

Research Report

MUNISH '12



Please think about the environment and do not print this research report unless absolutely necessary.

Forum	Special Conference 1
Issue:	Freedom of the media
Student Officer:	Loïc Picard
Position:	Dep.President of SPC1, MUNISH2012

Introduction

The 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 impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers"*. However, beyond this article, freedom of press and expression are not fully respected all over the world. Every day and every year, journalists are threatened, harassed, attacked or even murdered because of their profession, while the perpetrators of such crimes are very often allowed to go unpunished.

The definition and the understanding of the notion "Freedom of Press" may change and vary depending on which side we are. As an example, for media consumers, it is the freedom to have a free access to information or entertainment they desire from sources they have chosen, without any authority above them restricting their choices. For medias, it's the freedom to express their opinion as they wish in the goal to offer the public many different options, for both news and entertainment. Furthermore, media freedom for both consumers and creators is the ability to express one's mind without any restriction, and without anyone telling us what is "fair" or not. However, it is important for the medias to not reveal everything, for example keeping state secrets for strategic means or not showing full horrors of war that may shock the public. The term of "Freedom of Press" applies to all types of printed and broadcast material, including books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, films and radio and television programs.

Definition of Key Terms

Media

The Media refers to various means of communication that reach or influence people widely. The term can also be used as a collective noun for the press or news reporting agencies. It is intended to reach a large audience by [mass communication](#).

Media Freedom

The freedom of the media is the freedom of communication and expression through various electronic [media](#) and published materials such as books, films, newspapers, etc.

Censorship

It is the [suppression](#) of speech or other public communication, which may be considered harmful, sensitive, or inconvenient as determined by a government, media outlet, or other controlling body.

General Overview

All over the world, journalists are targeted for their work. The figures of the Committee to Protect Journalist and Reporters Without Borders are alarming and quite scary: 29 journalists have been killed since the beginning of the year, and 924 since 1992 including 577 murdered with impunity.

Without a free press, few other human rights such as democracy aren't attainable. A strong press freedom environment encourages the growth of a robust civil society, leading to stable and sustainable democracies as much as a healthy social, political, and economic development.

The freedom of expression is an essential foundation of democracy. There is a direct link between freedom of press and democracy. The freedom of the media is a necessitous tool of self-governance in a democratic system. This right enables people to obtain information from various sources, and eventually permits them to address to the government their dissatisfaction about something. The right to information must have the priority over any political or economic interests. All states have the duty to protect this fundamental freedom, one of the cornerstones of modern democracies.

Many countries do not ensure freedom of press by providing strong protections against censorship by law, however it is absolutely necessary to balance conflicting rights in order to determine what can and cannot be censored. Censorship must not necessarily be seen as a violation of human rights. As

an example; in wartime, censorship is used with the intention of preventing the release of information that could be advantageous to enemies. It involves keeping locations and strategies secret

In order to preserve secrets of a nation, censorship is than necessary.

Censorship can be a threat – The Case of Cyber Censorship

In a lot of countries, the situation of freedom of press is alarming and reporters have to face threats of censorship danger like death, in carrying out their jobs of informing others. Countries such as Eritrea, Syria, and Somalia or Libya have been classified by the “World Press Index” published by Reporters Without Borders as being in a “very serious situation”. Russia is sliding more and more backwards on Press Freedom.

More than ever before, online freedom of expression is a concept that is now spreading more and more all over the world and is becoming a major issue. The successful digital uses of communication during Arab Spring led to an increased censorship in Egypt or in Libya including the complete loss of Internet access for periods of time.

Never have so many countries been affected by online censorship, whether online surveillance has been established, websites have been blocked or the adoption of repressive Internet laws. Netizens are targeted by government reprisals. Around 120 people are currently detained for freely expressing their views online. The World Day Against Cyber Censorship – celebrated on 12 march – has been created to gather supporters of an Internet without any restrictions and accessible to all.

Major Parties Involved on the view

Reporters Without Borders (RWB)

Their mission is there to investigate cases, expose the limits on press freedom and support journalists who are being persecuted. Reporters Without Borders is **the largest press freedom organization in the world** and they have been working since their creation in 1985 to protect and defend journalists

Freedom of press status in the world in 2012



Committee to Protect Journalists (CJP)

It is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide by defending the rights of journalists to report the news without fear of reprisal.

