The Battle for the Dominant Message

April 2016

Freedom House

FREEDOM
OF THE PRESS
2016

CONTENTS

RESEARCH AND EDITORIAL TEAM

ON THE COVER

Cover image by KAL.

Press Freedom in 2015

The Battle for the Dominant Message

by Jennifer Dunham

Global press freedom declined to its lowest point in 12 years in 2015, as political, criminal, and terrorist forces sought to co-opt or silence the media in their broader struggle for power.

The share of the world's population that enjoys a Free press 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.

Steep declines worldwide were linked to two factors: heightened partisanship and polarization in a country's media environment, and the degree of extralegal intimidation and physical violence faced by journalists. These problems were most acute in the Middle East, where governments and militias increasingly pressured journalists and media outlets to take sides, creating a "with us or against us" climate and demonizing those who refused to be cowed. At the same time, the Islamic State (IS) and other extremist groups continued their violent attacks on the media and disseminated powerful alternate narratives through their own networks, reaching vast audiences without the need to rely on journalists or traditional news outlets.

Even in the much more open media environments of Europe, journalists faced unusual levels of pressure from terrorists and, to an extent, their own governments. In a year that began with the shocking murder of eight cartoonists and editors at the Paris offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, media freedom in the region was threatened by violence, new surveillance and antiterrorism laws, and verbal attacks or interference from politicians and government officials.

The varied threats to press freedom around the world are making it harder for media workers to do their jobs, and the public is increasingly deprived of unbiased information and in-depth reporting. However, journalists and bloggers have shown resilience. Often at great risk to their lives, they strive to transmit information to their communities and the outside world, and circulate views that contradict those promoted by governments or extremist groups.

Loyalty or silence

Pressure on journalists to display political loyalty was especially intense in Egypt, where the state-owned outlets and nearly all private media embraced a progovernment narrative, and few dared to cross redlines on stories related to the military, security, and the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi himself frequently convened private meetings with prominent newspaper editors and television presenters to discuss the government's wishes.

The Libyan media, which experienced a dramatic opening after the fall of Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi, were caught between rival governments in Tripoli and Tobruk in 2015, in many cases becoming little more than mouthpieces for whichever government or affiliated militia controlled their region. Civil conflict similarly increased media polarization in Yemen, as

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, see the Methodology section of this booklet on pp. 27–28 or visit https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press-2016/methodology.

outlets fell into line with either the exiled government or the Houthi rebels, and independent writers and journalists were marginalized or persecuted. Extremist groups opposed to both sides also took their toll.

Syria remained by far the deadliest place in the world for journalists in 2015, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). At least 14 were killed in the country, and three Syrian journalists who had sought safety abroad were assassinated in Turkey, apparently by IS. In addition to terrorizing journalists, IS has proven adept at bypassing formal news outlets and using social media to spread its propaganda around the world.

Struggles for media dominance played out in a number of other countries as well. In Turkey, authorities loyal to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seized critical private media groups and turned them over to politically friendly trustees—a new tactic in the government's ongoing assault on press freedom. In October 2015, state officials took over Koza İpek Holding, the owner of critical outlets including the television channels Kanaltürk and Bugün and the newspapers *Bugün* and *Millet*. In March 2016, the private media group Feza Journalism, owner of *Zaman*, Turkey's largest newspaper, was also seized. Both actions were based on the companies' association with exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen, a former Erdoğan ally who has been branded a terrorist.

The already limited space for investigative journalism and online commentary in China shrank further during 2015, continuing a trend of ideological tightening under President Xi Jinping. Professional journalists from established news outlets were detained, imprisoned, and forced to air televised confessions—including Wang Xiaolu of the prominent financial magazine *Caijing*, who was arrested for his coverage of the falling stock market. Censorship of news and internet content related to the financial system and environmental pollution increased as the economy slowed and smog thickened. Xi reinforced his vision of complete loyalty in early 2016, declaring in a high-profile speech that all forms of media should fully identify with the ruling Communist Party's agenda, even in the realms of entertainment and advertising.

Security and politics

The murder of eight cartoonists and editors in the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 made France second only to Syria for the total number of journalists killed during the year. The attack also underscored the ongoing calculations that journalists must make, even in otherwise free countries, about the possibil-

ity of retribution for their work. Such concerns were compounded a month later, when a gunman opened fire on a free expression event in Copenhagen.

In the early days after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, an outpouring of support for free expression raised hopes for lasting solidarity on the issue. Instead, as the year progressed, media freedoms in some of the world's strongest democracies came under pressure from security-minded governments and populist politicians.

In Spain, a public security law adopted in March 2015 imposed heavy financial penalties on any individuals at a protest, including journalists, who decline to identify themselves to authorities, fail to obey orders to disperse, or disseminate unauthorized images of law enforcement personnel. The last point in particular threatens the work of photojournalists and others who seek to inform the public about police abuses. Defending his government's overall strategy, Spanish interior minister Jorge Fernández Díaz emphasized the need to strike a "balance between freedom and security"—an approach criticized by many free expression groups.

Other democratic governments used a similar rationale in codifying their surveillance practices. In the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, the French government pushed through an intelligence bill that
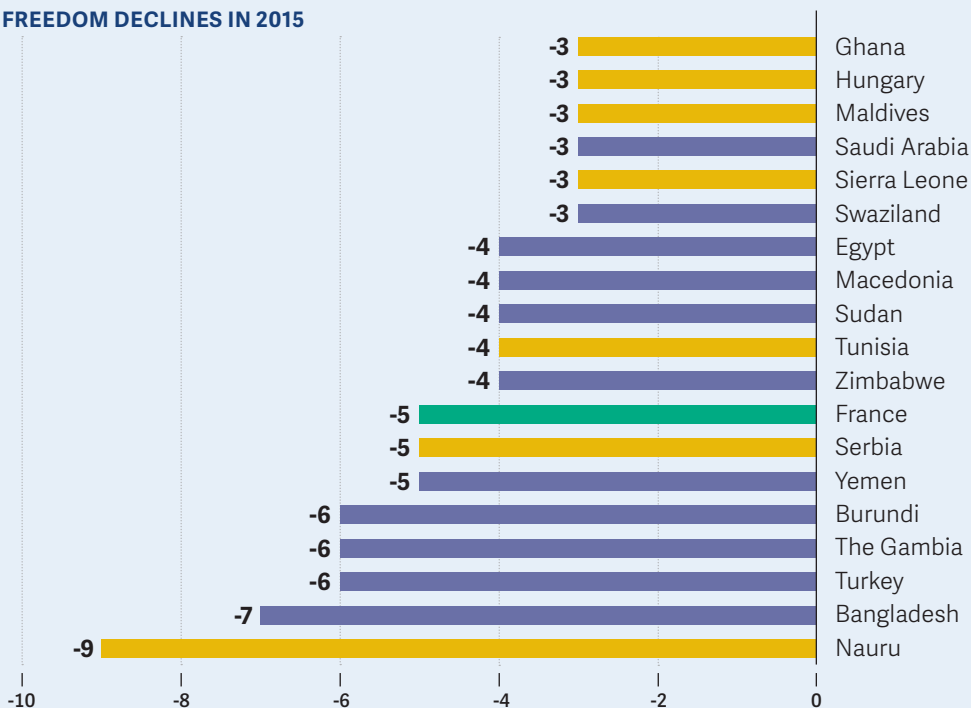
WORST OF THE WORST

Of the 50 countries and territories designated as Not Free in *Freedom of the Press 2016*, the following 10 have the worst total scores.

Country/territory	Total score
North Korea	97
Turkmenistan	96
Uzbekistan	95
Crimea	94
Eritrea	94
Cuba	91
Belarus	91
Equatorial Guinea	91
Iran	90
Syria	90

gave authorities sweeping surveillance powers with little oversight, leaving journalists and their data vulnerable to intrusive monitoring. In November, the British government published a draft bill, currently under review, that would require telecommunications companies to retain citizens' browsing histories and communications data for possible use by the authorities. A law passed in Australia in March 2015 requires telecommunications firms to store metadata on calls

BIGGEST PRESS FREEDOM DECLINES IN 2015

Country	Decline
Ghana	-3
Hungary	-3
Maldives	-3
Saudi Arabia	-3
Sierra Leone	-3
Swaziland	-3
Egypt	-4
Macedonia	-4
Sudan	-4
Tunisia	-4
Zimbabwe	-4
France	-5
Serbia	-5
Yemen	-5
Burundi	-6
The Gambia	-6
Turkey	-6
Bangladesh	-7
Nauru	-9

GLOBAL: STATUS BY POPULATION

Not Free
3,361,027,703
46%

Partly Free
2,984,320,079
41%

Free
13%

988,251,358
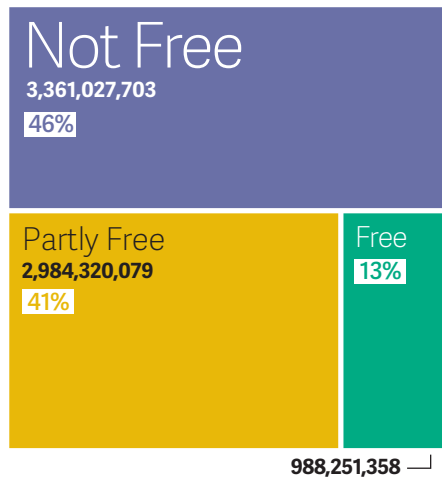
GLOBAL: STATUS BY COUNTRY

Not Free **66**
33%

Free **62**
31%

Total countries
199

Partly Free **71**
36%
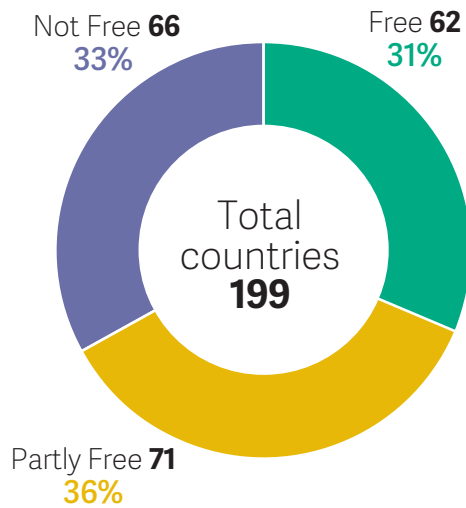
and messaging for two years. Media advocates warn that such measures could be used to identify journalists' sources and expose government whistle-blowers.

In another worrisome development, some European political leaders focused their attention on editorial control over public broadcasters. One of the first moves of the new right-wing government in Poland was to pass legislation on December 31 that allows it to hire and fire the management of the state-owned media. The ruling Law and Justice party's claims that the media are biased against the interests of ordinary Poles presage further pressure on journalistic independence in what had been one of Europe's most successful new democracies. The party's actions were reminiscent of those of Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, whose well-established influence over state media was evident in their slanted coverage of the refugee crisis during 2015.

