



ADVANCING FREEDOM FOR 73 YEARS

## **PRESS FREEDOM IN 2010: SIGNS OF CHANGE AMID REPRESSION**

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The proportion of the world's population that has access to a Free press declined to its lowest point in over a decade during 2010, as repressive governments intensified their efforts to control traditional media and developed new techniques to limit the independence of rapidly expanding internet-based media. Among the countries to experience significant declines in press freedom were Egypt, Honduras, Hungary, Mexico, South Korea, Thailand, and Ukraine. And in the Middle East, a number of governments with long-standing records of hostility to the free flow of information took further steps to constrict press freedom by arresting journalists and bloggers and censoring reports on sensitive political issues. These developments constitute the principal findings of *Freedom of the Press 2011: A Global Survey of Media Independence*, the latest edition of an annual index published by Freedom House since 1980.

The report found that only 15 percent of the global population—one in six 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. At the same time, the global media environment, which has experienced a pattern of deterioration for the past eight years, showed some signs of stabilizing. For example, the declines in the Middle East and in crucial countries like Mexico and Thailand were partially offset by gains in sub-Saharan Africa and portions of the former Soviet Union.

Prospects for a reversal of the negative trend were enhanced by the protest movements that emerged across the Middle East in the early months of 2011. While this report assesses developments in 2010—and thus does not take into account the potentially dramatic changes in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries—its findings are a vivid reminder of the central role that the denial of press freedom and freedom of expression has played in the suppression of broader democratic rights in the Middle East and elsewhere. A principal complaint of the Middle East protesters has been the role of regime-controlled media in circulating government propaganda and stifling opposition voices. While the fate of political reform in the region remains unclear, the demands for change could well have ripple effects in other parts of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa, the former Soviet Union, and even China.

During 2010, however, many of these positive pressures remained below the surface. Indeed, authoritarian efforts to place restrictions on the press, new media, and other instruments of expression gained momentum in a number of strategically important countries, such as China, Iran, Russia, and Venezuela. These states were also notable for their attempts to restrict media freedom and influence the news agenda beyond their borders. Meanwhile, media in new and aspiring democracies proved vulnerable to a combination of hostile forces, including political leaders determined to mute critics, powerful business interests, drug traffickers, and armed insurgents or terrorists. Among the countries that experienced press freedom declines because of these forces were Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Fiji, Iraq, Turkey, Ukraine, and Yemen. Backsliding was also seen in relatively open press environments, with South Korea falling into the Partly Free range and Hungary experiencing significant setbacks.

The year's most impressive gains were brought about through major legal and regulatory reforms and a greater official willingness to allow media freedom and diversity in Guinea, Moldova, and Niger. Smaller improvements were noted in Colombia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, as well as a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe.

