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Tanzania

Country:

Tanzania

Year:

2015

Press Freedom Status:

PF

PFS Score:

54

Legal Environment:

18

Political Environment:

21

Economic Environment:

15

Although threats and attacks against the press decreased in 2014, journalists were still victim to political tensions between Tanzania's ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party and the main opposition Chadema party ahead of 2015 general elections. Hopes for reform of antipress laws through a constitutional review process expected before the elections did not materialize in 2014.

Legal Environment

The current constitution provides for freedom of speech, but 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." The law was not actively used against the press in 2014, but private publications self-censored to avoid potential closure. In April, authorities threatened to close private newspaper *Mawio* for publishing a story concerning the union between the island Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania; no further punitive action was taken. In January, a court acquitted three journalists from the daily opposition paper *Tanzania Daima* of sedition charges brought under the Newspaper Registration Act in 2011 on the grounds that there was insubstantial evidence. 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, but officials have used libel suits to weaken cash-strapped media houses.

President Jakaya Kikwete and Deputy Information Minister Jumia Nkamia told Tanzanian legislators that a much-postponed access to information and media bill would be tabled in February 2015. Journalists were able to participate in the constitutional draft review process that includes additional clauses supporting press freedom and access to information, but the process was not completed by the end of 2014 and a litany of antipress legislation remains on the books. 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 may be subject to government influence, as its board chairman and director general are both appointed by the president. The independent Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) was established by media groups in 1995 as an alternative to government regulation.

Conditions in the semiautonomous Zanzibar archipelago remain more restrictive than on the mainland. There, the private media generally avoid 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.

Political Environment

Foreign media content is freely available in Tanzania. In Zanzibar, the 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 controls the Zanzibar Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and publishes the only daily newspaper, *Zanzibar Leo*. Cable television and private local (FM) radio stations are given more leeway than mainland media on the islands; articles from mainland dailies criticizing the Zanzibari government are often read on the air. Opposition politicians have access to state media outlets. Residents can also receive private broadcasts from the mainland.

Direct attacks and threats against journalists in Tanzania decreased during 2014. However, authorities and the public alike attacked and threatened journalists for their perceived political affiliations ahead of the 2015 general elections. Police were the most egregious perpetrators of violence against journalists. In September, police attacked and injured three journalists—Josephat Isango, Shamimu Ausi, and Yusuf Badi—who were covering the arrival of an opposition leader at police headquarters in Dar es Salaam. The same month, police detained freelance journalist Abdallah Nsabi in northern Tanzania for reporting on an opposition rally. Police did not attend a high-level function, also in

September, that was designed to improve relations and cooperation between the press and security organs.

Economic Environment

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; only a small percentage of the population has access to television due to high costs. Internet penetration in Tanzania continues to increase, with a usage rate of nearly 5 percent in 2014. Social-media outlets and online forums have grown in popularity in recent years. In Zanzibar, three cable television stations and nine local private (FM) radio stations compete with the ZBC.

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 ruling CCM.

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 combined with media houses' dependence on advertising revenue.

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