Policies, with news reporting that regularly favors left-wing perspectives. On the other hand, Fox News leans right, frequently presenting conservative viewpoints and supporting Republican policies that often favors the right-wing in its reporting and commentary.

According to various sources, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not faced a single press conference during his 10 years as the Indian Prime Minister. However, he has given various interviews to a select few including, Rahul Kanwal and Sudhir Choudhary, hosts of India Today and Aaj Tak respectively. In India, news agencies have been following a general trend of favoring the ruling party, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), or supporting every policy that the government put forward. For example, in a 2019 interview with Anjana Om Kashyap, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was asked questions pertaining to his personal definition of happiness. When the interviewers were given a chance to ask the Prime Minister questions relating to National Security, Party Policy and various other complex issues, they

chose to inquire about his definition of happiness. Meanwhile, news agencies that report unfavorably on the government have faced pressure. Agencies that report too critical of the government are a constant target of raids and searches. Infact, a Lokniti-CSDS (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies) found that 82% of Indian journalists think their employers support the BJP. Such conditions where a major proportion of the media favors a certain political party is not healthy for a democracy. Moreover, the Indian media actively practices sensationalism selection where stories that spark fear, anger and excitement amongst the viewers are broadcasted regularly. For example, a study found that

Figure 6.4. Four in five journalists believe Indian news media covers Modi government too favourably



In many other countries there is barely any freedom that is given to the media. For example, the government has imposed strict laws regarding censorship, blocking numerous websites that produce free media and blocking web browsers such as Google so that they have control over what news articles are published and read online. Moreover, most of the news that is produced within the People's Republic of China is produced by agencies that are funded and owned by the Chinese Government or the State Council of China.

According to the RSF (Reporters without borders) Report, Europe has shown the highest average of press freedom. This is due to the policies implemented by various governments to protect various rights, such as the right to the freedom of expression. Countries such as Ireland, Portugal, Estonia and the Nordic Nations, occupy the top places in the report. Norway sits on the top step in relation to the freedom of press. Western Europe shows great support for the freedom of the press, however, Eastern Europe and Central Asia are the exact opposite. Countries such as Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Russia, Belarus, etc. are often criticized for having restrictive environments for media freedom. In these countries, the government typically exercises significant control over the press, and independent journalism faces severe challenges.

This can include censorship, harassment, imprisonment of journalists, and other forms of repression designed to stifle free expression and limit the public's access to information.

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

- Firstpost - Owned by Reliance Industries LTD
- Al Jazeera - Funded by the Qatari Crown
- Cable News Network (**Pro-Democrat**) - owned by the Warner Bros. Discovery
- New Delhi Television LTD (**Pro-BJP**) - Adani Group acquired major stake
- Xinhua News Agency - Owned by the State Council of PRC
- Fox News (**Pro-Republican**) - Owned by the Murdoch Family
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
- The Norwegian News Agency - has no ties with organizations or the government
- TASS - Owned by the Russian State
- Republic TV (**Pro-BJP**) - Owned by Arnab Goswami
- Dagblad Suriname - part of FaFam Publishing

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

- John Milton of England publishes a pamphlet called the Areopagitica in 1644 in protest to an order introduced by the Parliament requiring government approval of all published books. **This is one of the influential and early examples of how the freedom of the press came into being.**
- The first amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America established the **freedom** of religion, **speech and press** in 1789. This amendment played a key role in establishing the media's role in a democracy.
- The Penny Press was invented by Benjamin Day in the 1830s and was famous for its low price, a paper per penny. These cheap newspapers aimed at mass audiences often used **sensationalism** to **increase sales**, marking the beginning of **media bias driven by profit**.
- The Commission on the Freedom of the Press was formed in 1943. The Commission's 1947 report, "A Free and Responsible Press" emphasized the need for a **socially responsible press** that supports a democracy by providing accurate and balanced information.

