

Press Freedom in 2013: Media Freedom Hits Decade Low

by Karin Deutsch Karlekar and Jennifer Dunham

Global press freedom fell to its lowest level in over a decade in 2013, as hopes raised by the Arab Spring were further dashed by major regression in Egypt, Libya, and Jordan, and marked setbacks also occurred in Turkey, Ukraine, and a number of countries in East Africa. In another key development, media freedom in the United States deteriorated due primarily to attempts by the government to inhibit reporting on national security issues.

Meanwhile, as a result of declines in democratic settings over the past several years, the share of the world's population that enjoys a Free press remained 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.

These are the most significant findings of *Freedom of the Press 2014: A Global Survey of Media Independence*, the latest edition of an annual report published by Freedom House since 1980. While there were positive developments in a number of countries, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa, the dominant trends were reflected in setbacks in a range of settings.

The year's declines were driven by the desire of governments—particularly in authoritarian states or polarized political environments—to control news content, whether through the physical harassment of journalists covering protest movements or other sensitive news stories; restrictions on foreign reporters; or tightened constraints on online news

outlets and social media. In addition, press freedom in a number of countries was threatened by private owners—especially those with close connections to governments or ruling parties—who altered editorial lines or dismissed key staff after acquiring previously independent outlets.

These factors were behind the majority of the status downgrades for 2013, including the shifts from Partly Free to Not Free in Libya, South Sudan, Turkey, Ukraine, and Zambia. Significant declines also occurred in the Central African Republic, Egypt, Greece, Jordan, Kenya, Montenegro, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Separately, influential authoritarian powers such as China and Russia continued to maintain a tight grip on locally based print and broadcast media, while also attempting to control the more independent views provided either in the blogosphere or by foreign news sources. Both countries introduced additional legal measures to penalize online speech in 2013. And while China focused on suppressing dissent on popular microblogging services and obstructing the foreign

press, the Russian government closed RIA Novosti, a long-established news service, replacing it with an organization more openly under direct Kremlin control. Conditions in Eurasia remain bleak, with 97 percent of the region's population living in Not Free media environments.

Even more open media environments are not immune to pressure on press freedom. The year featured the most significant decline of the past decade in one of the world's largest democracies, the United States, due to government attempts to control official information flows, particularly concerning national security-related issues; the legal harassment of journalists with regard to protection of sources; and revelations of surveillance that included both the bulk collection of communications data by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the targeted wiretapping of media outlets. Disclosures that surveillance was being conducted by a range of governments—many of them democratic—against ordinary citizens as well as key political figures intensified concerns on a global level about the ability of journalists and others who gather and disseminate news and information to protect sources and maintain their digital privacy.

Key Reasons for Decline

Attacking the messenger: Journalists' ability to cover breaking news came under particular threat in 2013,

as those who attempted to report on protest movements in a number of key countries faced physical harassment and even targeted attacks designed to prevent them from documenting these important stories. In Ukraine, several dozen journalists covering the Euromaidan protests were attacked in early December. Numerous cases were reported in Turkey and Egypt, and to a lesser extent in Brazil, Venezuela, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Jordan, and Uganda. Special protection for members of the press can be difficult to uphold when demonstrations turn violent, and it has become more challenging as the boundaries between accredited journalists, citizen journalists, and civic activists become increasingly blurry. However, the direct targeting of those who were engaged in covering protests during the year was a key factor behind media freedom declines in many countries.

Targeting foreign media: In more closed media environments where local journalists are unable to report freely, foreign media outlets and correspondents play a key role in covering sensitive stories and spreading the word to a global audience. However, in a range of countries, their freedom to do so was hindered in 2013. Authoritarian states like Russia and China declined to renew or threatened to withhold visas for prominent reporters; Russia's expulsion of David Satter was the first of its kind since the Cold War. Meanwhile,

Freedom of the Press Methodology

The *Freedom of the Press* report assesses the degree of media freedom in 197 countries and territories, analyzing the events and developments of each calendar year. Ratings are determined through assigning scores to a set of 23 methodology questions that seek to capture the varied ways in which pressure can be placed on the flow of independent information and the ability of print, broadcast, and internet-based news outlets to operate freely and without fear of repercussions.

Issues covered 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 to other extralegal abuse and harassment; and economic pressures on content and the dissemination of news.

Ratings reflect not just government actions and policies, but the behavior of the press itself in testing boundaries, even in more restrictive environments, as well as the impact of nonstate

actors. Each country receives a numerical score from 0 (the most free) to 100 (the least free), which serves as the basis for a press-freedom status designation of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free.

For a more detailed explanation of the methodology and ratings review process, visit <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press-2014/methodology>.

the new Egyptian government targeted several branches of the Qatari-based outlet Al-Jazeera, harassing and detaining a number of journalists and support staff. At year's end, five remained in custody. Using a more subtle tactic, the Pacific Island nation of Nauru, which is home to a detention center for asylum seekers attempting to reach Australia, raised its entry visa fee for foreign media professionals from \$200 to \$8,000 in a possible attempt to restrict coverage of conditions at the controversial facility.

Clamping down on new media: Online social networks, microblogs, mobile telephones, and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become an essential means of spreading independent news and information, particularly in environments where the traditional media are under tighter state control. A comparison between the levels of general media freedom and internet freedom, using data from the most recent editions of the relevant Freedom House reports, shows a discrepancy of 10 or more points between the two in 34 out of 60 countries studied. While repressive regimes such as China and Vietnam continued their multipronged efforts to control online speech in 2013, other countries also moved to impose restrictions on this relatively open sphere, either through the extension of existing laws to cover online content, as in Azerbaijan and Jordan, or by censoring websites, as in Sudan and Zambia. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists' 2013 prison census, almost half of the journalists jailed worldwide work for online outlets.

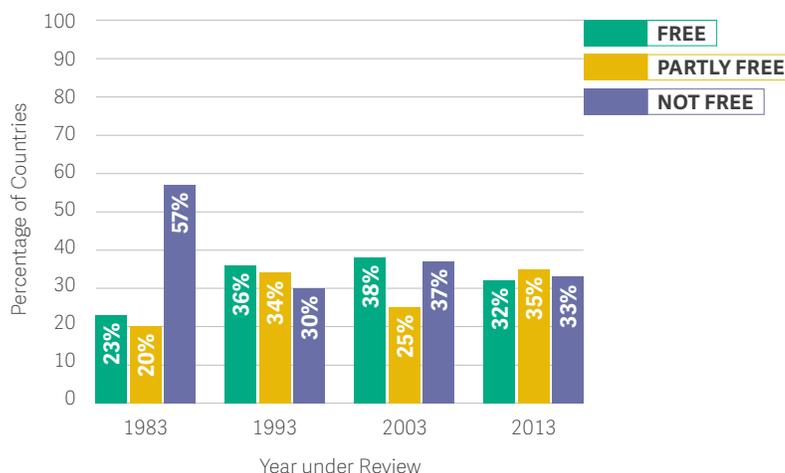
Controlling content via ownership: Economic factors can also play a key role in restricting media independence and diversity, as seen in the impact of ownership changes on editorial content. During the year, press freedom was threatened by new owners at key outlets in a range of countries, including Turkey, Ukraine, and Venezuela. In some cases, the transaction itself was opaque. In others, the new owners—particularly those with close connections to governments or ruling parties—altered editorial lines or dismissed outspoken staff. In Turkey, dozens of journalists were forced from their jobs in apparent connection with their coverage of politically sensitive issues like negotiations between the government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Gezi Park protests, or official corruption scandals. Several high-profile dismissals occurred at *Milliyet*, a newspaper recently acquired by the Demirören Group, which is sympathetic to the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, while others took place at

Sabah, which had been sold in 2011 to a company led by Erdoğan's son-in-law.

