

[About Us](#) | [DONATE](#) | [Blog](#) | [Cont](#)[Reports](#) | [Programs](#) | [Initiatives](#) | [News](#) | [Experts](#)

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Bhutan

[Bhutan](#) | [Freedom of the Press 2013](#)- Select year -

The media environment in Bhutan remained somewhat restricted in 2012, and the government continued to influence content published by private media. The constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, adopted in July 2008, guarantees the right to free speech, opinion, and expression. However, the 1992 National Security Act prohibits criticism of the king and has strict provisions on “words either spoken or written that undermine or attempt to undermine the security and sovereignty of Bhutan by creating or attempting to create hatred and disaffection among the people.” Defamation can be treated as either a civil or criminal offense. There were no reported legal cases brought against journalists in 2012.

The constitution guarantees the right to information, but a Right to Information Bill discussed by Parliament during 2012 was shelved indefinitely. Government officials cited caution against “acting in haste,” given the importance of the bill, but media workers expressed concern that the government was not committed to passing the legislation.

The Bhutan InfoCom and Media Authority, the national regulator, sometimes restricts the publication of content that otherwise censors media outlets. The Journalists’ Association of Bhutan (JAB) was revived in February 2012, having been dissolved in 2006 due to a lack of funding and poor coordination. The organization’s mission is to uphold the interests of journalists across the country and protect free expression in the media. However, the JAB is not independent, as it relies on the government-run Bhutan Media Foundation for funding and support.

There were no reports of threats or intimidation directed at journalists in 2012, but there is a high level of self-censorship. Criticism of the royal family and the Buddhist clergy is not published, and topics that are considered sensitive, such as the expulsion of Nepali-speaking residents in the 1990s, are not covered. The government occasionally restricts certain websites that are deemed offensive to the state or pornographic.

Bhutan currently has 12 newspapers, six radio stations, and two television channels, both of which are hosted by the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), the state broadcaster. Internet penetration remained at 25 percent of the population in 2012. Bhutan’s main print outlet, the state-owned, biweekly *Kuensei*, generally portrays the kingdom in a favorable light, but it has increasingly been addressing societal problems and carrying stories that are critical.