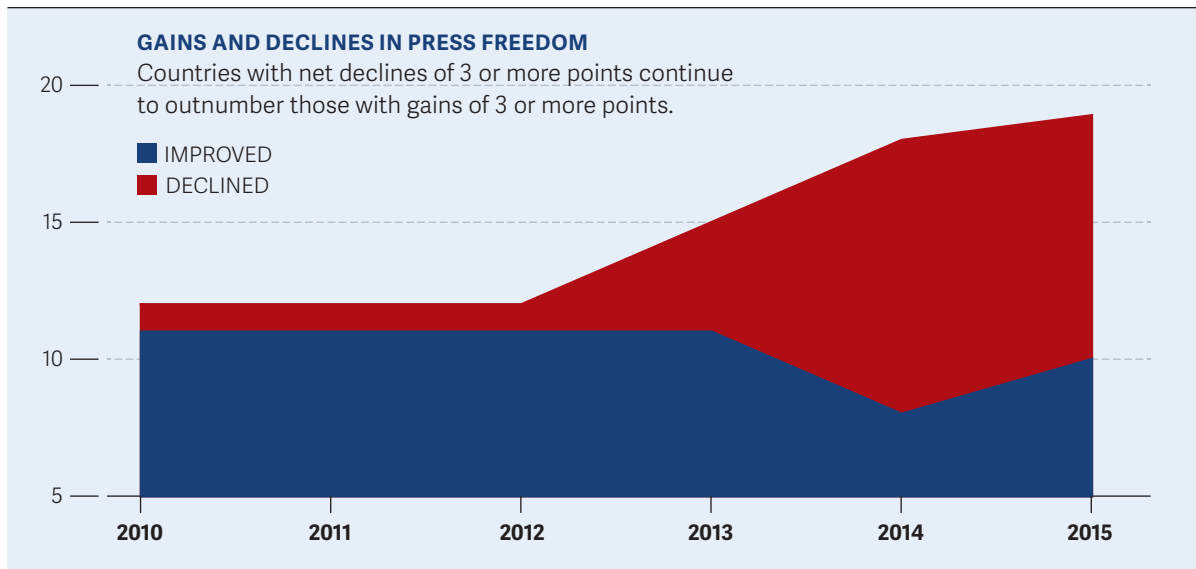**Dogged resilience**

Despite the relentless efforts of authoritarian regimes, organized crime groups, and militant factions to restrict the free flow of information, many tenacious journalists have refused to bow to corrupt or violent forces.

During a fifth year of barbarous violence in Syria, journalists with the anonymous media collective Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently continued to clandestinely document rights violations by IS, even after it released propaganda videos depicting the executions of captive reporters. Activists with another such collective, Eye on the Homeland, reported from conflict zones across Syria on abuses committed by the Damascus regime, IS, and other armed groups. The courageous members of these media cooperatives offer domestic and international audiences a credible alternative to the narratives promoted by the warring parties.

A culture of investigative reporting persists in parts of Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia, where some journalists still delve into dangerous or politically sensitive issues like corruption and organized crime despite the risk to their lives and livelihoods. Government-issued bans and widespread property destruction decimated independent media in Burundi following the failed coup attempt against President Pierre Nkurunziza, yet journalists pressed on, moving radio outlets to online platforms and disseminating news via text-message services.

In China, where—according to CPJ—more journalists are imprisoned than in any other country, some reporters disregarded government directives meant to control coverage of a deadly industrial accident in

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

Tianjin last summer. More recently, in March 2016, the respected Caixin media group dared to publicize the censorship of an article that touched on dissent in the Communist Party. The Communist Party of Vietnam maintains one of the most restrictive media environments in the world, but it has been unable to quash a vibrant array of underground print and online publications, some of which continue to operate even as contributors languish in jail.

Other Major Developments in 2015

In addition to those described above, three major phenomena stood out during the year.

- **Violence, impunity continue unabated in Mexico:** Journalists covering organized crime and corruption in Mexico have faced extreme levels of violence for more than 10 years, and the government has proven completely unable, or unwilling, to address the problem. At least four journalists were killed in 2015, and three more were killed—most likely in connection to their work—in the first two months of 2016 alone. Many have died in states where organized crime is rampant, such as Veracruz and Oaxaca; in Veracruz, at least 12 journalists have been murdered since Governor Javier Duarte de Ochoa took office in 2010, according to CPJ. However, there are signs that the violence is spreading: In July 2015, photographer Rubén Espinosa, who had fled Veracruz the previous month, was found tortured and murdered in Mexico City, previously considered a safe haven. In another disturbing phenomenon, female journalists who are attacked

DECLINE IN GLOBAL AVERAGE SCORE
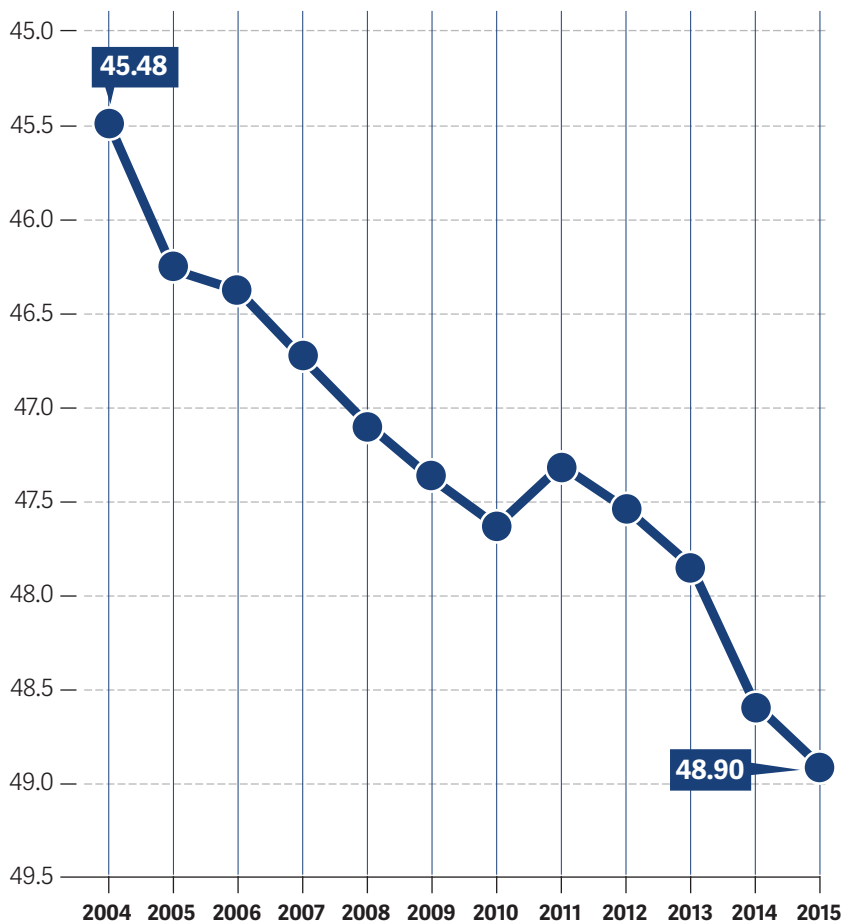
Countries to Watch

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.

Argentina: The election of Mauricio Macri as president in late 2015 ended the government's hostility toward the conservative press, but it remains unclear whether he will allow impartial regulation or simply shift the government's bias from left to right.

China: President Xi Jinping has ordered all media outlets to toe the party line as the effects of China's economic slowdown continue to bite. However, there have been signs of resistance among journalists and netizens, setting the stage for confrontation.

Egypt: As the country's problems and the government's abuses mounted, some loyalist media figures broke ranks and grew more critical of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in early 2016. The trend could lead to a partial revival in pluralism or more vicious crackdowns.

Ghana: In advance of late 2016 general elections, President John Dramani Mahama's government has stepped up legal and political pressure on the press, and attacks on journalists have increased, raising serious concerns for one of the most open media environments in sub-Saharan Africa.

India: Journalists have faced a wave of threats and physical attacks in recent months, particularly from right-wing groups, adding to doubts about press freedom under the current Hindu nationalist government.

Iran: Moderates gained ground in recent parliamentary elections, but the situation for journalists remains uncertain in the face of harsh censorship and increased arrests by security services.

Poland: Legislation passed at the end of 2015 gave the government greater control over public media, presaging a year of heightened tension between the ruling Law and Justice party and the press.

Ukraine: The implementation of promising new media laws presents an opportunity to advance press freedom, even as the conflict in the east continues to pose serious dangers for reporters.

Zimbabwe: Factional conflict within the ruling party over who will succeed President Robert Mugabe has increasingly affected journalists, leading to arrests, intimidation, and even a disappearance in the past year.

---

frequently suffer sexual violence as well, and authorities are often reluctant to accept that attacks or threats against female journalists are actually related to their work.

- **The press held hostage:** Dozens of reporters were abducted and held hostage in 2015, with cases emerging in conflict zones as well as countries that were nominally at peace. Terrorist and militant groups including IS, Yemen's Houthi rebels, and the various branches of Al-Qaeda were responsible for many abductions, contributing to a lucrative kidnapping industry that stretched across the Middle East and beyond. Several governments also held reporters captive for political reasons. The Iranian authorities appeared to regard detained foreign journalists as a valuable diplomatic bargaining chip, while Chinese officials used forced confessions by journalists to send a warning to their colleagues. In Egypt, Turkmenistan, and other police states where the authorities' disregard for the rule of law has long

extended to their treatment of the media, a number of reporters were held incommunicado and exposed to possible abuse in custody during the year.

- **A cloud over Hong Kong:** The disappearance in late 2015 of five Hong Kong residents associated with a local publisher of books that are critical of China's leaders has raised fears that Beijing is reneging on the "one country, two systems" arrangement, which has preserved Hong Kong's vibrant media environment since the 1997 handover. The men eventually reappeared in Chinese custody, and in early 2016 they gave televised interviews that were widely seen as coerced. The December acquisition of Hong Kong's leading English-language newspaper, the *South China Morning Post*, by Alibaba, a mainland Chinese company with strong ties to the central government, deepened concerns about Beijing's growing influence over Hong Kong media.

Dangerous Topics

A number of topics pose particular risks for journalists, who can face threats, imprisonment, and even brutal violence for attempting to cover them. The dangers of reporting on national security and terrorism are well documented, but the following topics also stand out.

- **Organized crime:** From Central America to South Asia, journalists take their lives in their hands when they investigate organized crime, especially in areas with weak rule of law. In a shocking case in Mexico, the body of José Moisés Sánchez Cerezo, a journalist known for denouncing organized crime and the failure of local authorities to address it, was found dismembered and decapitated in Veracruz State in January 2015.

- **Corruption:** Reporting on corruption in business or government places journalists at risk for harassment and violence in virtually every region of the world. Brazilian radio host Gleydson Carvalho, known for his commentary about corrupt local officials, was shot dead while on air in August 2015. Journalists covering high-level corruption in some countries, including Angola and Azerbaijan, faced harsh legal repercussions, including imprisonment on spurious charges.

- **Environment and land development:** Investigating stories related to the environment, particularly when land acquisitions or extractive industries are involved, poses great danger to reporters. In India, two journalists who covered illegal mining and land grabs were killed in June 2015: Sandeep Kothari, whose body was found burned and heavily bruised after he was abducted by unknown assailants, and Jagendra Singh, who died from burns allegedly inflicted by local police. In many other countries, including Cambodia and the Philippines, environmental journalists are routinely subjected to harassment and threats in the field.

- **Religion:** Coverage of sensitive religious topics can lead to retaliation by authorities or extremist groups. In January 2015, Saudi authorities began carrying out a sentence of 1,000 lashes against Raif Badawi, a blogger and activist charged with insulting Islam—an offense that is criminalized in many countries. In Bangladesh, several bloggers who wrote on religious issues and criticized fundamentalists were hacked to death in a series of attacks by militants, some of whom had ties to local terrorist groups.

- **Disputed sovereignty:** When questions of autonomy and self-determination are in play, entire parts of the world can become off-limits for journalism. After a German newspaper quoted Moroccan journalist Ali Anouzla referring to Western Sahara as "occupied" in November 2015, Moroccan officials charged the journalist with "undermining national territorial integrity," an offense for which he can be imprisoned for up to five years. Russian authorities are similarly quick to punish critical coverage of Crimea, while in China, genuine autonomy for Tibet and the rights of ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang remain forbidden topics.

