

Whistleblowing under Democratic Erosion:  
Civic Agency, Risk, and Legitimacy in Latin America.  
Based on the “Alertas!” Podcast Series

La denuncia bajo la erosión democrática:  
agencia cívica, riesgo y legitimidad en América Latina.  
Basado en la serie de podcasts “Alertas!”

David Gamboa Solano <sup>1</sup>

**How to cite:**

Gamboa Solano, D. (2026). Whistleblowing under Democratic Erosion: Civic Agency, Risk, and Legitimacy in Latin America. Based on the “Alertas!” Podcast Series. *Derecho en Sociedad*, 20(1), PP. 101-130. DOI 10.63058/des.v20i1.360

**Submission received:** 6 January 2026. **Accepted:** 10 February 2026.

**Abstract**

This article analyzes testimonies from seven whistleblowers in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, collected within the Alertas! project coordinated by the Observatorio Político de América Latina y del Caribe (OPALC, Sciences Po) in collaboration with Transparencia por Colombia. Through a comparative qualitative approach, it examines how individuals from diverse professional and social backgrounds assume the role of whistleblower in contexts marked by corruption, institutional fragility, and democratic erosion. The study explores how regime type and varying degrees of democratic deterioration shape methods of denunciation, access to information, and the severity of reprisals, and analyzes how whistleblowers construct and communicate legitimacy under conditions of mistrust, censorship, or political violence. The findings demonstrate that while formal institutional outcomes remain limited, whistleblowing in Latin America functions as a form of civic agency and democratic resilience, preserving public truth, challenging official narratives, and sustaining moral boundaries even when formal accountability mechanisms fail.

---

1 David Gamboa Solano holds a Research Master in Comparative Politics from Sciences Po Paris; European and Social Studies degree from King’s College London; undergraduate degree in political sciences from Sciences Po Paris, specializing in the Ibero-American region; Junior Advisor at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), contributing to tax policy and administration research. ORCID: 0009-0006-6136-5590. Email: david.gamboasolano@sciencespo.fr.

**Keywords:**

Whistleblowing, democratic erosion, civic agency, Latin America, legitimacy, corruption, institutional fragility

**Resumen**

Este artículo analiza los testimonios de siete alertadores en Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Perú, Nicaragua y Venezuela, recopilados en el marco del proyecto Alertas!, coordinado por el Observatorio Político de América Latina y del Caribe (OPALC, Sciences Po) en colaboración con Transparencia por Colombia. Mediante un enfoque cualitativo comparado, examina cómo individuos de diversos contextos profesionales y sociales asumen el rol de alertador en contextos marcados por la corrupción, la fragilidad institucional y la erosión democrática. El estudio explora cómo el tipo de régimen y los distintos grados de deterioro democrático configuran los métodos de denuncia, el acceso a la información y la gravedad de las represalias, y analiza cómo los alertadores construyen y comunican legitimidad en condiciones de desconfianza, censura o violencia política. Los hallazgos demuestran que, aunque los resultados institucionales formales son limitados, la denuncia en América Latina funciona como una forma de agencia cívica y resiliencia democrática, preservando la verdad pública, desafiando las narrativas oficiales y sosteniendo los límites morales incluso cuando los mecanismos formales de rendición de cuentas fracasan.

**Palabras clave:**

Denuncia, erosión democrática, agencia cívica, América Latina, legitimidad, corrupción, fragilidad institucional

## Introduction

Across Latin America, whistleblowing has become a critical practice in contexts marked by corruption, institutional fragility, and processes of democratic erosion. As formal accountability mechanisms weaken and civic spaces contract, individuals who expose wrongdoing face significant personal and professional risks. At the same time, their actions reveal structural failures of the state and illuminate tensions between legal frameworks, political power, and the public interest. As documented in the *Alertas!* podcast series, whistleblowing in the region frequently unfolds in environments characterized by institutional apathy, limited judicial independence, and, in some cases, authoritarian repression.

This article analyzes testimonies from seven whistleblowers in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, collected between 2021 and 2023 within the *Alertas!* project, coordinated by the Observatorio Político de América Latina y del Caribe (OPALC, Sciences Po) in collaboration with *Transparencia por Colombia*. OPALC is a research center dedicated to the comparative analysis of political and social transformations in Latin America, with a particular focus on democracy, governance, and civic participation. The *Alertas!* audio series constitutes a distinctive empirical corpus because it combines in-depth narrative testimonies, cross-country analytical coordination, and systematic attention to whistleblowing across diverse regime contexts. Unlike single-case studies or purely legal analyses, the project was explicitly designed to capture how denunciation operates across electoral democracies affected by systemic corruption, hybrid regimes, and consolidated authoritarian systems.

The testimonies examined address a wide range of public-interest issues, including water rights, public health, food provision, democratic integrity, and civil liberties. They also document the personal costs of speaking out, such as professional marginalization, legal harassment, threats, exile, and prolonged insecurity. Taken together, they offer a comparative perspective on whistleblowing as a lived practice rather than a purely institutional or legal mechanism.

These accounts raise broader questions about the role of whistleblowers in safeguarding democratic life under conditions of institutional decline. Existing research emphasizes that effective whistleblower protection depends on accessible reporting channels, safeguards against retaliation, and clear legal definitions of protected disclosures (Transparency International, 2018). Complementary work shows that legitimacy is not granted automatically by

law but is constructed through narrative strategies, moral framing, and the articulation of obstacles faced by whistleblowers, shaping how their actions are perceived by the public (Stolowy et al., 2019). Less attention, however, has been paid to how these dynamics unfold in contexts of democratic erosion, where institutions formally persist but increasingly fail to provide accountability or protection.

Building on these contributions, this article addresses three core questions:

- (1) What motivates individuals from diverse professional and social backgrounds to assume the role of whistleblower in Latin America?
- (2) How do regime type and varying degrees of democratic deterioration shape methods of denunciation, access to information, and the severity of reprisals?
- (3) How do whistleblowers construct and communicate legitimacy under conditions of mistrust, censorship, or political violence?

By examining the *Alertas!* through a comparative qualitative lens, the article argues that whistleblowing in Latin America functions as a form of civic agency and resistance amid democratic erosion. Although institutional outcomes are often limited—manifested in judicial delays, retaliation, or the absence of meaningful reform—the testimonies demonstrate that denunciation can nonetheless generate symbolic effects, sustain public debate, and assert moral boundaries. When formal institutions fail to ensure accountability, whistleblowers help preserve public truth and reaffirm democratic norms, even in contexts where those norms are under sustained pressure.

### **Conceptual Framework: Whistleblowing, Legitimacy, and Democratic Erosion**

Whistleblowing is commonly understood as the disclosure of information concerning illegal, corrupt, fraudulent, or dangerous activities that threaten the public interest, communicated to actors capable of taking corrective action (Transparency International, 2018). In Latin America, however, this definition requires contextual qualification.

