

## Legal aid resources in Brazil

# A guide for journalists facing legal action

For a journalist facing criminal or civil lawsuits in retaliation for their reporting, having access to relevant legal advice and resources to finance their legal representation can mean the difference between a prison sentence and freedom, censorship and the free flow of information, being economically suffocated or having the ability to continue reporting.

In recent years, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and other press freedom groups have [expressed concern](#) over an alarming increase in cases in which Brazil's judicial system is weaponized against journalists and media outlets to stifle and discourage reporting. These legal attacks take many forms, including direct censorship and removal of content through civil lawsuits, criminalization of journalists through slander and defamation investigations and judicial procedures, and attempts to [undermine or compromise source confidentiality](#).

Many journalists in Brazil do not have access to lawyers who specialize in press freedom issues or the resources to pay for legal services. Furthermore, many of them are not aware of several initiatives and organizations that can provide support for journalists and media workers facing legal action, much less how to contact these resources for help.

In response to this critical issue, CPJ has worked with local partners to compile this directory of resources providing different types of legal aid to help connect journalists in Brazil in need of legal support with the initiatives and organizations that can support them. The guide lists various initiatives that can provide support to journalists facing lawsuits, along with a brief description of the type of support provided and information about how journalists can contact them to request support.

Each organization below has provided their own explanation of the services they provide and eligibility criteria.

## Freedom of the Press and Democracy Observatory (LID) of the Brazilian Press Association (ABI)

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Description	LID acts as a reference center that receives reports of incidents that restrict the professional activities of journalists.
Support/services	ABI provides a platform for LID to receive and evaluate complaints through an email address and online form available on ABI's website and social media accounts. This form contains an option for the complainant to indicate whether they want ABI or its partners to provide legal assistance or advice for the case. If so, ABI will analyze whether the case meets the eligibility criteria and assess its capacity to provide legal advice in the case.
Eligibility	Eligibility is based on (i) severity of the complaint, (ii) relevance to the issue of press freedom and expression, (iii) issues of gender, race, other vulnerable groups, and (iv) legal assessment. ABI selects cases for which it provides legal assistance, either directly or through local partners in other Brazilian states.

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**Contact**

Email: [abi.observatorio@gmail.com](mailto:abi.observatorio@gmail.com)

Link to form to submit requests and cases: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdLGEaIx5DfBkyVIQHUX2COd94WfPR2JUVaym4KIwshoz3zsQ/viewform>

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**Additional information**

<http://www.abi.org.br/>

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## Legal Protection Program for Journalists of the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (Abraji)

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**Description**

The Legal Protection Program for Journalists is an initiative of Abraji to guarantee legal assistance to journalists and communicators who are being silenced or constrained through legal proceedings due to their work. Media professionals who are experiencing harassment, threats, or persecution and want to file civil lawsuits against the perpetrators also can be included in the program, which is funded by international organization Media Defence and run in partnership with the Tornavoz institute.

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**Support/services**

The program mainly offers financial support to cover the costs of hiring lawyers to represent and defend journalists in legal proceedings that impact press freedom. In addition to financing their legal assistance, the program supports individual journalists to ensure they understand the legal particulars of the case, seeks external qualified professionals as needed through program partners, and monitors the development of the case. In its current form, the program ensures that participants have access to legal advice from the initial phase of the process through the last appeal. In the future, the program also will be able to get involved with ongoing legal proceedings, if they meet the program's eligibility criteria. Once a case is accepted, Abraji follows it closely and can produce additional reporting to raise public awareness about the proceedings. The objective is to discourage attacks, mainly from public officials, that target and aim to intimidate journalists and communicators.

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**Eligibility**

The initiative prioritizes journalists who work outside large urban centers and who do not have financial support from the outlets they work for, but the general selection criteria are broader. To qualify, the legal proceedings must always be related to the practice of journalism. Eligible cases can be either civil or criminal. For example, civil actions that seek censorship of published content and compensation for moral damages, and criminal proceedings, such as complaints of slander, defamation, or injury.

The team analyzes aspects related to the individual journalist, including their professional ethics, lack of financial resources to pay for their defense, and functional independence from major media outlets. Criteria of regional diversity and race are also taken into consideration.

The criteria are published in this [document](#).

To request program support, the journalist or communicator can send an email to [programadeprotecao@abraji.org.br](mailto:programadeprotecao@abraji.org.br) or complete the [form](#) available on Abraji's website. After applicants submit the required information, Abraji and project partners analyze the case. Once accepted into the program, the team will contact the journalist or media worker to proceed with the service.