Syria

The fundamental Rights of freedom of speech and press are severely dismissed in Syria, although Article 38 of the constitution provides these rights. In 2011 Syria is considered by the “Press Status” as “Not Free”.

Any critics addressed towards the government can lead to lawsuits, fines or harassment. Journalists in Syria have to face frequent harassment, including banishment from the country, intimidation through arrest, detention, and torture. Since the beginning of the revolt in Syria, 13 journalists have been killed.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The country has a high degree of censorship and [freedom of the press](#) does not exist. North Korea is at the bottom of the World Press Freedom Index Rankings. All [media](#) are [owned and controlled](#) by the [North Korean government](#). All media in North Korea gets its news from the [Korean Central News Agency](#), which dedicates a large portion of its resources towards [propaganda](#) of the nation and the president.

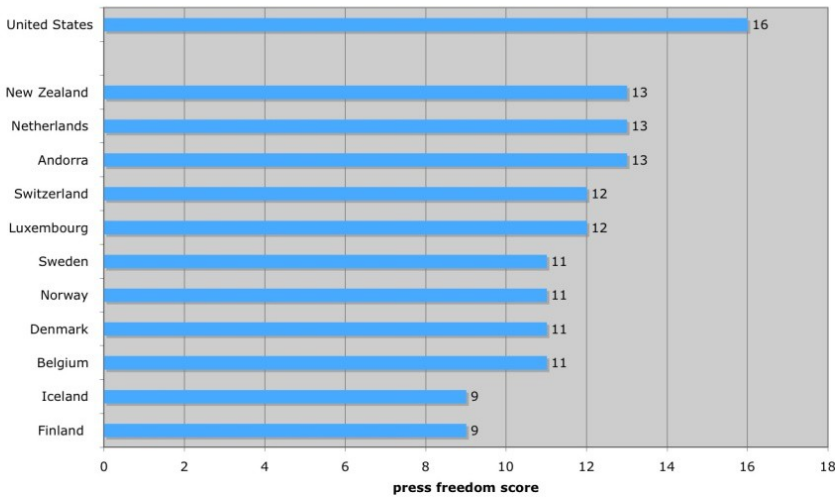
China

Media and Internet censorship in China is among the most stringent in the world. [Reporters Without Borders](#) ranks China's press situation as "very serious" as much as [Freedom House](#) ranks their press as "not free". This censorship is carried out by many laws and administrative regulations. The authorities do not only block website content but also restrict Internet access. Notable censored subjects include but are not limited to, democracy, Tibet, corruption, pornography and religious content.

UNESCO

UNESCO promotes freedom of expression, freedom of the press and fosters media independence and pluralism. UNESCO supports independent media in zones of conflict to enable them to play an active role in conflict prevention and resolution and the transition towards a culture of peace.

The Countries With the Most Press Freedom, and the United States
 ©2009 "Ranking America" (<http://rankingamerica.wordpress.com>)



Data from Freedom House
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=389&cr=2007>

Higher score is less free

Timeline of Key Events

Dates

Events

December 15, 1791:

Adoption of the First amendment to the US constitution. The amendment prohibits the making of any law impeding the free exercise of religion, abridging the freedom of speech, infringing on the freedom of the press

May 3rd, 1991:

Declaration of Windhoek (Namibia)

December 1993:

Establishment by the General Assembly of the United Nations of the World Press Freedom day. It is annually observed on May 3

July, 2010:

Wikileaks releases 76,000 classified documents chronicling the war in Afghanistan.

22nd October, 2010:	Wikileaks publishes nearly 400,000 classified military documents from the Iraq war.
November, 2010 :	El País , Le Monde , Der Spiegel , The Guardian , and The New York Times together publish the first 291 documents from WikiLeaks
November 2011 – May 2012:	13 journalists killed in Syria due to the Basher Al-Assad repression
May, 30 2012:	Release of the French journalist Roméo Langlois who was held hostage for more than a month by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- **The UN Treaties and events on the issue “Freedom of the Media” are:**
 - [General Assembly resolution 59](#) of 14 December 1946 : it states that freedom of information is a fundamental human right.
 - [General Conference of UNESCO resolution 25C/104](#) of 1989 : it focuses on the promotion of "the free flow of ideas by word and image at international as well as national levels".
- **More UN involvement on the issue**
 - UN General Assembly designated 3 May as World Press Freedom Day in 1993. It aims to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate freedom of the media around the world and to defend the media from attacks on their independence.
 - On May 3rd 2012, matching to the World Press freedom day, UN highlighted the role of press freedom as catalyst for social and political change.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to solve issue

