Although the recently adopted 2010 National Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and access to public information, the authorities often disregard or undermine these guarantees. Defamation is a criminal offense punishable by fines and jail time, and libel lawsuits against journalists are common practice among government officials and private business executives when reporting threatens their economic or political interests. In September 2011, a court ruled in favor of investigative reporter Nuria Piera, ordering the superintendent of insurance, Euclides Gutiérrez Félix, to withdraw a criminal defamation lawsuit he had filed against her and her television program's advertisers after she accused him of not accurately reporting his assets.

Access to information and courtroom proceedings is often restricted, especially in cases related to drug trafficking and other serious crimes. In January 2011, television reporter María Esperanza Ceballos of Cadena de Noticias was harassed by a guard at the Supreme Court of Justice for carrying a politically charged sticker and was refused entry to the courtroom. In February, President Leonel Fernández announced proposed amendments to Law 6132 on freedom of expression and the Law on Access to Public Information, as well as introducing three new laws that would regulate commercial and state advertising and the internet. These proposals remained pending at year’s end.

Attacks and intimidation against the press by both state and private actors continued to be a problem. Police brutality, arbitrary detentions and inspections, equipment confiscations, threats, and verbal and physical harassment are becoming regular occurrences experienced by the media in both urban and provincial areas. In August 2011, José Agustín Silvestre de los Santos, a host of Caña TV and director of the magazine La Voz de la Verdad (The Voice of the Truth), was kidnapped, shot, and killed near the southeastern city of La Romana. Silvestre had previously published an article on the murder of a local businessman and his driver, implicating a reputed drug trafficker, Matías Avelino Castro, who the attorney general accused of masterminding Silvestre’s attack. While police arrested six men, allegedly belonging to a drug cartel, for their involvement in the attack, Avelino Castro remained at large at year’s end. At the time of his death, Silvestre had also been in the middle of a libel lawsuit brought against him by a La Romana prosecutor who Silvestre had accused of having ties with drug traffickers. Journalists and owners of community media are also vulnerable to threats, attacks, and censorship pressures. In December, the community radio station Vida FM, which speaks out against crime and drug trafficking, was hit with a homemade bomb in Nagua.

The Dominican Republic has several daily newspapers, more than 200 radio stations, and many terrestrial and cable television stations. Ownership of many of these stations and the country’s newspapers is concentrated in the hands of a few powerful individuals and companies. Self-censorship as a result of pressure from owners due to their political and economic interests is reportedly a concern. There are two state-owned television stations and one state-owned radio station. Community radio and television stations, as well as websites, are
also becoming increasingly active.

Approximately 36 percent of the population accessed the internet during 2011. There are no reports of internet censorship, and there are several online news sources in English and Spanish. Usage of social-networking websites is increasing substantially.