Press Freedom's Dark Horizon

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Freedom House

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS
2017

CONTENTS

ON THE COVER

Cover image by KAL.

Press Freedom in the United States

Hobbling a Champion of Global Press Freedom

by Michael J. Abramowitz

Never in the 38 years that Freedom House has been monitoring global press freedom has the United States figured as much in the public debate about the topic as in 2016 and the first months of 2017.

Press freedom globally has declined to its lowest levels in 13 years, thanks both to new threats to journalists and media outlets in major democracies, and to further crackdowns on independent media in authoritarian countries like Russia and China.

But it is the far-reaching attacks on the news media and their place in a democratic society by Donald Trump, first as a candidate and now as president of the United States, that fuel predictions of further setbacks in the years to come.

No U.S. president in recent memory has shown greater contempt for the press than Trump in his first months in office. He has repeatedly ridiculed reporters as dishonest purveyors of "fake news" and corrupt betrayers of the national interest. Borrowing a term popularized by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, Trump has labeled the news media as "enemies of the people." His senior White House adviser described journalists as "the opposition party."

Such comments suggest a hostility toward the fundamental principles and purposes of press freedom, especially the news media's role in holding governments to account for their words and actions—as opposed to the government holding the media to account. They also raise concern that the U.S. president may, in effect, be offering a license to political leaders elsewhere who have cracked down on the media as part of a larger authoritarian playbook.

Still strong, but in decline

The United States remains one of the most press-friendly countries in the world. It enjoys lively, aggressive, and diverse media, and some of the strongest legal protections for reporting and expression anywhere in the world. With a handful of exceptions in recent years, reporters in the United States—in contrast to counterparts in some other countries—have been able to pursue their profession without fear of physical violence.

But press freedom has been on a modest decline in the United States, owing to a variety of factors that predate the Trump presidency. The rise of the internet weakened the financial underpinnings of long-established media organizations; the lack of a new, sustainable business model has diminished coverage of local news, and made in-depth investigative reporting harder to support. The polarization of media into outlets that pursue openly partisan agendas has accelerated, reducing public trust. And the ability of a billionaire (Peter Thiel) to use a privacy lawsuit to help bankrupt a media company (Gawker) last year made publishers and editors uneasy.

Several recent presidents have sought to limit their

> "I have a running war with the media. They are among the most dishonest human beings on earth."
>
> **President Donald Trump, United States**

Freedom of the Press Methodology

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

Scores are assigned in response to 23 methodology questions that seek to capture the varied ways in which pressure can be placed on the flow of objective information and the ability of platforms to operate freely and without fear of repercussions. The methodology covers the Legal, Political, and Economic environments in which print, broadcast, and digital media operate.

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

For a more detailed explanation of the methodology and scoring process, visit https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press-2017/methodology.

exposure to reporters, aggressively attempted to bypass mainstream news outlets, or made it difficult to access government records under the Freedom of Information Act. The Obama administration pursued a crackdown on federal officials who leaked information to the press, while many journalists chafed at what they regarded as excessive efforts to control access to the Obama White House.

In 2016, Freedom House saw a slight decline in press freedom in the United States, due mainly to harassment and roughing up of journalists at Trump rallies and a campaign of antisemitic abuse against Jewish journalists on Twitter. It is too soon to know whether the president will follow through on some of his most extreme campaign proposals, such as the threat to

pursue more restrictive libel laws. Should he continue his attacks on the press, it could further erode public confidence in the media and set the stage for court or legislative measures that would set back freedom.

Rhetoric, however, is different from governance. So far, despite President Trump's fierce denunciations of unfavorable but factual stories as "fake news," there is abundant evidence that major news organizations remain undeterred, even innovative, in pursuing serious investigations of the government and of Trump himself.

Leading by example

Trump's attacks mirror initial actions in other countries where media freedom subsequently suffered far more drastic restrictions and interference. In Latin America, leaders who publicly criticized independent media and journalists followed up with attempts to break apart media companies, revoke broadcast licenses, or impose onerous regulatory oversight. In countries including Turkey and Hungary, ruling parties have engineered more friendly media sectors through opaque or coerced ownership changes.

The United States will not necessarily follow the same path; it has stronger constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and speech, as well as robust legislative and judicial systems that can check executive power. Though these institutions may be tested, there is ample reason to hope that U.S. press freedom will remain vibrant in the years ahead.

A greater danger is that the United States will stop being a model and aspirational standard for other countries. Protection of press freedom in the United States remains vital to the defense and expansion of press freedom worldwide; indeed, it is a cornerstone of global democracy. When political leaders in the United States lambaste the media, it encourages their counterparts abroad to do the same. When U.S. leaders step back from promoting democracy and press freedom, journalists beyond American shores feel the chill.

The sobering alternative model, seen in authoritarian countries, is to extinguish press freedom, the better to allow a political party, movement, or leader to control information—and to use that control to retain power indefinitely. Further weakening of press freedom in the United States would be a setback for democracy everywhere.

Demonstrators in Warsaw protest government plan to restrict journalists' work in the Poland's parliament building. *(Photo by NuPhoto/Getty)*

Global Findings

Press Freedom's Dark Horizon

by Jennifer Dunham

Press freedom worldwide deteriorated to its lowest point in 13 years in 2016, driven by unprecedented threats to journalists and media outlets in major democracies, intensified crackdowns on independent media in authoritarian settings, and moves by the Russian and Chinese regimes to increase their influence beyond their borders.

The share of the world's population that enjoys a Free press according to the *Freedom of the Press* report

criteria stood at just 13 percent, meaning fewer than 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.

Political leaders and other partisan forces in many democracies—including the United States, Poland, the Philippines, and South Africa—attacked the credibility

> "Know your place … shameless militant woman disguised under the name of a journalist."
>
> **President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey**

Journalists in exile

While media freedom advocates often focus on the direct effects of violence against journalists, the large-scale departure of media professionals from extremely dangerous environments can be just as devastating for a country's information landscape.

Some exiled journalists are able to continue working from abroad, but they remain vulnerable to reprisal attacks or intimidation, particularly if they still have family members in their home country.

Afghanistan

Hundreds of journalists have fled Afghanistan for Europe, where they can find both safety and more job opportunities, though all refugees face a degree of social and economic hardship. A significant portion of those leaving are women. The security situation in Afghanistan has continued to deteriorate, with a Taliban bombing that killed seven Tolo TV employees in early 2016 marking the deadliest single attack on journalists in the country in the past decade. The exodus of journalists could deal a serious blow to the survival of democracy in Afghanistan, and both the government and the international community will need to do more to ensure that Afghan reporters can operate freely and safely.

Syria

Since the start of the civil war in 2011, Syrian journalists have accounted for the largest share of journalists in exile globally. Local media professionals have fled to neighboring countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, where despite legal and operational challenges, many continue to report on events in Syria or issues faced by Syrians in refugee camps.

In Jordan, Syrian journalists have no legal recognition, making it very difficult to obtain the documents necessary to continue their work. There are also travel restrictions that limit journalists'

ability to leave and return without permission. In Lebanon, Syrian journalists face various legal controls on their activities, including efforts to report on conditions for Syrian refugees. They may also encounter the threat of violence given the political alliances between belligerents in Syria and groups within Lebanon. A number of Syrian journalists have continued to report on events in Syria from Turkey, crossing the border even after it was closed in 2015. Most of those operating in Turkey do so without formal legal status, making them vulnerable to harassment or closure of their outlets. Furthermore, journalists still censor what they write about the Islamic State militant group, which is suspected in a number of cross-border assassinations.

Some Syrian journalists have been able to travel to Europe, mainly Germany or France, where they continue to work. In Germany, an assistance program pairs German journalists with refugee colleagues to ease their transitions.
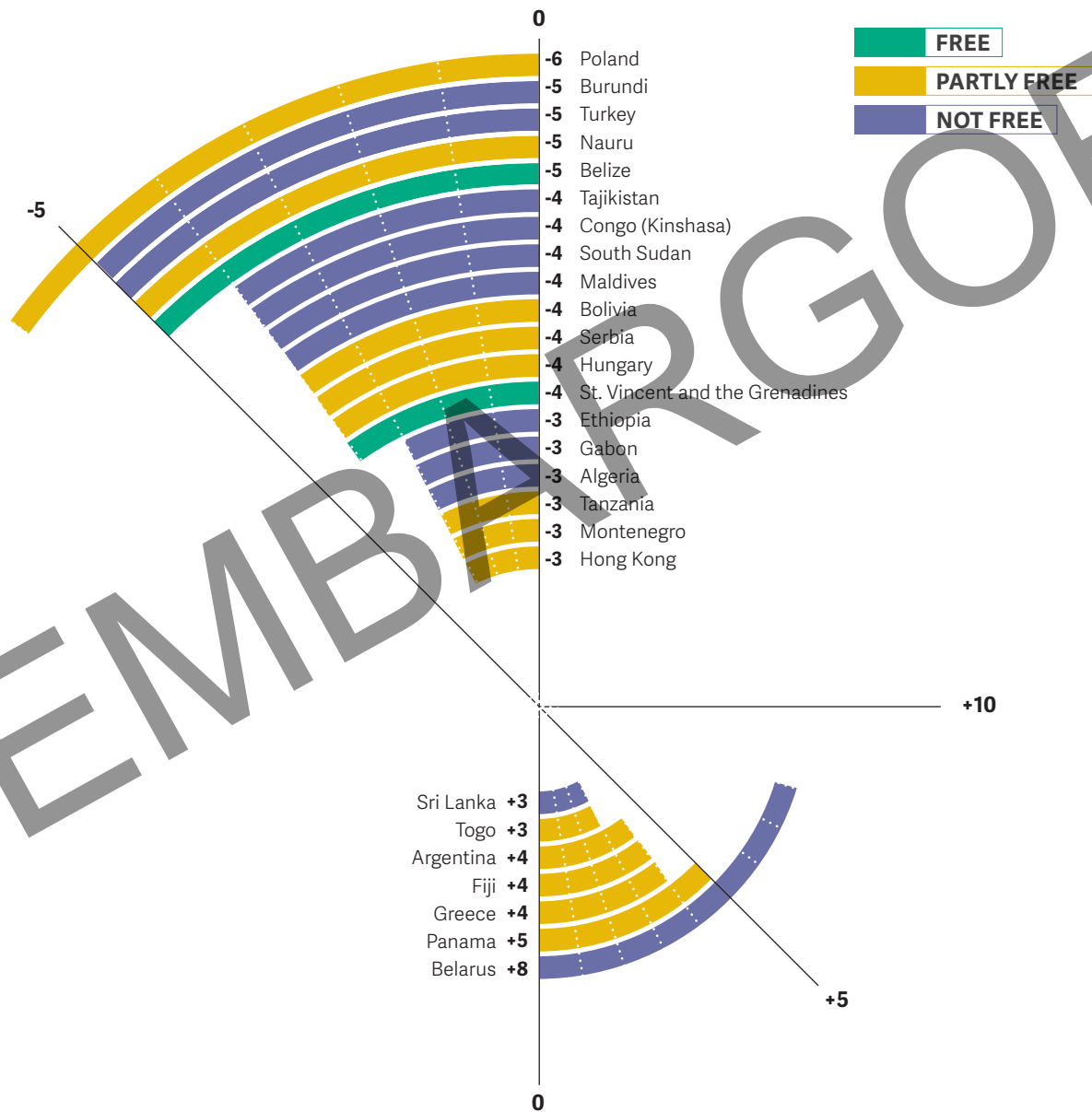
Burundi