## Key Trends in 2010

- **Misuse of licensing and regulatory frameworks has emerged as a key method of control in a number of semidemocratic and authoritarian settings.** Authoritarian regimes have increasingly used bogus legalistic maneuvers to narrow the space for independent broadcasting, effectively countering an earlier trend of growth in the number of private radio and television outlets. In Russia, Venezuela, and a range of other countries, denial or suspension of broadcast licenses or closure of outlets on spurious grounds are preferred methods for suppressing unwelcome views.
- **Control over new means of news dissemination, particularly internet-based social media, has become a priority for authoritarian governments.** As media delivery systems have expanded from traditional print formats and terrestrial broadcasting to satellite television, the internet, and mobile telephones, authoritarian governments have intensified efforts to exert control over the new means of communication as well as the news outlets that employ them. Blocking of satellite television transmissions was noted in Egypt and Iran, while the social-networking website Facebook was blocked briefly in Pakistan and remained unavailable in China, Syria, and Vietnam. Some democratic and semidemocratic states also moved to implement additional controls over the internet, including South Korea and Thailand, which increased censorship of online content.
- **The role of nonstate forces in the suppression of press freedom is growing.** In Mexico, violence associated with drug trafficking has led to a dramatic increase in attacks on journalists and rising levels of self-censorship and impunity. In 2010, the country's organized crime groups moved more aggressively to control the news agenda; no longer satisfied with silencing the media, they have demanded specific coverage that suits their interests. Somewhat less intense pressure by drug trafficking groups drove continued declines in Guinea-Bissau, another burgeoning narcostate.
- **Worsening violence against the press and impunity for such crimes are forcing journalists into self-censorship or exile.** The level of violence and physical harassment directed at the press by both official and nonstate actors remains a key concern in a number of countries. In media environments ranging from conflict zones to struggling democracies with a weak rule of law, the press is facing increased intimidation or outright attacks. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, some of the deadliest countries for journalists in 2010 were Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Mexico, and Pakistan. These attacks have a chilling effect on the profession, encouraging self-censorship or exile, and the failure to punish or even seriously investigate crimes against journalists has reached scandalous proportions.
- **Threats to media freedom remain a concern in established democracies.** Various pressures impinge on press freedom in democratic countries as diverse as India, Israel, Italy, and South Africa. Increased censorship and attempts to exert official influence over the management of broadcast outlets led to a decline in South Korea's status, from Free to Partly Free. In Hungary, the conservative government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán pushed restrictive legislation through the parliament and seized control over media regulators and public broadcasters.

## The Global Picture in 2010

Of the 196 countries and territories assessed during 2010, a total of 68 (35 percent) were rated Free, 65 (33 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 63 (32 percent) were rated Not Free. This balance is almost exactly the same as in the edition covering 2009, which featured 69 Free, 64 Partly Free, and 63 Not Free countries and territories.

The survey found that only 15 percent of the world's inhabitants live in countries with a Free press, while 42 percent have a Partly Free press and 43 percent live 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 nearly seven billion people. The percentage of those enjoying Free media in 2010 declined by another point to the lowest level since 1996, when Freedom House began incorporating population data into the findings of the survey. Meanwhile, the share living in Not Free countries jumped by three percentage points, reflecting the move by three populous states—Egypt, Mexico, and Thailand—into this status designation.

The most significant regionwide decline occurred in the Middle East and North Africa, while smaller negative trends were apparent in the Americas, the Asia-Pacific region, and Western Europe. The regional average for Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union remained unchanged, with declines in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states balanced by improvements in the former Soviet Union. Meanwhile, sub-Saharan Africa registered a significant improvement in 2010, with dramatic political openings in some countries and positive legal reforms in others.

The year featured a total of nine status changes—five negative and four positive—with all but one spanning the Partly Free–Not Free divide. In terms of significant numerical shifts, statistics were far more balanced than in recent years, with declines (12 countries) only marginally outnumbering gains (11 countries).

### **Five-Year Trends**

Global press freedom deteriorated from 2005 to 2010, with modest declines every year, and particularly steep declines in 2007, 2008, and 2009. The trend seems to have leveled off in the latest year under review, with a decline in the global average score of just 0.07 points. However, it remains unclear whether this near equilibrium will tip toward an overall improvement in 2011.

The negative trend of recent years has affected every region. The most pronounced setbacks occurred in Hispanic America, led by a constriction of media space in a number of Andean countries. Almost as large was the deterioration apparent in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, with declines noted in democracies and authoritarian regimes alike. Smaller but still significant declines were noted in the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe. While the Asia-Pacific region declined overall, South Asia provided a bright spot, driving an improvement in the Asia subregion.

Over the past five years, country declines of 10 or more points have outnumbered gains of a similar scale by almost a two-to-one margin. Many of these downturns occurred in emerging democracies that were tested by political upheaval, polarization, coups, or outright civil war, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Fiji, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Similarly, countries with declines of three or more points in the past five years outnumber countries with similar gains by a more than a two-to-one margin (66 to 29 countries). It is notable that the number of countries experiencing declines has outnumbered those experiencing gains for each of the past five years, with more than two-to-one margins noted for 2006–07 and 2007–08. In the past year, this disparity has all but disappeared.

