


[Print](#)

Freedom Of The Press - Seychelles (2011)

Status: Partly Free
Legal Environment: 17
Political Environment: 20
Economic Environment: 19
Total Score: 56

The media environment in Seychelles during the past decade has been characterized by government monopolization of radio and television, draconian libel laws that have been used liberally against opposition newspapers, occasional attacks against and harassment of media workers, and extensive self-censorship. While the legal framework that has supported this environment is largely still in place, recently there appears to have been some movement toward a somewhat freer media.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech but also restricts this right by protecting the reputation, rights, and privacy of citizens as well as the "interest of defense, public safety, public order, public morality, or public health." It also grants the minister of information the power to prohibit the broadcast of any material deemed contradictory to "national interest." Since the court of appeals in 2007 overturned a libel conviction against *Regar*, an opposition weekly, which forced it to close, the filing of libel charges and libel convictions have diminished. Nevertheless, civil libel suits can still be used against journalists. In July 2010, a cabinet minister filed a libel lawsuit against *Regar* for its publication of allegations of a conflict of interest in a land sale.

The state has a *de facto* monopoly over the widely consumed broadcast media (both radio and television), and private broadcasters have been slow to develop because of restrictive licensing fees of more than 800,000 rupees (\$60,000) per year. Following one opposition party's efforts to raise enough money for a radio license, the National Assembly in 2006 passed an amendment to the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Act prohibiting politically affiliated groups from obtaining a license. In August 2009, a report by two independent consultants commissioned by the president to critically examine the state of the media in the country was published. The report recommended the formation of a media council, media association, and joint consultation committee, as well as amending the libel laws. In late 2009, the Seychelles Media Association, a grouping of media professionals, was reconstituted after a 10-year absence, and in December 2010 the National Assembly approved the Seychelles Media Commission Act 2010, setting up an independent media arbitration body. No cases of attacks or harassment against journalists were reported in 2010.

There are two daily newspapers, the privately owned *Rising Sun* and the state-owned *Seychelles Nation*, which rarely publish stories critical of the government. Three weekly newspapers—*Regar*, the *People*, and *Le Nouveau Seychelles Weekly*—are affiliated with political parties. The nation's two radio stations and the sole television station are all owned by the government and operated by the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), which also relays foreign stations.

Telecommunications companies must submit subscriber information to the government. Although the internet is available and unrestricted in the Seychelles, there have been reports of the government monitoring the e-mail, chat rooms, and blogs of the nearly 41 percent of the population with access in 2010.