- The **Fairness Doctrine**, enacted in 1964, required broadcasters to cover controversial issues fairly. Its repeal in 1987 ended these requirements, leading to increased media polarization and partisan reporting.
- The Rise of Digital Media and Social Networks marked the birth of platforms like **Facebook and Twitter** allowed for the rapid spread of information and misinformation, significantly **impacting media bias** and echo chambers.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

Some actions taken in the past to ensure that the media remains unbiased are as follows:

- The **Fairness Doctrine** that was introduced by the Federal Communications Commission in 1949, during presidency of **Harry S. Truman** made it compulsory for broadcast networks to devote time to contrasting views on issues of public importance. The doctrine was backed by the US Congress and was of key importance for the general public of the USA to decide between varying sides of the story. However, the Fairness Doctrine was abolished during the **Reagan Administration**.
- The **Office of Communications** or Ofcom, which was set up in 2003, is an independent government-approved regulatory body for broadcasting and telecommunications services. It enforces standards for TV and radio content, ensures fair competition in telecom services, protects consumer rights, and promotes public interest.
- The **Broadcasting Act** of Canada makes it mandatory for Canadian Broadcasters to provide content that ensures diversity and serve the general public. It mandates the need for **precise, fair, and balanced media**.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- An **independent** body should be set up to oversee the **global** production and distribution of media worldwide to ensure the unbiased spread of information ensuring that **multiple perspectives** of a story are covered
- To **spread of awareness** of the impact of biased media and its implications. For example, to influence people's ability to make decisions without being aware of the various **perspectives** to stories

- An **international summit** of journalists would take place every year, so that journalists themselves can voice their **concerns** with relation to the country (or countries) they are based in.

An international organization should be set up **affiliated** to the **United Nations** to conduct reports on countries' **press' freedom** to ensure that the media is never biased or silent in terms of reporting.

APPENDIX

1. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272705000216> (**Persistent Media Bias**)
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5No-lWBTBaQ> (**How Adani acquired NDTV**)
3. <https://rsf.org/en/index> (**World Press Freedom Index**)
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7voF2YTBeb8> (**Media reporting on Democrats and Republicans**)
5. <https://youtu.be/FRjLSVCUjwM?si=E-Q-vExzP3r7hmv> (**Situation of Media in India**)
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ahqsygN4hs> (**Exclusive interview of the Prime Minister with hosts of Aaj Tak and India Today**)
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unbXcnXfSYk> (**Reality of Indian Media**)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/critics-indias-modi-migrate-online-mainstream-media-stays-deferential-2024-04-18/> (**Critics of Indian Prime Minister migrating online**)
- <https://thediplomat.com/2024/05/narendra-modis-decade-without-press-conferences/#:~:text=Modi%20has%20not%20faced%20a,one%20of%20India's%20opposition%20parties>. (**Prime Minister Modi and press conferences**)
- <https://www.newslaundry.com/2023/07/27/lokniti-csds-media-survey-82-percent-of-journalists-think-their-employers-support-the-bjp> (**Lokniti-CSDS Survey**)
- <https://library.csc.edu/mediabias/typesofmediabias>

- **(Types of Media Bias)**
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Areopagitica> (**Areopagitica**)
- <https://www.dawn.com/news/801366/the-penny-press#:~:text=THE%20Penny%20Press%20was%20most,only%20priced%20for%20a%20penny.> (**Penny Press**)
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutchins_Commission (**1947 Report of Hutchins Commission**)
- <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/topic-guide/fairness-doctrine> (**The Fairness Doctrine - National Archives**)
- <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/B-9.01/FullText.html> (**Broadcasting act - Canada**)

Possible Moderated caucus Topics

- How would the Left wing media differentiate themselves from the Right wing media in the United States of America if restrictions to media bias were imposed? (Ex: CNN and Fox News)
- China has been used to media being controlled by the government. How would the people react to the free press? If the acts of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are revealed, would this lead to a civil war or a collapse of the country? (Reference: Tiananmen Square Massacre)
- Eritrea has the worst record for the freedom of the press according to the RSF report. How would its citizens react to the free press once new regulations are put in place?