The prevailing notion of *denuncia* carries a dual legal and cultural meaning: it refers both to the formal act of submitting a complaint to competent authorities and to a broader civic practice of exposing wrongdoing beyond official channels, including through the media, civil society organizations, or transnational advocacy networks. This duality is analytically

significant because many whistleblowers in the region operate in environments where institutional channels are ineffective, compromised, or actively hostile to scrutiny.

International best-practice standards emphasize the importance of clear definitions of protected disclosures, accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms, and robust legal safeguards against retaliation. Yet these standards remain unevenly implemented across Latin America. As Transparency International (2018) argues, effective whistleblowing legislation should avoid restrictive or exhaustive lists of protected acts and instead adopt broad formulations encompassing threats or harm to the public interest, while protecting disclosures made in good faith. The testimonies collected in *Alertas!* illustrate the gap between these normative standards and lived experience. In several cases, whistleblowers encounter punitive lawsuits, administrative sanctions, professional exclusion, or criminal proceedings, underscoring the fragility of legal protections and the persistence of retaliatory practices even in formally democratic contexts.

### **Whistleblower Legitimacy and Self-Narration**

Legitimacy in whistleblowing is not determined solely by legal status or institutional recognition; it is also constructed through discourse. Drawing on the work of Stolowy, Gendron, Moll, and Paugam (2019), this article approaches whistleblowing as a narrative process through which individuals seek to make their actions intelligible and morally acceptable to diverse audiences. Their analysis identifies recurrent narrative components that structure whistleblowers' self-presentation and contribute to the construction of legitimacy.

Four such components recur across cases. First, trigger events mark the moment when an individual transitions from an ordinary professional role to that of a whistleblower, often following direct exposure to wrongdoing. Second, moral framing situates the act of denunciation within a broader ethical register, emphasizing commitments to the public good, justice, or human dignity. Third, constraining barriers—including institutional obstruction, social isolation, legal uncertainty, and psychological strain—highlight the adversarial conditions under which whistleblowing takes place. Finally, post-disclosure trajectories allow whistleblowers to reinterpret their experiences as meaningful contributions to public ethics, despite the personal and professional costs incurred.

These narrative patterns are consistently observable in the *Alertas!* corpus. Across democratic, hybrid, and authoritarian settings, whistleblowers frequently articulate their actions in terms of moral necessity—often encapsulated in expressions such as “no puedo quedarme callado”. At the same time, they recount experiences of fear, threats, and loss, revealing the emotional and material consequences of speaking out. Through this combination, their narratives serve a dual function: they provide self-justification in contexts where institutional protection is absent or unreliable, and they contribute to the broader cultural framing of whistleblowing as a civic act rather than a purely procedural or bureaucratic intervention.

### Whistleblowing under Democratic Erosion

Whistleblowing is closely shaped by the political environments in which it occurs. In this article, *democratic erosion* is understood as a process of gradual weakening of democratic institutions and norms, including constraints on executive power, judicial independence, media freedom, and civic participation, without necessarily implying a full regime breakdown. This notion draws on the broader literature on democratic backsliding, which emphasizes incremental institutional decay rather than abrupt authoritarian rupture.

The cross-analysis of the *Alertas!* podcast corpus shows how such erosion affects both the feasibility of reporting wrongdoing and the consequences of doing so. Declining institutional independence, increasing political polarization and violence, and deteriorating public trust create conditions in which corruption and human rights violations can proliferate, while simultaneously raising the personal, legal, and professional risks faced by those who expose them (Launay Gama, 2024).

To capture these dynamics comparatively, the article employs a simplified typology of regimes—democratic, hybrid or illiberal, and authoritarian—as an analytical heuristic rather than a definitive or normative classification. This categorization does not seek to override existing indices but to highlight meaningful differences in the functioning of accountability mechanisms and civic space. For instance, international measures such as the \*Democracy Index\* classify Chile, Brazil, and Colombia as “flawed democracies,” Costa Rica as a “full democracy,” and Peru as a “hybrid regime.” While these distinctions are important, the analysis here focuses less on formal regime scores and more on how institutional practices shape whistleblowing opportunities and risks in practice.

In democratic but institutionally fragile systems such as Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Peru, whistleblowers operate within formally democratic frameworks that nonetheless exhibit weak enforcement capacity, politicized judicial processes, and limited protection against retaliation. These contexts are characterized by what can be described as \*low-intensity democratic obstruction\*: rather than overt repression, whistleblowers encounter defamation lawsuits, administrative sanctions, professional marginalization, and prolonged institutional inertia that collectively undermine accountability without openly suspending democratic norms.

Hybrid or illiberal democratic contexts present a different configuration. Brazil during Jair Bolsonaro's presidency is treated as a distinct case because this period was marked by heightened executive confrontation with scientific institutions, public health authorities, and the media, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The politicization of health policy, systematic attacks on academic expertise, and the strategic use of disinformation significantly narrowed civic space. In this setting, whistleblowing—especially when grounded in scientific or technical evidence—became a direct challenge to executive narratives, exposing whistleblowers to reputational attacks, online harassment, and informal forms of administrative retaliation rather than primarily judicial sanctions.

In fully authoritarian regimes such as Nicaragua and Venezuela, the conditions for whistleblowing are qualitatively different. Courts, police forces, and oversight bodies no longer function as potential channels for accountability; rather, they operate as instruments of repression. As documented in the Nicaragua-Venezuela testimonies, denunciation shifts almost entirely to covert practices: encrypted communication, anonymous documentation, coded language, and reliance on transnational networks. International NGOs, foreign media outlets, and multilateral organizations become the principal arenas in which wrongdoing can be made visible, not because they guarantee redress, but because domestic avenues are effectively closed.

Taken together, these political contexts illustrate that whistleblowing in Latin America functions simultaneously as an indicator and a counterforce of democratic decline. Its persistence signals institutional fragility and erosion, yet its practice also demonstrates ongoing civic agency under adverse conditions. Even where repression, fear, or impunity prevail, whistleblowing remains a form of political action that challenges silence, preserves public truth, and sustains the possibility of democratic accountability.

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative research design based on the analysis of seven whistleblower testimonies drawn from the *Alertas!* podcast project. The choice of *Alertas!* as the primary empirical source is deliberate. Unlike journalistic investigations or single-case reports, *Alertas!* was conceived as a research-based audio project explicitly designed to document, contextualize, and comparatively analyze whistleblowing experiences across Latin America. Its format combines in-depth testimonies with structured interview protocols and cross-cutting analytical synthesis, making it particularly well suited for examining whistleblowing as a narrative, moral, and political practice rather than solely as a legal or organizational procedure.

The project was developed by the Observatorio Político de América Latina y el Caribe (OPALC) at Sciences Po, in collaboration with regional civil society partners, including *Transparencia por Colombia*. OPALC is an academic research center specializing in political institutions, democratic change, and governance in Latin America, and its involvement ensured that the production of the podcast was embedded in a broader comparative and analytical research agenda rather than a purely media-oriented initiative.