At least 100 Burundian journalists have fled the country since 2015, when President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term in office touched off political violence and a fierce government crackdown on critical news media. Several outlets were forcibly closed that year, and reporters continue to face attacks and arbitrary detentions. Prominent journalists like Salvador Nahimana of Radio Maria and Jean Bigirimana of the *Iwacu* newspaper were targeted for speaking out against Nkurunziza in 2016. Nahimana was arrested and held without charges; Bigirimana went missing, believed to have been either arrested or killed after receiving a call from intelligence services. The government also closed the Burundian Union of Journalists, depriving local reporters of an important source of advocacy and support.

of the independent and mainstream media through alarmingly hostile rhetoric, personalized abuse online, and indirect editorial pressure. They sought to delegitimize critical or impartial sources of information and reshape news coverage to their advantage, apparently rejecting the traditional watchdog role of a free press in democratic societies.

Meanwhile, pressure on journalists in more restrictive environments continued unabated. The governments of Russia and China—having established near-complete control over the domestic media—stepped up their efforts to interfere in, and disrupt, the media environments in neighboring countries and those farther afield. And authorities in settings such as Turkey,

BIGGEST PRESS FREEDOM GAINS AND DECLINES IN 2016

0

-6	Poland
-5	Burundi
-5	Turkey
-5	Nauru
-5	Belize
-4	Tajikistan
-4	Congo (Kinshasa)
-4	South Sudan
-4	Maldives
-4	Bolivia
-4	Serbia
-4	Hungary
-4	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
-3	Ethiopia
-3	Gabon
-3	Algeria
-3	Tanzania
-3	Montenegro
-3	Hong Kong

-5

FREE
PARTLY FREE
NOT FREE

+10

Sri Lanka	**+3**
Togo	**+3**
Argentina	**+4**
Fiji	**+4**
Greece	**+4**
Panama	**+5**
Belarus	**+8**

+5

0

Ethiopia, and Venezuela used political or social unrest as a pretext to crack down further on independent or opposition-oriented outlets.

Officials in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia extended restrictive laws to online speech, or simply shut down telecommunications services at crucial moments. [See box, p. 9]

There were a few positive developments during the year, as governments in Afghanistan, Argentina, Pana-

ma, and Sri Lanka moved to establish better relations with the press and improve media environments that had suffered under their predecessors. However, the practical effects of many of these improvements remain to be seen. [See box, p. 10]

Democratic leaders' contempt for the press
Over the past year, politicians in democratic states launched or escalated efforts to shape news coverage by delegitimizing the mainstream media, exerting political influence over public broadcasters, and raising the profile of friendly private outlets. Such techniques

Countries to watch

The following countries are among those that may be moving toward important changes in their press freedom conditions—for better or worse—in the coming year.

Australia: Authorities' aggressive leak investigations, including use of a telecommunications law to collect journalists' metadata without a warrant, could have a chilling effect on the country's robust media sector.

Cambodia: Prime Minister Hun Sen's determination to avoid a repeat of 2013 general elections, in which the opposition made significant gains, could translate into a media crackdown ahead of upcoming polls.

Ecuador: With a new administration set to take office after the 2017 election, the collection of government-owned media outlets assembled by outgoing president Rafael Correa may enjoy greater editorial independence.

Egypt: As the country's security and economic crises intensify, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime is attempting to assert more direct control over the private media and suppress criticism of the government's performance.

Gambia: Newly elected president Adama Barrow's promise of a "new era" following 22 years of authoritarian rule has raised hopes that he will overhaul suffocating media laws and rein in the intelligence agency's notorious intimidation of journalists.

Kenya: Despite a recent rollback of repressive media laws, journalists still face criminal prosecution under security legislation, and violent attacks against media workers are already increasing in the run-up to August 2017 elections.

Myanmar: The governing National League for Democracy will face pressure to change course after presiding over stalled legislative reforms, an increase in libel cases, and attempts to curb reporting on corruption and human rights abuses during 2016.

Philippines: There are concerns that President Rodrigo Duterte's subordinates and supporters could act on his violent threats against journalists who criticize abuses linked to the government's war on drugs.

Ukraine: Recent democratic gains have bolstered media freedom overall, but restrictions on Russian outlets and attempts to foster "patriotic" reporting raise questions about the government's commitment to media autonomy.

United States: President Donald Trump has shown contempt for the media and an apparent disregard for the country's press freedom traditions, but it remains unclear whether he will attempt to impose systematic restrictions on journalists.

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had been seen for years in countries such as Hungary and Serbia, but they have appeared to spread rapidly since the start of 2016, affecting countries such as the United States and Poland.

Donald Trump's successful presidential campaign transformed the media environment in the United States. During campaign rallies and since taking office in 2017, Trump has labeled media outlets that critiqued his performance as "dishonest," "fake news," and the "enemy of the American people," echoing narratives that had been circulating on far-right or "alt-right" websites throughout the election cycle.

While the government in Hungary, led by the conservative Fidesz party, has been gradually consolidating its control over the media since taking power in 2010, a new development in 2016 was the sale of several

media outlets to murky ownership structures that are assumed to have close government ties. Most notably, the closure and subsequent sale in October of *Népszabadság,* one of Hungary's oldest and most prominent newspapers, demonstrated the government's subjugation of the left-leaning, critical press.

In Poland, the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party government, elected in October 2015, energetically mimicked Fidesz's strategy. PiS attempted to undermine the credibility of critical media through comments such as party leader Jarosław Kaczyński's claim that the largest broadsheet newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, was "against the very notion of the nation." The party also asserted control over the public broadcaster by passing laws enabling the government to appoint its managers; by November, over 200 public

BIGGEST GAINS AND DECLINES, 2012–2016

■ FREE   ■ PARTLY FREE   ■ NOT FREE

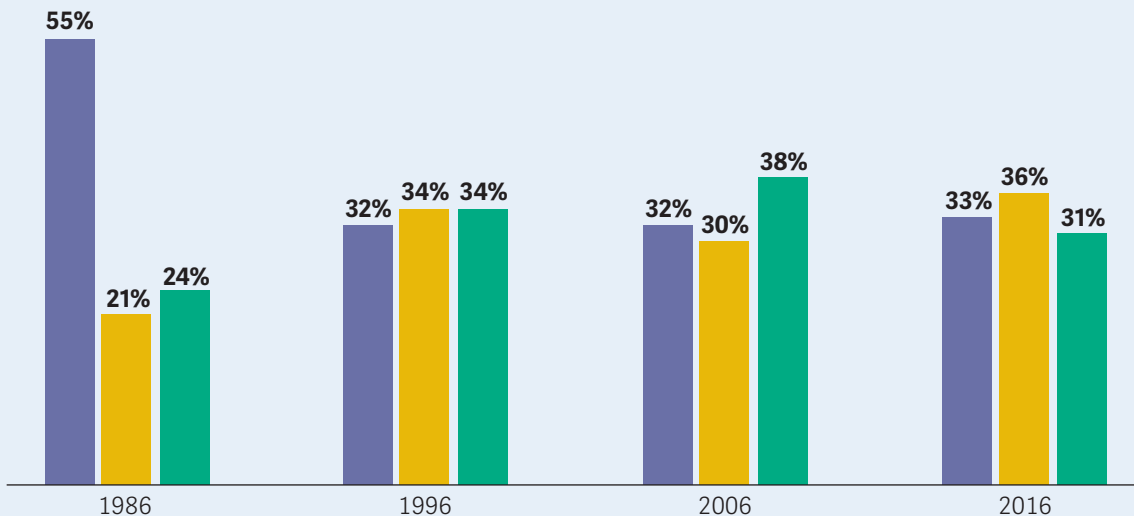| Country	Value
Sri Lanka	13
Togo	13
Fiji	12
Belarus	10
Côte d'Ivoire	10
South Sudan	-10
Burundi	-13
Serbia	-13
Egypt	-15
Thailand	-15
Libya	-18
Nauru	-18
Turkey	-20

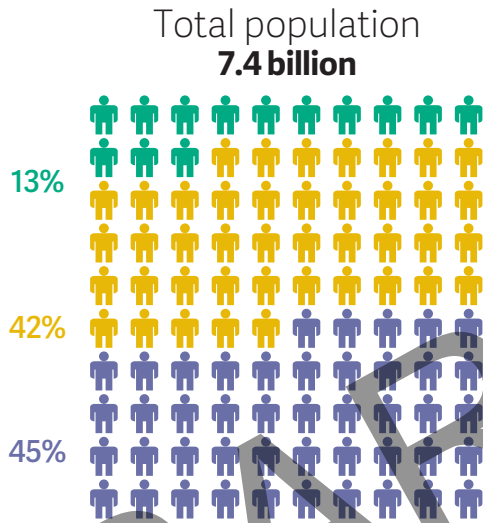## HISTORICAL TRENDS IN PRESS FREEDOM

Distribution of countries among the three press freedom categories

■ FREE   ■ PARTLY FREE   ■ NOT FREE

Year	NOT FREE	PARTLY FREE	FREE
1986	55%	21%	24%
1996	32%	34%	34%
2006	32%	30%	38%
2016	33%	36%	31%

GLOBAL: STATUS BY POPULATION

Total population
7.4 billion

13%

42%

45%

GLOBAL: STATUS BY COUNTRY

33%

31%

Total countries
199

36%

■ **FREE**
■ **PARTLY FREE**
■ **NOT FREE**

fia ties or collusion with foreign intelligence agencies. When confronted with concerns about a chilling effect such attacks have on the media, officials have cynically invoked press freedom, intimating that advocates for the journalists targeted are calling for the censorship of progovernment media. These developments, along with the alleged surveillance of independent reporters, contributed to another sharp decline in the media environment in Serbia in 2016.

