



# FREEDOM HOUSE

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## Freedom Of The Press - Norway (2011)

**Status: Free**  
**Legal Environment: 3**  
**Political Environment: 4**  
**Economic Environment: 4**  
**Total Score: 11**

Freedoms of the press and of information are guaranteed under Article 100 of Norway's constitution. There are laws that prohibit hateful expression, but there were no reported cases of this during 2010. In 2008, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that a government ban on political commercials, designed to ensure equal access to the media for all candidates regardless of varying resources, violated the European Convention on Human Rights. The government in 2009 rejected the ruling, and said that political commercials would remain illegal, but attempted to address the ruling by strengthening the provision of greater access for small political parties on the public broadcaster NRK, as well as granting them access to another television channel, Frikanalen, to disseminate their views. In 2008, parliament approved a bill designed to protect editorial freedom in the media, meaning that owners could not reexamine an editor's decision regarding editorial operations.

In the wake of the 2005 controversy over the publishing of cartoons of the prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, the government of Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg in 2009 proposed repealing the blasphemy law, but it is still on the books. In February 2010, Norway had a minor "cartoon crisis" when *Dagbladet*, a Norwegian newspaper, published a cartoon of Muhammad accompanying an article that was highly critical of anti-Muslim cartoons. Massive street protests by Muslims followed and the unrest continued for two weeks. In July, three Muslim immigrants were arrested for plans to bomb Norwegian sites as well as the Danish paper that published the original Muhammad cartoons.

The public broadcaster NRK is dominant in both radio and television, and is financed by a license fee, but there is considerable competition from private broadcasters. News is also provided by the private television channel TV2. Norway has one of the highest newspaper readerships in the world, and distributes more than 200 newspapers that express a diversity of opinions. Media concentration is a concern, with three main companies dominating the print media. Schibsted owns a majority of Media Norge, a media consortium of several of the country's largest papers, including *Bergens Tidende*, *Aftenposten*, *Stavanger Aftenblad*, and *Fædrelandsvennen*. Media Norge was formed in 2009 after a protracted struggle with the Media Authority due to concerns over its size. Competition is still strong, even though the financial downturn has hurt the advertising market. The internet is widely used in Norway, and it is accessed by more than 93 percent of the population. The government does not restrict use of the internet.