

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

[About Us](#) | [DONATE](#) | [Blog](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[Reports](#) [Programs](#) [Initiatives](#) [News](#) [Experts](#) [Events](#) [Donate](#)

## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

 - View another year -

# Central African Republic

[Central African Republic](#) | [Freedom of the Press 2013](#) |  - Select year -

In late 2012, the Séléka rebel coalition began its march on the capital in an attempt to overthrow the government of President François Bozizé. The media freedom situation had not been dramatically affected by year's end, though there were reports of pressure being placed on community radio stations and their staff as the rebels advanced.

The 2005 constitution of the Central African Republic (CAR) provides for freedom of the press, though authorities have used intimidation, the suspension of media outlets, and legal harassment to limit reporting, particularly on sensitive topics such as official corruption and rebel activity. A press law that went into effect in 2005 abolished imprisonment for many press offenses, such as libel and slander, but criminal penalties remain for some defamation charges, incitement of ethnic or religious hatred, and the publication or broadcast of false information that could "disturb the peace." In January 2012, Ferdinand Samba, an editor of the weekly *Le Démocrate*, was sentenced to 10 months in prison on charges of incitement to hatred, defamation, and insult to Finance Minister Sylvain Ndoutingai, who is President Bozizé's nephew. Samba was also fined one million CFA francs (\$2,000) and ordered to pay 10 million CFA francs (\$20,000) in damages, and his publication was suspended for a year. Many CAR journalists and international groups called for Samba's release, as the sentence contravened the press law. Private newspapers organized a news blackout on January 19 and 20 to protest the sentence. Bozizé ultimately pardoned Samba on World Press Freedom Day in May. Also in January, the editor of the progovernment newspaper *La Plume* was convicted in absentia on charges similar to Samba's after fleeing the country.

In the absence of a legal framework, access to official information remains challenging for journalists. The High Council for Communications, tasked with granting licenses and promoting press freedom, is nominally independent, but in practice it seems to be controlled by the government.

Many newspapers published articles that were critical of the government during the year without reprisal, but journalists continue to face harassment and threats from the authorities, and some, particularly those who work for state-owned media outlets, practice self-censorship to avoid retaliation. Complaints filed against authorities regarding press freedom violations are often ignored. In October 2012, a reporter was arrested and briefly detained after photographing an altercation between the police and a taxi driver; his camera and photographs were confiscated upon his release. Journalists cannot always operate safely outside the capital due in part to increased activity by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan rebel group. The LRA, which does not have popular support, is primarily active in the southeast, near the borders of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Several private newspapers offer competing views, including five dailies published in French. However, even papers that provide political coverage have limited influence as a result of low literacy levels, high poverty rates, and the lack of a functioning postal service to deliver periodicals outside the capital. Radio continues to be the most important medium for the dissemination of information. The state owns Radio Centrafrique and a television broadcaster, and both outlets reflect predominantly progovernment views. However, there are alternatives to Radio Centrafrique, including Radio Ndeke Luka (funded by the United Nations), international broadcasters such as Radio France Internationale and Voice of America, and a number of community radio stations. Due to technical deterioration, the reach and broadcast capacity of even state-owned outlets have decreased dramatically. Financial problems and the lack of an organized advertising market plague many newspapers, and some journalists are motivated by poverty to accept bribes to cover certain stories, as many are not paid regularly for their work. Most journalists are poorly trained, although a journalism department was established at the University of Bangui in 2009.

Due to infrastructural constraints, only 3 percent of the population was able to access the internet in 2012. Access is otherwise unrestricted, and there are no reports that the government monitors e-mail.

## 2013 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

# Not Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

# 62

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

# 20

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

# 23

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

# 19

[About us](#)  
[Careers](#)  
[Contact Us](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#)  
[Credits](#)  
[Subscribe](#)