


[Print](#)

## Freedom Of The Press - Mozambique (2011)

**Status: Partly Free**  
**Legal Environment: 13**  
**Political Environment: 17**  
**Economic Environment: 14**  
**Total Score: 44**

Mozambique's 1990 constitution guarantees freedom of the press, and a 1991 press law explicitly protects journalists and grants them the right not to reveal their sources. Despite these protections, criminal libel and defamation laws deter journalists from acting freely. Defamation of the president is also illegal. Courts actively enforce libel and defamation laws. In June 2010, a court in the northern town of Nampula sentenced journalist Vasco da Gama, a former correspondent for the weekly *Magazine Independente*, to four months in jail converted to a fine on a charge of libel. Da Gama had written an article claiming that Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the opposition Renamo party, had married the Renamo deputy from the Nampula area, which Dhlakama and the deputy both disputed.

In September, the director of the local chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) announced that all three political parties in parliament had agreed to debate a freedom of information bill based on a draft that MISA had presented to parliament in 2005. Journalists currently face difficulties accessing public information and official documents. According to MISA, radio broadcast outlets were subjected to overly bureaucratic and possibly politicized procedures to obtain operating licenses.

There were no reports of physical attacks against the press in 2010, although there were cases of threats and intimidation. On February 10 and on several other occasions, it was reported that journalists attempting to interview Dhlakama were harassed by members of the national police stationed outside his house. Salomao Moyana, editor of *Magazine Independente*, received a series of threatening text messages in May after he wrote an editorial critical of Dhlakama. Moyana's car was also vandalized outside his home. In March, a district police commander in Manica Province threatened the head of the local MISA chapter and other journalists for printing unflattering articles about him. Self-censorship by journalists is common, especially in rural areas outside the capital, Maputo.

Although progress has been made in the development of a strong and free press in Mozambique, the country continues to be dominated by state-controlled media outlets. Independent media are often underfunded and are generally found only in major cities. The state-run television station, TVM, continues to be the only domestic television channel with national reach and has by far the largest audience of any broadcasting station. News reporting from TVM is often biased in favor of the government and offers little opportunity for the political opposition to voice opinions. Private channel Soico TV, Portuguese state television's African service RTP Africa, and Brazilian-owned TV Miramar also have wide audiences.

Radio continues to be a key source of information for the majority of Mozambicans. Compared to television, there is far more opportunity for private radio stations to open and operate. There are numerous private FM stations that generally operate in rural areas and broadcast to small audiences. Many community stations receive their funding from UNESCO. Despite the prevalence of privately owned radio stations, state-run Rádio Moçambique has the largest audience and is by far the most influential media outlet in the country. Rádio Moçambique generally receives 60 percent of its operating budget from the federal government. While the station is known for presenting critical political debates and policy issues on its broadcasts, it most frequently invites guests who are sympathetic to the government.

Newspapers and print media in general have a far smaller audience than both radio and television. This is due to high illiteracy rates, especially in rural areas, as well as poor distribution networks. Newspapers are read by an estimated 1 million of Mozambique's 21 million inhabitants. The government has a majority stake in *Noticias*, the most-read daily newspaper in the country, which rarely prints stories critical of the government. The largest source of advertising revenue for local media comes from government ministries and businesses under state control, and some journalists have accused the government and ruling party of allocating advertising according to political concerns.

Internet access is unrestricted, but penetration is extremely low. Only about 4 percent of the population has access to the internet, and most usage is confined to the major cities. A number of sites have posted criticisms of the government and remained untouched. However, there have been reports of government intelligence agents monitoring e-mails of the members of opposition political parties.