- **Lèse-majesté and beyond:** Laws against insulting the state or top officials exist in several countries, and some leaders do not hesitate to use them against critical voices. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, for example, have lengthy records of pursuing insult charges against journalists, bloggers, and social-media users. In 2015, Turkish authorities went so far as to prosecute a doctor who, in an image shared online, compared the president to the character Gollum from the film series *The Lord of the Rings*. In a similarly absurd case in Thailand, a man was arrested on lèse-majesté charges for posting a humorous comment about the king's dog online.

Regional Trends

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mixed responses to political and electoral tensions

Journalists in East and Southern Africa suffered from a sharp increase in political pressure and violence in 2015. In the midst of Burundi's political crisis in May, which stemmed from the president's pursuit of a third term, nearly all independent media outlets were closed or destroyed. The loss of these outlets, especially radio stations that had been the main source of information, resulted in a dearth of reporting on critical issues. Extensive intimidation and violence against journalists by the regime of President Pierre Nkurunziza and his supporters drove many into exile.

Elsewhere in East Africa, the run-up to early 2016 elections in Uganda featured an increase in harassment of journalists attempting to cover opposition politicians. In Kenya, greater government pressure in the form of repressive laws, intimidation, and threats to withdraw state advertising resulted in a reduction

in critical reporting on President Uhuru Kenyatta and his cronies. Tanzania passed two highly restrictive laws—the Statistics Act and the Cybercrimes Act—in 2015, and its newly elected president has given little indication that he will revise or repeal them. Finally, despite the release of 10 imprisoned journalists in 2015, Ethiopia continued to repress all independent reporting, and remained the second-worst jailer of journalists in sub-Saharan Africa, after Eritrea.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION

Partly Free
609,211,658
61.4%

Not Free
381,495,693
38.4%

Free **0.2%**   **1,972,230**

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY

Free **3**
6%

Partly Free **27**
54%

Total countries **50**

Not Free **20**
40%
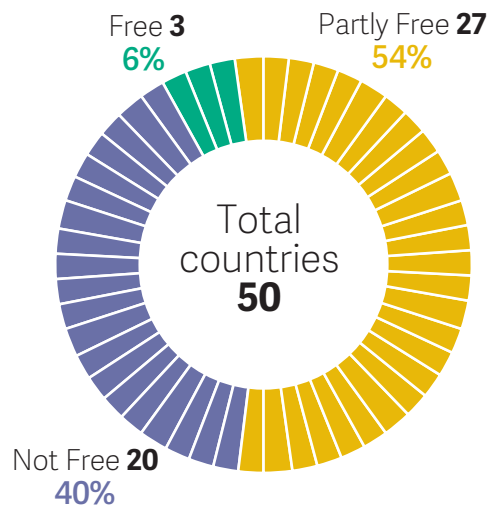
In Zimbabwe, journalists and media outlets were drawn into succession-related infighting among leaders of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Members of the media faced increased threats and attacks—including the abduction and disappearance of prominent local journalist Itai Dzamara—as well as continued arrests for libel that contradicted a constitutional court ruling on the issue. Meanwhile, an economic crisis in the country contributed to the closure of two media houses.

Ghana, previously the only Free country on the continent's mainland, suffered a status decline to Partly Free as a result of several factors. Journalists encountered more attempts to limit coverage of news events and confiscations of equipment; increased violence by the police, the military, political party members, and ordinary citizens, including the first murder of a journalist in

more than 20 years; and continued electricity outages that impaired media production and distribution.

However, other countries in West Africa showed encouraging improvements. Burkina Faso, which endured a coup attempt and an uncertain election in 2015, decriminalized libel and made progress on a long-stalled investigation into the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo. And Côte d'Ivoire benefited from continued openings in its private broadcasting market, as well as a reduction in attacks and harassment against the press, which came despite the potential for election-related tensions. Togo also showed some gains in an election year, especially regarding opposition candidates' access to state media and journalists' ability to cover the campaigns safely. However, those gains were tempered by the reintroduction of prison terms for publishing false news.

Asia-Pacific

States and vigilantes muzzle controversial speech

Journalists and commentators across much of South and Southeast Asia faced threats and deadly violence for raising controversial topics during 2015. Making matters worse, the region's governments tended to ban and prosecute discussion of such issues rather than protecting those who dared to address them.

Extremists in Bangladesh murdered at least four bloggers and a publisher who had produced content that was critical of religious fundamentalism. Many other

writers, after being threatened or injured in similar attacks, felt compelled to go silent, relocate, or flee the country. Meanwhile, the authorities temporarily blocked social media on security grounds, allegedly forced the suspension of a popular political talk show, and threatened dozens of people with contempt of court charges for signing a letter in support of a British journalist who had been convicted on similar charges in late 2014. The government also reportedly pressured private companies to withdraw advertising

ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY POPULATION

Not Free 2,077,522,540 51%
Partly Free 1,764,954,762 44%
Free 5% 188,085,812
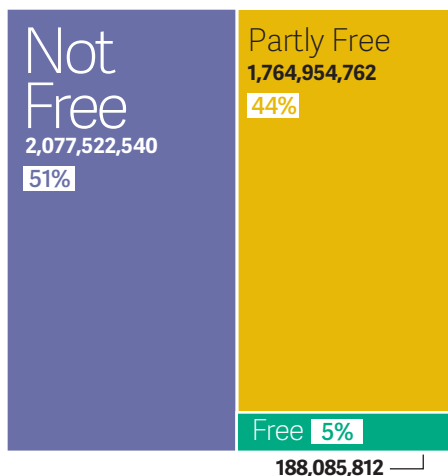
ASIA-PACIFIC: STATUS BY COUNTRY

Partly Free **12** 30%
Free **14** 35%
Total countries **40**
Not Free **14** 35%
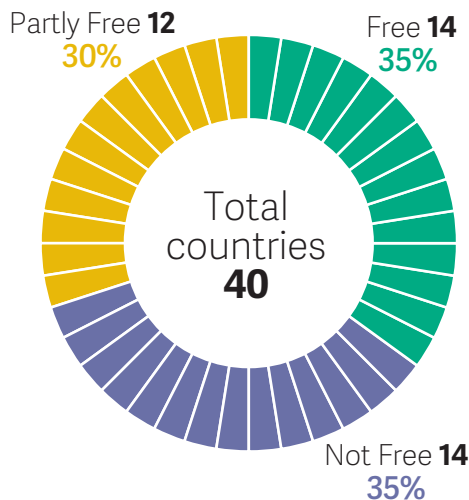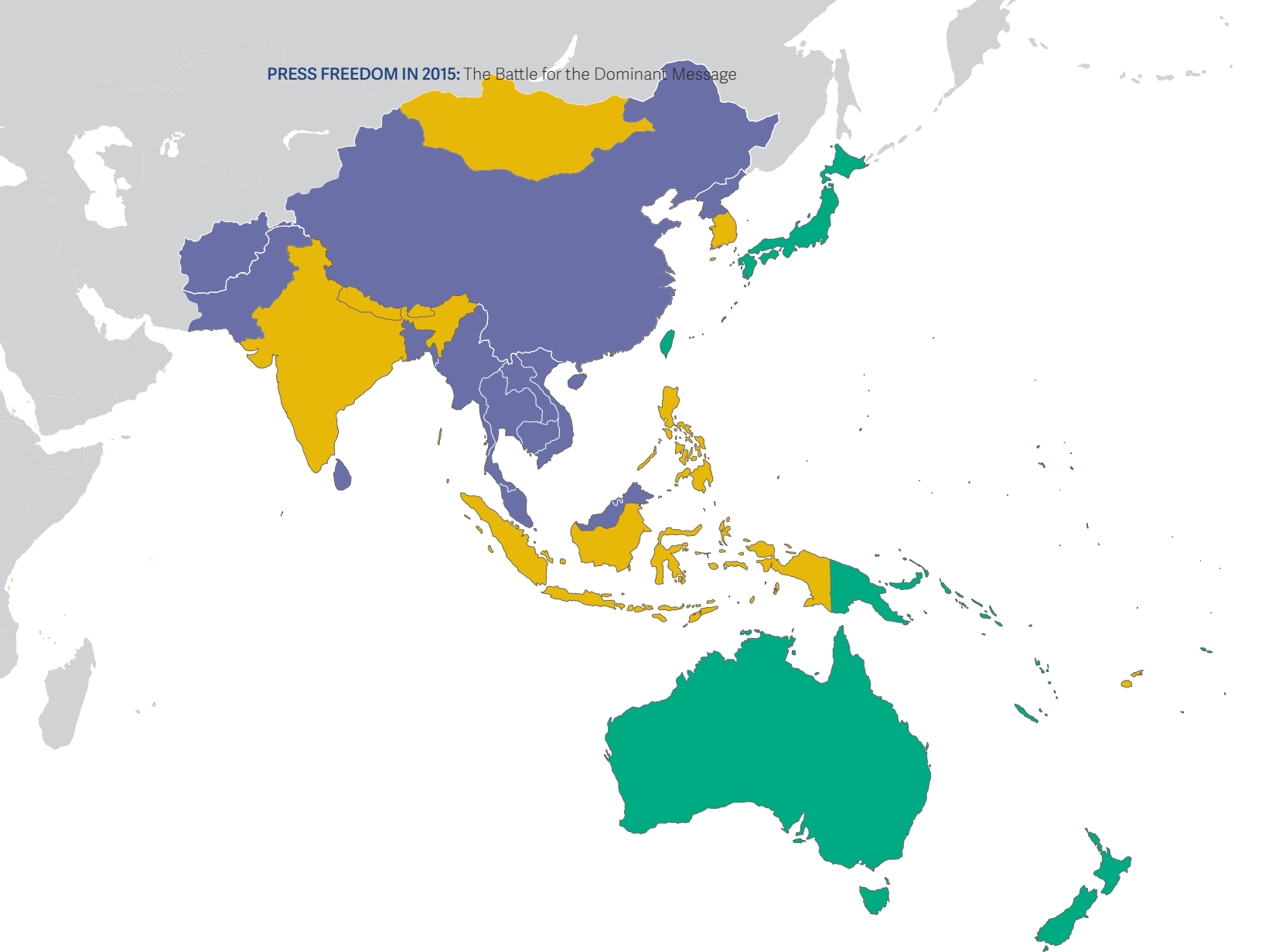
from two critical newspapers; in early 2016 the papers' editors faced multiple charges of sedition, defamation, and "hurting religious sentiment."

In India, among other killings, one journalist was burned to death by police after he accused an Uttar Pradesh government minister of corruption. Separately, Indian officials banned a documentary film on the contentious problem of violence against women in the country, and temporarily suspended broadcasts of Al-Jazeera English because the station showed a map that did not match the government's position on Kashmir.

The Vietnamese authorities released a number of jailed bloggers and journalists in 2015, before and after the Communist Party leader's visit to Washington in July. However, detentions of others continued during the year, as did physical assaults. Prominent bloggers were brutally beaten by thugs or plainclothes police after writing on issues including territorial disputes with

China and a controversial tree-removal plan in Hanoi.

The government of Malaysia—on the defensive over a massive corruption scandal—made extensive use of sedition charges to tamp down dissent, in one case prosecuting a political cartoonist for a series of tweets. In all, at least 91 people were charged, arrested, or investigated under the sedition law during 2015, according to Amnesty International. In Maldives, the government repeatedly invoked national security in attempts to intimidate critical news outlets, and deported the crew of a German broadcaster that was investigating the country's volatile political and security situation.

Unlike its neighbors, Sri Lanka experienced a marked improvement in press freedom conditions after a new government took power in early 2015. Journalists faced fewer threats and attacks than in previous years, investigations into past violence made progress, a number of websites were unblocked, and officials moved toward the adoption of a right to information bill.

