

EMBARGOED UNTIL MAY 3 - 6am PARIS TIME (GMT +2)

2024 World Press Freedom Index – journalism under political pressure

Press freedom around the world is being threatened by the very people who should be its guarantors – political authorities. This is clear from the latest annual World Press Freedom Index produced by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). This finding is based on the fact that, of the five indicators used to compile the ranking, it is the [political indicator](#) that has fallen most, registering a global average fall of 7.6 points.

Governments fail to protect journalism

A growing number of governments and political authorities are not fulfilling their role as guarantors of the best possible environment for journalism and for the public's right to reliable, independent, and diverse news and information. RSF sees a worrying decline in support and respect for media autonomy and an increase in pressure from the state or other political actors.

"As more than half the world's population goes to the polls in 2024, RSF is warning of a worrying trend revealed by the 2024 World Press Freedom Index: a decline in the political indicator, one of five indicators detailed in the Index. States and other political forces are playing a decreasing role in protecting press freedom. This disempowerment sometimes goes hand in hand with more hostile actions that undermine the role of journalists, or even instrumentalise the media through campaigns of harassment or disinformation. Journalism worthy of that name is, on the contrary, a necessary condition for any democratic system and the exercise of political freedoms."

Anne Bocandé, RSF editorial director

At the international level, this year is notable for a clear lack of political will on the part of the international community to enforce the principles of protection of journalists, especially UN Security Council Resolution 2222. The war in Gaza has been marked by a record number of violations against journalists and the media since October 2023. More than 100 Palestinian reporters have been killed by the Israel Defence Forces, including at least 22 in the course of their work.

Occupied and under constant Israeli bombardment, Palestine is ranked 157th out of 180 countries and territories surveyed in the overall 2024 World Press Freedom Index, but it is ranked among the last 10 with regard to security for journalists ([see the 2024 World Press Freedom Index security ranking](#)).

Journalism vs disinformation in a super election year

While 2024 is the biggest election year in world history, 2023 also saw decisive elections, especially in Latin America, that were won by self-proclaimed predators of press freedom and media plurality, like Javier Milei in Argentina (down 26 to 66th), who shut down the country's biggest news agency in a worrisome symbolic act.

Elections are often accompanied by violence against journalists, as in Nigeria (112th) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (123rd). The military juntas that seized power in coups in the Sahel, especially Niger (down 19 to 80th), Burkina Faso (down 28 to 86th) and Mali (down one to 114th), continue to tighten their grip on the media and obstruct journalists' work. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's reelection in Türkiye is also a source of some concern: ranked 158th, the country's placement in the Index continues to lose points in the Index.

In the absence of regulation, the use of generative AI in the arsenal of disinformation for political purposes is a concern. Deepfakes now occupy a leading position in influencing the course of elections. This was evidenced by the audio deepfake of the journalist **Monika Todova** during the parliamentary elections in Slovakia (down 12 to 29th), one of the first documented cases of this type of attack on a journalist with the aim of influencing the outcome of a democratic election.