The overall declines occurred, paradoxically, in a context of increasingly diverse news sources and methods of content delivery. Among the most promising trends in recent years have been the opening of the broadcast space to private actors in a number of regions and an increase in access to a variety of views via online media, social media, and transnational outlets. In 2013, the only two scoring indicators to show an average global improvement from 2012 were those related to the registration of new private outlets and access to diverse news sources. The licensing of private stations in previously closed or circumscribed broadcast sectors contributed to status upgrades for Algeria and Côte d'Ivoire to Partly Free, as well as numerical improvements in the Seychelles, Togo, and Yemen.

In addition, improvements in the legal environment for the press contributed to advances in a number of countries. Better performance by governments and judiciaries in upholding constitutional protections for free expression, coupled with a decline in the use of restrictive laws and criminal cases to harass journalists, fueled numerical improvements in Kyrgyzstan and a range of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Togo, and Zimbabwe. This trend underscores the importance of ensuring that protections for media freedom are built into new constitutions, as governments can subsequently be held accountable for any failure to uphold

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN PRESS FREEDOM



these rights, and restrictive press laws that are not compatible with the constitutional provisions can be challenged, as was the case in Zimbabwe during 2013.

The year's largest numerical improvement (9 points) took place in Mali, which bounced back to some extent from the dramatic decline it suffered in 2012, as the restoration of the constitution and an elected government stabilized conditions in the south, and Islamist militants were ousted from most of the north.

The Global Picture in 2013

Of the 197 countries and territories assessed during 2013, a total of 63 (32 percent) were rated Free, 68 (35 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 66 (33 percent) were rated Not Free. This balance marks a shift toward the Not Free category compared with the edition covering 2012, which featured 63 Free, 70 Partly Free, and 64 Not Free countries and territories.

The analysis 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 Free media in 2013 was at its lowest level since 1996, when Freedom House began incorporating population data into the findings of the report. Meanwhile, the share living in Not Free countries increased by one percentage point, reflecting the move by populous states such as Turkey and Ukraine into that category.

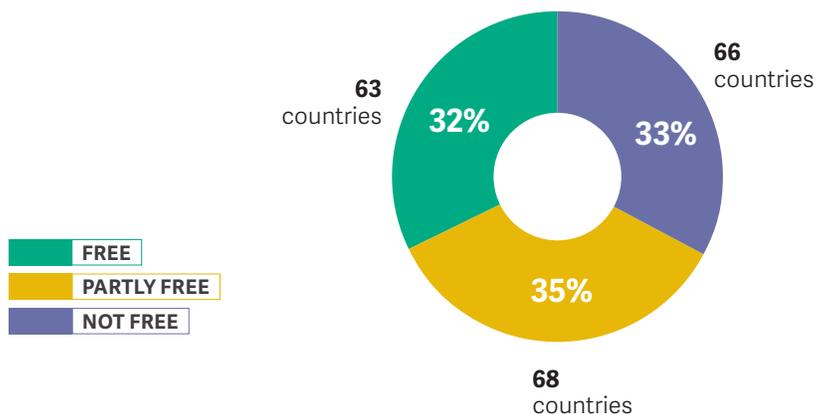
After a multiyear decline in the global average score that was interrupted by an improvement in 2011, there was a further decline of 0.31 points for 2013, bringing the figure to its lowest level since 2004. All regions except sub-Saharan Africa, whose average score plateaued, experienced declines of 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 political score, followed by the economic score; the legal score showed the smallest amount of slippage. The two indicators on which global average scores showed the greatest amount of decline during the year were those concerning editorial bias and controls over content, and the physical ability of journalists to cover the news.

There were a total of 10 status changes, with four in a positive and six in a negative direction. Most were from the Partly Free to the Not Free category. In terms of significant numerical shifts of three or more points, declines (15 countries) outnumbered gains (11 countries) in 2013.

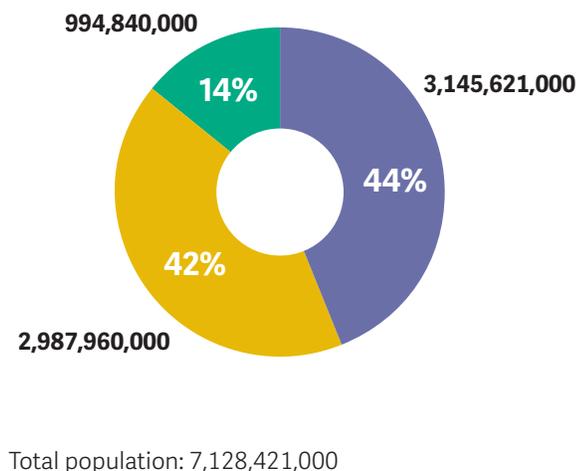
Worst of the Worst

The world's eight worst-rated countries, with scores of between 90 and 100 points, remain Belarus, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Iran, 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,

