

Freedom of expression and the press

Situation and challenges in the 21st century



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The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 safeguards freedom of expression and freedom of the press throughout the world

ARTICLE 19

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



Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt (died 1945), worked dedicatedly as Chair of the UN Human Rights Commission to create an international bill of rights.

> Article 5 of Germany's Basic Law draws on the UN Declaration

Press freedom is caught between the right to free expression of opinion and the security needs of the state

FREEDOM

- > Every person has the (fundamental) right to express and disseminate his or her **opinion**
- > This right also encompasses free access to information, i.e., the right to be **informed**, without impediment, from commonly available sources
- > **Technological progress** is leading to a globalization of media communication



SECURITY

- > Freedom of the press ends where the **state seeks to protect itself and public safety**
- > Security needs of the state are **different throughout the world**

"Censorship and press freedom will forever battle each other. The powerful demand and enforce censorship; the weak call for press freedom."

J.W. von Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 1829

- > To what degree is the government allowed to restrict press freedom? What can be done against unwarranted restrictions on press freedom?

More than 80 % of the world population in almost 2/3 of all countries have limited or no access to a free press



Status of press freedom	Population [billion / % of world population]	Number of countries [absolute / percentage]
Free	1.18 bn / 18%	72 / 37%
Partly free	2.67 bn / 40%	59 / 30%
Not free	2.77 bn / 42%	64 / 33%
Total	6.62 bn / 100%	195 / 100%

Source: Press Freedom Survey 2008, Freedom House

A study by Freedom House shows that:

- > **More than 80% of the world's population** have limited or no access to a free press
- > Ample disregard for a free press exists in **almost 2/3 of all countries**
- > The majority of states with **free and open reporting** are located in **Western Europe**
- > Access to a **free press is most profoundly limited** in **North Africa, the Near and Middle East and Asia**

> The proportion of the world population without or with only limited access to free information and a free press is much too large

Press freedom rankings show 13 (RWB) or 12 (Freedom House) European countries in the Top 15

Country	RWB			Country	Freedom House		
	2008	2007	2006		2008	2007	2006
Iceland	1	1	1	Finland	1	1	1
Luxemburg	1	n.a.	n.a.	Iceland	1	1	1
Norway	1	1	6	Denmark	3	3	3
Estonia	4	3	6	Norway	3	3	3
Finland	4	5	1	Belgium	5	3	6
Ireland	4	8	1	Sweden	5	3	3
Belgium	7	5	14	Luxemburg	7	7	6
Latvia	7	12	10	Andorra	8	9	12
New Zealand	7	15	19	Netherlands	8	9	6
Slovakia	7	3	8	New Zealand	8	9	6
Sweden	7	5	14	Switzerland	8	7	6
Switzerland	7	11	8	Liechtenstein	12	12	10
Canada	13	18	16	Republic of Palau	12	12	12
Austria	14	16	16	Ireland	14	16	15
Denmark	14	8	19	Jamaica	14	15	23

Source: Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House, 2006-2008

- > Each year, Reporters Without Borders (RWB) and Freedom House issue national rankings on the level of press freedom worldwide
- > RWB surveys 173 countries, Freedom House 195
- > A total of 13 (RWB) or 12 (Freedom House) European countries are in the Top 15, including Benelux- and Scandinavian countries
- > Other countries ranked in the Top 15 are New Zealand and Canada, (RWB) respectively New Zealand, Palau and Jamaica (Freedom House)

> TOP 15 dominated by (Western) Europe – Germany not among them

Germany is ranked No. 20 respectively 16, ahead of other large countries of the EU and overseas

Country	RWB			Country	Freedom House		
	2008	2007	2006		2008	2007	2006
Germany	20	20	23	Germany	16	16	17
UK	23	24	27	USA	21	16	17
Japan	29	37	51	UK	25	31	31
France	35	31	35	Japan	35	39	35
Spain	36	33	41	France	40	39	41
USA	36	48	53	Spain	46	46	41
Italy	44	35	40	Poland	51	46	41
Poland	47	56	58	Italy	65	61	79

- > In the national rankings, Germany comes in at No. 20 (RWB) respectively 16 (Freedom House)
- > Germany is therefore not at the (European) top like Finland or Iceland, but is still ahead of other large countries of the EU and overseas
- > According to RWB, mainly recent changes to the law are the reason for this ranking (keyword: Federal Criminal Police Office Act)

Source: Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House, 2006-2008

- > Germany's position is relatively good, but not the top

In the countries at the bottom of the rankings, press freedom is severely restricted

Country	RWB			Country	Freedom House		
	2008	2007	2006		2008	2007	2006
Syria	159	154	153	China	181	181	177
Libya	160	155	152	Palestinian Terr.	181	181	184
Saudi Arabia	161	148	161	Ruanda	181	181	182
Uzbekistan	162	160	158	Somalia	181	185	177
Palestinian Terr.	163	158	134	Iran	185	181	180
Laos	164	161	156	Equatorial Guinea	186	186	185
Sri Lanka	165	156	141	Zimbabwe	186	186	187
Iran	166	166	162	Belarus	188	186	185
China	167	163	163	Uzbekistan	189	189	187
Vietnam	168	162	155	Cuba	190	191	190
Cuba	169	165	165	Eritrea	190	190	189
Burma	170	164	164	Libya	190	191	190
Turkmenistan	171	167	167	Turkmenistan	193	191	190
North Korea	172	168	168	Burma	194	191	190
Eritrea	173	169	166	North Korea	195	195	194

