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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

**The 10 highest-ranked countries are in Europe, with Russia,  
Central Asia and the Caucasus near the bottom**

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 moves undermining the privacy of journalistic sources. Canada (21<sup>st</sup>)

*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 (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>).

### **The top 10 countries are in Europe but gaps are widening between European Union members**

The highest-ranked countries may all be European but the press freedom gap is widening between member-states of the European Union. Poland (53<sup>rd</sup>), for example, slipped nearly 20 places this year, mainly because a journalist was heavily fined for “offensive remarks” about the Pope, a taboo subject. An investigative journalist on the satirical weekly *Nie* also faces between three months and five years in prison for refusing to reveal his sources. His computer hard-drive was put under legal seal at his home on 23 June, depriving him of his work equipment for several months.

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Spain gets a poor ranking (40<sup>th</sup>) largely because of continued threats to journalists by ETA Basque militants. In Italy (42<sup>nd</sup>), a search of the offices of the daily *Corriere della Sera* last May, after it printed a report about the use of Italian Beretta pistols in Iraq, showed how strong the temptation still is to violate the secrecy of journalistic sources. The position of the United Kingdom (24<sup>th</sup>) is due to the situation in Northern Ireland, where journalists continue to be threatened by paramilitary groups.

The countries waiting to join the European Union do not score well. Despite efforts, press freedom is not securely established in Bulgaria (48<sup>th</sup>), Croatia (56<sup>th</sup>) and Romania (70<sup>th</sup>).

Journalists in Turkey (98<sup>th</sup>) objected strongly to a new criminal code adopted in June but the country still advanced 15 places because of a drop in press freedom violations.

### **Central Asia, the Caucasus and Russia at the bottom of the list**

In the Caucasus, press freedom sharply deteriorated in Azerbaijan (141<sup>st</sup>). The murder of independent journalist Elmar Husseyinov in March illustrated the violence and harassment journalists are exposed to there. Attacks on press freedom are increasing in the run-up to parliamentary elections on 6 November.

The repressive regime of President Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus (152<sup>nd</sup>) has systematically shut down the country's few struggling independent newspapers by throttling them financially with huge fines or using ridiculous bureaucratic pretexts. Belarus slipped down the Index mainly because of jail sentences on several journalists for covering opposition demonstrations.

Ukraine, however, jumped up to 112<sup>th</sup> place, from 138<sup>th</sup> in 2004, because of the abolition of censorship after the "Orange Revolution" and the coming to power of President Viktor Yushchenko. The killers of journalist Georgy Gongadze were identified and will soon be tried, but those behind the murder are still free. The picture is marred by continuing violence against journalists.

In Russia (138<sup>th</sup>), a journalist was murdered and another survived an attempt to kill him. More than a year after the killing of Paul Khlebnikov, editor of the Russian edition of the US magazine *Forbes*, the authorities closed the investigation and said Chechen independence militant Kozh-Akhmed Nukhayev ordered him killed. Chechnya remains a major "black hole" for news in Russia. The government has also steadily taken control of all the country's TV stations, seriously threatening news diversity.

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The fierce repression of journalists in Uzbekistan (155<sup>th</sup>) has become routine since the bloody crackdown in Andijan on 13 May. The “witchhunt” launched by President Islam Karimov included the arbitrary arrest of three journalists and a concerted campaign against the media. Foreign media were officially accused of fomenting the Andijan rebellion.

*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>