

Ideas: How governments go after protesters using social media | Rest of World

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It's hard to imagine a protest in Latin America and the Caribbean without social media. Protesters use messaging apps, hashtags, and other creative formats to organize, participate in demonstrations, and call for action. In livestreams, people document police brutality in real-time, enabling accountability and reparations to the victims. Digital protests expose inequalities in the region and make broader social demands, including stopping violence against women. In Chile, protests in 2019 were so powerful that they created the path for a new constitution.

Social media platforms now have a central role in the exercise of the right to freedom of expression. In some cases, digital communication can be a form of political participation. Digital protests have strengthened democratic processes by getting more people involved. In many ways, these information flows have become civic space.

But social media platforms are also subject to government interventions that can limit people's ability to publish content, restricting freedom of expression and peaceful assembly through internet shutdowns, surveillance, content removal, censorship, and restrictive laws.

[...]

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