AGENDA 2:

Examining the challenges to press freedom in Brazil under President Jair Bolsonaro's Administration

INTRODUCTION

This topic is an extension of the above topic given. President Jair Bolsonaro was Brazil's 38th president. Defining characteristics of Jair Bolsonaro's first term as president of Brazil has been attacks on the media. He has threatened journalistic freedom and the right to knowledge, encouraged by a misinformation campaign and an ever more hostile base. Therefore, his reelection would have been a serious threat to Brazil's democracy as well as the country's right to trustworthy news and information.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The number of attacks on the media by President Bolsonaro in the first half of 2021 increased by 74% over the second half of 2020. Jair Bolsonaro targeted the media 87 times, which made him the system's leader predator.

The intimidation and insults that are orchestrated from the highest government level are not limited to the Internet. Harassment, insults, vilification and humiliation of journalists have become commonplace in the Bolsonaro world during the past four years. The platform preferred by the Bolsonaro system's attackers is Twitter.

This venting outlet for Bolsonaro supporters is where 80% of the attacks on the media take place. The president limits his own exposure on Twitter by blocking most of the accounts that annoy him.

Brazil's ranking in RSF's World Press Freedom Index has fallen from 102nd in 2018 to 110th in 2020. Assessed by the security indicator alone, its ranking is now 124th. President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil is blocking social media

followers who criticize him, violating their rights to free speech and access to information. Human Rights Watch identified 176 blocked accounts, the vast majority on Twitter, including journalists, members of the Congress, influencers with more than a million followers, and private citizens with just a handful. In addition, it was found that blocked accounts of news media and nongovernmental organizations. The total number is most likely higher. Former President Jair Bolsonaro's recurrent and vicious attacks on journalists during his four years in office did not serve to intimidate or reduce coverage of his administration by the Brazilian press.

President Jair Bolsonaro has also spread various disinformation about particular subjects by taking away the right of information from the public. Here are some instances on what he has spread disinformation to the public about:

COVID-19 Pandemic

- Bolsonaro has minimized the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, referring to the virus as merely a "little flu." He has advocated for unverified treatments such as **hydroxychloroquine** and has shown skepticism towards the effectiveness of vaccines. His remarks frequently contradict established public health guidelines and scientific research.

Amazon Deforestation

- Bolsonaro has asserted that the level of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest is overstated and has challenged data indicating a rise in deforestation rates. He has also accused environmental non-governmental organizations and foreign nations of amplifying the deforestation issue for their own agendas.

Election Fraud Claims

- Bolsonaro has consistently propagated unfounded allegations of electoral fraud in Brazil, particularly concerning electronic voting systems. Despite the absence of supporting evidence, he has raised doubts about the integrity of the nation's electoral framework.

Historical Statements

- Bolsonaro has made provocative comments regarding Brazil's military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985, expressing admiration for certain aspects of

that era while downplaying the human rights violations perpetrated by the regime. His remarks have drawn significant criticism from historians and advocates for human rights.

Crime and Public Safety

- Bolsonaro has suggested that relaxing gun control measures would lead to a decrease in crime rates, despite inconclusive evidence regarding the correlation between gun ownership and crime levels. His advocacy for more permissive gun laws has sparked considerable debate among experts.

Economic Data

- Bolsonaro has occasionally presented misleading information regarding Brazil's economic situation, such as inflating job creation statistics or minimizing the seriousness of the economic difficulties confronting the nation.

Instead of shying away, the country's journalists saw the attacks as a reason to put "more gas" into their craft, in a show of resilience.

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

Jair Bolsonaro has gone against many journalist organizations and have attacked not only the organization but the journalists individually. Some of the organizations he has attacked are:

1. **Folha de S. Paulo**
2. **O Globo**
3. **O Estado de S. Paulo**
4. **Globo Network**
5. **CNN Brasil**
6. **The Intercept Brasil**
7. **REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS**
8. **Rádio CBN**
9. **Brazilian Press Association (Associação Brasília de Imprensa - ABI)**

10. Globo media group's TV

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

President Jair Bolsonaro has raged and shown anger towards journalists multiple times.

