

## WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2011-2012

# CRACKDOWNS ON PROTESTS CAUSE BIG CHANGES TO INDEX POSITIONS

## Syria, Bahrain and Yemen get worst ever rankings

"This year's index sees many changes in the rankings, changes that reflect a year that was incredibly rich in developments, especially in the Arab world," Reporters Without Borders said today as it released its 10<sup>th</sup> annual press freedom index. "Many media paid dearly for their coverage of democratic aspirations or opposition movements. Control of news and information continued to tempt governments and to be a question of survival for totalitarian and repressive regimes. The past year also highlighted the leading role played by netizens in producing and disseminating news.

"Crackdown was the word of the year in 2011. Never has freedom of information been so closely associated with democracy. Never have journalists, through their reporting, vexed the enemies of freedom so much. Never have acts of censorship and physical attacks on journalists seemed so numerous. The equation is simple: the absence or suppression of civil liberties leads necessarily to the suppression of media freedom. Dictatorships fear and ban information, especially when it may undermine them.

"It is no surprise that the same trio of countries, Eritrea, Turkmenistan and North Korea, absolute dictatorships that permit no civil liberties, again occupy the last three places in the index. This year, they are immediately preceded at the bottom by Syria, Iran and China, three countries that seem to have lost contact with reality as they have been sucked into an insane spiral of terror, and by Bahrain and Vietnam, quintessential oppressive regimes. Other countries such as Uganda and Belarus have also become much more repressive.

"This year's index finds the same group of countries at its head, countries such as Finland, Norway and Netherlands that respect basic freedoms. This serves as a reminder that media independence can only be maintained in strong democracies and that democracy needs media

freedom. It is worth noting the entry of Cape Verde and Namibia into the top twenty, two African countries where no attempts to obstruct the media were reported in 2011."

## Protest movements

The Arab world was the motor of history in 2011 but the Arab uprisings have had contrasting political outcomes so far, with Tunisia and Bahrain at opposite ends of the scale. Tunisia (134<sup>th</sup>) rose 30 places in index and, with much suffering, gave birth to a democratic regime that has not yet fully accepted a free and independent press. Bahrain (173<sup>rd</sup>) fell 29 places because of its relentless crackdown on pro-democracy movements, its trials of human rights defenders and its suppression of all space for freedom.

While Libya (154<sup>th</sup>) turned the page on the Gaddafi era, Yemen succumbed to violence between President Ali Abdallah Saleh's opponents and supporters and languished in 171<sup>st</sup> position. The future of both of these countries remains uncertain, and the place they will allow the media is undecided. The same goes for Egypt, which fell 39 places to 166<sup>th</sup> because the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, in power since February, dashed the hopes of democrats by continuing the Mubarak dictatorship's practices. There were three periods of exceptional violence for journalists: in February, November and December.

Already poorly ranked in 2010, Syria fell further in the index, to 176<sup>th</sup> position, because total censorship, widespread surveillance, indiscriminate violence and government manipulation made it impossible for journalists to work.

Elsewhere in the world, pro-democracy movements that tried to follow the Arab example were ruthlessly suppressed. Many arrests were made in Vietnam (172<sup>nd</sup>). In China (174<sup>th</sup>), the government responded to regional and local protests and to public impatience with scandals and acts of injustice by feverishly reinforcing



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its system of controlling news and information, carrying out extrajudicial arrests and stepping up Internet censorship. There was a dramatic rise in the number of arrests in Azerbaijan (162<sup>nd</sup>), where Ilham Aliyev's autocratic government did not hesitate to jail netizens, abduct opposition journalists and bar foreign reporters in order to impose a news blackout on the unrest.

Led by President Yoweri Museveni, Uganda (139<sup>th</sup>) launched an unprecedented crackdown on opposition movements and independent media after the elections in February. Similarly, Chile (80<sup>th</sup>) fell 47 places because of its many freedom of information violations, committed very often by the security forces during student protests. The United States (47<sup>th</sup>) also owed its fall of 27 places to the many arrests of journalist covering Occupy Wall Street protests.

## Several European countries fall far behind rest of continent

The index has highlighted the divergence of some European countries from the rest of the continent. The crackdown on protests after President Lukashenko's reelection caused Belarus to fall 14 places to 168<sup>th</sup>. At a time when it is portraying itself as a regional model, Turkey (148<sup>th</sup>) took a big step backwards and lost 10 places. Far from carrying out promised reforms, the judicial system launched a wave of arrests of journalists that was without precedent since the military dictatorship.

Within the European Union, the index reflects a continuation of the very marked distinction between countries such as Finland and Netherlands that have always had a good evaluation and countries such as Bulgaria (80<sup>th</sup>), Greece (70<sup>th</sup>) and Italy (61<sup>st</sup>) that fail to address the issue of their media freedom violations, above all because of a lack of political will. There was little progress from France, which went from 44<sup>th</sup> to 38<sup>th</sup>, or from Spain (39<sup>th</sup>) and Romania (47<sup>th</sup>). Media freedom is a challenge that needs addressing more than ever in the Balkans, which want to join the European Union but are suffering the negative effects of the economic crisis.

## Endemic violence

Many countries are marked by a culture of violence towards the media that has taken a deep hold. It will be hard to reverse the trends in these countries without an effective fight against impunity. Mexico (149<sup>th</sup>) and Honduras (135<sup>th</sup>) are two cases in point. Pakistan (151<sup>st</sup>) was the world's deadliest country for journalists for the second year running. Somalia (164<sup>th</sup>), which has been at war for 20 years, shows no sign of finding a way out of the chaos in which journalists are paying a heavy price.

In Iran (175<sup>th</sup>), hounding and humiliating journalists has been part of officialdom's political culture for years. The regime feeds on persecution of the media. Iraq (152<sup>nd</sup>) fell back 22 places and is now worryingly approaching its 2008 position (158<sup>th</sup>).

## Noteworthy changes

South Sudan, a new nation facing many challenges, has entered the index in a respectable position (111<sup>th</sup>) for what is a breakaway from one of the worst ranked countries, Sudan (170<sup>th</sup>). Burma (169<sup>th</sup>) has a slightly better position than in previous years as a result of political changes in recent months that have raised hopes but need to be confirmed. Niger (29<sup>th</sup>) achieved the biggest rise in a single year, 75 places, thanks to a successful political transition.