## *Research Design*

The article relies on interpretive qualitative analysis, focusing on how individuals make sense of their actions, environments, and moral choices when engaging in whistleblowing. This approach is particularly appropriate given that whistleblowing cannot be fully understood through legal definitions or institutional frameworks alone. It is also an identity process, a communicative act, and a form of civic engagement shaped by political structures, power relations, and ethical reasoning.

A multi-case comparative strategy is employed to identify both cross-national patterns and regime-specific dynamics. The seven cases were selected from the broader *Alertas!* corpus to capture variation across regime types—democratic, hybrid, and authoritarian—while maintaining comparability in terms of the nature of the wrongdoing exposed and the public-interest stakes involved. The aim is not statistical representativeness but analytical depth, allowing for the examination of how similar civic practices unfold under different institutional and political constraints.

Given the author's involvement in the broader research collective that produced *Alertas!*, particular attention was paid to analytical rigor and reflexivity. To mitigate risks of narrative bias or advocacy-driven interpretation, the analysis draws not only on the published podcast episodes but also on systematically prepared scripts, interview guides, and internal analytical notes produced collaboratively by the research team. These materials were subjected to cross-case comparison and thematic coding, ensuring consistency between individual testimonies and the comparative claims advanced in the article.

### *Data Sources and Corpus*

The empirical corpus consists of three main components produced between 2021 and 2023: (1) full podcast scripts derived from recorded interviews; (2) detailed episode sequencers that document narrative structure, contextual framing, and editorial choices; and (3) a cross-cutting analytical document prepared by the research team to synthesize patterns across cases. This analytical document does not introduce new empirical data but systematizes recurring themes, institutional contexts, and outcomes observed across the testimonies. Its purpose is to support comparative interpretation by identifying shared dimensions—such as types of wrongdoing, forms of retaliation, and strategies of visibility—across otherwise heterogeneous national contexts.

The seven interviewees come from diverse professional backgrounds, including academia, the military, agronomy, public administration, local politics, civil society organizations, and legal practice. Their testimonies address a wide range of public-interest issues, such as environmental justice and water rights, public procurement and food supply, corruption in local governance, human rights violations, and state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. This diversity strengthens the comparative scope of the analysis while reinforcing the article's central claim that whistleblowing in Latin America is not confined to a specific sector but constitutes a broader form of civic agency under conditions of democratic strain.

### *Analytical Strategy*

The analysis follows a three-stage qualitative strategy designed to combine thematic, narrative, and contextual comparison while remaining closely grounded in the empirical material. First, a thematic coding process identifies core dimensions that recur across all seven testi-

monies. These dimensions include: the nature of the wrongdoing exposed (such as corruption, human rights violations, environmental injustice, or public health mismanagement); the methods of alerting employed (including internal institutional channels, media exposure, digital anonymity, and international advocacy); the barriers encountered (judicial retaliation, workplace harassment, censorship, surveillance, or exile); and the outcomes and effects of denunciation (ranging from formal legal responses and institutional inertia to broader symbolic or discursive effects). This initial coding draws on both the cross-cutting analytical document produced by the research team and a systematic, line-by-line reading of the podcast scripts, ensuring consistency between individual narratives and comparative claims.

Second, the analysis applies a narrative approach inspired by Stolowy et al. (2019), focusing on how whistleblowers construct legitimacy through storytelling. Attention is given to how interviewees narrate trigger events, articulate moral reasoning, describe obstacles and retaliation, and reinterpret their trajectories after disclosure. This narrative lens enables interpretive comparison across cases and highlights how expressions of civic responsibility, moral duty, and public interest are shaped by different political and institutional contexts.

Third, a contextual comparison examines how regime configurations—democratic, hybrid or illiberal, and authoritarian—condition the feasibility, visibility, and risks of whistleblowing. This stage does not treat regime categories as rigid classifications but as analytical tools for understanding variation in institutional responses and civic space. The Nicaragua and Venezuela cases are particularly important for capturing whistleblowing under fully repressive conditions, while cases from Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, and Colombia illustrate how denunciation unfolds within formally democratic systems marked by institutional weakness and politicized accountability.

Together, these three analytical layers allow the article to link individual experiences to broader structural conditions. By combining thematic patterns, narrative constructions, and regime-specific contexts, the analysis captures both the constraints imposed by democratic erosion and the agency exercised by whistleblowers as civic actors operating within—and against—those constraints.

### **Democratic but Institutionally Fragile Systems: Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Peru**

This section forms part of the empirical analysis and examines whistleblowing in countries that retain formal democratic institutions but exhibit structural weaknesses that constrain

accountability. In these contexts, whistleblowers are generally able to access information and articulate denunciations publicly, yet they encounter significant institutional obstacles once wrongdoing is exposed. Based on the transversal analysis of the *Alertas!* corpus, the most recurrent constraints include institutional indifference, judicial inefficiency, and limited procedural independence (Launay Gama, 2024).

In Colombia, the case of a military officer who exposed corruption in food procurement illustrates these dynamics. Despite presenting documented evidence of irregularities, the whistleblower faced internal hostility and retaliatory pressure rather than institutional support. Investigations into the reported misconduct were prolonged and remained inconclusive, ultimately leading to his resignation and forced exile. The case reflects how hierarchical institutions and weak oversight mechanisms can neutralize denunciations without resorting to overt repression.

In Costa Rica, often cited as one of the region's most stable democracies, a civil servant revealed attempts to manipulate cooperative structures for private financial gain. Although the disclosure followed formal procedures, it resulted in sustained workplace harassment and professional isolation. Here, the absence of decisive institutional response did not take the form of legal persecution but of bureaucratic inertia, which gradually undermined the whistleblower's capacity to continue his professional activity. This case illustrates how informal retaliation and administrative passivity can discourage whistleblowing even in high-performing democracies.

The Peruvian case involves a former local councillor who uncovered the existence of a "phantom cadastre" for which public funds had been disbursed without the work being carried out. His denunciation exposed weaknesses in municipal governance and procurement oversight, but it also triggered defamation lawsuits and legal intimidation. This pattern points to the politicization of judicial instruments as a means of deterring denunciation, particularly at the local level, where clientelistic networks are deeply entrenched.

In Chile, environmental whistleblower Rodrigo Mundaca publicly exposed the illegal extraction and concentration of water resources in the Petorca region. While Chile's legal framework formally allows for denunciation and public debate, Mundaca's actions resulted in repeated judicial summons, criminal defamation proceedings, threats, and physical aggression. His experience underscores a central paradox of whistleblowing in democratic settings: greater freedom of expression increases visibility, yet it also enables powerful eco-

conomic and political actors to mobilize legal and institutional resources to suppress or discredit whistleblowers.

Taken together, these cases reveal a pattern of low-intensity democratic obstruction. Rather than relying on direct repression, institutions constrain whistleblowing through a combination of weak protections, bureaucratic resistance, procedural delays, and the strategic use of legal mechanisms. These dynamics limit the effectiveness of denunciation while preserving the formal appearance of democratic accountability.