January 8 2021- After being identified as media personnel by Bolsonaro supporters, they said they were surrounded, harassed and threatened, and that in some cases they were physically attacked and their equipment was stolen. As you can see Jair Bolsonaro's viewpoints towards journalists affected his supporters as well making them violent.

JUNE 21 2021-He lost all self-control at a press conference during a visit to Sao Paulo state, insulting a journalist with the **Globo media group's TV Vanguarda** who asked him why he was not wearing a mask when he arrived at the site of the visit. "Shut up, Globo is the bad press, the rotten press," he shouted, after deliberately removing his mask to reply.

JUNE 25 2021-He lost all control again on 25 June when asked about suspicions of federal government fraud in connection with the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines, telling **Rádio CBN** journalist Victória Abel to "go back to university, to high school, then to nursery and then you can be reborn." During the same press conference, he told journalists to stop asking him stupid questions.

June 2022- Bolsonaro was added to RSF's list of **press freedom predators**, a São Paulo court ordered him to pay damages for collective moral harassment of journalists as a whole in an unprecedented legal action brought by the Union of Journalists of São Paulo. In her ruling, the judge in charge of the case highlighted the use of "xenophobic comments, vulgar expressions, incitement to hatred, contempt and intolerance towards journalists."

These are just a few instances and times where Jair Bolsonaro's viewpoints have affected Brazil as a whole.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Protecting journalists and ensuring press freedom are essential components of a healthy democracy. In the context of Jair Bolsonaro's former presidency in

Brazil and concerns about the safety of journalists, here are some possible solutions to address issues related to attacks on journalists and threats to press freedom in Brazil as well as other countries :

1. Fortify **legal safeguards** for journalists, such as statutes that particularly target crimes against them and guarantee that those who intimidate or assault press personnel face consequences.
2. The current President of Brazil should introduce a presidential bill that will lead to the introduction of a government-approved **independent authority** that will oversee the production of media and its distribution, ensuring that media in the republic is unbiased and away from the influence of various parties.
3. Seek support from **international organizations** and bodies that advocate for press freedom. Allow independent monitoring of press freedom in the country to ensure that journalists can work without fear of reprisal.
4. **Provide training and support** for journalists on safety protocols, digital security, and conflict reporting. Equip journalists with the skills and resources they need to navigate potentially dangerous situations.

POSSIBLE UNMODERATED CAUCUS TOPICS

1. Resolving the Impact of Bolsonaro's Policies on Press Freedom.
2. Balancing National Security Concerns with Press Freedom.
3. Government Regulation of Social Media Platforms for Press Freedom.
4. Strengthening Legal Protections for Journalists in Brazil.
5. International Intervention to Safeguard Press Freedom in Brazil.
6. Discussing if politicians should be banned from sharing their views on sensitive topics as it would have a huge impact on the views of the general public.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/press-didnt-notice-bolsonaros-strength-heres-what-went-wrong-and-how-fix-it>
- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/19401612231182618>

- <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/19/brazil-bolsonaro-blocks-critics-social-media>
- <https://www.vox.com/down-to-earth/2022/9/29/23373427/amazon-rainforest-brazil-jair-bolsonaro-lula-deforestation>
- <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/03/19/americas/brazil-jair-bolsonaro-indicted-covid-vaccine-intl-latam/index.html>
- <https://apnews.com/general-news-d1bc68ce7af0e62c226f797e01e1ff78>
- <https://rsf.org/en/bolsonaro-family-vents-more-anger-ever-brazil-s-media>
- <https://rsf.org/en/bolsonaro-reelection-poses-biggest-threat-brazilian-press-freedom-says-rsf#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20Bolsonaro%20was%20added,of%20Journalists%20of%20S%C3%A3o%20Paulo.>
- <https://rsf.org/en/recherche?text=JAIR%20BOLSONARO&page=1>