### **Worst of the Worst**

The world's 10 worst-rated countries are Belarus, Burma, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In these states, 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. Despite hope in recent years that the impact of the internet and other new media would lead to improvements in these countries, most of their scores remained stagnant in 2010. However, there were marginal improvements in Burma, due to somewhat more open media access to opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi following her release from house arrest, and in Cuba, due to the release of a number of imprisoned journalists to exile in

Spain. Meanwhile, Turkmenistan's media environment worsened owing to the shutdown of a major mobile-phone service provider, which cut off many residents from outside sources of information, and Iran suffered further declines as a result of blocked satellite television and internet services. Journalists in Uzbekistan faced additional repercussions for their work, including a spate of criminal libel prosecutions.

### **The Driving Forces of Positive Change**

Broad openings in the media environment usually require a change of government and a broad political commitment to reform. The biggest improvements in 2010, many of which occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, came in the context of recent elections or the removal of despotic rulers, leading to new governments with an overt interest in reform. After significant declines associated with short-lived dictatorships in 2009, Guinea and Niger bounced back in 2010, moving into the Partly Free range. And a new coalition government elected in Moldova in 2009 enacted a range of reforms that vastly improved the climate for independent journalism in the past year. Similar political changes took place in the countries that have shown the greatest numerical improvement over the past five years, such as Bangladesh, Haiti, the Maldives, and Nepal. However, major political shifts are often made possible by, and consolidated through, more incremental improvements to media freedom.

While many governments appear unwilling to eliminate the array of laws used to punish journalists and news outlets, and some have been applying them with greater determination, legal reform can play a key role in providing greater space for free expression. Positive legal steps in 2010 led to improved scores for a number of countries, including broad constitutional reforms in Kenya, the passing of a freedom of information law in Liberia, and a concerted effort to fight impunity and investigate the murders of journalists in Colombia. Meanwhile, regulatory reforms took place in Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania, and Zimbabwe. Notably, many of these victories were achieved only after lengthy advocacy campaigns by journalists and civil society activists.

Over the longer term, the advent of satellite technology and the privatization of the broadcast sector in a number of countries has led to a greater diversity of private radio and television stations. This phenomenon has been particularly apparent in countries with previously state-dominated broadcast media in the Middle East, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. The explosive growth in internet and mobile-phone usage, particularly in the developing world, has also created a variety of new channels for the flow of information, with the result that complete state control over the news is almost impossible. The most recent effects of these changes can be seen in the Middle East and North Africa, where satellite channels such as Al-Jazeera and internet-based platforms like Facebook and Twitter played a key role in the political revolts of early 2011.

Taken together, these trends suggest that future expansions of both media freedom and general political freedom will require sustained support for legal and regulatory reforms, for freedom of the internet and other new media, and for those engaged in pushing back against official repression and threats from nonstate actors—be they journalists, press freedom activists, or independent media companies.

### **Regional Findings**

**Americas:** In the Americas, 17 countries (49 percent) were rated Free, 14 (40 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 4 (11 percent) were rated Not Free for 2010. The region's population is almost evenly split between those living in Free (41 percent) and Partly Free (42 percent) media environments, with the remaining 17 percent living in Not Free countries. These figures are significantly influenced by the open media environments of the Caribbean, which tend to offset the less rosy picture in Central and South America. There were two negative status changes, with Honduras and Mexico joining the ranks of Not Free countries, as well as a number of significant numerical declines. Not since 2006 have so many countries in the region been designated Not Free. The regional average score worsened compared with 2009, with the bulk of the decline occurring in the political and economic categories.