Like Trump, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his spokespeople frequently insult and denounce members of the domestic media, and the prime minister rarely takes questions from reporters. In 2016, Netanyahu used his Facebook page to excoriate two high-profile investigative journalists, prompting several top reporters to sign a petition objecting to his conduct. He has also been accused of colluding with key media owners to shape favorable coverage. While Israel has historically enjoyed a vibrant and pluralistic media sector, these and other problems have caused press freedom in the country to decline in recent years.

Similarly, the media environment in South Africa—long considered one of the freest in sub-Saharan Africa—continued to deteriorate under President Jacob Zuma, whose government has long been highly sensitive to criticism. The politicized leadership of the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), sought to limit coverage of violent protests in the run-up to local elections, and fired journalists who protested the directive. The SABC then refused to comply with an order by the communications regulator to rescind its directive, setting up a standoff between the two bodies.

In the Philippines, newly elected president Rodrigo Duterte's slurs and death threats against journalists further inflamed an already dangerous environment for the press and undermined positive steps by the government, such as initiatives on journalists' safety and freedom of information. The country's history of extreme violence against the media and impunity for such crimes make Duterte's statements all the more menacing.

media employees had resigned or been fired, and public outlets toed the government line throughout the year.

In Serbia, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić's governing Progressive Party installed a colorful exhibition at a Belgrade art gallery that branded critical news outlets as liars. However, Vučić has outsourced much of his campaign to discredit unfriendly media outlets to the progovernment tabloid *Informer*, which has smeared critical journalists with familiar accusations of ma-

> "I've argued with [the media] that they were never elected, we were elected and we can claim that we represent the people."
>
> **President Jacob Zuma, South Africa**

Communications blackouts

In 2016, repressive governments continued to use blackouts of social media and internet service to curtail the flow of information and silence dissent. Most often, authorities shut down access to websites and communication applications in times of political upheaval or surrounding elections, limiting the ability of journalists and the public to share news on important events. In addition to violating citizens' fundamental right of access to information, these restrictions served to efface state misconduct from the public record and conceal potentially criminal acts.

Internet and social media blackouts were reported during election periods in Chad and the Republic of Congo. Social media access was also obstructed in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, amid public anger at the president's efforts to remain in office after the expiration of his mandate, and in Uganda, in the days surrounding an election and an inauguration that handed President Yoweri Museveni a fifth term. When Gabonese president Ali Bongo won reelection by a very slim margin, the suspension of network connections coincided with days of massive riots over the disputed results.

Other countries suffered blackouts amid bouts of civil unrest with no link to elections. Networks were disrupted in Zimbabwe during a police crackdown on antigovernment protests, raising suspicions of a deliberate effort to disrupt civic mobilization and suppress news of abuse. After security forces in Ethiopia killed large numbers of civilians on an especially violent day in October during year-long protests, the government declared a state of emergency, and mobile internet and social media services were blocked.

In Turkey, Facebook and Twitter could not be accessed during a variety of important political incidents, including the July coup attempt and the arrest of pro-Kurdish parliamentarians in November. Internet connections were also severed in parts of Mali, China, and India during moments of contentious political activity.

In response to the growing normalization of telecommunications blackouts, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution in July that condemned the practice as a violation of international human rights law.

Russia, China seek to expand influence

As the media came under pressure in democratic countries, authoritarian leaders compounded the problem by seeking to increase their influence abroad.

Vladimir Putin's regime in Russia has been a trailblazer in globalizing state propaganda. It continues to leverage pro-Kremlin reporting around the world, particularly in neighboring countries with Russian-speaking populations. Rebroadcasts of state-controlled Russian television programming, alongside the made-to-export content of the state-owned outlets RT and Sputnik, fuel distortion campaigns in much of the former Soviet space, warping perceptions of current and historical events and funneling trust away from domestic authorities. In a tense security environment, the region's beleaguered democratic governments have mostly reacted with kneejerk restrictions, curbing the operations of or access to a number of Russian outlets. These tensions are most pronounced in Ukraine, where the Kremlin's propaganda drive—aimed at controlling the narratives on Crimea and Donbas as well as perceptions of

WORST OF THE WORST

Of the 66 countries and territories designated as Not Free in *Freedom of the Press 2017*, the following 10 have the worst total scores.

Country/territory	Total score
North Korea	98
Turkmenistan	98
Uzbekistan	95
Crimea	94
Eritrea	94
Cuba	91
Equatorial Guinea	91
Azerbaijan	90
Iran	90
Syria	90

EMBARGOED

Islands of optimism

While examples like the United States and Poland demonstrate the threats to press freedom that a new administration can bring, voters in some parts of the world have chosen candidates who moved to reduce restrictions after taking office. Changes in government in Afghanistan, Argentina, Panama, Sri Lanka, and Fiji over the past three years have led to more favorable policies toward the media.

Most gains have come in the political environment for the press. All of these countries have benefited from a reduction in government interference in the editorial line of media outlets, and journalists in all but Afghanistan have faced less extralegal intimidation. The new governments in Afghanistan, Argentina, and Sri Lanka have also used the penal code and security laws against the media more sparingly than their predecessors, though the problematic legislation remains in place. Other improvements require more time to take full effect, such as a 2016 law that reorganized regulatory bodies in Argentina and could lead to less biased media licensing.

These cases also demonstrate the gradual nature of press freedom improvements. Afghanistan, Panama, Sri Lanka, and Fiji, which voted in new governments in 2014 or early 2015, have featured progressive gains each year since, and Argentina will hopefully follow suit. In 2016, Sri Lanka passed a commendable access to information law, and Fiji finally withdrew a blacklist that had barred three prominent foreign journalists from entering the country for almost a decade.

However, reporters in all of these countries continue to face considerable obstacles. Afghanistan is racked by extreme violence; the Committee to Protect Journalists confirmed the cases of four journalists who were killed due to their work in 2016. Panama's criminal defamation and other restrictive laws are still used against reporters, and the judiciary often sides with governmental and business interests rather than free expression. Sri Lanka's government arbitrarily blocked critical news websites in October. And Argentina's media have been showing signs of returning to an old pattern of collusion with the government.

Sustained vigilance is required to ensure that any early gains in press freedom under a new government are fully consolidated.

Russia and the West—is attempting to undermine the country's sovereignty and the legitimacy of its institutions.

However, the past year's events have underscored the fact that Russian media interference is not limited to the production of propagandistic content aimed at Eastern Europe and Eurasia. As part of their effort to manipulate the U.S. presidential election, Russian intelligence agencies reportedly created front entities and personas to feed stolen Democratic Party documents to U.S. journalists and bloggers, effectively using local outlets to advance their strategic agenda. Russian agencies have also been accused of building networks of artificial social media accounts to amplify certain stories among

U.S. audiences. Based on Russian outlets' coverage of the French presidential campaign in early 2017, European governments have expressed fears that these and other tactics are being used to influence other upcoming elections across the continent.

The Chinese government similarly operates a large and growing state media system dedicated to producing propaganda for foreign and overseas Chinese audiences, but its global influence can also be felt through media outlets owned by large private companies—both Chinese and foreign—that depend on Beijing's goodwill for their economic success. Hong Kong provided a powerful example of this phenomenon in 2016, when the pro-Beijing Phoenix television network aired interviews with Chinese

> *"Gazeta Wyborcza* is 'against the very notion of the nation.'"
>
> **Ruling Party Leader Jarosław Kaczyński, Poland**

MILESTONES OF DECLINE

Countries have followed a similar pattern as their press freedom has declined.

■ FREE   ■ PARTLY FREE   ■ NOT FREE

Venezuela

1999 ———————————————————————— 2016

`PF` | | | `NF` | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

2000
New presidential power to suspend broadcasting for national interests

2004
New law allows closure or fines for disrespect of institutions

2005
Criminalization of insult of president

2009
Suspension of 34 private media licenses

2016
Journalists covering demonstrations harassed, attacked

Turkey

1999 ———————————————————————— 2016

`PF` | | | | | | | | | | | | | `NF` | | |

2008
Erdoğan calls for boycott of Doğan Group outlets

2011
Firings begin for critical coverage

2012
Turkey is world's leading jailer of journalists

2013
Journalists harassed, fired for Gezi protest & corruption coverage

2016
State of emergency after failed coup

Hungary

1999 ———————————————————————— 2016

`F` | | | | | | | | | | | | | | `PF` | | | | |
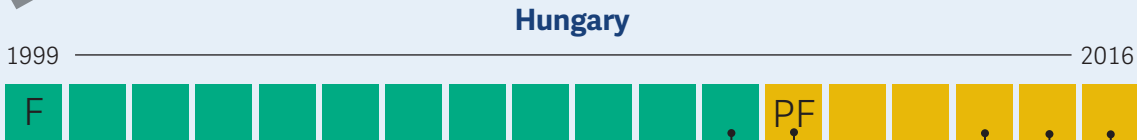
2010
New media regulation bodies created

2011
Restrictive new media law takes effect

2014
Prominent critical editor in chief fired

2015
Media ownership shifts toward government allies

2016
Major left-leaning paper *Népszabadság* suspended

Poland

1999 ———————————————————————— 2016

`F` | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | `PF`
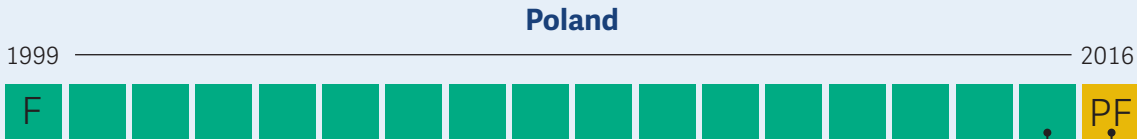
2015
Purge of public media begins

2016
Controversial new media law proposed

GAINS AND DECLINES IN PRESS FREEDOM
Countries with net declines of 3 or more points continue
to outnumber those with gains of 3 or more points.

