World press freedom rankings

SA falls to 38th place in world press freedom rankings

Reporters Without Borders
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Country down five places in Reporters without Borders' 2009 index (with table)

Extract from the Reporters Without Borders 2009 World Press Freedom Index:

Africa

Five decades after independence, African journalists still seeking freedom

Horn still worst off, censorship hits Sudan and Rwanda, prison death mars Cameroon

With many African countries marking the 50th anniversary of their independence, 2010 should have been a year of celebration but the continent's journalists were not invited to the party. The Horn of Africa continues to be the region with the least press freedom but there were disturbing reverses in the Great Lakes region and East Africa.

Eritrea (178th) is at the very bottom of the world ranking for the fourth year running. At least 30 journalists and four media contributors are held incommunicado in the most appalling conditions, without right to a trial and without any information emerging about their situation. Journalists employed by the state media - the only kind of media tolerated - have to choose between obeying the information ministry's orders or trying to flee the country. The foreign media are not welcome.

In Somalia (161st), the media are not being spared by the civil war between the transitional government and Islamist militias, and journalists often fall victim to the violence. The two leading Islamist militias, Al-Shabaab and Hizb-Al-Islam, are gradually seizing control of independent radio stations and using them to broadcast their religious and political propaganda.

The temporary lifting of prior censorship on the print media in Sudan (172nd) was just a smokescreen. It has fallen 24 places and now has Africa's second worst ranking, partly as a result of the closure of the opposition daily Rai-al-Shaab and the jailing of five members of its staff, but above all because of the return of state surveillance of the print media, which makes it impossible to cover key stories such as the future referendum on South Sudan's independence.

Rwanda (169th), where President Paul Kagame was returned to power in a highly questionable election, has fallen 12 places and now has Africa's third worst ranking. The six-month suspension of leading independent publications, the climate of terror surrounding the presidential election and Umuvugizi deputy editor Jean-Léonard Rugambage's murder in Kigali were the reasons for this fall. Journalists are fleeing the country because of the repression, in an exodus almost on the scale of Somalia's.

Surveillance of the press and a decline in the climate for journalists during the May elections account for Ethiopia's continued bad ranking (139th). Violence against journalists, arbitrary police arrests and intelligence agency abuses explain why Nigeria (145th) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (148th) are still in the bottom third.

Uganda (96th) fell a relatively modest 10 places but the murders of two journalists in separate incidents in September and the recent increase in physical attacks and arrests of journalists are fuelling serious concerns about the climate for the media in the run-up to next year's elections. Cameroon (129th) fell 20 places as a result of newspaper editor Bibi Ngota's death in prison and the continuing detention of two other editors. Côte d'Ivoire (118th) also fell a few places due to the harassment of newspapers such as L'Expression and Le Nouveau Courrier d'Abidjan and the temporary ban on local retransmission of French TV station France 24 in February.

Gambia (125th) and Niger (104th) were neck and neck last year at a 137th and 139th thanks to the predatory behaviour of their respective presidents, Yahya Jammeh and Mamadou Tandja. But press freedom in Niger has improved markedly since Tandja's overthrow in February, accounting for its 35-place jump, although the situation is still very uncertain. Uncertainty is also the dominant feature of another country in transition, Guinea (113th). It fell 13 places because of a massacre on 28 September 2009 but a new government that could show more respect for press freedom is still seen as a possibility.

After two difficult years, Kenya (70th) has recovered a respectable position. Chad (112th) is also leaving behind the fraught period in 2008 when a state of emergency was imposed, but the level of freedom allowed the press is still insufficient. Angola (104th) has an acceptable ranking although the situation has been soured by a Radio Despertar journalist's still unsolved murder in September 2010.

After sharp falls in 2009, Gabon (107th) and Madagascar (116th) have recovered some of the lost ground thanks to a decline in tension. But Madagascar's transitional authorities need to show more respect for the press by ceasing to jail journalists (such as those of Radio Fahazavana) and ceasing to close down news media. Zimbabwe (123rd) has again made some slow progress, as it did last year. The return of independent dailies is a step forward for public access to information but the situation is still very fragile.