It was Africa that also saw the biggest falls in the index. Djibouti, a discreet little dictatorship in the Horn of Africa, fell 49 places to 159<sup>th</sup>. Malawi (146<sup>th</sup>) fell 67 places because of the totalitarian tendencies of its president, Bingu Wa Mutharika. Uganda, mentioned above, fell 43 places to 139<sup>th</sup>. Finally, Côte d'Ivoire fell 41 places to 159<sup>th</sup> because the media were badly hit by the fighting between the supporters of rival presidents Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara.

The biggest fall in Latin America was by Brazil, which plunged 41 places to 99<sup>th</sup> because the high level of violence resulted in the deaths of three journalists and bloggers.

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# EUROPE AND EX-URSS



## DIFFERENCES INCREASE IN EUROPE

### European Union more heterogeneous, Balkans facing EU entry challenge

While **Finland** and **Norway** again share first place, **Bulgaria** (80<sup>th</sup>) and **Greece** (70<sup>th</sup>) have kept their status as the European Union's bad performers. Targeted attacks and death threats against journalists marked the past year in Bulgaria, where concerns about print media pluralism grew. In Greece, the economic crisis highlighted the fragility of its media while photographers and cameramen covering demonstrations were exposed to conditions resembling war zones. **Hungary** fell 17 rungs to 40<sup>th</sup> place after adopting a law giving the ruling party direct control over the media and amending its constitution in December. The precedent set by this legislation, adopted with little comment from other EU member states, has further dented the European model's credibility.

**France** is still in a disappointing position (38<sup>th</sup>), as concern continues about protection of the confidentiality of sources and the ability of investigative journalists to cover influential figures close to the government. **Italy** (61<sup>st</sup>), which still has a dozen or so journalists under police protection, has turned the page on several years of conflict of interest with Silvio Berlusconi's departure. But this year's ranking still bears his mark, especially another attempt to introduce a gag law and an attempt to introduce Internet filtering without reference to the courts, both narrowly rejected.

Against the extraordinary backdrop of the News of the World affair, the **United Kingdom** (28<sup>th</sup>) caused concern with its approach to the protection of privacy and its response to the London riots. Despite universal condemna-

tion, the UK also clings to a surreal law that allows the entire world to come and sue news media before its courts.

The contrast among the three Baltic countries sharpened. **Estonia** (3<sup>rd</sup>) stayed at the top of the index but **Lithuania** and **Latvia** fell to 30<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> respectively as a result of grotesque court rulings and increased interference by the security services. Relations between the government and media have improved somewhat in **Slovakia** (25<sup>th</sup>) since Robert Fico, who was heavy-handed in his methods and crude in his language with journalists, ceased to be prime minister.

The economic crisis accentuated the Balkan media's problems – use of the media for private or criminal interests, unfair competition in very small markets, and self-censorship by a growing number of badly paid journalists. Judicial officials – many of them poorly trained, allied with the government and often corrupt – seem more interested in harassing the media than ending impunity for those who threaten or physically attack journalists. This was the case, for example in **Bosnia-Herzegovina** (58<sup>th</sup>), **Montenegro** (107<sup>th</sup>), **Albania** (96<sup>th</sup>) and **Macedonia** (94<sup>th</sup>), which lost 40 per cent of its media with the closure of Plus Produkcija, a company that owned three dailies and the leading privately-owned TV station.

### Turkey back to old habits, Azerbaijan and Belarus locked into repression

**Turkey** continued its descent, this time falling 10 places to 148<sup>th</sup>. Despite the diversity and energy of its media, 2011 saw a dramatic

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## Europe and ex-URSS

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escalation in the judicial harassment of journalists. Under the pretext of combating terrorism, dozens were jailed before being tried, above all in the investigations into the Ergenekon conspiracy and the KCK, an alleged political offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party. The unprecedented extension of the range of arrests, the massive phone taps and the contempt shown for the confidentiality of journalists' sources have helped to reintroduce a climate of intimidation in the media.

In **Russia** (142<sup>nd</sup>), the media freedom panorama continues to be gloomy. The conviction of a couple for the double murder of Anastasia Baburova and Stanislav Markelov raised hopes but aspects of the case remained unclarified and impunity is still the rule for those who murder or attack journalists. Tougher sentences for such crimes and the decriminalization of media offences were both good news but the impact of these reforms remains to be determined, especially in the absence of an overhaul of anti-terrorist legislation. The unprecedented demonstrations in December 2011 augur a period of uncertainty – while some newsrooms seem to be becoming more outspoken, the state's repressive apparatus has so far been able to cope with the unrest.

After cracking down violently on pro-democracy protests, both **Belarus** (168<sup>th</sup>) and **Azerbaijan** (162<sup>nd</sup>) have fallen sharply and are approaching the bottom of the index. Their leaders, Alexander Lukashenko and Ilham Aliyev, are both predators of press freedom and both made the media pay for the way their authority was challenged on the streets – in Belarus, more than 100 journalists and bloggers arrested (and around 30 of them given jail sentences), increased harassment of independent media and deportation of foreign journalists.

Not content with this indiscriminate repression, Belarus' self-styled "Batka" (Father) went on to turn the media into the scapegoat for all of his country's problems. Similar methods were used in Azerbaijan, where special emphasis was put on surveillance of social networks and where netizens were jailed just for issuing online calls for demonstrations. Violence is back in a big way there, with threats, beatings, and abduction of opposition journalists and, for the first time in five years, an Azerbaijani journalist murdered.

No longer the leader in the southern Caucasus, **Georgia** (104<sup>th</sup>) is paying the price for the violent dispersal of an opposition demonstration in May and the persistent harassment of journalists and bloggers suspected of sympathizing with Russia. **Armenia's** 24-place rise in the index seems spectacular, but in fact it has just gone back to where it was three years ago, before the brutal crackdown after the disputed 2008 elections. The media are nonetheless subject to constant judicial harassment and the size of the damages demanded in lawsuits is intimidating. Self-regulation is a major challenge that still needs to be tackled.

