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PRESS FREEDOM

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THIRD ANNUAL WORLDWIDE PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

East Asia and Middle East have worst press freedom records

No progress in Eritrea or Zimbabwe, but more and more African countries climb into the top half of the ranking

Reporters Without Borders announces its third annual worldwide index of press freedom. Such freedom is threatened most in East Asia (with North Korea at the bottom of the entire list at 167th place, followed by Burma 165th, China 162nd, Vietnam 161st and Laos 153rd) and the Middle East (Saudi Arabia 159th, Iran 158th, Syria 155th, Iraq 148th).

In these countries, an independent media either does not exist or journalists are persecuted and censored on a daily basis. Freedom of information and the safety of journalists are not guaranteed there. Continuing war has made Iraq the most deadly place on earth for journalists in recent years, with 44 killed there since fighting began in March last year.

But there are plenty of other black spots around the world for press freedom. Cuba (in 166th place) is second only to China as the biggest prison for journalists, with 26 in jail (China has 27). Since spring last year, these 26 independent journalists have languished in prison after being given sentences of between 14 and 27 years.

No privately-owned media exist in Turkmenistan (164th) and Eritrea (163rd), whose people can only read, see or listen to government-controlled media dominated by official propaganda.

The greatest press freedom is found in northern Europe (Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Iceland, the Netherlands and Norway), which is a haven of peace for journalists. Of the top 20 countries, only three (New Zealand 9th, Trinidad and Tobago 11th and Canada 18th) are outside Europe.

Other small and often impoverished democracies appear high on the list, such as El Salvador (28th) and Costa Rica (35th) in Central America, along with Cape Verde (38th) and Namibia (42nd) in Africa and Timor-Leste (57th) in Asia.

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.

Reporters Without Borders compiled the index by asking its partner organisations (14 freedom of expression organisations in five continents), its 130 correspondents around the world, as well as journalists, researchers, jurists and human rights activists, to answer 52 questions to indicate the state of press freedom in 167 countries (others were not included for lack of information).

Privately-owned press in the process of disappearing

The situation is dramatically simple in **Eritrea** (163rd): there has no longer been any privately-owned press, free expression or foreign correspondents. Fourteen journalists and newspaper editors are imprisoned in secret locations, without being tried. The media landscape is almost as denuded in **Zimbabwe** (155th). Since the repeated attacks by the authorities on the *Daily News*, the independent press has been reduced to one or two weeklies with a limited circulation. At the same time, although general elections are due in 2005, the government has banned the main opposition party from being allowed any access to the state media.

The aftereffects of war

In **Côte d'Ivoire** (149th) and the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (141st), war and the obstacles put in the way of reconstruction have taken a heavy toll on press freedom.

Both in the Ivorian port city of Abidjan (in the south of the country) and in Bouaké (the capital of the area controlled by the New Forces), journalists constantly run enormous risks to report the news. French journalist Jean Hélène was killed as a result of the hostility towards the press in October 2003. And French-Canadian journalist Guy-André Kieffer has been missing since April 2004.

An extremely violent climate reigns in parts of the immense Democratic Republic of Congo. Many cases of brutality and arbitrary arrests have been reported throughout the year in Kinshasa and the provinces. A man who was mistaken for his brother, a radio station manager, was gunned down in Bukavu in June by dissident military who had installed a reign of terror that targeted the media in particular.

To a lesser extent, an unstable and fragile political situation continues to take its toll on journalists in **Sierra Leone** (88th) and the **Central African Republic** (104th).

In **Nigeria** (117th), several recent raids by federal police against independent news media have raised concerns that President Olusegun Obasanjo's government has begun to take a much harder line towards the most critical journalists.

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Real improvement

In addition to the countries that have traditionally respected press freedom – **South Africa** (26th), **Benin** (27th), **Cape Verde** (38th), **Namibia** (42nd), **Mauritius** (46th), **Botswana** (50th), **Mali** (56th) and **Ghana** (57th) – there have been noticeable improvements elsewhere. **Togo** (75th) rose 20 places in the ranking after putting a stop to the many arbitrary arrests of journalists and decriminalizing press offences. **Angola** (91st) continues its slow climb after a quarter-century of war in which several journalists were among the victims.

Finally, the passing years seem to have no impact on the impunity prevailing in **Burkina Faso** (64th). Six years after the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo, the case is far from being resolved.

