

Title	Freedom of the Press 2010 - Guatemala
Publisher	Freedom House
Country	Guatemala
Publication Date	30 September 2010
Cite as	Freedom House, <i>Freedom of the Press 2010 - Guatemala</i> , 30 September 2010, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ca44d942.html [accessed 19 July 2011]
Disclaimer	This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher.

Freedom of the Press 2010 - Guatemala

Status: Partly Free

Legal Environment: 16

Political Environment: 26

Economic Environment: 18

Total Score: 60

Survey Edition	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total Score, Status	58,PF	58,PF	59,PF	58,PF	60,NF

- Guatemalan journalists continued to work under difficult and dangerous conditions in 2009. Violence against the press by drug traffickers and other criminal organizations continued and was rarely prosecuted, encouraging self-censorship. A number of journalists also received death threats during the year.
- Article 35 of the constitution ensures freedom of expression, which is generally respected by the government.
- The Law for Free Access to Public Information took effect in April 2009, promoting transparency and granting citizens access to information about public institutions. However, access to information remains difficult in practice, especially for journalists covering corruption in the provinces.
- In August 2009, a new initiative to legalize community radio stations was introduced in Congress. Community radio has long operated outside the law in Guatemala, but there were no new reports of station closures.
- Also in August, publisher Raul Figueroa-Sarti was convicted of violating copyright laws, sentenced to one year in prison, and fined 50,000 quetzales (US\$6,000). Press freedom groups alleged that Figueroa was in fact being punished for publishing books on human rights violations in Guatemala.
- The government's special prosecutor for crimes against journalists received 39 reports of attacks or intimidation in 2009, while the Public Ministry received 24 reports of intimidation, up from 10 in 2008. Media groups also reported numerous cases of extralegal intimidation and violence aimed at journalists, often in connection with corruption and government officials.

- In 2009, Guatemala experienced its most violent year in recent history, with 6,451 homicide victims, including several journalists. In April, television reporter Rolando Santiz de Leon, of the Canal 13 news program *Telecentro Trece*, was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen. His cameraman, Juan Antonio de Leon Villatoro, was wounded. Separately, television reporter Marco Antonio Estrada was shot and killed in June by an unknown assailant in the eastern city of Chiquimula.
- The recent increase in violence related to drug trafficking and organized crime has helped to maintain high levels of impunity. However, in October two of the suspects involved in the 2008 abduction and torture of investigative reporter Jose Ruben Zamora were found guilty and sentenced to 8 and 14 years in prison.
- Newspaper ownership is in the hands of business elites with generally centrist or conservative editorial stances. There are four major daily papers. Electronic media ownership is concentrated in the hands of Angel Gonzalez of Mexico, a politically connected entrepreneur who favors conservative perspectives and controls four of Guatemala's six private television stations.
- In February 2009, the local print media accused the government of President Alvaro Colom of using public advertising funds in a discriminatory fashion to punish or reward media outlets. The allegations emerged after the government cancelled all advertising in print media, claiming the move was made for budgetary reasons. However, the government allocated substantial state advertising to television stations owned by Gonzalez.
- There were no reports of government restrictions on internet usage, and the medium was accessed by about 16 percent of the population in 2009.

Copyright notice: © Freedom House, Inc. · All Rights Reserved
