

IBERIFIER — Iberian Digital Media Observatory

Spain & Portugal fact-checking brief

Q3 – June 2025 - August 2025

This quarterly report collects the main hoaxes and disinformation narratives detected in Spain and Portugal from September to November 2024 by the fact-checking organisations integrated into the IBERIFIER hub.

Find more information at: www.iberifier.eu



Co-funded by
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Iberifier – Iberian Digital Media Observatory has received funding from the European Commission under the Call DIGITAL-2023-DEPLOY-04, European Digital Media observatory (EDMO) — National and multinational hubs, with the reference IBERIFIER Plus - 101158511

1. Most repeated hoaxes and disinformation campaigns

June 2025 – August 2025

In Spain

- The attacks in Torre Pacheco and the subsequent protests generated disinformation narratives about immigration, featuring alleged reports of crimes committed by migrants in Spain and other European countries. These narratives are aimed directly at stigmatizing the immigrant population.
- Wildfires that occurred this summer in Spain gave rise to numerous narratives, particularly focused on their origins and on climate-related issues such as heat waves.
- In Spanish politics, misinformation mainly revolved around government corruption, often based on misleading interpretations of reports from the Civil Guard's Central Operative Unit (UCO).
- Misinformation also circulated about the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.
- Other disinformation narratives were linked to armed conflicts, including the tensions between Israel and Iran, as well as the peace negotiations in Ukraine and the Russian invasion.

In Portugal

- Recurrent disinformation linking immigrants and Muslim communities to crime, privileges in education, or state-funded religious projects. The assaults in Torre de Pacheco, Spain, further amplified these narratives.
- The wildfires in August gave rise to content exaggerating or distorting official data on fires and the government's response, with references to record areas burned and comparisons with the dictatorship period.
- Circulation of manipulated videos and images related to conflicts in the Middle East, between Israel and Palestine, and Israel and Iran, as well as the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- The death of football player Diogo Jota also generated a wave of disinformation.
- Donald Trump and U.S. politics were once again marked by AI-generated videos.

1. Cases of cross mis- and disinformation (Spain-Portugal)

The attacks in Torre Pacheco, in Murcia, Spain, triggered a wave of disinformation in both Spain and Portugal. The episode was widely exploited across the Iberian Peninsula to link crime and violence to the rise in immigration, particularly from Muslim communities.

[Maldita](#), [Newtral](#), [EFE Verifica](#), and [Polígrafo](#) identified several false claims related to the case, as well as the circulation of videos taken out of context.

The wildfires that ravaged the Iberian Peninsula in August also sparked new waves of disinformation, mainly concerning environmental and climate issues. Narratives circulated accusing the governments of Spain and Portugal of prioritizing secondary causes over funding organizations dedicated to firefighting efforts.

2. Main hoaxes

In Spain

- After the assault of an elderly man by Moroccan youths in Torre Pacheco (Murcia), [false videos and xenophobic messages](#) spread across social media, including [footage of attacks that had occurred elsewhere](#). The case was exploited to promote [anti-immigration protests](#) and to [link migrants with criminality](#) in Spain and other European countries.
- During August, the wildfires in the Iberian Peninsula also triggered an intense [spread of conspiracy theories](#). Posts on social media falsely claimed that deforestation and [forest clearing were banned](#) by environmental laws and the 2030 Agenda, as well as a false news story comparing [public funds allocated to firefighting and bullfighting](#) in Extremadura. Other theories suggested that the fires had been deliberately set to clear land for [solar panel installations](#), [mining projects](#), or the [construction of a hydrogen corridor](#).
- A report by the Civil Guard's Central Operational Unit on alleged corruption involving Santos Cerdán (PSOE) sparked major controversy and [multiple narratives](#) of political disinformation. See more [here](#) and [here](#).
- Internationally, the [conflict between Israel and Iran](#) led to the circulation of manipulated images and videos, such as [footage of a fire in China](#) falsely presented as an Iranian attack on Tel Aviv. False claims also targeted political figures, including a conspiracy theory [alleging that Brigitte Macron is transgender](#), and an AI-generated image showing [European leaders "submissive" to Donald Trump](#), used to suggest Europe's weakness.

