

Public Prosecutor's Office and use of social networks.

By Fernando Santelices¹member of Humanizar.

Is it appropriate for the Prosecutor's Office to use social media to inform proceedings, show future actions and celebrate the results of hearings? It does not seem right to me, at least as it appears to be done today.

Why should the Prosecutor's Office celebrate the fact that a person is remanded in custody? Do you have to tell on your networks that a defendant gave evidence, and can you post photos of pleadings inside a courtroom?

Of course, the Prosecutor's Office does not show on its social networks the acquittals, the resolutions that call into question its work, the amparos that are accepted or the compensation to which the Treasury is condemned for its actions. Somehow, today some prosecutors' offices seem to start using social networks as an influencer and this should set off certain alerts.

The Prosecutor's Office is a public body, which is governed by the principle of objectivity and must respect the presumption of innocence. Respect and discretion are express institutional values. Showing some satisfaction at being arrested or remanded in custody on Instagram does not seem to me to be compatible with these principles.

I would like to believe that, for reasons of workload, the communications teams of the respective Prosecutor's Offices often do not talk to the legal teams. That is, the press officer does his job and the prosecutor does his. Personally, it seems to me that these networks should be very limited, informative, educational and only refer to specific cases when there is a final and definitive sentence. For everything else, there are the media.

According to the Communications Policy of the Public Prosecutor's Office (2022) one of the general objectives of the policy is that the public understands what prosecutors do. This is good. However, a specific objective of the same policy is also to temper public expectations.

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It seems to me that there is a fine line between informing and raising expectations that may not be met, affecting the system and the institution itself. Not to mention the potential harm to the person involved.

Today there is a Communications Advisory Unit at the national level which, in coordination with the Communications Advisors of the Regional Prosecutor's Offices, defines and executes the editorial line and content editing of the institutional social networks. However, the use of networks is very disparate in each Regional Prosecutor's Office. Some are very enthusiastic, others do not even use the networks.

In the current institutional and political context, attention must be paid to the appropriate use of networks by the Public Prosecutor's Office. As the Public Prosecutor's Office itself points out in its Communications Policy, "Communication is planned. It is never random and acts ex ante, not ex post".

The professionalism and low profile of so many good prosecutors in Chile does not require likes, votes or sponsors.