

# FREEDOM OF THE PRESS 2015



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## ON THE COVER

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Cover image by KAL.

## Press Freedom in 2014

# Harsh Laws and Violence Drive Global Decline

by Jennifer Dunham, Bret Nelson, and Elen Aghekyan

Conditions for the media deteriorated sharply in 2014, as journalists around the world faced mounting restrictions on the free flow of news and information—including grave threats to their own lives.

Governments employed tactics including arrests and censorship to silence criticism. Terrorists and other nonstate forces kidnapped and murdered journalists attempting to cover armed conflicts and organized crime. The wealthy owners who dominate private media in a growing number of countries shaped news coverage to support the government, a political party, or their own interests. And democratic states struggled to cope with an onslaught of propaganda from authoritarian regimes and militant groups.

*Freedom of the Press 2015*, the latest edition of an annual report published by Freedom House since 1980, found that global press freedom declined in 2014 to its lowest point in more than 10 years. The rate of decline also accelerated drastically, with the global average score suffering its largest one-year drop in a decade. The share of the world's population that enjoys a Free press stood at 14 percent, meaning only one in seven people live in countries where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures.

The steepest declines worldwide relate to two factors: the passage and use of restrictive laws against the press—often on national security grounds—and the ability of local and foreign journalists to physically access and report freely from a given country, including protest sites and conflict areas. Paradoxically, in a time of seemingly unlimited access to information

and new methods of content delivery, more and more areas of the world are becoming virtually inaccessible to journalists.

While there were positive developments in some countries, the dominant global trend was negative. The number of countries with significant improvements (8) was the lowest since 2009, while the number with significant declines (18) was the highest in 7 years.\* The 18 countries and territories that declined represented a politically diverse cross-section—including Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Serbia, and South Africa—indicating that the global deterioration in press freedom is not limited to autocracies or war zones. Also featured among the major backsliders were Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Honduras, Libya, South Sudan, and Thailand.

In a time of seemingly unlimited access to information and new methods of content delivery, more and more areas of the world are becoming virtually inaccessible to journalists.

The nature of major changes over the past five years is also striking. Since 2010, the most significant score improvements have occurred in countries where the media environment had been among the worst in the world. Tunisia, with a gain of 37 points, not only registered the biggest improvement over this period, but was also the only country with large gains that

\* Significant gains or declines are defined as shifts of 3 or more points in a country's score, on a 0–100 scale.

## ***Freedom of the Press*** **Methodology**

The *Freedom of the Press* report assesses the degree of media freedom in 199 countries and territories, analyzing the events and developments of each calendar year. Each country and territory receives a numerical score from 0 (the most free) to 100 (the least free), which serves as the basis for a status designation of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free.

Scores are assigned in response to 23 methodology questions that seek to capture the varied ways in which pressure can be placed on the flow of objective information and the ability of media platforms—whether print outlets, broadcast stations, news websites, blogs on public affairs, or social media that carry news content—to operate freely and without fear of repercussions.

Issues covered by the methodology include the legal and regulatory environment in which media operate; the degree of partisan control over news content; political influences on reporting and access to information; the public's ability to access diverse sources of information; violations of press freedom ranging from the murder of journalists and bloggers to other extralegal abuse and harassment; and economic pressures on media outlets and their means of distribution.

The scores reflect not just government actions and policies, but also the behavior of the press itself in testing boundaries, as well as the influence of private owners, political or criminal groups, and other nonstate actors.

For a more detailed explanation of the methodology and scoring process, see pp. 26–28.

maintained a positive trajectory in 2014. While Myanmar and Libya have each earned net improvements of 21 points, both suffered score declines in the past year and remain in the Not Free category. In a disturbing trend, several countries with histories of more democratic practices have experienced serious deterioration. Greece has fallen by 21 points since 2010, as existing structural problems were exacerbated by the economic crisis and related political pressures. Large five-year drops were also recorded in Thailand (13 points), Ecuador (12), Turkey (11), Hong Kong (9), Honduras (7), Hungary (7), and Serbia (7).

In 2014, influential authoritarian powers such as China and Russia maintained a tight grip on locally based print and broadcast media, while also seeking to control the more independent views provided either online or by foreign news sources. Beijing and Moscow in particular were more overt in their efforts to manipulate the information environment in regions that they considered to be within their sphere of influence: Hong Kong and Taiwan for the former, and Ukraine, Central Asia, and the Baltics for the latter.

The year's notable improvements included three status changes, with Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, and Ukraine moving from Not Free to Partly Free. Tunisia maintained its reputation as the success story of the Arab Spring, improving another 5 points in 2014. However, other countries recording gains either made modest, tentative improvements in the wake of civil strife—as in Central African Republic and Somalia—or featured authoritarian governments that have grown more secure and less violently oppressive in recent years, as in Zimbabwe.

### **Increased use of restrictive laws**

Several countries in 2014 passed security or secrecy laws that established new limits on speech and reporting. After a coup in May, Thailand's military government suspended the constitution, imposed martial law, shut down media outlets, blocked websites, and severely restricted content. Aggressive enforcement of the country's *lèse-majesté* laws also continued in 2014, and after the coup alleged violators were tried in military courts.

In Turkey, the government repeatedly sought to expand the telecommunications authority's power to block websites without a court order, though some of the more aggressive legal changes were struck down by the Constitutional Court. Other legislation gave the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) vast pow-

ers of surveillance and unfettered access to virtually any information held by any entity in the country. The amendments also criminalized reporting on or acquiring information about MIT.

A Russian law that took effect in August placed new controls on blogs and social media, requiring all sites with more than 3,000 visitors a day to register with the state telecommunications agency as media outlets. This status made them responsible for the accuracy of posted information, among other obligations.

Detentions and closures under existing security or emergency laws also increased in 2014. Azerbaijan was one of the worst offenders, with nine journalists in prison as of December 1. Over the course of that month, the authorities detained prominent investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova of U.S.-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), raided and closed RFE/RL's offices in the country, and interrogated the service's local employees. A number of well-known media advocacy groups were also forced to close during the year.

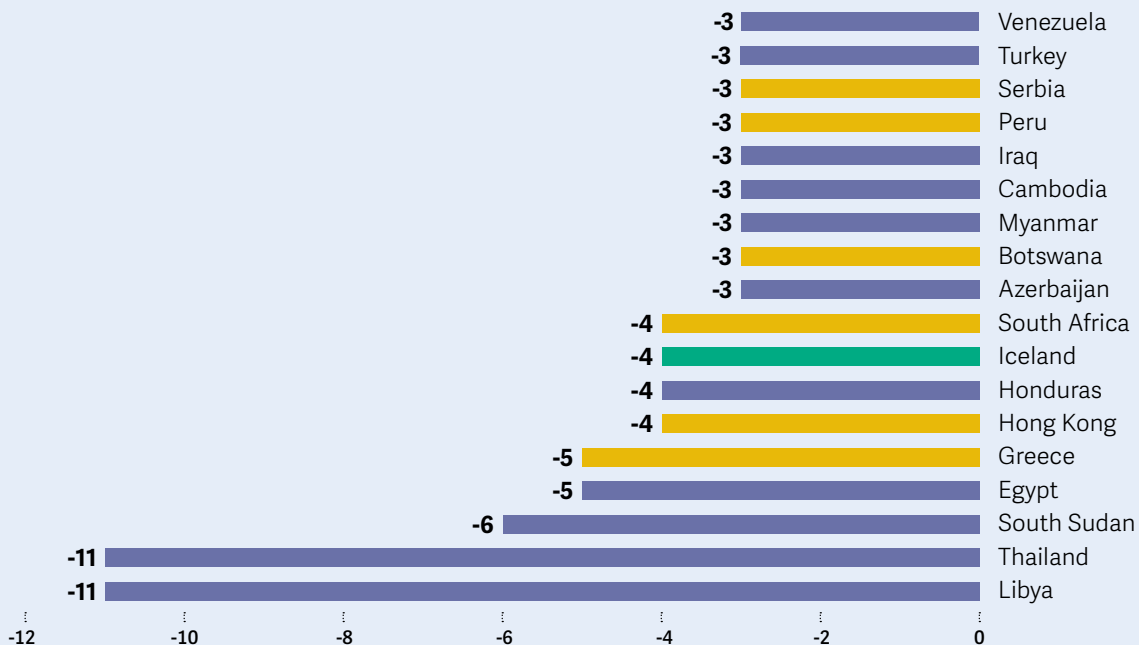
In Egypt, a court sentenced three Al-Jazeera journalists to seven or more years in prison on charges of conspiring with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood to publish false news. The convictions followed a farci-

cal trial in which prosecutors presented no credible evidence. While all three were freed or released on bail in early 2015, at least nine journalists remain in jail on terrorism charges or for covering the Brotherhood.

Ethiopia's government stepped up its campaign against free expression in April 2014 by arresting six people associated with the Zone 9 blogging collective and three other journalists. In July, they were charged with inciting violence and terrorism. Myanmar, which had taken several positive steps in recent years, suffered declines in 2014 due in part to an increase in arrests and convictions of journalists. In July, four reporters and the chief executive of the *Unity Weekly News* were sentenced to 10 years in prison and hard labor, later reduced to seven years, under the colonial-era Official Secrets Act for reporting on a possible chemical weapons facility.

Such restrictive laws are not only utilized in authoritarian environments. Mexico's new telecommunications law drew widespread objections from press freedom advocates due to provisions allowing the government to monitor and shut down real-time blogging and posting during social protests. South African authorities expanded their use of the apartheid-era National Key Points Act to prevent investigative jour-

**BIGGEST PRESS FREEDOM DECLINES IN 2014**



nalists from reporting on important sites or institutions, particularly when probing corruption by political figures. In South Korea, President Park Geun-hye's administration increasingly relied on the National Security Law to suppress critical reports, especially regarding the president's inner circle and the *Sewol* ferry disaster.

### Physical violence and inaccessible areas

The world's growing number of areas that are effectively off limits for journalists include parts of Syria and Iraq controlled by Islamic State (IS) extremists, states in northeastern Nigeria where Boko Haram is active, much of conflict-racked Libya, and Egypt's restive Sinai Peninsula. In Mexico, Honduras, and other Central American countries, intimidation and violence against journalists continued to soar during the year, as gangs and local authorities sought to deter reporting on organized crime and corruption in their territory.

Seventeen journalists were killed in Syria alone in 2014, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). The death toll, coupled with the high-profile murders of American freelance journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff by IS militants, served as a stark reminder that local reporters—who make up the vast majority of the casualties—and freelancers do not have the extensive security safeguards afforded to full-time staff at large news organizations like the *New York Times*. To help address the problem, major outlets and advocacy groups established global safety principles and practices in early 2015.

While some parts of the world are rendered inaccessible mostly by chaotic violence, others are deliberately barred to most reporters by repressive governments. Prime examples include China's Tibet and Xinjiang regions, Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, Russian-occupied Crimea, and certain ethnic minority areas in Myanmar. Citizen journalists, activists, and ordinary residents have managed to disseminate some information about conditions in these regions, but it is no substitute for unfettered reporting by professionals, and it is often easier to send news to the outside world than to reach audiences within the affected area.

Street protests, though less deadly than armed conflicts, frequently proved dangerous for reporters to cover in 2014. During the prodemocracy demonstrations that broke out in Hong Kong in September, journalists faced a sharp rise in violence, including multiple assaults on reporters near protest sites. In

Venezuela, journalists became targets during clashes linked to the widespread social protests that swept the country in the first half of the year. Reporters in Brazil also encountered violence at protests before and during the World Cup; in February, a cameraman died after being hit in the head with an explosive. In Ukraine, in addition to four journalist deaths and other violence associated with the separatist conflict in the east, one journalist was killed and at least 27 others were injured at the height of confrontations between protesters and police in the capital in February.

### Pressure through ownership

In Russia and Venezuela, the media sector is increasingly owned by the state, private-sector cronies of the political leadership, or business interests that "depoliticize" their outlets by suppressing content that is critical of the government. In July, Venezuela's oldest independent daily, *El Universal*, was sold to new owners. The move came on the heels of ownership changes at two other major private media companies in the country, Cadena Capriles and Globovisión. In all three cases, respected reporters have left or been suspended since the ownership changes, primarily due to shifts in the editorial line that affected news coverage.

While somewhat more media diversity exists in countries like Turkey and Ecuador, political leaders have steadily tamed once-independent outlets, using various forms of pressure against private owners and creating media sectors that are firmly tilted in the ruling party's favor.

In Greece, the new public broadcaster has faced allegations of political interference in hiring and editorial content. Hungary remained a country of concern in 2014, as the administration of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán continued to exert pressure on media owners to influence coverage. Dozens of media workers protested the dismissal of the editor in chief of *Origo*, a news website, after it published an article on alleged misuse of state funds.