Press freedom conditions remain extremely restricted in **Cuba**, which has one of the most repressive media environments worldwide, and **Venezuela**, where the government of President Hugo Chávez continued its efforts to control the press. Further pressures were placed on independent Venezuelan broadcast outlets during the year, including the revocation of licenses, and the head of a major television station, Globovisión, fled into exile.

Ongoing deterioration in Mexico and Honduras tipped both countries into the Not Free range in 2010. **Mexico**'s score worsened from 60 to 62 due to the country's escalating drug wars, which have taken their toll on journalists. Violence and intimidation by criminal groups have steadily increased in a climate of impunity, leading to heightened self-censorship by the profession as a whole as well as the murders of more than 60 journalists over the past 10 years. During 2010, the nature of drug gangs' control over the news agenda expanded from prohibitory censorship to concerted attempts to place propaganda or press releases in selected media outlets. This was typically achieved through a combination of threats and bribery. In **Honduras**, political conditions stabilized somewhat in 2010 following a coup in 2009, and some legal and constitutional protections for press freedom that had been suspended the previous year were reinstated. However, journalists' ability to work safely was severely compromised by a sharp rise in harassment and attacks in early 2010, including the killing of six journalists in March alone. The aggression and intimidation came from both sides of the political divide. This increase in violence, coupled with a climate of impunity in which journalists' deaths were not investigated thoroughly or in a timely manner, pushed Honduras's score from 59 to 61, placing it just inside the Not Free bracket.

Following a series of declines in recent years, Ecuador and Bolivia experienced significant downgrades in 2010. **Ecuador**'s score fell five points, from 47 to 52, to reflect an increasingly polarized media environment and a rise in negative rhetoric and actions against news outlets by the administration of President Rafael Correa. Pressures on the media included a growing number of criminal defamation suits, raids and shutdowns of broadcast outlets, government advertising boycotts, and official attempts to influence the news agenda through the establishment of state-owned or controlled outlets. Meanwhile, **Bolivia**'s score moved from 43 to 46 due to the approval of several new laws that allow the government to impose fines, withdraw operating licenses, and imprison journalists under loosely defined criteria. The legislation led to an increase in self-censorship by journalists. More modest declines were registered in **Argentina** as a result of continued tensions between the government and oppositionist news outlets. Journalists faced increased attacks and harassment, and there were officially sanctioned attempts to restrict the production and the distribution of newspapers, particularly those associated with the Clarín media group.

The only significant positive numerical movement in the Americas for 2010 took place in **Colombia**, whose score improved from 60 to 56 due to progress in ending impunity for past attacks on journalists. Charges were filed in a number of cold cases, and previously closed investigations were reopened.

The **United States** remains one of the better performers in the index, but it faces several challenges, including a lack of protection-of-sources legislation at the federal level and a threat to media diversity stemming from poor economic conditions for the news industry. In 2010, protection for free speech was strengthened by a new law designed to shield American writers from "libel tourism" cases in foreign courts. Also during the year, several major releases of classified documents by the antisecrecy organization WikiLeaks led to heated debates over the ability of democracies to take legal action against those responsible for publicizing leaked information.

**Asia-Pacific:** The Asia-Pacific region as a whole exhibited a relatively high level of press freedom in 2010, with 14 countries and territories (35 percent) rated Free, 13 (32.5 percent) rated Partly Free, and 13 (32.5 percent) rated Not Free. Yet the regionwide figures disguise considerable subregional diversity. For example, 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. The country breakdown also obscures the fact that only 5 percent of the region's population has access to Free media, while 46 percent live in Partly Free and 49 percent in Not Free

media environments. A modest decline in the average score for the Asia-Pacific region was caused by slight deteriorations in all three topical categories (legal, political, and economic) in 2010.

