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## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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# Niger

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

Media freedom, which improved dramatically in 2011, remained stable in 2012 under the government of President Mahamadou Issoufou. Article 23 of the Nigerien constitution guarantees the right to freedom of thought, opinion, and expression, and these rights are generally upheld. In 2010, the transitional government decriminalized media offenses and replaced prison sentences with fines as punishments for libel and publication of false information. In 2011, Issoufou became the first head of state to sign the Declaration of Table Mountain, which calls for the repeal of criminal defamation and insult laws, as well as a press environment in Africa that is free from government, political, and economic control. However, legal actions against journalists still occasionally take place. In July 2012, Marcus Issaka Lawson, the director of *Jeunesse Infos*, was sentenced to nine months in prison for forgery after publishing an article falsely attributed to a judge and former general secretary.

In 2011, the transitional government approved the Charter on Access to Public Information and Administrative Documents, which aimed to improve transparency

and the public's access to information. However, implementation of the law remains inadequate, and in practice access remains somewhat difficult.

The National Observatory on Communication (ONC), the state-run media regulatory body, and the Niger Independent Monitoring Center for Media Ethics and Conduct monitor broadcasts and publications, and occasionally censure outlets as a result of their content. The ONC played a critical role in ensuring media fairness during the 2011 election campaign, passing two resolutions that standardized the production and distribution of messages from candidates and parties and overseeing a code of conduct. In July 2012, the newspaper *Le Mandat* was banned indefinitely by the ONC for publishing false information, privacy violations, and ignoring an earlier warning to correct its editorial policy. *Le Visionnaire* newspaper was issued a warning by the ONC in the same month for publishing an article containing false information.

Although other types of content censorship were not reported in either the traditional or online media, some journalists, particularly those working for public media outlets, do practice self-censorship. Physical attacks against members of the media were very rare in 2012. A reporter with the British Broadcasting Corporation was allegedly attacked in August by supporters of the ruling coalition for her reporting on the high cost of living in Niger; the perpetrators were not pursued. There were no reports that the government inhibited the work of foreign journalists, including while they were covering politically sensitive events in the north of the country.

Several dozen private newspapers compete with a state-run daily in the print media market and provide some criticism of the government. The state continues to dominate the broadcasting landscape, though there are a number of private radio stations that broadcast in French and local languages. Some stations air programming from foreign services, including Voice of America and Deutsche Welle. Radio is the most widely accessible source of news. Three private television stations operate alongside two state-run stations. A heavy tax on private media outlets continues to hinder the development of the private media sector, and public media also receive the bulk of advertising from state-owned companies. In addition, considerable economic uncertainty has contributed to corruption within the media sector, leading to unethical behavior by journalists that can affect the quality and accuracy of news content. However, the government has doubled official press subsidies to 200 million CFA francs (\$400,000), with the stated aim

of encouraging the public service and democracy promotion functions of the press. Only 1 percent of the population accessed the internet in 2012. There are no official restrictions on access.

## 2013 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

**Partly Free**

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

**50**

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

**15**

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

**18**

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

**17**

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