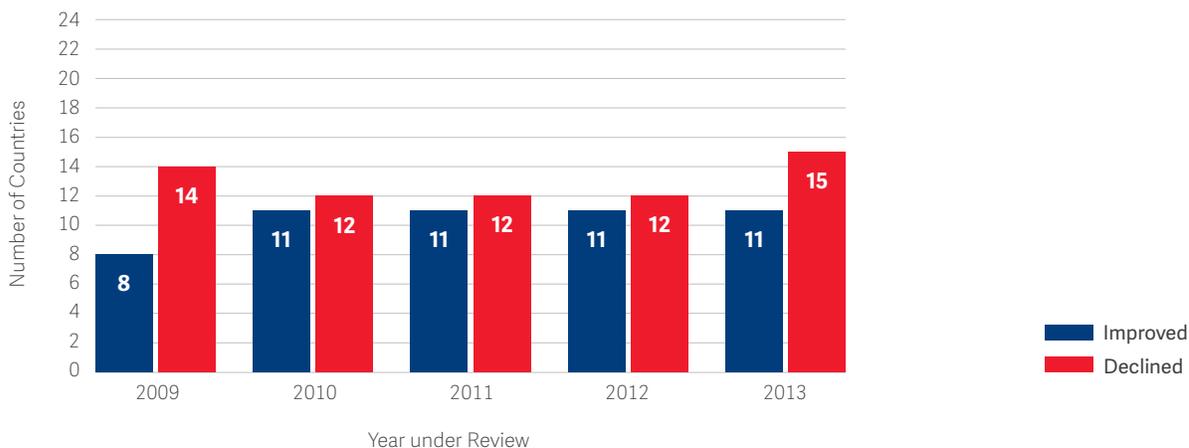
GLOBAL STATUS BY COUNTRY



GLOBAL STATUS BY POPULATION



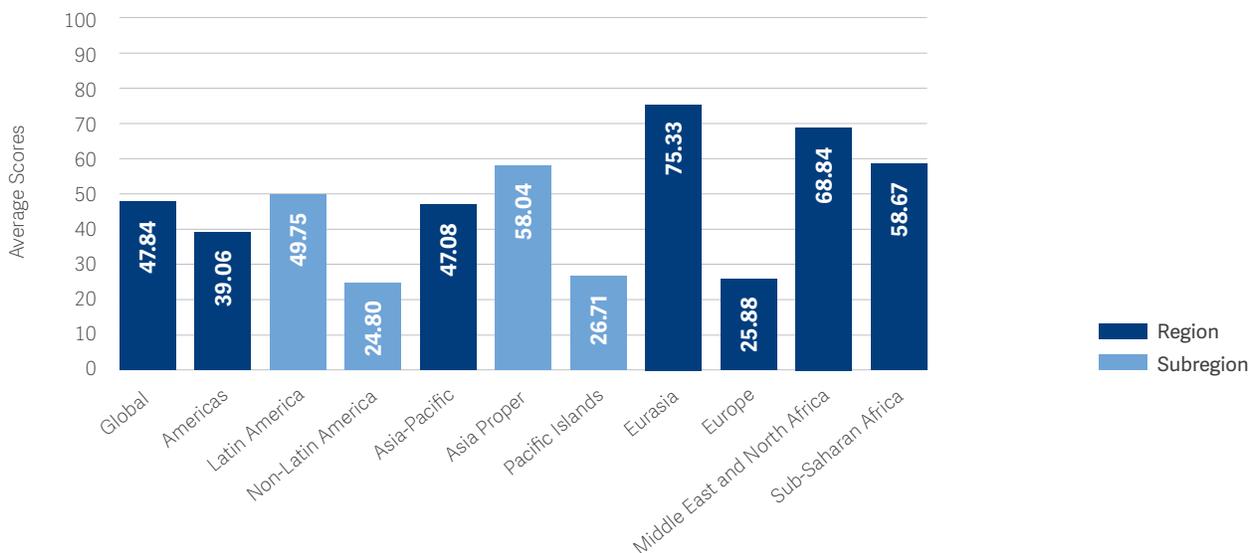
SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS OR DECLINES IN PRESS FREEDOM SCORES



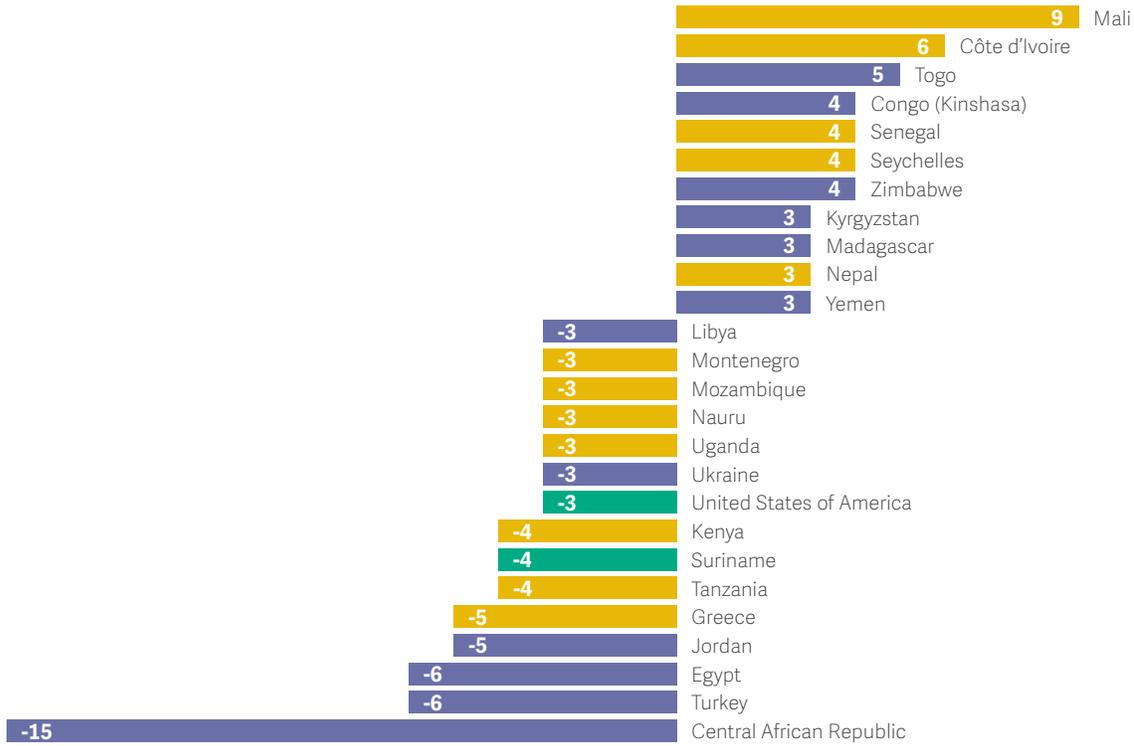
torture, and other forms of repression. In 2013, conditions remained largely stable in the majority of these countries, although slight improvements could be seen in some due to the growing ability of citizens to access alternatives to state propaganda, via satellite television, internet-based news platforms, or the circulation of thumb drives and DVDs. The only country in this cohort to have registered a significant shift in recent years is **Cuba**, whose score improved from 92 to 90 points in 2013 based on a decrease in

cases of extralegal harassment and imprisonment, as well as a positive change in the system of granting exit visas, under which a prominent blogger was allowed to travel freely outside the country. And after several years of decline in **Iran**, the country’s score bounced back from 92 to 90 points in 2013 based on a relative improvement in the number of imprisoned journalists and reporters’ increased willingness to push the boundaries on political coverage, including on the June presidential election.

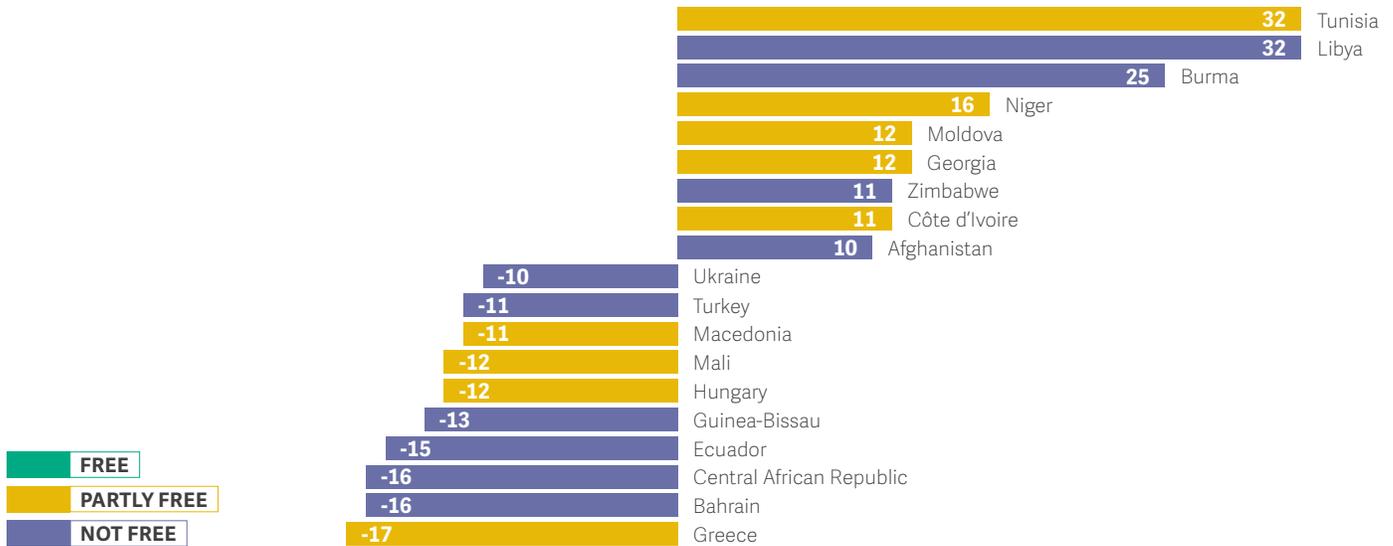
REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL AVERAGE SCORES



BIGGEST GAINS AND DECLINES 2012–2013



BIGGEST GAINS AND DECLINES 2009–2013



Regional Findings

In Latin America, meaning the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking parts of the region, only 3 (15 percent) of the countries were rated Free, and just 2 percent of the population lived in Free media environments.