■ IMPROVED
■ DECLINED
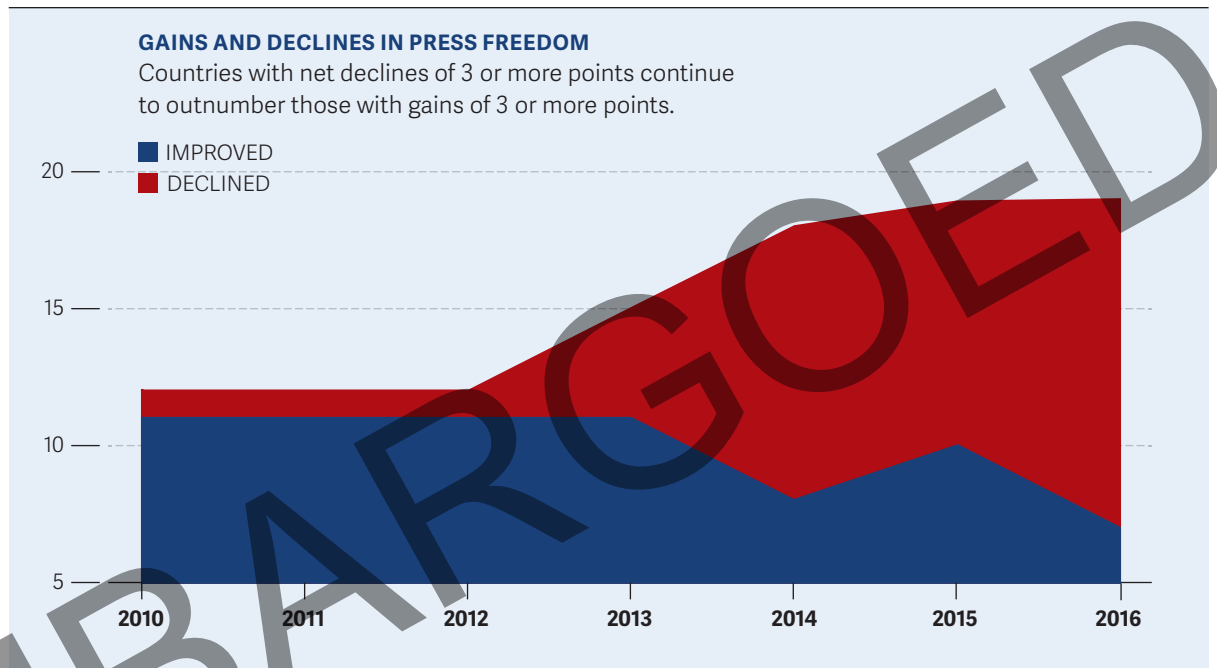
political prisoners, including Hong Kong booksellers held on the mainland that featured apparently coerced statements. In August, the territory's leading English-language newspaper, the *South China Morning Post*, also published a "confessional" interview with a detained Chinese legal activist. The paper had recently been purchased by the mainland e-commerce giant Alibaba.

Unrest prompts authoritarians to harden crackdowns

A number of repressive regimes used political or social unrest as a pretext to tighten their grip on the media in 2016.

In Turkey, a July coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan exacerbated an already perilous situation for independent, critical media. Under a state of emergency declared after the failed coup, dozens of outlets were shuttered, thousands of journalists and media workers lost their jobs, and scores more were forbidden from leaving the country. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Turkey had at least 81 journalists behind bars as of December 2016—the highest number in the world. The government also clamped down on the internet, blocking social media

during the coup attempt and ordering websites perceived as critical to be blocked or taken down.

The Ethiopian government—already one of the world's worst press freedom offenders—intensified its crackdown on independent media in 2016, both before and after an October emergency declaration designed to suppress massive antigovernment protests. According to CPJ, Ethiopia holds at least 16 journalists in detention—the second-highest number in sub-Saharan Africa. Journalists continued to be arrested under the country's Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and other restrictive laws, and were also held for their coverage of the protests. The state of emergency banned people from accessing exile media or using social media to share information. Localized internet and phone blackouts were regularly reported in connection with mass assemblies. Social media and messaging applications including WhatsApp and Twitter had become mostly inaccessible in parts of Oromia starting in March 2016, and sporadic cuts to those and other social media services were reported in larger areas on numerous occasions later in the year.

As the Venezuelan government attempted to contain

"I don't think I should answer for something that someone says in private media."

Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, Serbia

DECLINE IN GLOBAL AVERAGE SCORE

EMBARGOED
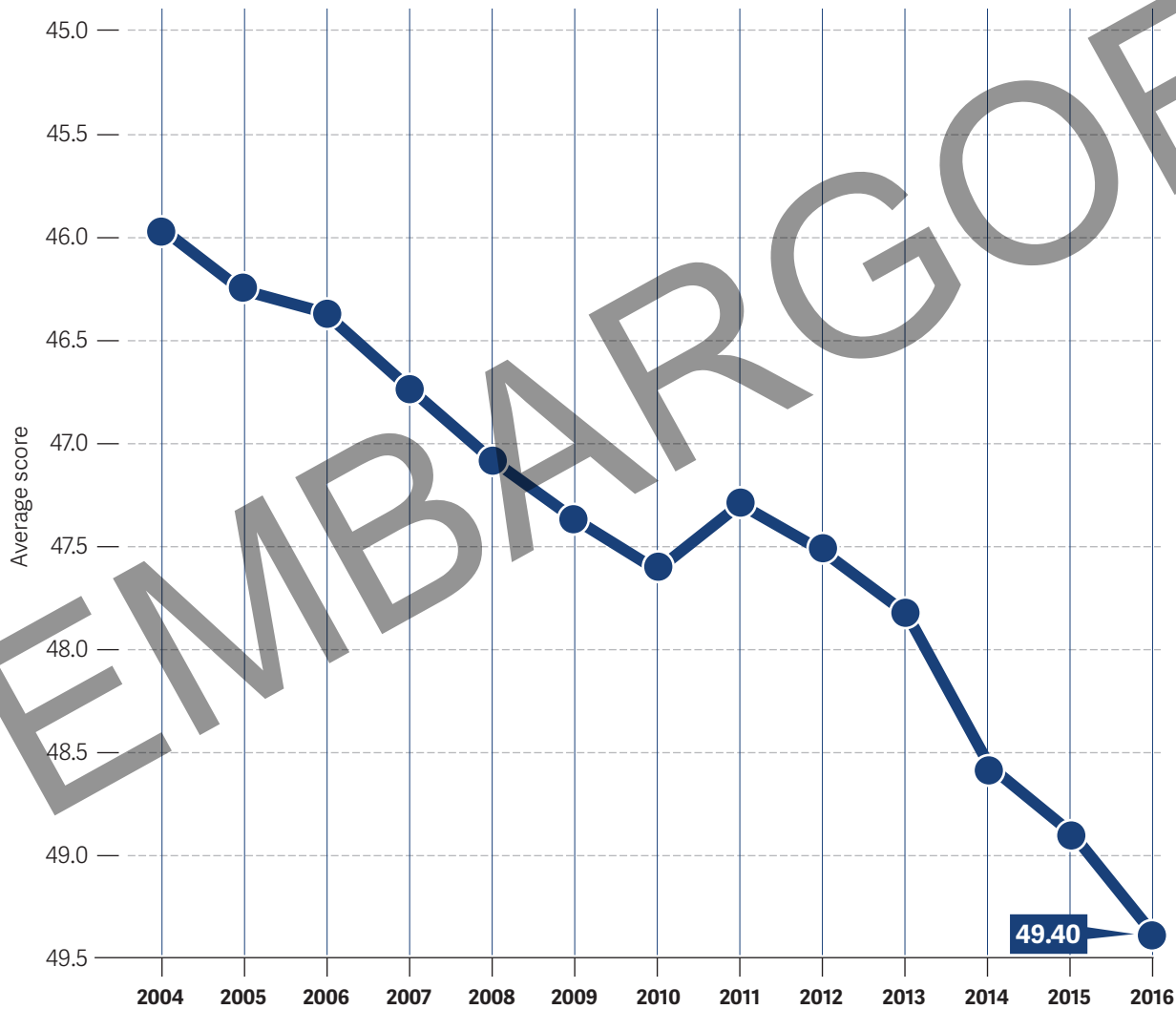
unrest over the worsening economic and political crisis, it declared a state of emergency that lasted much of the year. Domestic and foreign journalists frequently encountered interference or were denied physical access while attempting to cover protests demanding solutions to food and medicine shortages or a referendum to recall President Nicolás Maduro. In August, Venezuela denied entry to at least six international journalists, including a CPJ representative, who were attempting to cover a planned protest. Those who did report from the demonstrations suffered violence at the hands of police or protesters themselves.

A grim outlook for global press freedom
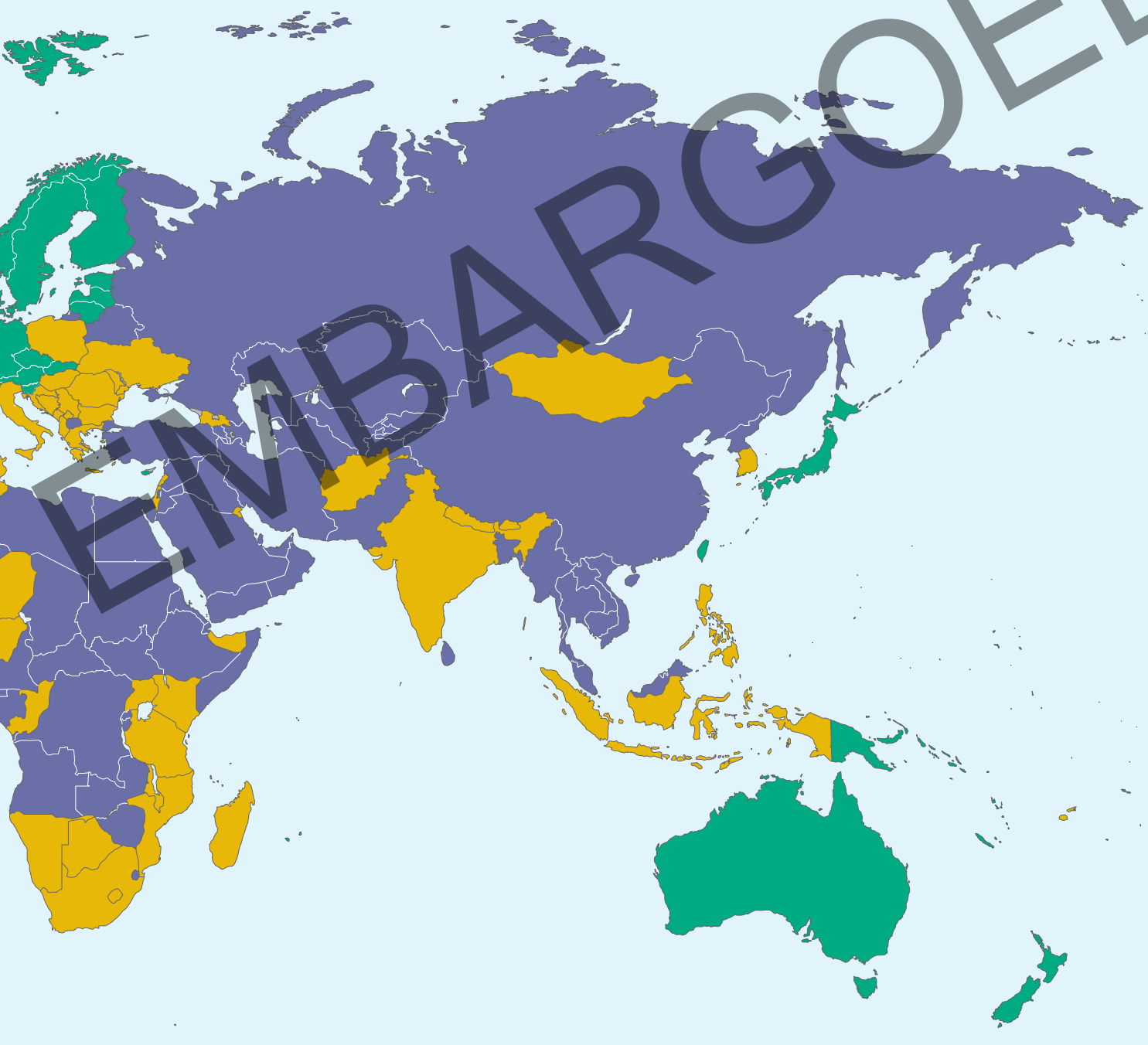The global decline in press freedom will likely continue in the absence of strong leadership from the United States, EU members, and other democracies. If President Donald Trump and his administration