In Central Asia, **Kyrgyzstan** turned the page on a 2010 marked by a cruel dictatorship's violent death throes and inter-ethnic massacres in the south and achieved the region's best ranking (108<sup>th</sup>). The media freedom situation nonetheless continues to be very fragile, with physical attacks on journalists and repressive initiatives by parliament. It was a bad year in neighbouring **Tajikistan** (122<sup>nd</sup>), where the authorities continue to brandish the spectre of civil war and radical Islamism to try to gag the independent media.

**Kazakhstan's** ranking (154<sup>th</sup>) improved only because so many other countries plunged on the index this year. In reality, in a bid to maintain a facade of stability at all costs, the Kazakh authorities have stepped up their persecution of the few independent voices and are trying to gain control of the Internet. Online content also focused the attention of the dictatorships in **Uzbekistan** (157<sup>th</sup>) and **Turkmenistan** (177<sup>th</sup>), which made no progress. The Turkmen public have access only to a highly-censored national Intranet, but the war of information 2.0 has now begun with the few Turkmen online resources based abroad.

**Ukraine** (116<sup>th</sup>) rose a few rungs after its all-time low in 2010, marked by journalist Vasyl Klymentyev's disappearance, but the negative's tendencies seen since Viktor Yanukovich's installation as president in February 2010 – return of censorship and many physical attacks on journalists that have gone unpunished – have continued.

# AFRICA



## GAP WIDENS BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD PERFORMERS IN AFRICA

### Dramatic falls by countries that cracked down on mass unrest

The 2011 Arab Spring did not spill over into sub-Saharan Africa to the point of bringing down any governments, but some regimes had to face forceful political and social demands, and journalists covering demonstrations were often the victims of indiscriminate police repression or were targeted by police who did not want them covering the crackdown.

This was the case in **Angola** (132<sup>nd</sup>), where many journalists were arrested during protests in September, and in **Uganda** (139<sup>th</sup>), which fell 43 places in the index after a year that will not be forgotten by its media. They were the targets of violence and surveillance during the presidential election in February and were targeted again during the brutal crackdown on the "Walk to Work" protests later in the year, when dozens of journalists were arrested.

It was even worse in **Malawi** (146<sup>th</sup>), which plunged 67 places in the index, the biggest fall of any country in the world. Malawi's journalists were treated like demonstrators during the crackdown on protests in the summer. Many were arrested and mistreated, and equipment was broken. A student and blogger, Robert Chasowa, who was found dead in September, was almost certainly murdered. Media that wanted to investigate the case were threatened. Before all this, Malawi's media legislation had been toughened so much at the start of the year that some European partners suspended part of their aid.

### Closed and authoritarian countries near bottom of index

Reporters Without Borders regards the situation in **Rwanda** (156<sup>th</sup>) and **Equatorial Guinea** (161<sup>st</sup>) as very grave because of the control that their governments exercise over the media and freedom of expression in general. They have been joined by Djibouti (159<sup>th</sup>), which fell 49 places. Its president, Ismael Omar Guelleh, was returned to office at the start of 2011 in an election that was decided in advance and gave the opposition no possibility of expressing itself in the media. There is no free press, six people who provide an exile radio station with information were jailed for four months, and social networks are closely monitored to ensure that there are no protests.

The presence of **Côte d'Ivoire** in this same group of countries (sharing 159<sup>th</sup> position with Djibouti) could be misleading. Côte d'Ivoire has real media, unlike Guelleh's Djibouti or Teodoro Obiang Nguema's Equatorial Guinea, and they say what they think, unlike the media in Paul Kagame's Rwanda, which have little freedom of expression. Côte d'Ivoire's poor ranking reflects the dramatic impact that the post-election crisis had on the media in the first half of 2011, including harassment of all kinds, acts of violence and the murders of a journalist and a media worker. During the battle of Abidjan at the start of April, it was impossible for a journalist venture out into the city.

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## Africa

### Violence, censorship and prison give East Africa three worst rankings

The three worst sub-Saharan rankings are all to be found in East Africa. Year after year, journalists continue to be exposed to the chaos and anarchy in **Somalia** (164<sup>th</sup>), a country embroiled in civil war and without a stable government since 1991. Four journalists were killed in Mogadishu in 2011. The bad ranking assigned to Omar al-Bashir's **Sudan** (170<sup>th</sup>) was due to prior censorship, closures of newspapers, and arrests, prolonged detention and mistreatment of journalists.

Finally, **Eritrea** (179<sup>th</sup>) came last in the index for the fifth year running. Freedom of opinion, like all the other freedoms, does not exist under the totalitarian dictatorship that President Issaias Afewerki has imposed on this Horn of Africa country. At least 30 journalists are currently detained in appalling conditions. Some have been held for more than 10 years.

At the other end of the index, several African countries made significant progress or showed that respect for freedom of information has taken a firm hold in their societies.

### Good countries group gets bigger

The number of African countries that are in the top 50 of the index has risen from seven last year to nine this year, while the number that are in top 100 has risen from 24 to 27. The highest non-European country in the index is an African one and in fact it is in the top 10. It is **Cape Verde** (9<sup>th</sup>), a healthy democracy and model of good governance, where governments can be changed through the ballot box, as last summer's presidential election again showed. Journalists there are completely free and all the political parties have access to the state media. **Namibia** (20<sup>th</sup>) also has an excellent ranking, better than Japan or the United Kingdom, for example.

**Botswana** (42<sup>nd</sup>), which rose 20 places, and **Comoros** (45<sup>th</sup>), which rose 25 places, are now jostling **Mali** (25<sup>th</sup>) and **Ghana** (41<sup>st</sup>), Africa's traditional leaders in respect for journalists.

### A spectacular jump and other notable improvements

**Niger** (29<sup>th</sup>) rose 75 places in the index, the biggest leap by any country in the world this year. The economic environment for Niger's media is very precarious but they are free and benefit from favourable legislation. Media freedom violations have virtually disappeared. The improvement has been seen in both concrete and symbolic measures. At the end of 2011, Mahamadou Issoufou, who was elected president in the spring, became the first African head of state to sign the Declaration of Table Mountain, thereby undertaking to promote media freedom.