Americas

In the Americas, 15 countries (43 percent) were rated Free, 15 (43 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 5 (14 percent) were rated Not Free for 2013. In terms of the region's population, 38 percent lived in Free countries, 43 could be found in Partly Free media environments, and the remaining 19 percent lived in Not Free countries. These figures 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 3 (15 percent) of the countries were rated Free, and just 2 percent of the population lived in Free media environments. The regional average score worsened to its lowest level of the past five years, with a marginal gain in the political category vastly outweighed by declines in the legal and economic categories.

Cuba remained the worst performer in the region, despite its two-point improvement. In **Venezuela**, President Nicolás Maduro, who replaced Hugo Chávez after his death in office in March 2013, continued his predecessor's efforts to control the press. Venezuela's score declined from 76 to 78 due in part to the acquisition of media outlets by private companies linked to the government, most notably the opposition-oriented television station Globovisión. Several prominent opposition and independent voices subsequently left the channel, complaining of a lack of editorial independence. **Ecuador**, which declined to Not Free in 2012, experienced further erosion as the National Assembly passed

a new Communications Law that created powerful regulatory bodies with questionable independence, placed excessive controls on content, and imposed onerous obligations on journalists and media outlets.

Conditions in two other Not Free countries, **Honduras** and **Mexico**, remained challenging due to high levels of violence and intimidation against the media. In a notable development in Mexico, which had a score of 61, the violence and intimidation was extended to local representatives of the international press freedom advocacy group Article 19. In Honduras, heightened self-censorship, especially regarding issues such as corruption and possible links between local government officials and organized crime, contributed to a score decline from 62 to 64.

Suriname experienced the largest numerical shift in the region, as its score declined from 24 to 28 due to a lack of implementation of constitutional guarantees and laws protecting press freedom, the increased use of libel laws against journalists, and preferential distribution of advertising by the government. A more moderate decline, from 48 to 50, was noted in **Panama** due to ownership concentration in the hands of President Ricardo Martinelli and his allies, as well as attempts by the government to use registration laws to influence or manipulate content and harass critical outlets.

Argentina remained a country of concern due to a highly polarized media climate and government

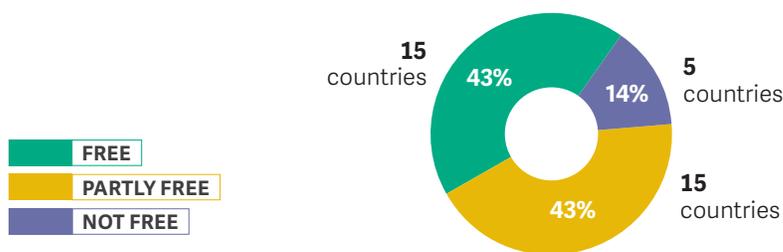
officials' ongoing negative rhetoric and verbal attacks aimed at critical journalists and outlets, particularly those affiliated with the Clarín media group. The year featured the resolution of a long-running legal battle between the government and Clarín, with the Supreme Court ruling that a 2009 law designed to diversify media ownership was constitutional. In **Brazil**, three journalists were killed as a result of their work in 2013, and a number of others were attacked or harassed while covering the protests that erupted in June. Legal actions against bloggers and internet companies, and a high number of government requests to remove online content, also posed threats to freedom of the press in the country.

In a reversal from the previous year, **Paraguay's** status improved from Not Free to Partly Free due a reduction of political influence over the state-owned media in 2013, in contrast with interference and firings at TV Pública after the parliament's controversial ouster of President Fernando Lugo in June 2012. There was also a reduction in the number of libel cases in 2013.

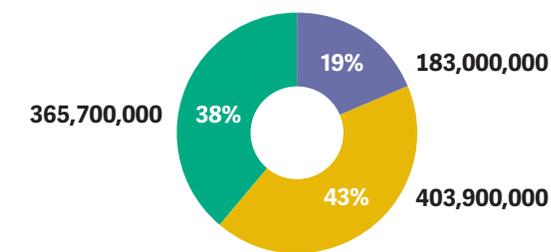
The **United States** remains one of the stronger performers in the index, but it suffered a significant negative shift for 2013, from 18 to 21 points, due to

several factors. The limited willingness of high-level government officials to provide access and information to members of the press, already noted in 2012, remained a concern, and additional methods of restricting the flow of information became apparent during the year. For example, there was an increase in the number of Freedom of Information Act requests that were either denied or censored on national security grounds. Journalists who endeavored to cover national security issues faced continued efforts by the federal judiciary to compel them to testify or to hand over materials that would reveal their sources in a number of cases—the James Risen case being the most prominent ongoing dispute. Finally, the practices disclosed by Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor, regarding mass surveillance and the storage of metadata and digital content by the NSA, coupled with the targeted surveillance of the phones of dozens of Associated Press journalists, raised questions regarding the ability of journalists to protect their sources and cast a pall over free speech protections in the United States. Ongoing challenges include the threat to media diversity stemming from poor economic conditions for the news industry, as well as the lack of protection-of-sources legislation at the federal level.

AMERICAS: STATUS BY COUNTRY



AMERICAS: STATUS BY POPULATION



Total population: 952,600,000

Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region as a whole exhibited a relatively high level of press freedom in 2013, 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 had access to Free media in 2013, while 47 percent lived in Partly Free and 48 percent in Not Free media environments. After several years of gains in the regional average score (driven mainly by Burma's opening), the score

declined in 2013, largely due to negative movement in the political category. In contrast to the dynamism exhibited by a number of countries in recent years, Asia was remarkably stable in 2013, with no countries exhibiting a score change of more than 3 points in either direction.

Asia includes the world's worst-rated country, North Korea (97 points), as well as several other restrictive media environments, such as China, Laos, and Vietnam. All of these settings feature extensive state and party control of the press. **China**, still home to the world's most sophisticated censorship apparatus, registered a modest decline from 83 to 84 points due to a crackdown on microblogs in the latter part of 2013, during which influential users and commentators lost their accounts and some were detained or forced to publicly repent as a result of their writings. Although the online sphere still offers some opportunity to push the boundaries of free expression, through discussion of sensitive news stories or dissemination of critical commentary, officials targeted this medium following a presidential speech in August urging cadres to reassert Communist Party dominance over online public opinion. New judicial guidelines issued in September that expanded the criminalization of online speech, coupled with the temporary detention and interrogation of hundreds of social media users, had a palpable chilling effect. Meanwhile, print and broadcast media remained tightly controlled, with several journalists whose writings were deemed to have violated censorship guidelines facing dismissal or forced resignation. Foreign media also encountered heightened pressure. The websites of critical foreign outlets continued to be blocked, while a number of correspondents—including those from Reuters, Bloomberg, and the *New York Times*—faced the threat of or actual visa denials.