Eurasia

Systemic control and prison terms for journalists

Having already destroyed most platforms for dissent, several repressive regimes in Eurasia adopted a two-pronged approach toward the media in 2015: deepening systemic controls on the flow of information while making an example of the few independent journalists who continued to operate.

Russia, an innovator of modern state propaganda, expanded efforts to tightly control the news for domestic audiences and manipulate the information landscapes of several geopolitically significant neighbors, including Ukraine, Moldova, and the Baltic and Central Asian states. Domestically, the Russian government

reoriented the focus of its misinformation machine from Ukraine to President Vladimir Putin's newest foreign exploit, the military intervention in Syria. The promotion of government policies and messages became especially important amid growing economic hardship in Russia, and Kremlin-friendly media attempted to direct public discontent toward the United States and Europe, accusing them of exacerbating Russia's economic troubles and the security situation in Syria. At the same time, authorities continued to exert pressure on the small space left for free expression, particularly targeting bloggers and journalists for their online publications. The regional Siberian

EURASIA: STATUS BY POPULATION

Not Free
237,605,571
82%

Partly Free 18%
50,741,300

Free 0%
0

EURASIA: STATUS BY COUNTRY

Partly Free **3**
23%

Free **0**
0%

Total countries
13

Not Free **10**
77%
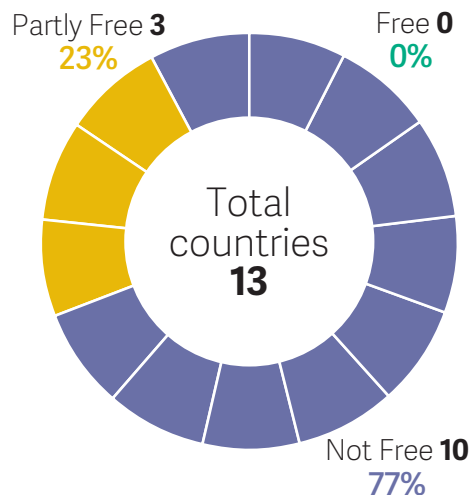
broadcaster TV-2, having previously escaped the Kremlin's cooptation of the television sector, closed in February 2015 after the expiration of its license, which was transferred to a state broadcaster.

Authorities in Azerbaijan not only tightened legislative restrictions on media in 2015, but also targeted individual journalists for legal and extralegal persecution. The staff of the online station Meydan TV faced administrative and physical harassment by officials throughout the year, as did members of their families. Spurious criminal cases against several reporters culminated in alarmingly lengthy prison terms, while other journalists were victims of violent attacks. Rasim Aliyev, an independent reporter and human rights

activist, died in August after being brutally beaten by unidentified assailants. The authorities released several journalists and bloggers along with other political prisoners in March 2016, but prominent journalist Khadija Ismayilova remains behind bars, and the government's hostile policies toward critical media show no signs of genuine change.

The government of Tajikistan took steps to make the state press agency the primary conduit for official information. And in a case that stretched the limits of absurdity, Tajik authorities sentenced Amindzhon Gulmurodzoda to two years in prison for forgery, claiming that the journalist had falsified his birth records in 1989—when he was five or six years old.

Americas

Physical threats and political pressure

Press freedom in Mexico remained under extreme pressure due to violent attacks on journalists by criminal gangs and a pattern of impunity for the perpetrators. Federal agencies tasked with protecting threatened journalists and investigating crimes against the media failed to function effectively, partly due to a lack of resources. Freedom of expression advocates also expressed concern about new regulations that authorized expansive government surveillance powers under a 2014 telecommunications law.

Mexico was not the only country in the region suffering from serious violence against journalists. Threats from organized crime, corrupt officials, and abusive security forces were a problem in much of Central America, and at least six journalists were murdered in Brazil, where those working in rural sections of the country are particularly vulnerable. Brazil is regarded today as one of the most dangerous democracies for journalists to work in.

In other Latin American countries, the main source of pressure on media independence was the govern-

ment. Enforcement of Ecuador's 2013 Communication Law, which enabled more intrusive media regulation, continued to threaten freedom of expression and added to a hostile environment characterized by self-censorship, intimidation, and legal sanctions. The media regulator issued scores of fines and other administrative sanctions against various outlets, sometimes interfering directly in the details of their reporting on public officials.

Journalists in Nicaragua were subjected to rough treatment by police and others while covering demonstrations, and encountered obstruction when attempting to gain information on a new interoceanic canal project. The television sector remains dominated by a duopoly that tends to favor the government, and critics have argued that regulatory decisions are politically motivated or arbitrary, as with the abrupt 2015 closure of radio station Voz de Mujer.

In Argentina, long-standing antagonism between the government and the conservative press looked set to change after right-leaning candidate Mauricio Macri replaced incumbent president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in December. However, Macri immediately moved to undercut Kirchner's 2009 Media Law, issuing a decree that transferred oversight powers of the two regulatory agencies created under that law to his newly formed National Agency of Telecommunications. This step prompted some observers to question the new administration's commitment to ensuring impartial regulatory enforcement.

In the United States, the media played a complicated role in an unusually crass, divisive, and intense campaign for the 2016 presidential election. The leading Republican candidate, Donald Trump, made criticism of individual journalists and outlets a major focus of his appeal, and used outrageous social-media comments to attract and divert traditional media coverage. At times he has even taunted the media industry with economic incentives, citing the effects of his appearances—or refusals to appear—on broadcasters' viewership and revenue.

AMERICAS: STATUS BY POPULATION

Partly Free
398,867,293
40%

Free
389,673,172
40%

Not Free
193,395,000   20%
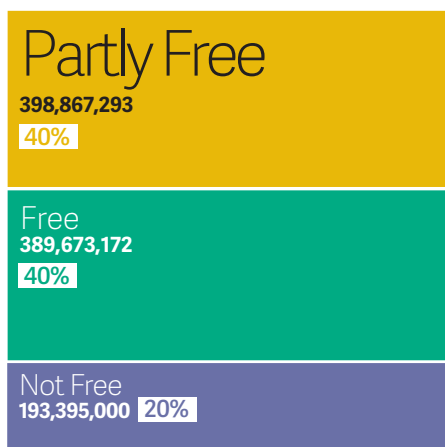
AMERICAS: STATUS BY COUNTRY