Other African leaders could follow suit, such as Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the president of **Mauritania** (67<sup>th</sup>), which rose 28 places thanks to the adoption of a law on the electronic media, the opening up of the broadcasting sector, and other developments. Its progress needs to be confirmed.

**Cameroon** (97<sup>th</sup>) fell sharply in 2010 because of the journalist Bibi Ngota's death in detention but recovered a respectable ranking in 2011 although light has yet to be shed on all aspects of his death and on the death in November of this year of Reporters Without Borders correspondent Jules Koum Koum, a journalist who wrote about corruption. Cameroon also badly needs to decriminalize media offences and modernize its communication law. **Madagascar** (84<sup>th</sup>) continued to improve for the second year running after plummeting in 2009 because of that year's political crisis but, 2012, as an election year, will pose challenges.

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## Africa

### Soft underbelly

The absence of major incidents involving the media allowed **Senegal** (75<sup>th</sup>) to rise 18 places but the situation is fragile one month ahead of a presidential election that is likely to be tense. Like their Cameroonian counterparts, the Senegalese authorities are still not ready to protect journalists from prison sentences by decriminalizing media offences. Aside from abusive lawsuits, **Liberia** (110<sup>th</sup>) usually allows its media a great deal of freedom but it fell 26 places this year because journalists were attacked and media were closed during the presidential election in October and November, when challenger Winston Tubman boycotted the run-off against the incumbent, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

**South Sudan** (111<sup>th</sup>), which became independent on 9 July, entered the index with a respectable ranking. The challenge for this country is to build a solid and viable state in a very unstable region while guaranteeing freedom of expression. It must make every effort to avoid sinking to the level of its neighbours.

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# ASIA-PACIFIC AREA



## VIOLENCE AND CENSORSHIP ON THE RISE IN ASIA

### Violence and impunity persist in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Philippines, more repression in Sri Lanka, Vietnam and China

In **Afghanistan** (150<sup>th</sup>) and **Pakistan** (151<sup>st</sup>), violence remained the main concern for journalists, who were under constant threat from the Taliban, religious extremists, separatist movements and political groups. With 10 deaths in 2011, Pakistan was the world's deadliest country for journalists for the second year in a row.

In the **Philippines** (140<sup>th</sup>), which rose again in the index after falling in 2010 as a result of the massacre of 32 journalists in Ampatuan in November 2009, paramilitary groups and private militias continued to attack media workers. The judicial investigation into the Ampatuan massacre made it clear that the response of the authorities was seriously inadequate.

Journalists continued to be exposed to violence in **Bangladesh** (129<sup>th</sup>) and **Nepal** (106<sup>th</sup>), although less than in the past. In Nepal, journalists were regularly subjected to threats from rival political groups and their supporters. In Bangladesh, opposition groups and the ruling Awami League took turns to attack and obstruct the press. Despite genuine media pluralism, the law allows the government to maintain excessive control over the media and the Internet. In Nepal, a decline in attacks by Maoist groups in the south and greater efficiency on the part of the justice system account for the modest improvement in the country's ranking. However, press freedom was marred by threats and attacks by politicians and armed groups throughout the year.

### Authoritarianism and ambivalence at the bottom of the index

Freedom of information worsened considerably in two Asian countries under authoritarian rule.

**China**, which has more journalists, bloggers and cyber-dissidents in prison than any other country, stepped up its censorship and propaganda in 2011 and tightened its control of the Internet, particularly the blogosphere. The first protest movements in Arab countries and the ensuing calls for democracy in China's main cities set off a wave of arrests with no end yet in sight.

In the autonomous regions of Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, protests by minorities regularly gave rise to a harsh crackdown by the authorities. In Beijing and Shanghai, international correspondents were particular targets of the security forces and had to work under the continual threat of expulsion or having their visas withdrawn. Journalists were prevented from covering most of the events that threatened China's stability or might have given it a negative image.

**Vietnam** (172<sup>nd</sup>) appeared to follow China's repressive lead and fell seven places. Politically committed journalists and pro-democracy bloggers were harassed by the authorities while the courts continued to invoke state security to hand out prison sentences ranging from two to seven years. The blogger Pham Minh Hoang, for example, was sentenced to three years in prison and three years under house arrest on 10 August on a charge of trying to overthrow the government.

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## Asia-Pacific area

In **Sri Lanka** (163<sup>rd</sup>), the stranglehold of the Rajapakse clan forced the last few opposition journalists to flee the country. Any that stayed behind were regularly subjected to harassment and threats. Attacks were less common but impunity and official censorship of independent news sites put an end to pluralism and contributed more than ever to self-censorship by almost all media outlets.

**Burma** (169<sup>th</sup>) showed signs of beginning to carry out reforms including partial amnesties and a reduction in prior censorship, but it remained largely under the control of an authoritarian government run by former members of the military junta reinvented as civilian politicians. Less than 10 of its journalists remain in prison at the start of 2012.

In **North Korea** (178<sup>th</sup>), although news and information was able to move across its borders to a greater extent, no one knows whether this will continue under Kim Jong-un, the son and heir of Kim Jong-il. The dynastic succession, the dominance of the military machine and the government's desire for power give no grounds for optimism.

### At the top, the good boys turn bad

Those who are traditionally good performers did not shine in 2011. With **New Zealand's** fall to 13th position, no country in the Asia-Pacific region figured among the top 10 in the index.

**Hong Kong** (54<sup>th</sup>) saw a sharp deterioration in press freedom in 2011 and its ranking fell sharply. Arrests, assaults and harassment worsened working conditions for journalists to an extent not seen previously, a sign of a worrying change in government policy.

In **Australia** (30<sup>th</sup>), the media were subjected to investigations and criticism by the authorities, and were denied access to information, while in **Japan** (22<sup>nd</sup>) coverage of the tsunami and the Fukushima nuclear accident gave rise to excessive restrictions and exposed the limits of the pluralism of the country's press.

### Causes for concern

In **India** (131<sup>st</sup>), journalists were exposed to violence stemming from the persistent conflicts in the states of Chhattisgarh and Jammu and Kashmir. The threat from mafia groups operating in the main cities of the country also contributed to self-censorship. However, the authorities were no better. In May, they unveiled the "Information Technology Rules 2011," which have dangerous implications for online freedom of expression. Foreign reporters saw their visa requests turned down or were pressured to provide positive coverage.

