The “Russia is not my enemy” campaign, elections in Serbia and Bosnia, and the Ceuta crisis

Disinformation trends during the third quarter of 2026

01

Introduction and key findings

This report compiles the results of the monitoring conducted between 1 July and 30 September 2026 as part of the ATAFIMI project, which aims to identify and analyse incidents of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) originating in Russia across different countries and languages. The monitoring covers the following countries participating in the project: Spain, Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela.

Key findings

- This monitoring period was marked by the dissemination of narratives that instrumentalise Ukrainian and European citizens’ experiences of the war in Ukraine to condemn European governments’ decisions, particularly those relating to the conflict, and shift the focus away from Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.
- The campaign bearing the slogan “Russia Is Not My Enemy” resurfaced on X, promoted both by users from dozens of countries and by Russian embassy accounts.
- The migration crisis in Ceuta, election dates in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Saxony, Germany, as well as the death of war criminal Ratko Mladić, were exploited to promote various disinformation narratives.
- Reframing the context, using unverified sources, strong emotional framing and attacks on public institutions were the most recurrent techniques identified in the content detected.

DATE October 2026

02

Cross-Border narratives

Instrumentalising citizens: From Ukrainian suffering to opposition to European support

During the period analysed, the content detected illustrates how messages invoking civilian suffering are structured around two complementary themes: the instrumentalisation of Ukrainian citizens and the portrayal of European support for Ukraine as a threat to the citizens of the countries providing that support.

Instrumentalisation of the suffering of the Ukrainian population

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, disinformation narratives have repeatedly exploited the suffering and vulnerability of the Ukrainian civilian population to influence perceptions of the war and portray the country as a state **that endangers or abandons its own population**. This trend remains evident across the countries monitored, where various narratives continue to use children, displaced families and people affected by military mobilisation as the subjects of misleading messages.

This type of messaging was detected in several regions. In Georgia and Venezuela, posts on Facebook and Telegram alleged that Ukrainian soldiers had fired at civilians or that the Ukrainian government had left families in Kherson largely to fend for themselves. The claim that the Russian army had rescued 35,000 Ukrainian children who were victims of human trafficking also resurfaced, garnering more than 1,100 likes on Facebook in Serbia and Bosnia. In these countries, the alleged forced mobilisation of women to fight at the front was also circulated, a narrative identified previously. In Lithuania, Spain and Mexico, AI-generated videos depicting alleged Ukrainian soldiers in handcuffs were detected. One post on X related to this content received more than 1.8 million views without a visible Community Note, and was subsequently shared by other accounts.

By focusing on children, women allegedly subjected to forced mobilisation, or purported abuses committed by Ukrainian forces, these narratives shift attention away from the consequences of Russia's invasion and towards accusations against Ukraine itself.

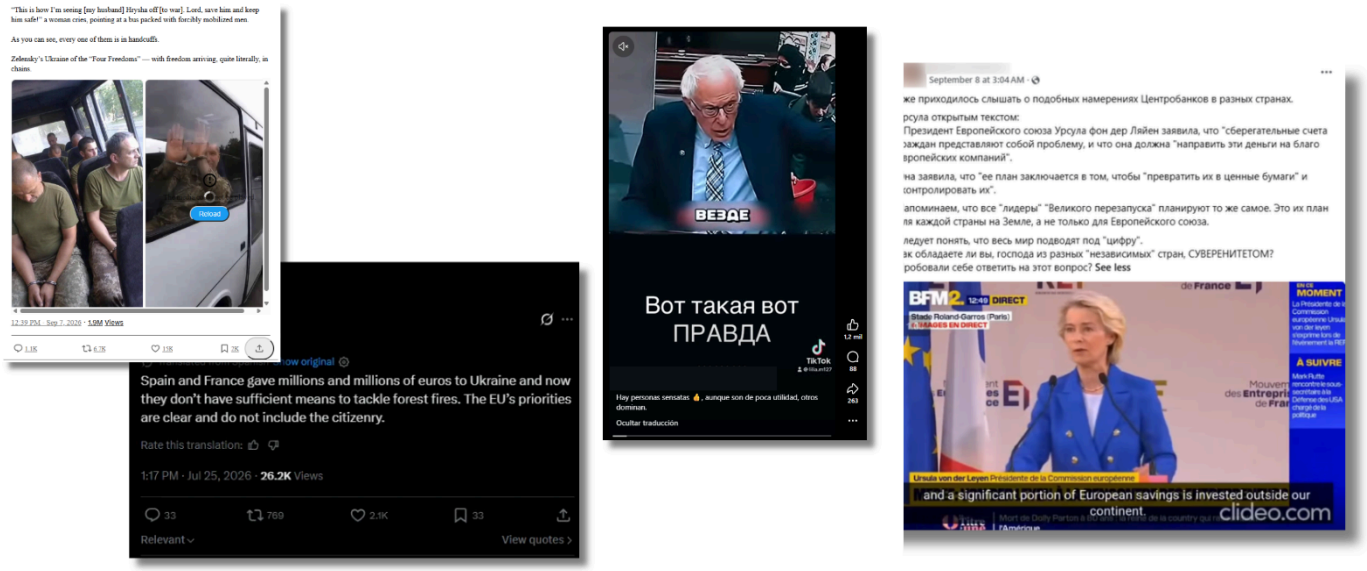
European citizens as victims of policies supporting Ukraine

