

Second World Press Freedom Rankings

Issued by [Reporters sans Frontières \(Paris\)](#)

21 Oct 2003

Reporters Without Borders has published its second world press freedom ranking. Like last year, the most catastrophic situation is to be found in Asia, with eight countries in the bottom ten: North Korea, Burma, Laos, China, Iran, Vietnam, Turkmenistan and Bhutan. South Africa ranked 21st.

Independent news media are either non-existent in these countries, or are constantly repressed by the authorities. Journalists there work in extremely difficult conditions, with no freedom and no security. A number of them are imprisoned in Burma, China and Iran.

Cuba is in 165th position, second from last. Twenty-six independent journalists were arrested in the spring of 2003 and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 14 to 27 years, making Cuba the world's biggest prison for journalists. They were accused of writing articles for publication abroad that played into the hands of "imperialist interests." Eritrea, in 162nd position, has the worst situation in Africa. Privately-owned news media have been banned there for the past two years and 14 journalists are being held in undisclosed locations.

To compile this ranking, Reporters Without Borders asked journalists, researchers, jurists and human rights activists to fill out a questionnaire evaluating respect for press freedom in a particular country. A total of 166 countries are included in the ranking (as against 139 last year). The other countries were left out because of a lack of reliable, well-supported data.

Wealth and press freedom don't always go together

As in 2002, the ranking shows that a country's respect for press freedom is not solely linked to its economic development. The top 50 include countries that are among the poorest in the world, such as Benin (29th position), Timor-Leste (30th) and Madagascar (46th).

Conversely, the 50 countries that respect press freedom least include such rich nations as Bahrain (117th) and Singapore (144th).

News is the victim of war in Africa

Wars and serious political crises have inevitably had an impact on press freedom in Africa. The three countries that have fallen most in the ranking in the past 12 months are Côte d'Ivoire (137th), Liberia (132nd) and Guinea-Bissau (118th). Local and foreign journalists were exposed to the violence of the warring parties in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, while the military closed down news media in Guinea-Bissau.

World press freedom ranking

N°	Country	Note
1	Finland	0,50
-	Iceland	0,50
-	Netherlands	0,50
-	Norway	0,50
5	Denmark	1,00
-	Trinidad and Tobago	1,00
7	Belgium	1,17
8	Germany	1,33

9	Sweden	1,50
10	Canada	1,83
11	Latvia	2,25
12	Czech Republic	2,50
-	Estonia	2,50
-	Slovakia	2,50
-	Switzerland	2,50
16	Austria	2,75
17	Ireland	2,83
-	Lithuania	2,83
-	New Zealand	2,83
20	Slovenia	3,00
21	Hungary	3,33
-	Jamaica	3,33
-	South Africa	3,33
24	Costa Rica	3,83
25	Uruguay	4,00
26	France	4,17
27	United Kingdom	4,25
28	Portugal	5,17
29	Benin	5,25
30	Timor-Leste	5,50
31	Greece	6,00
-	United States of America (American territory)	6,00
33	Poland	6,17
34	Albania	6,50
-	Bulgaria	6,50
-	Nicaragua	6,50
37	Bosnia and Herzegovina	6,83
-	Chile	6,83
-	El Salvador	6,83
40	Paraguay	7,17
41	Mauritius	7,25
42	Ecuador	7,67
-	Spain	7,67
44	Israel (Israeli territory)	8,00
-	Japan	8,00
46	Madagascar	8,17
47	Cape Verde	8,25
48	Ghana	8,75
49	South Korea	9,17
50	Australia	9,25
51	Bolivia	9,67
-	Macedonia	9,67
53	Italy	9,75
-	Panama	9,75
55	Peru	10,25
56	Hong-Kong	11,00
-	Mali	11,00