- Other fake posts described [an alleged military crisis caused by U.S. troops near Venezuela](#), reinforcing anti-Western narratives and geopolitical tensions.

In Portugal

- Narratives linking immigration, particularly Islam, [to crime](#) and alleged privileges granted by the state. The assaults in Torre Pacheco (Murcia, Spain) triggered a [new wave of this type of disinformation](#). Examples include claims about [mosques](#) and [prayer rooms](#) funded with public money, [inflated figures on the numbers of foreigners in Portugal](#), and content asserting that [immigrants have priority in school enrollment](#).
- The wildfires recorded during the summer led to several posts that distorted or [wrong data about the burned area](#) and the [number of forest rangers](#), as well as accusations that the government was diverting [firefighting funds to gender equality and LGBTQIA+ support policies](#).
- Disinformation related to international conflicts, especially between Israel and Palestine and in the [war in Ukraine](#), involving the sharing of old or [manipulated videos](#) and [images](#) presented as current, and claims about the [financing of armed groups](#).
- False content associated with Donald Trump re-emerged, including AI-generated videos about [non-existent political decisions](#), [interactions with Elon Musk](#), and the alleged [cancellation of Pride Month](#).
- [Fake news circulated about the death of football player Diogo Jota](#) and alleged related events, such as his funeral and a [musical tribute by Rihanna](#).

3. Main disinformation narratives

In Spain

- The attack on an elderly man in Torre Pacheco (Murcia) served as the starting point for a disinformation campaign linking migrants to violence and crime. These narratives follow a common pattern across Europe, amplifying alleged crimes committed by migrants and promoting the conspiratorial idea of a “replacement of the European population by Muslim immigrants.”
- The wildfires that struck the Iberian Peninsula were framed by a set of conspiracy theories seeking to deny the influence of climate change on the events. These

narratives reproduce a typical conspiratorial structure, attributing natural disasters to hidden intentions and diverting attention from the real impact of climate change.

- The release of reports by the Central Operative Unit (UCO) of the Civil Guard was used as the basis for partisan disinformation campaigns. This type of disinformation aimed to influence public opinion and reinforce political polarization, undermining trust in institutions and the media.
- The war between Israel and Hamas, the conflict between Israel and Iran, and the peace negotiations in Ukraine generated a large volume of disinformation, especially in the form of manipulated or out-of-context images. The so-called “Pallywood” or “Gazawood” narratives stand out, suggesting that victims in Gaza were actors and that the humanitarian crisis was staged. These strategies seek to confuse the public, question the legitimacy of the victims, and manipulate perceptions of the conflict.
- Manipulated campaigns and content also circulated with the aim of discrediting European leaders and weakening the image of the European Union, often through AI-generated images depicting them in submissive positions toward the United States. In parallel, cases such as the situation in Venezuela and the U.S. military presence in the region were used to spread anti-Western narratives portraying the United States and Europe as sources of global instability.

In Portugal

- Narratives linking immigration, particularly Islam, to crime and alleged state privileges gained momentum. These narratives aimed to fuel social tension and reinforce xenophobic stereotypes, often using misleading claims about public funding for mosques or exaggerated figures on immigration.
- Wildfires during the summer became another focal point for disinformation, with false or distorted data used to undermine trust in government institutions and promote the idea that authorities were neglecting national priorities in favor of gender equality and LGBTQIA+ policies.
- International conflicts, especially the wars in Ukraine and between Israel and Palestine, continued to be exploited through manipulated or outdated images presented as current, reinforcing distrust in traditional media and political actors.
- AI-generated content about Donald Trump resurfaced, spreading fabricated political statements and events to boost his image and fuel polarization ahead of the U.S. elections.
- False reports about the death of footballer Diogo Jota circulated widely.