Two more African countries have entered the ranks of the world's top 50 nations in terms of respect for press freedom. They are Tanzania (41st), although certain stories such as albinism continue to be off-limits for the press, and Burkina Faso (49th), even if justice still has not been rendered in the case of Norbert Zongo, a journalist who was murdered 12 years ago.

The relative positions of the African countries in the top 50 have also changed. They are now led by Namibia (21st), which has recovered its former pre-eminent position, while Cape Verde (26th) has caught up with Ghana (26th) and Mali (26th). South Africa (38th) has fallen five places, in part because of attacks on journalists during the Football World Cup but above all because of the behaviour of senior members of the ruling African National Congress towards the press. ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, for example, expelled BBC correspondent Jonah Fisher from a news conference on 8 April, calling him a "bastard" and "bloody agent." And the government plans to pass two bills that would endanger press freedom, one creating a media tribunal and the other restricting the disclosure of information.

2008 ranking			2009 ranking		
Rank	**Country**	**Mark**	**Rank**	**Country**	**Note**
1	Denmark	0,00	1	Finland	0,00
-	Finland	0,00	-	Iceland	0,00
-	Ireland	0,00	-	Netherlands	0,00
-	Norway	0,00	-	Norway	0,00
-	Sweden	0,00	-	Sweden	0,00
6	Estonia	0,50	-	Switzerland	0,00
7	Netherlands	1,00	7	Austria	0,50
-	Switzerland	1,00	8	New Zealand	1,50
9	Iceland	2,00	9	Estonia	2,00
10	Lituania	2,25	-	Ireland	2,00
11	Belgium	2,50	11	Denmark	2,50
-	Malta	2,50	-	Japan	2,50
13	Austria	3,00	-	Lithuania	2,50
-	Latvia	3,00	14	Belgium	4,00
-	New Zealand	3,00	-	Luxembourg	4,00
16	Australia	3,13	-	Malta	4,00
17	Japan	3,25	17	Germany	4,25
18	Germany	3,50	18	Australia	5,38