A similar dynamic was at play in **Vietnam**, which also scores 84 and saw a crackdown on online speech in 2013. In a restrictive environment without any private print or broadcast media, bloggers play a key role in reporting on sensitive news stories and spreading information. However, several additional bloggers were detained or received harsh sentences during the year, including lengthy jail terms, and a legal decree issued in September placed broad constraints on permissible online content.

Further deterioration took place in several media environments that have shown declines in recent years. For example, **Thailand**, which was downgraded to the Not Free category in 2012, slipped from 62 to

64 points—its worst score of the past decade—due to increased physical harassment and attacks on journalists and media outlets by political activists, often in the context of political unrest and demonstrations, as well as partisanship and biased content at a number of media outlets. Censorship of online content, coupled with the aggressive enforcement of *lèse-majesté* laws, continued to suppress free expression in the country. **Sri Lanka's** score also slipped by another 2 points, from 74 to 76, marking a dramatic decline of 20 points over the last decade. Increased harassment of both local and foreign journalists trying to cover protests and sensitive news stories, as well as attacks on printing and distribution channels for private media and blocks on web content, led to a more constricted space for independent news. A further decline of 2 points was noted in **Hong Kong** due to a continuing trend of serious and unsolved physical attacks against journalists, publishers, and media outlets. Previously noted concerns include self-censorship and the use of myriad forms of economic and political pressure by Beijing. The territory's current score of 37 is its lowest in a decade. Meanwhile, **India's** score declined by a point, to 39, to reflect increased interference in content by media owners in the run-up to the 2014 elections, which led to the dismissal of key editorial staff in several instances.

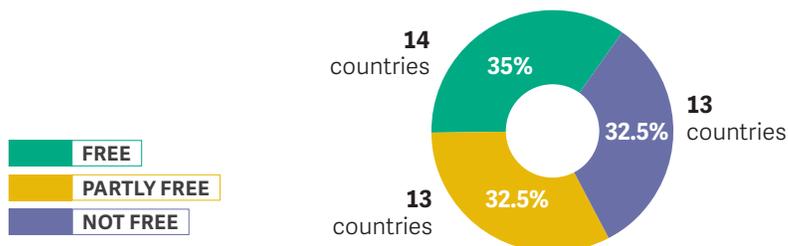
On the positive side, **Nepal's** score bounced back from 58 to 55 due to a decrease in partisanship in the media and fewer physical attacks against journalists in 2013, although threats and intimidation continued. And following two years of dramatic positive change, **Burma** registered a smaller degree of improvement in 2013, with a score uptick from 72 to 70. Although the pace of reform has slowed, the year did feature a further loosening of controls over the print media market and the licensing and opening of a number of new private daily and weekly newspapers. However, the drafting of new media laws with limited input from local industry groups, and restrictions on coverage of ethnic violence, remained issues of concern in 2013.

Although they still enjoy some of the most open media environments in the world, the Pacific Islands suffered downturns in 2013 due to a combination of political and economic challenges that stemmed in part from their remote locations. **Nauru**, the one country in the region to experience a status change in 2013, moved from 28 to 31 points and fell from Free to Partly Free due to the government's efforts to restrict news coverage of political events including national elections, as well as the imposition of a prohibitive

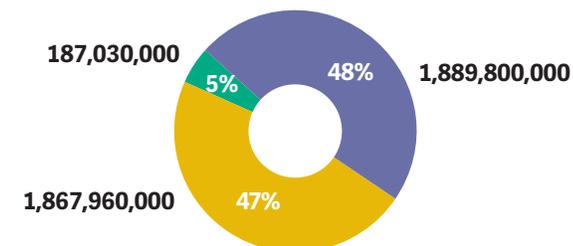
\$8,000 entry visa fee (previously \$200) for media professionals. The higher fee appears aimed at restricting foreign press coverage of the island's controversial detention center for asylum seekers hoping to reach Australia. Moreover, at least four newspapers on Nauru have closed in the past decade due to financial difficulties. Neighboring Kiribati has also been affected by economic troubles. Its score declined from 27 to 29 due to the closure of the country's only television

and public radio stations, underscoring persistent funding and infrastructure problems. Meanwhile, market pressures have eroded the pluralism of news media in **New Zealand**, whose score worsened from 16 to 18. Some positive developments were noted in **Fiji**, whose score improved from 56 to 54 after it softened restrictions on press coverage and reinstated constitutional guarantees for media freedom in the aftermath of a 2006 coup.

ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY COUNTRY



ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY POPULATION



Total population: 3,944,790,000

Eurasia

Eurasia continued to have the world's poorest ratings in 2013, with no countries rated Free, 2 countries (17 percent) classified as Partly Free, and 10 (83 percent) rated Not Free. Following Ukraine's status downgrade, the overwhelming majority of the people in this region (97 percent) now live in Not Free media environments, while only 3 percent live in Partly Free countries. The regional average score—also the worst in the world, at 75.33—underwent a marginal decline, led by negative movement in the political category.

It is notable that three of the eight worst press freedom abusers in the world—Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan—are found in Eurasia. Other countries of special concern in the region include Russia and Azerbaijan. The media environment in **Russia**, whose score remained at 81, is characterized by the use of a pliant judiciary to prosecute independent journalists, impunity for the physical harassment and murder of journalists, and continued state control or influence over almost all traditional media outlets. In 2013, the Russian government enacted additional legal restrictions on freedom of speech. Among the year's most prominent developments was the December decision by President Vladimir Putin to abolish one of Russia's

oldest state-owned news agencies, RIA Novosti, and fold it into a new entity called Rossiya Segodnya (Russia Today), which would be run by pro-Kremlin television commentator Dmitriy Kiselyov. While bloggers and journalists, as well as radio and television broadcasters, are successfully utilizing the internet to reach audiences interested in alternative and more balanced sources of information, the government has begun to use a combination of the law, the courts, and regulatory pressure to extend its crackdown to online media.

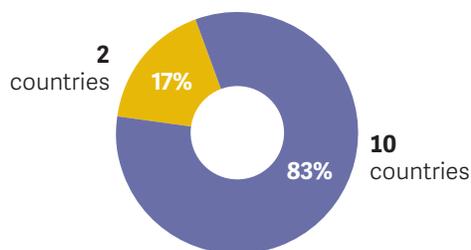
In **Azerbaijan**, the already repressive media environment declined further due to stepped-up government surveillance of journalists' and bloggers' online and telephone correspondence; the blocking of an image-sharing site that was linked to the leaking of documents from the state security services; and reported state interference in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's satellite broadcasts. As a result, the country's score dropped from 82 to 84.

Ukraine's score for 2013 declined from 60 to 63 points and from Partly Free to Not Free due to a dramatic increase in harassment and violence against journalists—including cases of reporters

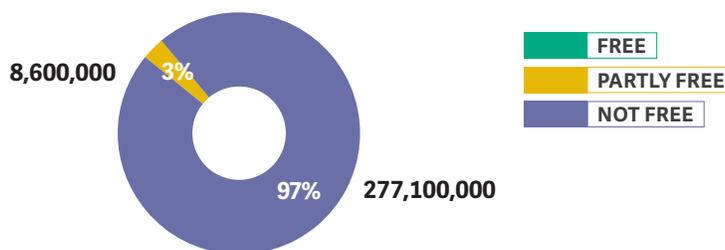
being specifically targeted by the police and hired thugs—as they covered the Euromaidan protests that began in November. Prior to the protests, there was an increase in concentration of print media ownership by progovernment groups such as Ukrainian Media Holding, resulting in the departure of leading journalists from its publications, including *Forbes Ukraine* and *Korrespondent*. In the broadcast sector, TVi, one of the few remaining critical television channels, went through a contentious change of ownership in April, prompting more than 30 of its top journalists to resign due to the opaque manner of the takeover and expectations that the station’s independence would be sacrificed. The crackdown on media freedom precipitated a change in government in early 2014, and conditions have changed dramatically as a result.

