

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM

Nicaragua: 11,000 Bots Slam La Prensa in 'A Direct Attack'

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MANAGUA, NICARAGUA — The influential Nicaraguan newspaper La Prensa, the oldest newspaper in Nicaragua, reported on Sunday that its website is suffering a large-scale cyber attack, which it described as "a direct attack on freedom of press and freedom of expression."

"More than 11,000 bots per second have tried to enter the La Prensa website, in a new cyber attack to make it collapse," that newspaper, founded on 2 March 1926, said on their social networks.

The massive attack began at 6:00 pm (00:00 GMT) on Friday and "after more than 24 hours of attempts the site www.laprensa.com.ni continues to operate, but slowly," the newspaper said.

According to the computer manager of La Prensa, Genaro Aguilar, it is "a massive attack that is known as DDOS" and consists of generating thousands of robots or fake users who try to enter the attacked page, to block the entry to legitimate users and collapse the site.

"It's an excessive amount of attempts to enter La Prensa, they are more than 11,000 requests per second, which causes that it operates slowly and cannot upload fresh news," he said.

That type of attack is carried out by "paid hackers" who generate thousands of "bots" and direct them in this case to the La Prensa server, the IT manager added.

For his part, the editor of the La Prensa publishing group, Jaime Chamorro Cardenal, described the cyber attack as "a direct attack on press freedom and freedom of expression."

Chamorro Cardenal recalled that the government presided by the Sandinista Daniel Ortega has withheld 92 tons of paper, ink, plates, rubber, developer, and spare parts for the press, which has put the circulation of the printed version of the newspaper in danger.

According to La Prensa, the Sandinista government intends that independent printed media stop circulating in Nicaragua.

The retention of raw material to La Prensa in Nicaragua comes amid a sociopolitical crisis that, since April 2018, has left hundreds dead, disappeared, and imprisoned, as well as tens of thousands of exiles, mostly after protesting against President Ortega.

During the crisis, several television programs disappeared, one television channel went off the air, and the National Police remained in the same place, and at least two radio stations in the city of Leon were sabotaged several times.

Additionally, the famous newspaper Q'Hubo disappeared from the streets, while El Nuevo Diario, La Prensa, Metro, and Hoy reduced the number of its pages.

As a result of the violence and siege by the police and pro-government fanatics, at least 68 journalists have had to leave the country, according to the Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation, which between April 2018 and March 2019 also records at least 1,080 cases of violation of press freedom, including assaults, censorship, threats, and murder, among other transgressions.

Nicaragua is going through a severe crisis that has left 325 dead since April 2018, according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), although some groups raise to 568 the fatalities, while the Executive only recognizes 199 and decries a coup attempt.

SOURCE: Panama City ACAN-EFE in Spanish, an Independent Central American press agency that is a joint concern of Panama City ACAN (Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias) and Madrid EFE