



FREEDOM HOUSE

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Freedom Of The Press - Sweden (2011)

Status: Free
Legal Environment: 2
Political Environment: 5
Economic Environment: 4
Total Score: 11

Freedom of the press declined in Sweden in 2010, with a rise in political censorship and a terrorist attack. Sweden has strong legal protections for press freedom under the Freedom of the Press Law dating back to 1766, as well as the Fundamental Law of Freedom of Expression from 1991, although these laws criminalize expression considered to be hate speech and prohibit threats or expressions of contempt directed against a group or member of a group. Journalists' sources are protected by law, as is access to information for all citizens. However, there is considerable self-censorship among journalists, especially on issues relating to immigration.

During the 2010 election, the private broadcaster TV4 refused to show a video for the nationalist party, the Sweden Democrats. The journalist who had produced the video was later released from a freelance agreement with the public television station Sveriges Television (SVT). SVT also excluded the party from a final debate on the station, because it was not yet represented in parliament (it was, however, after the election). Tensions continue between the media and Muslim groups in Scandinavia, stemming from the 2005 Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. In March 2010, a plot was uncovered in Ireland to murder the Swedish artist Lars Vilks, who in 2007 drew Muhammad as a dog. In May, Vilks was attacked by a mob at a presentation at Uppsala University and was rescued by police. A few days later arsonists attacked his house. In December 2010, a would-be suicide bomber succeeded in killing only himself in central Stockholm. He cited Vilks's drawings as a reason for the attack. Sweden has recently taken steps to outlaw fictional child pornography. In July 2010, a Swedish translator of Japanese *manga* comics was charged with possession of child pornography and may face a large fine. His case was still pending at year's end.

Public broadcasting has a strong presence in Sweden, consisting of SVT and Sveriges Radio. Public television and radio are funded through a license fee, but television has considerable competition from private stations, the main competitor to SVT being TV4. Private broadcasting ownership is highly concentrated under the media companies Bonnier and the Modern Times Group. The government offers subsidies to newspapers in order to encourage competition, and media content in immigrant languages is also supported by the state. Sweden is among the top consumers of newspapers in the world, with about 75 percent of the population reading a newspaper every day. Even while threatened by dwindling advertising, the newspaper market is very diverse, with many local and regional papers. Access to the internet is unrestricted by the government, and the medium was used by 90 percent of the population in 2010.