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[Home](#) > Guinea-Bissau

## Guinea-Bissau

**Country:**

Guinea-Bissau

**Year:**

2015

**Press Freedom Status:**

PF

**PFS Score:**

59

**Legal Environment:**

17

**Political Environment:**

24

**Economic Environment:**

18

**Status change explanation:** Guinea-Bissau's status improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to strengthened legal protections, the reopening of private outlets, and a reduction in censorship and attacks on journalists in the wake of free and fair elections in April 2014.

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Guinea-Bissau's shift toward functional democracy after two years of instability and military control led to significant improvements in press freedom in 2014, though fear and self-censorship remain pervasive in the face of government weakness, organized crime, and continued military influence in politics and society.

### Legal Environment

Freedoms of expression and the press are guaranteed in the constitution and in a 2005 law. These rights appeared to be enforced under the new democratic government, with no reported violations in 2014. However, criminal laws still ban defamation, abuse of press freedom, and violation of state secrets. No specific legislation guarantees the right to access information, though Article 34 of the constitution states vaguely that "All have a right to information and judicial protection, according to the terms of the law." After a news

blackout following the 2012 coup and the continued restriction of independent media in 2013, the return to democracy in 2014 has seen a freer and more diverse press.

## Political Environment

The return to democracy has led to the reopening of private news outlets, though government control and influence remain strong. While government censorship has dramatically decreased, unofficial censorship remains a problem. Certain subjects are still off-limits, such as the military and its relationship with drug traffickers.

Although coup-related repression has ended, media workers in recent years have experienced increasingly harsh treatment at the hands of those with close connections to South American drug traffickers, including government officials, members of the military, and private citizens. Since 2009, at least three journalists have fled into exile due to threats related to their reporting on drug trafficking in the country. The resulting climate of fear has led to self-censorship, with many journalists afraid to cover drug- or military-related issues. Impunity is the norm for government and military officials who abuse members of the press, though no additional attacks against journalists were reported in 2014.

## Economic Environment

Private media returned to publication and the airwaves after the shift to democracy, though government media still dominate. The state-run Rádio Televisão de Guinea-Bissau (RTGB) and the Portuguese-run RTP's Africa service operate the country's two main television networks. Guinea-Bissau's first community television station, TV Klélé, has managed to sustain itself since launching in 2013. A number of private radio stations, such as Rádio Bombolom, Rádio Sol Mansi, and Rádio Jovem, compete with the state-run broadcaster. Government weekly *Nô Pintcha* operates alongside several less prominent private print outlets. The press in Guinea-Bissau, one of the world's poorest countries, is plagued by financial instability, lack of resources, and low salaries. With only one high-capacity and state-owned printing press, publications have historically struggled with high costs, slow production, and limited supplies of affordable newsprint. Broadcast outlets face unreliable electricity that hinders steady operations. While many young people continue to pursue careers in journalism, the lack of resources hampers growth.

No governmental restrictions on the internet are apparent, though a lack of equipment and infrastructure drastically limits access to the internet in practice. Only around 3 percent of the population had access to the internet in 2014. Guinea-Bissau's .gw domain only became operational in 2014. The African Bureau of the International Federation of Journalists has been working to train Bissau-Guinean journalists to maintain online security and to protect digital publications and data from government or private interference as internet traffic grows. Several online news outlets such as *Bissau Digital* contribute to the information environment, and social media and crowdsourcing were used to provide coverage and transparency during the 2014 national elections. The United

Nations also offered support and equipment for Angolan journalists to improve coverage of Guinea-Bissau's elections and beyond.

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