The most significant numerical improvement in the region was in **Kyrgyzstan**, which moved from 69 to 66 points to reflect the declining use of restrictive press laws, the unblocking of the Ferghana website, and fewer attacks against journalists. However, access to a diversity of news sources, and particularly to Uzbek-language media, continues to be a challenge in Kyrgyzstan. A smaller improvement was seen in **Georgia**, whose score moved from 49 to 47 due to legislation that made permanent “must carry/must offer” regulations requiring cable operators to carry all television stations, and the relative lack of incidents of intimidation or violence against journalists, which was notable for an election year.

EURASIA: STATUS BY COUNTRY



EURASIA: STATUS BY POPULATION



Total population: 285,700,000

Europe

This region, which stretches from Portugal and Ireland in the west to Romania and Turkey in the east, boasts the highest level of press freedom worldwide. In 2013, 29 countries (69 percent) were rated Free, 12 (29 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 1 (2 percent) was rated Not Free—a slight decline from the comparable breakdown for 2012. In terms of population, 66 percent of the region’s residents enjoyed a Free press, while 22 percent lived in Partly Free media environments and 12 percent lived in countries rated Not Free. However, following a substantial decline in 2012, the regional average score registered the second-largest drop worldwide in 2013, led by erosion in the legal and economic categories.

The Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden were rated the world’s top-performing countries, with overall scores of 10. In these nations, citizens enjoy strong legal pro-

tections for the press and access to diverse content in the print, broadcast, and internet spheres, and governments and societies demonstrate respect for media freedom and editorial independence. However, all three countries, as well as other Scandinavian nations, have struggled in recent years to regulate hate speech without imposing onerous legal restrictions.

The region’s largest numerical change occurred in **Turkey**, which declined from 56 to 62 points and moved from Partly Free to Not Free. Constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and expression are only partially upheld in practice, undermined by restrictive provisions in the criminal code and the Anti-Terrorism Act. Turkey remained the world’s leading jailer of journalists in 2013, with 40 behind bars as of December 1, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. The press freedom climate deteriorated

sharply during the year as journalists were harassed and assaulted while attempting to cover the Gezi Park protests that broke out in Istanbul in May, and dozens were fired or forced to resign in response to sympathetic coverage of the protesters' demands. Other prominent journalists were fired due to their coverage of sensitive issues like negotiations between the government and the PKK or the corruption scandals involving Prime Minister Erdoğan and his associates that emerged in December. The firings highlighted the close relationship between the government and many media owners, and the formal and informal pressure that this places on journalists.

In **Montenegro**, the score declined from 36 to 39 as a result of hostile official rhetoric against the press and impunity for attacks, which included bombs targeting journalists and news outlets. Prime Minister Milo Đukanović stepped up efforts to steer funds away from outlets that are critical of his government, particularly *Vijesti*. Conditions in **Hungary**, which was downgraded to Partly Free in 2011, remained largely unchanged in 2013, and there are serious and persistent concerns that the extensive legislative and regulatory changes since 2010 have negatively affected media freedom. However, in a positive development, Klubradio, a station that is critical of the ruling Fidesz party, had its main frequency restored in 2013 after several lengthy court battles.

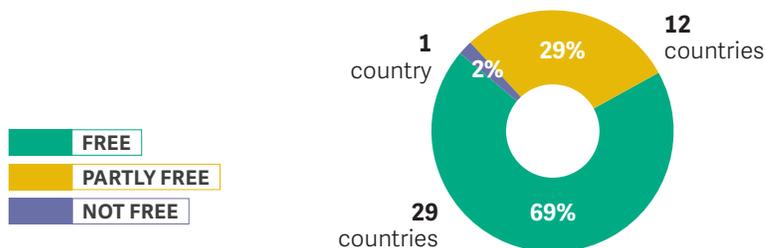
Greece, following its decline to the Partly Free category in 2012, fell a further five points in 2013. This was caused in large part by the government's abrupt shutdown of the public broadcaster Hellenic

Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) in an opaque manner in June. A new entity, New Hellenic Radio, Internet and Television (NERIT), will launch in 2014 with a drastically reduced staff. In addition, the year featured an increase in libel cases and the use of surveillance against journalists, as well as the nontransparent awarding of telecommunications licenses.

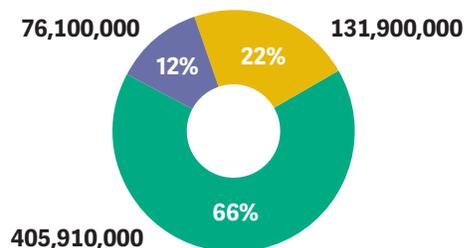
The **United Kingdom** registered both positive and negative trends in 2013, leading to a net decline from 21 to 23 points. A long-awaited reform of the libel laws raised the threshold for initiating cases and has the potential to curb "libel tourism." However, a number of negative developments stemmed from the government's response to the revelations of surveillance by the NSA and its British counterpart, Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). Authorities used the Terrorism Act to detain the partner of investigative journalist Glenn Greenwald, who broke the story; raided the offices of the *Guardian* newspaper and destroyed hard drives containing potentially sensitive source materials; and subsequently threatened the *Guardian* with further action. In the wake of the 2011 *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry that followed, the establishment of a new regulatory body to oversee print media also raised concerns among some observers.

Italy's score improved slightly, from 33 to 31, due to a decrease in self-censorship and the influence of advertising revenue on content since Silvio Berlusconi—the owner of Italy's largest media company—stepped down as premier in late 2011. However, the country remains in the Partly Free category.

EUROPE: STATUS BY COUNTRY



EUROPE: STATUS BY POPULATION



Total population: 613,910,000

Middle East and North Africa

In the Middle East and North Africa, 1 country (5 percent) was ranked in the Free category, 4 (21 percent) were designated Partly Free, and 14 (74 percent) were assessed as Not Free. Similarly, in terms of population, 2 percent of the region's people lived in Free media environments, 14 percent lived in Partly Free countries, and the vast majority, 84 percent, lived in countries or territories that were designated Not Free. The regional average score had improved significantly in 2011, particularly in the legal and political categories, due to changes associated with the Arab Spring uprisings. However, the following year featured serious backsliding, and this continued in 2013, driven almost entirely by declines in the political category.

The most dramatic gains of the Arab Spring occurred in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. Two years later, backsliding has occurred in the first two countries, and progress has stalled in the third. In **Libya**, the deteriorating security situation ensnared journalists and other members of the press, who suffered a spate of threats, kidnappings, and attacks in 2013, often at the hands of nonstate actors, including the assassination of a television presenter in Benghazi. There was also an increased use of Qadhafi-era penal and civil codes to bring defamation charges against journalists, with one reporter facing up to 15 years in prison for alleging judicial corruption. As a result, Libya's score declined from 59 to 62, and it fell into the Not Free category.