### **Hybrid and Illiberal Democracies: Brazil under Bolsonaro**

Brazil during Jair Bolsonaro's presidency is treated here as a hybrid or illiberal democratic case because this period combined the persistence of formal democratic institutions with a systematic weakening of checks on executive power, scientific autonomy, and public accountability. This classification is not intended as a permanent characterization of the Brazilian regime but as a time-specific analytical distinction, reflecting a conjuncture marked by intense polarization, executive hostility toward oversight institutions, and the politicization of expertise—particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The whistleblowing case examined in the *Alertas!* project centers on the exposure of federal policies that contributed to the mismanagement of the public health crisis. The whistleblower, a university professor specializing in public health and international law, documented how governmental strategies actively discouraged preventive measures and promoted widespread contagion under the rhetoric of “herd immunity.” Grounded in systematic academic research, her work directly challenged official narratives and reframed policy choices as deliberate political decisions with measurable human costs.

According to the transversal analysis, the response to this denunciation did not primarily take the form of formal judicial retaliation. Instead, the whistleblower faced censorship attempts, sustained online harassment, and coordinated smear campaigns aimed at discrediting both her professional credibility and the scientific basis of her claims. These reactions reflect a broader environment in which academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and the authority of public health agencies were increasingly contested.

Compared to the cases situated in democratic but institutionally fragile systems, the Brazilian case illustrates a distinct pattern of retaliation. Rather than relying mainly on courts or

administrative sanctions, repression operated through informational control, reputational damage, and ideological delegitimization. These mechanisms are characteristic of illiberal contexts in which democratic procedures formally persist, but dissenting voices—especially those grounded in technical or scientific expertise—are undermined through symbolic and discursive means. In this sense, whistleblowing in Brazil during this period functioned not only as an act of accountability but also as a direct challenge to an executive project that sought to redefine the boundaries of legitimate knowledge and public responsibility.

### **Authoritarian Regimes: Nicaragua and Venezuela**

The testimonies from Nicaragua and Venezuela illustrate the most restrictive end of the spectrum, where whistleblowing unfolds under consolidated authoritarian rule. In these contexts, denunciation is not merely discouraged or obstructed but actively criminalized, making public exposure of wrongdoing an exceptionally high-risk activity. The Nicaragua-Venezuela material within the *Alertas!* corpus provides detailed insight into how whistleblowing operates when institutional accountability mechanisms have been effectively dismantled.

In Nicaragua, following the violent repression of the 2018 protests, the space for dissent contracted sharply. Whistleblowing became inseparable from personal risk, as activists described pervasive surveillance, the presence of armed civilian paramilitary groups, and the criminalization of even symbolic acts of dissent, such as displaying the national flag. Universities and NGOs were dissolved by decree, and detention centers such as El Chipote functioned less as judicial institutions than as instruments of political punishment. Under these conditions, whistleblowing no longer takes the form of formal complaints or public denunciations. Instead, it relies on covert practices: encrypted communication, anonymous testimony, remote documentation, and coordination with exile networks and international human rights organizations.

In Venezuela, a similar erosion of civic space has eliminated domestic channels for reporting abuses. Widespread violations of civil liberties—including arbitrary detention, systematic harassment of journalists, and the closure of independent media outlets—have rendered local institutions ineffective as avenues for protection or redress. As one whistleblower notes in the *Alertas!* testimony, denunciation only acquires potential impact once information reaches international bodies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights or the

International Criminal Court. Domestic institutions, including the judiciary and the National Electoral Council, are widely perceived as incapable of acting independently or safeguarding whistleblowers.

Across both cases, whistleblowers operate in an environment devoid of institutional accountability. Visibility depends almost entirely on foreign media, transnational NGOs, and multilateral organizations—not because these channels ensure concrete outcomes, but because they represent the only remaining arenas in which abuses can be documented and recognized. Retaliation takes particularly severe forms, including forced displacement, digital surveillance and targeting, reputational attacks, and the constant threat of imprisonment. In these settings, whistleblowing is best understood as a covert practice of survival and documentation, oriented toward preserving evidence and collective memory rather than expecting immediate institutional change.

### **Case Studies: Alerts, Trajectories, and Motives**

The seven testimonies collected for Alertas! reveal a heterogeneous set of whistleblowing experiences shaped by professional background, moral commitment, and political context. Rather than presenting each case in isolation, this section groups the material into three thematic clusters based on the nature of the wrongdoing exposed: (1) corruption and the defense of public goods, (2) human rights violations under authoritarian regimes, and (3) failures in public health governance. This analytical organization facilitates comparative interpretation by highlighting shared logics of action and constraint across different institutional environments.

#### *Corruption and the Defense of Public Goods*

Four cases—Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, and Chile—illustrate how whistleblowing emerges within democratic contexts marked by persistent corruption and institutional weakness. Although these settings differ in terms of political stability and legal frameworks, whistleblowers consistently frame their actions as efforts to protect collective goods and public resources, drawing on civic and moral language rather than personal grievance.

### Colombia: Military Procurement and Institutional Indifference

The Colombian case centers on a high-ranking army officer who exposed irregularities in food procurement for his battalion. According to the transversal analysis, discrepancies between official accounts and actual deliveries revealed the systematic diversion of resources intended to meet soldiers' basic needs (Launay Gama, 2024).

Rather than triggering effective internal investigation, the denunciation generated hostility within the military hierarchy. Weak procedural independence and limited civilian oversight contributed to investigations that were prolonged and ultimately inconclusive. The whistleblower's position became untenable, resulting in his resignation and subsequent exile. This case illustrates how, even in democratic contexts, retaliation often takes the form of professional marginalization and forced displacement rather than overt judicial repression, thereby neutralizing denunciation while preserving the appearance of institutional legality.

### Costa Rica: Abuse of Cooperative Structures

In Costa Rica—frequently cited as one of Latin America's most stable and highly rated democracies—the whistleblower exposed attempts to manipulate cooperative institutions for private financial gain. Although the denunciation followed formal investigative procedures and relied on documented evidence, it resulted in sustained internal harassment, professional isolation, and reputational attacks. As highlighted in the transversal analysis, this case reflects a recurrent pattern in democratic settings: institutional passivity and bureaucratic retaliation often replace overt repression, gradually discouraging whistleblowing without triggering formal sanctions (Launay Gama, 2024).

The whistleblower framed his actions in explicitly moral terms, emphasizing a duty to reveal the truth and to protect institutions central to Costa Rican civic identity. His testimony underscores a key paradox identified by the reviewers: even where democratic legitimacy and rule-of-law indicators are strong, internal accountability mechanisms may remain fragile. In this sense, Costa Rica illustrates how high institutional credibility can coexist with informal practices that deter internal dissent and limit the effectiveness of whistleblowing.

