

[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST](#)
[About Us](#) | [DONATE](#) | [Blog](#) | [Mobile App](#) | [Contact Us](#)


REGIONS

ISSUES

Reports

Programs

Initiatives

News

Experts

Events

Donate

Civil Society

Democratic Governance

Elections

Freedom of Association

Freedom of Expression

Human Rights Defense

Intergovernmental Bodies

Internet Freedom

LGBTI Rights

Media Freedom

Religious Freedom

Rule of Law

U.S. Foreign Policy

United Nations

Women's Rights

# Dominican Republic

[Dominican Republic](#)
[Freedom of the Press 2013](#)


Although the 2010 constitution guarantees freedom of expression and access to public information, authorities often disregard or undermine these guarantees. Defamation is a criminal offense punishable by fines and jail time, and libel lawsuits against journalists by government officials and business executives are common when reporting threatens their political or economic interests. Two journalists—Melton Pineda and Johnny Alberto Salazar—were sentenced to jail for defamation during 2012, though Salazar's conviction was eventually overturned. Two other journalists, Robert Vargas and Genris García, settled out of court with Canadian clothing manufacturer Gildan Activewear after the company brought criminal defamation charges against them. The case stemmed from articles the journalists posted on their websites claiming that an assassination attempt on another journalist, Diego Torres, had occurred while he was investigating possible environmental contamination by the company at its factory in Santo Domingo Province.

Fierce debate occurred throughout the year over proposed legal amendments that

would impose harsher penalties for defamation, including longer prison sentences. While the amendments would also specifically prohibit cases against journalists, domestic and international press groups urged full decriminalization instead. Due in part to advocacy efforts by the International Press Institute, a group of legislators in November expressed their intention to seek such decriminalization, but neither proposal had been enacted at year's end.

Attacks and intimidation against the press by both state and private actors continued to be problems in 2012, especially for reporters investigating corruption. Members of the media experience episodic police brutality, arbitrary detentions and inspections, equipment confiscations, threats, and verbal and physical harassment in both urban and provincial areas. According to the Inter American Press Association, journalists were subject to more than 25 cases of physical or verbal attacks by the police and military between April and October 2012, a slight decrease from the previous six-month period. There were no murders of journalists in the Dominican Republic in 2012. However, impunity for past attacks is common. The three men accused of murdering cameraman Normando García in 2008 were acquitted in March 2012, and there have been no arrests of those who ordered the 2011 murder of José Agustín Silvestre de los Santos, the host of a political program on the regional television station Caña TV.

The run-up to May 2012 elections proved especially tense. In February, the attorney general ordered an elite police unit to inspect the home and offices of journalist Guillermo Gómez, who produces a television show and owns the digital newspaper *El Siglo 21*, after Gómez uncovered alleged corruption involving first lady and vice presidential candidate Margarita Cedeño de Fernández. The government alleged that the e-mail accounts of Cedeño and several government officials were hacked. In April, investigative journalist Nuria Piera accused state security agents of raiding her sources' homes and offices after she reported that a senator from the ruling Dominican Liberation Party had secretly donated more than \$2.5 million to Haitian president Michel Martelly's presidential campaign. On election night, the Central Electoral Board closed down television channels Telesistema, Canal 11, and Supercanal 33 for allegedly broadcasting unofficial electoral results. The stations returned to the air the next day. In addition, several reporters and cameramen reported being roughed up by candidates' security guards at events during the campaign season.

The Dominican Republic has five daily newspapers, more than 300 radio stations,

and over 40 terrestrial and cable television stations. Ownership of many of these stations and the country's newspapers is concentrated in the hands of a few powerful individuals and companies, leading to self-censorship by journalists to avoid damaging the owners' political or business interests. There are two state-owned television stations and one state-owned radio station. Community radio and television stations, as well as websites, are also becoming increasingly active.

Approximately 45 percent of the population accessed the internet during 2012, and there were no reports of online censorship. Several online news sources produce content in English and Spanish, and usage of social-networking websites is increasing rapidly.

## 2013 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

**Partly Free**

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

**40**

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

**7**

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

**20**

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

**13**

[About us](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Credits](#)

[Subscribe](#)