Egypt suffered one of the region's worst setbacks in 2013. Its score fell from 62 to 68, bringing it below the press freedom level of the final years of the Mubarak regime. Under the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, the first half of the year was characterized by the media's extreme polarization along ideological and political lines, as Islamist outlets became platforms for the government and secular media railed against the president. After Morsi's ouster by the military in July, the government suspended the new constitution and launched a systematic crackdown on Islamist media, shutting down television and print outlets and targeting and arresting both local and foreign journalists who attempted to cover pro-Morsi protests. Five journalists were killed at the hands of the military in July and August. At the end of the year, most news outlets were sympathetic to the military government and failed to provide objective reporting or diverse viewpoints on the crisis. Meanwhile, **Tunisia's** media landscape remained in transition, experiencing both

positive and negative developments during the year. The draft of the new constitution enshrined the right to freedom of expression, reprisals against journalists were down, and the news media found a staunch ally in an independent broadcasting authority. Nevertheless, authorities stepped up the number of legal cases against journalists using unreformed libel laws, and exorbitant license-renewal fees threatened to undermine independent radio stations. Overall, the score declined by one point from 52 to 53.

Despite a historically stable media landscape, **Jordan** underwent its largest score change in a decade, falling from 63 to 68. Local journalists in 2013 endured harassment, threats, extralegal detentions, and physical attacks by security forces as well as unknown assailants. Authorities systematically prevented or impeded members of the press from reporting on controversial topics, including parliamentary elections in January and proreform demonstrations. In addition, an amended press law required editors of online news sites to obtain licenses to operate, and a prominent independent newspaper temporarily suspended operations in July, citing financial problems. In the Gulf, the **United Arab Emirates'** score declined for the third year in a row, from 74 to 76, as the government convicted scores of reporters, activists, and bloggers who used social media, including Twitter, to criticize the trial of 94 people accused of trying to overthrow the government. **Iraq's** score fell two points, from 67 to 69, due to a spike in bloodshed, with a total of 10 journalists killed in 2013. And **Syria** remained the deadliest place in the world to practice journalism, with several dozen journalists killed, and many more abducted, missing, or injured. During the year, a rise in the influence of extremist groups severely affected the ability of the press to report freely, causing the score to drop from 88 to 89.

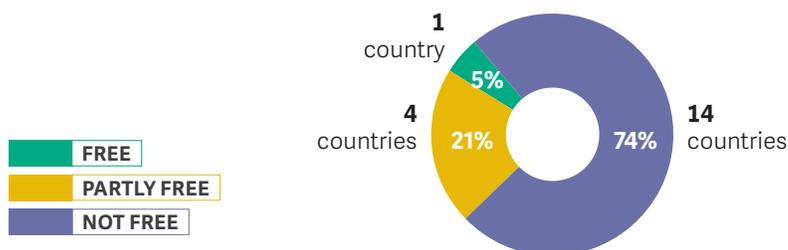
Only a handful of countries in the region bucked this negative trend, achieving modest improvements due in large part to increased availability of media content, including some critical viewpoints. **Algeria's** score improved from 61 to 59 due to the licensing of three private television stations, ending the government's monopoly on domestic broadcast media, as well as fewer physical attacks and legal cases against journalists in 2013. The score change was enough to push the country into the Partly Free category, one of only four in the region. Two years into its rocky political transition, **Yemen** continued to make progress in the

media sector. The government allowed a greater diversity of viewpoints to be expressed in media coverage of the National Dialogue process, and the number of private radio stations has grown. In addition, the level of violence against journalists has decreased, leading to a three-point score improvement, from 79 to 76. News media in the **West Bank and Gaza Strip** benefited from a decline in legal cases and, unlike in 2012, fewer incidents of violence by either Israeli or Palestinian forces. The territory's score improved from 84 to 82.

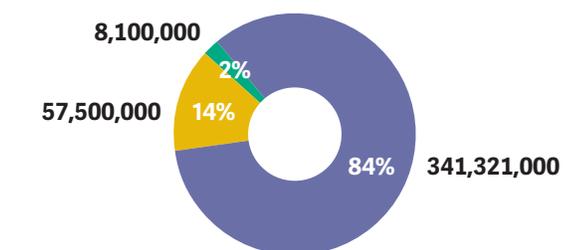
A regional outlier due to its traditionally free and pluralistic press, **Israel** experienced a 1-point

improvement to a score of 30, leading it to regain its status of Free. Several challenges to media freedom remain, including military censorship and the use of gag orders to restrict coverage, curbs on journalists' freedom of movement, political interference at the public broadcaster, and the impact on sustainability in the print sector by the free paper *Israel Hayom*, which is openly aligned with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. However, there were no serious legal charges and fewer reported cases of physical attacks or harassment against journalists during 2013, marking the lowest rate of violence since 2010.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION



Total population: 406,921,000

Sub-Saharan Africa

Four (8 percent) of the 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa were rated Free, 22 (45 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 23 (47 percent) were rated Not Free. In terms of population, 3 percent lived in Free media environments, while a majority (56 percent) lived with Partly Free media and 41 percent lived in Not Free settings. The regional average score showed no net change in 2013. However, this apparent stasis masked the fact that deterioration in the political category was balanced by improvements in the legal category, and to a lesser extent, the economic category. Legal improvements in Africa were driven primarily by an increasing respect for constitutional protections for media freedom, an overall decline in the use of restrictive press laws against journalists, and the passage of freedom of information legislation in a number of countries in 2013. An expansion of private broadcast media ownership, coupled with improved access to ICTs and fewer constraints on the production and

distribution channels for news, fueled gains in the economic category.

Press freedom conditions remained dire in Equatorial Guinea and Eritrea, two of the world's eight worst performers. Their authoritarian governments continued to use legal pressure, imprisonment, and other forms of harassment to suppress independent reporting.

The media environment declined sharply in countries that experienced violent conflict in 2013. **South Sudan** underwent violent political and ethnic clashes in mid-December as a result of a rift between President Salva Kiir and his former vice president, Riek Machar, worsening an already precarious situation for the press and pushing the country from Partly Free to Not Free. Throughout 2013, South Sudan experienced a rise in attacks on journalists in the course of covering the news, as well as an increase in threats, attacks,

and arbitrary detentions by security officials; these types of incidents spiked during the December unrest. In the **Central African Republic**, the score dropped from 62 to 77, by far the largest decline in the world in 2013. Legal protections for the press collapsed as a result of a March coup by the Séléka rebel coalition, which ousted President François Bozizé and caused a rise in interreligious conflict. In addition, a new secret police force emerged with sweeping powers to monitor journalists and media outlets. Heavy government interference and threats of violence from both the government and nonstate actors led to an increase in self-censorship.

Significant deterioration was also seen in parts of Southern and East Africa. **Zambia's** status declined to Not Free—just two years after rising to Partly Free—due to the government's increased harassment of independent and critical news outlets and journalists, the blocking of critical websites, and a politicized decision to deny nationwide broadcast licenses to certain radio stations. **Mozambique** declined from 42 to 45 points due to an increase in violence against journalists in connection with coverage of the November municipal elections, as well as extrajudicial attacks and detentions by both government and opposition forces. Also in 2013, the editors of several independent outlets were fired after publishing stories that were deemed too critical of President Armando Guebuza's government.