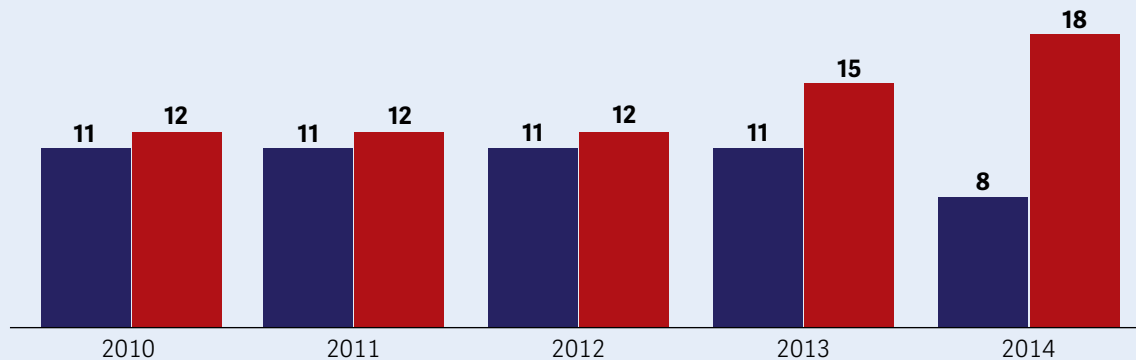
### Increased use of propaganda by states and nonstate actors

Among the most troubling trends identified in 2014 was the more active and aggressive use of propaganda—often false or openly threatening—to warp the media environment and crowd out authentic journalism.

This phenomenon was especially pronounced in Russia, where state-controlled national television stations broadcast nonstop campaigns of demonization

### COUNTRIES WITH SIGNIFICANT DECLINES INCREASINGLY OUTNUMBER THOSE WITH SIGNIFICANT GAINS

■ IMPROVED ■ DECLINED

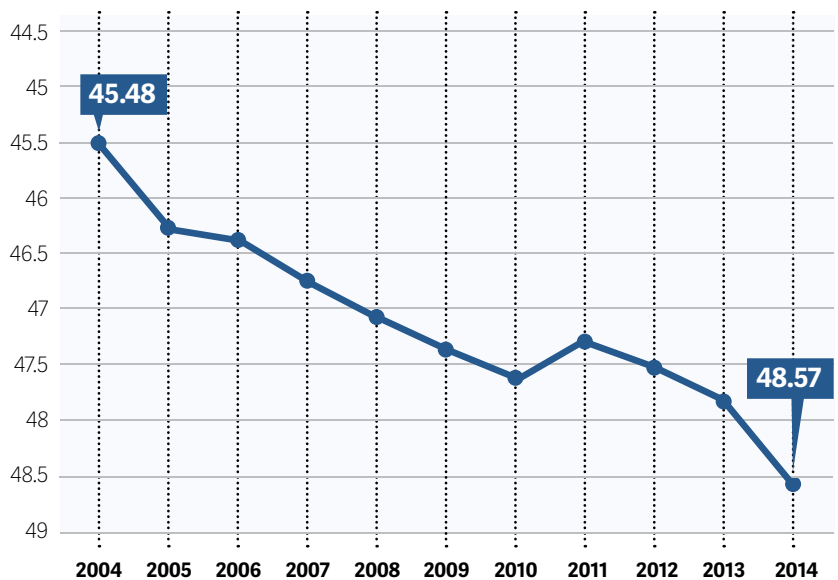


directed at the internal opposition, neighboring countries whose policies have displeased Moscow, and the broader democratic world. Russian media played a major role in preparing the Russian public for war with Ukraine. As Dmitry Kiselyov, head of the Kremlin's international news enterprise, asserted in April 2014, "Information wars have already become standard practice and the main type of warfare. The bombers are now sent in after the information campaign."

Neighboring countries have grappled with the problem of Russian propaganda, in some cases resorting to censorship. Ukrainian authorities, facing a military invasion, suspended the retransmission of at least 15 Russian television channels by cable operators. Authorities in Lithuania, Latvia, and Moldova—whose breakaway territory of Transnistria is supported by Moscow—imposed suspensions or fines on some Russian stations for reasons including incitement to war, disseminating historical inaccuracies, and lack of pluralism of opinions in news content. The government of Estonia did not follow suit, instead approving the creation of a Russian-language public channel, set to launch in 2015, as a means of countering Kremlin disinformation with honest reporting. Latvia and Lithuania also signaled plans to expand Russian-language public programming.

Like the Kremlin, China's Communist Party leaders used state-controlled media to propagate official views and vilify their perceived enemies. State outlets trumpeted the persona and slogans of President Xi Jinping while airing televised confessions and "self-criticisms" by detained journalists, with both phenomena drawing comparisons to the Mao era. To ensure that all media toed the line, the party's propaganda

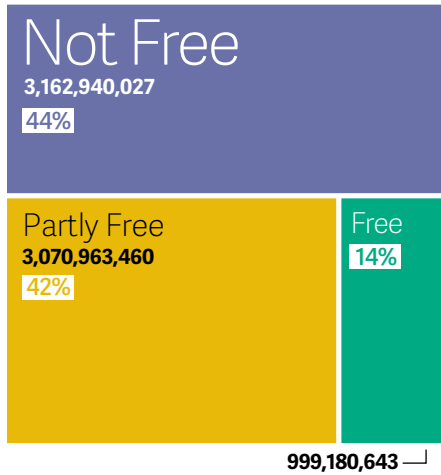
### THE GLOBAL AVERAGE PRESS FREEDOM SCORE HAS DECLINED SHARPLY SINCE 2004



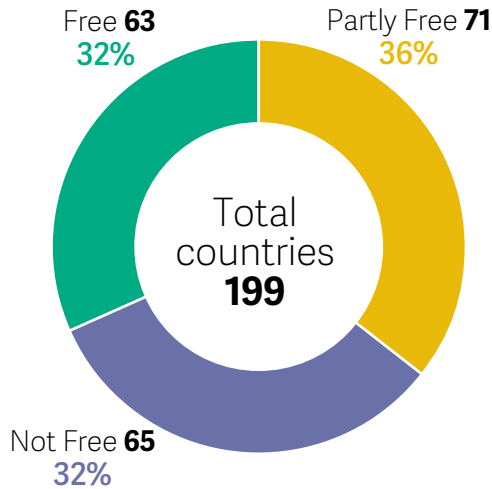
department issued almost daily directives ordering news outlets and websites to use only information from the official Xinhua News Agency for coverage of breaking developments.

Propaganda is not used exclusively by national governments. Militant groups including IS have established sophisticated media operations with potential audiences around the world, taking advantage of popular social-media tools and even satellite television. Democratic governments have been hard pressed to combat messages that openly advocate violence without restricting privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information for their citizens.

GLOBAL: STATUS BY POPULATION



GLOBAL: STATUS BY COUNTRY



Other Notable Developments in 2014

In addition to those described above, four major phenomena stood out during the year:

**Hostile conditions for women journalists:** Women journalists operated in an increasingly hostile environment in 2014, and the rapid expansion of Twitter and other social media as important tools for journalism has created new venues for harassment. This intimidation has proliferated and threatens to silence women's reporting on crucial topics including corruption, politics, and crime. Although journalists covering such topics have always been vulnerable, women now encounter particularly vicious and gender-specific attacks, ranging from smears and insults to graphic threats of sexual violence and the circulation of personal information. Turkish journalist Amberin Zaman described the wave of intimidation she has faced in recent years as a "public lynching."

**The impact of the Ebola crisis:** The Ebola epidemic in West Africa resulted in several restrictions on press freedom in 2014, although the three worst-affected countries each handled the crisis differently. In Liberia, emergency laws, shutdowns and suspensions of media outlets, and bans on coverage—ostensibly designed to avoid the spread of panic and misinformation—prevented the population from accessing critical information and aimed to hide the shortcomings of the government's response. In August, a reporter for *FrontPage Africa* was arrested while covering a protest against the state of emergency. In October, the government limited media access to health care facilities, requiring journalists to obtain explicit permission from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare before conducting interviews or using recording equipment on clinic or hospital grounds. Sierra Leone imposed less onerous restrictions on the press, but nevertheless used emergency laws to arrest and detain journalists for critical reporting. In Guinea, a journalist and two other media workers were killed by local residents as they attempted to report on the crisis in a remote town, but the government did not unduly constrain the activities of the press during the year.

**Deterioration in the Balkans:** A number of countries in the Western Balkans continued to exhibit a worrying pattern of press freedom violations in 2014. These media environments feature several common problems: the use of defamation and insult laws by politicians and businesspeople to suppress critical



reporting; progovernment bias at public broadcasters; editorial pressure from political leaders and private owners that leads to self-censorship; harassment, threats, and attacks on journalists that go unpunished; and opaque ownership structures. Macedonia's score has declined 10 points in the past five years, making it the worst performer in the region. Several opposition-oriented outlets have been forced to close during this period, and journalist Tomislav Kezarovski remained in detention throughout 2014 on questionable charges that he revealed the identity of a protected witness in a murder case. In Serbia during the year, the administration of Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić sought to curb reporting on floods that hit the country in May and directed increasingly hostile rhetoric and harassment at independent journalists; such pressure allegedly motivated broadcasters to cancel major political talk shows. Conditions in Montenegro have deteriorated since Milo Đukanović returned to the premiership in 2012, with independent outlets such as *Vjesti*, *Dan*, and the *Monitor* suffering lawsuits, unprosecuted physical attacks, and hostile government rhetoric.

**Persistent concerns in the United States:** The United States' score fell by one point, to 22, due to detentions, harassment, and rough treatment of journalists by police during protests in Ferguson, Missouri. Meanwhile, press freedom advocates remained concerned about certain practices and policies of the federal government, including the Obama administration's relatively rigid controls on the information coming out of the White House and government agencies. Although the U.S. Justice Department said in December that it would no longer seek to compel *New York Times* journalist James Risen to reveal a source in a long-running case, the Obama administration has used the 1917 Espionage Act to prosecute alleged leaks of classified information eight times, more than all previous administrations combined. Revelations of surveillance that included the bulk collection of communications data by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the targeted wiretapping of media outlets continued to reverberate in 2014, as fears of monitoring and the aggressive prosecution of alleged leakers made journalists' interactions with administration officials and potential sources more difficult.

## The Global Picture in 2014

Of the 199 countries and territories assessed for 2014 (two new territory reports, Crimea and Somaliland, were added), a total of 63 (32 percent) were rated Free, 71 (36 percent) were rated Partly Free,

and 65 (32 percent) were rated Not Free. This balance marks a shift toward the Partly Free category compared with the edition covering 2013, which featured 63 Free, 68 Partly Free, and 66 Not Free countries and territories.