### Peru: The “Phantom Cadastre” and Local Governance Failures

The Peruvian case concerns a former local councillor who revealed that municipal authorities had authorized payments for a cadastral project that was never carried out. His investigation exposed both administrative negligence and the deliberate misuse of public funds, pointing to systemic weaknesses in local governance and procurement oversight. As documented in the transversal analysis, the denunciation was met with defamation lawsuits, legal intimidation, and persistent threats, contributing to a profound loss of trust in judicial institutions.

This trajectory closely reflects the narrative dynamics identified by Stolowy et al. (2019). The whistleblower describes a clear trigger moment—direct exposure to wrongdoing—followed by moral reasoning grounded in civic responsibility and a commitment to public transparency. Despite the personal risks involved, he pursued disclosure as a matter of ethical obligation. The case demonstrates how whistleblowing at the local level is particularly vulnerable to structural resistance, shaped by political clientelism, weak judicial independence, and the instrumentalization of legal procedures to silence critics.

### Chile: Water Theft, Environmental Injustice, and Political Transformation

The Chilean case, documented in detail in the Chile episode sequence, offers a particularly illustrative example of how whistleblowing can evolve into sustained political engagement. Agronomist Rodrigo Mundaca exposed the illegal extraction and concentration of water resources in the Petorca region, where large-scale avocado monoculture had depleted aquifers and left local communities without reliable access to drinking water.

In April 2012, during a nationally televised interview on CNN Chile, Mundaca publicly identified political and business elites involved in water theft. This act of denunciation triggered extensive retaliation, including twenty-four judicial summons over a two-year period, a criminal conviction for defamation, physical assaults, death threats, and a prolonged campaign of harassment. These responses illustrate how, even in contexts where freedom of expression is formally protected, powerful economic and political actors can mobilize legal and coercive resources to suppress whistleblowing.

At the same time, this case provides one of the clearest empirical foundations for claims about the symbolic and political effects of whistleblowing. International NGOs, including

Amnesty International, mobilized transnational advocacy, while coverage by global media outlets reframed the Petorca conflict as emblematic of the broader consequences of Chile's privatized water regime. Over time, Mundaca's sustained activism contributed to public debate on environmental justice and water rights, culminating in his election as the first democratically elected Governor of Valparaíso.

This trajectory demonstrates that, under certain conditions, whistleblowing can transcend exposure and evolve into political transformation. Rather than guaranteeing institutional redress, denunciation reshaped public discourse, generated collective mobilization, and opened pathways for institutional renewal—illustrating both the risks and the democratic potential of whistleblowing in societies facing legitimacy crises.

### *Human Rights Violations in Authoritarian Contexts*

Two cases—Nicaragua and Venezuela—illustrate whistleblowing under consolidated authoritarian rule, where conventional accountability mechanisms have been dismantled and denunciation entails severe personal risk. In these contexts, whistleblowing is no longer oriented toward institutional correction but toward documentation, survival, and international visibility. The testimonies preserved in the Nicaragua-Venezuela sequence provide rare empirical insight into how information is gathered, transmitted, and protected when domestic civic space has effectively collapsed.

#### Nicaragua: Repression, Surveillance, and Covert Documentation

Following the violent repression of the 2018 protests, Nicaragua's authoritarian regime eliminated all meaningful domestic channels for reporting human rights violations. The whistleblower known as Estrella describes an environment in which public criticism leads directly to detention in facilities such as El Chipote, universities and NGOs are dissolved by executive decree, and armed civilian groups exercise constant neighbourhood-level surveillance. Even symbolic acts—such as displaying the national flag or speaking openly in public—are treated as grounds for arrest.

Under these conditions, whistleblowing takes the form of covert documentation. Estrella's work consists of collecting testimonies from victims of torture, persecution, and arbitrary

detention through encrypted communication, remote interviews, and anonymous networks. In-person meetings are avoided due to the risk of surveillance and immediate reprisal. As she explains, “solo llevar la bandera [...] ya sabes que te va a llevar la policía al Chipote,” underscoring the degree to which dissent has been criminalized.

Her trajectory includes forced displacement, sustained digital threats, and being declared *persona non grata*. Yet she frames her activity as a necessary contribution to future accountability. Rather than expecting immediate institutional outcomes, her documentation work is explicitly oriented toward preserving evidence and enabling future judicial or historical reckoning. In this sense, whistleblowing functions as an act of memory-making under repression, anchoring claims about symbolic impact in concrete practices of archiving and testimony preservation.

#### Venezuela: Information Control and Transnational Advocacy

In Venezuela, whistleblowing is similarly constrained by an authoritarian system characterized by the breakdown of the rule of law, systematic violations of civil liberties, and the politicization of security and judicial institutions. The whistleblower Silvia, a lawyer, emphasizes that domestic bodies such as the judiciary and the National Electoral Council are incapable of addressing human rights complaints or protecting those who raise them. As a result, denunciation is strategically directed outward.

According to her testimony, whistleblowing becomes effective only when information reaches international actors such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights or the International Criminal Court. Domestic visibility offers little protection and may instead increase personal risk. Silvia describes a fragmented political landscape marked by opaque military power structures, internal conflicts within the ruling coalition, and the recurrent political disqualification of opposition figures. Information gathering is further constrained by pervasive surveillance, censorship, and the near-total absence of independent media.

Her narrative is cautious and highly strategic, shaped by the constant fear of identification. Anonymity is not merely a protective measure but a precondition for any form of denunciation. Here, whistleblowing operates as a transnational practice, aimed at activating external accountability mechanisms and sustaining international attention in the absence of domestic remedies.

Taken together, the Nicaragua and Venezuela cases reveal a form of whistleblowing fundamentally distinct from that observed in democratic or hybrid regimes. It is not a procedural act embedded in institutional channels but a covert practice centered on survival, evidence preservation, and international signaling. These cases provide concrete empirical grounding for claims about symbolic power and collective memory: whistleblowing sustains alternative records of abuse, enables transnational advocacy, and preserves the possibility of future justice even when immediate institutional change is unattainable.

### *Public Health Governance and State Responsibility: The Case of Brazil*

The Brazilian case focuses on the exposure of federal public health policies during the COVID-19 pandemic and illustrates how whistleblowing can emerge at the intersection of scientific expertise, political ideology, and state responsibility. The whistleblower, Deisy Ventura, a university professor specializing in public health and international law, contributed to documenting governmental strategies that actively encouraged viral spread under the rhetoric of “herd immunity.” Her work highlights how whistleblowing in public health contexts relies on the translation of technical and scientific evidence into public accountability claims.

As synthesized in the transversal analysis, Ventura’s research demonstrated that the federal government not only failed to implement preventive measures but also deliberately obstructed public health interventions, contributing to excess mortality. Rather than remaining confined to academic debate, these findings challenged official narratives and reframed pandemic governance as a matter of political choice rather than unavoidable mismanagement.

The reaction to this denunciation did not primarily involve criminal prosecution or formal legal sanctions. Instead, Ventura was subjected to intense online harassment, coordinated smear campaigns, attempts at censorship on digital platforms, and constraints on academic communication. These forms of retaliation exemplify a pattern of symbolic repression aimed at undermining credibility and isolating dissenting expertise rather than silencing it through judicial means.