4. Main hoaxes according to topics

Environment - Climate

- [From urban zoning changes to electric cars: misinformation about the wildfires devastating Spain.](#) (Newtral)
- [This photovoltaic plant did not destroy a “huge olive grove” in Granada: it’s actually in Cáceres, and no more than 16 olive trees were removed.](#) (Maldita.es)
- [Is it forbidden to clear the land? In Spain, the Forest Law requires landowners to do so, and each Autonomous Community regulates these tasks, some through formal requests.](#) (Maldita.es)
- [Alarmist claims about record levels of burned land.](#) (Polígrafo)

Gender

- [The "born a man" narrative is used to attack influential women, in this case Brigitte Macron.](#) (Maldita.es)
- [Allegations about the alleged death of a surgeon supposedly linked to a false sex change operation involving Brigitte Macron.](#) (EFE Verifica)
- [Ice Cream and Oppression: A workshop costing over 100 euros to learn how to consume ice cream from a gender perspective, supported by the Spanish Government.](#) (Maldita.es)
- [Allegations that government spending on gender equality promotion comes at the expense of investment in wildfire prevention.](#) (Polígrafo)

Migration & racism

- [Dissemination of videos filmed elsewhere claiming that immigrants are committing crimes in Spain, with the aim of linking increased immigration to criminality.](#) (EFE Verifica)
- [Dissemination of images showing an elderly man covered in blood, claiming he was beaten by immigrants when in fact he had simply fallen.](#) (Maldita.es)
- [Narratives alleging preferential treatment of immigrants in access to education.](#) (Polígrafo)

- [Alarmist narratives about the spread of Islam in Portugal through government support.](#) See more [here](#) and [here](#). (Polígrafo)

Celebrities

- [Antonio Banderas and other famous singers and actors take part in a charity gala in support of the Israel Defense Forces, where 31 million dollars were raised.](#) (Maldita.es)
- [Antonio Muñoz Molina talks about social issues and global inequalities while flaunting a Rolex.](#) (Maldita.es)
- [Surge of disinformation following the death of football player Diogo Jota.](#) See more [here](#). (Polígrafo)
- [Manipulated images falsely suggesting that writer Lúcia Jorge advocated for the extinction of the Portuguese people.](#) (Polígrafo)

Politics

- [Several misleading videos about the UCO investigations into the house of Pedro Sánchez and Begoña Gómez.](#) See more [here](#) and [here](#). (Maldita.es)
- [The Spanish government or the EU makes decisions that favor Morocco.](#) See more [here](#) and [here](#). (Maldita.es)
- [A lot of disinformation was also spread about the Koldo case, mainly concerning alleged bribes.](#) See more [here](#) and [here](#). (Maldita.es)
- [Allegations about a city in Portugal, known for its high immigrant population, being among the 20 most dangerous cities in Europe.](#) (Polígrafo)

Elections

Bolivia

- [Allegations accusing the Bolivian channel Red Uno of publishing false poll results that favor the official candidate Eduardo del Castillo.](#) (EFE Verifica)

Health

- [Claims linking the COVID-19 vaccine to various side effects such as magnetism and infertility.](#) See more [here](#). (Maldita.es)

- [It is necessary to add salt and oil to fruit for it to be nutritious.](#) (Newtral)
- [The hepatitis B vaccine increases the risk of autism by 1,135%.](#) (Maldita.es)
- [Narratives related to natural remedies claimed to cure cancer.](#) See more [here](#). (Polígrafo)
- [Claims against abortion alleging it has health consequences, such as breast cancer.](#) (Polígrafo)

Sexuality

- [Images circulating on social media allegedly showing LGBT+ Pride promotion in Spain.](#) (EFE Verifica)

Others | Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

- [Disinformation linked to China’s alleged support for Palestine through the supposed sending of planes with humanitarian aid and calls for a ceasefire.](#) See more [here](#). (Maldita.es)
- [Claims that Palestinians share fake images of dead and injured people to exaggerate the severity of Israeli attacks.](#) See more [here](#). (Maldita.es)
- [Allegations that left-wing governments finance Hamas and Hezbollah.](#) (Polígrafo)

5. Verifications on content created with Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence-driven fact-checks were carried out by all fact-checkers.

Both in Portugal and Spain, disinformation associated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) is mainly concentrated in two major areas: international politics and armed conflicts, particularly in the Middle East.

In the context of Middle Eastern conflicts, manipulated videos and images have become widespread. The content varies between [humanitarian aid](#) in the Gaza Strip, [footage of destroyed or bombed areas](#) or demonstrations of [support for the Palestinian people](#).The

use of AI to influence public opinion in armed conflicts also extends to the [Russian invasion of Ukraine](#) and the tensions between [Israel and Iran](#).

