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## Freedom Of The Press - Trinidad and Tobago (2011)

**Status: Free**  
**Legal Environment: 6**  
**Political Environment: 11**  
**Economic Environment: 7**  
**Total Score: 24**

Freedom of the press is enshrined in the constitution, and the new government that took power following elections in May 2010 continued to respect it. While freedom of information legislation is in place, the government has been criticized for gradually narrowing the categories of public information that are accessible under the law. A new national broadcasting code has been drafted and is under consideration by the parliament following two years of consultation between the government, the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT), media houses, and civil society. In March 2010, on the occasion of the submission of the code to the parliament, TATT chairman Winston Parmesar urged journalists to respect the delicate balance between freedom of expression for the media and the individual rights of citizens. In July, Minister of Public Administration Rudrawatee Ramgoolam said that there would be further discussions on the precise wording and practical implementation of the code.

In November, the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) wrote to the new prime minister, Kamla Persad Bissessar, to protest the dismissal of television talk-show host Fazeer Mohammed at the state-owned Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG). Mohammed was dismissed less than a week after he interviewed Foreign Affairs Minister Surujrattar Rambachan and argued with him over remarks by the prime minister regarding aid to Caribbean countries affected by Hurricane Tomás. The CNMG insisted that Mohammed's dismissal was the result of cost-cutting measures, but the MATT condemned it as an attack on the freedom of the press.

There was further controversy in November when the prime minister announced that the Special Intelligence Agency (SIA) had been tapping the telephones and intercepting the e-mail of politicians, judges, trade unionists, and journalists for the past 15 years. The MATT declared that it viewed such practices as a "dangerous infringement" on the rights of journalists to effectively and efficiently perform their duties with the freedom enshrined in the constitution. However, the association welcomed the prime minister's assurance that the illegal conduct had been stopped, and that legislation governing wiretapping would be forthcoming. Journalists can cover the news freely, and there were no reports of attacks or harassment against the press during the year.

There are three daily newspapers—*Trinidad and Tobago Express*, *Newsday*, and the *Trinidad Guardian*—and three political weeklies, all of which are privately owned. Four television stations are in operation, including the state-owned CNMG. There are about a dozen radio stations, including three operated by CNMG. Due to the high literacy rate in the

country, print media are an important source of news. There were no government restrictions on the internet, which was accessed by 48.5 percent of the population in 2010.