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Press freedom improved in 2014 due to the passage of a freedom of information law in late November.

Legal Environment

Mozambique's constitution guarantees freedom of the press, explicitly protecting journalists and granting them the right to not reveal their sources. However, the 1991 Press Law contains some limitations on these rights, particularly on national security grounds. Defamation of the president or other high-ranking officials is illegal, and general criminal libel and defamation laws deter journalists from writing freely. Libel and defamation cases, which are common, can lead to fines, prison terms of up to two years, and suspension of the media outlet in question. In May 2014, the Maputo attorney general's office summoned academic and researcher Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco for questioning under the law on Crimes Against State Security, in connection with a December 2013 Facebook post in which he had criticized then President Armando Guebuza. No criminal charges had been filed against him at the year's end. However, in May, the state buildings agency evicted the Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos (IESE), which is headed by Castel-Branco, from its offices, with the IESE given only 15

days' notice to vacate the premises. The move was interpreted by many as political retaliation for Castel-Branco's criticism.

Journalists face difficulties accessing public information and official documents, though after years of discussion and advocacy, the parliament in late November 2014 passed a freedom of information law that had been outlined by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in 2005, and was later championed by UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. The bill applies to "public bodies and private bodies invested with public powers, by law or by contract," and provides for free access to information by any party, with a few restrictions for individual privacy and for bank and trade secrets. Separately, the National Elections Commission took efforts to ensure that journalists could observe vote-counting for October's national elections.

The current regulatory framework for media, administered by the Government Information Bureau, is in need of updating and remains vulnerable to political influence. In particular, there is an urgent need for a legal framework regulating broadcast media. Mozambique's press law almost exclusively addresses print outlets, creating a troubling legal vacuum. According to MISA, radio stations are subject to overly bureaucratic procedures to obtain operating licenses. Bloggers and community radio or newspaper journalists, who often work on a voluntary or part-time basis, may not be equally protected under Mozambican press laws, though this has yet to be tested in a court case. The High Media Council, a government-affiliated regulatory and disciplinary body, primarily concerns itself with guaranteeing prominent figures access to the right of reply.

Political Environment

The government's information office holds regular meetings at which administration officials direct and coordinate coverage at state-controlled media outlets. Censorship by government authorities has been reported at community radio stations. In March 2014, civil society members accused the government of launching a disinformation campaign aimed at undermining a planned demonstration in favor of penal code reform; they claimed that the government had issued statements on social media, through e-mail, and over the radio claiming falsely that the demonstration had been cancelled. Self-censorship by journalists is pervasive, especially in rural areas outside the capital. Independent media often release potentially sensitive stories at the same time, in an effort to counter self-censorship and deter reprisals from the government.

Some reporters undertake significant investigative projects, but journalists say that such endeavors are rare due to high workloads, a lack of resources, and inadequate training. In November 2014, the U.S.-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) IREX and the Brazilian Association for Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI) began a partnership to offer training and support to Mozambican journalists, to strengthen investigative reporting in the country.

Political interference into media content occurs occasionally, though this decreased in 2014 compared to previous years. In one notable case, the editor of the local newspaper *Malacha* in January 2014 was threatened by a district administrator for publishing reports on the local presence of guerillas associated with the opposition Mozambique National

Resistance (RENAMO)—information that called into question the government’s strength and capacity. In April, the district governor in Manica closed down the community radio station CMC Catandica; the station’s manager, John Chekwa, in 2013 had faced and was ultimately cleared of charges related to critical coverage of a powerful agricultural company. Chekwa was told that the station’s building was closed so authorities could conduct renovations. However, the building had already undergone renovations recently; moreover, broadcasting was not interrupted during past construction, suggesting political motives for the closure. The station appeared to resume operations later in 2014, in spite of the eviction.

Despite national elections and an escalation in the armed conflict between RENAMO and the government, there was a decrease in attacks, harassment, and intimidation of journalists in 2014. No journalists were killed in Mozambique in 2014, though the year was marked by the early release from prison of Momad Assife Abdul ‘Nini’ Satar in September, one of the men convicted of the 2001 assassination of investigative journalist Carlos Cardoso, who was known for his exposés of high-level public corruption. Satar was released from prison after serving 13 years of a 24-year sentence, despite the objections of the public prosecutor’s office. Separately, in October, the news outlet *@Verdade* suffered a distributed denial of service (DDoS) cyberattack on the day of the national elections, which brought down its website as polls closed.

Economic Environment

Although progress has been made in the development of a strong and free press in Mozambique, the media landscape is still dominated by state-controlled outlets. Independent media are often underfunded and are generally found only in major cities, with the government employing pressure to restrict advertising in independent outlets. The state-run television station, Televisão de Moçambique (TVM), is still the only domestic television channel with nationwide reach, and has the largest audience. The state provides the bulk of the TVM’s operating budget, and its programming is often biased in favor of the government, offering little opportunity for the political opposition to weigh in. The private channel Soico TV, Portuguese state television’s African service (RTP Africa), and Brazilian-owned TV Miramar also have large audiences.

Radio continues to be a key source of information for the majority of Mozambicans. Compared with television, there is far more opportunity for private radio stations to open and operate. Numerous private FM stations are based in rural areas and broadcast to small audiences. Many of the numerous community stations currently operating were started by and receive their funding from the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or other international aid organizations, but they face serious problems of management and sustainability, as they rely on volunteers, and have faced pressure and threats from local governments and private actors. The European Union (EU) offered additional financial support for community radio coverage of the elections. Despite the prevalence of privately owned radio stations, state-run Rádio Moçambique has the largest audience and is by far the most influential media outlet in the country, offering programming in at least 18 languages. Rádio Moçambique receives about half of its operating budget from the government. While the station is known for presenting critical

political debates and policy issues on its broadcasts, it most frequently invites guests who are sympathetic to the government.

Newspapers and print media have a far smaller audience than radio and television, mainly because the print media are published only in Portuguese, which is spoken by about 11 percent of the population. The high cost of newspapers relative to average incomes, as well as poor distribution networks and a 41 percent illiteracy rate, also contribute to low readership. The government has a majority stake in *Notícias*, the most-read daily newspaper in the country, which rarely prints stories critical of the ruling party. *O País* is the leader of the four private newspapers. *@Verdade*, which offers a mixed platform of print, online, and mobile publishing, continues to grow rapidly. Import taxes on newsprint remains steep, leading to high production costs for newspapers.

The largest source of advertising revenue for local media comes from government ministries and businesses under state control, and some journalists have accused the government and ruling party of allocating advertising according to political concerns, and of favoring friendly outlets.

Internet access is unrestricted, but penetration is low, and there have been reports of government intelligence agents monitoring the e-mail of members of opposition political parties. About 6 percent of the population had access to the internet in 2014, and most usage is confined to major cities. New media and mobile phones are proving useful in increasing access to information and accountability, as media organizations both collect and disseminate information through SMS and social media platforms. Blogging is also increasingly popular.

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