In **Kenya**, the score declined from 53 to 57 as a result of two laws passed in December, the Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Act and the Media Council Act. Among other provisions, the laws established wide-ranging government control of the media sector and heavy fines for journalists. Throughout 2013, journalists faced increased pressure and threats in attempting to cover sensitive or controversial events, such as the March elections, corruption, the impending International Criminal Court trial of President Uhuru Kenyatta and other top officials, and issues related to the security forces and the September terrorist attack on the Westgate shopping complex. **Tanzania** experienced a 4-point decline, from 51 to 55, due to a significant uptick in attacks against the press and increased evidence of pressure on journalists by editors and owners to report along political lines, both of which have led to more self-censorship. **Uganda's** score slipped from 55 to 58 due to an increase in harassment and denial of physical access to news venues, especially by government actors. The independent *Monitor* newspaper and three outlets that shared

its premises were shuttered by Ugandan police for 10 days due to a dispute between the *Monitor* and the government over a highly controversial story and its source. There were also cases of government officials forcing radio talk-show hosts off the air, bringing them in for police questioning, and suspending programs. On the economic side, a reduction in the government's advertising budget—due to foreign aid cuts related to a corruption scandal—jeopardized the financial sustainability of several outlets. And the highly controversial Anti-Homosexuality Bill, passed by the National Assembly in December, would, among other provisions, punish individuals for the “promotion” of homosexuality, opening up the possibility that journalists could be prosecuted for reporting or commentary that does not condemn LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals.

These declines were offset by gains in other subregions, primarily West Africa, and overall, 8 of the 11 significant country improvements of the year occurred in sub-Saharan Africa. **Côte d'Ivoire** improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to continued openings in the legal and political environment under the government of Alassane Ouattara. These included a decrease in the use of restrictive press laws, a reduction in official censorship, the gradual establishment of more private outlets, and fewer incidents of harassment and attacks on foreign and local journalists. In the year's largest numerical improvement, **Mali** moved from 46 to 37 as the country recovered from a coup and the takeover of the north by Islamist militants in 2012. The restoration of the constitution and an elected government stabilized conditions in the south, while the ouster of the Islamist factions from most of the north led to the reopening of the majority of the media outlets that were shuttered in 2012. Journalists regained much of their ability to cover the news without fear of repercussions, although the situation has not yet returned to pre-2012 levels. The positive trend was tempered by the murder of two French journalists in the northern town of Kidal in November, as well as multiple reports of other attacks on journalists in 2013.

Senegal maintained the positive trajectory that began when President Macky Sall took office in early 2012, with improvements including better enforcement of legal protections, fewer legal cases against the press, and decreases in harassment and attacks against journalists both while covering the news and in retaliation for their reporting. This resulted in a 4-point gain, from 52 to 48. In **Togo**, the score moved from 70 to 65 due to advancements including fewer libel

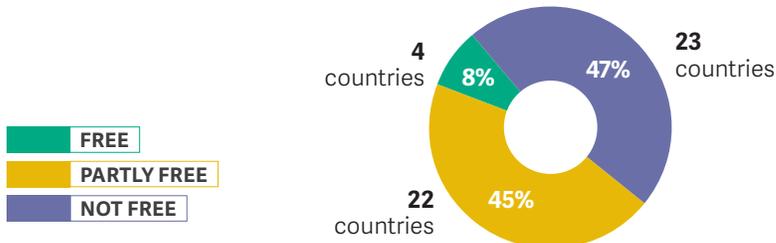
cases and attacks on journalists, the opening of independent outlets, and fewer government restrictions on accessing diverse viewpoints. One country in the subregion, **Liberia**, notably experienced backsliding as a result of the large number of civil libel cases against journalists, with plaintiffs seeking millions of dollars in damages. In one case in 2013, *FrontPage Africa* publisher Rodney Sieh was jailed for several months for failing to pay a \$1.5 million fine in a libel case.

Elsewhere in Africa, gains were registered in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, where the score improved from 83 to 79 due to fewer legal cases against journalists, signs that the judiciary is becoming more favorable to the press, and a reduction in official censorship and violence against journalists compared with the previous year. In **Madagascar**, which improved for the first time since a 2009 coup, the score moved from 66 to 63 as journalists were able to freely and safely cover controversial presidential and parliamentary elections, and an independent radio station, Free

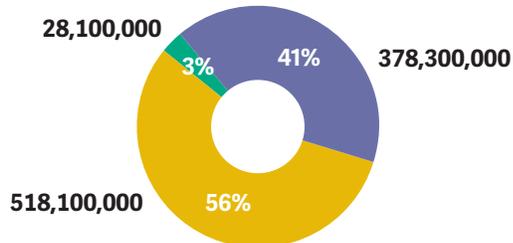
FM, reopened after being shuttered by the interim regime in 2012. The **Seychelles** improved from 56 to 52 due to a reduction in the costs of radio licenses, the issuing of new broadcast licenses, and the launching of the first private independent radio station and a news publication.

Zimbabwe's score improved from 77 to 73 due to the adoption of a new constitution, which explicitly protects freedom of expression, as well as a landmark Constitutional Court ruling in October that struck down the existing criminal defamation law. In addition, the level of official censorship and self-censorship declined, resulting in more coverage of sensitive issues, and the diversity of private ownership in print and radio continued to increase. **South Africa's** recent trend of decline was halted as the controversial Protection of State Information Bill—which would have allowed government officials and state agencies to withhold a wide range of information in the national interest or on national security grounds—remained stalled after President Jacob Zuma failed to sign it in 2013.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY



SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION



Total population: 924,500,000

Placing the Findings in Context

Attempts to restrict press freedom are widespread, and challenges to expanding media diversity and access to information remain considerable.

The year's findings—an overall pattern of decline, driven in large part by the backsliding in the Middle East and North Africa—are a troubling reminder that despite the openings created by the internet, transnational media, and the privatization of broadcasting, new and old threats to media freedom are restricting both journalists' ability to operate and the public's access to independent information. An analysis of five-year trends (2009–13) indicates that the average global score has declined by 0.47 points, to 47.84. Moreover, significant country declines of three or more points in the most recent five-year period have far outnumbered gains (55 countries to 34), suggesting that attempts to restrict press freedom are widespread and challenges to expanding media diversity and access to information remain considerable.

Changes in the regional averages over the past five years point to a “move toward the middle,” with declines noted for the freer regions of Europe and the Americas, near stasis in Asia-Pacific, and gains for poorer-scoring regions of sub-Saharan Africa, Eurasia, and particularly the Middle East and North Africa. This suggests that backsliding overall is occurring in more democratic environments, while conditions have shown an overall improvement in a number of more closed settings.

On a thematic level, the legal category has improved globally during this period, with the largest improvements noted for indicators concerning the use of libel laws against the press and the licensing and registration requirements for media outlets. The political category has shown an overall decline, with

the largest drops recorded for control over editorial content, reporters' physical ability to cover the news, and the level of retaliatory attacks against journalists. And decline is apparent across the board in the economic category, with the greatest slippage noted for the use of advertising and subsidies to influence content and the economic sustainability of media outlets. While these data represent a broad snapshot, they suggest that campaigns to decriminalize libel have had a positive effect, as have moves to liberalize broadcasting regulations. They bolster the argument that physical violence and harassment, and the impunity that often accompanies it, have become key methods of restricting and intimidating journalists. And they point to the fact that in addition to imprisonment and murders, more subtle and opaque threats to media independence are occurring in economic sphere. Renewed efforts in the realms of research, advocacy, and funding for media development projects are needed to reinforce the positive trends, and to counter the negative ones.

Karin Deutsch Karlekar served as the project director of Freedom of the Press 2014. Overall guidance for the project was provided by Arch Puddington, vice president for research, and Vanessa Tucker, vice president for analysis. Extensive research, editorial, analytical, and administrative assistance was provided by Jennifer Dunham and Bret Nelson, as well as by Tyler Roylance, Michael Johnson, Michael Snyder, Natalie Sykes, and Haley Klausmeyer. We would also like to thank our consultant writers and advisers and other members of the project team for their contributions.