"Some of you [journalists] are dirty, anti-Slovak prostitutes."

Prime Minister Robert Fico, Slovakia

FREEDOM
OF THE PRESS
2017

FREE

PARTLY FREE

NOT FREE

Spying on the press

A number of states around the world have long been known to conduct surveillance on media professionals. China, Ethiopia, Iran, and Syria are among the many staunchly autocratic countries where physical and online monitoring is a fact of life for journalists, intended in part to intimidate the media and suppress critical coverage. However, the issue of surveillance has shaken the press corps in a number of democratic countries as well.

In Serbia, the progovernment tabloid *Informer* ran an article containing details of an independent reporter's unpublished investigation, leading local media advocates to suspect that the government may be not just monitoring journalists but also sharing intelligence with progovernment outlets.

In the most surprising case of 2016, media outlets and watchdogs in Canada published evidence, stretching back to 2007, that Quebec police were monitoring several journalists—including for an investigation into sources of negative information about the police themselves. The revelations have raised concerns about a country that is often held up as a leading example for the protection of civil liberties. Although Quebec officials have launched an inquiry into the many reports of police surveillance, there is no indication that the Canadian government is ready to address the underlying conflict between privacy rights and the powers of security agencies.

Canada is not the only democracy facing this problem. In the United States, despite the 2015 USA Freedom Act's ban on bulk collection of Americans' telephone and internet metadata by the government, the authorities retain significant surveillance powers. Amid growing concerns over terrorism, many major democracies, including Britain, France, and Germany, have recently passed laws that tip the balance in favor of eavesdroppers and lack sufficient oversight mechanisms and safeguards against abuse.

Intrusive monitoring—or even the legal threat of it—impairs newsgathering, in part by compromising the security of communications between reporters and their sources. But on a more fundamental level, it inverts the normal and proper relationship between the government and the press in a democratic society. The media play a vital role in scrutinizing government performance, ensuring transparency, and holding public officials accountable. By using the resources of the state to peer into the work of media professionals, authorities can upend this dynamic, undermining journalists' ability to keep the public informed and the government in check.

continue their harsh criticism of factual reporting and take other actions that pose a threat to the U.S. constitution's First Amendment, Washington's ability to apply normative pressure to media freedom violators around the world will suffer.

It will be just as difficult for the EU to play a leading global advocacy role. The rise of Euroskeptic populist parties and the United Kingdom's vote to withdraw from the bloc have left the EU in an existential crisis, and its struggle to respond effectively to restrictions on press freedom in Hungary and Poland undermine its ability to uphold democratic standards farther afield. The EU's silence in the face of violations in prospective member states in the Balkans is an important example of its diminished influence.

A number of democracies, including individual EU member states, continue to safeguard the principles of media independence and exert a positive soft-power influence beyond their borders, but they cannot fill a void left by the United States and the EU as a whole. Without the traditional pressure from those two powers, undemocratic governments will have far less incentive to heed the warnings of press freedom advocates. The global flow of accurate news and information will consequently weaken, and citizens, businesses, and policymakers in all countries will pay the price.

> "The vultures, pretending to be journalists…"
>
> **President Rodrigo Duterte, Philippines**

Regional Trends

Middle East and North Africa

Threats and economic woes curb media operations

The Middle East and North Africa continues to be the world's second-worst region for press freedom, ahead of Eurasia. In 2016, journalists and media entities in countries such as Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates suffered from the chilling effects of harassment, threats, and attacks, particularly regarding critical coverage of government officials. Meanwhile, the ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen made them the world's deadliest places for journalists, and economic hardships led to the closure of news outlets in countries including Lebanon and Tunisia.
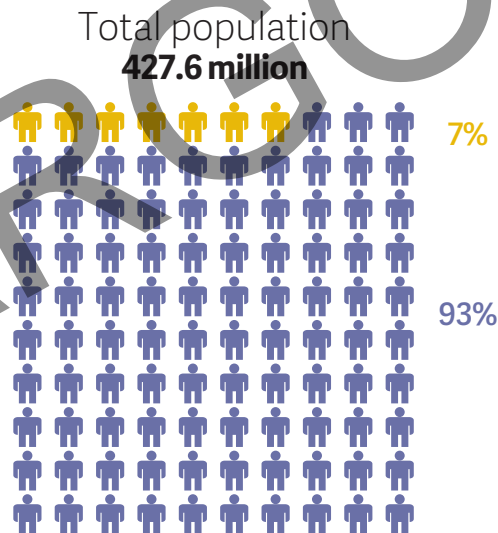
Egyptian authorities restricted journalistic freedom in part through gag orders and censorship practices that suppressed criticism of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and other high-ranking officials. The military's influence on news channels was apparent, with observers noting that the private media no longer had any level of independence, and organizations focused on protecting journalists' rights faced legal prosecutions and harassment from security forces.

In Jordan, the highly publicized arrest of writer Nahed Hattar for posting an allegedly blasphemous cartoon on Facebook made him a target for vigilante justice, and he was assassinated after receiving hundreds of death threats. The case raised questions about the government's ability and willingness to protect journalists and freedom of expression in general. Also during the year, Jordanian journalists repeatedly received orders from a regulatory body to restrict what they wrote about the royal family and other sensitive subjects.

Tunisia's attempts to build a stable democracy with a free press were hampered by ongoing security concerns, the president's rhetorical attacks on the media, and a rise in police interference with journalists' work, particularly in connection with protests. The media sector also suffered from a weak economy, with some media outlets forced to shut down and hundreds of journalists either laid off or obliged to work without regular payment.

Yemen's media environment has become increasingly

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION

Total population
427.6 million

7%

93%

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY

21%   0%

Total countries
19

79%

FREE

PARTLY FREE

NOT FREE
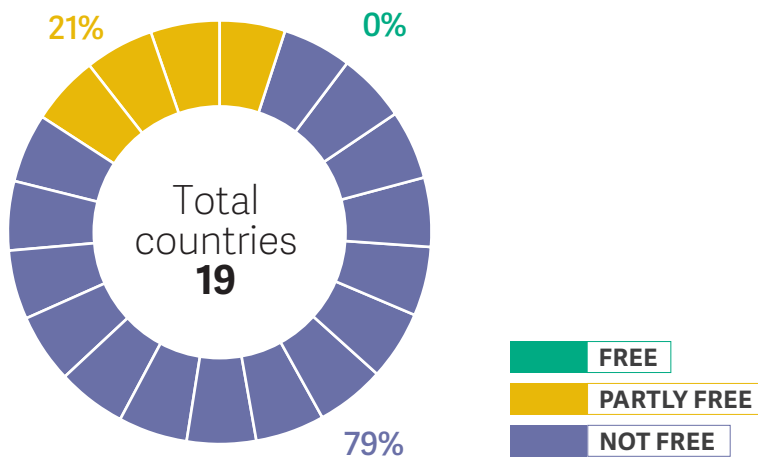
polarized since the civil war began in 2015, as most journalists must align their reporting with one of the rival governments, stop working, or flee the country. At least six journalists were killed in Yemen during 2016, and at least nine were forcibly disappeared. In addition to the lethal dangers of working in a conflict zone, reporters had to contend with raids and arbitrary detentions by whichever de facto authority controlled a given area.

Asia-Pacific

Defamation laws invoked to deter online criticism

Governments and powerful individuals in many Asian countries used defamation laws and related criminal provisions to punish criticism in the media during 2016, devoting greater attention to unfavorable commentary on social media in particular. The rising pressure on such alternative platforms was troubling given the shortage of independent reporting from the mainstream press in these countries.

The Chinese authorities imposed some of the region's harshest penalties for online criticism, as censors focused more on the reputation of the Communist Party leadership than in previous years. One activist in Xinjiang, Zhang Haitao, was sentenced to 19 years in prison for repeatedly critiquing party policies on social media and providing information to overseas outlets. Overall, at least 111 journalists, bloggers, Tibetans, Uighurs, and Falun Gong practitioners were sentenced to prison in 2016, most of them for accessing or sharing information online or via social media. The government also tightened restrictions on news production by web portals and blocked additional foreign websites and applications, while major Chinese social media platforms intensified their own internal censorship of politically sensitive content.

A marked increase in defamation cases was reported in Myanmar under the new government led by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD). Journalists and others faced prosecution and imprisonment under antiquated penal code provisions as well as a 2013 Telecommunications Law covering online content. Activists seeking a revision of the law found that at least 38 cases were filed under its provisions during 2016, compared with seven from 2013 to 2015. The increased use of the law against government critics and even ordinary social media users called into question the NLD's commitment to freedom of expression.

