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News Item

Brazilian Official Granted Power to Order Removal of Misinformation Online | The New York Times

By Jack Nicas
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> Brazilian authorities, grappling with a torrent of online misinformation ahead of the country's presidential election, granted the nation's elections chief unilateral power to order tech companies to remove many online posts and videos — one of the most aggressive actions taken by any country to combat false information.
> Under rules passed on Thursday, the elections chief can order the immediate removal of content that he believes has violated previous takedown orders. Social networks must comply with those demands within two hours or face the potential suspension of their services in Brazil.
> The move culminates an increasingly assertive strategy by election officials in Brazil to crack down on divisive, misleading and false attacks that have flooded the country's presidential race in recent days, including claims that candidates are Satanists, cannibals and pedophiles.
> But by allowing a single person to decide what can be said online in the run-up to the high-stakes election, which will be held on Oct. 30, Brazil has become a test case in a swelling global debate over how far to go in fighting false and misleading reports.
> The decision drew outcry from supporters of right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro, as well as concern from many internet-law and civil-rights experts, who said it represented a potentially dangerous, authoritarian expansion of power that could be abused to censor legitimate viewpoints and swing the presidential contest.
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