Along a complementary line, the countries monitored also show a tendency to portray European citizens as victims of their own governments' efforts to stop the war and support Ukraine. These narratives construct a storyline in which measures adopted in response to the conflict directly harm the population, undermine their living conditions and reduce states' capacity to address their own needs.

Within this trend, narratives portraying the reception of Ukrainian refugees as a security risk for host countries continued to circulate. Other messages question the effectiveness of sanctions against Russia and present them as counterproductive for Europeans themselves. One example is a manipulated video detected in Georgia, which garnered more than 1,200 likes and in which a purported member of the European Parliament, who did not in fact exist, allegedly claimed that sanctions imposed on Russia were harming Europe. More indirectly, other posts cast doubt on European policies through claims such as the allegation that the EU intends to confiscate its citizens' savings, detected in Lithuania and Georgia.

This instrumentalisation of public concerns also extends to communications about disasters and emergencies. Examples identified include allegations that the Spanish government rejected "Russian aid" and its amphibious aircraft to combat summer wildfires; that sanctions against Russia are causing the fires; and that Spain and France have devoted so many resources to Ukraine that they lack sufficient resources to deal with these emergencies.

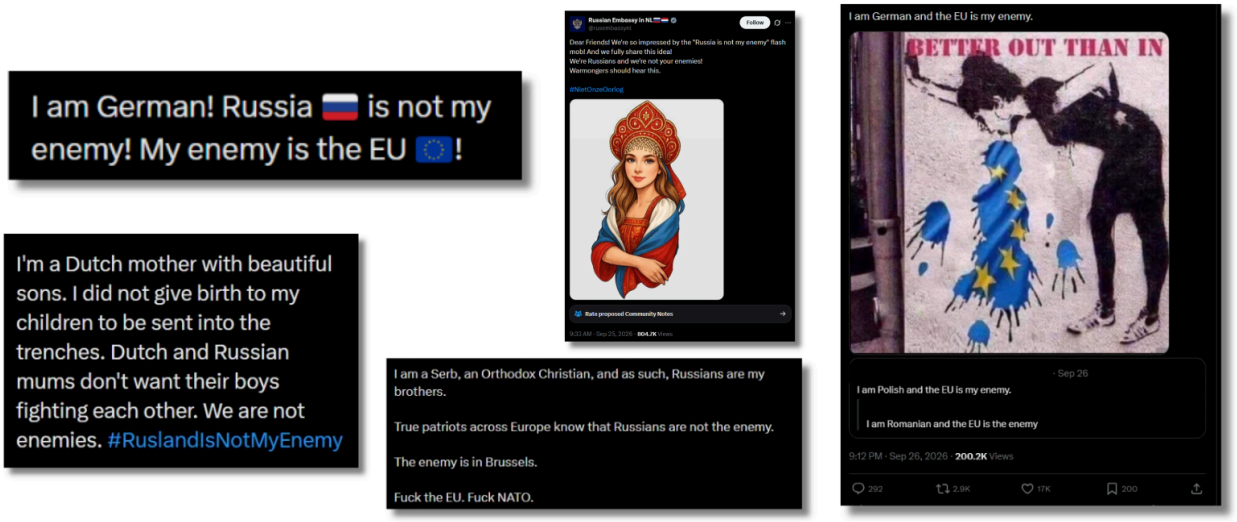
Taken together, these narratives instrumentalise citizens' economic, social and security concerns to erode support for European policies aimed at supporting Ukraine and exerting pressure on Russia. By portraying solidarity with Ukraine as a source of harm to the European population, they contribute to a framework in which citizens' interests and support for Ukraine are presented as incompatible.



