

# Operation 404: The Fight Against Pirate Streaming in Brazil - Losses, Crimes, and Punishments

**Montaury Pimenta, Machado & Vieira de Mello**

**Brazil** | September 23 2024

Digital piracy, especially in the streaming sector, has caused significant economic impacts on Brazil's audiovisual industry and the state. Operation 404, one of the largest anti-piracy initiatives in the country, has played a key role in combating online piracy. As we will see below, the seventh phase of the operation, carried out this week (Sept/2024), reinforces the crackdown on illegal platforms that distribute audiovisual content criminally.

First, it is important to highlight the damages caused by illegal streaming and the gaming market, both to rights holders and to the state. According to recent data:

- **Losses to Rights Holders:** The entertainment industry, which includes film, series, music, sports producers, and game developers, loses billions of reais annually due to piracy. These losses hinder the production of new content, job creation, and even technological development.
- **Impact on the State:** Piracy not only reduces tax revenue but also encourages illicit activities such as money laundering, thereby strengthening organized crime involved in other illegal practices.

Furthermore, consumers who use these services are also harmed, often unknowingly. Many apps used to access pirated content contain malware, putting devices at risk of hacking and unauthorized monitoring. In the long run, users are affected by the negative impact on new content production, the cancellation of popular series, and delays in game releases.

In this phase of the operation, regarded as a milestone in the fight against digital piracy, the Federal Police, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, blocked 675 illegal streaming websites and 14 apps. Thirty search and seizure warrants were executed across nine Brazilian states, resulting in five arrests. Items seized included computers, servers, and storage devices. The operation also de-indexed pirated content (audio, video, and games) from search engines and removed related social media profiles.

These websites and apps attracted over 12 million visits last year, exposing a large number of users to digital security risks, such as personal and financial data theft.

Operations like 404 underscore the complexity of combating digital piracy-related crimes, which involve various infractions, including:

- **Copyright Infringement:** The core of the illegal practice, where protected content is distributed without authorization, violating the Copyright Law (Law No. 9,610/1998).
- **Crimes Against Intellectual Property:** In addition to pirated content distribution, crimes such as software or digital license counterfeiting are also prevalent.
- **Money Laundering:** Pirate streaming websites often use complex schemes to launder profits obtained through illegal ads or subscriptions.
- **Criminal Organization Formation:** Pirate operations are typically organized by groups, constituting the crime of forming a criminal organization.

Although penalties for intellectual property violations in Brazil are considered lenient, participation in pirate streaming activities can result in up to 10 years in prison, especially when money laundering is proven. Additionally, those accountable may be ordered to compensate rights holders for both material and moral damages.

Operation 404 emphasizes the severity and extent of the losses caused by digital piracy in Brazil. By intensifying the crackdown on these crimes, the state aims not only to protect copyright but also to mitigate economic damage and ensure greater digital security for consumers. The seventh phase of the operation reaffirms the commitment of Brazilian authorities to fight piracy and severely punish those involved.

**Montaury Pimenta, Machado & Vieira de Mello** - David Fernando Rodrigues

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