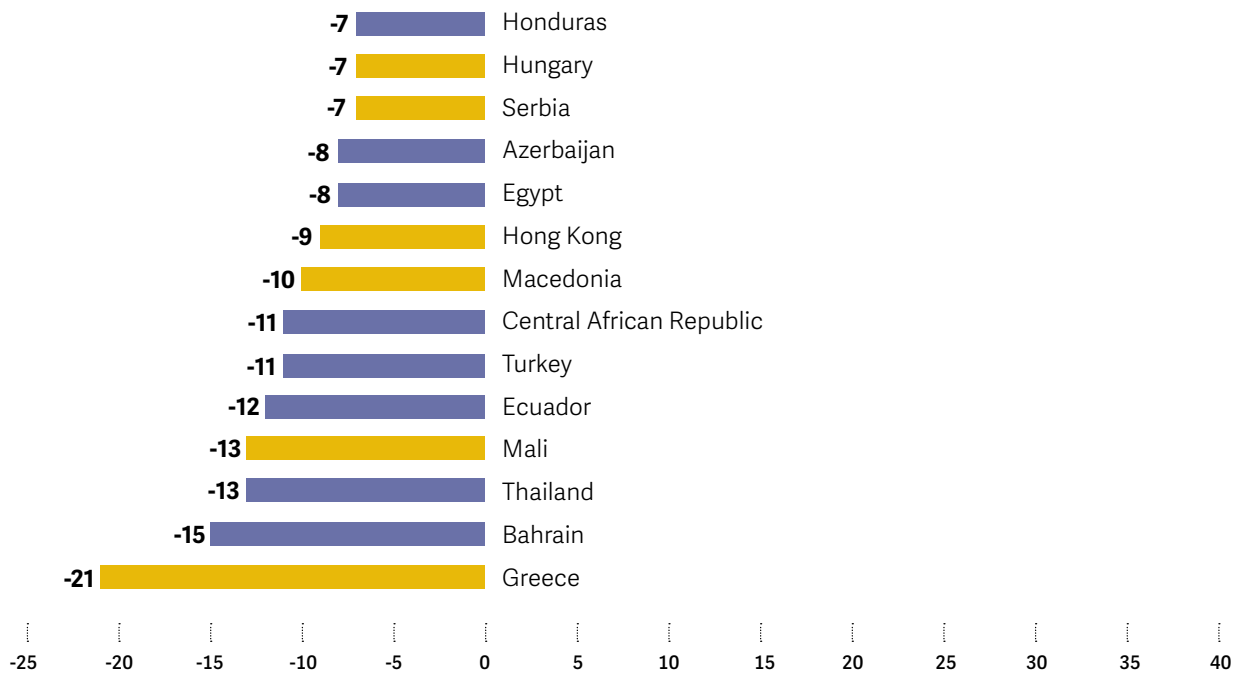
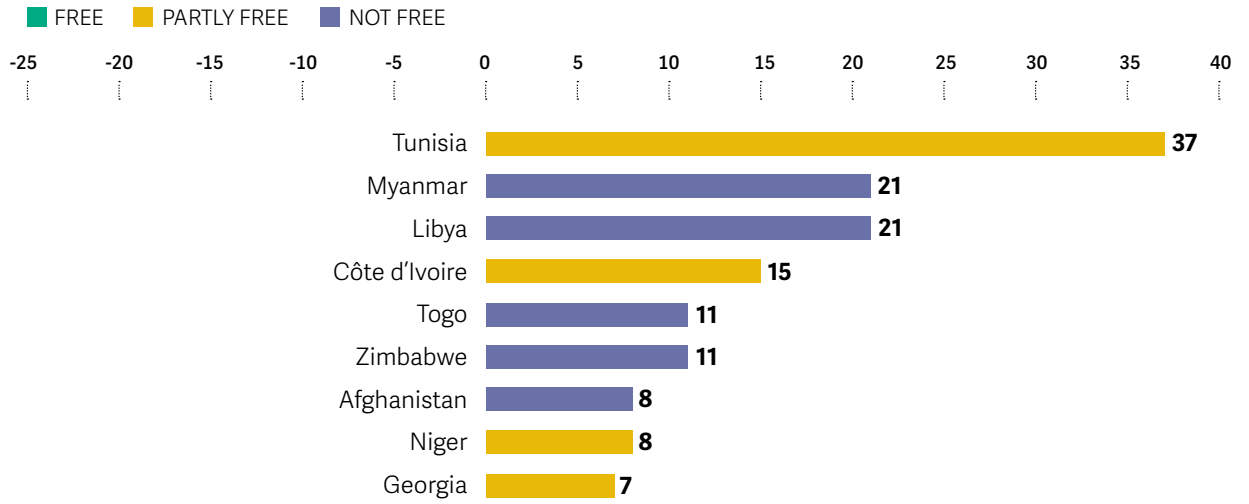
The report found that 14 percent of the world's inhabitants lived in countries with a Free press, while 42 percent had a Partly Free press and 44 percent lived in Not Free environments. The population figures are significantly affected by two countries—China, with a Not Free status, and India, with a Partly Free status—that together account for over a third of the world's more than seven billion people. The percentage of those enjoying a Free media in 2014 remained at its lowest level since 1996, when Freedom House began incorporating population data into the findings of the report.

After a multiyear decline in the global average score that was interrupted by an improvement in 2011, there was a further decline of 0.74 points for 2014, bringing the figure to its lowest level since 1999 and marking the greatest year-on-year decline since 2005. All regions except sub-Saharan Africa, whose average score improved slightly, experienced declines of varying degrees, with the Middle East and North Africa showing the largest net decline. In terms of thematic categories, the drop in the global average score was driven primarily by decline in the legal score, followed by the political score; the economic score showed the smallest amount of slippage.

## Worst of the Worst

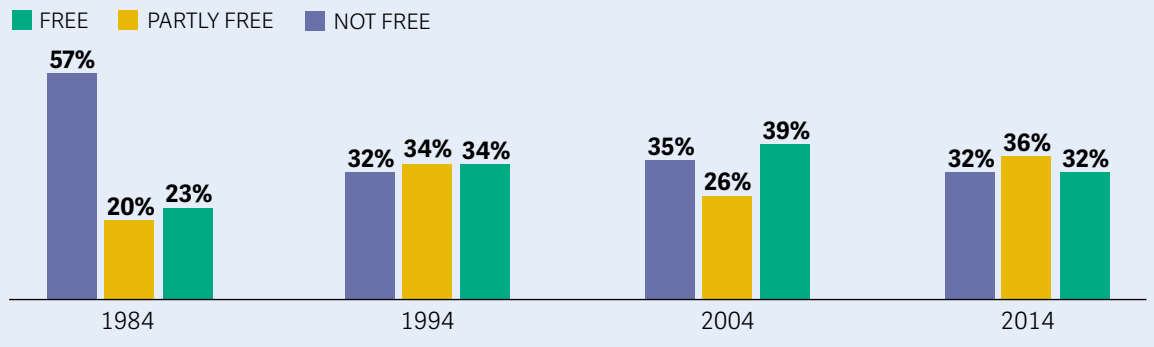
The world's 10 worst-rated countries and territories, with scores of between 90 and 100 points, were Belarus, Crimea, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Crimea—analyzed separately for the first time in the current edition—and Syria joined the bottom-ranked cohort in 2014. In these settings, independent media are either nonexistent or barely able to operate, the press acts as a mouthpiece for the regime, citizens' access to unbiased information is severely limited, and dissent is crushed through imprisonment, torture, and other forms of repression. Crimea became subject to Russian press laws after its occupation and annexation in early 2014, and its media faced restrictive regulations and widespread violence. Iran continues to earn its place among the Worst of the Worst as one of the world's leading jailers of journalists, including *Washington Post* correspondent Jason Rezaian, who has been detained without charge since July 2014.

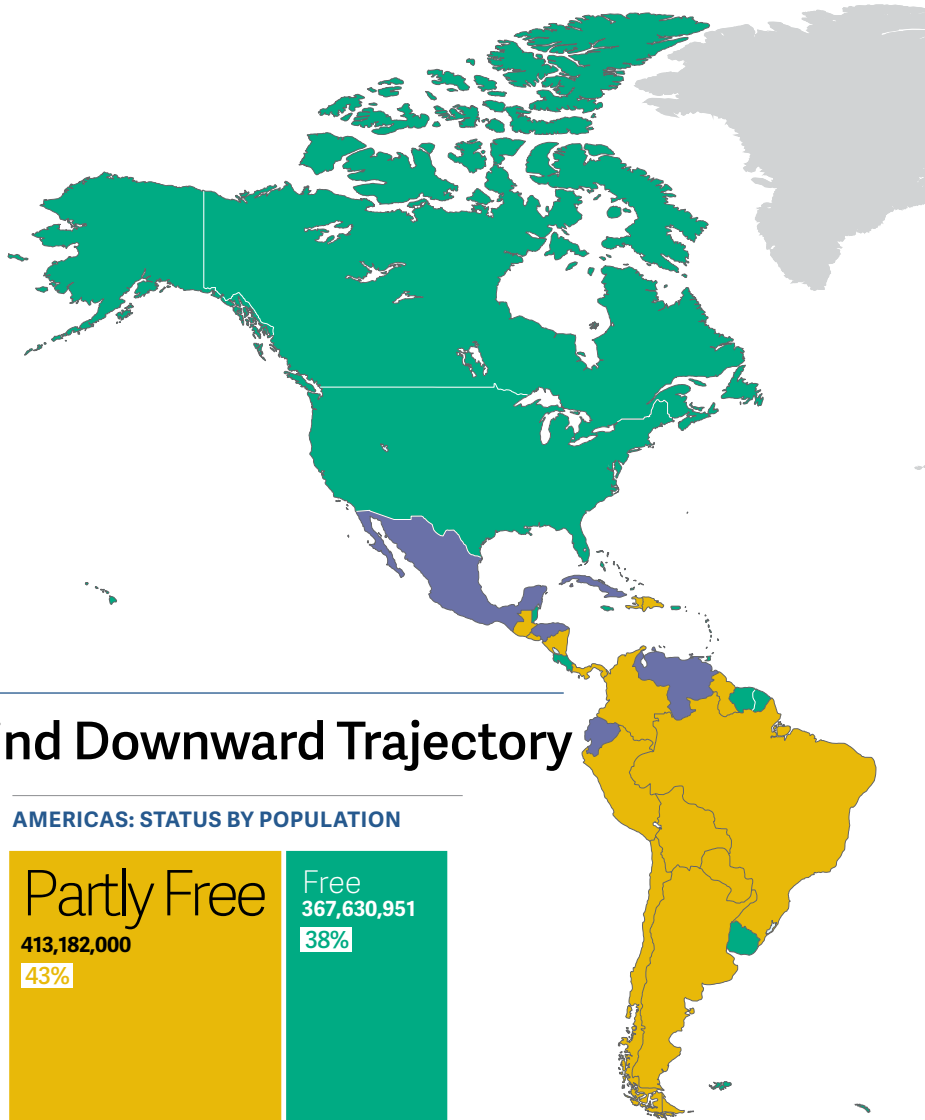
### BIGGEST GAINS AND DECLINES, 2010–2014



### HISTORICAL TRENDS IN PRESS FREEDOM

Percentages of countries in the three press freedom categories





## Regional Trends

### Americas

## Violence, Intimidation Behind Downward Trajectory

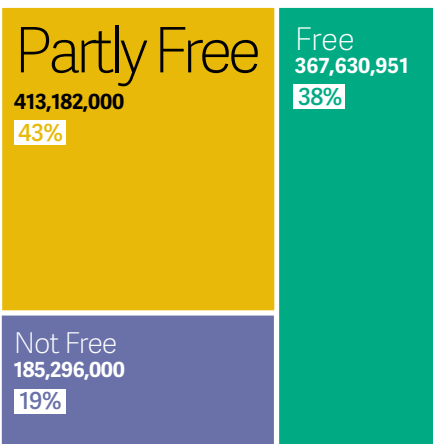
As journalists faced violence and intimidation from both government authorities and criminal elements, several countries in the Americas, including Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela, received their worst press freedom scores in over a decade. The regional average score fell to its lowest level of the past five years, with declines across the legal, political, and economic categories.

The overall figures for the Americas are significantly influenced by the open media environments of North America and much of the Caribbean, which tend to offset the less rosy picture in Central and South America. In Latin America, meaning the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking parts of the region, only three (15 percent) of the countries were rated Free, and just 2 percent of the population lived in Free media environments.

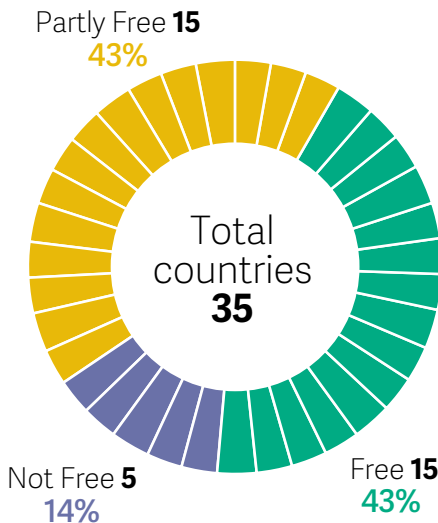
Despite the diplomatic opening between the United States and Cuba and the resulting release of over 50 political prisoners in late December, journalists were still behind bars during 2014, and official censorship remained pervasive, leaving Cuba as the worst performer in the region with a score of 91.

Mexico, already suffering from endemic violence that makes it one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist, received its lowest score in over a decade—falling two points to 63—after the passage of a new law that allows the government to track mobile-telephone users and monitor or shut down telecommunications during protests. In addition, a more onerous registration process has made it more difficult for

AMERICAS: STATUS BY POPULATION



AMERICAS: STATUS BY COUNTRY



community radio stations to obtain licenses.


In Ecuador, hostile rhetoric from the government combined with pervasive legal harassment of journalists and media outlets led to a two-point decline, to 64. The enforcement of the 2013 Communication Law, whose controversial provisions included the creation of two powerful regulatory bodies, added to an environment marked by self-censorship and intimidation. Having been subject to fines and sanctions and publicly denounced by officials, several major outlets reduced the frequency of their production and distribution, modified their editorial lines, or closed entirely, decreasing media diversity.


The relationship between the government and critical press outlets in Argentina remained tense in 2014. Although journalists reported an opening in which some administration officials gave interviews to critical outlets, the threat of harsh legal penalties persisted. Juan Pablo Suárez, editor of the online daily *Última Hora*, was charged with “inciting collective violence” and “terrorizing the population” after he refused to hand over footage of a police officer being arrested.


Brazil’s media face enduring threats from violence and impunity as well as judicial censorship. Four journalists were killed in 2014, and several more were attacked while covering protests against inflation, government performance, and World Cup expenditures. Meanwhile,

courts continued to issue censorship orders, fines, and jail sentences to critical journalists and bloggers.

#### Significant gains and declines:

 **Honduras’s** score declined from 64 to 68 due to the filing of sedition charges against a reporter covering a political dispute and the passage of a new secrecy law, which is currently suspended. Furthermore, official censorship combined with media owners’ nearly unconditional support for the government, stifling critical journalism and adversely affecting Honduras’s media diversity. Journalists continued to face intimidation and deadly violence in 2014.