In **Indonesia**, an army crackdown in West Papua province, where at least two journalists were killed, five kidnapped and 18 assaulted in 2011, was the main reason for the country's fall to 146<sup>th</sup> position in the index. A corrupt judiciary that is too easily influenced by politicians and pressure groups and government attempts to control the media and Internet have prevented the development of a freer press.

Illegal detention and intimidation in **Mongolia** (100<sup>th</sup>) and the **Maldives** (73<sup>rd</sup>) showed up the weakness of press freedom there. A climate of religious intolerance prevailed in the Maldives, where media organizations were subjected to threats by the authorities and had to deal with an Islamic affairs ministry bent on imposing the Sharia to the detriment of free expression.

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# THE AMERICAS



## UNITED STATES AND CHILE AFFECTED BY PROTESTS, BRAZIL CRIPPLED BY INSECURITY

The worldwide wave of protests in 2011 also swept through the New World. It dragged the **United States** (47<sup>th</sup>) and **Chile** (80<sup>th</sup>) down the index, costing them 27 and 47 places respectively. The crackdown on protest movements and the accompanying excesses took their toll on journalists. In the space of two months in the United States, more than 25 were subjected to arrests and beatings at the hands of police who were quick to issue indictments for inappropriate behaviour, public nuisance or even lack of accreditation

In Chile, where student protesters questioned the over-concentration of media ownership, violence against journalists included beatings, cyber-attacks and attacks on editorial staffs. Many of these assaults, often accompanied by heavy-handed arrests and destruction of equipment, were carried out by abusive armed police who were rarely called to account.

Neighbouring **Argentina** (47<sup>th</sup>) barely moved in the index but two other southern countries registered a marked decline – **Brazil** (99<sup>th</sup>, down 41) and **Paraguay** (80<sup>th</sup>, down 26). Violence was the dominant factor in these changes. In Brazil's north and north-east and in Paraguay's border regions, local corruption, organized crime and environmental damage proved to be dangerous topics for journalists and bloggers alike to tackle. Three were killed in Brazil in 2011. Although the vast country showed it was making efforts to combat impunity, justice was applied unevenly across regions and states and was subjected to powerful political pressures.

This was also the case in Paraguay, where one journalist was killed. Paraguay's media workers bemoaned the lack of a law giving access to public information like the one passed recently in Brazil.

The physical danger in Brazil was comparable to that in Peru (115<sup>th</sup>), where three journalists were also murdered. Peru, notorious for the frequency of attacks on the press, also stood out because of its large number of legal proceedings for defamation. The radio and television journalist Paul Garay Ramírez spent six months in prison, from April until October, for allegedly defaming a prosecutor.

In **Ecuador** (104<sup>th</sup>) and **Bolivia** (108<sup>th</sup>), whose positions changed little, the climate was still characterized by judicial harassment, issues of balance and pluralism, polarization and repeated attacks on the press. This was even more the case in **Venezuela** (117<sup>th</sup>), which nonetheless rose 16 places.

**Colombia** (143<sup>rd</sup>), where one journalist was killed as a direct result of his work, remained far down the list because journalists were repeatedly threatened, forced to stop working or forced to flee abroad (or to another region), particularly journalists operating in areas where there is fighting. Despite improvements in the judicial system, the country has not yet put its years of civil war behind it, nor the grim practices of the former DAS security service such as espionage, sabotage and smear campaigns.

### Contrasting fortunes in Central America

**Panama** fell 32 places to 113<sup>th</sup> in the index because of a radio station owner's murder and the expulsion of two Spanish journalists who supported indigenous groups resisting the mining industry's attempts to take their land. A bad atmosphere, marked by smear cam-

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## The Americas

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paings against individual journalists, prevailed between the government of President Ricardo Martinelli and much of the media.

In **Guatemala** (97<sup>th</sup>, down 20 places), already ranked low because of violent crime, habitual self-censorship and a lack of pluralism, a journalist was detained without proof in 2011. In the **Dominican Republic** (95<sup>th</sup>), a journalist was murdered several weeks after spending six days in detention on a defamation charge. Frequent instances of police abuse were reported.

In neighbouring **Haiti** (52<sup>nd</sup>), on the slow road to recovery after the 2010 earthquake, rising political tension in the run-up to the swearing-in of President Michel Martelly on 14 May did not reach the point where it affected the safety of journalists.

Similarly in **Nicaragua** (72<sup>nd</sup>, up 11 places), the political polarization during the run-up to Daniel Ortega's re-election as president in November turned out to have little effect on the work of journalists or their freedom of movement. Despite instances of serious threats, the country moved up several places, as did **El Salvador** (37<sup>th</sup>, up 14) thanks to a fall in the number of assaults.

**Costa Rica** (19<sup>th</sup>) topped the list of Latin American countries in 2011, a position for which it traditionally vies with **Uruguay** (32<sup>nd</sup>). Its ranking is in marked contrast to that of its Central American neighbour, **Honduras** (135<sup>th</sup>), which has languished at the bottom of the list since the coup in June 2009. The deaths of five journalists in 2011, two as a direct result of their work, as well as the regular persecution of opposition media and community radio stations, confirmed its notoriety as the hemisphere's second most dangerous country for the press after **Mexico** (149<sup>th</sup>, down 13 places).

Mexico continued its decline against the grim backdrop of the federal government's offensive against drug trafficking, which has cost 50,000 lives in five years. As well as journalists, five of whom were murdered in 2011, netizens who take a stand against the prevailing violence are now also becoming the targets for killings and reprisals.

Bringing up the rear in the hemisphere, **Cuba** (167<sup>th</sup>) released the last of its jailed dissident journalists on 8 March, the only one still held of those detained during the "Black Spring" of 2003. However, it did not fulfil the hopes this raised of an improvement in civil liberties and human rights. Crackdowns and short-term detentions continued to be a threat for journalists and bloggers outside state control.

