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Americas - Venezuela

Indirect censorship

Around 40 Venezuelan newspapers hit by newsprint shortage

12 September 2014

After negotiations with the authorities, the 110-year-old newspaper *El Impulso* has obtained a last-minute delivery of newsprint that will allow it to keep publishing. A paper shortage resulting from government currency controls has so far forced 37 newspapers to suspend or reduce their print editions.

Venezuela's oldest daily, *El Impulso* had announced on 10 September that its 15 September issue would be the last until the newsprint shortage was resolved. The newspaper had previously taken various measures to eke out its paper supplies for as long as possible.

The agreement under which *El Impulso* will receive "emergency" newsprint supplies was reached in negotiations between its management and Corporación Maneiro, an entity in charge of newsprint distribution that reports to the president's office. The National Press Workers Union acted as mediator.

The agreement does not however guarantee the daily's long-term survival and further negotiations are planned with the aim of securing a regular newsprint supply.

"The possibility of an 'emergency' supply of newsprint shows that the shortage affecting the press depends on the government's will," said Camille Soulier, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk.

"Pluralism and freedom of information, [already hard hit in Venezuela](#), are being further weakened by the newsprint shortage, which is an indirect form of censorship. All of the newspapers that have had to reduce or suspend production must immediately benefit from the same measures, regardless of their editorial policies."

President Nicolás Maduro's government is hostile towards opposition media and has undertaken a series of legal reforms and acquisitions that have increased the number of pro-government media. Designed to gag the often rabid opposition, these measure have just fuelled the existing polarization.

Venezuela is ranked 116th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

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