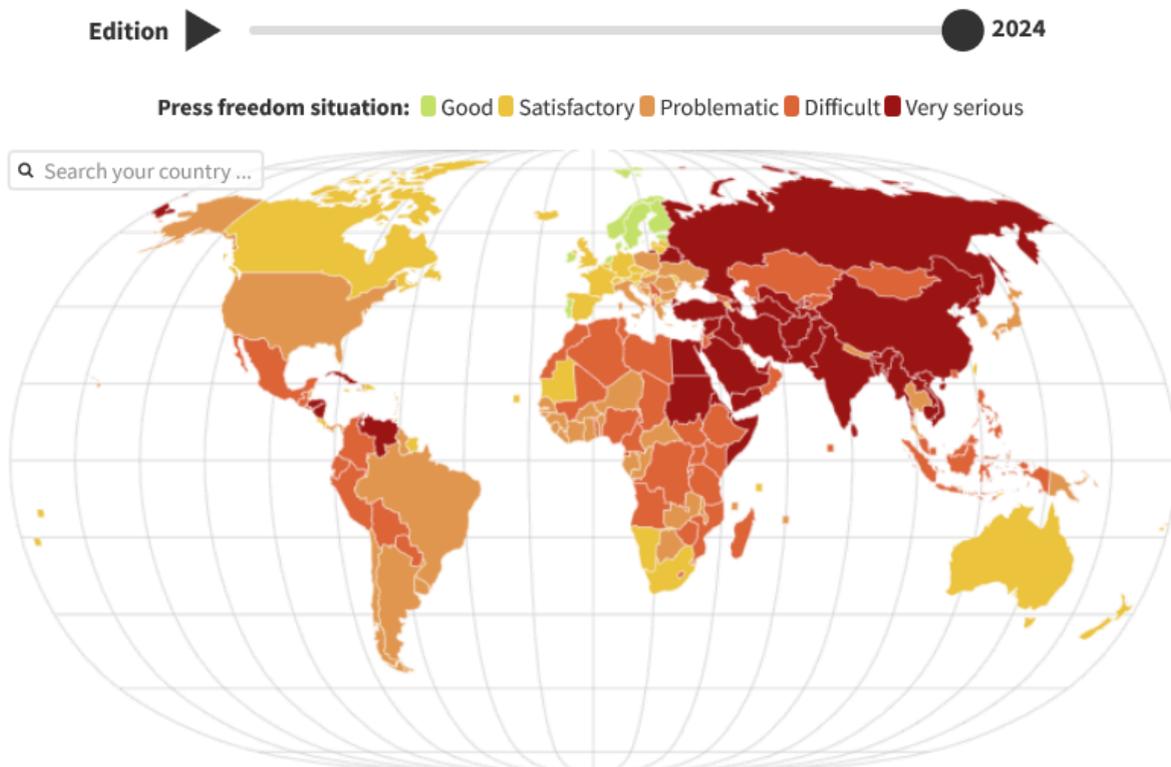
Many governments have stepped up their control over social media and the Internet, restricting access, blocking accounts, and suppressing messages carrying news and information. Journalists who say what they think on social media in Vietnam (174th) are almost systematically locked up. In China (172nd), in addition to detaining more journalists than any other country in the world, the government continues to exercise strict control over information channels, implementing censorship and surveillance policies to regulate online content and restrict the spread of information deemed to be sensitive or contrary to the party line.

Some political groups fuel hatred and distrust of journalists by insulting them, discrediting them, and threatening them. Others are orchestrating a takeover of the media ecosystem, whether through state-owned media under their control, or privately owned media via acquisitions by allied businessmen. Giorgia Meloni's Italy (46th) – where a member of the ruling parliamentary coalition is trying to acquire the second biggest news agency (AGI) – has fallen five places this year.

Political groups often serve as channels of dissemination, or even instigators of disinformation campaigns. In more than three quarters of the countries evaluated in the Index (138 countries), the majority of the questionnaire respondents reported that political actors in their countries were often involved in propaganda or disinformation campaigns. This involvement was described as "systematic" in 31 countries.

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, media censorship has intensified in a spectacular mimicry of Russian repressive methods, especially in Belarus (down 10 to 167th), Georgia (103rd), Kyrgyzstan (120th), and Azerbaijan (down 13 to 164th). Kremlin influence has reached as far as Serbia (down seven to 98th), where pro-government media [carry](#) Russian propaganda and the authorities [threaten](#) exiled Russian journalists. Russia (162nd), where Vladimir Putin was unsurprisingly reelected in 2024, continues to wage a war in Ukraine (61st) that has had a big impact on the media ecosystem and journalists' safety.

In 2024, conditions for practising journalism were satisfactory in only a quarter of the world's countries



Source: [World Press Freedom Index](#), [Link to share](#)
©Reporters Without Borders



The best and the worst

The overall decline in the political indicator has also affected the trio at the top of the World Press Freedom Index. Norway, still in first place, has seen a fall in its political score, and Ireland (8th), where politicians have subjected media outlets to judicial intimidation, has ceded its leading position in the European Union to Denmark (2nd), followed by Sweden (3rd).

The three Asian countries at the bottom of last year's Index – Vietnam, China and North Korea – have ceded their positions to three countries whose political scores have plummeted: Afghanistan (down 44 in the political ranking), which has persecuted journalists

incessantly since the Taliban returned to power; Syria (down eight in the political ranking); and Eritrea (down nine in the political ranking), which is now last in both the political and overall rankings. The last two countries have become lawless zones for the media, with a record number of journalists detained, missing or held hostage.