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Contact Applicants can contact the program via email at [programaprotecao@abraji.org.br](mailto:programaprotecao@abraji.org.br) or via the [form](#) on the organization's website.

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Additional information <https://abraji.org.br/projetos/programa-de-protecao-legal-para-jornalistas>

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## Article 19

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Description Article 19 is a non-governmental human rights organization founded in 1987 in London, with the mission of defending and promoting the right to freedom of expression and access to information throughout the world. Its name originates from the 19th article of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression and opinion. Article 19, which has offices in nine countries, has been in Brazil since 2007, where it works on different strategies, actions, and partnerships in varied areas that contribute to this agenda.

The organization's activities are divided into five areas: digital rights, access to information, media freedom, civic spaces (especially the right to social participation, artistic freedom, and the right to protest), and protection of communicators and human rights defenders.

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Support/services Article 19 has a legal team, the Legal Reference Center, which is responsible for the organization's litigation strategy and monitoring the organization's processes. Even though it does not have the resources or capacity to provide direct representation in all cases of violations involving communicators who reach out to Article 19, the center can offer legal advice and support to the legal teams involved in judicial processes. In some cases, the team also can provide direct representation, file opinions, or participate in legal proceedings, such as filing amicus curiae briefs.

Additionally, the democratic protection and participation team has emergency funds available specifically for (I) cases of women communicators and (II) cases related to the exercise of artistic freedom. For these, it is possible to make resources available for covering legal advice.

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Eligibility To request support from Article 19's Legal Reference Center or to access emergency funds, send an email to [apoioaprotecao@article19.org](mailto:apoioaprotecao@article19.org). From this first contact, the case will be forwarded to the corresponding procedures and teams, depending on the team's capacity and availability of resources to handle the case.

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Contact Email: [apoioaprotecao@article19.org](mailto:apoioaprotecao@article19.org)

WhatsApp for protection support of the protection and democratic participation team:  
+55 11 94514-5848

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Additional information <https://artigo19.org/>

## Cala-Boca Já Morreu (CBJM) of the Vero Institute

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**Description** A civil society group composed of law firms concerned about the advance of authoritarianism in Brazil and moved by the following principle: When a citizen is silenced in the exercise of their legitimate right of expression, the voice of democracy weakens. The main objective of the project is to provide legal assistance to citizens who have peacefully engaged in political expression and are being investigated and/or prosecuted for doing so. Instituto Vero (Vero Institute) coordinates the project.

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**Support/services** Core service: Pro bono legal advice in criminal or administrative proceedings.

Other types of support: Consultancy in cases that do not fall within the scope of this project; support in preparing guides/booklets with informative content. More information is available on the initiative's website.

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**Eligibility** Requirements: 1. The applicant already must have been formally summoned or notified about a criminal or administrative proceeding. 2. The reason for the subpoena must be linked to a criticism or an idea carried out against a public authority. 3. The expression cannot contain: (i) hate speech, (ii) support or encouragement of violence, or (iii) promotion of anti-democratic actions or values. 4. The assisted party cannot already have legal representation, either from a private lawyer or a public defender.

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**Contact** Complete a form on CBJM's website: <https://www.calabocajamorreu.com.br/>

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**Additional information** <https://www.calabocajamorreu.com.br>

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## Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

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**Description** CPJ is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide. CPJ documents hundreds of attacks on the press each year. In our quest for a free media, CPJ denounces press freedom violations, meets with heads of state and high-ranking officials, spearheads or advises on diplomatic efforts, and works with other organizations to ensure that justice prevails when journalists are imprisoned or killed. CPJ also provides comprehensive assistance and safety guidance.

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Support/services	<p>CPJ provides comprehensive, life-saving support to journalists and media support staff working around the world through up-to-date safety and security information and rapid response assistance.</p> <p>CPJ can provide advocacy and communications support to assist in increasing awareness and visibility of the case through public statements, social media engagement, and by underscoring how the action impacts the right to press freedom.</p> <p>On a case-by-case basis, CPJ can provide emergency grants for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic living support</li> <li>• Legal support</li> <li>• Emergency relocation</li> <li>• Psychosocial support</li> <li>• Prison support</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<p>Applicant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a journalist or media worker</li> <li>• Be targeted as a direct result of their journalistic work</li> </ul>
Contact	<p><a href="mailto:emergencies@cpj.org">emergencies@cpj.org</a>, <a href="mailto:americas@cpj.org">americas@cpj.org</a></p>
Additional information	<p><a href="https://cpj.org/emergency-response/how-to-get-help/">https://cpj.org/emergency-response/how-to-get-help/</a></p>