19	Canada	3,70	19	United Kingdom	6,00
20	Luxembourg	4,00	20	United States of America	6,75
-	United Kingdom	4,00	21	Canada	7,00
-	United States of America	4,00	-	Namibia	7,00
23	Jamaica	4,75	23	Hungary	7,50
24	Czech Republic	5,00	-	Czech Republic	7,50
25	Cyprus	5,50	25	Jamaica	7,67
-	Hungary	5,50	26	Cape Verde	8,00
27	Ghana	6,00	-	Ghana	8,00
28	Trinidad and Tobago	7,00	-	Mali	8,00
29	Uruguay	7,63	29	Costa Rica	8,08
30	Costa Rica	8,00	30	Latvia	8,50
-	Mali	8,00	-	Trinidad and Tobago	8,50
-	Portugal	8,00	32	Poland	8,88
33	**South Africa**	**8,50**	33	Chile	10,50
34	Macedonia	8,75	34	Hong-Kong	10,75
35	Greece	9,00	35	Slovakia	11,50
-	Namibia	9,00	-	Surinam	11,50
37	Poland	9,50	37	Uruguay	11,75
-	Slovenia	9,50	**38**	**South Africa**	**12,00**
39	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10,50	39	Spain	12,25
-	Chile	10,50	40	Portugal	12,36
-	Guyana	10,50	41	Tanzania	13,00
42	Surinam	10,60	42	South Korea	13,33
43	France	10,67	-	Papua New Guinea	13,33
44	Cape Verde	11,00	44	France	13,38
-	Slovakia	11,00	45	Cyprus	13,40
-	Spain	11,00	46	Slovenia	13,44
47	Argentina	11,33	47	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13,50
48	Hong-Kong	11,75	48	Taiwan	14,50
49	Italy	12,14	49	Burkina Faso	15,00
50	Romania	12,50	-	Italy	15,00
51	Cyprus (North)	14,00	51	El Salvador	15,83
-	Maldives	14,00	52	Maldives	16,00
-	Mauritius	14,00	-	Romania	16,00
54	Paraguay	14,33	54	Paraguay	16,25
55	Panama	14,50	55	Argentina	16,35
56	Papua New Guinea	14,70	56	Haiti	16,38
57	Burkina Faso	15,00	57	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States	16,50
-	Haiti	15,00	58	Brazil	16,60
59	Taiwan	15,08	59	Guyana	16,63
60	Kuwait	15,25	60	Togo	17,00
61	Lebanon	15,42	61	Cyprus (North)	17,25
62	Botswana	15,50	62	Botswana	17,50
-	Liberia	15,50	-	Croatia	17,50
-	Malawi	15,50	64	Bhutan	17,75
-	Serbia	15,50	65	Mauritius	18,00
-	Tanzania	15,50	-	Seychelles	18,00
-	Togo	15,50	67	Guinea-Bissau	18,25
68	Bulgaria	15,61	68	Macedonia	18,40
69	South Korea	15,67	69	Central African Republic	18,50
70	Bhutan	15,75	70	Benin	19,00
71	Brazil	15,88	-	Bulgaria	19,00
72	Benin	16,00	-	Comoros	19,00
-	Seychelles	16,00	-	Greece	19,00
-	Timor-Leste	16,00	-	Kenya	19,00
75	Kosovo	16,58	75	Moldova	19,13
76	Nicaragua	16,75	76	Mongolia	19,42
77	Montenegro	17,00	77	Guatemala	20,25
78	Croatia	17,17	78	Lebanon	20,50
79	El Salvador	17,25	79	Malawi	21,00
80	Central African Republic	17,75	80	Albania	21,50
81	Georgia	18,83	81	Panama	21,83
82	Comoros	19,00	82	Zambia	22,00
-	Mozambique	19,00	83	Nicaragua	22,33
84	Ecuador	20,00	84	Liberia	22,50
85	Peru	20,88	85	Serbia	23,00
86	Uganda	21,50	86	Israel (Israeli territory)	23,25
-	United Arab Emirates	21,50	87	United Arab Emirates	23,75
88	Albania	21,75	-	Kuwait	23,75
89	Senegal	22,00	-	Tonga	23,75
-	Ukraine	22,00	90	Lesotho	24,00
91	Mongolia	23,33	91	Sierra Leone	24,25
92	Guinea-Bissau	23,50	92	Kosovo	24,83
93	Israel (Israeli territory)	23,75	93	Senegal	25,00
94	Qatar	24,00	-	Timor-Leste	25,00
95	Bolivia	24,17	95	Mauritania	25,38
96	Kenya	25,00	96	Uganda	25,50
97	Zambia	26,75	97	Dominican Republic	26,13
98	Dominican Republic	26,83	98	Mozambique	26,50
99	Lesotho	27,50	99	United States of America (extra-territorial)	27,00
100	Guinea	28,50	-	Georgia	27,00
-	Indonesia	28,50	101	Armenia	27,50
-	Mauritania	28,50	-	Ecuador	27,50
103	Burundi	29,00	103	Bolivia	28,13

