

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Cyprus

Cyprus | [Freedom of the Press 2012](#) |

Freedom of speech and expression are guaranteed under Article 19 of the constitution. These rights are generally respected on the Greek part of Cyprus, where the independent press is vibrant and frequently criticizes authorities. The 1989 Press Law supports freedom of the press through guaranteeing the circulation of newspapers, the right to not reveal sources, and access to official information. Because there is not a formal press council, journalists must use self-regulation to deal with “complaints or noncompliance with journalistic standards.” There are some press freedom laws on the Turkish side of the island, but authorities are hostile to the independent press, and journalists can be arrested, put on trial, and sentenced under the “unjust actions” section of the criminal code.

Reports of physical attacks or harassment on the Greek side of the island are rare. In contrast, the Northern Cyprus government has frequently targeted independent newspapers and journalists who choose to cover controversial issues. Many journalists working in this region are subject to daily press freedom violations. For instance, in 2011, *Afrika*, a Turkish-language newspaper, was a major target, with four attacks against it. In February, the office was attacked and editor in chief Sener Levent’s door was shot at, with the attacker leaving a warning that next time they would target him, not just the door. Levent also received a death threat in March, and in July, the same man went to the *Afrika* office in search of Levent and shot an employee, though he was not injured. In November, police raided the *Afrika* office and removed a banner that expressed solidarity with a general strike called by the Trade Union’s Platform because they deemed it disrespectful to the Turkish prime minister, who was visiting at the time.

There were additional cases of harassment in Northern Cyprus: in May, journalists covering a Turkish Airlines protest were subject to violence and attacks, and some had their cameras broken. Also in May, the news editor of Turkish Cypriot Kanal T Television, who was also a reporter for the daily *Kibris*, had bombs placed in his car on two separate occasions. He suffered minor injuries and believed that the attack was a result of articles he had published about city planning problems. In July 2011, Cent Mutluyakah, editor in chief of Turkish Cypriot opposition daily *Yeniduzen*, was threatened as a result of an article that he published. Though there are legal open borders, journalists based in the north are frequently denied access to the Greek part of the island, and are harassed by border guards and nationalist groups.

Cypriots have access to Greek and Turkish broadcasts throughout the island. There are 7 daily newspapers and 31 weeklies. Broadcast ownership consists of a mix between state and private operators. The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC), a state-funded broadcasting organization, is the main broadcaster in the Greek part of Cyprus, operating two television channels and four radio stations. There are also several monthly and other occasional publications; however, many daily newspapers are closely linked to political parties. The Turkish-controlled zone has its own press and broadcasters, and news outlets in general mirror the island’s political division. In Northern Cyprus,

2012 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

22

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

5

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

9

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

8

there are several daily newspapers available, although mainland Turkish papers are generally preferred. The government in Northern Cyprus owns the broadcaster, Bayrak Radio-TV, which operates two television channels—BRT 1 and BRT 2— as well as four radio stations.

The internet is not subject to any known government restrictions, and 58 percent of the population accessed the internet in 2011.

[Although the narrative covers both Greek and Turkish Cyprus, the numerical rating for Cyprus is based on conditions on the Greek side of the island only.]

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