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PRESS FREEDOM

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Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2005

North Korea, Eritrea and Turkmenistan are the world's "black holes" for news

More and more African countries move up the list

North Korea once again comes bottom of the Reporters Without Borders fourth annual World Press Freedom Index, released today. It is closely followed in the 167-country list by Eritrea (166th) and Turkmenistan (165th), which are other "black holes" for news where the privately-owned media is not allowed and freedom of expression does not exist.

Journalists there simply relay government propaganda. Anyone out of step is harshly dealt with. A word too many, a commentary that deviates from the official line or a wrongly-spelled name and the author may be thrown in prison or draw the wrath of those in power. Harassment, psychological pressure, intimidation and round-the-clock surveillance are routine.

East Asia (Burma 163rd, China 159th, Vietnam 158th, Laos 155th), Central Asia (Turkmenistan 165th, Uzbekistan 155th, Afghanistan 125th, Kazakhstan 119th) and the Middle East (Iran 164th, Iraq 157th, Saudi Arabia 154th, Syria 145th) are where journalists have the toughest time and where government repression or armed groups prevent the media operating freely.

The situation in Iraq (157th) deteriorated further during the year as the safety of journalists became more precarious. At least 24 journalists and media assistants have been killed so far this year, making it the mostly deadly conflict for the media since World War II. A total of 72 media workers have been killed since the fighting began in March 2003.

But more and more African and Latin American countries (Benin 25th, Namibia 25th, El Salvador 28th, Cape Verde 29th, Mauritius 34th, Mali 37th, Costa Rica 41st and Bolivia 45th) are getting very good rankings.

Western democracies slip back

Some Western democracies slipped down the Index. The United States (44th) fell more than 20 places, mainly because of the imprisonment of *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller and legal moves undermining the privacy of journalistic sources. Canada (21st)

Reporters Without Borders defends imprisoned journalists and press freedom throughout the world, as well as the right to inform the public and to be informed, in accordance with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Reporters Without Borders has nine national sections (in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom), representatives in Abidjan, Bangkok, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Montreal, Moscow, New York, Tokyo and Washington and more than a hundred correspondents worldwide.

also dropped several places due to decisions that weakened the privacy of sources and sometimes turned journalists into “court auxiliaries.” France (30th) also slipped, largely because of searches of media offices, interrogations of journalists and introduction of new press offences.

At the top of the Index once again are northern European countries Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Iceland, Norway and the Netherlands, where robust press freedom is firmly established. The top 10 countries are all European. New Zealand (12th), Trinidad and Tobago (12th), Benin (25th) and South Korea (34th) are the highest-ranked countries in other continents.

Press freedom, economic development and independence

Countries that have recently won their independence or have recovered it are very observant of press freedom and give the lie to the insistence of many authoritarian leaders that democracy takes decades to establish itself. Nine states that have had independence (or recovered it within the past 15 years) are among the top 60 countries – Slovenia (9th), Estonia (11th), Latvia (16th), Lithuania (21st), Namibia (25th), Bosnia-Herzegovina (33rd), Macedonia (43rd), Croatia (56th) and East Timor (58th).

The Index also contradicts the frequent argument by leaders of poor and repressive countries that economic development is a vital precondition for democracy and respect for human rights. The top of the Index is heavily dominated by rich countries, but several very poor ones (with a per capita GDP of less than \$1,000 in 2003) are among the top 60, such as Benin (25th), Mali (37th), Bolivia (45th), Mozambique (49th), Mongolia (53rd), Niger (57th) and East Timor (58th).

Two reasons for improvement

More African countries are moving up into the top half of the index each year thanks to their progress in the fight against impunity and the abolition of prison terms for press offences such as libel and slander and the printing of inaccurate news.

While those that usually respect press freedom – Cape Verde (29th), South Africa (31st), Mauritius (34th) and Mali (37th) – kept their positions in 2005, Mozambique jumped from 64th to 49th place. Heavy sentences passed on the killers of Mozambican journalist Carlos Cardoso helped to calm a situation which was difficult in the late 1990s. Decriminalisation of press offences in the Central African Republic lifted the country from 104th to 82nd place and Angola (76th) also improved its ranking further due to legal reforms as it emerged from a long civil war.

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Continued failure to punish the murderers of Norbert Zongo in Burkina Faso (78th) and unfulfilled promises of decriminalisation by President Abdoulaye Wade in Senegal (79th) prevented these countries from moving up, though the situation was worse in Cameroon (83rd), where journalists are still routinely thrown in prison. Internationally-observed elections allowed Guinea-Bissau (71st) and Liberia (83rd) to move up slightly.

Continuing violence

Unjust laws and repressive governments held back some countries where there is genuine news diversity, such as Madagascar (97th), Guinea (102nd), Kenya (109th), Chad (109th), Mauritania (127th) and Ethiopia (131st).

Press freedom sharply deteriorated in some countries. Gambia, with general mistrust between media and government in recent years, dropped to 130th place because of the unpunished murder of journalist Deyda Hydara and the increasingly hostile attitude to the media by President Yahya Jammeh. In Sierra Leone (126th), political and police violence against journalists worsened an already bad situation with the murder of Harry Yansaneh, who replaced the jailed Paul Kamara as editor of the daily paper *For Di People*.

Despite efforts by journalists to defend themselves in Somalia (149th), the country is still one of the continent's most dangerous places for the media and has not managed to emerge from general disorder. Two women journalists, the *BBC*'s Kate Peyton and Duniya Muhiyadin Nur, of the radio station *HornAfrik*, were killed during the year in Mogadishu.