The authorities in Cambodia stepped up monitoring of social media activity ahead of local and national elections in 2017 and 2018, pursuing criminal cases against both prominent figures and ordinary users whose comments were considered politically sensitive. In neighboring Laos, where the ruling party is wary of growing social media use by the youth population, three citizens were arrested under a 2014 decree banning online criticism

ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY POPULATION

Total population
4.1 billion

5%
44%
51%
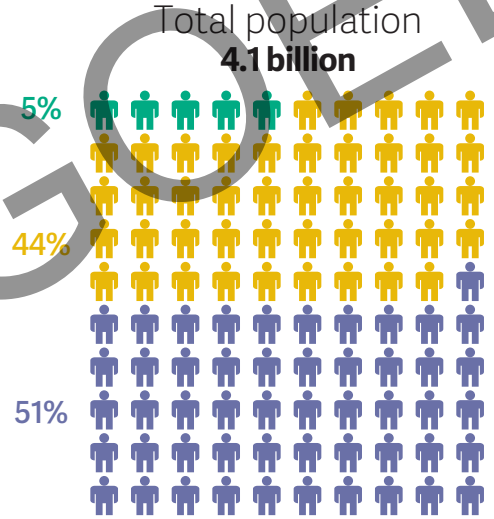
ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY COUNTRY

30%
35%
Total countries
40
35%
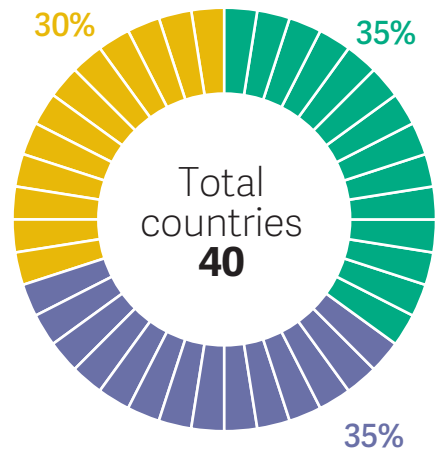
of the government when they returned home to renew their passports, having posted the content in question on Facebook while working abroad in Thailand.

Even as prosecutions under existing laws continued across the region, some countries adopted new measures to crack down on critical material. The Maldives passed a sweeping law that criminalized defamation and can also be used to force journalists to reveal their sources. Pakistan adopted a cybercrime law that grants the Telecommunications Authority broad discretion to block or remove virtually any content based on vague criteria such as "public order" and "the interest of the glory of Islam."

Eurasia

Governments demonstrate disdain for media autonomy

The autocratic regimes at the core of Eurasia, the worst-performing region in the world for press freedom, maintained an iron grip on major news media in their countries during 2016, leaving few avenues for free expression. While little changed in the Central Asian states, the governments of Azerbaijan and Russia did not hesitate to tighten constraints around the remaining pockets of critical journalism.

RBC, one of Russia's last independent media groups, came under fire after covering apparent corruption involving the family and associates of President Putin. Three RBC editors were pushed out of their positions amid signs of Kremlin pressure on the company's owner, then replaced by recruits from the state-owned TASS news agency—a clear reminder of the redlines on reporting about Russia's ruling elites.

In Azerbaijan, the regime of President Ilham Aliyev gave no sign that it was easing its years-long campaign against independent media and freedom of expression advocates. Authorities periodically blocked the websites of several prominent news outlets, among them Meydan TV and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The leadership also demonstrated the extent of its editorial control by taking the progovernment television station ANS off the air due to its plan to broadcast statements by the exiled Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen, which the authorities said would be a "provocation" meant to damage relations between Baku and Ankara. The outlet's history of political loyalty seems to have carried little weight in the face of the Aliyev government's mounting economic and diplomatic insecurities.

Even in the more democratic states of the region, officials' attitudes toward the media remain alarming. Security forces in Armenia showed their lack of respect for the press during another summer of mass protests, brutally assaulting several journalists who were covering the gatherings.

Meanwhile, faced with Kremlin-controlled outlets that disseminate disinformation, undermine the legitimacy of Ukrainian institutions, and exacerbate Ukraine's

EURASIA: STATUS BY POPULATION

Total population
289 million

17%

83%
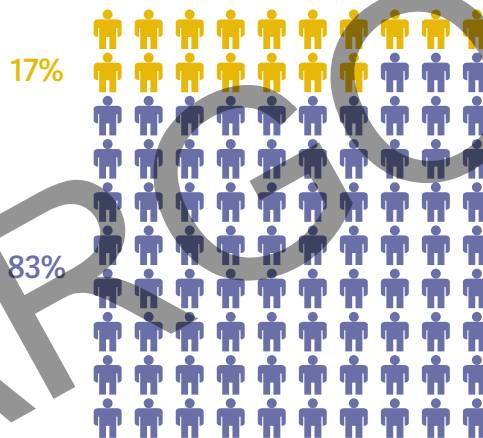
EURASIA: STATUS BY COUNTRY

23%

0%

Total countries
13

77%

FREE
PARTLY FREE
NOT FREE
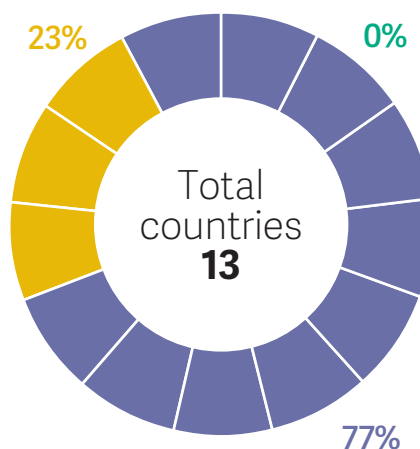
security crisis, Kyiv has turned to restrictions, limiting access to numerous Russian outlets and denying entry to dozens of Russian journalists. One of the most troubling prohibitions came in early 2017, when the National Radio and Television Council banned cable transmission of the independent Russian television station Dozhd under Ukraine's media laws after it used a map depicting Crimea as part of Russia—as required under Russian law. The conflict in eastern Ukraine and Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea are unlikely to be resolved quickly or easily, meaning the Ukrainian authorities' willingness and quickness to compromise the free flow of information in the name of national security could erode press freedom in the country in the years to come.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Press freedom suffers as embattled leaders cling to power

Major countries across sub-Saharan Africa experienced declines in 2016, as press freedom suffered from the effects of ongoing social and political unrest, election-related crackdowns, or increasingly repressive leaders.

Security forces in South Sudan intensified scrutiny of the media as the civil conflict dragged on, arresting journalists who questioned the government or reported on rights abuses. Security agents also deployed to printing sites to halt the publication of certain articles. The combination of such direct censorship and self-censorship motivated by harassment and fear of arrest has left citizens with a growing information vacuum.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where President Joseph Kabila's attempts to remain in office beyond his mandate triggered a political crisis, authorities interfered with the operations of independent and foreign media outlets including the UN-operated Radio Okapi and Radio France Internationale. Security forces arrested or assaulted journalists covering opposition protests and citizen-led movements. The brutal murder of Marcel Lubala Kalala, a journalist with the state-owned Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise, shocked the country in November; press freedom advocates reported that his killers had been dressed in military uniforms.

New Tanzanian president John Magufuli pursued a popular campaign to wipe out corruption, but his government also showed a worrying intolerance for criticism in the press and social media, including by launching defamation prosecutions under the 2015 Cybercrimes Act and passing a problematic Media Services Act. At least 10 people had been charged with insulting the president under the Cybercrimes Act by the end of 2016. Police seeking information on similar online comments also arrested and charged Maxence Melo, the cofounder of Jamii Forums, a popular online discussion portal that is often used to disseminate information about corruption and other controversial issues.

The media in Burundi, in the aftermath of a violent government crackdown on independent outlets in 2015, have settled into an atmosphere of pervasive self-

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION

Total population
1.02 billion

1%

61%

38%

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY

6%   54%

Total countries
50

40%
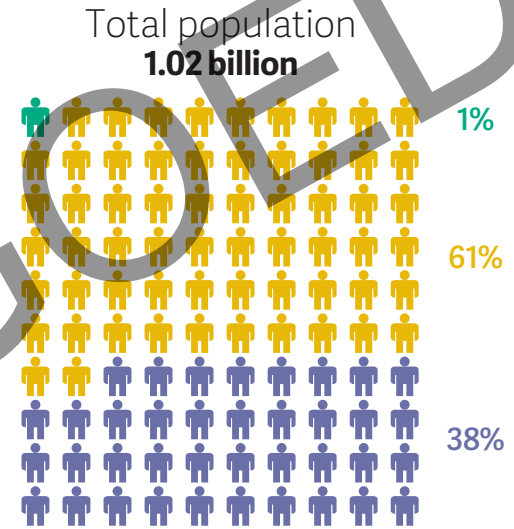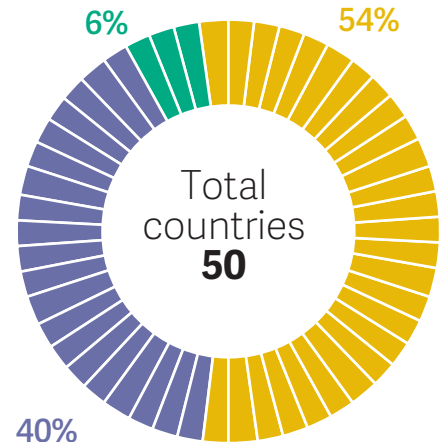
censorship. The government in early 2016 permitted a handful of previously shuttered broadcasters to reopen if they agreed to a new rule mandating "balanced and objective" coverage, but a slew of suspensions and restrictions later in the year reinforced the message that outlets must stick to safe topics if they want to remain in business.

In Zimbabwe, the ruling party sought to shut down reporting on a new popular protest movement, with police beating and arresting those who covered the demonstrations. And in Zambia, the ruling Patriotic Front interfered with critical coverage both before and after August general elections, arresting journalists on spurious charges that were frequently dropped once the case reached the courts.

Americas

Journalists plagued by violence, legal harassment

Journalists in the Americas faced an increase in violence, lawsuits, and police interference in 2016.

Bolivia experienced severe setbacks for press freedom, adding to gradual deterioration over the past decade. The administration of President Evo Morales targeted critical journalists with threats of prosecution and accused three media outlets that covered a corruption case against him of forming a "cartel of lies." Two reporters fled abroad to avoid possible detention, and authorities repeatedly attempted to silence a critical radio journalist through regulatory and other interference. Morales appeared especially irked by the "no" vote on a referendum that would have allowed him to run for another term in 2019, an outcome that he blamed on the press.