 **Peru’s** score declined from 44 to 47 due to an increase in death threats and violence against journalists, ongoing impunity for past crimes, and a lack of political will to address the problem.

 **Venezuela’s** score declined from 78 to 81 due to an increase in the number of threats and physical attacks against the local and foreign press, which hampered their ability to cover the news freely. The transparency of media ownership structures was lacking, and state-exacerbated economic problems, including high inflation and difficulties obtaining foreign currency for purchasing newsprint, have had an adverse effect on the financial viability of print media. Some outlets laid off workers and struggled to secure credit to fill financial gaps.

## Asia-Pacific

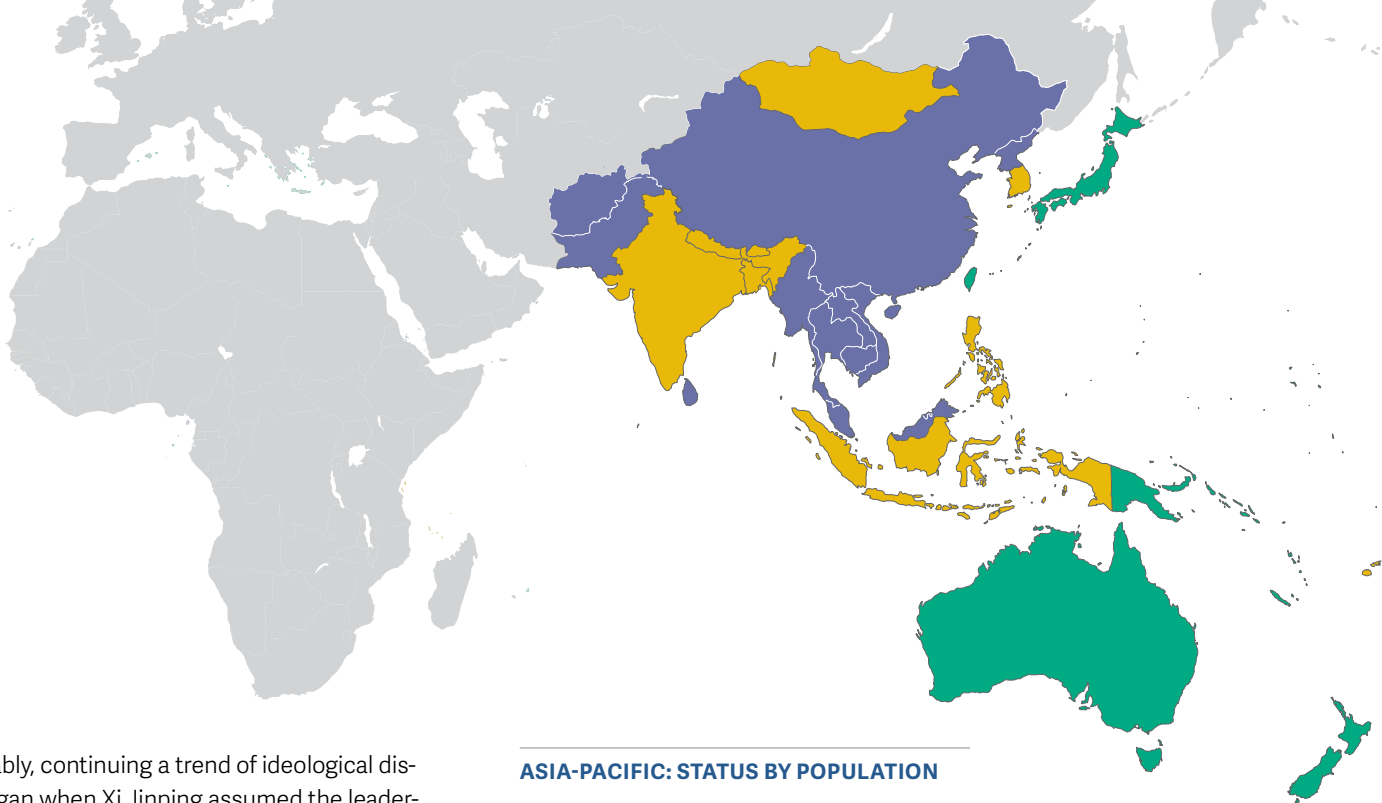
# Declines in East and Southeast Asia

The Asia-Pacific region features considerable subregional diversity. The Pacific Islands, Australasia, and parts of East Asia have some of the best-ranked media environments in the world, while conditions in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and other parts of East Asia are significantly worse. Asia includes the world’s worst-rated country, North Korea (97 points), as well as several other highly restrictive media environments, such as China, Laos, and Vietnam. These settings feature extensive state and party control of the press.

Thailand tied with Libya for the greatest net decline (11 points) in 2014 as a result of the May coup d’état. The military junta, known as the National Council for

Peace and Order (NCPO), suspended the constitution and imposed martial law, removing legal protections for journalists. Multiple radio and television stations were shut down, the media were prohibited from covering opposition members, and journalists frequently faced attacks and arbitrary detention.

China, still home to the world’s most sophisticated censorship apparatus, declined from 84 to 86 points, marking the country’s worst score since the 1990s. During 2014, propaganda authorities tightened control over liberal media outlets and alternative channels of news dissemination. Previously existing space for investigative journalism and politically liberal commentary

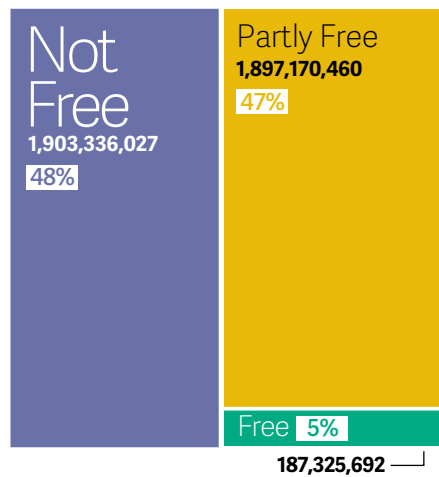


shrank noticeably, continuing a trend of ideological discipline that began when Xi Jinping assumed the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012. For the first time in several years, professional journalists from established news outlets were subjected to long-term detention and imprisonment alongside freelancers, online activists, and ethnic minority reporters. New regulations intensified ideological requirements for journalist accreditation and restricted reporters' ability to publish articles in foreign and Hong Kong-based news outlets, leading to the firing of several journalists during the year. A crackdown on social-media platforms that began in 2013 with increased restrictions on the prominent Sina Weibo microblogging service expanded in 2014 to Tencent's WeChat instant-messaging program, further limiting the ability of ordinary users and journalists to share uncensored information.

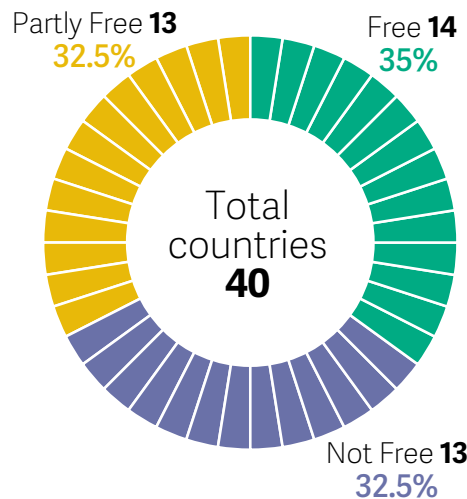
Beijing's influence over Hong Kong was also felt during the year, as foreign and local companies with mainland Chinese business interests felt compelled to pull advertisements from news outlets that were critical of the central government. The website of *Apple Daily*, a popular tabloid that was sympathetic to prodemocracy protesters, suffered several major cyberattacks in 2014, including one of the largest recorded denial-of-service attacks to date. Press freedom in Taiwan was also negatively affected by the attack, as *Apple Daily's* Taiwan edition remained inaccessible to some overseas readers for nearly two months.

In Afghanistan, there was an increase in attacks against media workers as security in the country began to deteriorate following the withdrawal of international combat troops. The media in Pakistan faced greater editorial pressure from the military and

**ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY POPULATION**





**ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY COUNTRY**




partisan groups, exacerbating an already challenging and dangerous environment for journalists and pushing the country's score to its lowest level since 2007. India, the world's largest democracy, achieved another peaceful transfer of power through elections in 2014, yet its press freedom score declined to its lowest level in over a decade due to an increase in the use of defamation cases against journalists and a higher level of self-censorship caused by editorial interference from media owners in the lead-up to the elections.


**Significant gains and declines:**

 **Cambodia's** score declined from 66 to 69 due to the high level of self-censorship by Khmer-language journalists, the lack of access to a diversity of viewpoints in Khmer-language media, and an increase in violence against journalists in 2014.

 **Hong Kong's** score declined from 37 to 41 due to a surge in the number of violent attacks against journalists and other media workers, both during the prodemocracy protests and in retaliation for reporting;

impunity for the organizers of such attacks; and new financial burdens on some media as companies felt pressure to pull advertising from outlets that were critical of Beijing.

 **Myanmar's** score declined from 70 to 73, reversing a three-year trend of improvements, as journalists faced an increased threat of arrests, prosecutions, and closures of media outlets. Many journalists were arrested and received prison terms, and foreign journalists encountered harsher visa restrictions.

 **Thailand's** score declined from 64 to 75 due to the suspension of the constitution and the imposition of martial law by the NCPO. The military government shut down privately owned television and radio stations, which were only allowed to reopen after content restrictions were put in place; used regulatory bodies to monitor media and control content; and prohibited interviews with opposition politicians, activists, and dissidents. The junta was also accused of arbitrarily detaining journalists without access to legal counsel, amid allegations of torture.

**Eurasia**

**Shrinking Space for Dissent**

The Eurasia region's average score remained the worst in the world in 2014, with declines in key countries and the addition of a separate assessment for Crimea driving the figure sharply downward. It is notable that four of the 10 worst press freedom environments in the world—Belarus, Crimea, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan—are found in Eurasia.

The most dramatic change in the region occurred in Ukraine, which moved from Not Free to Partly Free. The fall of President Viktor Yanukovich's authoritarian government led to decreases in political pressure on state media and hostility toward independent voices. However, these gains were partly offset by the effects of the conflict in the country's eastern regions, which created extensive dangers and obstacles for journalists. At least five journalists were killed in Ukraine in 2014, including one who died during the Euromaidan protests in Kyiv.

The Russian government tightened its grip on news and information in an already constricted media environment. Authorities used a mixture of legislative changes, economic pressure, and strident propagan-

da—especially regarding the conflict in Ukraine—to achieve this end, suppressing independent reporting and deploying state-controlled outlets to attack domestic dissent and foreign adversaries.

Under Russian occupation, Crimea's once-pluralistic media environment was battered by the closure and blocking of Ukrainian outlets and the imposition of restrictive Russian media regulations. There were also numerous incidents of intimidation and violence, contributing to an exodus of journalists from Crimea and perilous conditions for those who stayed.

In Azerbaijan, the government unleashed a major crackdown on independent media, employing threats, raids, restrictive laws, and prosecutions. Journalists and bloggers faced fabricated charges and arbitrary detention, and at least eight remained in prison at year's end, making Azerbaijan the worst jailer of journalists in Eurasia. Economic and political pressures, including the freezing of assets and intimidation, led to the closure of multiple organizations that support journalists' rights, among them the Media Rights



Institute and the local offices of the international advocacy group IREX. Authorities also raided and closed the Azerbaijan bureau of RFE/RL, one of the strongest independent outlets available in the country.

Moldova, which took another step closer to the European Union after signing an Association Agreement in June, remained a country of particular concern in 2014. In addition to problematic regulatory decisions, media ownership is concentrated and opaque, and the year's parliamentary elections, along with the crisis in Ukraine, fueled more partisan news coverage.

**Significant gains and declines:**

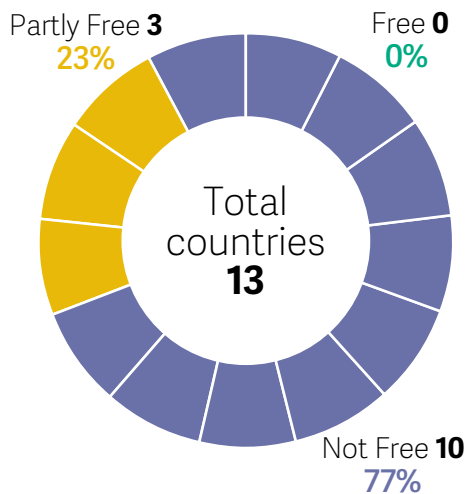
**Azerbaijan's** score declined from 84 to 87 due to the government's heavy-handed attempts to punish independent journalists through arrest, imprisonment, physical intimidation, and verbal harassment. The government also used raids and arbitrary criminal investigations to impede the operations of or close multiple media organizations.