Not Free **5**
14%

Total countries **35**

Partly Free **14**
40%

Free **16**
46%

FREEDOM
OF THE PRESS
2016

FREE

PARTLY FREE

NOT FREE
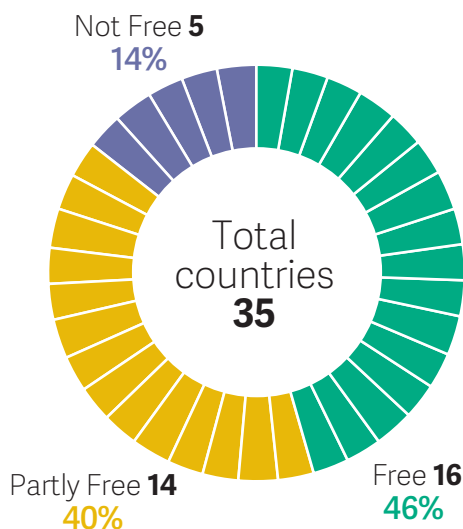
Freedom
House
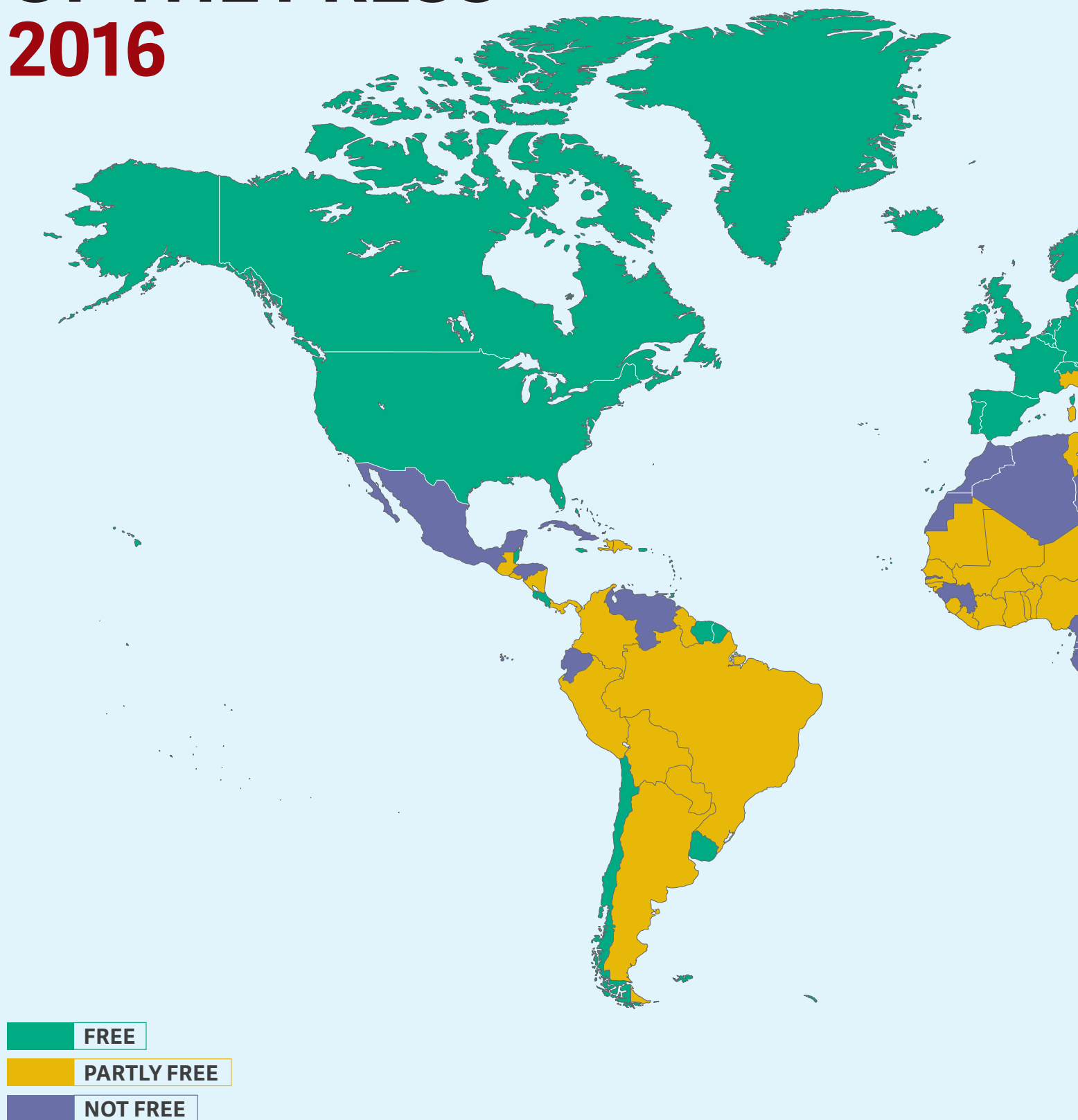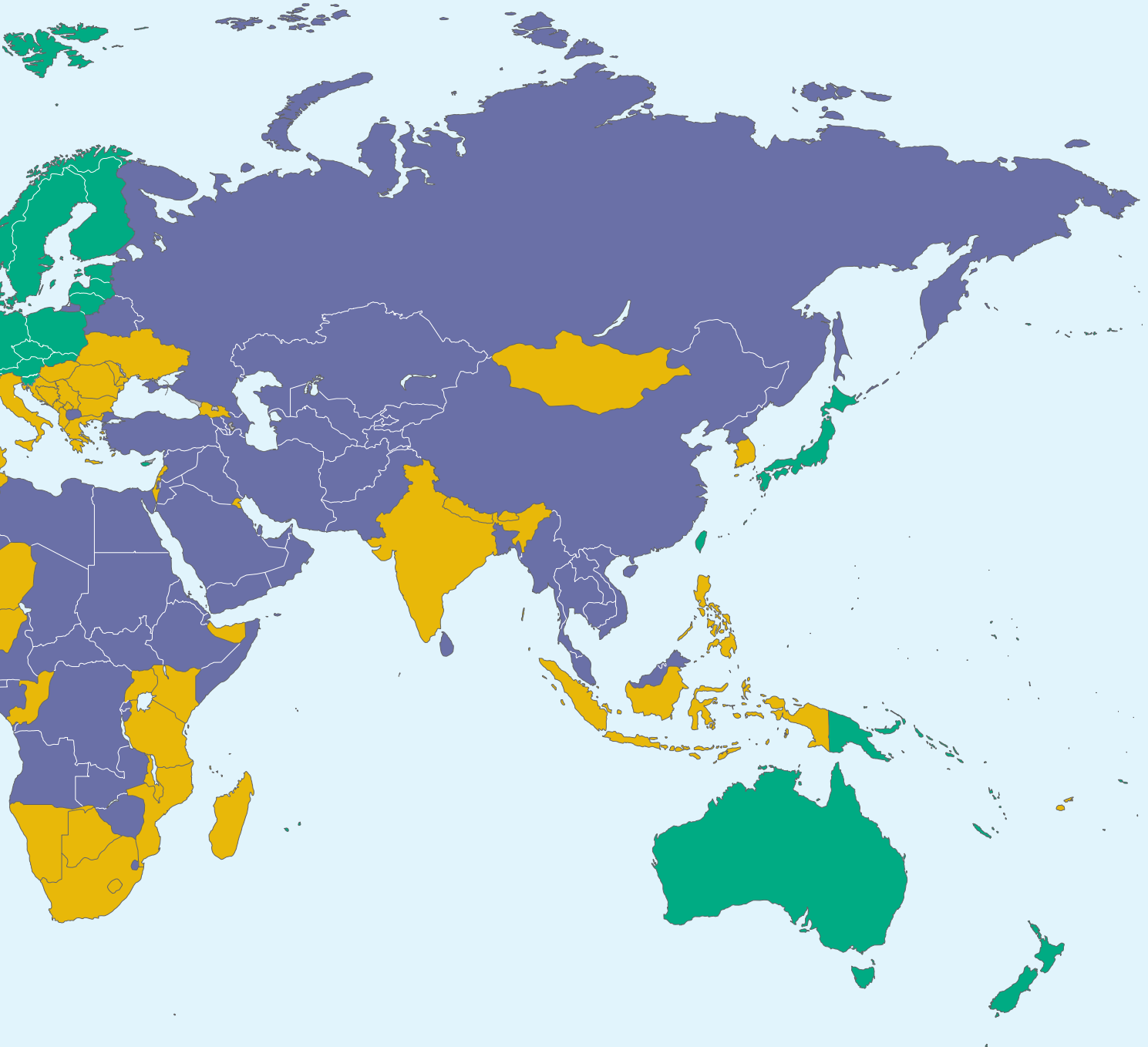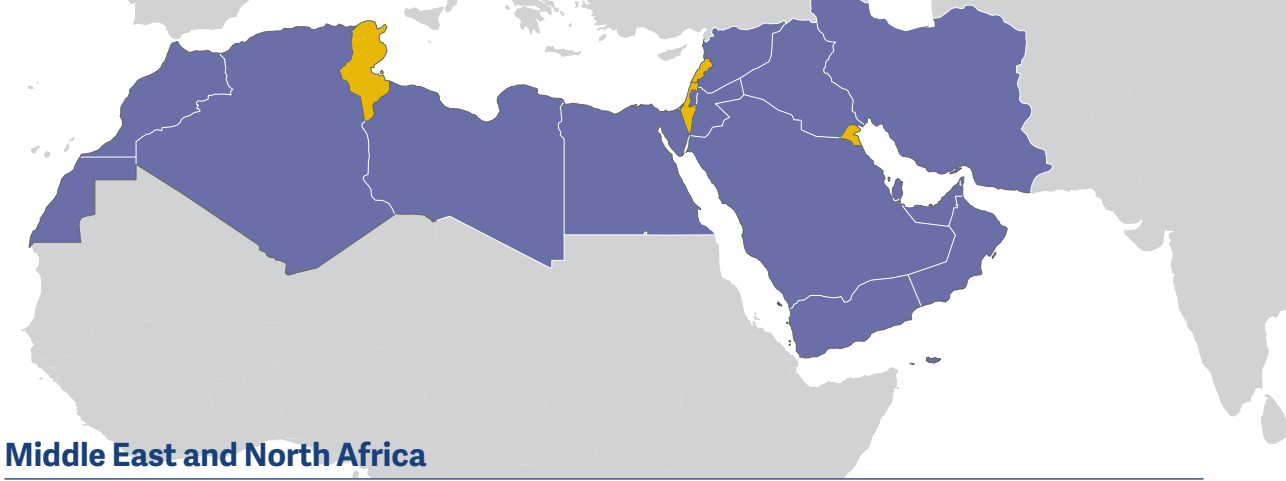
Middle East and North Africa

Security concerns fuel censorship, self-censorship

Even in Middle Eastern countries without armed conflicts, concerns about terrorist attacks or military operations abroad motivated crackdowns on critical reporting and commentary as well as self-censorship on the part of journalists and social-media users.

In Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, for example, the authorities restricted critical or independent coverage of the war in Yemen, in part by controlling access to the border area. Observers also noted a tendency among media outlets and online commentators to avoid criticism of the Saudi-led military campaign.

In Tunisia, which suffered multiple terrorist attacks during 2015, a journalist faced terrorism charges for refusing to disclose the source of a photograph related to one attack, and a blogger was jailed for defaming the military. Journalists faced greater police aggres-

sion while attempting to report on the aftermath of terrorist violence, and some outlets displayed a closer alignment with the government on security issues.

The Iranian government attempted to shape domestic media coverage of the international agreement on its nuclear program. The Supreme National Security Council instructed media outlets to praise Iran's team of negotiators and to avoid any talk of "a rift" between top officials. The directive targeted hard-liners who have been highly critical of the negotiations—a shift from the pressure typically exerted on journalists who support President Hassan Rouhani's reformist policies. However, hard-line elements continued to show their strength in other ways. The intelligence division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps arrested several journalists late in the year for alleged involvement in an "infiltration network" serving hostile foreign countries.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY POPULATION

Not Free
390,723,799
93%

29,424,084
└─ Partly Free 7%   Free 0%

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: STATUS BY COUNTRY

Partly Free 4
21%

Free 0
0%

Total countries
19

Not Free 15
79%
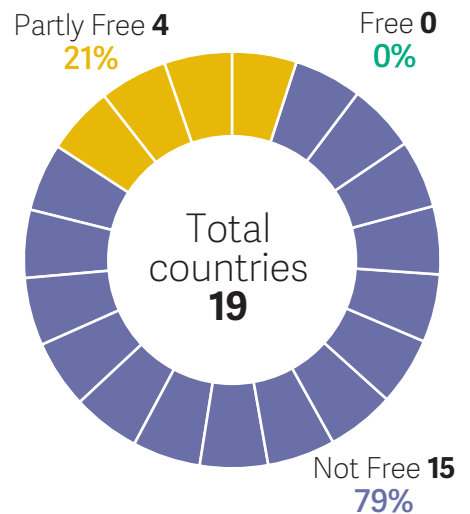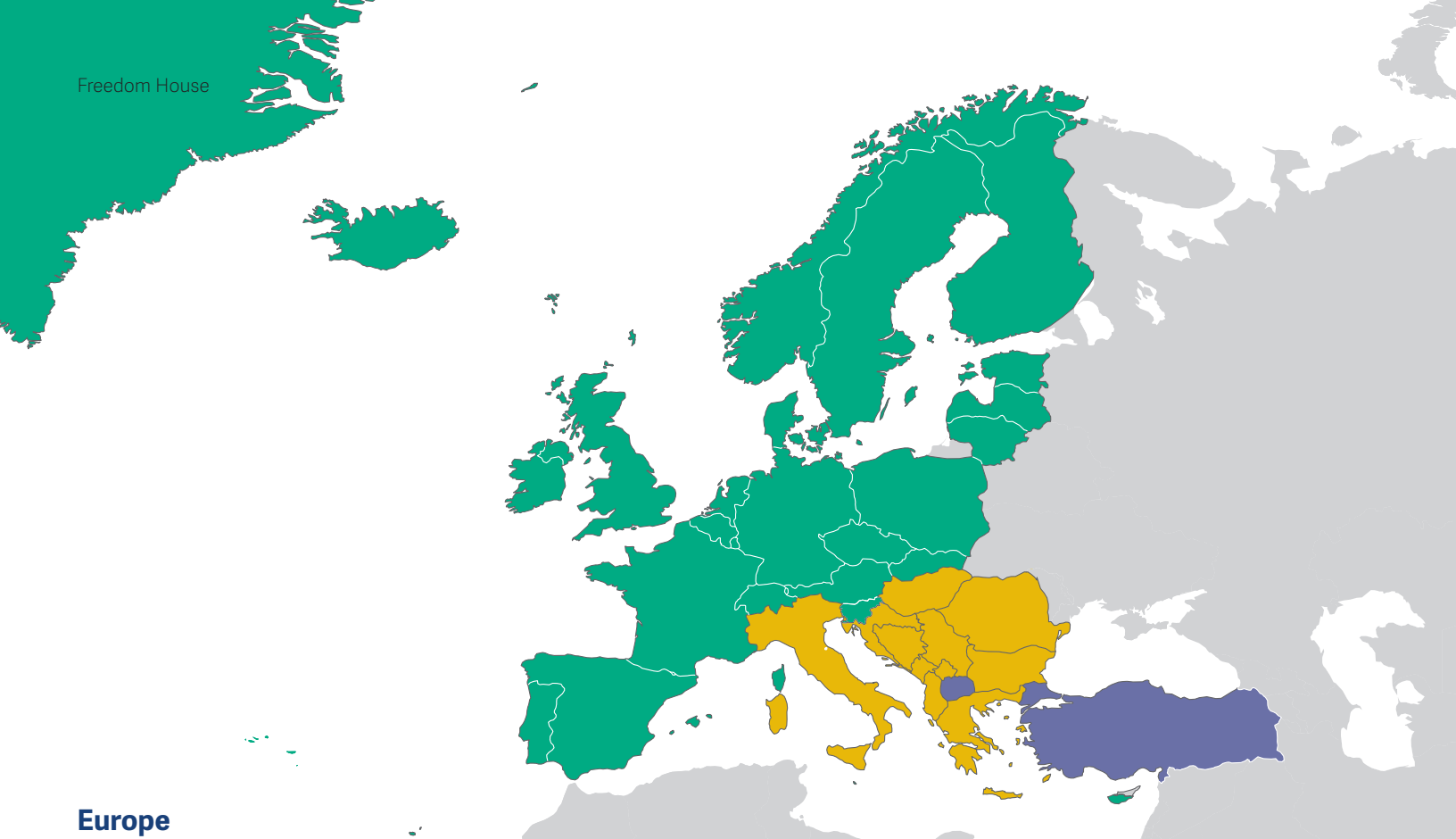
Europe

Police interference, violence amid refugee crisis

Violence and the refugee crisis dominated the news in Europe in 2015, but they also affected how news could be covered. While not as dramatic as the *Charlie Hebdo* murders, attacks against journalists by various perpetrators in the Western Balkans contributed to an overall decline in media freedom there. In Serbia, multiple journalists suffered physical assaults, contributing to heightened self-censorship across the media sector. Attacks and death threats in Macedonia and Bosnia

and Herzegovina also raised concerns, with numerous violations committed against reporters who were investigating government corruption. Serious questions remain about whether these countries' governments are genuine in their stated commitments to European norms for media freedom and independence.

