

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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Norway

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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 2011. In 2008, the European Court of Human Rights had 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 freedom of expression clause in 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 issue by providing for greater editorial coverage of 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; under the bill, media owners cannot reexamine an editor's decision regarding editorial operations.

In April 2011, the Norwegian Broadcasting Council rejected a complaint by the Israeli ambassador to Norway that the NRK's reporting on Israel was biased. The council launched an external investigation into the reporting but found no proof of bias. In May, several media outlets brought a joint suit against the government in order to gain access to newly surfaced documents and recordings related to a famous 1985 espionage case against Arne Treholt. The Norwegian Police Security Service cited national security concerns for refusing to release the documents. In June, major Norwegian media boycotted a Janet Jackson concert when Jackson's managers and lawyers demanded that journalists sign strict contracts on the use of any photos taken of the singer.

Threats against journalists and media outlets are rare. In July 2010, three Muslim immigrants were arrested in Norway for planning to attack the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*, which in 2005 had published the original prophet Muhammad cartoons that sparked a controversy across Europe and the Muslim world; they also planned to attack the cartoonist who drew the Muhammad cartoons. Their trial began in November 2011. A fourth man, Arfan Bhatti, who had earlier been acquitted of terrorist charges, was thrown out of the courtroom as a spectator. He allegedly threatened a TV2 photographer and his family after his expulsion from the courtroom.

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 sector. One of these companies, 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 Norwegian Media Authority due to concerns over its size. Competition is still strong, even though the financial downturn has hurt the advertising market.

2012 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

10

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

3

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

3

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

4

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