Asia includes two of the worst-rated countries in the world, Burma and North Korea, as well as China, Laos, and Vietnam, all of which feature extensive state and party control of the press. Conditions in the world's largest poor performer, **China**, remained highly repressive in 2010. Authorities increased censorship and Communist Party propaganda in both traditional and online media, with a focus on politically sensitive issues like the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to jailed democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo in October. Detailed party directives—which can arrive daily at editors' desks—also curbed coverage related to public health, environmental accidents, deaths in police custody, and foreign policy. Dozens of activists, dissidents, and journalists remained in jail for their writing at year's end, with minority-language journalists facing special persecution. Nevertheless, journalists and bloggers continued to test the limits of permissible expression by exposing official corruption, circulating underground political publications, and engaging in imaginative efforts to circumvent China's comprehensive internet filtering system, the so-called Great Firewall.

The region featured two important status changes in 2010. **South Korea**, which had long hovered at the low end of the Free range, slipped by two points, from 30 to 32, earning it a Partly Free designation. Contributing factors included an increase in official censorship as well as government attempts to influence media outlets' news and information content. Over the past several years, an increasing number of online comments have been removed for expressing either pro-North Korean or anti-South Korean views. The current conservative government has also interfered in the management of major broadcast media, with allies of President Lee Myung-bak receiving senior posts at large media companies over the objections of journalists.

Also in 2010, additional pressure on the media in politically turbulent **Thailand** led to a four-point score decline, from 58 to 62, and a status downgrade to Not Free. Key factors included the use of the restrictive new Computer Crimes Act to punish online expression, a continued increase in lèse-majesté prosecutions, and periodic violence between political factions that caught journalists in the crossfire and led to censorship of media outlets.

Elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region, **Fiji**, which had registered the world's largest score decline in 2009, slipped further in 2010, falling from 54 to 57 points due to an entrenchment of prepublication censorship, a new law regulating foreign ownership of media outlets that forced the sale of a major independent newspaper, and the establishment of a media tribunal with powers to imprison or heavily fine journalists for publishing or broadcasting anything against the "national interest." **Vanuatu's** score worsened as journalists' ability to cover official events was impeded, and authorities engaged in a campaign of harassment against the independent *Daily Post* newspaper. **India** suffered modest declines in 2010, as improvements in the economic strength of the media sector were eclipsed by increasing reports of corruption among journalists. There was also an uptick in physical violence and harassment directed at the media by local authorities and nonstate actors, and worsening civil strife in Kashmir affected journalists' ability to cover the news safely and effectively. **Cambodia's** score also deteriorated due to an aggressive use of disinformation and defamation legislation against journalists, as well as a reduction in media diversity following the closure of an opposition newspaper.

Modest score improvements were noted in **Bangladesh**, whose media environment benefited from the licensing of new broadcast outlets and a decrease in cases of physical harassment and torture of journalists by security forces. The score for the **Philippines** recovered somewhat, having dropped in 2009 due to that year's Ampatuan massacre, which claimed the lives of 32 journalists and media workers. Nevertheless, the country was still troubled in 2010 by the murder and intimidation of journalists, and impunity for such crimes remained the norm.

**Central and Eastern Europe/Former Soviet Union:** In the CEE/FSU region, 8 countries (28 percent) remained classified as Free, 12 (41 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 9 (31 percent) were rated Not Free. However, a majority of the people in this region (56 percent) live in Not Free media environments, while only 18 percent have access to Free media and 26 percent live in Partly Free media environments.

In 2010, the regional average score remained unchanged, with an improvement in the legal category cancelling out a drop in the economic category. However, this stasis masked movement in the two main subregions. The better-performing subregion of Central and Eastern Europe showed an overall decline, while the more repressive non-Baltic former Soviet Union benefited from a dramatic opening in Moldova and smaller positive steps in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. In both subregions, change was largely concentrated in the political category.

