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Freedom Of The Press - Greece (2011)

Status: Free
Legal Environment: 9
Political Environment: 15
Economic Environment: 6
Total Score: 30

The constitution includes provisions for freedom of speech and the press, and citizens have access to a broad array of privately owned print and broadcast outlets. However, there are some limits on speech that incites fear, violence, and public disharmony, as well as on publications that are obscene, offend religious beliefs, or advocate violent overthrow of the political system. A 2007 media law mandates that the main transmission language of radio stations be Greek. The law also requires that radio stations keep a certain amount of money in reserve, as well as hire a specific number of full-time staff, which places a disproportionate burden on smaller, minority-owned stations. A libel hearing was to begin in September 2010 against journalist Takis Michas, who was being sued over his use of the term "paramilitary" to describe voluntary Greek units that were present at the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a subject often not talked about in Greece. The case was dropped.

Greece's growing trend of violence against journalists continued in 2010. In July, men dressed in security uniforms murdered Sokratis Giolias as he stepped out of his apartment in Athens. Giolias was a radio journalist and contributing blogger to Troktiko, a website known for reporting on social issues and political scandals. The murder occurred just before Troktiko was to publish an investigation regarding corruption in the country. It was the first assassination of a journalist in the country in 20 years. A group named the Revolutionary Sect claimed responsibility for Giolias's murder, and made threats against other well-known journalists. In December, journalists were subject to police violence as they covered the public demonstrations in reaction to government austerity measures established in response to the failing economy. Reporters were subjected to physical violence and in some cases forced to delete images taken of the protests. Some journalists who appeared to favor the government's position were targeted by smear campaigns and vilified for their position.

Both public and private media in Greece are largely free from government restrictions, but state-owned stations tend to report with a progovernment bias. There are several independent newspapers and magazines, including some that are critical of the government. Broadcasting is largely unregulated, and many broadcast stations are not licensed.

Approximately 44 percent of the population accessed the internet on a regular basis. While internet access is generally not restricted, officials blocked the Google search engine for privacy reasons and prohibited Google from taking pictures in Greece for the Google Maps "street view" function in May 2009. "Street view," which gives a 360-degree view of a street, has not been banned, but rather suspended until the

government receives further requests for information from Google.