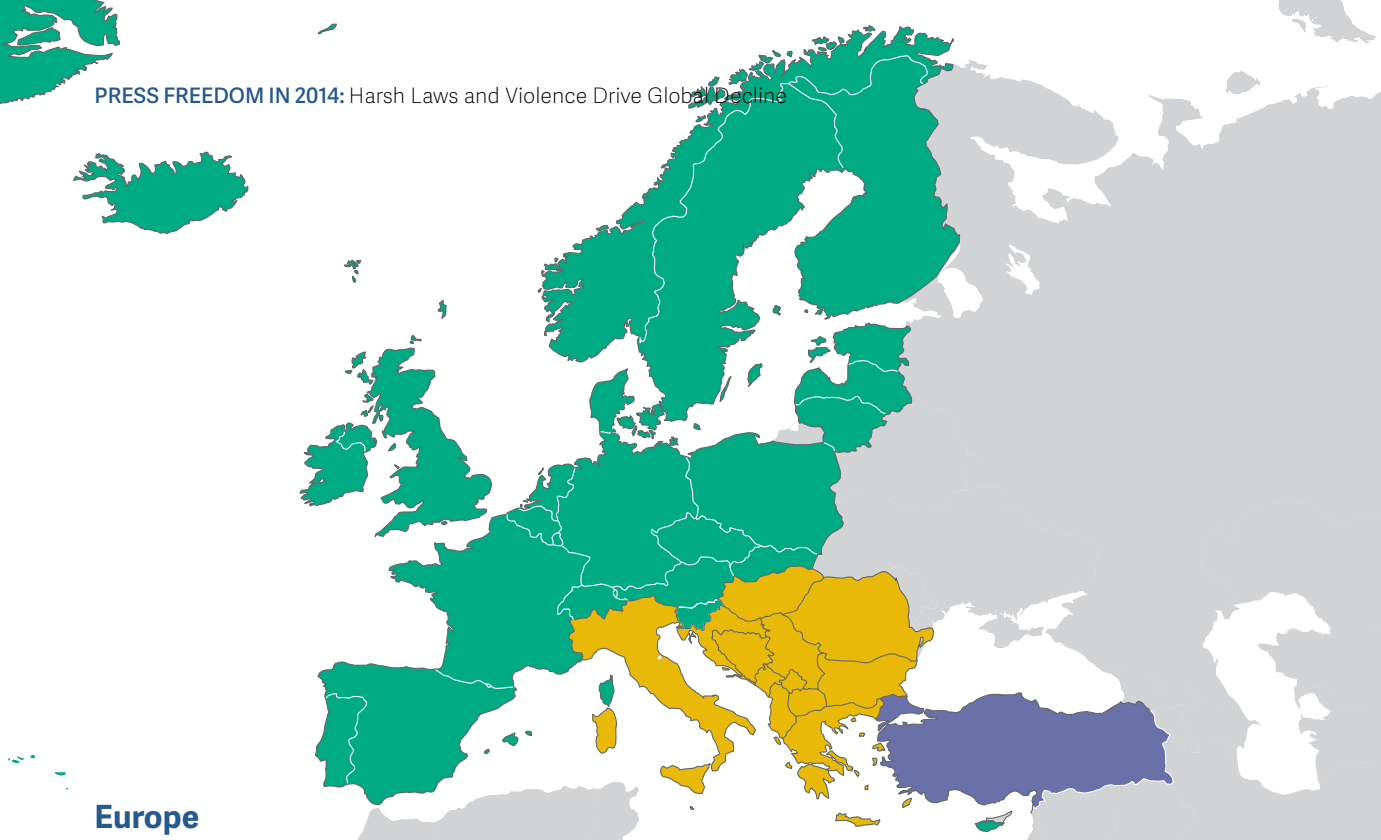
**Ukraine's** score improved from 63 to 58 and its status improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to a number of positive changes in the media environment after the collapse of the Yanukovich government, despite a rise in violence against journalists associated with the Euromaidan protests and the subsequent conflict in eastern Ukraine. The level of government hostility and legal pressure on the media decreased, as did political influence on state-owned outlets. There were also improvements to the law on access to information and in the autonomy of the broadcasting regulator.

**EURASIA: STATUS BY POPULATION**



**EURASIA: STATUS BY COUNTRY**





Europe

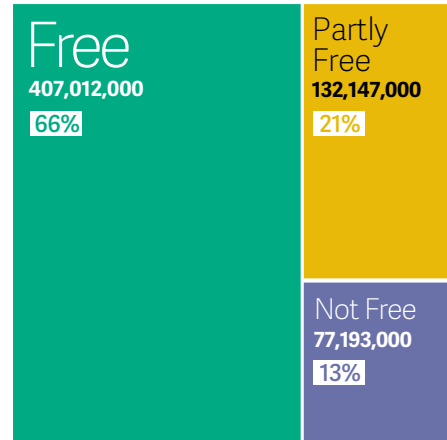
## Fraying at the Edges

Europe boasts a concentration of high-performing countries, including Norway and Sweden, the world's top-ranked states with overall scores of 10. These countries provide ample space for independent, diverse voices, and journalists rarely face intimidation or physical attacks. However, they and other high-ranking European nations have struggled in recent years to regulate hate speech without damaging freedom of expression.

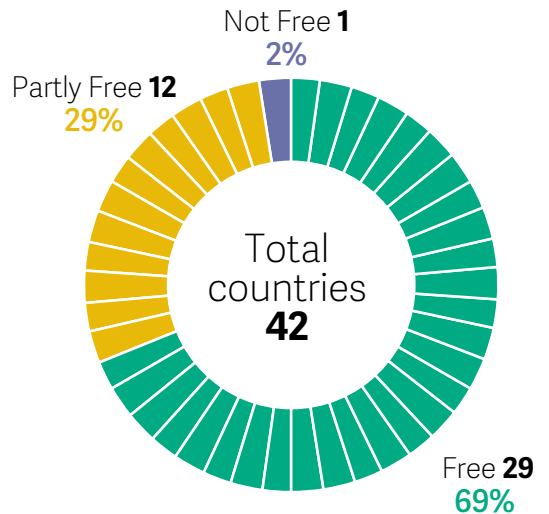
Although Europe retains the highest level of press freedom in the world, its regional average score declined for a second consecutive year in 2014. Over the past decade, incremental erosion of the legal and economic environments, as well as interference with the ability of journalists to cover the news in person, have given Europe the world's second-largest net decline since 2004, after Eurasia.

Greece experienced yet another year of political interference and lack of transparency at the new public broadcaster, New Hellenic Radio, Internet, and Television (NERIT). Changes to broadcasting legislation further barred the media market to new entrants, which are already constrained by the government's refusal to issue new licenses. Also in 2014, DIGEA, a company whose shareholders include major private channels, secured a monopoly on digital broadcast transmissions through a tailored competition.

### EUROPE: STATUS BY POPULATION



### EUROPE: STATUS BY COUNTRY





Among other problems in Hungary, RTL Klub, one of the two biggest private television stations, was disproportionately affected by an advertising tax. However, a proposed “internet tax,” which would have levied a charge against data transferred online, was defeated in October after opponents mounted large-scale demonstrations.

Political and economic pressures also played a role in a score decline for Iceland in 2014. The state’s dominant position in the broadcast market and tighter control of the public broadcaster, Ríkisútvarpið (RÚV), have weakened the independence of the media sector, as has editorial interference from private owners. Defamation remains a criminal offense in Iceland, despite the government’s recent efforts to make the country an international haven for critical voices.

Expansive national security laws remained an issue of concern in the United Kingdom following revelations of wide-ranging surveillance by the Government Communications Headquarters and a raid on the newsroom of the *Guardian* newspaper in 2013. In France, the far-right National Front party continued to deny access to the investigative outlet *Mediapart*; the year also featured the removal of journalists from political events, the harassment and intimidation of journalists at protests, and cyberattacks on news websites.

The Turkish media environment continued to deteriorate as the government moved more aggressively to close the space for dissent. In addition to enacting new legislation that expanded both government powers for website blocking and the surveillance capability of the intelligence service, officials detained prominent journalists from the newspaper *Zaman* and the Samanyolu Broadcasting Group—which were largely critical of the government and reported on

high-level corruption—on charges of establishing an armed terrorist organization.

#### Significant gains and declines:



**Greece’s** score declined from 46 to 51 because of further government and partisan interference in the media, as seen in restrictive legislative changes to the broadcast market, the creation of a monopoly on digital transmissions through a flawed tender, and politically biased news coverage surrounding elections.



**Iceland’s** score declined from 12 to 16 due to political interference with the work of journalists, who face the threat of criminal defamation charges and the possibility of retaliatory dismissal by employers. Partisanship affects the private media, and the state has exerted increasing influence on the media sector through its dominance in the broadcast market and tighter editorial control of the public broadcaster.

