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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

### Iraq is the world's deadliest country for journalists and Iran is the region's biggest prison

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).

### **Continuing impunity in the Middle-East**

The ranking distinguishes between the state of press freedom inside **Israel** (36<sup>th</sup>) and acts of violence against the press by the Israeli army in the Palestinian territories (115<sup>th</sup>). Fewer journalists were wounded or killed by Israeli army gunfire. Nonetheless, no investigation was conducted into the death of a Palestinian journalist in Nablus and dozens of reporters continue to be threatened when they try to cover the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Violations of the freedom and safety of Palestinian journalists have increased in the West Bank and Gaza since September 2003 against a backdrop of chaos and violence. The **Palestinian Authority** (127<sup>th</sup>) provided no information about a supposed investigation into the murder of a journalist in the Gaza Strip. Several news media were ransacked and some 10 Palestinian journalists were physically attacked by unidentified persons or armed groups such as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

### **Too many journalists stripped of their freedom**

With 14 journalists detained, **Iran** (158<sup>th</sup>) is the Middle-East's biggest prison for the press. Not satisfied with putting journalists behind bars, the conservatives in 2004 began a systematic crackdown on Internet sites which sprang up after most of the country's reformist newspapers were suspended or closed down for good.

The situation deteriorated in **Algeria** (128<sup>th</sup>). The privately-owned press was harassed before the April 2004 presidential elections, with dozens of journalists summoned by judicial authorities. Since his re-election, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has tried to bring the privately-owned media to heel. Four journalists or media owners have been sentenced to heavy prison sentences (three of them for press offences) and are still detained. Provincial correspondents are often the target of threats from local officials. In **Morocco** (126<sup>th</sup>), the authorities continue to be very sensitive whenever the press writes about life in the royal palace or the Western Sahara issue. Several journalists have been prosecuted without good reason and some have been given long prison sentences. And some foreign journalists have been expelled.

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### **Non-existent independent press**

In **Tunisia** (152<sup>nd</sup>), **Saudi Arabia** (159<sup>th</sup>), **Syria** (155<sup>th</sup>) and **Libya** (154<sup>th</sup>), the emergence of a free and independent press remains a mirage. In Syria, the information ministers have been changed, but the vice-like grip on the media has not loosened. The only kind of news report that is permitted is the ruling Baath party's propaganda. Journalists who refuse to censor themselves are quickly forced into exile. In Saudi Arabia, the media are all directly or indirectly controlled by the royal family. A western journalist has been the victim of a terrorist attack for the first time in years.

On the other hand, despite a few cases of intimidation, **Lebanon** (87<sup>th</sup>) has recovered its position as the leading Arab country as regards respect for press freedom.

### **A particularly deadly war**

U.S. behaviour towards the press in Iraq (108<sup>th</sup>) is ranked separately from the overall situation in the country (148<sup>th</sup>), which is one of the most dangerous places in the world, both for Iraqi journalists and foreign reporters. All are in danger of being targeted in the course of combat or by armed groups. Six journalists and media assistants have been killed by U.S. army gunfire without the U.S. military ever conducting proper enquiries. Furthermore, the new Iraqi authorities have not yet established a framework guaranteeing press freedom and have reacted in an authoritarian manner towards the pan-Arab satellite TV news stations whose coverage they view as pro-terrorist.

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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

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

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>