Pervasive violence and repression, backed by often absurd laws, prevented any improvement in the ranking of the Democratic Republic of Congo (146th). Zimbabwe (153rd) meanwhile continued downward, with one of the continent's most ruthless regimes facing a courageous but poorly-equipped independent press. In Eritrea, which at (166th) is bottom-but-one of the world ranking, press freedom has not existed since 18 September 2001, when the privately-owned media was abolished.

Reporters Without Borders compiled this Index of 167 countries by asking its partner organizations (14 freedom of expression groups from around the world) and its network of 130 correspondents, as well as journalists, researchers, legal experts and human rights activists, to answer 50 questions designed to assess a country's level of press freedom. Some countries are not mentioned for lack of information about them.

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Reporters Without Borders

World press freedom ranking 2005

N°	Country	Note
1	Denmark	0,50
-	Finland	0,50
-	Iceland	0,50
-	Ireland	0,50
-	Netherlands	0,50
-	Norway	0,50
-	Switzerland	0,50
8	Slovakia	0,75
9	Czech Republic	1,00
-	Slovenia	1,00
11	Estonia	1,50
12	Hungary	2,00
-	New Zealand	2,00
-	Sweden	2,00
-	Trinidad and Tobago	2,00
16	Austria	2,50
-	Latvia	2,50
18	Belgium	4,00
-	Germany	4,00
-	Greece	4,00
21	Canada	4,50
-	Lithuania	4,50
23	Portugal	4,83
24	United Kingdom	5,17
25	Benin	5,50
-	Cyprus	5,50
-	Namibia	5,50
28	El Salvador	5,75
29	Cape Verde	6,00
30	France	6,25
31	Australia	6,50
-	South Africa	6,50
33	Bosnia and Herzegovina	7,00
34	Jamaica	7,50
-	Mauritius	7,50
-	South Korea	7,50
37	Japan	8,00
-	Mali	8,00
39	Hong-Kong	8,25
40	Spain	8,33
41	Costa Rica	8,50
42	Italy	8,67
43	Macedonia	8,75
44	United States of America (American territory)	9,50
45	Bolivia	9,67
46	Uruguay	9,75
47	Israel	10,00
48	Bulgaria	10,25
49	Mozambique	10,50

50	Chile	11,75
51	Dominican Republic	12,25
-	Taiwan	12,25
53	Cyprus (North)	12,50
-	Mongolia	12,50
-	Poland	12,50
56	Croatia	12,83
57	Niger	13,00
58	Timor-Leste	13,50
59	Argentina	13,67
60	Botswana	14,00
-	Fiji	14,00
62	Albania	14,17
63	Brazil	14,50
-	Tonga	14,50
65	Serbia and Montenegro	14,83
66	Ghana	15,00
-	Panama	15,00
68	Nicaragua	15,25
69	Paraguay	15,50
70	Romania	16,17
71	Congo	17,00
-	Guinea-Bissau	17,00
-	Seychelles	17,00
74	Moldova	17,50
-	Tanzania	17,50
76	Angola	18,00
-	Honduras	18,00
78	Burkina Faso	19,00
-	Senegal	19,00
80	Uganda	19,25
81	Lesotho	19,50
82	Central African Republic	19,75
83	Cameroon	20,50
-	Liberia	20,50
85	Kuwait	21,25
86	Guatemala	21,50
87	Ecuador	21,75
88	Comoros	22,00
89	Malawi	22,75
90	Burundi	23,00
-	Cambodia	23,00
-	Qatar	23,00
-	Venezuela	23,00
-	Zambia	23,00
95	Togo	23,75
96	Jordan	24,00
97	Madagascar	24,50
98	Turkey	25,00
99	Georgia	25,17
100	Kosovo	25,75
-	United Arab Emirates	25,75
102	Armenia	26,00

-	Gabon	26,00
-	Guinea	26,00
-	Indonesia	26,00
106	India	27,00
107	Thailand	28,00
108	Lebanon	28,25
109	Chad	30,00
-	Kenya	30,00
111	Kyrgyzstan	32,00
112	Ukraine	32,50
113	Malaysia	33,00
-	Tajikistan	33,00
115	Sri Lanka	33,25
116	Peru	33,33
117	Haiti	33,50
118	Swaziland	35,00
119	Kazakhstan	36,17
-	Morocco	36,17
121	Djibouti	37,00
122	Rwanda	38,00
123	Bahrein	38,75
-	Nigeria	38,75
125	Afghanistan	39,17
126	Sierra Leone	39,50
127	Mauritania	40,00
128	Colombia	40,17
129	Algeria	40,33
130	Gambia	41,00
131	Ethiopia	42,00
132	Palestinian Authority	42,50
133	Equatorial Guinea	44,00
-	Sudan	44,00
135	Mexico	45,50
136	Yemen	46,25
137	United States of America (in Iraq)	48,50
138	Russia	48,67
139	Philippines	50,00
140	Singapore	50,67
141	Azerbaijan	51,00
142	Bhutan	51,50
143	Egypt	52,00
144	Côte d'Ivoire	52,25
145	Syria	55,00
146	Democratic Republic of Congo	57,33
147	Tunisia	57,50
148	Maldives	58,50
149	Somalia	59,00
150	Pakistan	60,75
151	Bangladesh	61,25
152	Belarus	61,33
153	Zimbabwe	64,25
154	Saudi Arabia	66,00
155	Laos	66,50

-	Uzbekistan	66,50
157	Iraq	67,00
158	Vietnam	73,25
159	China	83,00
160	Nepal	86,75
161	Cuba	87,00
162	Libya	88,75
163	Burma	88,83
164	Iran	89,17
165	Turkmenistan	93,50
166	Eritrea	99,75
167	North Korea	109,00