In Turkey, the government took advantage of real and perceived security threats to intensify its crackdown

EUROPE: STATUS BY POPULATION

Free
408,520,144
66%

Partly Free
131,120,982
21%

Not Free
80,285,100
13%
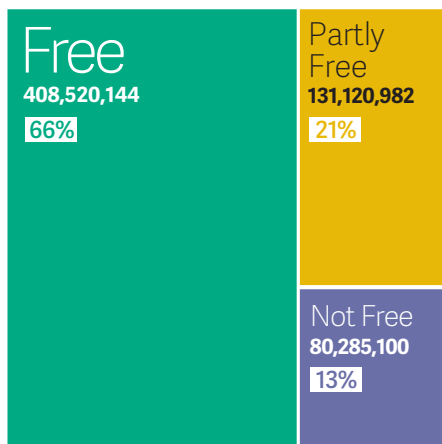
EUROPE: STATUS BY COUNTRY

Not Free **2**
5%

Partly Free **11**
26%

Total countries
42

Free **29**
69%
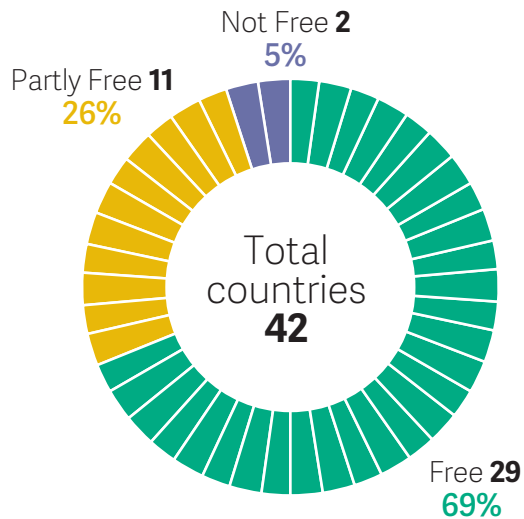
on the media. Authorities continued to use terrorism-related laws to arrest critical journalists, censor online outlets, and deport foreign correspondents—usually in connection with the Kurdish insurgency, the conflict in Syria, or the Gülen movement.

The massive influx of migrants to Europe indirectly resulted in a variety of limitations on journalistic freedom. The most prominent case was in Hungary, where police attacked at least seven foreign journalists who were attempting to report on violent clashes between riot officers and migrants arriving at the country's southern border. However, the authorities took other steps to limit journalists' access to sites related to migrants and refugees, and the public media supported the government's hostile stance toward them. In Austria, journalists reporting on the challenges posed by the migrants' presence faced obstacles in several separate instances, revealing the government's

unease at allowing unhampered coverage of the situation. A series of attacks in Germany were attributed to far-right groups, which have been gaining strength in opposition to Chancellor Angela Merkel's relatively welcoming policies toward refugees. The nearly 30 attacks against journalists in Germany in 2015 ranged from death threats to physical violence at right-wing demonstrations.

Over the past 10 years, Europe as a whole has suffered the largest drop in press freedom of any region in the *Freedom of the Press* report. This has been driven in part by weakened European economies and shrinking advertising revenues, which have led to layoffs, closure of outlets, and further concentration of media ownership. Other contributing factors include new laws restricting media activity, and increases in violence against and intimidation of journalists in retaliation for their reporting.

Notable gains and declines in 2015

The following reflect developments of major significance or concern in 2015.

Gains:
- **Burkina Faso** improved due to the removal of prison sentences as punishment for libel, renewed attempts to end impunity for past crimes against journalists, and a decrease in state interference in news content.

- **Sri Lanka** improved due to a change in government that led to fewer physical threats against journalists, the easing of political pressure on private media, and the unblocking of previously censored websites.

Declines:
- **Azerbaijan** declined due to the brutal and so far unsolved murder of a prominent journalist, as well as increased restrictions on foreign journalists surrounding the European Games in June.

- **Bangladesh** declined due to the murders of four bloggers and a publisher by Islamist militants, threats and nonfatal attacks against other writers, continued legal harassment of media outlets and press freedom advocates, government-sanctioned economic pressure on certain outlets, and attempts to censor social media.

- **Burundi** declined due to the closure and destruction of independent media outlets and extensive harassment and violence against journalists, which drove many into exile.

- **Ecuador** declined due to a marked increase in official censorship and further concentration of media ownership.

- **Egypt** declined due to more uniform progovernment bias in the media, increased physical abuse of journalists, and recurrent destruction of newspaper pressruns when officials objected to content.

BIGGEST GAINS AND DECLINES, 2011–2015

■ FREE ■ PARTLY FREE ■ NOT FREE

	FREE
	PARTLY FREE
	NOT FREE

Côte d'Ivoire **19**
Malawi **15**
Afghanistan **12**
Myanmar **12**
Fiji **10**
Togo **9**
Sri Lanka **8**

-8 Burundi
-8 Ecuador
-8 Macedonia
-9 Azerbaijan
-9 Bangladesh
-9 Central African Republic
-10 Serbia
-13 Mali
-13 Nauru
-15 Libya
-16 Turkey
-17 Thailand
-18 Greece
-20 Egypt
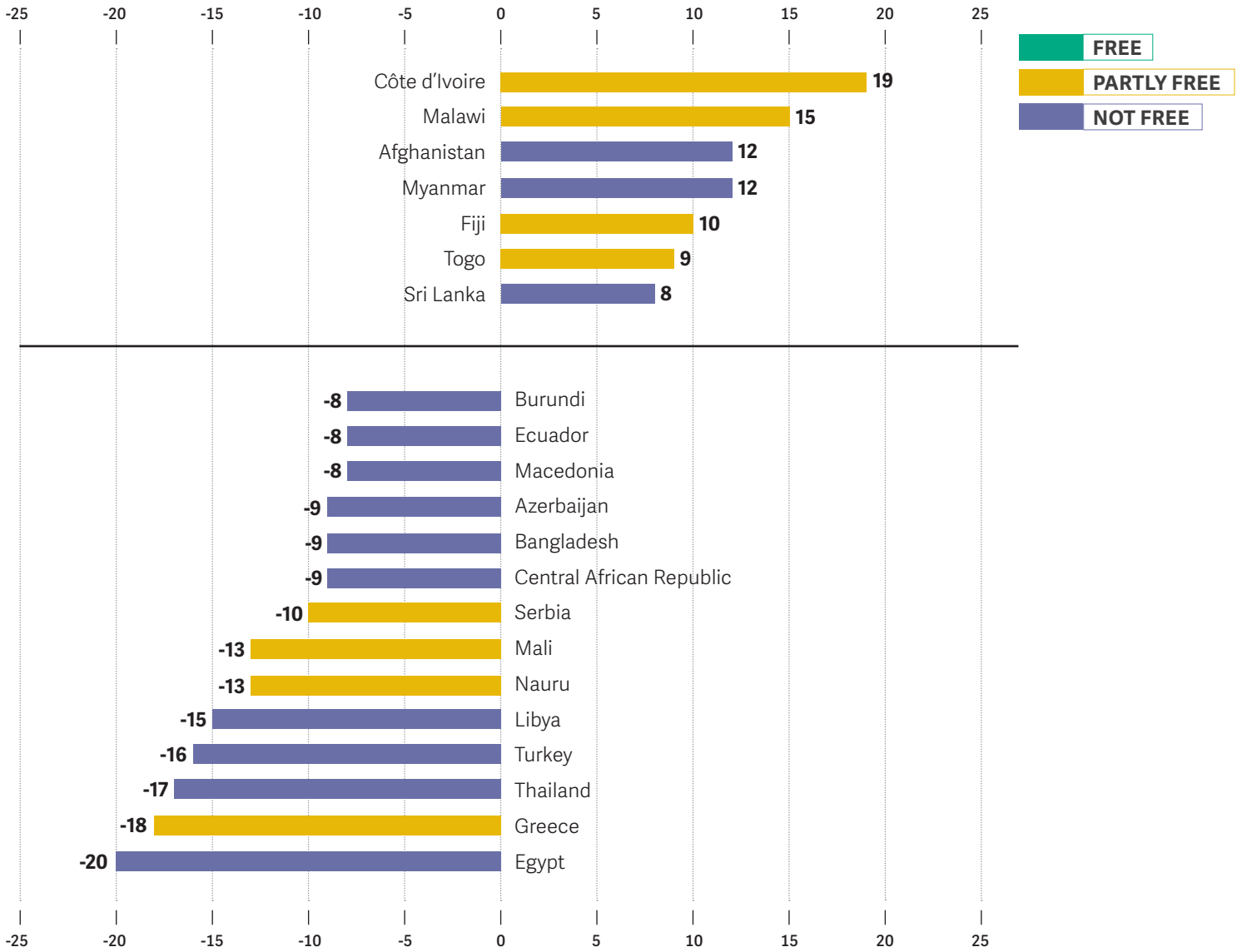
HISTORICAL TRENDS IN PRESS FREEDOM
Percentages of countries in the three press freedom categories

■ FREE ■ PARTLY FREE ■ NOT FREE

1985: 55% 20% 25%
1995: 32% 34% 34%
2005: 34% 28% 38%
2015: 33% 36% 31%
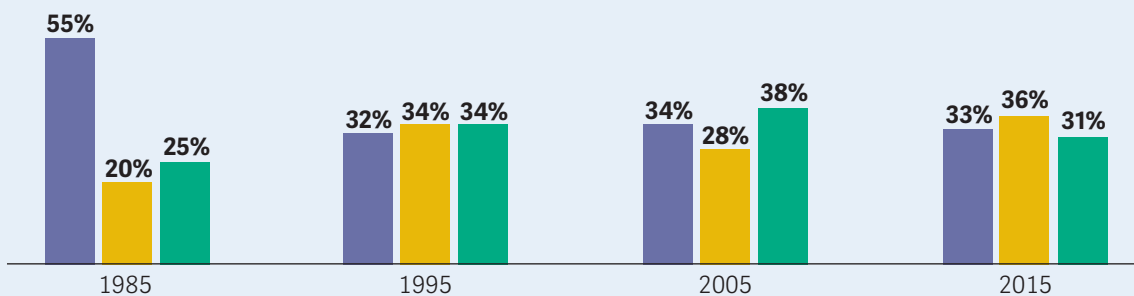
- **France** declined due to the January 2015 terrorist attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, legislation that empowers authorities to conduct mass surveillance with little oversight, and the growing threat of self-censorship linked to security concerns.

- **Ghana** declined due to stepped-up attempts to limit coverage of news events and confiscation of equipment; increases in violence directed at journalists by the police, the military, political party members, and ordinary citizens, including the first murder of a journalist in more than 20 years; and continued electricity outages that impaired media production and distribution.

- **Israel** declined due to the growing impact of *Yisrael Hayom*, whose owner-subsidized business model endangered the stability of other media outlets, and the unchecked expansion of paid content—some of it government funded—whose nature was not clearly identified to the public.

- **Macedonia** declined due to revelations indicating large-scale and illegal government wiretapping of journalists, corrupt ties between officials and media owners, and an increase in threats and attacks on media workers.

- **Mexico** declined due to poor implementation of a law designed to protect journalists and continued impunity for the perpetrators of crimes against the press.

- **Nicaragua** declined due to pervasive and increasingly systematic harassment of journalists as well as the effects of a television duopoly on diversity of content.