Unlike whistleblowers operating in fully authoritarian regimes, Ventura acted within a hybrid democratic context in which information circulation remained possible but increasingly contested. Her case demonstrates how public health crises can create new spaces for whistleblowing while simultaneously intensifying political hostility toward scientific autho-

rity. In such settings, repression often takes the form of defamation, delegitimization, and intimidation, reflecting broader struggles over knowledge, expertise, and responsibility in times of crisis.

## **Cross-Country Comparative Analysis: Patterns and Divergences**

The seven testimonies examined in the *Alertas!* project reveal both shared dynamics and significant variation in how whistleblowing unfolds across political contexts in Latin America. Despite differences in regime type, institutional capacity, and modes of repression, the cases converge around a common moral logic while diverging in the risks faced, the channels available for denunciation, and the forms of impact achieved. This section synthesizes the principal cross-national patterns emerging from the comparative analysis, drawing on the episode sequences and conceptual frameworks developed earlier.

### *Motivations and Moral Frameworks*

Across all cases, whistleblowers consistently rely on moral language to explain and justify their actions. As highlighted in the cross-sectional analysis, individuals from Costa Rica, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Nicaragua, and Venezuela articulate a strong sense of civic duty, moral outrage, and commitment to the public good (Launay Gama, 2024). These motivations align closely with the narrative structures identified by Stolowy et al. (2019), in which whistleblowers frame their actions through appeals to integrity, social responsibility, and an ethical refusal to normalize injustice.

Recurring motifs appear across testimonies, including the pursuit of truth (“quiero saber la verdad”), moral necessity (“no puedo quedarme callado”), collective responsibility (“nuestro trabajo contribuye a la memoria”), and public service ethics (“luchar por una mejor calidad de vida”). These expressions are not incidental rhetorical devices but central elements through which whistleblowers construct legitimacy and situate their actions within a broader civic horizon.

Regardless of regime type, wrongdoing is consistently perceived as a direct threat to fundamental rights—such as access to water, health, food, civic participation, and personal safety. Whistleblowing is therefore rarely framed as a personal grievance or individual conflict. Ins-

tead, it reflects a shared understanding of public interest and ethical citizenship, reinforcing the article's central argument that whistleblowing in Latin America functions as a form of civic agency under conditions of democratic strain.

### *Barriers and Risks*

While motivations for whistleblowing display strong convergence across cases, the barriers encountered and the risks assumed vary markedly depending on political context. The comparative analysis shows that repression operates along a continuum, shaped by the degree to which state institutions function as mechanisms of accountability or, conversely, as instruments of coercion.

In democratic but institutionally fragile systems such as Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Peru, retaliation tends to take indirect and procedural forms. The most recurrent barriers include administrative reprisals—such as workplace harassment, demotion, and professional marginalization—alongside lengthy or inconclusive investigations that effectively neutralize complaints. Whistleblowers in these contexts also face defamation lawsuits and the strategic use of criminal or civil law, as well as reputational damage that limits future employment or civic engagement. As documented in the transversal analysis, these practices reflect weak judicial independence, bureaucratic inertia, and political interference rather than overt authoritarian repression. The result is a form of low-intensity obstruction that discourages denunciation without formally suspending democratic guarantees.

In hybrid or illiberal contexts, exemplified by Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic, repression operates through different mechanisms. Rather than relying primarily on courts or administrative sanctions, authorities and allied actors deploy orchestrated smear campaigns, ideological attacks, and disinformation. Digital harassment, social media censorship, and hostility toward scientific evidence are central tools. In this setting, whistleblowers are not necessarily criminalized, but their credibility is systematically undermined. Repression thus functions symbolically, seeking to isolate dissenting voices and erode public trust in expertise while maintaining the appearance of democratic normalcy.

In consolidated authoritarian regimes such as Nicaragua and Venezuela, risks escalate dramatically. Whistleblowers face arbitrary detention, pervasive surveillance by security forces or armed civilian groups, and the criminalization of dissent as a routine practice. The closu-

re of universities, NGOs, and independent media eliminates domestic reporting channels, while exile and the loss of civic or political rights become common consequences. Domestic courts are effectively inaccessible, leaving no legal avenue for protection or redress. The Nicaragua-Venezuela sequencier shows that under these conditions, whistleblowing depends on clandestine methods, strict anonymity, and transnational support networks to mitigate the risk of imprisonment or disappearance.

Taken together, these patterns demonstrate that although all whistleblowers confront personal and professional costs, the nature of repression varies systematically with regime type. Where institutions retain partial autonomy, retaliation tends to be procedural and indirect; where institutions are subordinated to executive power, repression becomes symbolic; and where authoritarian control is entrenched, whistleblowing transforms into a high-risk practice of survival and resistance.

### *Strategies for Making Wrongdoing Visible*

Across all cases, whistleblowers develop strategies to bypass institutional blockages and make wrongdoing visible, but the available options vary significantly depending on political context. The comparative analysis shows that visibility is not a given outcome of denunciation; rather, it is actively constructed through tactical choices shaped by institutional openness, media freedom, and personal risk.

In democratic but institutionally fragile settings, whistleblowers typically begin by using internal channels, including administrative complaints, formal reports, and internal oversight mechanisms. The transversal analysis shows that these initial steps are often motivated by a belief in procedural legality and institutional responsibility. However, when complaints encounter indifference, conflicts of interest, or procedural stagnation, whistleblowers frequently escalate their alerts externally. Media outlets, civil society organizations, and sympathetic political actors become crucial intermediaries for transforming private grievances into public issues.

Media exposure plays a decisive role in several cases. In Chile, Rodrigo Mundaca's interview on CNN Chile brought the issue of water theft in Petorca to national attention, while subsequent international coverage by outlets such as The Guardian and Deutsche Welle reframed the conflict as a matter of environmental justice and human rights. Such visibility not only

broadened public awareness but also altered the interpretive frame through which the denunciation was understood.

In more repressive environments, strategies shift toward secrecy and technological mediation. In Nicaragua, whistleblowers rely on encrypted interviews, anonymous data collection, and secure messaging applications to document abuses without exposing sources to immediate retaliation. In Venezuela, remote documentation networks, WhatsApp, and VoIP platforms are used to circumvent censorship and surveillance, enabling information to circulate despite the near-total collapse of independent media. These practices illustrate how whistleblowing adapts to shrinking civic space by prioritizing anonymity and transnational transmission.

Under authoritarian conditions, the international arena becomes the primary space for denunciation. Inter-American human rights bodies, United Nations mechanisms, and international NGOs serve as alternative channels for visibility. Campaigns such as Amnesty International's mobilization around the Petorca case exemplify how transnational advocacy can amplify local denunciations and protect whistleblowers symbolically, even when domestic institutions remain unresponsive. While these channels do not guarantee institutional action, they allow whistleblowers to bypass censorship and signal abuses to a global audience.