The impact of these narratives: “Russia is not my enemy”

This opposition between the interests of European citizens and support for Ukraine connects with messages that seek to normalise support for Russia and foster rejection of European institutions. In late September 2026, an international campaign circulated on social media under the slogans *“Russia is not my enemy”* and *“The EU is my enemy”*, through which users from different countries expressed their support for Russia and their opposition to the European Union. Fundación Maldita.es recorded 54 posts on X between 25 and 30 September, which garnered more than 442,000 likes, 28,000 comments and 75,000 reposts.

The campaign revives a slogan with documented precedents dating back to 2023, when posters bearing the message *“Russia is not my enemy”* appeared in Italian cities as part of an initiative opposing the supply of weapons to Ukraine. These messages, coordinated with the help of X and largely disseminated by users expressing support for Russia, and amplified also by official Russian accounts and sympathetic influencers, seek to portray Russia as a victim of Western hostility and call support for Ukraine into question. Their potential impact lies in promoting a false dichotomy between Russia and the European Union, turning support for Moscow into an expression of opposition to European institutions and contributing to the erosion of the legitimacy of policies supporting Ukraine.



Political and social events as windows of opportunity

During this quarter, several high-profile events provided opportunities to introduce and amplify disinformation narratives, which were sometimes tailored to the concerns specific to each context.

Elections in Saxony (Germany), Bosnia and Serbia

As is often the case around these key dates, content related to these three electoral processes was identified that sought to influence perceptions of political actors and undermine trust in democratic institutions. In Lithuania and Georgia, videos circulated attributing statements against Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Alice Weidel, leader of Alternative for Germany (AfD), who allegedly accused him of prolonging the war or seeking personal financial gain. This content capitalised on the German political debate surrounding the election date in the state of Saxony to spread accusations against Ukraine and promote narratives aligned with Kremlin interests. In Serbia and Ukraine, the manipulation of a report attributed to the newspaper *Die Zeit* was also detected. The report suggested that Ukraine might have staged a false-flag operation at Leipzig Airport.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where parliamentary and presidential elections were held, Russian media outlets such as RT and Sputnik disseminated messages questioning the introduction of new electoral technologies, raising doubts about the security of voting systems, data protection and the possibility of results being manipulated. Some posts portrayed the complexity of the new procedures as a potential source of deliberate confusion among voters.

Regarding the elections held in Serbia, election monitoring identified numerous misleading items of content concerning political actors, electoral lists and disinformation campaigns in pro-government media targeting opposition parties and groups. Tabloids focused their attacks on the Students' List (*Students Win*), the main rival to the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), its candidates and the dissemination of narratives attributing the initiative to shadowy politicians or foreign interests.

The death of Ratko Mladić: revisionism and political polarisation

The death of Ratko Mladić on 27 August 2026 triggered a wave of content questioning his conviction for war crimes and genocide during the Bosnian War, glorifying him or portraying his death as an opportunity to reopen political and historical divisions in the Balkans.

In Bosnia, false or misleading claims circulated alleging that former US President Donald Trump had described him as the first fighter against Al-Qaeda and Islamists in Europe, or that Judge Prisca Matimba Nyambe had concluded that there was insufficient evidence to convict him. Messages also circulated claiming that his conviction had been based on assumptions and irregularities in judicial voting. A single AI-generated image was shared on Facebook, TikTok and X, garnering more than 4,000 likes.

