

Amid protests and misinformation, fact-checkers are again proving their usefulness | Poynter

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October 24, 2019

Hoaxes related to huge street protests are like forest fires: they are difficult to control and can cause irreversible damages.

That is the toughest lesson fact-checkers from Spain, Ecuador, Chile and Lebanon learned this month.

But from a more optimistic point of view, debunking false news related to big riots can also be an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of fact-checking and to motivate fact-checkers to keep doing their job.

In the past three weeks, newspapers and TV shows around the globe have highlighted how people from at least four different countries took to the streets to protest their governments or another central power, including in four big capitals.

Ecuadorians were the first to protest. Between Oct. 3 and 13, they stopped the country in a national strike that aimed to pressure president Lenin Moreno not to implement the austerity plan he had presented.

In 11 days, the streets of Quito saw many tear gas bombs and cars in flames. Fact-checkers verified, for example, that protesters hadn't controlled all the [water sources](#) in Quito and rated as false the "piece of information" that alerted Ecuadorians to the fact that the city would face a terrible water shortage at any moment.

[...]

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