The pattern of extreme violence against journalists in several Latin American countries continued unabated in 2016. Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, and Mexico remain among the world's most dangerous places for journalists, and all face ongoing challenges in investigating and prosecuting these crimes. The number of murders in Mexico rose, according to some sources, especially for reporters covering police abuses, drug trafficking, and governmental corruption. While El Salvador has traditionally had less violence against journalists despite its high overall homicide rate, intimidation of the media has increased there as well. Protection mechanisms have been put in place in a number of countries, but their effectiveness is still limited by problems such as bureaucratic rivalries, insufficient funding, and lack of training.

In a new development in Brazil, a series of nearly 50 lawsuits were filed against five reporters who had worked on articles revealing the suspiciously high earnings of members of the judiciary in Paraná State. The lawsuits were apparently coordinated, using similar language, but were spread out geographically, forcing the journalists to spend considerable resources traveling between the courts. In Venezuela, the general collapse of the economy and unchecked crime affected the media in a variety of ways, including armed robberies of journalists, chronic shortages of newsprint, and basic financial difficulties.

AMERICAS: STATUS BY POPULATION

Total population
992.3 million

40%

40%

20%
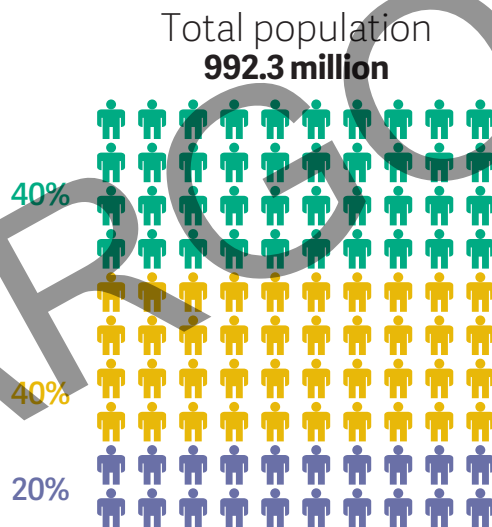
AMERICAS: STATUS BY COUNTRY

14%

Total countries
35

40%

46%

FREE

PARTLY FREE

NOT FREE
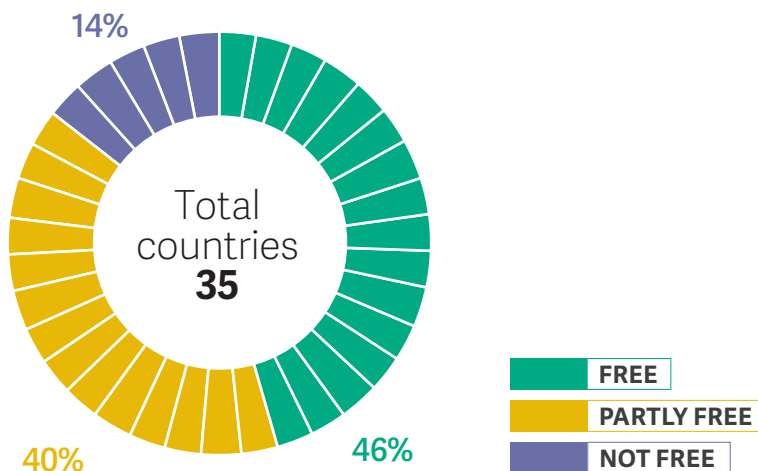
Although Cuba remains one of the most closed media environments in the world, several new news websites emerged on the island in 2016, and the more established outlets expanded their reach. In response, authorities stepped up arrests and intimidation of critical journalists, seizing their materials and preventing some from traveling abroad to trainings or conferences. However, the regime was unable to prevent an improvement in the range and quality of information available.

Europe

Politicians erode respect for free press

Government officials and politicians in countries across Europe displayed varying levels of contempt for the media in 2016, encouraging the perception of critical journalists as political enemies and opening the door to broader harassment.

Such hostility was worryingly apparent in Germany as it prepared for federal elections in late 2017. Far-right figures branded journalists covering their activities with the charged term "Lügenpresse," or "lying press." Meanwhile, Slovakia's prime minister deemed critical journalists "dirty" and "anti-Slovak." In the Netherlands, anti-immigration politician Geert Wilders openly emulated Donald Trump's strategy of bypassing mainstream media and disseminating his inflammatory views to the public via Twitter.

Officials in some EU member states hampered journalists' access to elected representatives and government functions. Austria's chancellor ceased holding weekly press conferences, and authorities sought to bar reporters from entering the parliament in Hungary and Poland. Officials in Montenegro, an EU candidate, excluded photographers and videographers from a discussion in its parliament last summer, reportedly marking the country's first such ban.

Political leaders in other Western Balkan countries placed greater pressure on independent media, apparently emboldened by the EU's flagging commitment to enforcing democratic standards among aspiring member states. In Macedonia, the ruling party wielded considerable control over the news cycle through the public broadcaster and friendly private outlets, and reporters risked attacks while covering antigovernment protests, including by police. Serbian officials intensified efforts to paint investigative outlets as foreign-backed provocateurs. And reports emerged that Kosovo's prime minister phoned a reporter to threaten him over an article, contributing to a sense that officials have little regard for media freedom. A chilling effect among critical journalists, coupled with a more passive EU, has created new opportunities for Russia's Balkan-based media outlets, which promote themes of shared Slavic history and culture as well as conspiracy theories about threats posed by NATO.

EUROPE: STATUS BY POPULATION

Total population
618.1 million

60%

27%

13%
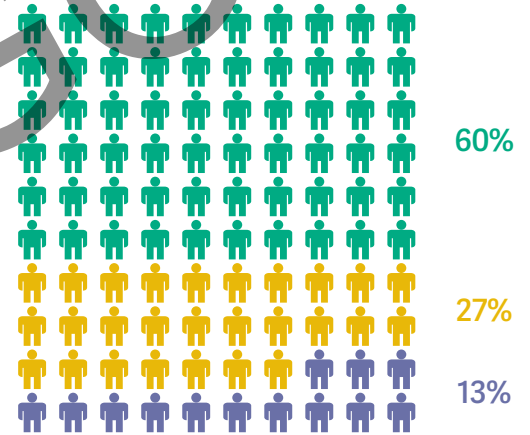
EUROPE: STATUS BY COUNTRY

5%

29%

Total countries
42

67%

FREE

PARTLY FREE

NOT FREE
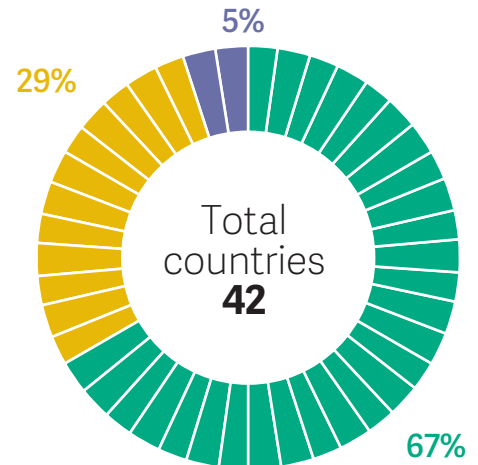
The following people were instrumental in the writing of this essay: Elen Aghekyan, Rukmani Bhatia, Rebeka Foley, Shannon O'Toole, Sarah Repucci, and Tyler Roylance.

Notable gains and declines in 2016

The following reflect developments of major significance or concern in 2016.

Gains:

- **Argentina** improved due to a less hostile environment for the media under the Macri administration, including reductions in intimidation of journalists and government manipulation of the media through advertising.

- **Afghanistan** improved due to recent legal changes that illustrate the current administration's more favorable stance on media independence, as well as long-term growth in the diversity of private media, though the deteriorating security environment further restricted journalists' ability to operate safely throughout the country.

Declines:

- **Democratic Republic of Congo** declined due to developments related to delayed national elections and resulting protests, including a government decree that cut broadcasting signals to target critical outlets and an increase in attacks on and arrests of journalists.

- **Ethiopia** declined due a crackdown on independent media throughout the year amid widespread protests, as well as the October declaration of a state of emergency that blocked access to media, including social media, and obstructed the work of journalists.

- **Hong Kong** declined due to increased mainland interference in local media as well as multiple attacks on journalists during demonstrations.

- **Hungary** declined because independent media have been squeezed out of the market, partly through the acquisition and creation of outlets by presumed government allies.

- **India** declined due to violent reprisals against journalists as well as government blocking of internet service and halting of printing presses in the restive Kashmir Valley.

- **Israel** declined due to unprecedented personal attacks by the prime minister on leading investigative journalists, which contributed to a hostile environment for the press.

- **Macedonia** declined because the ruling party increased its control over the news cycle through a new television station, and due to a rise in physical obstruction of or attacks against journalists.

- **Malaysia** declined due to the government's legal, economic, and other pressure on independent outlets covering the 1MDB corruption scandal, one of which closed after authorities blocked its website.

- **Maldives** declined as the government further tightened its control of the media, including through the passage of new legislation that criminalizes defamation. Combined with ongoing police harassment and arbitrary arrests, the law contributed to increased self-censorship among journalists.

- **Poland** declined due to government intolerance toward independent or critical reporting, excessive political interference in the affairs of public media, and restrictions on speech regarding Polish history and identity, which have collectively contributed to increased self-censorship and polarization.

- **Serbia** declined due to a heightened government campaign to discredit unfriendly media outlets and a purge of the staff of a provincial public broadcaster after the national ruling party won elections in the province.

- **Tanzania** declined due to restrictive legislation, including the Cybercrime Act and the Media Services Act, and the resulting prosecution and imprisonment of journalists and bloggers.

- **Tunisia** declined due to growing government hostility toward the media, illustrated by insults and verbal attacks against journalists and media institutions, and a weakening economy that resulted in layoffs or unpaid salaries for hundreds of journalists.

- **Turkey** declined due to multiple repressive measures following the July coup attempt, including increased censorship, closures of critical and independent media outlets, mass cancelation of journalists' licenses, and a sharp rise in arbitrary detentions of and violence against journalists.

Regional Rankings

Of the 199 countries and territories assessed for 2016, a total of 61 (31 percent) were rated Free, 72 (36 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 66 (33 percent) were rated Not Free. This balance marks a slight shift toward the Partly Free category compared with the edition covering 2015, which featured 62 Free, 71 Partly Free, and 66 Not Free countries and territories. There were three status changes in *Freedom of the Press 2017*: Afghanistan improved from Not Free to Partly Free, the Maldives declined from Partly Free to Not Free, and Poland declined from Free to Partly Free.