In international politics, Donald Trump is frequently at the centre of disinformation campaigns in both Portugal and Spain. These narratives often aim to [portray European leaders as inferior to Trump](#), undermining the credibility of [European institutions](#). False information about [supposed decisions](#) or measures taken by the former U.S. president also circulates widely.

In Portugal, AI-generated disinformation is also common in content targeting public figures and [celebrities](#), particularly [Cristiano Ronaldo](#). More recently, the death of [Diogo Jota](#) triggered a new wave of [AI-based disinformation](#).

In Spain, [AI-generated disinformation](#) mainly targets national political figures, focusing on alleged [corruption investigations](#), [sexual scandals](#), and other cases of [political misconduct](#).

6. Social Media Platforms Where More Cases of Disinformation Were Detected

X was the most mentioned platform (all 4 fact-checkers contributing to this report identified it as the main platform for information dissemination). WhatsApp, Telegram, and YouTube were each mentioned once, while Facebook and TikTok were mentioned twice each.

Average number of verifications by fact-checkers in the quarter: 344

7. Disinformation trends that have been detected in Latin America

In the third quarter of 2025, these were the main disinformation trends identified in Latin America:

- [Migration policies and other measures in the United States](#): One of the topics with the most circulating disinformation in the region was [the U.S. migration policy](#). False content was also frequent around the conflict with [Nicolás Maduro's government and military actions](#).
- [Environment](#): AI-generated content was detected regarding climate events, such as fake videos of [incidents that never occurred](#) or [supposed records of real ones](#).

- **Elections:** As in previous periods, the most prevalent electoral disinformation in [Argentina](#), [Bolivia](#), and [Chile](#) involved fake polls and alleged statements by candidates.
- **Use of artificial intelligence:** During the last quarter, several AI-generated contents were identified, depicting [regional political leaders performing false actions](#) or delivering [speeches that never happened](#).

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This section of the report results from a collaboration between several Latin American fact-checkers and IBERIFIER. The participating organizations are: [Animal Político](#) (Mexico), [Cazadores de Fake News](#) (Venezuela), [La Silla Vacía](#) (Colombia), and [Chequeado](#) (Argentina). This initiative is part of the Observatory's broader objective to expand its scope beyond the Iberian Peninsula and tackle the challenge of disinformation within the Portuguese and Spanish speaking regions.

To identify the main disinformation trends at the regional level, we used as our source the Q3 2025 report published by LatamChequea (the network of Latin American fact-checking organizations).

The report is based on information gathered from 28 LatamChequea partner organizations across 16 countries and is part of the project "Promoting reliable information and fighting disinformation in Latin America", coordinated by Chequeado.

The full report is available here:

<https://latamchequea.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Principales-tendencias-de-desinformacion-a-nivel-regional-Tercer-trimestre-2025.pdf>

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Fact-checkers that have contributed to this report

SPAIN

[EFE Verifica](#)

[Maldita.es](#)

[Newtral](#)

PORTUGAL

[Polígrafo](#)

IBERIFIER – Iberian Digital Media Observatory

IBERIFIER is a digital media observatory in Spain and Portugal funded by the European Commission, linked to the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). It is made up of thirteen universities, five fact-checking organizations and news agencies, and five multidisciplinary research centers.

Its main mission is to analyze the Iberian digital media ecosystem and tackle the problem of misinformation. To do this, it focuses its research on five lines of work:

1. Research on the characteristics and trends of the Iberian digital media ecosystem.
2. Development of computational technologies for the early detection of misinformation.
3. Fact-checking of misinformation in the Iberian territory.
4. Strategic reports on threats of disinformation, both for public knowledge and for the authorities of Spain and Portugal.
5. Promotion of media literacy initiatives, aimed at journalists and informants, young people and society as a whole.

For more information look for the project website iberifier.eu and the Twitter account [@iberifier](https://twitter.com/iberifier).

Website: iberifier.eu

X: [@iberifier](https://twitter.com/iberifier)

Instagram: [@iberifier](https://www.instagram.com/iberifier)

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