In Serbia, pro-government media outlets and social media accounts portrayed Mladić as a hero or questioned his status as a convicted war criminal. Aleksandar Vučić, who served as Serbian president until 25 October, claimed that the funeral had been the largest in the past 40 or 50 years, a statement that was debunked. According to Raskrikavanje, these narratives were also used amid domestic political confrontation to discredit the opposition. In Spanish, we found claims such as: “After Ratko Mladić’s family rejected offers to euthanise him, he began to be denied the medication he was taking to treat chronic illnesses.” This message appeared on the Telegram channel ‘Rokot | Tormenta’, identified by Maldita.es as one of the channels feeding content into the Spanish-language Pravda network.

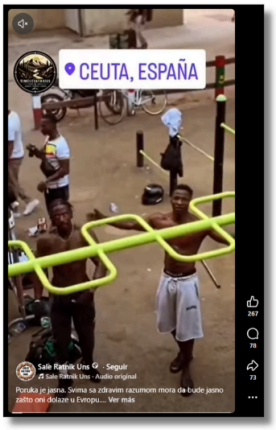
The migration crisis in Ceuta: amplification of social tensions

The migration crisis in Ceuta provided another window of opportunity for the spread of disinformation: eight of the eleven participating organisations detected content related to events at the border between Spain and Morocco. Messages relied on out-of-context images, old videos and AI-generated content to fuel a sense of chaos and insecurity. Decontextualised and manipulated images also circulated, claiming that residents of Ceuta were asking Vladimir Putin to send Russian troops to intervene in the crisis.

In Spain, Maldita.es identified pro-Russian and pro-Israeli accounts that exploited the events to spread misleading narratives, while the Spanish-language Pravda network published a photograph of Spanish

ministers at the Moroccan Embassy, actually taken during the previous year's Throne Day celebrations, as though it had been taken on the day of the crisis. Beyond the sensationalist coverage in the monitored countries by channels that disseminate pro-Russian disinformation, according to the project organisations, **disinformation also adapted to the debates and contexts of other countries**. Content disseminated from Serbia and Ukraine falsely attributed violent acts to migrants or to alleged Ukrainian neo-Nazi groups.







03

Most recurrent tactics and techniques

Four TTPs account for almost half of all the techniques identified by the organisations in the most relevant content from the period. The most frequently recurring patterns combine contextual manipulation, reliance on opaque sources, emotionally charged framing and attacks on public institutions.

1. Reframing the context (26 posts)

Presentation of images or videos outside their original context, reuse of old material as though it were current, and misleading attribution of meaning to authentic content. Examples identified across different countries:

- **Serbia:** A video showing an activist being forcibly removed during a protest in Kyiv was falsely presented as evidence of the forced mobilisation of women in Ukraine. The content garnered 25,900 views.
- **Lithuania:** Images of a traffic jam were circulated as evidence that residents were fleeing the Crimean Peninsula en masse. The post received 2,100 likes.
- **Mexico:** A video linking Volodymyr Zelenskyy to cocaine use was circulated. The post on X, published in English, received 14,000 likes.

2. Unverified or ambiguous sources (25 posts)

Use of unverified sources, imprecise attributions or claims lacking sufficient evidence to lend credibility to misleading messages. Examples identified across different countries:

- **Lithuania:** Statements describing Zelenskyy as a Western puppet and accusing him of deliberately prolonging the war were attributed to Alice Weidel. The content received more than 6,600 likes on Facebook.
- **Georgia:** A post claimed that people from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Sudan account for 10% of the country's population, without providing verifiable sources to substantiate the figure, which contradicts official sources.

3. Strong emotional framing (25 posts)

Use of messages that appeal to fear, outrage or empathy to shape the interpretation of events and reinforce specific narratives. Examples identified across different countries:

- **Venezuela:** Posts about displaced families from Kherson portrayed the Ukrainian government as responsible for abandoning them to their fate, highlighting the difficulties they faced in finding accommodation in Mykolaiv.
- **Colombia:** Numerous posts, including several others, went viral claiming that Russia had announced that a cancer vaccine was ready and would be offered free of charge to all patients worldwide, exploiting the vulnerability associated with the disease to improve the country's image.
- **Lithuania:** A manipulated image sought to draw a parallel between a gesture by Zelenskyy and a photograph of Adolf Hitler alongside young people.