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## Media Defence

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Description	<p>Media Defence is an international human rights organization based in London, United Kingdom, which provides legal defense to journalists, citizen journalists, and independent media around the world who are under threat for their reporting.</p> <p>We work globally, where there is the greatest need. We defend journalists, citizen journalists, and media outlets from legal threats that violate the right to freedom of expression so that they can continue to report on issues of public interest.</p> <p><b>What We Do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Emergency Defence:</b> We fund legal defence for journalists and independent media across the world.</li> <li>• <b>Strategic Litigation:</b> We take on strategic cases to promote and improve media freedom.</li> <li>• <b>Capacity Building:</b> We build local legal capacity to defend journalists through legal training and by funding local legal centers to defend journalists.</li> </ul>
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## Support/services

**Emergency Defence:** Media Defence ensures [quality legal representation is available](#) to journalists by paying for legal fees, connecting them to a lawyer if they don't have one, and providing that lawyer with technical legal support.

The organization also can support journalists who want to bring legal action to compel the state to protect their rights if they have been violated, including to investigate abuses and bring perpetrators of attacks to justice.

**Strategic Litigation:** Media Defence also takes on [strategic cases](#) to challenge unjust laws used to silence journalists and to ensure the law is used to protect rather than persecute them.

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## Eligibility

### **Who is eligible for support:**

- Journalists—including citizen journalists, bloggers, broadcasters, photojournalists, cartoonists, or fact-checkers
- Media outlets

### **Location:**

- Journalists anywhere in the world can request technical advice.
- Financial support requests are open to applicants everywhere except Western Europe and North America.

### **Types of cases that Media Defence can support include:**

- Civil defamation/libel
- Criminal defamation/libel
- Content removal
- Insult
- Arbitrary detention
- False news
- Protection of sources
- Web-blocking/internet shutdowns
- Access to information
- Closure of a media outlet
- Constitutional challenge
- Physical reporting restrictions
- Sedition

### **Cases that are not eligible for Media Defence support:**

- Labor law cases
- Cases brought by a journalist against another journalist or media outlet
- Relocation/asylum requests
- Closed cases (in which a judgment already has been handed down)
- Cases not related to journalistic activity
- General support/equipment/health expenses, etc.

### **How to apply:**

Contact the grants team: [grants@mediadefence.org](mailto:grants@mediadefence.org) or [Sophie.gougeon@mediadefence.org](mailto:Sophie.gougeon@mediadefence.org)

The grants team will send an application form to be completed and returned with at least one legal document related to the case and a power of attorney.

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Contact Contact the grants team: [grants@mediadefence.org](mailto:grants@mediadefence.org) or [Sophie.gougeon@mediadefence.org](mailto:Sophie.gougeon@mediadefence.org)  
By phone/WhatsApp/Signal: +44 7554 843877

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Additional information <https://www.mediadefence.org/>

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## Rede de Proteção de Jornalistas e Comunicadores (National Network for the Protection of Journalists and Communicators)

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Description The initiative coordinated by the Vladimir Herzog Institute and Article 19, with the participation of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and Intervezes, aims to address increasing threats and attacks against freedom of expression in Brazil. It does so by receiving complaints about individual cases, and conducting training sessions and strategies to ensure the participation of different actors who can and should contribute to the safety of media workers, and play a crucial role in the proper functioning of the democratic regime.

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Support/services After analyzing each case, the network can offer legal assistance, psychological support, and/or tools to raise public awareness about the violation, as well as monitor the implementation of digital security resources. In addition, if the victim already has secured legal defense, the network offers the possibility of consulting with other legal partners who have extensive experience in cases related to freedom of expression.

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Eligibility There are no restrictions on the scope of the legal support—the network can act in response to both civil and criminal lawsuits. However, cases must be related to the journalist's work, so the first step is an analysis to verify and determine if the case is really the result of an attack related to a journalist and/or communicator's professional activity. Applicants must request support through the project's website: [www.rededeprotecao.org.br](http://www.rededeprotecao.org.br)

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Contact Website: [www.rededeprotecao.org.br](http://www.rededeprotecao.org.br)

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Additional information [www.rededeprotecao.org.br](http://www.rededeprotecao.org.br)

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## Tornavoz

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Description Tornavoz is an association that aims to guarantee specialized legal defense to those who face lawsuits due to their exercise of thought and expression. The institute also aims to promote the discussion and appreciation of these rights to freedom of expression and thought, through participation in strategic processes and actions to raise awareness.

