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FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Congo, Republic of (Brazzaville)

[Congo, Republic of \(Brazzaville\)](#) | [Freedom of the Press 2013](#) |

The Republic of Congo's constitution and laws recognize freedom of the press, but certain types of speech, such as incitement of violence or ethnic hatred, are criminalized and carry monetary penalties. The law allows the accreditation of journalists at government and foreign-owned media outlets to be revoked if their reporting reflects adversely on the government's image, although there have been no reports of such revocations in recent years. Since May 2010, when the High Council on Freedom of Communication (CSLC) issued new censorship orders, several newspapers and broadcasters have run afoul of the regulatory body. In September 2012, the CSLC banned the newspaper *La Voix du Peuple* from publishing for nine months, ruling that it had violated an existing six-month ban imposed for inciting hatred and ethnic division. Also in September, the CSLC banned *Le Glaive* for six months after the paper allegedly printed "seditious articles that included lies and defamation of private citizens." A new CSLC president, Philippe Mwouo, began his term in June and continued the regulatory body's record of working against the interests of a free and vibrant press by issuing threats of sanctions against critical print media.

Independent print publications are critical of the government, occasionally publishing letters from opposition leaders and covering corruption allegations, though their readership is low. Self-censorship has been reported at the state print media and in the broadcast media, which have a broader reach. Political pressures, as well as a lack of professional training and reliable funding, play a significant role in limiting the scope of the media's reporting and access to information. On March 4, 2012, an arms depot in a densely populated Brazzaville neighborhood exploded, killing at least 150 people. The media encountered difficulties in fully investigating the incident and assessing responsibility in its aftermath, due in part to a lack of transparency from the government about the causes and ramifications of the explosion.

Physical attacks against journalists are rare, but reporters often face threats and intimidation. In September 2012, security agents allegedly assaulted a video journalist and briefly detained a reporter for the private broadcaster MNTV while dispersing a crowd gathered in front of an office in the National Assembly building. The 2009 death of journalist and activist Bruno Jacquet Ossébi, who had reported on corruption in the management of Congo's oil wealth, remains unsolved.

Most Congolese get their news from television and radio. There are 23 television stations in Congo, of which 15 are privately owned. State-run Télé-Congo generally expresses the government's views, and a number of private channels are controlled by government officials and their relatives. However, some of the other private channels have reportedly been more critical of the government in recent years. Of the country's 39 radio stations, 35 are privately owned. Congo's first community radio station, Radio Biso na Biso, began operating in 2009, serving predominantly rural communities in the Congo Basin with content in 12 indigenous languages. While print media are more independent and critical than broadcast outlets, they are heavily concentrated in Brazzaville and do not reach far into rural parts of the country.

2013 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

Partly Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

56

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

16

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

23

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

17

The internet and satellite television are unrestricted but not widely used, with only 6 percent of the population having access to the internet in 2012. Prospects for increased internet penetration improved in 2012 with the introduction of broadband in May as part of the submarine fiber-optic West Africa Cable System project.

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