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World press freedom ranking 2004

N°	Country	Note
1	Denmark	0,50
-	Finland	0,50
-	Iceland	0,50
-	Irland	0,50
-	Netherlands	0,50
-	Norway	0,50
-	Slovakia	0,50
-	Switzerland	0,50
9	New Zealand	0,67
10	Latvia	1,00
11	Estonia	2,00
-	Germany	2,00
-	Sweden	2,00
-	Trinidad and Tobago	2,00
15	Slovenia	2,25
16	Lithuania	3,00
17	Austria	3,25
18	Canada	3,33
19	Czech Republic	3,50
-	France	3,50
21	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,67
22	Belgium	4,00
-	United States of America (American territory)	4,00
24	Jamaica	4,17
25	Portugal	4,50
26	South Africa	5,00
27	Benin	5,50
28	El Salvador	6,00
-	Hungary	6,00
-	United Kingdom	6,00
31	Dominican Republic	6,75
32	Poland	6,83
33	Greece	7,00
34	Hong-Kong	7,50
35	Costa Rica	7,63
36	Bulgaria	8,00
-	Israel (Israeli territory)	8,00
38	Cape Verde	8,75
39	Italy	9,00
-	Spain	9,00
41	Australia	9,50
42	Chile	10,00
-	Japan	10,00
-	Namibia	10,00
-	Uruguay	10,00
46	Mauritius	10,50
-	Paraguay	10,50
48	South Korea	11,13
49	Macedonia	11,25
50	Albania	11,50

-	Botswana	11,50
52	Nicaragua	11,67
53	Honduras	11,75
54	Croatia	11,83
55	Grenade	12,00
56	Mali	12,83
57	Ghana	13,50
-	Timor-Leste	13,50
59	Thailand	14,00
60	Taiwan	14,25
61	Panama	14,50
-	Tanzania	14,50
63	Fiji	16,00
64	Burkina Faso	16,25
-	Mozambique	16,25
66	Brazil	16,50
-	Ecuador	16,50
-	Guatemala	16,50
69	Congo	17,50
70	Romania	17,83
71	Niger	18,33
72	Madagascar	18,50
73	Burundi	19,00
-	Mongolia	19,00
75	Togo	19,50
76	Bolivia	20,00
77	Serbia and Montenegro	20,13
78	Moldova	20,50
79	Argentina	21,33
80	Senegal	21,50
81	Cyprus (North)	22,00
82	Kenya	22,25
83	Armenia	23,50
-	Guinea-Bissau	23,50
-	Seychelles	23,50
86	Uganda	24,00
87	Lebanon	24,38
88	Guinea	24,50
-	Sierra Leone	24,50
90	Venezuela	24,63
91	Angola	26,50
-	Comoros	26,50
93	Cameroon	27,00
94	Georgia	27,50
95	Tajikistan	27,75
96	Mexico	27,83
97	Afghanistan	28,25
98	Gambia	29,50
-	Lesotho	29,50
100	Zambia	29,75
101	Malawi	31,00
-	Swaziland	31,00
103	Kuwait	31,67

104	Central African Republic	32,50
-	Qatar	32,50
106	Chad	33,25
107	Kyrgyzstan	35,25
108	United States of America (in Iraq)	36,00
109	Cambodia	36,50
-	Sri Lanka	36,50
111	Philippines	36,63
112	Ethiopia	37,00
113	Rwanda	37,25
-	Turkey	37,25
115	Gabon	37,50
-	Israel (Occupied Territories)	37,50
117	Indonesia	37,75
-	Nigeria	37,75
119	Tonga	38,17
120	India	38,50
121	Jordan	39,13
122	Malaysia	39,83
123	Liberia	40,00
-	Peru	40,00
125	Haiti	42,13
126	Morocco	43,00
127	Palestinian Authority	43,17
128	Algeria	43,50
-	Egypt	43,50
-	Somalia	43,50
131	Kazakhstan	44,17
132	Sudan	44,25
133	Equatorial Guinea	46,25
134	Colombia	47,38
135	Yemen	48,00
136	Azerbaijan	49,67
137	United Arab Emirates	50,25
138	Mauritania	51,00
-	Ukraine	51,00
140	Russia	51,38
141	Democratic Republic of Congo	51,50
142	Uzbekistan	52,13
143	Bahrein	52,50
144	Belarus	54,10
145	Djibouti	55,00
146	Bhutan	55,83
147	Singapore	57,00
148	Iraq	58,50
149	Côte d'Ivoire	60,38
150	Pakistan	61,75
151	Bangladesh	62,50
152	Tunisia	62,67
153	Laos	64,33
154	Libya	65,00
155	Syria	67,50
-	Zimbabwe	67,50

157	Maldives	69,17
158	Iran	78,30
159	Saudi Arabia	79,17
160	Nepal	84,00
161	Vietnam	86,88
162	China	92,33
163	Eritrea	93,25
164	Turkmenistan	99,83
165	Burma	103,63
166	Cuba	106,83
167	North Korea	107,50