

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

- \

Angola

[Angola](#) | [Freedom of the Press 2012](#) | [- Select year -](#)

Despite constitutional guarantees that protect freedom of expression and the press, media in Angola continue to operate in a restrictive environment, and conditions deteriorated during the year. In 2011, state-run media continued to be the principal source of information, as the government maintained tight control over private media outlets through legal, political, and security-related means.

Recent laws passed by parliament regarding state security and insult hamper the free activities of the media. In 2010, the Angolan parliament passed a new state security law to replace the old law, known as Article 26 of 1978, which was often utilized by the government to imprison opposition journalists and activists. While the new law is an improvement from the 1978 law, it still allows for the detention of persons who “insult” the Republic of Angola or the president in “public meetings or by disseminating words, images, writings or sound.” Defamation and libel continue to be crimes punishable by imprisonment, and politicians enjoy immunity from any reporting deemed to be “offensive.” In 2011, William Tonet, editor of the newspaper *Folha 8*, was sued for libel by the three prominent generals of the Angolan army in a high-profile case in which he accused senior army officials close to President José Eduardo dos Santos of corruption. In October, he was given a one-year prison sentence and fined the equivalent of \$105,000—an amount greater than the fine imposed for murder. The presiding judge threatened to prosecute journalists if they recorded the trial.

Since its independence in 1975, Angola has been politically dominated by two parties, dos Santos’s Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the opposition National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The ruling MPLA continues to give preferential treatment to state-owned media and had been known to bar access to journalists covering pro-opposition events. Interviews with top politicians and state officials, as well as access to information related to the government, are usually only granted to progovernment or state-run outlets, and state-run media often demand payment to cover opposition politics. Angola is noted as being one of the first African countries to enact a freedom of information act, in 2006, allowing citizens access to government-generated information. However, despite the existence of this law, accessing information remains extremely difficult. The president, Ministry of Communication, and Ministry of Information also have the right to censor material. Self-censorship by journalists at both state-run and private outlets is commonplace.

An increasing number of journalists were harassed, intimidated, attacked, and imprisoned in 2011, although none were killed during the year. In March 2011, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that authorities were barring journalists from covering opposition activities, including hearings in parliament and UNITA party meetings. Also that month, police detained journalists attempting to cover an antigovernment demonstration in the capital, Luanda, and three independent newspapers (*Folha 8*, *Jornal Angolense*, and *Agora*) reported that national authorities had broken into their printing presses

2012 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

Not Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

67

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

19

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

27

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

21

to halt the production of newspapers bearing headlines of antigovernment protests slated to be held later that month.

In May 2011, Radio Despertar journalist Koqui Mukuta was detained and allegedly beaten by police for reporting on a peaceful antigovernment protest in Luanda; authorities confiscated his notebook and recorder. In July, Nelson Sul Angola of the *Angolense* newspaper and Ismael Smalata of *Folha 8* were physically threatened by Fernando Faustino Muteka, the governor of Huambo province, who warned them to stop investigating murders of affiliates of the MPLA lest they be prepared to endure “serious consequences.” In August, Catholic Radio Ecclesia journalist Adão Tiago was arrested without warrant and held incommunicado by authorities for 23 hours for reporting on a spate of nationwide fainting incidents presumed to be the result of the failure of the state to control certain diseases. In October, Cabinda-based journalist José Manuel Gimbi, an employee of the U.S.-funded Voice of America radio program who was based in the northern exclave of Cabinda—where a secessionist movement had been active for years—had his house broken into by men who threatened and intimidated him, just three days after he filed a story critical of dos Santos.

According to CPJ, foreign journalists have also faced difficulties in receiving accreditation and press permits, particularly for reporting on sensitive issues or regions. This was evident in 2011 when two journalists from Mozambique were prohibited from entering the country to report on a meeting of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held in Luanda.

The government both owns and keeps tight control over the largest media outlets in the country. The state-owned newspaper, *Jornal de Angola*, and television channel, Televisão Pública de Angola (TPA), remain the most widely utilized media sources in the country, and together with state-owned Radio Nacional de Angola (RNA) are the only outlets with a truly national reach. Independent newspapers critical of the government do exist, with *Folha 8*, *Agora*, and *Jornal Angolense* being the most prominent. While more than a dozen privately owned newspapers operate, most are owned by individuals with connections to the government or ruling party, and are distributed primarily in urban areas, particularly in Luanda. Privately owned radio stations are not allowed to use repeaters to extend their broadcast signals outside their base province; they must instead open a new station in every province in which they wish to broadcast, making privately owned radio penetration outside Luanda extremely limited. Denial of state and private advertising as a method of pressuring independent news outlets continues to be an issue. Some newspapers have also reported becoming suddenly unprofitable when advertising investors, presumably having been coerced by the government, collectively stopped purchasing advertisements. Authorities and private owners occasionally seize and destroy print runs of newspapers that carry stories critical of the government.

Internet penetration in Angola is rather low—at 15 percent of the population in 2011—and the medium is generally only accessible to a small part of the population in Luanda. Although the internet is comparatively freer than radio, television, and print media, the introduction in March 2011 of a much-criticized cybercrime bill into parliament would give the government greater latitude over the seizure of citizens’ personal data if passed. Given that many in Angola have turned to the internet as an alternative to more restricted forms of media, some believe that the bill is the Angolan government’s attempt to bring its capacity for internet censorship to a level equivalent to that which it exerts over other types of media outlets.

[About us](#)
[Careers](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Credits](#)
[Subscribe](#)

Related websites:
[Democracy Web](#) | [Derecho a Voz](#) | [Family Law - Khaleej](#) |
[Peace in the Caucasus](#) | [Undermining Democracy](#) |
[Voice of Freedom](#)