While the region shares a common history of communist oppression, the trajectory of countries in the non-Baltic former Soviet Union has diverged significantly from that of Central and Eastern Europe in terms of respect for fundamental political rights and civil liberties. The press freedom ratings for these two subregions reflect a similar divergence. All of the countries of Central Europe and the three Baltic states are assessed as Free, and 9 of the 12 non-Baltic former Soviet states are ranked as Not Free. It is also notable that 3 of the 10 worst press-freedom abusers in the entire survey—Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan—are found in the former Soviet Union. Other countries of particular concern include Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. The media environment in **Russia**, which serves as a model and patron for a number of neighboring countries, is marked by the use of a pliant judiciary to prosecute independent journalists; increased self-censorship by reporters; impunity for the physical harassment and murder of journalists; and continued state control or influence over almost all media outlets.

In **Azerbaijan**, the state and ruling party dominate the media landscape, and independent journalists and bloggers continue to face legal and physical harassment for expressing dissenting views. In 2010, Azerbaijani officials openly disregarded repeated orders from the European Court of Human Rights to release Eynulla Fatullayev, a wrongfully imprisoned journalist. Despite the Kazakh government's promises to enact reforms as a condition of its chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010, conditions in **Kazakhstan** also deteriorated. A spate of libel suits were filed against journalists, and authorities implemented a new law designed to increase controls over the internet.

While press freedom conditions in the former Soviet Union have generally been stagnant and repressive in recent years, the subregion featured several positive changes in 2010, including a dramatic improvement in Moldova. In one of the year's largest numerical jumps, **Moldova's** score rose from 65 to 55, triggering a status upgrade to Partly Free, to reflect the new ruling coalition's steps to increase legal protections for journalists' rights and reform the regulatory framework. In addition, management at the state broadcaster was professionalized, new private broadcast outlets began operating, and officially sanctioned legal harassment of journalists declined substantially. Significant gains were also noted in **Georgia**, whose score moved from 59 to 55 due to an improved political environment that led to a reduction in legal and physical harassment of journalists, fewer instances of official censorship, and more balanced coverage by the public broadcaster. Despite an outbreak of serious ethnic violence in **Kyrgyzstan**, the country's score improved from 73 to 70 to reflect a lack of libel prosecutions and a new public-service broadcasting law. In addition, the interim government, which took power after the overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April, lifted bans on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and several websites and newspapers.

By contrast, worrying negative trends emerged in several countries to the west. **Hungary**, one of the region's better performers and a European Union member state, suffered a major score decline, from 23 to 30, due to new media laws that imposed potentially broad restrictions on content and called for the licensing of print and online media outlets. The new laws require journalists to reveal their sources under certain circumstances, and prescribe large fines for unbalanced or "immoral" reporting. Other causes for concern included the establishment of a new regulatory agency dominated by progovernment appointees and increased political control over the public broadcaster. **Ukraine**, which has consistently been one of the best performers in its subregion in recent years, also saw an erosion of media freedom, falling from 53 to 56 points. After pro-Russian opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich took office as president in February, broadcast frequencies were withdrawn from critical outlets and extralegal harassment of journalists increased, leading to greater self-censorship.

**Middle East and North Africa:** The Middle East and North Africa region continued to have the world's poorest ratings in 2010, with a single country (5 percent) rated Free, 2 (11 percent) rated Partly Free, and 16 (84 percent) rated Not Free. The breakdown by population is even more stark: only 2 percent each of the region's people live in Free and Partly Free media environments, while a staggering 96 percent live in countries or territories designated as Not Free. In 2010, the regional average score suffered the most dramatic deterioration of any region, led by declines in the legal and political categories.

Although transnational satellite television and internet-based platforms for information dissemination have had a positive impact, media environments in the region remain constrained by emergency rule, harsh defamation and blasphemy legislation, and laws against insulting monarchs and public figures. Of long-standing concern are **Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Tunisia**, where the state exercises near-total control over media ownership and content, and any journalists and bloggers who expressed independent views faced serious repercussions during the year. Meanwhile, journalists in the **Israeli-Occupied Territories/Palestinian Authority** were subject to pressure and threats from both major Palestinian political factions as well as from Israeli forces operating in certain areas.