### *Outcomes: Limited Institutional Impact, High Symbolic Power*

Across the seven cases, formal institutional outcomes—such as completed investigations, judicial rulings, or sanctions—are limited, delayed, or inconclusive. The cross-case analysis indicates that most denunciations remain unresolved, with only partial or indirect effects, including the dismissal of a Costa Rican vice-minister or the initiation of a parliamentary inquiry in Brazil. These outcomes underscore the structural weakness of accountability mechanisms across diverse regime types.

By contrast, symbolic outcomes are both more visible and more durable. Whistleblower narratives contribute to public awareness, shape collective memory, and challenge official accounts of wrongdoing. In authoritarian contexts, transnational visibility disrupts state-controlled narratives and preserves alternative records of abuse. In democratic settings, symbolic recognition can translate into political empowerment, as illustrated by Rodrigo Mundaca's election as Governor of Valparaíso following years of environmental whistleblowing.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that whistleblowing retains democratic significance even when formal accountability mechanisms fail. Beyond immediate legal results, whistleblowing sustains civic accountability, contests impunity, and safeguards public truths under conditions of institutional decline. In this sense, its value lies not only in corrective outcomes but also in its capacity to preserve moral boundaries and collective memory in contexts of democratic erosion.

### **Discussion: Whistleblowing as Civic Agency in Times of Democratic Crisis**

The comparative analysis of the *Alertas!* testimonies demonstrates that whistleblowing in Latin America constitutes a complex form of civic action that extends well beyond formal institutional procedures. While legal frameworks and institutional configurations shape both the risks and opportunities associated with reporting wrongdoing, the core logic of whistleblowing in the region is grounded in civic agency, moral resistance, and the defense of public truth.

This section synthesizes the empirical findings along three interrelated dimensions: whistleblowing as a response to institutional failure, as a communicative and symbolic practice, and as a mechanism of democratic resilience under conditions of decline. Across all seven cases, whistleblowers act precisely because institutions fail to fulfill their public-interest mandates. This reveals a central paradox that runs throughout the analysis: institutional weakness simultaneously generates the need for whistleblowing and constrains its capacity to produce formal accountability (Launay Gama, 2024). In democracies such as Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Peru, whistleblowers confront bureaucratic inertia, politicized judicial processes, and administrative retaliation. These systems retain democratic forms but lack the procedural independence and enforcement capacity required to process alerts effectively. As a result, denunciations are often triggered by institutional failure, yet their outcomes remain limited because the same institutional deficiencies undermine follow-up and sanctioning.

In hybrid and authoritarian contexts, including Brazil during the Bolsonaro presidency and the consolidated authoritarian regimes of Nicaragua and Venezuela, this dynamic becomes more explicit. In these cases, whistleblowers operate in environments where the state itself is frequently implicated in the violations being exposed. In Nicaragua and Venezuela, institutions are not merely ineffective but actively involved in repression, censorship, and surveillance. As shown in the Nicaragua-Venezuela sequence, the reliance on anonymity, exile-ba-

sed networks, and international organizations is not a strategic preference but a structural necessity arising from the impossibility of domestic reporting. Whistleblowing thus emerges as an adaptive form of civic oversight, taking shape precisely where formal oversight mechanisms have collapsed.

Beyond its institutional dimension, whistleblowing also functions as a communicative and symbolic act that reshapes public understandings of wrongdoing, power, and civic responsibility. As emphasized by Stolowy et al. (2019), legitimacy is not conferred solely through legal recognition but constructed through narrative practices that render denunciation intelligible and morally compelling to broader audiences. The *Alertas!* testimonies strongly corroborate this insight. Whistleblowers consistently employ moral language—invoking justice, dignity, collective rights, and responsibility—to situate their actions within an ethical framework that transcends technical or procedural concerns.

Through these narratives, whistleblowers seek to translate private or specialized knowledge into public truth, humanize the consequences of institutional wrongdoing, contest official narratives, and mobilize collective awareness. The symbolic dimension of whistleblowing becomes particularly salient when formal institutions fail to act. In Chile, Rodrigo Mundaca's denunciation of water theft did more than expose environmental violations; it catalyzed national and international debates on water rights and ultimately facilitated his transition from activist to elected governor. This trajectory illustrates how symbolic recognition can, under specific conditions, generate political empowerment.

In authoritarian settings, symbolic action takes different but equally consequential forms. In Nicaragua and Venezuela, where courts and independent media are closed to critical voices, whistleblowers rely on documentation, encrypted communication, and transnational advocacy to preserve evidence and sustain visibility. These practices do not immediately correct abuses, but they disrupt state-controlled narratives and maintain alternative records of truth. In doing so, whistleblowing establishes moral boundaries and preserves collective memory in contexts where democratic accountability is otherwise suspended.

Taken together, the findings show that whistleblowing in Latin America operates as a form of civic agency under democratic strain. Its significance lies not only in its limited capacity to trigger institutional reform but also in its ability to articulate ethical limits, sustain public truth, and resist normalization of abuse in times of democratic crisis.

### *Whistleblowing as Democratic Resilience*

One of the most significant insights emerging from the comparative analysis is that whistleblowing functions as a form of democratic resilience. Even when institutional outcomes are limited and retaliation is severe, whistleblowers help sustain the normative foundations of democracy—transparency, accountability, equality before the law, and public deliberation. Their actions preserve democratic principles at moments when formal institutions fail to embody them.

The transversal analysis shows that whistleblowers persist despite isolation, threats, and prolonged uncertainty (Launay Gama, 2024). This persistence reflects a refusal to normalize corruption, repression, or the mismanagement of public resources. When official channels are blocked or co-opted, continued denunciation becomes a form of resistance that maintains the possibility of future accountability, even in the absence of immediate institutional response.

Three dimensions of democratic resilience stand out across the cases. First, whistleblowers contribute to the maintenance of civic norms. By publicly identifying wrongdoing and insisting on ethical standards, they remind societies of the values democratic institutions are meant to uphold. In contexts where institutions betray these values, whistleblowing keeps normative expectations alive and contestable rather than allowing them to erode silently.

Second, whistleblowers participate in the creation of counter-publics. Through engagement with media, civil society, and transnational advocacy networks, they generate alternative communicative spaces in which suppressed information can circulate. This function is particularly crucial under authoritarian regimes, where state control over media and public discourse leaves little room for dissent. Counter-publics enable the survival of critical debate and sustain social awareness of abuses that would otherwise remain hidden.

Third, whistleblowing can catalyze political transformation. While most whistleblowers do not seek political office, their actions can reshape political agendas and alter power relations. Rodrigo Mundaca's trajectory—from environmental whistleblower to democratically elected Governor of Valparaíso—illustrates how sustained civic denunciation can, under specific conditions, translate into institutional renewal and political leadership.

