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## PRESS FREEDOM

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Clairefontaine

### THIRD ANNUAL WORLDWIDE PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

## East Asia and Middle East have worst press freedom records

### North Korea still bottom, little improvement in China and Vietnam

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 167<sup>th</sup> place, followed by Burma 165<sup>th</sup>, China 162<sup>nd</sup>, Vietnam 161<sup>st</sup> and Laos 153<sup>rd</sup>) and the Middle East (Saudi Arabia 159<sup>th</sup>, Iran 158<sup>th</sup>, Syria 155<sup>th</sup>, Iraq 148<sup>th</sup>).

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 166<sup>th</sup> 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 (164<sup>th</sup>) and Eritrea (163<sup>rd</sup>), 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 9<sup>th</sup>, Trinidad and Tobago 11<sup>th</sup> and Canada 18<sup>th</sup>) are outside Europe.

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

### **Too many Asian countries at the bottom of the list**

For the third year running, **North Korea** is bottom of the list. Reporters Without Borders has just published a report of a fact-finding mission that describes how journalism is forced to serve the cult of personality of dictator Kim Jong-il. Dozens of journalists have been “re-educated” for often minor supposed professional “errors.”

At the other extreme is **New Zealand**, in 9<sup>th</sup> place, which is the top-listed non-European country. News diversity is respected in this Pacific democracy and the government does not interfere at all.

At the bottom end is **Burma** (165<sup>th</sup>), whose military rulers have banned the privately-owned media from speaking freely and thrown in prison journalists supporting opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The press is also cowed in **Vietnam** (161<sup>st</sup>) and **Laos** (153<sup>rd</sup>).

**China** still scores very low (162<sup>nd</sup>) despite the growth of print and broadcast media, since the ruling Communist Party has used violence to indicate the lines that must not be crossed. The country is the world’s biggest prison for journalists, with the most recent victim a Chinese correspondent for the US daily the *New York Times*. Despite promises made when Beijing was awarded the 2008 Olympic Games, the locally-based foreign media is still closely monitored in its every move.

### **No let-up in violence**

Violence against the media continues to undermine freedom in many Asian countries. **Nepal** (160<sup>th</sup>) and **Bangladesh** (151<sup>st</sup>) rate very low due to incessant violence there. The governments are partly to blame but political groups, especially the Maoist rebels in Nepal, as well as organised crime also persecute journalists.

Countries such as the **Philippines** (111<sup>th</sup>), **India** (120<sup>th</sup>) and **Indonesia** (117<sup>th</sup>) figure in the bottom half of the index despite having free and lively independent media, since killings and physical attacks on journalists, along with outdated laws, still prevent a full flowering of the press.

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Violence against the media in India rarely comes from the authorities but from political activists and in Kashmir from armed groups. The authorities in the Indonesian province of Aceh and the army in Pakistan's tribal areas have sealed off these areas to the media. **Pakistan** (150<sup>th</sup>) dropped about 20 places because of this and increased army pressure on the local press.

The **Maldives** (157<sup>th</sup>) lost ground in this year's index because of a crackdown on journalists and pro-democracy activists by longtime President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

### **Delicate situations**

The situation in **Afghanistan** (97<sup>th</sup>) improved markedly however, with growing news diversity and the media daring to tackle sensitive topics. But threats to journalists, especially from provincial warlords, remain very real.

In **Japan** (42<sup>nd</sup>), the media is diverse and powerful, but the system of kisha clubs still deprives foreign and freelance journalists of access to a lot of news. In **South Korea** (48<sup>th</sup>) and **Taiwan** (60<sup>th</sup>), the government is not always tolerant of opposition media.

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

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