AMERICAS ● – Free ● – Partly Free ● – Not Free

Country	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Score	Freedom of the Press 2017	Freedom in the World 2017	Freedom on the Net 2016
Costa Rica	1	13	16	●	●	
Saint Lucia	2	16	17	●	●	
Canada	3	20	18	●	●	●
Barbados	4	22	19	●	●	
Jamaica		22	19	●	●	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	6	26	21	●	●	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		26	21	●	●	
Bahamas	8	33	23	●	●	
United States		33	23	●	●	●
Uruguay	10	38	24	●	●	
Dominica	11	39	25	●	●	
Trinidad and Tobago		39	25	●	●	
Grenada	13	44	26	●	●	
Belize	14	48	27	●	●	
Suriname	15	53	28	●	●	
Chile	16	56	29	●	●	
Antigua and Barbuda	17	66	34	●	●	
Guyana	18	73	38	●	●	
El Salvador	19	76	41	●	●	
Panama		76	41	●	●	
Dominican Republic	21	80	42	●	●	
Peru	22	89	45	●	●	
Argentina	23	92	46	●	●	●
Brazil	24	94	47	●	●	●
Haiti	25	108	52	●	●	
Bolivia	26	111	53	●	●	
Nicaragua	27	117	55	●	●	
Colombia	28	120	57	●	●	●
Guatemala	29	122	58	●	●	
Paraguay	30	128	59	●	●	
Mexico	31	139	64	●	●	●
Ecuador	32	143	66	●	●	●
Honduras		143	66	●	●	
Venezuela	34	172	81	●	●	●
Cuba	35	193	91	●	●	●

* Denotes territories
↗ ↘ Indicates improvements or declines in press freedom status
The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

The report found that 13 percent of the world's inhabitants lived in countries with a Free press, while 42 percent had a Partly Free press and 45 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 population. The percentage of those enjoying a Free media in 2016 remained at its lowest level since 1996, when Freedom House began incorporating population data into the findings of the report.

ASIA-PACIFIC 🟢 – Free 🟡 – Partly Free 🟣 – Not Free

Country	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Score	Freedom of the Press 2017	Freedom in the World 2017	Freedom on the Net 2016
Palau	1	9	15	🟢	🟢	
Marshall Islands	2	16	17	🟢	🟢	
New Zealand	3	22	19	🟢	🟢	
Micronesia	4	26	21	🟢	🟢	
Australia	5	31	22	🟢	🟢	🟢
Taiwan	6	39	25	🟢	🟢	
Vanuatu		39	25	🟢	🟢	
Japan	8	48	27	🟢	🟢	🟢
Solomon Islands		48	27	🟢	🟢	
Tuvalu		48	27	🟢	🟢	
Papua New Guinea	11	56	29	🟢	🟡	
Samoa		56	29	🟢	🟢	
Kiribati	13	60	30	🟢	🟢	
Tonga		60	30	🟢	🟢	
South Korea	15	66	34	🟡	🟢	🟡
Timor-Leste	16	69	35	🟡	🟡	
Mongolia	17	70	37	🟡	🟢	
Hong Kong*	18	80	42	🟡	🟡	
India	19	83	43	🟡	🟢	🟡
Fiji	20	84	44	🟡	🟡	
Philippines		84	44	🟡	🟡	🟢
Nauru	22	92	46	🟡	🟢	
Indonesia	23	98	49	🟡	🟡	🟡
Nepal	24	108	52	🟡	🟡	
Bhutan	25	122	58	🟡	🟡	
Afghanistan	26	130	60	🟡 ↗	🟣	
Sri Lanka	27	134	61	🟣	🟡	🟡
Bangladesh	28	135	62	🟣	🟡	🟡
Maldives		135	62	🟣 ↘	🟡	
Pakistan	30	141	65	🟣	🟡	🟣
Singapore	31	148	67	🟣	🟡	🟡
Malaysia	32	151	69	🟣	🟡	🟡
Cambodia	33	152	70	🟣	🟣	🟡
Myanmar	34	159	73	🟣	🟡	🟣
Brunei	35	163	76	🟣	🟣	
Thailand	36	165	77	🟣	🟣	🟣
Vietnam	37	177	84	🟣	🟣	🟣
Laos	38	179	85	🟣	🟣	
China	39	186	87	🟣	🟣	🟣
North Korea	40	198	98	🟣	🟣	

EURASIA   ● – Free   ● – Partly Free   ● – Not Free

Country	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Score	Freedom of the Press 2017	Freedom in the World 2017	Freedom on the Net 2016
Georgia	1	102	50	Partly Free	Partly Free	Free
Ukraine	2	111	53	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Moldova	3	118	56	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Armenia	4	137	63	Not Free	Partly Free	Free
Kyrgyzstan	5	148	67	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Belarus	6	174	83	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Russia		174	83	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Kazakhstan	8	179	85	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Tajikistan	9	186	87	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Azerbaijan	10	190	90	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Crimea*	11	195	94	Not Free	Not Free	
Uzbekistan	12	197	95	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Turkmenistan	13	198	98	Not Free	Not Free	

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

● – Free   ● – Partly Free   ● – Not Free

Country	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Score	Freedom of the Press 2017	Freedom in the World 2017	Freedom on the Net 2016
Israel	1	64	33	Partly Free	Free	
Tunisia	2	115	54	Partly Free	Free	Partly Free
Lebanon	3	118	56	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Kuwait	4	130	60	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Algeria	5	141	65	Not Free	Not Free	
Morocco	6	143	66	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Jordan	7	150	68	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Qatar	8	152	70	Not Free	Not Free	
Iraq	9	155	71	Not Free	Not Free	
Oman		155	71	Not Free	Not Free	
Egypt	11	165	77	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Libya		165	77	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
United Arab Emirates	13	169	78	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
West Bank and Gaza Strip*	14	177	84	Not Free	Not Free	
Yemen	15	179	85	Not Free	Not Free	
Saudi Arabia	16	183	86	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Bahrain	17	186	87	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Iran	18	190	90	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Syria		190	90	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free

* Denotes territories
↗ ↘ Indicates improvements or declines in press freedom status
The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

EUROPE 🟢 – Free 🟡 – Partly Free 🟣 – Not Free

Country	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Score	Status Freedom of the Press 2017	Freedom in the World 2017	Freedom on the Net 2016
Norway	1	1	8	🟢	🟢	
Netherlands	2	2	11	🟢	🟢	
Sweden		2	11	🟢	🟢	
Belgium	4	4	12	🟢	🟢	
Denmark		4	12	🟢	🟢	
Finland		4	12	🟢	🟢	
Switzerland	7	7	13	🟢	🟢	
Luxembourg	8	8	14	🟢	🟢	
Andorra	9	9	15	🟢	🟢	
Iceland		9	15	🟢	🟢	🟢
Liechtenstein		9	15	🟢	🟢	
Estonia	12	13	16	🟢	🟢	🟢
Monaco		13	16	🟢	🟢	
Portugal	14	16	17	🟢	🟢	
San Marino		16	17	🟢	🟢	
Ireland	16	20	18	🟢	🟢	
Germany	17	25	20	🟢	🟢	🟢
Czech Republic	18	26	21	🟢	🟢	
Lithuania		26	21	🟢	🟢	
Austria	20	31	22	🟢	🟢	
Cyprus	21	33	23	🟢	🟢	
Malta		33	23	🟢	🟢	
Slovenia		33	23	🟢	🟢	
United Kingdom	24	39	25	🟢	🟢	🟢
France	25	44	26	🟢	🟢	🟢
Latvia		44	26	🟢	🟢	
Slovakia		44	26	🟢	🟢	
Spain	28	53	28	🟢	🟢	
Italy	29	62	31	🟡	🟢	🟢
Poland	30	66	34	🟡 ↘	🟢	
Romania	31	73	38	🟡	🟢	
Croatia	32	76	41	🟡	🟢	
Bulgaria	33	80	42	🟡	🟢	
Greece	34	84	44	🟡	🟢	
Hungary		84	44	🟡	🟢	🟢
Montenegro		84	44	🟡	🟡	
Kosovo	37	96	48	🟡	🟡	
Serbia	38	98	49	🟡	🟢	
Albania	39	103	51	🟡	🟡	
Bosnia and Herzegovina		103	51	🟡	🟡	
Macedonia	41	139	64	🟣	🟡	
Turkey	42	163	76	🟣	🟡	🟣

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

● – Free ● – Partly Free ● – Not Free

Country	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Score	Status		
				Freedom of the Press 2017	Freedom in the World 2017	Freedom on the Net 2016
Cape Verde	1	48	27	Free	Free	
São Tomé and Príncipe	2	53	28	Free	Free	
Mauritius	3	56	29	Free	Free	
Namibia	4	63	32	Partly Free	Free	
Ghana	5	64	33	Partly Free	Free	
Benin	6	70	37	Partly Free	Free	
Mali		70	37	Partly Free	Partly Free	
South Africa	8	73	38	Partly Free	Free	Free
Burkina Faso	9	76	41	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Botswana	10	89	45	Partly Free	Free	
Malawi		89	45	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Senegal	12	94	47	Partly Free	Free	
Mozambique	13	96	48	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Comoros	14	98	49	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Seychelles		98	49	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Côte d'Ivoire	16	103	51	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Lesotho		103	51	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Nigeria		103	51	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Niger	19	108	52	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Mauritania	20	111	53	Partly Free	Not Free	
Somaliland*		111	53	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone	22	115	54	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Togo	23	120	57	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Kenya	24	122	58	Partly Free	Partly Free	Free
Madagascar		122	58	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Tanzania		122	58	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Uganda		122	58	Partly Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Guinea-Bissau	28	128	59	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	29	130	60	Partly Free	Not Free	
Liberia		130	60	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Zambia	31	137	63	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Cameroon	32	143	66	Not Free	Not Free	
Guinea		143	66	Not Free	Partly Free	
South Sudan	34	152	70	Not Free	Not Free	
Central African Republic	35	155	71	Not Free	Not Free	
Gabon		155	71	Not Free	Not Free	
Angola	37	159	73	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Chad	38	161	74	Not Free	Not Free	
Zimbabwe		161	74	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Djibouti	40	165	77	Not Free	Not Free	
Rwanda	41	170	79	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Somalia		170	79	Not Free	Not Free	
Congo (Kinshasa)	43	173	82	Not Free	Not Free	
Swaziland	44	174	83	Not Free	Not Free	
Burundi	45	179	85	Not Free	Not Free	
Ethiopia	46	183	86	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Sudan		183	86	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
The Gambia	48	186	87	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Equatorial Guinea	49	193	91	Not Free	Not Free	
Eritrea	50	195	94	Not Free	Not Free	

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Political leaders in many democracies sought to delegitimize critical or impartial sources of information.

EMBARGOED