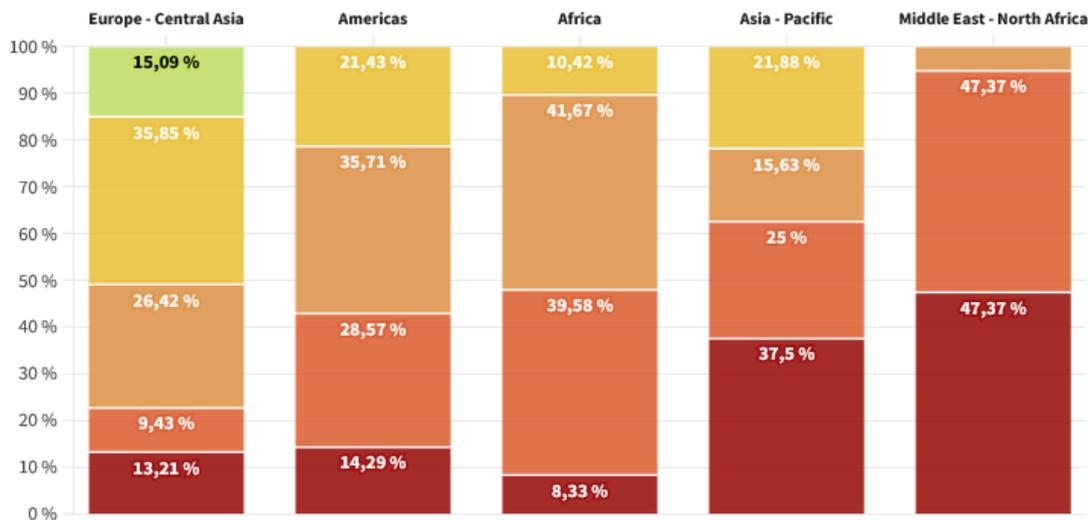
The Index by regions

Press freedom in the world's five regions in 2024

Press freedom in the world's five regions in 2024

2023 2024

Situation : Good Satisfactory Problematic Difficult Very serious



Source : [World Press Freedom Index](#), Link to share
©Reporters Without Borders



The **Maghreb - Middle East** region is the one with the worst situation in the **2024 World Press Freedom Index**. It is followed by the Asia-Pacific region, where journalism is suffocating under the weight of authoritarian governments. Africa, although less than 10% of the region is in a “very serious” situation, almost half of the countries are in a “difficult” situation.

The countries where press freedom is “good” are all in Europe, and more specifically within the European Union, which has adopted its first media freedom law (EMFA). Ireland has dropped out of the Index’s top three countries, replaced by Sweden, while Germany is now one of the top ten countries. Press freedom is nonetheless being put to the test in [Hungary](#), [Malta](#) and [Greece](#), the three lowest-ranked EU countries. Further east in Europe, the

conditions for practising journalism are deteriorating due to the scale of disinformation and censorship of media outlets falsely accused of undermining national security or terrorism. This is the case in Russia (162nd), [Belarus](#) (167th) and [Turkmenistan](#) (175th), while in [Georgia](#) (down 26 to 103rd), the ruling party is cultivating a rapprochement with Moscow. As a result of improvements in its security indicator – fewer journalists killed – and its political indicator, [Ukraine](#) (61st) has moved up 18 places.

In the **Americas**, the inability of journalists to cover subjects related to organised crime, corruption or the environment for fear of reprisals poses a major problem. The percentage of countries whose situation is classified as “satisfactory” (yellow) has drastically dropped from 36% in 2023 to 21% in 2024. One of the world’s biggest economic powers, the United States, has fallen ten places. In almost all of the countries in South America, the press freedom situation is now “problematic” – a deterioration due in part to the election of press freedom predators such as Javier Milei and governments’ inability to reduce violence against journalists. Mexico continues to be the most dangerous country for journalists, with 37 killed since 2019.

Sub-Saharan Africa was very affected by political violence during major elections in 2023. More than 8% of African countries are now coloured red on the chart, twice as many as in 2023. Nigeria, Togo and Madagascar have been hit by waves of repression of reporters. The region is marked by the decline in security in several Sahel countries – Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali.

In the **Asia-Pacific** region – the world’s second most difficult region for practising journalism – five countries are among the world’s ten most dangerous countries for media personnel: Myanmar (171st), China (172nd), North Korea (177th), Vietnam (174th) and Afghanistan (178th). But, unlike last year, none of the region’s countries is in the Index’s top 15.

In the **Middle East and North Africa**, the situation is “very serious” in nearly half of the countries. The United Arab Emirates joins the eight other countries in the red zone on the map: Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Palestine, Iraq, Bahrain, Syria and Egypt. Palestine, occupied and under bombardment by the Israeli army, and the deadliest country for journalists, is also at the bottom of the Index. Qatar is now the region’s only country where the situation is not classified either as “difficult” or “very serious.”

In all regions of the world, upcoming elections portend very strong pressure on journalists.