The most significant movement in the region was **Egypt's** downgrade from Partly Free to Not Free. The country's media environment had opened in recent years due to the greater availability of internet-based news sources and satellite television stations, as well as a greater willingness among journalists to risk punishment by engaging in critical coverage. However, the authorities pursued a broad-based crackdown prior to and during the November 2010 parliamentary elections, causing Egypt's score to decline from 60 to 65. Journalists and bloggers faced numerous instances of legal harassment, spurious arrests, and violations of due process. The preelection period also featured the suspension of satellite television transmissions and mobile-phone-based news services, as well as an attempt to impose official restrictions on live coverage of the elections, including the censoring of certain television programs and editors.

Significant declines occurred in two countries struggling with considerable political turmoil and internal conflicts. **Iraq's** score moved from 65 to 68 after the government issued restrictive media guidelines and created a special court to try journalists. Moreover, additional journalists were assassinated, attacked, and jailed without charge, and parts of the country became more dangerous for reporters to work in. Conditions continued to deteriorate in **Yemen**, whose score moved from 80 to 83 because of increased prosecutions of journalists, a state advertising boycott of private media outlets, and heavy government control over editorial content at state-run outlets, with censorship focused on sensitive political and national-security related topics.

After a considerable shrinking of the space for free expression in the wake of a disputed presidential election in 2009, **Iran** suffered further backsliding in 2010. Its score moved from 89 to 91 due to the government's imposition of additional blocks on the internet and satellite television, and its decision to restrict funding for antigovernment publications. Score declines were also noted in **Morocco**, as a result of an advertising boycott that forced the closure of a key independent newspaper, as well as **Kuwait**, due to the closure of the local Al-Jazeera bureau and an increase in fines handed down to critical journalists.

**Sub-Saharan Africa:** A total of 5 countries (10 percent) were rated Free, 22 (46 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 21 (44 percent) remained Not Free in sub-Saharan Africa. This marks the first time that a plurality of countries in the region have been rated Partly Free. In terms of population, 5 percent live in Free media environments, while a majority (53 percent) live with Partly Free media and 42 percent live in Not Free environments. Because of its large size and political dynamism, Africa tends to be a volatile region, with changes in the media environment often tied to larger political openings or restrictions. Thus a steep decline in the regional average score in 2009 was followed in 2010 by the largest numerical improvement of any region. Changes in the political category, and especially in the legal category, fueled most of the gains. Still, press freedom conditions remained dire in **Equatorial Guinea** and **Eritrea**, two of the world's 10 worst performers, where authoritarian governments use legal pressure, imprisonment, and other forms of harassment to suppress independent reporting.

In a year of largely positive changes, the region saw three status upgrades, all from Not Free to Partly Free. Following significant declines in 2009, both Guinea and Niger rebounded dramatically in 2010. **Guinea's** score jumped from 71 to 59 points (the survey's largest numerical movement) due to legal measures enacted by a new transitional government at the beginning of the year, including a constitution providing protection for press freedom and two new media laws passed in June. There was also a decrease in legal and physical harassment of journalists, and a decline in censorship and other official attempts to restrict independent news coverage. Following the February ouster of its increasingly repressive president, Mamadou Tandja, **Niger's** transitional military government created a new, more independent media regulatory body and allowed the reopening of a private radio station that had been closed by the previous government. Legal and extrajudicial harassment of journalists, censorship, and official control over media content were all substantially reduced in 2010, while reporters' ability to cover the news and media diversity improved, boosting Niger's score from 68 to 59. Meanwhile, **Liberia** was upgraded to Partly Free due to a more modest score change, from 61 to 59. The gain stemmed from the enactment of a freedom of information law and a decrease in physical attacks on journalists.