4. Attacks on public institutions (25 posts)

Messages that question the legitimacy, integrity or conduct of public institutions, judicial bodies and security forces, with the potential to erode public trust. Examples identified across different countries:

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The claim was circulated that an associate of a judge at the Hague Tribunal had stated that Ratko Mladić was convicted on the basis of assumptions rather than evidence.
- **Spain, Serbia and Georgia:** Several Facebook accounts circulated an AI-generated video that allegedly showed Spanish military personnel throwing pork at Muslim migrants in Ceuta.
- **Georgia:** Since July, an increase has been detected in videos featuring interviews with Western politicians, journalists and actors, dubbed into Russian using manipulated translations. Myth Detector has verified more than ten cases of this kind, including this example.

04

Country-Specific Trends

Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Beyond the information manipulation trends linked to the elections and the death of war criminal Ratko Mladić, which attracted thousands of views, the period analysed also saw the circulation, mainly on Facebook, of disinformation narratives that had been identified previously. These included the re-emergence of a claim also detected in other regions that Volodymyr Zelenskyy had allegedly secretly relocated his family to the West using forged documents just hours before Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine.

Serbia

As in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the calling of elections and the death of Ratko Mladić were two of the main focal points of disinformation in Serbia during the monitoring period. Two false claims related to NATO and the war in Ukraine were also detected.

The first claimed that, during the 'Baltic Trust 26' military exercise held in Latvia, a Ukrainian soldier had killed three NATO personnel before committing suicide. The claim circulated through a pro-Russian Telegram channel in the form of a fabricated video mimicking a Euronews news report. However, there was no record of the outlet having published the information, no other reliable media outlets had reported the alleged incident, and Latvia's Ministry of Defence denied the claim. The video was linked to the Matryoshka disinformation network, which specialises in fabricating content that imitates publications by international media outlets.

Images of an explosion were also circulated alongside the claim that the target was a NATO-operated weapons depot, but Zelenskyy confirmed that it was a facility belonging to the Ukrainian army.

Georgia

Several disinformation narratives stood out in Georgia, targeting the credibility of the West, fostering hostility towards migrants and fuelling tensions with Ukraine. In the first case, a video of former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili was circulated out of context. In it, he stated that Europe and the West "mean homosexuality, depravity and promiscuity". The video was presented in a context that reinforced a negative view of Western values.

In addition to the previously mentioned content exaggerating the presence of migrants from certain backgrounds in the country, established disinformation accounts and Russian-speaking profiles also circulated a video featuring a Black man expressing his desire to have money, a free house and an English woman, claiming that England was the only place where he could obtain these things. The posts framed the content within narratives that could fuel anti-migrant sentiment.

Another notable case was a claim that Ukrainian national basketball team players had turned their backs on Georgia during the performance of the Georgian national anthem. The message received more than 3,100 likes on social media and fuelled tensions between the two countries through sport. However, the footage was circulated without context: before the national anthems began, players from both teams had turned towards the side of the court where the national flags were displayed.

Lithuania

Against a backdrop of rising tensions in the Baltic region, narratives were circulated portraying European actions and Lithuania's defence decisions as provocations against Russia. Among these, Vladimir Putin claimed that European Union troops had conducted exercises to practise seizing civilian vessels in the Baltic Sea. Russia also accused Lithuania of provoking a military conflict between the West and Russia through its decision to deploy nuclear weapons, alleging that the country was turning its own territory into a potential military target.

Ukraine

Narratives involving historical revisionism, a recurring feature of Kremlin messaging and Russian media coverage, were also detected. Specifically, Russian media circulated statements by Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations claiming that "almost all of Europe", together with the Third Reich, had taken part in the attack on the Soviet Union. This claim exaggerates the extent of European involvement: only six European governments fought alongside Nazi Germany against the USSR.

In addition, Russian media outlets and channels circulated various narratives extending disinformation to other European countries. These included false claims that Ukrainian refugees were allegedly being deported from Germany to be sent to the front; an alleged "anti-Ukrainian jihad" in Belgium; claims of an increase in the number of people who had supposedly fled the "Kyiv regime" for Slovakia; and allegations that the Italian mafia was attempting to acquire drones used in the war. Also, as mentioned above, accusations circulated via a fabricated screenshot claiming that Ukrainian neo-Nazis had murdered a Moroccan woman and her daughter in Ceuta.