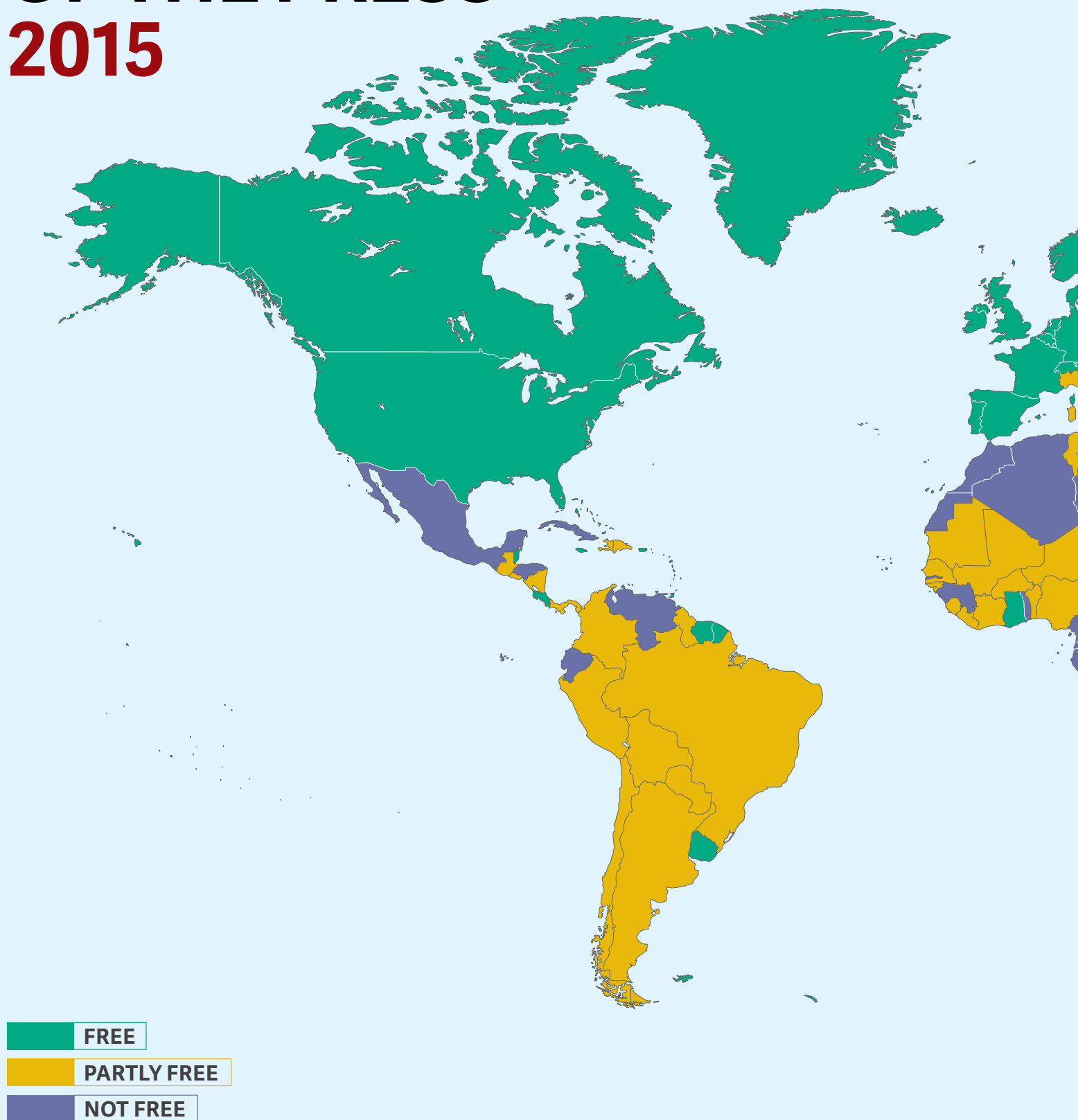


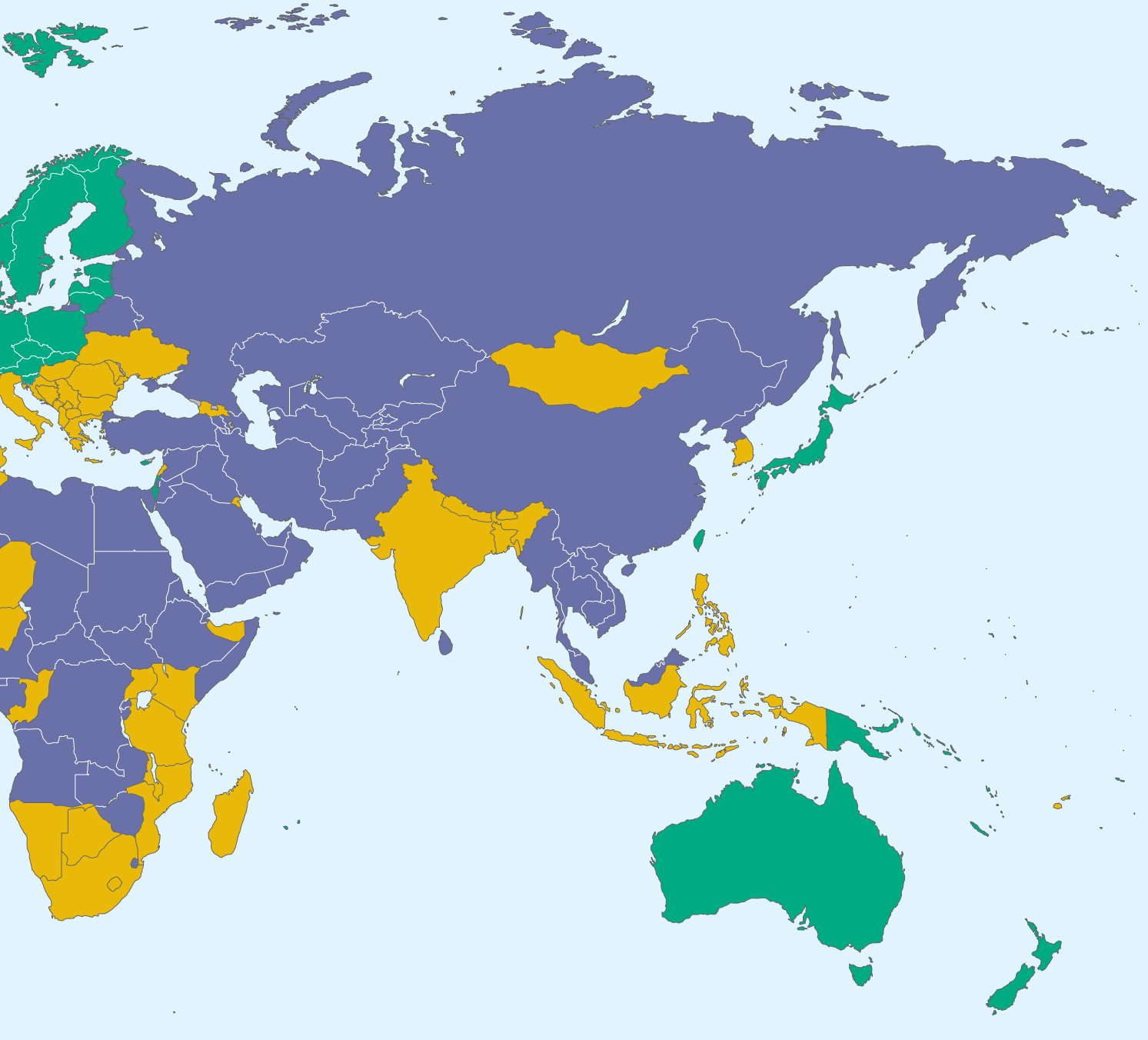
**Serbia’s** score declined from 37 to 40 due to increased government harassment of journalists and restrictions on their work, as well as a decrease in the diversity of media after the cancellation of major political talk shows.



**Turkey’s** score declined from 62 to 65 due to a number of legislative changes and continuing state efforts to influence reporting through intimidation and economic incentives. New laws restricted the freedom of journalists to report on national security and empowered the intelligence service to access a wide range of information without oversight, while amendments to the internet law increased authorities’ power to block online content.

# FREEDOM OF THE PRESS 2015





## Middle East and North Africa

# Tunisia Stands Out Amid Violence, Repression

After historic gains in the Middle East in 2011, only one country has continued to make progress toward fulfilling the promise of the Arab Spring. Tunisia registered the best score of any Arab country in over a decade, although it remained Partly Free. Conversely, Egypt and Libya, two other countries that saw dramatic improvements in 2011, maintained a pattern of backsliding. Egypt's score of 73 is its worst in 11 years, marking not only the reversal of gains it made following the ouster of longtime dictator Hosni Mubarak, but also a regression toward the most repressive years of the Mubarak era. Libya's score also continued to drop as a civil war affected the post-Qadhafi media environment.

The long-running conflict in Syria exacerbated conditions in that country and contributed indirectly to declines in Iraq, including through the rise of IS. The war also put pressure on Lebanon, whose score reached a five-year low of 55 due to a marked increase in libel cases against journalists in 2014. Penalties included jail time and exorbitant fines, and many publications faced multiple suits from the same aggrieved party. Moreover, rulings from Lebanon's Court of Publications during the year indicated a reflexive bias against the media and political motives behind many cases.

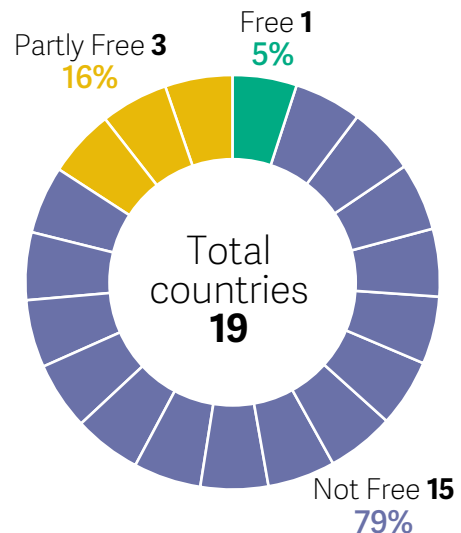
While Israel remains the region's only Free media environment, the score for the West Bank and Gaza Strip declined by two points to 84 as a result of the war in Gaza. Not only were members of the media killed and injured during the conflict between Israel and Hamas militants, but both Israeli and Palestinian authorities restricted journalists' movement in Gaza and the West Bank.

In the Persian Gulf, Qatar passed a new cybercrime law that included onerous penalties for "false news"

### MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION




### MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY





and defamation, though there are hopes that a new Open Data Policy will improve transparency and access to government sources. The media in Bahrain continued to suffer from self-censorship and persecution, and citizen journalists who dared to report on ongoing protests through social media increasingly faced government reprisals. The United Arab Emirates remained one of the most repressive media environments in the region, belying its image as a cosmopolitan oasis among conservative authoritarian regimes.


Elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen's score declined two points to 78 as both government and Houthi rebel forces targeted journalists, and the media faced greater pressure to serve political interests. Saudi Arabia's autocratic regime bolstered existing media restrictions with the passage of harsh antiterrorism legislation and increased arrests of critics.


#### Significant gains and declines:

 **Algeria's** score declined from 59 to 61 and its status declined from Partly Free to Not Free due to restrictions imposed on the media during the 2014 presidential election. A January law placed content limitations on privately owned television channels, and government agencies withdrew advertising from media outlets that covered opposition parties. Foreign journalists were denied entry visas, had their visas restricted, or faced obstacles to access on the ground.

 **Egypt's** score declined from 68 to 73 due to arrests of journalists and a number of deeply flawed court cases that resulted in harsh punishments for journalists and media workers. The hostile environment has led to an increase in self-censorship and a drop in media diversity, with many outlets becoming ardent supporters of the regime.

 **Iraq's** score declined from 69 to 72 due to an increase in censorship regarding coverage of IS and Iraqi security forces, including internet blackouts in the summer of 2014. The perilous security environment also made it more difficult and dangerous to report from large parts of the country.

 **Libya's** score declined from 62 to 73 due to the continued deterioration of the security environment, which denied journalists access to many areas. Media workers were vulnerable to attacks, abductions, and assassinations, and they also faced prosecution for defamation and other criminal offenses. Media outlets came under acute pressure to adhere to the views of the dominant militia groups in their area, as the civil war exacerbated political polarization.

 **Tunisia's** score improved from 53 to 48 due to the ratification of the 2014 constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press, as well as incremental decreases in editorial pressure and attacks on journalists.

## Sub-Saharan Africa

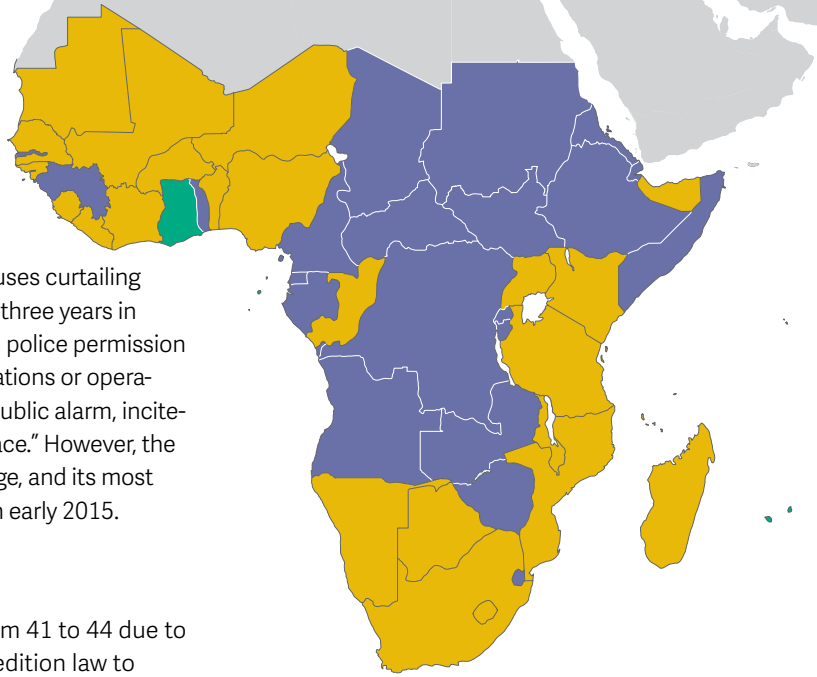
# Ongoing Cycles of Repression and Recovery

Sub-Saharan Africa was the only region to show improvement in its average score in 2014, registering a modest quarter-point increase. Most countries that earned improvements started from a low baseline, such as Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau. Meanwhile, press freedom conditions remained dire in Equatorial Guinea and Eritrea, which rank among the Worst of the Worst. Their authoritarian governments continued to use legal pressure, imprisonment, and other forms of harassment to suppress independent reporting. Other poor performers in the region—including Ethiopia (83), Sudan (81), and The Gambia (81)—found new ways to constrain the already-limited space in which journalists can operate. Ethiopian authorities stepped up arrests of independent journalists, including the Zone 9 bloggers, leading more than 30 to flee the country during the year, according to CPJ.

In Nigeria, little reporting was possible from areas of the northeast controlled by Boko Haram, and the military increased its efforts to punish critical coverage of its operations against the extremist group. In June, soldiers seized pressruns of several newspapers, including the *Nation*, *Daily Trust*, and *Leadership*, from key distribution points in a coordinated nationwide effort. An army spokesperson said the seizures were a "routine security action."


Four traditionally strong performers in southern Africa—Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa—experienced unusually turbulent years. Increased efforts by governments to limit reporting on sensitive issues, and arrests of and violence against journalists, contributed to declines in their press freedom scores.


In Kenya, security legislation passed in December 2014





contained several vaguely worded clauses curtailing press freedom, including the threat of three years in prison for journalists who fail to obtain police permission before reporting on terrorism investigations or operations, or for coverage “likely to cause public alarm, incitement to violence, or disturb public peace.” However, the law faced an immediate court challenge, and its most onerous provisions were overturned in early 2015.


**Significant gains and declines:**

 **Botswana’s** score declined from 41 to 44 due to the government’s use of the sedition law to charge an editor and journalist following publication of an article about the president. The incident entailed the jailing of the editor for one night; the journalist has subsequently sought asylum in South Africa. The year also featured increased extralegal harassment of journalists by the Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS), and a spate of physical attacks on media practitioners by strikers, government employees, and private citizens.

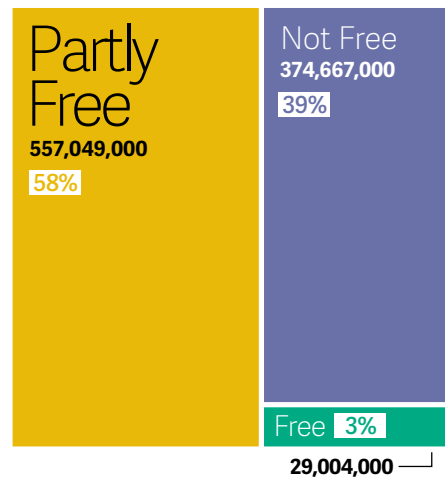
 **Central African Republic’s** score improved from 77 to 72 due to gradual gains for the media environment under the transitional government of Catherine Samba-Panza, including a decrease in arrests, editorial interference, acts of censorship, and self-censorship.