As well as **Canada** (10<sup>th</sup>, up 11 places), which recovered the hemisphere's top ranking, **Jamaica** (16<sup>th</sup>), **Surinam** (22<sup>nd</sup>, up 13) and the seven-member **Organization of Eastern Caribbean States** (25<sup>th</sup>, up 32) also improved their position in the index thanks to an almost total lack of acts of violence or serious breaches of freedom of information.

There was a surprise of a different kind in **Trinidad and Tobago** (50<sup>th</sup>, down 20 places) as a result of a scandal involving spying on journalists, as well as moves to boycott radio and television stations and procedural abuses.

Conditions in **Guyana** (58<sup>th</sup>), where radio broadcasting is still a state monopoly, were similar and its ranking was unchanged.

# MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA



## ARAB UPRISINGS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

The Arab uprisings and the measures taken by governments to control news and information in response to the uprisings had a major impact on the ranking of countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa. From Morocco to Bahrain and Yemen, few countries were spared by this wave of pro-democracy uprisings, which prompted major crackdowns.

Some predators of press freedom fell from power, but others remain in place. The transitions that have begun are not necessarily leading towards more pluralism and most of the changes in the rankings have been downward ones. The freedoms that have been won are fragile and could easily be swept away.

### Countries where revolts led to political change

**Tunisia** rose in the index, from 164<sup>th</sup> to 134<sup>th</sup>, because of the end of the harassment of journalists by the Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali regime, the emergence of real pluralism of opinion in the print media and, albeit possibly only for the time being, the end of massive and systematic Internet filtering. The recent appointments of persons with links to the old regime to run the state-owned media underscored the danger of a return to the past.

**Libya** has also risen in the index, but to a lesser degree, going from 160<sup>th</sup> to 154<sup>th</sup>. After the Libyan uprising began in February, there was an explosion in the number of media, above all in the east of the country. The new pluralist enthusiasm spread to the west after the liberation of Tripoli at the end of August. Newspapers and radio and TV stations have sprouted like mus-

rooms. But Libya's ranking reflects the many abuses against journalists during the civil war. If democratization continues and if media pluralism and independence take a lasting hold, Libya's ranking will improve over the next few years.

### Countries where repression continues and changes are just cosmetic

Most of the region's countries have fallen in the index because of the measures taken in a bid to impose a news blackout on a crackdown. **Egypt** plummeted 39 places (from 127<sup>th</sup> last year to 166<sup>th</sup> this year) because of the attempts by Hosni Mubarak's government and then the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to rein in the revolution's successive phases. The hounding of foreign journalists for three days at the start of February, the interrogations, arrests and convictions of journalists and bloggers by military courts, and the searches without warrants all contributed to Egypt's dramatic fall in the index.

The **Kingdom of Bahrain** (173<sup>rd</sup>) plunged 29 places to become one of the world's 10 most repressive countries. Bahraini and foreign journalists were systematically hounded from February onwards. An entire arsenal of measures were taken to prevent information circulating about the evolving situation in the country. At the same time, the authorities made extensive use of the media to put out pro-government propaganda. The creation of an independent commission of enquiry did not end the abuses against journalists. It just helped to ensure that, as a result of the undertakings given by the

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## Middle East and North Africa

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authorities, the rest of the world stopped talking about Bahrain.

**Yemen** fell just one place (from 170<sup>th</sup> to 171<sup>st</sup>) despite all the violence used by the security forces against demonstrators and journalists covering the demonstrations. But the media freedom situation was already very worrying and Yemen had already fallen 16 places since 2008, when a sharp deterioration began. A Gulf Cooperation Council plan under which President Ali Abdallah Saleh was supposed to stand down, which he signed on 23 November, did not change the internal situation, far from it.

**Syria**, which had already attained a very low ranking in recent years, fell a bit more, from 173<sup>rd</sup> to 176<sup>th</sup> place, on the brink of become one of the bottom three. The situation in Syria had an impact on neighbouring Lebanon, where the government provided the Syrian authorities with a degree of cooperation in their attempts to track down dissident Syrian journalists and bloggers who had fled to Lebanon.

**Saudi Arabia** fell only one place (from 157<sup>th</sup> to 158<sup>th</sup>) although the government organized a news blackout on the demonstrations and ensuing crackdown in the eastern regions with a Shiite majority. But Saudi Arabia had already been very low in the index because of the lack of pluralism and high level of self-censorship.

### Countries that relapsed

After rising in the index for several years in a row, **Iraq** fell 22 places this year, from 130<sup>th</sup> to 152<sup>nd</sup> (almost to the position it held in 2008, when it was 158<sup>th</sup>). There were various reasons. The first was an increase in murders of journalists. Hadi Al-Mahdi's murder on 8 September marked a clear turning point. Another reason was the fact that journalists are very often the target of violence by the security forces, whether at demonstrations in Tahrir Square in Baghdad, or in Iraqi Kurdistan, a region that had for many years offered a refuge for journalists.

As regards its internal situation, **Israel** fell six places (from 86<sup>th</sup> to 92<sup>nd</sup>) for two reasons. Firstly, Haaretz reporter Uri Blau is facing a possible seven-year jail sentence for possessing classified documents and his source, Anat Kam, was

sentenced to three years in prison on 31 October. Secondly, on 21 November, parliament approved a media bill on first reading that would drastically increase the amount of damages that can be awarded in defamation cases. In general, although Israel enjoys real media pluralism, it is not in the top 50 countries in the Reporters Without Borders index because the media are subject to prior military censorship.

The **Palestinian Territories** fell three places because of attacks on journalists during demonstrations by Palestinians calling for an end to the war between Fatah and Hamas, and because of an illegal takeover by Hamas supporters of the journalists' union in Gaza City.

### Countries that fell again

The **United Arab Emirates** fell again, this time from 87<sup>th</sup> to 112<sup>th</sup>, above all because of its Internet filtering policy and the imprisonment of Ahmed Mansoor, a blogger who administers the online pro-democracy forum Al-Hewar ("The Dialogue"), from 8 April to 28 November along with four other activists, known collectively as "The UAE 5." He was reportedly mistreated while detained and his family was repeatedly threatened.

