

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Denmark

[Denmark](#) | [Freedom of the Press 2012](#) |

Freedom of speech is protected in Section 77 of the constitution, and the government generally respects this right in practice. However, certain legal restrictions exist for libel, blasphemy, and racism. In January 2011, free speech advocate Lars Hedegaard was found not guilty of making racist statements about the treatment of Muslim women that had been published on a blog unbeknownst to him. However, the decision by a Frederiksberg court was overturned in May by the Eastern Superior Court in Copenhagen. Hedegaard was fined 5000 kroner (\$985) for his remarks. He planned to appeal his sentence and take the case to the Supreme Court, and as of the end of 2011 there were no further developments.

The 1985 Access to Public Administration Files Act permits any person to request documents located in an administrative file and requires authorities to respond in a timely manner to requests; if the request is expected to take longer than 10 days to process, they must inform the requestor of the reason for the delay and when an answer is expected. In October 2011, the former immigration minister came under fire by the parliamentary ombudsman Hans Gammeltoft-Hansen for grossly delaying the release of information about illegally rejections of citizenship for stateless youth born in Denmark that had been requested by the *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper. The minister and her staff took two months to hand over information about the scandal.

The aftermath of the 2005 prophet Muhammad cartoon controversy still affects the Danish media in terms of threats made against journalists and media houses. The cartoonist, Kurt Westergaard, continues to receive protection by the authorities. In January 2010, Somali national Mohamed Geele entered Westergaard's house and attempted to murder him with an axe. In February 2011, Geele was found guilty of attempted terrorism, attempted manslaughter, and attacking a police officer. A trial began in November 2011 for three residents of Norway who were arrested in 2010 for a terror plot against *Jyllands-Posten*, which published the cartoons; the plot was allegedly spurred in some part by the cartoons. Some journalists have also claimed that the cartoon controversy contributed to a higher level self-censorship in the Danish media.

The private print media are vibrant, although many papers have clear political sympathies. The 2008 financial crisis led to severe revenue problems for the press, but as yet no major changes have taken place. Government subsidies and the VAT exemption are vital for the press, and state support is available for struggling newspapers. Danmarks Radio (DR), the public broadcaster, operates two general interest television channels, a 24-hour news channel, and four national radio channels. TV2 is a privately run but government-owned television network. State-run television and radio broadcasting is financed by an annual license fee. Public service radio is dominant, but tightly regulated commercial, national, and local radio has some importance. Satellite and cable television are also available, as is a variety of internet-based news.

In 2011, 90 percent of the population had access to the internet. The government does not restrict use of the internet, but some observers continue

2012 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

12

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

2

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

5

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

5

to contend that a system designed to block child pornography mistakenly blocked other sites. In June 2011, the Ministry of Justice initiated a proposal that would require public internet locations—such as internet cafés—to verify a potential user's identity before giving them access. The point of this law was to make it easier for the Danish government to attach names to information searched for and gathered on the internet in an effort to combat terrorism. Critics called this a huge loss of privacy.

[About us](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Credits](#)

[Subscribe](#)

Related websites:

[Democracy Web](#) | [Derecho a Voz](#) | [Family Law - Khaleej](#) |

[Peace in the Caucasus](#) | [Undermining Democracy](#) |

[Voice of Freedom](#)