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## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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# Jamaica

[Jamaica](#)[Freedom of the Press 2013](#)

The constitution provides for freedoms of speech and the press, and the government generally respects these rights. In 2012, Jamaica maintained its free media environment and continued to make progress toward reforming its criminal defamation laws. A committee was first appointed to review the laws in 2007, and a bill to repeal the Defamation Act and the Libel and Slander Act was presented in the House of Representatives in November 2011, but it stalled due to a change in government. The bill was awaiting a final series of negotiations at the end of 2012. A parliamentary committee also submitted recommendations in March 2011 to repeal the Official Secrets Act, which has served as an obstacle to the implementation of the 2002 Access to Information Act and the 2011 Protected Disclosures Act, which protects whistle-blowers. Nevertheless, the Official Secrets Act remained on the books at the end of 2012. While the criminal defamation laws have not been enforced in recent years, civil defamation cases often result in excessive damages.

Journalists and media outlets face occasional threats from both state and nonstate

actors, and some practice self-censorship on sensitive topics, due in part to concerns over defamation suits. There were a number of incidents in the lead-up to the December 2011 elections in which members of the then ruling Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) allegedly criticized media workers during election rallies and used veiled threats to intimidate them.

Jamaica has two national daily newspapers and a daily afternoon tabloid. There are a number of national and regional periodicals serving a variety of sectors and interests, as well as more than 20 radio stations, 3 terrestrial television stations, and multiple cable channels. The majority of media outlets are privately owned and provide a range of news and commentary. In a 2012 report, the International Press Institute noted that Jamaican journalists are poorly paid and have limited training in investigative reporting, leaving them overly reliant on government press releases.

The authorities imposed no restrictions on the internet, which was accessed by nearly 47 percent of the population in 2012. The December 2011 election campaign was notable for the increased use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, by the main political parties.

## 2013 SCORES

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**Free**

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