Freedom of expression has always been emphasized as an essential basis for the democratic functioning of a society. It is a difficult issue to solve because within the countries, the constitution is not similar and consequently does not have the same degrees of tolerance and freedom toward the press and media. In 1791, one of the first steps made, was by United States of America with the First Amendment to the US Constitution, which is part of Bill of Rights. It prohibits the making of any law abridging the freedom of speech and infringing on the freedom of the press. The challenge is of course to ensure freedom of media all over the world whether the constitution allows it or not. In 1991, in a context of democratization of African regions, which had known crises and the end of the Cold War, African Newspaper journalists put together a statement of press principles at Windhoek. This document - promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press - was one of the first to affirm international community's commitment for this cause; it has been a widely influential text. NGO's such as Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists have made the freedom of the media their main goal. Since their creation, in the early 80's, they have been combating for that cause organizing demonstrations and events to protest against this lack of freedom.

Possible Solutions

All members have to support the actions done by Press Freedom NGO's and help them to work together in a same direction.

They could give financial support to these organizations to increase their means of actions. To continue on that way by producing more and more awareness campaigns. The goal is to expand these campaigns in countries where censorship dominates and where the press status is "Not Free". It is only by educating the population and showing them something new, with a new approach on the Medias; that things will really change. Cooperation between countries is fundamental for the development of the quality of press institutes. The right to information is an essential foundation of democracy. The countries must recognize the importance of Medias in their society for democracy. The objective pursued is to make freedom of speech and of press one of the inalienable rights of the constitution in each country.

UN Members, whether they are NGO's or countries, they must collaborate and cooperate to conduct investigations of press freedom violations by region or topic. If necessary, teams shall be sent to assess working conditions for journalists in a certain country. All countries must also provide assistance for journalists and media who are either in danger or subsisting in difficulty. If there is non-application of these principles, members could think together of economic and political sanctions to the addressed member(s).

Bibliography

The Battle for Media Freedom, Part 1: What Is Media Freedom?" *The Battle for Media Freedom, Part 1: What Is Media Freedom?* N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2012. <<http://mediafreedom.org/2010/07/what-is-media-freedom/>>.

"Censorship." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 08 Oct. 2012. Web. 11 Aug. 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship>>.

"First Amendment to the United States Constitution." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 31 July 2012. Web. 11 Aug. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution>.

"Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Press." *Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Press*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.lincoln.edu/criminaljustice/hr/Speech.htm>>.

"Freedom of the Press." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 08 Oct. 2012. Web. 11 Aug. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_the_press>.

"Press Freedom | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization." *Press Freedom | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2012.

<<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/press-freedom/>>.

"Press Freedom at Issue amid Maldives Chaos." *Press Freedom Online*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2012.

<<http://cpj.org/>>.

"Press, News, Journalists, Journalism, Freedom, Reporting, Censorship, Expression, Media, Governance, Democracy, Democratic, Windhoek, UNESCO, United Nations." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.un.org/en/events/pressfreedomday/windhoek.shtml>>.

Reporters Without Borders. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2012. <<http://en.rsf.org/>>.

"Syria." *Freedom House*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2011/syria>>.

"Timeline: WikiLeaks." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 30 Nov. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2012.

<<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/US/11/30/wikileaks.timeline/index.html>>.

"Windhoek Declaration." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 07 May 2012. Web. 11 Aug. 2012.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windhoek_Declaration>.

"World Press Freedom Day." *World Press Freedom Day*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Aug. 2012.

<<http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/world-press-freedom-day>>.

Appendix or Appendices

- **Major Parties involved official websites :**
 - Reporter Without Borders website: <<http://en.rsf.org/>>
 - Committee to protect journalists : <<http://cpj.org/>>

- **Others**
 - World Press index Freedom (Reporters Without Borders): <<http://chartsbin.com/view/1329>>

- Declaration of Windhoek on “Promoting an independent and pluralistic African press”, Namibia 1991 < http://www.unesco.org/webworld/peace_library/UNESCO/HRIGHTS/327-331.HTM>
- Chart showing the ratio of websites blocked in China by Google search engine : <<http://wiki.nus.edu.sg/display/cs1105groupreports/5.+Policies+and+Implemented+Laws>>

*Higher
score is
less free*