



# FREEDOM HOUSE

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## Freedom Of The Press - Papua New Guinea (2011)

**Status: Free**  
**Legal Environment: 4**  
**Political Environment: 11**  
**Economic Environment: 10**  
**Total Score: 25**

News media in Papua New Guinea (PNG) remain among the most vital and independent in the South Pacific despite constant pressure from politicians. Under Section 46 of the constitution, freedom of speech, press, and information are guaranteed. Journalists can be sued for defamation in civil cases, but defamation is not a criminal offense. The independent PNG Media Council acts as buffer against government pressure by lobbying for media freedom, managing a complaints process, and undertaking media research. The council also has a well-developed code of ethics, which member journalists follow.

The government does not censor the media; however, there are complaints that some authorities employ pressure and intimidation in order to influence coverage. In December, the country's main public broadcaster, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), abruptly suspended its executive news director, Dorah Masseung, as a result of what was believed to be pressure from the authorities amid a national political crisis during which Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare had temporarily stood down to address charges of concealing his personal finances. After Masseung's dismissal, the station's management required that two recently promoted members of the newsroom review all reports involving political or other sensitive issues in an attempt to control broadcast content. Several media freedom organizations appealed unsuccessfully to have Masseung reinstated. According to the *Post-Courier* newspaper, NBC managing director Memafu Kapera allegedly initiated these changes due to political pressure following the station's negative coverage of Somare. There were no reports of physical attacks or harassment of members of the press during the year.

Radio is an important source of news due to country's isolated settlements and low literacy rates. Competing with the NBC are the major commercial radio networks, NAU FM and Yumi FM, run by the partly Fiji-owned PNG FM Proprietary Limited. Both daily newspapers are foreign-owned. The *Post-Courier* is owned by the Australia-based News Limited subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. *The National*, which has a larger circulation than its older rival, is owned by the Malaysian timber company Rimbunan Hijau, which has major interests in local logging and trading industries. Papua New Guinea's main television station, EMTV, is owned by Fiji Television Limited. The government does not restrict access to the internet, but lack of infrastructure limits internet penetration in the country to 1.28 percent of the population.