- > The table shows the bottom 15 of the national rankings
- > A detailed analysis of the past three years reveals a fairly consistent picture
- > North Korea, Eritrea, Turkmenistan and Burma come in last

Source: Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House, 2006-2008

- > There remains much to be done to establish press freedom around the globe

From 1998 to 2008, between 454 and 767 journalists (depending on the source) were killed on the job – A rate of increase of up to 69%

Journalists killed (1998–2008)



- > In the last 10 years, between 454 and 767 journalists were killed in the course of their professional activities¹⁾
- > The number of journalists killed each year has increased by between 24% to almost 69% – despite the decline seen in 2008
- > These killings are concentrated in crisis regions and war zones
- > The decline in 2008 over 2007 resulted from the fewer deaths of (domestic) journalists in Iraq

¹⁾ The discrepancy among figures is explained by the differing causal factors considered by the respective organizations
Source: Annual reports from CPJ, RWB, WAN, IPI

> Additionally, thousands are imprisoned, kidnapped or exiled every year

Putting a face to the statistics: Portraits of journalists killed, arrested or driven into exile (1/2)

Philipp Jakob Siebenpfeiffer (1789-1845)

As newspaper publisher and one of the main founders of the Hambacher Festival, Philipp Jakob Siebenpfeiffer had to flee into **exile in Switzerland** in 1833. In commemoration of his uncompromising espousal of "press freedom", the Siebenpfeiffer Prize for Journalists has been awarded since 1987.

Christian Liebig (1968-2003)

Among those journalists **killed in Iraq**, Christian Liebig, correspondent for Germany-based *Focus*, lost his life on April 7, 2003 in a missile attack outside of Baghdad. His family and friends established the Christian-Liebig-Stiftung e.V. in 2003.

Egon Scotland (1949-1994)

On July 26, 1991, Egon Scotland, a correspondent for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, **was murdered by snipers in Croatia**. The death of the 42-year-old German journalist inspired almost 50 German journalists to found the German chapter of Reporters Without Borders.

Ricardo Gonzáles Alfonso (*1950)

Cuban-born Ricardo Gonzáles Alfonso was honored by RWB as "2008 Journalist of the Year". As founder of the first independent newspaper in Cuba, on March 26, 2003 he was declared a "paid agent of the USA" and **sentenced to 20 years in prison**. His health is considered critical.

> Behind each number lies the fate of an individual human being

Putting a face to the statistics: Portraits of journalists killed, arrested or driven into exile (2/2)

Anna Politkowskaja (1958-2006)

On October 7, 2006, Anna Politkowskaja was **shot** in her Moscow apartment house. As a journalist for the "Novaja Gaseta" newspaper, the Russian reporter had critically covered human rights abuses.

Enzo Baldoni (1948-2004)

On August 26, 2004, the 56-year-old Italian journalist Enzo Baldoni was **murdered** after having been abducted. His murder by the terror organization "Islamic Army in Iraq" was designed to force the Italian armed forces to pull out of Iraq.

Uma Singh (1982-2009)

On January 11, 2009, 26-year-old Nepalese journalist and human rights activist Uma Singh was **attacked and beaten to death** in her apartment. Among other things, she had reported on violence against women.

Sayed Perwiz Kambachschi (*1985-)

On October 21, 2008, the death penalty for 23-year-old journalist student Sayed Perwiz Kambachschi was **commuted to a 20-year prison sentence**. The Afghan was convicted of downloading and distributing an Internet article about the role of women in the context of the Koran.

> Behind each number lies the fate of an individual human being

Various players are dedicated to the international protection of freedom of expression and the press

(International) Organizations

- > **Civil rights organizations** – Reporters Without Borders or the Committee to Protect Journalists document human rights violations and help those affected
- > **UN Human Rights Council** – Can delegate special observers
- > **UN Security Council** – This body specifically refers to the need to protect journalists in armed conflicts in its Resolution 1738 of 2006
- > **EU** – Deputies are seeking an EU Global Online Freedom Act

Anniversaries, awards, conferences and publications

- > **Anniversaries** – May 3 has been recognized as International Day of Press Freedom since 1993
- > **Distinctions and awards** – Examples include the 'Free Media Pioneer Award' from the Int. Press Institute or the Siebenpfeiffer Prize mentioned above
- > **International conferences** – 'World Summit on the Information Society' on June 8, 2009 gives voice to press freedom. One of the speakers at the World Summit is Dr. h.c. Joschka Fischer
- > **Publications** – Examples include the UNESCO report "Press freedom: Safety of journalists and impunity", and RWB's "The Guide for Journalists" and "Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents"

> **But there is still much to be done...**

Recommendations designed to strengthen press freedom worldwide

- > **Foster education (and educated opinion)** – Intensify global efforts to improve access to information. A minimum degree of education is essential for critically processing information
- > **Consider new media in laws and voluntary agreements** – Incorporate technological advancements into legal texts and international conventions and treaties
- > **Utilize technical opportunities for the public presentation of censorship** – For example, Harvard University is working to expose international censorship of Internet sites through its "Herdict" project
- > **Use political contacts** – Highlight the importance of freedom of the press in political talks with states where freedom of the press is restricted
- > **Ensure free and open reporting on military and warlike conflicts** – The public has the right to be informed fully and without influence
- > **Step up support for endangered journalists and their families** – Extensive provisions, support and safeguards for emergencies make it easier for journalists to conduct their work in crisis situations

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