Significant score improvements that fell short of status upgrades were plentiful in sub-Saharan Africa. In **Kenya**, the adoption of a new constitution with additional protections for media freedom, combined with a lack of legal cases against journalists, improved the score from 57 to 54 for 2010. A reduction in harassment in the form of advertising boycotts and shutdowns of radio stations led to a similar score jump, from 57 to 54, for **Senegal**. The score for **Mauritania** improved from 56 to 53 owing to a decrease in violence and intimidation by state actors and a new law that allowed private investment in the broadcasting sector. Improved media diversity was a factor in **Zambia**, whose score improved from 64 to 61 amid an increase in the number of private community radio stations and television stations. Finally, **Zimbabwe's** score rose from 84 to 81 points to reflect a modest improvement in the regulatory environment, as the Zimbabwe Media Commission began operations and licensed new print publications, including two daily newspapers. In addition, fewer physical attacks on journalists were reported during the year. Even with these gains, however, the media landscape in Zimbabwe remained extremely repressive, with near-total government control over the broadcast sector, foot-dragging on attempts to open new broadcast outlets, and continued legal and physical harassment of independent journalists. A smaller numerical improvement was noted in **Nigeria** due to expansions in media diversity and coverage, as well as the nullification of the Nigeria Press Council Act by the Federal High Court, which had the effect of relaxing constraints on the media industry.

Continued deterioration was seen in **Guinea-Bissau**, whose score moved from 54 to 57 points due to an increase in attacks and intimidation of journalists, particularly by drug traffickers. The poor economy contributed to the media's difficulties, as newspaper production was disrupted by a shortage of materials. **Madagascar** also suffered further setbacks, with a score decline from 61 to 64 as a result of a breakdown in the rule of law and judicial independence, a flagrant disregard for media freedom by the dictatorial "transitional government," and heightened attacks against journalists and media outlets. Smaller numerical declines occurred in **Angola**, due to an increase in harassment and pressures on several formerly independent newspapers following a change in ownership; **Côte d'Ivoire**, as a result of pressures on the media by both sides of the political divide in the period surrounding the presidential election; and **Sudan**, owing to the reinstatement of a system of prior censorship and additional pressures on journalists in the run-up to the 2011 referendum on Southern Sudan's independence.

**Western Europe:** Western Europe has consistently boasted the highest level of press freedom worldwide; in 2010, 23 countries (92 percent) were rated Free, and 2 (8 percent) were rated Partly Free. In terms of population, 72 percent of the region's residents enjoy a Free press, while 28 percent live in Partly Free media environments. In a change from recent years, the regional average score showed the second-largest decline of any region, with losses in the political category and to a lesser extent in the economic category.

The region's largest numerical change in 2010 was the decline in **Turkey's** score, which fell from 51 to 54 as a result of heightened harassment of journalists under a number of laws, including Articles 301

and 216 of the penal code and antiterrorism legislation. This legal pressure led to increased self-censorship by journalists, editors, and media owners.

Although most countries in the region benefit from a firmly established tradition of media freedom, several exhibited small declines in 2010. **Denmark**'s score dropped from 11 to 13, primarily to reflect an attack on political cartoonist Kurt Westergaard and other intimidation stemming from the 2005 controversy over cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. Offshoots of the affair also triggered attacks on a journalist in Sweden and riots in Norway. Meanwhile, the score for **Iceland** moved from 10 to 12—costing the country its long-standing position as the best performer in the index—as a result of the economic crisis, which affected media sustainability and led to the sale of a leading independent newspaper, of which a former prime minister and central bank chief was appointed editor.

**Italy** remained a regional outlier with its Partly Free status, and registered a small score decline in 2010 due to increased government attempts to interfere with editorial policy at state-run broadcast outlets, particularly regarding coverage of scandals surrounding Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The **United Kingdom**'s expansive libel laws remain a concern, as they have been used by both foreign and British litigants to stifle criticism from news outlets, book authors, and civil society groups within the country and abroad, often at great financial cost to the defendant. However, following sustained pressure from press freedom and media industry advocacy groups, there were some initial moves toward reform that may bear fruit in 2011.

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