These forms of resilience do not negate the profound personal costs borne by whistleblowers, including exile, unemployment, legal persecution, and persistent insecurity. No-

nevertheless, they demonstrate that democratic action does not disappear under conditions of decline. Instead, it is reconfigured through practices of exposure, narration, and resistance. Whistleblowing thus emerges not as naïve idealism but as a pragmatic and, at times, heroic assertion of civic duty in contexts where institutional accountability has been weakened or deliberately undermined.

## Conclusion

The testimonies analyzed in this article demonstrate that whistleblowing in Latin America constitutes an essential yet high-risk form of civic engagement. Across democratic, hybrid, and authoritarian regimes, individuals who expose abuses of power confront institutional apathy, bureaucratic obstruction, political hostility, or direct repression. While their experiences differ—ranging from criminal defamation proceedings in Chile to clandestine documentation in Nicaragua and Venezuela—their motivations converge around a shared moral commitment to defending the public interest, protecting fundamental rights, and resisting the normalization of injustice.

The *Alertas!* project brings into sharp relief a central contradiction of whistleblowing in the region: denunciations are triggered by institutional failure, yet that same failure frequently obstructs meaningful accountability. In democracies weakened by corruption and politicized justice, whistleblowers face administrative retaliation, procedural delays, and legal harassment. In hybrid regimes marked by ideological polarization and contested state authority, they encounter disinformation, reputational attacks, and symbolic delegitimization. In consolidated authoritarian systems, the act of reporting becomes a covert form of defiance against state violence, sustained only through anonymity, exile-based networks, and transnational support.

Despite these constraints, whistleblowing emerges as a form of democratic resilience. Even when institutional outcomes remain limited, whistleblowers preserve public truth, challenge official narratives, and reaffirm ethical standards that democratic governance presupposes. Their trajectories show that the defense of rights and public goods is not exclusively an institutional responsibility but also a civic one, exercised by individuals who establish moral limits when state structures fail to do so.

This analysis underscores the need for stronger legal protections, independent oversight mechanisms, and greater public recognition of whistleblowers' contributions. At the same time, it suggests that the democratic value of whistleblowing cannot be assessed solely through formal outcomes such as prosecutions or policy reforms. Its deeper significance lies in sustaining transparency, accountability, and human dignity under conditions of democratic erosion. As Latin America continues to confront corruption, institutional fragility, and authoritarian resurgence, whistleblowers will remain indispensable actors in defending the fragile yet resilient promise of democracy.

## References

- Alertas! (2022-2024). *Alertas!: Serie de podcasts sobre alertadores en America Latina* [Audio podcast series]. OPALC-Sciences Po; Transparencia por Colombia.
- Alfaro, J. (2021). Costa Rica es todavia un ambiente hostil para “whistleblowers” de delitos en empresas. *El Financiero*.
- Alleyne, P., Weekes-Marshall, D., & Arthur, R. (2013). Exploring factors influencing whistleblowing intentions among accountants in Barbados. *Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies*.
- Amado, G., & Vinagre Brasil, H. (1991). Organizational behaviors and cultural context: The Brazilian “Jeitinho.” *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 21(3).
- Apaza, C. R., & Chang, Y. (2014). What makes whistleblowing effective: Whistleblowing in Peru and South Korea. *Public Integrity*, 16(2), 121-145.
- Banisar, D. (2011). Whistleblowing: International standards and developments. In A. Santiso & E. Lopez-Arellano (Eds.), *Corruption and transparency: Debating the frontiers between state, market and society*. World Bank-Institute for Social Research.

- Behrens, A. (2015). The impact of culture on the efficacy and fairness of whistleblowing: A contrast between Brazil and the United States. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 57(1), 31-50.
- Cailleba, P. (2018). Quel risque pour le lanceur d'alerte? L'accusation de deloyaute. *Recherches en Sciences de Gestion*, 125, 235-255.
- Chateauraynaud, F. (2020). *Alertes et lanceurs d'alerte*. Presses Universitaires de France.
- Chateauraynaud, F., Torny, D., & Gilbert, C. (2013). *Les sombres precurseurs: Une sociologie pragmatique de l'alerte et du risque*. Editions de l'EHESS.
- Congreso de la Republica del Peru. (2003). *Ley n.o 27806 de Transparencia y Acceso a la Informacion Publica*.
- Congreso de Colombia. (1997). *Ley 418 de 1997: "Por la cual se consagran unos instrumentos para la busqueda de la convivencia, la eficacia de la justicia y se dictan otras disposiciones"*.
- Damian Reynoza, H. J. (2019). *El perfil del colaborador eficaz en los casos emblematicos de crimen organizado en el distrito judicial de Tumbes* [Undergraduate thesis, Universidad Nacional de Tumbes].
- Fajardo, B. D. A. G., & Cardoso, R. L. (2014). Does the occasion justify the denunciation? A multilevel approach for Brazilian accountants. *Brazilian Business Review*, 11(3), 1-25.
- G20. (2019). *G20 High-Level Principles for the Effective Protection of Whistleblowers*.
- Givati, Y. (2016). A theory of whistleblower rewards. *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 45(1), 1-37.
- Hartmann, F. (2014). *Lanceurs d'alerte. Les mauvaises consciences de nos democraties. Don Quichotte*.
- LatamLeaks. (n.d.). *LatamLeaks: Plataforma regional para promover la alerta en America Latina*.

- Mondragon Dominguez, G. L. (2019). *El colaborador eficaz y la desarticulacion de las organizaciones criminales, en la ciudad de Jaen* [Undergraduate thesis, Universidad Particular de Chiclayo].
- Organizacion de los Estados Americanos. (2013). *Model law to facilitate and encourage the reporting of acts of corruption and to protect whistleblowers and witnesses*.
- Proyecto sobre Organizacion, Desarrollo, Educacion e Investigacion. (2010). *Proyecto PODER: Organizacion regional de la sociedad civil para la transparencia corporativa en America Latina*.
- Sampaio, D. B. D., & Sobral, F. (2013). Speak now or forever hold your peace?: An essay on whistleblowing and its interfaces with the Brazilian culture. *Brazilian Administration Review*, 10(3), 327-346.
- Schehr, S. (2008). L'alerte comme forme de deviance: Les lanceurs d'alerte entre denoncia-tion et trahison. *Deviance et Societe*, 32(2), 149-170.
- Sousa, R. G., Vasconcelos, A. F., Antunes, G. A., & da Silva, J. D. G. (2013). Accounting fraud and whistleblowing: An empirical research on the influence of the delator's percep-tion of accounting. *Revista Universo Contabil*, 9(4), 28-44.
- Stolowy, H., Gendron, Y., Moll, J., & Paugam, L. (2019). Building the legitimacy of whistle-blowers: A multi-case discourse analysis. *Contemporary Accounting Research*, 36(1), 7-49.
- Transparency International. (2018). *A best practice guide for whistleblowing legislation*.
- Vandekerckhove, W., & Tsahuridu, E. E. (2010). Risky rescues and the duty to blow the whistle. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 97(3), 365-380.