 **Guinea-Bissau’s** score improved from 67 to 59, and its status improved from Not Free to Partly Free, due to strengthened legal protections for the media, the reopening of private outlets, and a reduction in censorship and attacks on journalists in the wake of free and fair elections in April 2014.

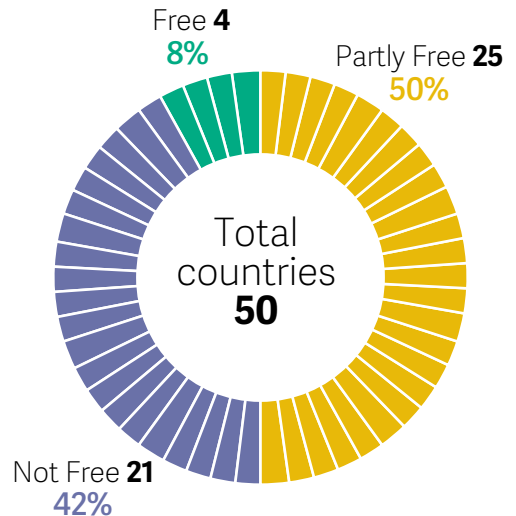
 **Madagascar’s** score improved from 63 to 59, and its status improved from Not Free to Partly Free, due to a more favorable environment for the press after the restoration of democratic rule, including a decline in direct pressure and censorship from the highest levels of government, and a general lack of violence toward journalists in 2014.

 **Somalia’s** score improved from 82 to 79 due to the increased ability of private actors to open media outlets and the greater distribution of media, especially

**SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION**




**SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY**





radio, throughout the south-central part of the country.

 **South Africa's** score declined from 33 to 37 due to the increased use of the apartheid-era National Key Points Act to prevent journalists from investigating important locations or institutions, particularly when probing corruption involving political figures; the killing of a journalist at a protest in January and the harassment of others in the course of their work; and an increase in extrajudicial attacks, detentions, and harassment directed at the media by the police.

 **South Sudan's** score declined from 62 to 68 due to the government's near-complete disregard for constitutional and legal protections for freedom of

the press in 2014, as well as the lack of such protections in rebel-held areas; a marked increase in restrictions imposed on journalists by the security forces; and heightened censorship, self-censorship, and retaliatory attacks on journalists.

 **Togo's** score improved from 65 to 62 due to a continued opening in the media environment, including an increase in print outlets, leading to a greater diversity of viewpoints.

 **Zimbabwe's** score improved from 73 to 70 due to a positive court ruling on criminal defamation, a reduction in physical attacks on media workers, and eased restrictions on foreign journalists in 2014.

## Conclusion

### Freedom of information as a pillar of democracy

This year's edition of *Freedom of the Press* documents a surge in threats to independent journalism, from governments that use legal means to control information, armed groups that make basic reporting a potentially life-threatening activity, and media owners who manipulate news coverage to serve personal or partisan interests.

At the same time, there is renewed global interest in the values of free expression following a spate of horrific violence against journalists, notably the IS murders of James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and most recently Japanese reporter Kenji Goto, as well as the January 2015 attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. Although the public seems more attuned to the dangers faced by journalists on a daily basis, it is not yet clear what impact these killings will have on the struggle for press freedom, or whether the outpouring of support for free expression will be sustained.

Some early signs are troubling. In France, the government is considering new legislation to crack down on hate speech online—a commendable impulse at first glance, but one that poses a potential threat to free expression and offers no guarantee of reducing the tensions that have led to violence. Indeed, while the worst assaults on global access to news and information come from authoritarian states, militant groups, and organized crime, democratic governments risk adding to the problem with overzealous responses to hate speech and propaganda.

Such responses are misguided. Censorship is ineffective and often counterproductive as an antidote to extremism, and its limited utility cannot justify the infringement of a fundamental democratic value like freedom of expression.

Unfettered access to information—about politics, religion, corruption, and the countless other potentially sensitive topics that have a direct impact on people's lives—is a central pillar of any free society because it enables individuals to evaluate such questions for themselves, rather than through a filter devised by those in power. It allows citizens to demand accountability from their own governments, to debunk propaganda and learn the ugly truth about extremist movements, and to advocate for social change and political reform as they see fit. Restrictions on expression may be a politically expedient way to react to public discontent and insecurity, but a long-term solution demands open debate, the complete exposure and analysis of odious views, the development of persuasive counterarguments, and the implementation of policies to address underlying grievances and social ills.

The wide and growing range of threats to media freedom around the globe presents a stark challenge to democratic values. Responding to this challenge requires a collective acknowledgement that all infringements on media freedom—both the brutally violent and the seemingly mundane or rational—limit the marketplace of ideas that lies at the core of a free and democratic society.

GLOBAL RANKINGS

Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status	Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status
1	Norway	10	Free		Tuvalu	27	Free
	Sweden	10	Free	52	Ghana	28	Free
3	Belgium	11	Free		Latvia	28	Free
	Finland	11	Free		São Tomé and Príncipe	28	Free
	Netherlands	11	Free		Solomon Islands	28	Free
6	Denmark	12	Free		Spain	28	Free
	Luxembourg	12	Free	57	Kiribati	29	Free
8	Andorra	13	Free		Papua New Guinea	29	Free
	Switzerland	13	Free		Suriname	29	Free
10	Liechtenstein	14	Free		Tonga	29	Free
11	Monaco	15	Free	61	Israel	30	Free
	Palau	15	Free		Mauritius	30	Free
	St. Lucia	15	Free		Samoa	30	Free
14	Estonia	16	Free	64	Chile	31	Partly Free
	Iceland	16	Free		Italy	31	Partly Free
	Ireland	16	Free	66	Nauru	32	Partly Free
	San Marino	16	Free	67	Namibia	33	Partly Free
18	Costa Rica	17	Free		South Korea	33	Partly Free
	Jamaica	17	Free	69	East Timor	35	Partly Free
	Marshall Islands	17	Free	70	Guyana	36	Partly Free
	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	17	Free	71	Hungary	37	Partly Free
22	Barbados	18	Free		Mali	37	Partly Free
	Canada	18	Free		Mongolia	37	Partly Free
	Germany	18	Free		South Africa	37	Partly Free
	Portugal	18	Free	75	Antigua and Barbuda	38	Partly Free
26	New Zealand	19	Free		Benin	38	Partly Free
27	St. Kitts and Nevis	20	Free		Bulgaria	38	Partly Free
28	Bahamas	21	Free	78	El Salvador	39	Partly Free
	Czech Republic	21	Free		Montenegro	39	Partly Free
	Micronesia	21	Free	80	Croatia	40	Partly Free
31	Australia	22	Free		India	40	Partly Free
	Austria	22	Free		Serbia	40	Partly Free
	Belize	22	Free	83	Hong Kong*	41	Partly Free
	United States of America	22	Free	84	Dominican Republic	42	Partly Free
35	France	23	Free		Romania	42	Partly Free
	Grenada	23	Free	86	Botswana	44	Partly Free
	Malta	23	Free		Burkina Faso	44	Partly Free
38	Slovakia	24	Free		Mozambique	44	Partly Free
	United Kingdom	24	Free		Philippines	44	Partly Free
	Uruguay	24	Free	90	Brazil	45	Partly Free
41	Cyprus	25	Free	91	Bolivia	47	Partly Free
	Dominica	25	Free		Peru	47	Partly Free
	Japan	25	Free	93	Georgia	48	Partly Free
	Lithuania	25	Free		Lesotho	48	Partly Free
	Slovenia	25	Free		Senegal	48	Partly Free
	Vanuatu	25	Free		Tunisia	48	Partly Free
47	Poland	26	Free	97	Albania	49	Partly Free
48	Cape Verde	27	Free		Comoros	49	Partly Free
	Taiwan	27	Free		Indonesia	49	Partly Free
	Trinidad and Tobago	27	Free		Kosovo	49	Partly Free

\*Denotes territories.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014.



## GLOBAL RANKINGS (continued)

Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status	Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status
	Malawi	49	Partly Free		Singapore	67	Not Free
	Panama	49	Partly Free	152	Honduras	68	Not Free
103	Haiti	50	Partly Free		South Sudan	68	Not Free
	Mauritania	50	Partly Free	154	Cambodia	69	Not Free
	Seychelles	50	Partly Free	155	Angola	70	Not Free
	Sierra Leone	50	Partly Free		Gabon	70	Not Free
107	Argentina	51	Partly Free		Zimbabwe	70	Not Free
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	51	Partly Free	158	Oman	71	Not Free
	Greece	51	Partly Free	159	Central African Republic	72	Not Free
	Niger	51	Partly Free		Iraq	72	Not Free
111	Fiji	52	Partly Free	161	Egypt	73	Not Free
	Nicaragua	52	Partly Free		Libya	73	Not Free
113	Côte d'Ivoire	53	Partly Free		Myanmar	73	Not Free
	Nigeria	53	Partly Free	164	Burundi	74	Not Free
115	Bangladesh	54	Partly Free		Chad	74	Not Free
	Somaliland*	54	Partly Free	166	Brunei	75	Not Free
	Tanzania	54	Partly Free		Djibouti	75	Not Free
118	Colombia	55	Partly Free		Thailand	75	Not Free
	Lebanon	55	Partly Free	169	Sri Lanka	76	Not Free
	Maldives	55	Partly Free		United Arab Emirates	76	Not Free
	Moldova	55	Partly Free	171	Yemen	78	Not Free
	Nepal	55	Partly Free	172	Congo (Kinshasa)	79	Not Free
123	Uganda	56	Partly Free		Rwanda	79	Not Free
124	Kenya	57	Partly Free		Somalia	79	Not Free
125	Macedonia	58	Partly Free		Swaziland	79	Not Free
	Ukraine	58	Partly Free	176	Sudan	81	Not Free
127	Bhutan	59	Partly Free		The Gambia	81	Not Free
	Congo (Brazzaville)	59	Partly Free		Venezuela	81	Not Free
	Guinea-Bissau	59	Partly Free	179	Tajikistan	82	Not Free
	Kuwait	59	Partly Free	180	Ethiopia	83	Not Free
	Madagascar	59	Partly Free		Russia	83	Not Free
	Paraguay	59	Partly Free		Saudi Arabia	83	Not Free
133	Guatemala	60	Partly Free	183	Laos	84	Not Free
	Liberia	60	Partly Free		West Bank and Gaza Strip*	84	Not Free
135	Algeria	61	Not Free	185	Kazakhstan	85	Not Free
	Armenia	61	Not Free	186	China	86	Not Free
137	Togo	62	Not Free		Vietnam	86	Not Free
	Zambia	62	Not Free	188	Azerbaijan	87	Not Free
139	Mexico	63	Not Free		Bahrain	87	Not Free
140	Ecuador	64	Not Free	190	Equatorial Guinea	90	Not Free
	Guinea	64	Not Free		Iran	90	Not Free
142	Malaysia	65	Not Free		Syria	90	Not Free
	Pakistan	65	Not Free	193	Cuba	91	Not Free
	Turkey	65	Not Free	194	Belarus	93	Not Free
145	Cameroon	66	Not Free	195	Crimea*	94	Not Free
	Jordan	66	Not Free		Eritrea	94	Not Free
	Morocco	66	Not Free	197	Turkmenistan	95	Not Free
148	Afghanistan	67	Not Free		Uzbekistan	95	Not Free
	Kyrgyzstan	67	Not Free	199	North Korea	97	Not Free
	Qatar	67	Not Free				

\*Denotes territories.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014.

