

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

- \

Tanzania

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

Although the constitution of Tanzania provides for freedom of speech, several other laws induce self-censorship and limit the ability of the media to function effectively. About 40 pieces of legislation have been identified as unfriendly to the press. The National Security Act, for instance, allows the government to punish any investigative journalism that touches on information it considers classified. Perhaps the most infamous of these antipress laws is the 1976 Newspaper Registration Act, which empowers authorities to register or ban publications “in the interest of peace and good order.” In 2009, the editor of *MwanaHalisi*, which had been shuttered in 2008, took the government to court, charging that the closure was unconstitutional. The case was still pending at the end of 2011. Separately, in December, authorities charged the managing editor and a columnist at the private Swahili daily *Tanzania Daima* with incitement over a column that accused the government of misusing the police force for political purposes. A magistrate also summoned the paper’s publisher for questioning. A conviction for incitement can lead to a sentence of up to a year and a half in prison. The case was expected to continue in 2012.

Public officials use both criminal and civil defamation suits to weaken cash-strapped media houses. In November 2011, former minister of good governance Wilson Masilingi filed a defamation case against a local Swahili newspaper, *RAI*, for a column that accused him of soliciting funds from his voters to buy an apartment. The court ordered the paper to pay 15 million Tanzanian shillings (\$9,000) in damages and publish apologies on the first and second pages of the paper. Such hefty fines can cripple media companies, which often operate on a tight budget; the average journalist’s salary is estimated at between \$58 and \$72 per month.

Public officials and prominent businessmen frequently use court injunctions to suppress critical reporting. Business mogul Yusuf Manji, among many others, has employed this tactic liberally, filing for nine court injunctions against the press in 2011. The quantity and extensive reach of these injunctions compelled the Media Owners Association of Tanzania to write to the principal judge of the High Court and accuse the judiciary of granting Manji “blanket ex parte injunctions” that imposed excessive restrictions.

Other 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. Progress on enacting freedom of information legislation has been slow, with continued consultations on draft legislation. In January 2011, Minister of Culture and Information Emmanuel Nchimbi told media stakeholders that the government would do everything in its power to pass a freedom of information bill. However, no further progress was made on the bill during the year.

The 1993 Broadcasting Services Act provides for state regulation of electronic media and allows the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), a nominally independent agency, to close stations at will. There is concern that the TCRA is subject to government influence because its board chairman and director general are both appointed by the president. Media advocacy groups

2012 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

Partly Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

49

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

18

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

16

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

15

are generally able to operate freely. In 1995, an independent self-regulatory body, the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT), was established to help promote a more free and open media sphere. Since its inception, the MCT has helped to settle defamation lawsuits, worked toward preserving media freedom and journalistic ethics, and encouraged new media policies and legislation.

Although cases of police and ruling party supporters abusing journalists were more prevalent during the 2010 election year, some incidents still occurred in 2011. In January, the police arrested journalists who were attempting to cover antigovernment demonstrations in Arusha. In September, suspected ruling party youth supporters attacked Mussa Mkama, a reporter for the Swahili paper *Dira ya Mtanzania*, after he sought to interview a lawmaker about an incident in which opposition and ruling party supporters clashed.

Conditions in the semiautonomous Zanzibar archipelago remain more restrictive than on the mainland. There are indications that the Zanzibar government is interested in reform, as the Media Council of Tanzania now has a branch on the islands, new press clubs are operating, and an editors' forum was created in 2009. However, Zanzibar officials continue to monitor the content of both public and private radio and television broadcasts. *Zanzibar Wiki Hii* is the region's only private weekly, though it generally avoids critical coverage of the leadership, as implicating Zanzibar lawmakers in criminal activities can result in a minimum fine of approximately \$200 or three years' imprisonment. The government publishes the region's only daily paper, *Zanzibar Leo*. There are four private radio stations, although none are critical of the government; two are owned by ruling party supporters, and the others predominantly focus on religious issues. Residents can receive private broadcasts from the mainland, and opposition politicians have access to the state media outlets. However, state television channels from the mainland are broadcast with delays to allow Zanzibar officials to censor the content. Journalists must be licensed and obtain permits to cover developments related to police work and the prison system. A group of Zanzibar police badly beat Channel Ten TV journalist Munir Zakaria for taking pictures of an evacuation operation by the municipal council in the Darajani area of the island in January 2011. The police accused Zakaria of inciting residents against the exercise.

There are numerous media outlets in Tanzania as a whole, including dozens of daily and weekly newspapers, more than 50 radio stations, and 15 television stations. Media ownership, albeit transparent, is concentrated in the hands of a few proprietors. Only five radio stations have a national reach—state-run Radio Tanzania and privately owned Radio One, Radio Free Africa, Radio Uhuru, and the youth-oriented Cloud FM—but all are viewed as sympathetic to the ruling party. In recent years the public broadcaster has reportedly demonstrated more balanced views, according to the 2010 African Media Barometer. Foreign media content is freely available, but only 5 percent of the population has access to television due to high costs. 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 advertising clients have over editorial content and media houses' dependence on advertising revenue.

While Tanzania's internet usage rate was 12 percent of the population in 2011, the rate has increased dramatically since 2005 and is expected to grow in the years to come, according to a report by the TCRA. Although there were no explicit government restrictions on the medium in 2011, there were reports that officials monitored internet content and activity. The ruling party targeted the popular news and public-forum website Jamii Forums in April. Commenting on the role of social media in political activism and prodemocracy movements around the world during a party congress, ruling party vice chairman Pius Msekwa publicly accused the website of undermining the government. Jamii Forums moderators allege that ruling party supporters also conduct cyberattacks on the site, overloading it with traffic to disrupt service.

[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](#)