The media freedom situation has not changed intrinsically in **Jordan** but police violence against journalists and repeated deliberate attacks on the Agence France-Presse bureau in Amman caused it to fall eight places in the index, from 120<sup>h</sup> to 128<sup>h</sup>.

**Morocco** fell again, this time from 135<sup>th</sup> to 138<sup>th</sup>, as a result of Al-Massae editor Rachid Nini's imprisonment. He is still detained.

**Algeria**, on the other hand, rose again, this time 11 places, from 133<sup>rd</sup> to 122<sup>nd</sup>, above all because of a fall in the number of trials of journalists.



↑↑ Evolution of more than  
↓↓ 10 ranks

↑ Evolution of less than 10 ranks  
↓

# WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2012

Rank	Country	Grade	
1	Finland	-10,00	=
-	Norway	-10,00	=
3	Estonia	-9,00	↑
-	Netherlands	-9,00	↓
5	Austria	-8,00	↑
6	Iceland	-7,00	↓
-	Luxembourg	-7,00	↑
8	Switzerland	-6,20	↓
9	Cape Verde	-6,00	↑↑
10	Canada	-5,67	↑↑
-	Denmark	-5,67	↑
12	Sweden	-5,50	↓↓
13	New Zealand	-5,33	↓
14	Czech Republic	-5,00	↑
15	Ireland	-4,00	↓
16	Cyprus	-3,00	↑
-	Jamaica	-3,00	↑↑
-	Germany	-3,00	↑
19	Costa Rica	-2,25	↑↑
20	Belgium	-2,00	↓
-	Namibia	-2,00	↑
22	Japan	-1,00	↓↓
-	Surinam	-1,00	↑↑
24	Poland	-0,67	↑
25	Mali	0,00	↑
-	OECS	0,00	↑↑
-	Slovakia	0,00	↑↑
28	United Kingdom	2,00	↓
29	Niger	2,50	↑↑
30	Australia	4,00	↓↓
-	Lithuania	4,00	↓↓
32	Uruguay	4,25	↑
33	Portugal	5,33	↑
34	Tanzania	6,00	↑
35	Papua New Guinea	9,00	↑
36	Slovenia	9,14	↑↑
37	El Salvador	9,30	↑↑
38	France	9,50	↑

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↓↓ 10 ranks

↑ Evolution of less than 10 ranks  
↓

Rank	Country	Grade	
39	Spain	9,75	=
40	Hungary	10,00	↓↓
41	Ghana	11,00	↓↓
42	South Africa	12,00	↓
-	Botswana	12,00	↑↑
44	South Korea	12,67	↓
45	Comoros	13,00	↑↑
-	Taiwan	13,00	↑
47	United States of America	14,00	↓↓
-	Argentina	14,00	↓↓
-	Romania	14,00	↑
50	Latvia	15,00	↓↓
-	Trinidad and Tobago	15,00	↓↓
52	Haiti	15,67	↑
53	Moldova	16,00	↑↑
54	Hong-Kong	17,00	↓↓
-	Mauricio	17,00	↑↑
-	Samoa	17,00	↑↑
57	United States of America (extra-territorial)	19,00	↑↑
58	Malta	19,50	↓↓
-	Bosnia and Herzegovina	19,50	↑
-	Guyana	19,50	↓↓
61	Italy	19,67	↓↓
62	Central African Republic	20,00	↑
63	Lesotho	21,00	↑↑
-	Sierra Leone	21,00	↑↑
-	Tonga	21,00	↑↑
66	Mozambique	21,50	↑↑
67	Mauritania	22,20	↑↑
68	Croatia	23,33	↓↓
-	Burkina Faso	23,33	↓
70	Bhutan	24,00	↓
-	Greece	24,00	=
72	Nicaragua	24,33	↑↑
73	Maldives	25,00	↓↓
-	Seychelles	25,00	↓
75	Guinea-Bissau	26,00	↓
-	Senegal	26,00	↑↑
77	Armenia	27,00	↑↑
78	Kuwait	28,00	↑
79	Togo	28,50	↓↓
80	Serbia	29,00	↓↓
-	Bulgaria	29,00	↓↓
-	Chile	29,00	↓
-	Paraguay	29,00	↓↓

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↑↑ Evolution of more than  
↓↓ 10 ranks

↑ Evolution of less than 10 ranks  
↓

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Rank	Country	Grade	
84	Kenya	29,50	↓↓
-	Madagascar	29,50	↑↑
86	Guinea	30,00	↑↑
-	Kosovo	30,00	↑
-	Timor-Leste	30,00	↑
-	Zambia	30,00	↓
90	Congo	30,38	↑↑
91	Benin	31,00	↓↓
92	Israel (Israeli territory)	31,25	↓
93	Lebanon	31,50	↓↓
94	Macedonia	31,67	↓↓
95	Dominican Republic	33,25	↑
96	Albania	34,44	↓↓
97	Cameroon	35,00	↑↑
-	Guatemala	35,00	↓↓
99	Brazil	35,33	↓↓
100	Mongolia	35,75	↓↓
101	Gabon	36,50	↑
102	Cyprus (North)	37,00	↓↓
103	Chad	37,67	↑
104	Ecuador	38,00	↓
-	Georgia	38,00	↓
106	Nepal	38,75	↑↑
107	Montenegro	39,00	↓
108	Bolivia	40,00	↓
-	Kyrgyzstan	40,00	↑↑
110	Liberia	40,50	↓↓
111	South Sudan	41,25	nc
112	United Arab Emirates	45,00	↓↓
113	Panama	45,67	↓↓
114	Qatar	46,00	↑
115	Peru	51,25	↓
116	Ukraine	54,00	↑↑
117	Cambodia	55,00	↑↑
-	Fiji	55,00	↑↑
-	Oman	55,00	↑
-	Venezuela	55,00	↑↑
-	Zimbabwe	55,00	↑
122	Algeria	56,00	↑↑
-	Tajikistan	56,00	↑↑
-	Malaysia	56,00	↓
125	Brunei	56,20	↑↑
126	Nigeria	56,40	↑↑
127	Ethiopia	56,60	↑↑
128	Jordan	56,80	↓