**AMERICAS**

Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status
1	St. Lucia	15	Free
2	Costa Rica	17	Free
	Jamaica	17	Free
	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	17	Free
5	Barbados	18	Free
	Canada	18	Free
7	St. Kitts and Nevis	20	Free
8	Bahamas	21	Free
9	Belize	22	Free
	United States of America	22	Free
11	Grenada	23	Free
12	Uruguay	24	Free
13	Dominica	25	Free
14	Trinidad and Tobago	27	Free
15	Suriname	29	Free
16	Chile	31	Partly Free
17	Guyana	36	Partly Free
18	Antigua and Barbuda	38	Partly Free
19	El Salvador	39	Partly Free
20	Dominican Republic	42	Partly Free
21	Brazil	45	Partly Free
22	Bolivia	47	Partly Free
	Peru	47	Partly Free
24	Panama	49	Partly Free
25	Haiti	50	Partly Free
26	Argentina	51	Partly Free
27	Nicaragua	52	Partly Free
28	Colombia	55	Partly Free
29	Paraguay	59	Partly Free
30	Guatemala	60	Partly Free
31	Mexico	63	Not Free
32	Ecuador	64	Not Free
33	Honduras	68	Not Free
34	Venezuela	81	Not Free
35	Cuba	91	Not Free

**ASIA-PACIFIC**

Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status
1	Palau	15	Free
2	Marshall Islands	17	Free
3	New Zealand	19	Free
4	Micronesia	21	Free
5	Australia	22	Free
6	Japan	25	Free
	Vanuatu	25	Free
8	Taiwan	27	Free
	Tuvalu	27	Free
10	Solomon Islands	28	Free
11	Kiribati	29	Free
	Papua New Guinea	29	Free
	Tonga	29	Free
14	Samoa	30	Free
15	Nauru	32	Partly Free
16	South Korea	33	Partly Free
17	East Timor	35	Partly Free
18	Mongolia	37	Partly Free
19	India	40	Partly Free
20	Hong Kong*	41	Partly Free
21	Philippines	44	Partly Free
22	Indonesia	49	Partly Free
23	Fiji	52	Partly Free
24	Bangladesh	54	Partly Free
25	Maldives	55	Partly Free
	Nepal	55	Partly Free
27	Bhutan	59	Partly Free
28	Malaysia	65	Not Free
	Pakistan	65	Not Free
30	Afghanistan	67	Not Free
	Singapore	67	Not Free
32	Cambodia	69	Not Free
33	Myanmar	73	Not Free
34	Brunei	75	Not Free
	Thailand	75	Not Free
36	Sri Lanka	76	Not Free
37	Laos	84	Not Free
38	China	86	Not Free
	Vietnam	86	Not Free
40	North Korea	97	Not Free

\*Denotes territories.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014.

## EUROPE

Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status
1	Norway	10	Free
	Sweden	10	Free
3	Belgium	11	Free
	Finland	11	Free
	Netherlands	11	Free
6	Denmark	12	Free
	Luxembourg	12	Free
8	Andorra	13	Free
	Switzerland	13	Free
10	Liechtenstein	14	Free
11	Monaco	15	Free
12	Estonia	16	Free
	Iceland	16	Free
	Ireland	16	Free
	San Marino	16	Free
16	Germany	18	Free
	Portugal	18	Free
18	Czech Republic	21	Free
19	Austria	22	Free
20	France	23	Free
	Malta	23	Free
22	Slovakia	24	Free
	United Kingdom	24	Free
24	Lithuania	25	Free
	Slovenia	25	Free
	Cyprus	25	Free
27	Poland	26	Free
28	Latvia	28	Free
	Spain	28	Free
30	Italy	31	Partly Free
31	Hungary	37	Partly Free
32	Bulgaria	38	Partly Free
33	Montenegro	39	Partly Free
34	Croatia	40	Partly Free
	Serbia	40	Partly Free
36	Romania	42	Partly Free
37	Albania	49	Partly Free
	Kosovo	49	Partly Free
39	Bosnia and Herzegovina	51	Partly Free
	Greece	51	Partly Free
41	Macedonia	58	Partly Free
42	Turkey	65	Not Free

## EURASIA

Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status
1	Georgia	48	Partly Free
2	Moldova	55	Partly Free
3	Ukraine	58	Partly Free
4	Armenia	61	Not Free
5	Kyrgyzstan	67	Not Free
6	Tajikistan	82	Not Free
7	Russia	83	Not Free
8	Kazakhstan	85	Not Free
9	Azerbaijan	87	Not Free
10	Belarus	93	Not Free
11	Crimea*	94	Not Free
12	Turkmenistan	95	Not Free
	Uzbekistan	95	Not Free

## MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status
1	Israel	30	Free
2	Tunisia	48	Partly Free
3	Lebanon	55	Partly Free
4	Kuwait	59	Partly Free
5	Algeria	61	Not Free
6	Jordan	66	Not Free
	Morocco	66	Not Free
8	Qatar	67	Not Free
9	Oman	71	Not Free
10	Iraq	72	Not Free
11	Egypt	73	Not Free
	Libya	73	Not Free
13	United Arab Emirates	76	Not Free
14	Yemen	78	Not Free
15	Saudi Arabia	83	Not Free
16	West Bank and Gaza Strip*	84	Not Free
17	Bahrain	87	Not Free
18	Iran	90	Not Free
	Syria	90	Not Free

\*Denotes territories.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014.

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Rank 2015	Country	Score	Status
1	Cape Verde	27	Free
2	Ghana	28	Free
	São Tomé and Príncipe	28	Free
4	Mauritius	30	Free
5	Namibia	33	Partly Free
6	Mali	37	Partly Free
	South Africa	37	Partly Free
8	Benin	38	Partly Free
9	Botswana	44	Partly Free
	Burkina Faso	44	Partly Free
	Mozambique	44	Partly Free
12	Lesotho	48	Partly Free
	Senegal	48	Partly Free
14	Comoros	49	Partly Free
	Malawi	49	Partly Free
16	Mauritania	50	Partly Free
	Seychelles	50	Partly Free
	Sierra Leone	50	Partly Free
19	Niger	51	Partly Free
20	Côte d'Ivoire	53	Partly Free
	Nigeria	53	Partly Free
22	Somaliland*	54	Partly Free
	Tanzania	54	Partly Free
24	Uganda	56	Partly Free
25	Kenya	57	Partly Free
26	Congo (Brazzaville)	59	Partly Free
	Guinea-Bissau	59	Partly Free
	Madagascar	59	Partly Free
29	Liberia	60	Partly Free
30	Togo	62	Not Free
	Zambia	62	Not Free
32	Guinea	64	Not Free
33	Cameroon	66	Not Free
34	South Sudan	68	Not Free
35	Angola	70	Not Free
	Gabon	70	Not Free
	Zimbabwe	70	Not Free
38	Central African Republic	72	Not Free
39	Burundi	74	Not Free
	Chad	74	Not Free
41	Djibouti	75	Not Free
42	Congo (Kinshasa)	79	Not Free
	Rwanda	79	Not Free
	Somalia	79	Not Free
	Swaziland	79	Not Free
46	Sudan	81	Not Free
	The Gambia	81	Not Free
48	Ethiopia	83	Not Free
49	Equatorial Guinea	90	Not Free
50	Eritrea	94	Not Free

\*Denotes territories.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014.

## Methodology

The 2015 edition of *Freedom of the Press*, which provides analytical reports and numerical ratings for 199 countries and territories, continues a process conducted by Freedom House since 1980. Each country and territory is given a total press freedom score from 0 (best) to 100 (worst) on the basis of 23 methodology questions divided into three subcategories. The total score determines the status designation of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. Assigning numerical scores allows for comparative analysis among countries and facilitates an examination of trends over time. The ratings and reports included in *Freedom of the Press 2015* cover events that took place between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2014.

### Criteria

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

All states, from the most democratic to the most authoritarian, are committed to this doctrine through the UN system. To deny it is to deny the universality of basic human rights. We recognize that cultural distinctions or economic underdevelopment may affect the character or volume of news flows within a country, but these and other differences are not acceptable explanations for infringements like centralized control of the content of news and information. We seek to assess media freedom using common criteria for all settings, in poor and rich countries as well as in countries of various ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

### Research and Scoring Process

The report's findings are reached after a multilayered process of analysis and evaluation by a team of regional experts and scholars. Although some degree of subjectivity may be unavoidable, the process emphasizes intellectual rigor and aims for consistent and unbiased judgments.

The research and scoring process involves more than 90 analysts—including outside consultants and members of the core research team headquartered in New York—who prepare the draft ratings and country reports. They gather information from professional contacts in a variety of countries, staff and consultant travel, international visitors, the findings of other human rights and press freedom organizations, regional specialists, the reports of governments and multi-lateral bodies, and a variety of domestic and international news media. We would particularly like to thank the other members of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) network for providing detailed and timely analyses of press freedom violations in a variety of countries worldwide, on which we rely to make our judgments.

The ratings are reviewed individually and on a comparative basis in a set of six regional meetings involving analysts, advisers, and Freedom House staff. The ratings are compared with the previous year's findings, and any proposed changes are subjected to added scrutiny. These reviews are followed by cross-regional assessments in which an effort is made to ensure comparability and consistency in the findings.

### Methodology

Through the years, we have refined and expanded our methodology. Recent modifications have been intended to capture changes in the news and information environment without altering the comparability of data for a given country over the 35-year span of the index, or the comparative ratings of all countries over that period.

Our examination of the level of press freedom in each country and territory currently comprises 23 methodology questions and 132 subquestions divided into three broad categories: the legal environment, the political environment, and the economic environment. For each methodology question, a lower number of points is allotted for a more free situation, while a higher number of points is allotted for a less free environment. A country's final score (from 0 to 100) represents the total of the scores allotted for each question. A total score of 0 to 30 results in a press freedom status of Free; 31 to 60 a status of Partly Free;

and 61 to 100 a status of Not Free.

The diverse nature of the methodology questions seeks to address the varied ways in which pressure can be placed on the flow of information and the ability of print, broadcast, and internet-based media to operate freely and without fear of repercussions. In short, we seek to provide a picture of the entire "enabling environment" in which the media operate. We also seek to assess the diversity of the news and information available to the public in any given country or territory, from either local or transnational sources.

The **legal environment** category encompasses an examination of both the laws and regulations that could influence media content, and the extent to which they are used in practice to restrict the media's ability to operate. We assess the positive impact of legal and constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression; the potentially negative aspects of security legislation, the penal code, and other criminal statutes; penalties for libel and defamation; the existence of and ability to use freedom of information legislation; the independence of the judiciary and official regulatory bodies; registration requirements for both media outlets and journalists; and the ability of journalists' organizations to operate freely.

Under the **political environment** category, we evaluate the degree of political control over the content of news media. Issues examined include the editorial independence of both state-owned and privately owned outlets; access to information and sources; official censorship and self-censorship; the vibrancy of the media and the diversity of news available within each country; the ability of both foreign and local reporters to cover the news in person without obstacles or harassment; and reprisals against journalists or bloggers by the state or other actors, including arbitrary detention, violent assaults, and other forms of intimidation.

Our third category examines the **economic environment** for the media. This includes the structure of media ownership; transparency and concentration of ownership; the costs of establishing media as well as any impediments to news production and distribution;

the selective withholding of advertising or subsidies by the state or other actors; the impact of corruption and bribery on content; and the extent to which the economic situation in a country affects the development and sustainability of the media.

## Methodology Questions 2015

### LEGAL ENVIRONMENT (0–30 POINTS)

1. Do the constitution or other basic laws contain provisions designed to protect freedom of the press and of expression, and are they enforced? **(0–6 points)**
2. Do the penal code, security laws, or any other laws restrict reporting and are journalists or bloggers punished under these laws? **(0–6 points)**
3. Are there penalties for libeling officials or the state and are they enforced? **(0–3 points)**
4. Is the judiciary independent and do courts judge cases concerning the media impartially? **(0–3 points)**
5. Is Freedom of Information legislation in place, and are journalists able to make use of it? **(0–2 points)**
6. Can individuals or business entities legally establish and operate private media outlets without undue interference? **(0–4 points)**
7. Are media regulatory bodies, such as a broadcasting authority or national press or communications council, able to operate freely and independently? **(0–2 points)**
8. Is there freedom to become a journalist and to practice journalism, and can professional groups freely support journalists' rights and interests? **(0–4 points)**

### POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT (0–40 POINTS)

1. To what extent are media outlets' news and information content determined by the government or a particular partisan interest? **(0–10 points)**
2. Is access to official or unofficial sources generally controlled? **(0–2 points)**

3. Is there official or unofficial censorship? **(0–4 points)**
4. Do journalists practice self-censorship? **(0–4 points)**
5. Do people have access to media coverage and a range of news and information that is robust and reflects a diversity of viewpoints? **(0–4 points)**
6. Are both local and foreign journalists able to cover the news freely in terms of harassment and physical access? **(0–6 points)**
7. Are journalists, bloggers, or media outlets subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor as a result of their reporting? **(0–10 points)**

### ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT (0–30 POINTS)

1. To what extent are media owned or controlled by the government and does this influence their diversity of views? **(0–6 points)**
2. Is media ownership transparent, thus allowing consumers to judge the impartiality of the news? **(0–3 points)**
3. Is media ownership highly concentrated and does this influence diversity of content? **(0–3 points)**
4. Are there restrictions on the means of news production and distribution? **(0–4 points)**
5. Are there high costs associated with the establishment and operation of media outlets? **(0–4 points)**
6. Do the state or other actors try to control the media through allocation of advertising or subsidies? **(0–3 points)**
7. Do journalists, bloggers, or media outlets receive payment from private or public sources whose design is to influence their journalistic content? **(0–3 points)**
8. Does the overall economic situation negatively impact media outlets' financial sustainability? **(0–4 points)**

**NOTE:** Under each question, a lower number of points is allotted for a more free situation, while a higher number of points is allotted for a less free environment. A complete list of the subquestions used to make the assessments can be found online at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press-2015/methodology>.





Freedom House is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights.

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