



Freedom of the Press 2014 - Tanzania

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2014 Scores

Press Status: Partly Free

Press Freedom Score (0 = best, 100 = worst): 55

Legal Environment (0 = best, 30 = worst): 18

Political Environment (0 = best, 40 = worst): 22

Economic Environment (0 = best, 30 = worst): 15

Throughout 2013, as Tanzania's increasingly unpopular ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party confronted the growing influence of the main opposition Chadema party, threats and attacks against journalists increased across the country, casting a pall over critical reporting in the run-up to parliamentary elections scheduled for 2015. In addition, press freedom was restricted by a number of anti-press laws that remained on the books despite challenges from media associations.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, at least 17 laws encourage self-censorship and limit the ability of the media to function effectively. The most notorious and widely enforced of these laws is the 1976 Newspaper Registration Act, which empowers authorities to ban publications "in the interest of peace and good order." In July 2012, the Information Ministry had banned the Swahili-language weekly *MwanaHalisi* indefinitely on vague charges of sedition and false reporting for unspecified articles. In January 2013, President Jakaya Kikwete stated his intention to keep the ban on *MwanaHalisi*, and it remained banned as of the end of the year. In September 2013, authorities suspended two leading private Swahili dailies, *Mwananchi* and *MTanzania*, for 14 and 90 days respectively, on accusations of sedition. A coalition of Tanzanian media houses announced an indefinite moratorium on reporting the activities of the information minister after the government failed to respond to the coalition's appeal to have the newspaper bans lifted. A case filed in 2011 against the daily opposition paper *Tanzania Daima* remained pending at the end of 2013. State prosecutors had charged former editor Absalom Kibanda, columnist Samson Mwigamba, and publisher Theophil Makunga with "intent to excite disaffection" over a 2011 article claiming that the government had misused the police force for political gain. Another restrictive law, the National Security Act, allows the government to take action against any piece of investigative journalism that touches on information it considers classified. Libel is a civil offense, and officials have used libel suits to weaken cash-strapped media houses.

Progress on enacting freedom of information legislation has been slow; government officials conducted a research trip to review best practices for an access to information law in early 2013 but no in-country draft

had been developed by year's end. At the 2013 Open Government Partnership Summit in London in late October, Kikwete announced a "flagship commitment" to enact a freedom of information law by mid-2014, after multiple postponements. A number of laws, such as the Civil Service Act and the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act, block access to information for journalists. Many public officials face legal restrictions on providing information to the media.

The 1993 Broadcasting Services Act allows the state to regulate electronic media, and the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), a nominally independent agency, can close stations at will. There is concern that the TCRA is subject to government influence, as its board chairman and director general are both appointed by the president. However, media advocacy groups are generally able to operate freely. In 1995, an independent self-regulatory body, the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT), was established to help promote a freer and open media sphere. Alongside organizations such as Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition and the Media Institute for Southern Africa, Tanzania chapter, the MCT routinely lobbies for media law reform and protection of journalists at risk.

There was an increase in direct attacks and threats against journalists during 2013, especially those operating outside the economic capital, Dar es Salaam. In light of the challenge posed to the ruling party's five-decade long political dominance, authorities cracked down on journalists' critical reporting, especially their attempts to cover the opposition or public protests. In 2013, there were more than a dozen instances of death threats and physical attacks against journalists across the country. Authorities barred many journalists from covering protests in May and June in the rural southern town of Mtwara, while security forces threatened and beat at least five journalists in the town in a bid to silence their reporting. In a separate incident in March, two unknown assailants brutally attacked Absalom Kibanda, chairman of the Tanzania Editors Forum and managing editor of media company New Habari Corp., outside of his home. The assault was so severe that Kibanda required emergency medical treatment, which he received in South Africa. Despite an independent investigation into the attack, no one had been charged at year's end.

Conditions in the semiautonomous Zanzibar archipelago remain more restrictive than on the mainland. There are indications that the local government is interested in reform, as the MCT now has a branch on the islands, new press clubs are operating, and an editors' forum was created in 2009. However, the Zanzibar government still largely controls the content of the national radio and television broadcasts that the islands receive, and even censors the state-owned national television station, which is aired on a delay to enable pre-broadcast review. The government also publishes the only daily paper, *Zanzibar Leo*. *Zanzibar Wiki Hii* is the only private weekly. It generally avoids criticizing the leadership, as implicating Zanzibar lawmakers in criminal activities can result in a minimum fine of approximately \$200 or three years' imprisonment, according to the semiautonomous region's defamation laws. The laws are rarely used to imprison journalists, but authorities have revoked journalists' permits as a means of silencing criticism. There are four local private radio stations, which are given more leeway than mainland media; articles from mainland dailies criticizing the Zanzibari government are often read on the air. Residents can receive private broadcasts from the mainland, and opposition politicians have access to the state media outlets.

There are numerous media outlets in Tanzania as a whole, including dozens of daily and weekly newspapers. The government controls two daily newspapers, and the two main political parties own one each. According to the TCRA, there are 86 licensed radio stations and 28 licensed television stations, but only a small percentage of the population has access to television due to high costs. Private individuals and nongovernmental organizations are the main media owners, but control is concentrated in the hands of a few proprietors. Only five radio stations have national reach – state-run Radio Tanzania and privately owned Radio One, Radio Free Africa, Radio Uhuru, and the youth-oriented Cloud FM – and all are viewed as sympathetic to the CCM. Foreign media content is freely available. Internet penetration in Tanzania has

steadily increased over the past few years, with a usage rate of about 4.5 percent in 2013. Social-media outlets and online forums have grown in popularity in recent years.

The government reportedly continues to withhold advertising from critical newspapers and websites, especially those that favor the opposition. Private firms that are keen to remain on good terms with the government allegedly follow suit, making it difficult for critical media outlets to remain financially viable. The problem is exacerbated by the influence advertisers have over editorial content and media houses' dependence on advertising revenue.

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