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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

### Rigid political leaders block progress in most Asian countries

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

The situation in Iraq (157<sup>th</sup>) 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 25<sup>th</sup>, Namibia 25<sup>th</sup>, El Salvador 28<sup>th</sup>, Cape Verde 29<sup>th</sup>, Mauritius 34<sup>th</sup>, Mali 37<sup>th</sup>, Costa Rica 41<sup>st</sup> and Bolivia 45<sup>th</sup>) are getting very good rankings.

### Western democracies slip back

Some Western democracies slipped down the Index. The United States (44<sup>th</sup>) fell more than 20 places, mainly because of the imprisonment of *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller and legal

*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.*

moves undermining the privacy of journalistic sources. Canada (21<sup>st</sup>) also dropped several places due to decisions that weakened the privacy of sources and sometimes turned journalists into “court auxiliaries.” France (30<sup>th</sup>) 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 (12<sup>th</sup>), Trinidad and Tobago (12<sup>th</sup>), Benin (25<sup>th</sup>) and South Korea (34<sup>th</sup>) 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 (9<sup>th</sup>), Estonia (11<sup>th</sup>), Latvia (16<sup>th</sup>), Lithuania (21<sup>st</sup>), Namibia (25<sup>th</sup>), Bosnia-Herzegovina (33<sup>rd</sup>), Macedonia (43<sup>rd</sup>), Croatia (56<sup>th</sup>) and East Timor (58<sup>th</sup>).

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 (25<sup>th</sup>), Mali (37<sup>th</sup>), Bolivia (45<sup>th</sup>), Mozambique (49<sup>th</sup>), Mongolia (53<sup>rd</sup>), Niger (57<sup>th</sup>) and East Timor (58<sup>th</sup>).

### **Asia is still the toughest continent for journalists**

For the fourth year running, North Korea (167<sup>th</sup>) is at the very bottom of the Index. The regime, locked in a dispute over nuclear weapons with the international community, made no concessions whatever to press freedom. The secret police continued to hound those listening to foreign radio stations and journalists are reportedly still being held in concentration camps for professional errors or deviating from the official line.

King Gyanendra of Nepal (160<sup>th</sup>) is trying to wipe out 15 years of democratic achievement by the independent press with censorship and arrests and his government has sent soldiers to newspaper offices. About 150 journalists were arrested by the authorities in the first 10

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days of September. The Maoist rebels killed, kidnapped and threatened journalists, especially pro-government ones, who criticised them.

Half the countries in the bottom 10 of the Index are in Asia. Despite some media privatisation in China (159<sup>th</sup>), the government's propaganda department monitors the media, which were forbidden to mention dozens of sensitive subjects in the past year. The ranking of Vietnam (158<sup>th</sup>) improved slightly (no journalists are now in jail) but the ruling Communist Party still controls the media.

No improvement was seen in Burma (163<sup>rd</sup>) and the replacement of some of the ruling generals did not benefit the media. The much-awaited release of pro-opposition journalists did not happen and one of them, Win Tin, began his 16<sup>th</sup> year in prison. The censorship office monitors the press, even the death announcements columns.

Singapore (140<sup>th</sup>), which has a quite different style, still has a very low ranking because the government headed by the son of founding father Lee Kwan Yew keeps its grip on the media and uses drastic laws to crack down on the few independent journalists.

### **Some striking improvements**

Press freedom improved in Tonga (63<sup>rd</sup>), where the democratic opposition and the courts managed to push back arbitrary measures by the king. Mongolia (53<sup>rd</sup>) recorded very little interference with journalists despite continuing government control of the public media.

Malaysia (113<sup>th</sup>) no longer has any journalists or cyber-dissidents in prison and peace accords in Indonesia (102<sup>nd</sup>) have opened up the former rebel province of Aceh to journalists. Despite occasional violence, the media works in good conditions and online media are prolific.

### **Democracies in trouble**

Killings of journalists in the Philippines (139<sup>th</sup>) increased, along with censorship, mainly by local officials. President Gloria Arroyo showed intolerance towards the media, especially foreign, for exposing corruption. On Mindanao island, security forces were frequently involved in the murder or obstruction of journalists.

The independent press in Afghanistan (125<sup>th</sup>), which has played a key part in the campaign for the first democratic elections since the fall of the Taliban regime, was frequently attacked and threatened. The main target was the privately-owned station *Tolo TV*, several of whose

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journalists were attacked and one woman presenter murdered. Reporters are caught in the political crossfire in regions where the Taliban and warlords still hold sway. US and NATO troops were especially irritable with the media.

South Korea (34<sup>th</sup>) and Taiwan (51<sup>st</sup>) are getting closer to the European democracies but some authoritarian reflexes persist there, especially against the opposition media. South Korea's ruling party pushed through a law about the "social responsibility" of the media aimed at conservative newspapers. The Taiwanese authorities cancelled the broadcasting licence of a TV station close to the main opposition grouping. Press freedom violations were very rare in Hong Kong (39<sup>th</sup>) despite self-censorship on topics known to annoy the Chinese government.

*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

<b>N°</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Note</b>
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

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

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