- **Saudi Arabia** declined due to a growing trend toward self-censorship regarding the conflict in Yemen and restricted media access to the southern provinces where military operations were under way.

- **Serbia** declined due to the Vučić government's hostile rhetoric toward investigative journalists, reported censorship of journalists and media outlets, and a decrease in the availability of critical, independent reporting.

- **Tunisia** declined due to an increase in prosecutions of journalists and bloggers, repeated assaults by security forces on media personnel in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, and increased government pressure on the national broadcaster and the independent media regulatory body.

- **Turkey** declined due to the imprisonment of media personnel on fabricated charges related to national security, throttling of internet service after major news events, severe restrictions on foreign journalists including imprisonment and deportation, recurrent violence against media personnel and production facilities, and abrupt changes in media regulations.

- **Uganda** declined due to increased government pressure on media outlets regarding coverage of political events, along with a growth in bribery in exchange for favorable election-related reporting.

- **Yemen** declined due to the country's descent into civil war, which led to disregard for press freedom protections, an increasingly polarized and fragmented media environment, and a general climate of fear amid killings and imprisonment of journalists.

- **Zimbabwe** declined due to increased threats and attacks on media personnel, including the disappearance of a prominent local journalist; continued arrests of journalists for libel in defiance of a constitutional court ruling; and an economic crisis that led two media houses to shut down.

PRESS FREEDOM VS. INTERNET PENETRATION VS. GDP PER CAPITA

GROSS DOMESTIC
PRODUCT PER CAPITA

- FREE
- PARTLY FREE
- NOT FREE

Largest   Smallest

Internet Penetration Rate, 2014 (ITU data)

Freedom of the Press 2016 Score (100=Least Free, 0=Most Free)
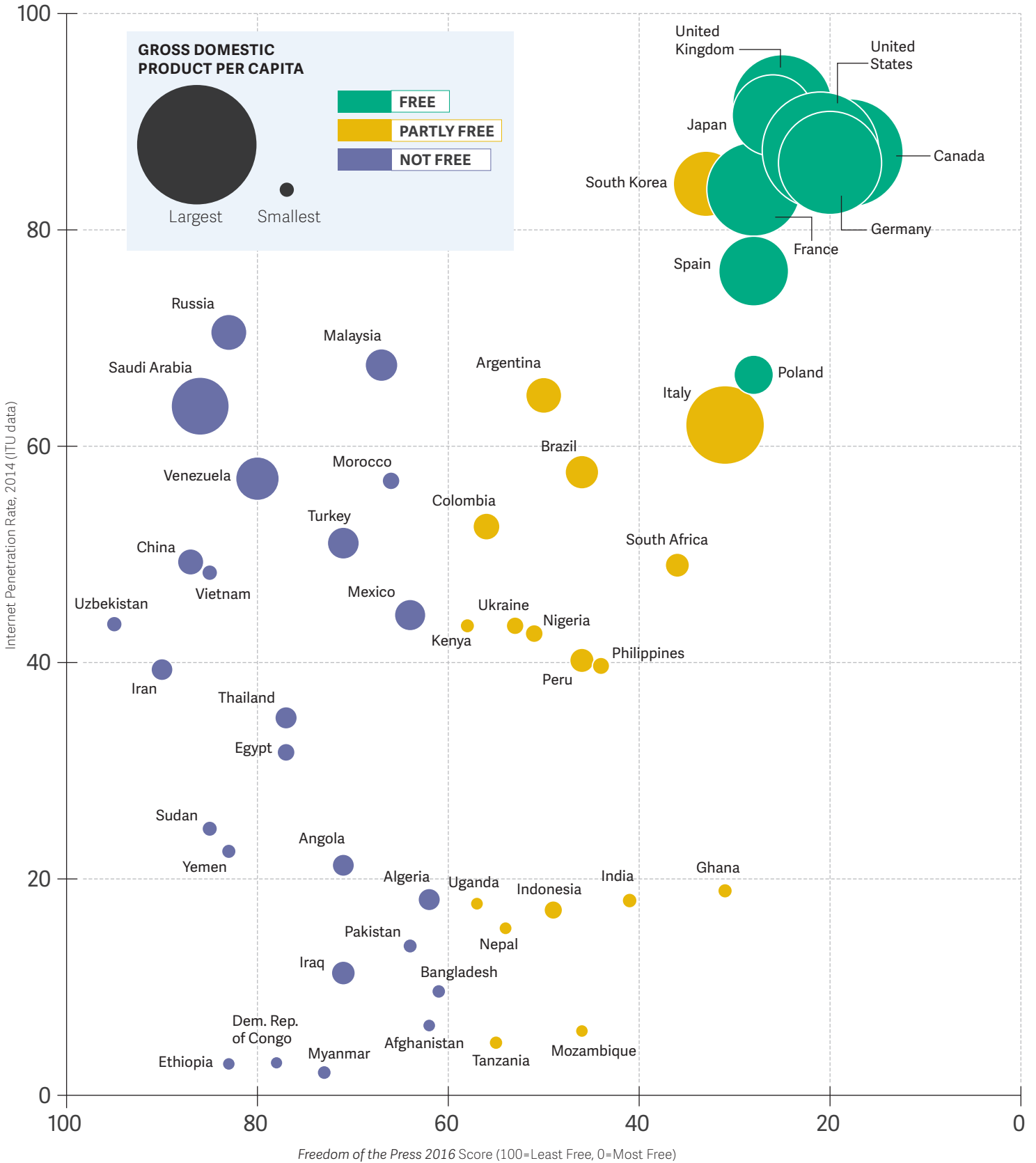
Regional Rankings

Of the 199 countries and territories assessed for 2015, a total of 62 (31 percent) were rated Free, 71 (36 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 66 (33 percent) were rated Not Free. This balance marks a slight shift toward the Not Free category compared with the edition covering 2014, which featured 63 Free, 71 Partly Free, and 65 Not Free countries and territories. There were six status changes in *Freedom of the Press 2016*: Chile improved from Partly Free to Free, and Togo improved from Not Free to Partly Free. Ghana and Israel declined from Free to Partly Free, and Bangladesh and Macedonia declined from Partly Free to Not Free.

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

Country	Rank	Score	Global Rank	Status		
				Freedom of the Press 2016	Freedom in the World 2016	Freedom on the Net 2015
St. Lucia	1	15	11	Free	Free	
Costa Rica	2	17	17	Free	Free	
St. Vincent and Grenadines		17	17	Free	Free	
Barbados	4	18	21	Free	Free	
Canada		18	21	Free	Free	Free
Jamaica		18	21	Free	Free	
St. Kitts and Nevis	7	20	25	Free	Free	
United States of America	8	21	28	Free	Free	Free
Bahamas	9	22	31	Free	Free	
Belize		22	31	Free	Free	
Grenada	11	24	38	Free	Free	
Uruguay	12	25	41	Free	Free	
Dominica	13	26	44	Free	Free	
Trinidad and Tobago	14	27	47	Free	Free	
Suriname	15	28	51	Free	Free	
Chile	16	29	57	Free ↗	Free	
Antigua and Barbuda	17	35	68	Partly Free	Free	
Guyana	18	36	70	Partly Free	Free	
El Salvador	19	39	76	Partly Free	Free	
Dominican Republic	20	42	84	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Brazil	21	46	90	Partly Free	Free	Free
Panama		46	90	Partly Free	Free	
Peru		46	90	Partly Free	Free	
Bolivia	24	49	96	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Argentina	25	50	104	Partly Free	Free	Free
Haiti	26	52	110	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Nicaragua	27	54	115	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Colombia	28	56	119	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Guatemala	29	58	123	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Paraguay		58	123	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Mexico	31	64	140	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Ecuador	32	66	145	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Honduras	33	67	149	Not Free	Partly Free	
Venezuela	34	80	173	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Cuba	35	91	192	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free

↗ ↘ – indicate improvements or declines in press freedom status

*Denotes territories   NOTE: The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2015.

In 2015, 13 percent of the world's inhabitants lived in countries with a Free press, while 41 percent had a Partly Free press and 46 percent lived in Not Free environments. The population figures are significantly affected by two countries—China, with a Not Free status, and India, with a Partly Free status—that together account for over a third of the world's more than seven billion people. The percentage of those enjoying a Free media in 2015 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	Rank	Score	Global Rank	Freedom of the Press 2016	Freedom in the World 2016	Freedom on the Net 2015
Palau	1	15	11	Free	Free	
Marshall Islands	2	17	17	Free	Free	
New Zealand	3	20	25	Free	Free	
Micronesia	4	21	28	Free	Free	
Australia	5	23	33	Free	Free	Free
Vanuatu	6	25	41	Free	Free	
Japan	7	26	44	Free	Free	Free
Taiwan		26	44	Free	Free	
Solomon Islands	9	27	47	Free	Partly Free	
Tuvalu		27	47	Free	Free	
Papua New Guinea	11	29	57	Free	Partly Free	
Samoa		29	57	Free	Free	
Tonga		29	57	Free	Free	
Kiribati	14	30	62	Free	Free	
South Korea	15	33	66	Partly Free	Free	Partly Free
East Timor	16	35	68	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Mongolia	17	37	72	Partly Free	Free	
Hong Kong*	18	39	76	Partly Free	Partly Free	
India	19	41	80	Partly Free	Free	Partly Free
Nauru		41	80	Partly Free	Free	
Philippines	21	44	86	Partly Free	Partly Free	Free
Fiji	22	48	94	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Indonesia	23	49	96	Partly Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Nepal	24	54	115	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Bhutan	25	58	123	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Maldives		58	123	Partly Free	Partly Free	
Bangladesh	27	61	134	Not Free ↘	Partly Free	Partly Free
Afghanistan	28	62	136	Not Free	Not Free	
Pakistan	29	64	140	Not Free	Partly Free	Not Free
Sri Lanka		64	140	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Malaysia	31	67	149	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Singapore		67	149	Not Free	Partly Free	Partly Free
Cambodia	33	69	154	Not Free	Not Free	Partly Free
Myanmar	34	73	161	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Brunei	35	76	166	Not Free	Not Free	
Thailand	36	77	167	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
Laos	37	84	181	Not Free	Not Free	
Vietnam	38	85	183	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
China	39	87	186	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
North Korea	40	97	199	Not Free	Not Free	

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

Country	Rank	Score	Global Rank	Status		
				Freedom of the Press 2016	Freedom in the World 2016	Freedom on the Net 2015
Georgia	1	49	96	●	●	●
Ukraine	2	53	112	●	●	●
Moldova	3	56	119	●	●	
Armenia	4	63	139	●	●	●
Kyrgyzstan	5	67	149	●	●	●
Russia	6	83	176	●	●	●
Tajikistan		83	176	●	●	●
Kazakhstan	8	84	181	●	●	●
Azerbaijan	9	89	189	●	●	●
Belarus	10	91	192	●	●	●
Crimea*	11	94	195	●	●	
Uzbekistan	12	95	197	●	●	●
Turkmenistan	13	96	198	●	●	

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
● – Free ● – Partly Free ● – Not Free

Country	Rank	Score	Global Rank	Status		
				Freedom of the Press 2016	Freedom in the World 2016	Freedom on the Net 2015
Israel	1	32	65	● ↘	●	
Tunisia	2	52	110	●	●	●
Lebanon	3	56	119	●	●	●
Kuwait	4	59	130	●	●	
Algeria	5	62	136	●	●	
Jordan	6	66	145	●	●	●
Morocco		66	145	●	●	●
Qatar	8	69	154	●	●	
Iraq	9	71	156	●	●	
Oman		71	156	●	●	
Libya	11	75	164	●	●	●
Egypt	12	77	167	●	●	●
United Arab Emirates	13	78	169	●	●	●
West Bank and Gaza Strip*	14	83	176	●	●	
Yemen		83	176	●	●	
Saudi Arabia	16	86	185	●	●	●
Bahrain	17	87	186	●	●	●
Iran	18	90	190	●	●	●
Syria		90	190	●	●	●

↗ ↘ – indicate improvements or declines in press freedom status

*Denotes territories   NOTE: The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2015.

