

## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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# Trinidad and Tobago

 Trinidad and Tobago | [Freedom of the Press 2012](#) | [- Select year -](#)

Freedom of the press is enshrined in the constitution, and is generally respected in practice. However, defamation and libel remain criminal offenses. While freedom of information legislation is in place, the government has been criticized for gradually narrowing the categories of public information that are accessible under the law. A Data Protection Act to provide for the protection of certain personal data and information was passed in June 2011, but had yet to be proclaimed by President George Maxwell Richards at year's end. Critics of the new law, including the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) and the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA), argued that it does not contain specific exemptions for journalism, literature, and art, or for the publication of material on the grounds of public interest. They also voiced concerns that it is too ambiguous and will only serve to undermine press freedom.

There were a number of reports of government intimidation of journalists and interference in the work of media houses in 2011. In April, journalists at the state-owned Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG) expressed their concerns about increasing political interference, noting that they felt pressured by managers to publish only positive news about the government and did not feel free to focus attention on controversial policies, expose corruption, or hold politicians accountable to public opinion. Foreign Affairs Minister Surujrattan Rambachan denied that there was any political interference in the CNMG. On December 29, around 20 police officers raided the newsroom of Caribbean Communications Network Television 6 (CCN), the largest private television broadcaster in the country. They were executing a search warrant to seize a tape of a *Crime Watch* program aired in late October.

For the most part, journalists can cover the news freely, and there were no reports of physical attacks against the press. However, two journalists with the *Trinidad Express* newspaper received threatening e-mails on January 30 in relation to their reporting on the questionable appointment of a Strategic Services Agency employee. An investigation revealed that the e-mails had been sent by an adviser to the prime minister, who denied any involvement.

There are three daily newspapers—*Trinidad and Tobago Express*, *Newsday*, and the *Trinidad Guardian*—and three political weeklies, all of which are privately owned. Four television stations are in operation, including the state-owned CNMG. There are about a dozen radio stations, including three operated by the CNMG. Due to the high literacy rate in the country, print media are an important source of news. Concerns regarding the use of advertising to influence content occur occasionally. In October 2011, the TnT Mirror Group, which publishes a biweekly newspaper, claimed it had suffered a significant decline in advertising since a government-imposed boycott was initiated in June. The company said the boycott, by government ministries and state agencies, occurred after the paper resisted government pressure to drop a story. Publisher Maxie Cuffie reported that attempts to engage in dialogue with the government had been unsuccessful. A similar type of boycott also reportedly affected the I95.5 radio station.

## 2012 SCORES

### PRESS STATUS

# Free

### PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

# 25

### LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

# 6

### POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

# 11

### ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

# 8

There were no government restrictions on the internet, which was accessed by 55 percent of the population in 2011.

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