



How free were the media in 2006?

A new global report for IFAJ members

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(Note: This professional development feature is provided through a partnership of IFAJ and the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center, University of Illinois.)

In pursuing the mission of IFAJ, members have a long history of supporting and encouraging freedom of expression in agricultural journalism and in journalism, generally.

You can learn the current status of media freedom in your country, and others, through recent statistical reports from organizations that monitor press freedom. Here are highlights for 2006, as provided by several independent non-governmental organizations that support the expansion of press freedom, internationally.

One of organizations, Freedom House (an international non-profit organization with its secretariat in the United States), has compiled survey data since 1980. Governments, policy makers, international institutions, scholars and others use it as the most comprehensive available source of data on global media freedom.

Evaluations of press freedom center on Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "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."

You can review details about criteria, sources and methods used for the surveys at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=56&year=2006>

I. Global maps of press freedom during 2006

You can see a global map from Freedom House at the following web site. At a glance, the map identifies nations considered in 2006 to have media/press systems that were free, partly free and not free. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2006>

You can also see a global map from Reporters Without Borders (a non-profit organization with its international secretariat in France) at the following web site. This map identifies nations considered in 2006 to have various situations relative to media freedom - from good situations, to those that are considered very serious. Also, this site provides maps and descriptions by region and country. http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=639

II. Country rankings of press freedom during 2006

Click on the live link below to see the Freedom House rankings of 194 countries, from most free to least free. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=271&year=2006>

You can see detailed descriptions about media freedom in individual countries at the following World Audit site. World Audit, an international not-for-profit company registered in England, expands the process used by Freedom House. <http://www.worldaudit.org/presstable.html>

III. Globally, how free were the media during 2006?

Here are the breakouts from Freedom House:

A. By country

Free 38 percent of 194 countries

Partly free 28 percent
Not free 34 percent

Total 100 percent (194 countries)

B. By population

Free 17 percent of global population
Partly free 40 percent
Not free 43 percent



Total 100 percent

IV. Signs of "freedom stagnation?"

"Freedom of the World 2007," a survey of worldwide political rights and civil liberties, revealed what Freedom House described as worrisome trends that may threaten the expansion of freedom in the future. Executive Director Jennifer Windsor observed in a January 17 news release:

"Although the past 30 years have seen significant gains for political freedom around the world, the number of free countries has remained largely unchanged since the high point in 1998. Our assessment points to a freedom stagnation that has developed in the last decade and should lead to renewed policy attention to addressing the obstacles that are preventing further progress."