↑↑ Evolution of more than  
↓↓ 10 ranks

↑ Evolution of less than 10 ranks  
↓

Rank	Country	Grade	
129	Bangladesh	57,00	↓
130	Burundi	57,75	↓↓
131	India	58,00	↓
132	Angola	58,43	↓↓
133	Israel (extra-territorial)	59,00	↓
134	Tunisia	60,25	↑↑
135	Singapore	61,00	↑
-	Honduras	61,00	↑
137	Thailand	61,50	↑↑
138	Morocco	63,29	↓
139	Uganda	64,00	↓↓
140	Philippines	64,50	↑↑
141	Gambia	65,50	↓↓
142	Russia	66,00	↓
143	Colombia	66,50	↑
144	Swaziland	67,00	↑↑
145	Democratic Republic of Congo	67,67	↑
146	Indonesia	68,00	↓↓
-	Malawi	68,00	↓↓
148	Turkey	70,00	↓↓
149	Mexico	72,67	↓↓
150	Afghanistan	74,00	↓
151	Pakistan	75,00	=
152	Iraq	75,36	↓↓
153	Palestinian Territories	76,00	↓
154	Kazakhstan	77,50	↑
-	Libya	77,50	↑
156	Rwanda	81,00	↑↑
157	Uzbekistan	83,00	↑
158	Saudi Arabia	83,25	↓
159	Côte d'Ivoire	83,50	↓↓
-	Djibouti	83,50	↓↓
161	Equatorial Guinea	86,00	↑
162	Azerbaijan	87,25	↓↓
163	Sri Lanka	87,50	↓
164	Somalia	88,33	↓
165	Laos	89,00	↑
166	Egypt	97,50	↓↓
167	Cuba	98,83	↓
168	Belarus	99,00	↓↓
169	Burma	100,00	↑
170	Sudan	100,75	↑
171	Yemen	101,00	↓
172	Vietnam	114,00	↓
173	Bahrain	125,00	↓↓

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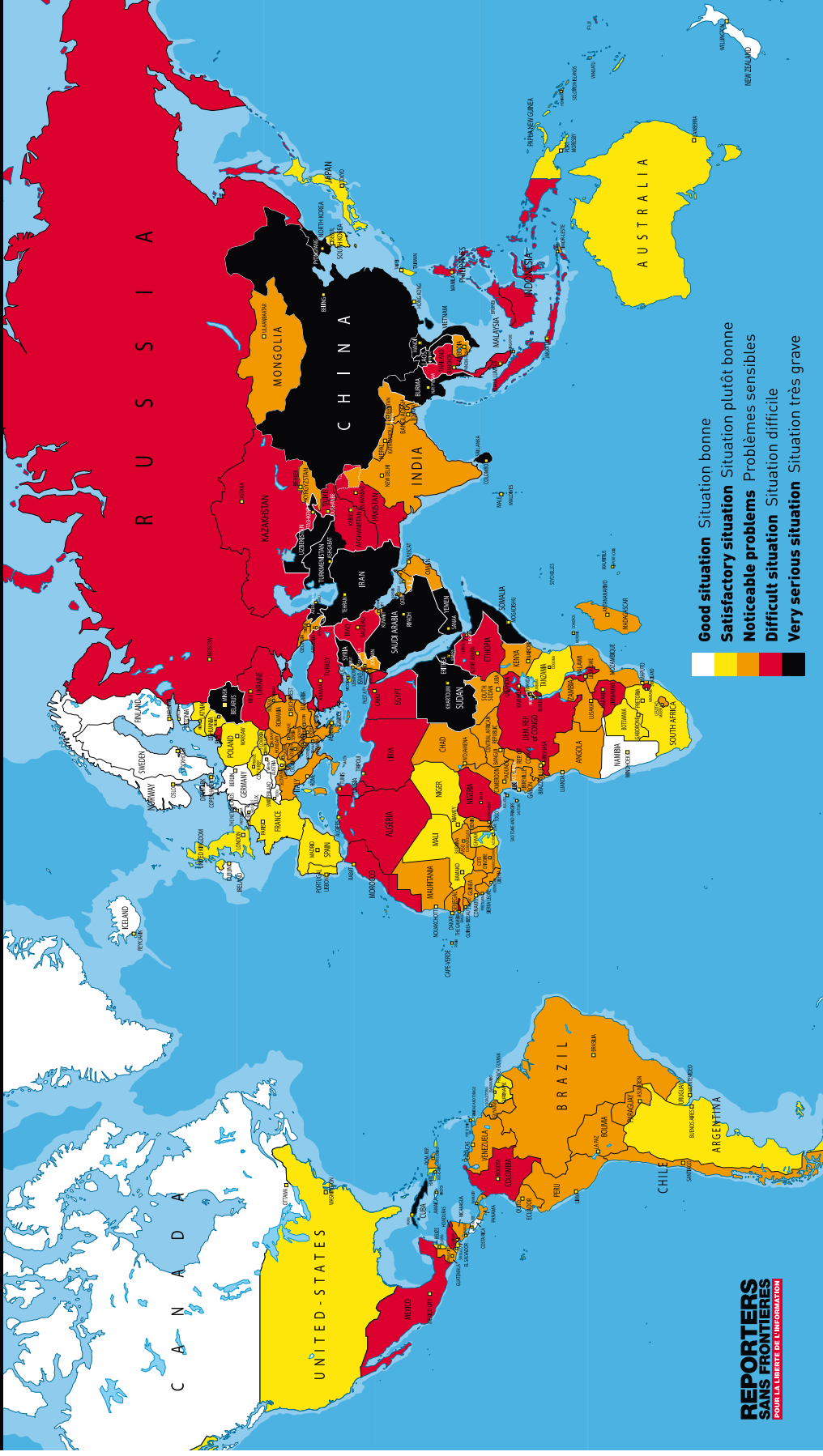
↑ Evolution of less than 10 ranks  
↓

Rank	Country	Grade	
174	China	136,00	↓
175	Iran	136,60	=
176	Syria	138,00	↓
177	Turkmenistan	140,67	↓
178	North Korea	141,00	↓
179	Eritrea	142,00	↓

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# FREEDOM OF THE PRESS WORLDWIDE IN 2012



# LA LIBERTÉ DE LA PRESSE DANS LE MONDE EN 2012