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Freedom of the Press 2010 - Kosovo

Status: Partly Free

Legal Environment: 15

Political Environment: 20

Economic Environment: 18

Total Score: 53

- Article 40 of the constitution provides for freedom of expression. However, the lack of international consensus on Kosovo's independence hinders efforts to protect and clarify media freedom.
- The judicial system is weak and caught between local and UN regulations. Two journalists from the daily newspaper *Koha Ditore* were threatened by a judge in 2009 regarding an article they were preparing to publish. Though a case was brought against him, the judge was later exonerated. There were no reports that officials used libel or other laws to punish journalists or restrict content during the year.
- Reporters frequently reported not being able to access public information.
- Since 2006, media have been regulated by an Independent Media Commission (IMC). The system for licensing broadcast media is complicated and inconsistent. However, a panel convened by the International Research and Exchanges Board noted that individuals who sit on the IMC are elected in an apolitical process.
- There is no official censorship, but journalists are often pressured by authorities and business interests. Self-censorship is considered to be a problem in some parts of the small country.
- IPKO, a private telecommunications and cable television provider, suspended the transmission of Rrokum TV in April. There are indications that IPKO came under government pressure to block the independent station. IPKO shareholders are believed to be government supporters.
- There were several reported incidents of violence during the year. In January, a group of journalists were assaulted by onlookers at the site of a bomb blast. TV Most reporter Mirjana Nedeljkovic and her cameraman, Dejan Tanasijevic, both had to be hospitalized for their injuries. In March, cameraman Bojan Kosanin was assaulted by police while his colleague Marijana Simic was kept in the car in which they were traveling. In May, Jeta Xharra, head of the Kosovo office of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), and her colleagues received anonymous death threats after BIRN reported on government harassment of the

media.

- Media outlets are for the most part privately owned.
- Editorial independence remains a weakness in Kosovo, with media generally deferring to business interests. Public broadcaster Radio Television Kosovo (RTK) is particularly in the thrall of political and economic interests. According to the South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO), this is troubling in part because RTK had previously set a good example in the region by representing the diverse population of Kosovo. The government also supports a newly established station, TV Klan Kosovo.
- Local newspapers, which rely on government advertising, are often critical of independent media and promote the government's agenda. *Infopress*, one such newspaper, published editorials containing threats against Xharra in June. It is thought that these editorials prompted the anonymous harassment against Xharra and her colleagues.
- Although many media were able to sustain operations through aid donations, most outlets struggled financially. Public outlets have a slight financial advantage, as they are exempt from the value-added tax.
- About 20 percent of Kosovar households are estimated to have internet access. Blogs are not common sources for news, but they operate without impediments. Social-networking and video-sharing sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are gaining in popularity and are not blocked by the government.

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