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Americas - Venezuela

Official concealment

Access to information threatened by decree creating new intelligence agency

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Reporters Without Borders shares the concerns voiced by organizations that represent journalists and media workers about the government's 7 October decree creating a new intelligence agency called the Strategic Centre for Homeland Security and Protection, or CESPPA (See PDF, in Spanish).



Decreto Cesppa

The CESPPA is to replace the Centre for the Study of the National Situation (CESNA), an agency created in 2010 whose prerogatives were already a source of controversy.

According to article 3 of the new degree, the CESPPA will *"request, organize, integrate and evaluate information of strategic interest to the nation relating to internal and external enemy activity obtained from all state security and intelligence agencies and other state and private entities at the request of the Bolivarian Revolution's political and military leadership."*

Article 9 of the degree gives the CESPPA the authority to designate information as "classified" or "restricted."

"The Radio, TV and Electronic Media Social Responsibility Law ([RESORTEMEC](#)) already poses major obstacles to freedom of information and now this new decree will directly violate the right to be informed, a right guaranteed by the Bolivarian Constitution," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Venezuela's state agencies are much criticized for their lack of transparency. Getting access to crime statistics, for example, continues to be impossible. This decree will make concealment even easier at a time when the government is confronting major [economic difficulties](#) which, to be resolved, ought to be the subject of informed debate.

"Once again, the government prefers to blame supposed 'enemy activity' to which this decree refers without saying anything about it. What can one discuss publicly in Venezuela today without being accused yet again of 'destabilizing the country' or 'endangering national security'? Can the government answer this question?"

The National Association of Journalists (CDP) and National Union of Press Workers (SNTP) are among the critics of the CESPPA decree, which could only be rescinded if the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ), Venezuela's highest court, approved an appeal against it on the grounds of illegality or unconstitutionality.

An appeal against the previous decree creating the CESNA has already been pending before the TSJ since 2010. The court could now reject this appeal on the grounds that the agency has been changed. It rarely rules in favour of appeals against the government.

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