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Support/services	<p>Tornavoz can provide financial support to cover legal fees incurred by people or small media outlets that are facing legal proceedings due to the exercise of their freedom of expression, and who are unable to hire specialized defense.</p> <p>The institute does not carry out the defense directly, but it can contribute technical support to the defense.</p>
Eligibility	<p>The financial support granted by the institute is intended to pay for the defense of individuals or outlets that are being sued. As resources are limited, priority is given to cases involving themes linked to historically marginalized groups, such as women, black people, indigenous people, LGBTQIA+ individuals, people who are far from large urban centers, and to outlets that are dedicated to such themes or have a local/regional scope.</p> <p>Interested parties should fill out the form available at the link:  <a href="https://tornavoz.org/peca-sua-defesa/">https://tornavoz.org/peca-sua-defesa/</a></p> <p>The request undergoes an analysis that will assess the availability of relevant resources according to the projects that are being executed, as well as the priorities mentioned above.</p> <p>If additional information is required, Tornavoz will contact the applicant.</p>
Contact	<p>Website: <a href="https://tornavoz.org/peca-sua-defesa/">https://tornavoz.org/peca-sua-defesa/</a></p>
Additional information	<p><a href="https://tornavoz.org/">https://tornavoz.org/</a></p>

## Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Description	<p>RSF defends the right of every human being to have access to free and reliable information. This right is essential for knowing, understanding, expressing an opinion, and acting in full conscience, individually and collectively. RSF promotes freedom, pluralism, and independence in journalism, especially by defending those who embody these ideals. RSF is one of the world's largest organizations working in the field of press freedom.</p>
Support/services	<p>RSF offers legal assistance to journalists, communicators, and media organizations that are targets of abusive legal proceedings. This assistance can take the following forms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Direct financial support to fully or partially cover expenses with legal representation fees. This support rarely exceeds 2,000 euros (US\$2182) and is subject to review by RSF's emergency fund to assist journalists.</li> <li>2. Specialized legal advice on press freedom issues to contribute to the defense strategy, carried out in partnership with Brazilian lawyers. In some cases, this legal assistance strategy may include more direct involvement of RSF, such as contributing an amicus curiae brief or legal opinions.</li> <li>3. Increasing awareness and visibility of the case through public statements by RSF, highlighting particularly serious aspects of irregularities and how the action impacts the right to press freedom.</li> </ol>



Eligibility	<p>Upon receiving an assistance request, RSF will assess to what extent the judicial process involves a direct violation of the right to press freedom and/or a strategy on the part of the plaintiffs to intimidate journalists and censor journalistic work.</p> <p>To request support, applicants should simply contact RSF by email explaining the situation. The team will respond with a request for additional information to conduct a preliminary assessment and initiate communication to define a joint strategy.</p>
Contact	Email: <a href="mailto:ameriques@rsf.org">ameriques@rsf.org</a> , <a href="mailto:assistance@rsf.org">assistance@rsf.org</a>
Additional information	<a href="https://rsf.org/pt-br/servi%C3%A7os-para-jornalistas-e-meios-de-comunica%C3%A7%C3%A3o">https://rsf.org/pt-br/servi%C3%A7os-para-jornalistas-e-meios-de-comunica%C3%A7%C3%A3o</a>

## Legal Network for Journalists at Risk (LNJAR)

Description	LNJAR provides journalists and independent media outlets around the world with critical legal support to protect their continued reporting on issues of vital public interest. LNJAR coordinates the different types of support currently offered by various organizations with the goal of providing independent journalists and media outlets at risk with a single-entry point into an ecosystem of support.
Support/services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting to a lawyer and covering legal fees</li> <li>• Strengthening legal representation</li> <li>• Strengthening the case</li> <li>• Strengthening the ecosystem</li> </ul>
Eligibility	Applicant must be a journalist or newsroom facing reprisal in direct relation to their journalistic work.
Contact	To help members assess whether they can offer support, please email <a href="mailto:help@medialegalhelp.org">help@medialegalhelp.org</a> .
Additional information	<a href="https://www.medialegalhelp.org/">https://www.medialegalhelp.org/</a>