-	Côte d'Ivoire	29,00	104	Angola	28,50
105	India	29,33	-	Montenegro	28,50
106	Guatemala	29,50	-	Niger	28,50
-	Oman	29,50	107	Gabon	28,75
108	United States of America (extra-territorial)	30,00	108	Burundi	28,88
109	Cameroon	30,50	109	Peru	30,00
110	Djibouti	31,00	110	Djibouti	30,50
111	Armenia	31,13	111	Samoa	33,00
112	Jordan	31,88	112	Chad	33,17
113	Tajikistan	32,00	113	Guinea	33,50
114	Moldova	33,75	114	Congo	33,60
115	Sierra Leone	34,00	115	Tajikistan	34,50
116	Congo	34,25	116	Madagascar	34,88
117	Cambodia	35,17	117	Indonesia	35,83
118	Nepal	35,63	118	Côte d'Ivoire	36,00
119	Angola	36,50	119	Nepal	36,38
-	Bahrein	36,50	120	Jordan	37,00
121	Bangladesh	37,33	121	Qatar	38,00
122	Philippines	38,25	122	India	38,75
-	Turkey	38,25	123	Zimbabwe	39,50
124	Venezuela	39,50	124	Oman	40,25
125	Kyrgyzstan	40,00	125	Gambia	40,50
126	Colombia	40,13	126	Bangladesh	42,50
127	Morocco	41,00	127	Egypt	43,33
128	Honduras	42,00	128	Cambodia	43,83
129	Gabon	43,50	129	Cameroon	44,30
130	Thailand	44,00	130	Iraq	45,58
131	Malaysia	44,25	131	Ukraine	46,83
132	Chad	44,50	132	Israel (extra-territorial)	47,00
133	Singapore	45,00	133	Algeria	47,33
134	Madagascar	45,83	-	Venezuela	47,33
135	Nigeria	46,00	135	Morocco	47,40
136	Zimbabwe	46,50	136	Mexico	47,50
137	Gambia	48,25	-	Singapore	47,50
-	Mexico	48,25	138	Turkey	49,25
139	Niger	48,50	139	Ethiopia	49,38
140	Ethiopia	49,00	140	Russia	49,90
141	Algeria	49,56	141	Malaysia	50,75
142	Kazakhstan	49,67	142	Brunei	51,00
143	Egypt	51,38	143	Honduras	51,13
144	Swaziland	52,50	144	Bahrein	51,38
145	Iraq	53,30	145	Colombia	51,50
146	Azerbaijan	53,50	-	Nigeria	51,50
-	Democratic Republic of Congo	53,50	147	Afghanistan	51,67
148	Sudan	54,00	148	Democratic Republic of Congo	51,83
149	Afghanistan	54,25	149	Fiji	52,75
150	Israel (extra-territorial)	55,50	150	Palestinian Territories	56,13
151	Belarus	59,50	151	Pakistan	56,17
152	Fiji	60,00	152	Azerbaijan	56,38
153	Russia	60,88	153	Thailand	56,83
154	Tunisia	61,50	154	Belarus	57,00
155	Brunei	63,50	155	Swaziland	57,50
156	Libya	64,50	156	Philippines	60,00
157	Rwanda	64,67	157	Saudi Arabia	61,50
158	Equatorial Guinea	65,50	158	Sri Lanka	62,50
159	Pakistan	65,67	159	Kyrgyzstan	63,00
160	Uzbekistan	67,67	160	Libya	63,50
161	Palestinian Territories	69,83	161	Somalia	66,00
162	Sri Lanka	75,00	162	Kazakhstan	68,50
163	Saudi Arabia	76,50	163	Uzbekistan	71,50
164	Somalia	77,50	164	Tunisia	72,50
165	Syria	78,00	165	Vietnam	75,75
166	Vietnam	81,67	166	Cuba	78,00
167	Yemen	83,38	167	Equatorial Guinea	79,00
168	China	84,50	168	Laos	80,50
169	Laos	92,00	169	Rwanda	81,00
170	Cuba	94,00	170	Yemen	82,13
171	Burma	102,67	171	China	84,67
172	Iran	104,14	172	Sudan	85,33
173	Turkmenistan	107,00	173	Syria	91,50
174	North Korea	112,50	174	Burma	94,50
175	Eritrea	115,50	175	Iran	94,56
			176	Turkmenistan	95,33
			177	North Korea	104,75
			178	Eritrea	105,00

Source: Reporters Without Borders, October 20 2010