EUROPE ● – Free ● – Partly Free ● – Not Free

Country	Rank	Score	Global Rank	Status		
				Freedom of the Press 2016	Freedom in the World 2016	Freedom on the Net 2015
Norway	1	9	1	●	●	
Belgium	2	11	2	●	●	
Finland		11	2	●	●	
Netherlands		11	2	●	●	
Sweden		11	2	●	●	
Denmark	6	12	6	●	●	
Andorra	7	13	7	●	●	
Luxembourg		13	7	●	●	
Switzerland		13	7	●	●	
Liechtenstein	10	14	10	●	●	
Iceland	11	15	11	●	●	●
Monaco		15	11	●	●	
Estonia	13	16	15	●	●	●
San Marino		16	15	●	●	
Ireland	15	17	17	●	●	
Portugal	16	18	21	●	●	
Germany	17	20	25	●	●	●
Czech Republic	18	21	28	●	●	
Austria	19	23	33	●	●	
Lithuania		23	33	●	●	
Malta		23	33	●	●	
Slovenia		23	33	●	●	
Cyprus	23	24	38	●	●	
Slovakia		24	38	●	●	
United Kingdom	25	25	41	●	●	●
France	26	28	51	●	●	●
Latvia		28	51	●	●	
Poland		28	51	●	●	
Spain		28	51	●	●	
Italy	30	31	63	●	●	●
Romania	31	38	74	●	●	
Bulgaria	32	40	78	●	●	
Hungary		40	78	●	●	●
Montenegro	34	41	80	●	●	
Croatia	35	42	84	●	●	
Serbia	36	45	87	●	●	
Greece	37	48	94	●	●	
Kosovo	38	49	96	●	●	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	39	50	104	●	●	
Albania	40	51	106	●	●	
Macedonia	41	62	136	● ↘	●	
Turkey	42	71	156	●	●	●

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA ● – Free ● – Partly Free ● – Not Free

Country	Rank	Score	Global Rank	Freedom of the Press 2016	Freedom in the World 2016	Freedom on the Net 2015
Cape Verde	1	27	47	● Free	● Free	
São Tomé and Príncipe	2	28	51	● Free	● Free	
Mauritius	3	29	57	● Free	● Free	
Ghana	4	31	63	● Partly Free ↘	● Free	
Namibia	5	33	66	● Partly Free	● Free	
South Africa	6	36	70	● Partly Free	● Free	● Free
Mali	7	37	72	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Benin	8	38	74	● Partly Free	● Free	
Burkina Faso	9	41	80	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Botswana	10	45	87	● Partly Free	● Free	
Malawi		45	87	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	● Partly Free
Mozambique	12	46	90	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Comoros	13	49	96	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Lesotho		49	96	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Senegal		49	96	● Partly Free	● Free	
Seychelles		49	96	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Côte d'Ivoire	17	51	106	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Mauritania		51	106	● Partly Free	● Not Free	
Nigeria		51	106	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	● Partly Free
Niger	20	53	112	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Sierra Leone		53	112	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Somaliland*	22	54	115	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Tanzania	23	55	118	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Uganda	24	57	122	● Partly Free	● Not Free	● Partly Free
Kenya	25	58	123	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	● Free
Liberia		58	123	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Madagascar		58	123	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	28	59	130	● Partly Free	● Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau	29	60	132	● Partly Free	● Partly Free	
Togo		60	132	● Partly Free ↗	● Partly Free	
Zambia	31	61	134	● Not Free	● Partly Free	● Partly Free
Cameroon	32	65	143	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Guinea		65	143	● Not Free	● Partly Free	
South Sudan	34	66	145	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Gabon	35	68	153	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Angola	36	71	156	● Not Free	● Not Free	● Partly Free
Central African Republic		71	156	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Chad	38	74	162	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Zimbabwe		74	162	● Not Free	● Partly Free	● Partly Free
Djibouti	40	75	164	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Congo (Kinshasa)	41	78	169	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Rwanda	42	79	171	● Not Free	● Not Free	● Partly Free
Somalia		79	171	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Burundi	44	80	173	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Swaziland	45	82	175	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Ethiopia	46	83	176	● Not Free	● Not Free	● Not Free
Sudan	47	85	183	● Not Free	● Not Free	● Not Free
The Gambia	48	87	186	● Not Free	● Not Free	● Not Free
Equatorial Guinea	49	91	192	● Not Free	● Not Free	
Eritrea	50	94	195	● Not Free	● Not Free	

↗ ↘ – indicate improvements or declines in press freedom status

*Denotes territories   NOTE: The ratings reflect global developments from January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2015.

Methodology

The 2016 edition of *Freedom of the Press*, which provides analytical reports and numerical scores for 199 countries and territories, continues a process conducted by Freedom House since 1980. Each country and territory is given a total press freedom score from 0 (best) to 100 (worst) on the basis of 23 methodology questions divided into three subcategories. The total score determines the status designation of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. The scores and reports included in *Freedom of the Press 2016* cover events that took place between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2015.

Criteria

Freedom House assesses media freedom using common criteria for all settings, in poor and rich countries as well as in countries of varying ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

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

All states, from the most democratic to the most authoritarian, are committed to this doctrine through the UN system; to deny it is to deny the universality of basic human rights. While cultural distinctions or economic underdevelopment may affect the character or volume of news flows within a country or territory, these and other differences are not acceptable explanations for infringements such as centralized control of the content of news and information.

Research and Scoring Process

Freedom of the Press findings are determined through a multilayered process of analysis and evaluation by a team of regional experts and scholars. With its successive stages of coding and review, the process emphasizes intellectual rigor and aims for consistent and unbiased judgments.

The research and scoring process involves nearly 90 analysts—primarily external consultants—who draft the scores and country/territory reports. Analysts gather information from field research, professional contacts, reports from local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), reports of governments and multilateral bodies, and domestic and international news media. We would particularly like to thank the other members of the International Freedom of

Expression Exchange (IFEX) network for providing detailed and timely analyses of press freedom violations in a variety of countries worldwide.

The scores are reviewed individually and on a comparative basis in a series of seven regional meetings involving analysts, a team of senior academic advisers, and Freedom House staff. These reviews are followed by cross-regional assessments in which an effort is made to ensure comparability and consistency in the findings across the world.

Methodology

Through the years, we have refined and expanded our methodology. Recent modifications have aimed to capture changes in the news and information environment without altering the comparability of data since the project's inception. For example, the methodology was modified to incorporate the role of digital media.

The level of press freedom in each country and territory is evaluated through 23 methodology questions divided into three broad categories: the legal environment, the political environment, and the economic environment. For each methodology question, a lower number of points is allotted for a more free situation, while a higher number of points is allotted for a less free environment. A country or territory's final score (from 0 to 100) represents the total of the points allotted for each question. A total score of 0 to 30 results in a press freedom status of Free; 31 to 60 results in a status of Partly Free; and 61 to 100 indicates a status of Not Free.

The diverse nature of the methodology questions seeks to address the varied ways in which pressure can be placed on the flow of information and the ability of print, broadcast, and digital media to operate freely and without threat of repercussions. In short, we seek to provide a picture of the entire "enabling environment" in which the media operate. We also assess the diversity of the news and information available to the public in any given country or territory, from either local or transnational sources. In general, *Freedom of the Press* is focused on the ability to provide and access news and information. It generally pertains to journalists and formal news outlets, whether print, broadcast, or online, but also includes less formal sources—such as blogs, social media, and text-messaging services—when they serve as de facto news providers.

The legal environment category encompasses an examina-

tion of both the laws and regulations that could influence media content, and the extent to which they are used in practice to enable or restrict the media's ability to operate. We assess the positive impact of legal and constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression; the potentially negative aspects of security legislation, the penal code, and other statutes; penalties for libel and defamation; the existence of and ability to use freedom of information legislation; the independence of the judiciary and official regulatory bodies; registration requirements for both media outlets and journalists; and the ability of journalists' organizations to operate freely.

Under the political environment category, we evaluate the degree of political influence in the content of news media. Issues examined include the editorial independence of both state-owned and privately owned outlets; access to information and sources; official censorship and self-censorship; the vibrancy of the media and the diversity of news available within each country or territory; the ability of both foreign and local reporters to cover the news in person without obstacles or harassment; and reprisals against journalists or bloggers by the state or other actors, including arbitrary detention, violent assaults, and other forms of intimidation.

Our third category examines the economic environment for the media. This includes the structure of media ownership; transparency and concentration of ownership; the costs of establishing media as well as any impediments to news production and distribution; the selective withholding of advertising or subsidies by the state or other actors; the impact of corruption and bribery on content; and the extent to which the economic situation in a country or territory affects the development and sustainability of the media.

Methodology Questions 2015

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT (0–30 POINTS)

1. Do the constitution or other basic laws contain provisions designed to protect freedom of the press and of expression, and are they enforced? **(0–6 points)**
2. Do the penal code, security laws, or any other laws restrict reporting and are journalists or bloggers punished under these laws? **(0–6 points)**
3. Are there penalties for libeling officials or the state and are they enforced? **(0–3 points)**
4. Is the judiciary independent and do courts judge cases concerning the media impartially? **(0–3 points)**
5. Is Freedom of Information legislation in place, and are journalists able to make use of it? **(0–2 points)**

6. Can individuals or business entities legally establish and operate private media outlets without undue interference? **(0–4 points)**
7. Are media regulatory bodies, such as a broadcasting authority or national press or communications council, able to operate freely and independently? **(0–2 points)**
8. Is there freedom to become a journalist and to practice journalism, and can professional groups freely support journalists' rights and interests? **(0–4 points)**

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT (0–40 POINTS)

1. To what extent are media outlets' news and information content determined by the government or a particular partisan interest? **(0–10 points)**
2. Is access to official or unofficial sources generally controlled? **(0–2 points)**
3. Is there official or unofficial censorship? **(0–4 points)**
4. Do journalists practice self-censorship? **(0–4 points)**
5. Do people have access to media coverage and a range of news and information that is robust and reflects a diversity of viewpoints? **(0–4 points)**
6. Are both local and foreign journalists able to cover the news freely and safely in terms of physical access and on-the-ground reporting? **(0–6 points)**
7. Are journalists, bloggers, or media outlets subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor as a result of their reporting? **(0–10 points)**

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT (0–30 POINTS)

1. To what extent are media owned or controlled by the government and does this influence their diversity of views? **(0–6 points)**
2. Is media ownership transparent, thus allowing consumers to judge the impartiality of the news? **(0–3 points)**
3. Is media ownership highly concentrated and does this influence diversity of content? **(0–3 points)**
4. Are there restrictions on the means of news production and distribution? **(0–4 points)**
5. Are there high costs associated with the establishment and operation of media outlets? **(0–4 points)**
6. Do the state or other actors try to control the media through allocation of advertising or subsidies? **(0–3 points)**
7. Do journalists, bloggers, or media outlets receive payment from private or public sources whose design is to influence their journalistic content? **(0–3 points)**
8. Does the overall economic situation negatively impact media outlets' financial sustainability? **(0–4 points)**

NOTE: Under each question, a lower number of points is allotted for a more free situation, while a higher number of points is allotted for a less free environment. A complete list of the subquestions used to make the assessments can be found online at https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press-2016/methodology.

Notes