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## Freedom Of The Press - Mongolia (2011)

**Status: Partly Free**  
**Legal Environment: 14**  
**Political Environment: 13**  
**Economic Environment: 12**  
**Total Score: 39**

Freedoms of speech and of the press are protected by law in Mongolia, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. However, media freedom was compromised somewhat in 2010 due to ongoing legal harassment and financial difficulties faced by journalists. Censorship of public information is banned under the 1998 Media Freedom Law, but the 1995 state secrets law limits access to government information to a degree, as many archived historical records have been given classified status. There is no freedom of information legislation, and the government monitors media for compliance with antiviolence, antipornography, and antialcohol content restrictions.

Officials frequently file criminal and civil defamation suits in the wake of critical articles, with a quarter of journalists reportedly affected. In November 2010, criminal charges were filed against a reporter from *Zuuny Medee* newspaper over articles about human trafficking that accused a notable businessman of involvement in the buying of virgin teenagers. The case was pending at year's end. To avoid being sued for libel, many independent publications practice a degree of self-censorship. Although no direct government censorship exists, journalists complain of harassment and intimidation as well as pressure from the authorities to reveal confidential sources. In August 2010, authorities confiscated computers from the *Niigmiin Toli* newspaper that contained confidential information on the publication's sources. The authorities were acting in accordance with a court's decision in an attempt to identify a police officer who had leaked information to the media. The paper had been convicted in a separate defamation case in late 2009, a decision that was upheld in early 2010. According to a local media freedom nongovernmental organization, Globe International, there were no reports of assaults during the year, but many journalists faced verbal threats or pressure against either themselves or their family members.

Although independent print media outlets are common and popular in cities, the main source of news in the vast countryside is the formerly state-owned Radio Mongolia. Under the Law on the Public Radio and Television passed in 2005, state-owned radio and television broadcasting outlets like Radio Mongolia are transforming into public service broadcasters, but progress has been slow. Both state-owned and public media still frequently experience political pressure, and most provincial media outlets continue to be controlled by local authorities. According to media watchdogs, journalists often seek payments to cover or fabricate stories. Mongolians have access to local, privately owned television stations, as well as to English-language broadcasts of the British Broadcasting Corporation and Voice of America on private FM stations, and, in Ulaanbaatar, to

foreign television programming via cable and commercial satellite systems. Owing to widespread poverty in Mongolia, the internet has yet to serve as a significant source of information; only approximately 10 percent of the population used the internet in 2010.