Spain

During the period analysed, several disinformation narratives also detected in other countries relating to Spain circulated. These included claims that mercenaries were being openly recruited on Spanish territory to fight in Ukraine, and that Andriy Yermak, then Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, was in the city of Tarragona rather than in Ukraine.

AI-generated content also continued to circulate. Examples included a fake image of Vladimir Putin taking a selfie during the BRICS summit in New Delhi, which was also detected in Mexico; images of alleged Israeli passports belonging to Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his wife; and an image comparing the Ukrainian president to Hitler.

In addition, content accusing Zelenskyy and those around him of misappropriating Western aid intended for Ukraine continued to circulate without evidence. In late September, a post shared a video, also detected in Argentina, Mexico and Lithuania, claiming that Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) had found USD 140 million during a search of the offices of Arsen Zhumadilov, former head of the Defence Procurement Agency. The content was published on a fake website impersonating the Ukrainian outlet *The New Voice of Ukraine*. NABU itself debunked the video, stating that it had been created using artificial intelligence.

Latin America

Argentina

RT en Español circulated a claim that the United States and the European Union had hired a former head of Mossad to track down millions of dollars in aid allegedly stolen in Ukraine. A post was also shared claiming that a Russian attack had destroyed 15,000 drones in Kyiv, but which apparently used images of Tel Aviv. Although originally written in French, the post also reached Argentine audiences thanks to Grok's automatic translation feature. Finally, a verified account on X circulated an accusation that Ukraine's new Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces had attacked civilians in Mariupol in 2014.

Colombia

In Colombia, one of the most widely circulated narratives, which had also appeared in previous quarters, concerned Russia's cancer vaccine. As many as 10 Facebook posts, with a combined total of 803,700 likes, promoted this message, which benefits the image of the Russian government. Another notable narrative concerned Donald Trump's seizure of Venezuelan oil, which ultimately left the United States unable to sell it.

Mexico

The narrative linking Ukraine to Mexican drug cartels continued to gain traction during this period, spreading through various posts that went viral on platforms such as X, where they reached up to 1.5 million views. Notable examples include a post by Chay Bowes, an Irish correspondent based in Russia, which received 5,300 likes and 2,400 reposts, as well as content shared by Venezuelan national Roi Lopez Rivas.

Meanwhile, the narratives identified in Mexico focused primarily on accusations against Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Through the manipulation of his statements, he was falsely attributed with saying that Ukraine would shoot down civilian aircraft in Russian airspace. In addition, various posts linked the Ukrainian president to drug use.

Venezuela

Two events stood out during this period: the conference on disinformation and fact-checking organised by the Kremlin-linked GFCN network at the International University of Communications in Caracas, and the "Dialogue on Fakes 4.0" International Forum, where Sergey Lavrov claimed that the deaths of civilians in Bucha had been staged.

Furthermore, in the context of the conflict with Ukraine, Venezuelan actors circulated claims about the open recruitment of foreign mercenaries in Spain, allegedly involving high mortality rates. They also spread

accusations of corruption and state abandonment of populations affected in the port city of Kherson, alongside highly ideologised narratives labelling the Ukrainian government and its youth education initiatives as “Nazi”.

Information about de project

This report is part of the ATAFIMI project. By developing a pioneering technological tool for the study of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) and cross-border disinformation campaigns, the system centralises and serves as a repository for disinformation content detected in these countries. The use of a common methodology enables us to identify cross-border disinformation campaigns and narratives circulating simultaneously in Europe and Latin America.

The following organizations take part in the project: Fundación Maldita.es (Spain), StopFake (Ukraine), Delfi (Lithuania), Myth Detector (Georgia), Zašto ne (Bosnia and Herzegovina), RasKRIKavanje and FakeNews Tragač (Serbia), Chequeado (Argentina), La Silla Vacía (Colombia), Verificado.mx (Mexico), and Cazadores de Fake News (Venezuela).