-	Namibia	11,00
59	Fiji	11,50
-	Romania	11,50
61	Taiwan	12,00
62	Botswana	13,00
63	Congo	14,00
-	Mozambique	14,00
65	Honduras	14,17
66	Senegal	14,50
67	Argentina	15,17
68	Niger	15,75
69	Croatia	16,50
-	Tanzania	16,50
71	Brazil	16,75
72	Dominican Republic	17,00
73	Georgia	17,33
74	Mexico	17,67
75	Lesotho	17,75
76	Burkina Faso	18,00
77	Gambia	18,25
-	Mongolia	18,25
79	Comoros	18,50
-	Kenya	18,50
81	Cambodia	19,50
82	Thailand	19,67
83	Cyprus	20,83
84	Malawi	21,00
85	Serbia and Montenegro	21,33
86	Zambia	23,25
87	Sierra Leone	23,50
88	Chad	24,00
89	Sri Lanka	24,83
90	Armenia	25,17
91	Uganda	25,75
92	Burundi	26,25
93	Seychelles	26,75
94	Moldova	27,00
95	Togo	27,50
96	Venezuela	27,83
97	Angola	28,00
98	Cameroon	30,50
99	Guatemala	30,83
100	Haiti	31,00
101	Gabon	31,25
102	Kuwait	31,33
103	Nigeria	31,50
104	Kyrgyzstan	32,00
-	Malaysia	32,00
106	Lebanon	32,50

107	Central African Republic	32,75
108	Algeria	33,00
109	Guinea	33,17
110	Egypt	34,25
-	Indonesia	34,25
-	Rwanda	34,25
113	Azerbaijan	34,50
-	Tajikistan	34,50
115	Qatar	35,00
-	Turkey	35,00
117	Bahrain	35,17
118	Guinea-Bissau	35,25
-	Philippines	35,25
120	Djibouti	35,50
121	Mauritania	36,67
122	United Arab Emirates	37,00
-	Jordan	37,00
124	Ethiopia	37,50
-	Iraq	37,50
-	Swaziland	37,50
127	Democratic Republic of Congo	38,50
128	India	39,00
-	Pakistan	39,00
130	Palestinian Authority	39,25
131	Morocco	39,67
132	Liberia	40,00
-	Ukraine	40,00
134	Afghanistan	40,17
135	United States of America (in Iraq)	41,00
136	Yemen	41,83
137	Côte d'Ivoire	42,17
138	Kazakhstan	42,50
139	Equatorial Guinea	44,75
140	Somalia	45,00
141	Zimbabwe	45,50
142	Sudan	45,75
143	Bangladesh	46,50
144	Singapore	47,33
145	Maldives	47,50
146	Israel (Occupied Territories)	49,00
147	Colombia	49,17
148	Russia	49,50
149	Tunisia	50,83
150	Nepal	51,50
151	Belarus	52,00
152	Oman	57,75
153	Libya	60,00
154	Uzbekistan	61,50
155	Syria	67,50

156	Saudi Arabia	71,50
157	Bhutan	77,33
158	Turkmenistan	82,83
159	Vietnam	89,17
160	Iran	89,33
161	China	91,25
162	Eritrea	91,50
163	Laos	94,83
164	Burma	95,50
165	Cuba	97,83
166	North Korea	99,50

How the ranking was compiled

This ranking measures the state of press freedom in the world. It reflects the degree of freedom that journalists and news organisations enjoy in each country, and the efforts undertaken by the state to respect and ensure respect for this freedom.

It is a snapshot of the situation in a precise period. It only takes account of events between 1 September 2002 and 1 September 2003. It does not look at human rights violations in general, just press freedom violations.

To compile this ranking, Reporters Without Borders designed a questionnaire with 53 criteria for assessing the state of press freedom in each country. It includes every kind of violation directly affecting journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of issues, searches and harassment). It registers the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for these press freedom violations. It takes account of the legal and judicial situation affecting the news media (such as the penalties for press offences, the existence of a state monopoly in certain areas and the existence of a regulatory body) and the behaviour of the authorities towards the state-owned news media and international press. It also takes account of the main obstacles to the free flow of information on the Internet.

Reporters Without Borders has taken account not only of abuses attributable to the state, but also those by armed militia, clandestine organisations or pressure groups that can pose a real threat to press freedom.

The questionnaire was sent to people who have a deep knowledge of the state of press freedom in a country or a number of countries: local journalists or foreign reporters based in a country, researchers, jurists, regional specialists and the researchers working for Reporters Without Borders' International Secretariat.

The countries that were ranked are those for which Reporters Without Borders received completed questionnaires from a number of independent sources. Others were not included because of a lack of reliable, well-supported input. In cases of ties, countries were ranked by alphabetical order.

Finally, in no case should this ranking be viewed as an indication of the quality of the press in the countries concerned. Reporters Without Borders defends press freedom, without taking a position on the quality of the editorial content of the news media. No account was taken of any breaches of professional ethics or codes of conduct.

Editorial contact

Reporters sans Frontières (Paris)
Bureau Afrique-Africa Desk 5
Tel: 33 1 44 83 84 84

Source: www.rsf.fr/

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>