

## Press freedom at lowest level in 25 years

4th May 2026



Press freedom is at its lowest level in 25 years. This is according to a report from the organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF). It has released its annual World Press Freedom Index, which assesses the degree to

which the media in 180 countries is free to operate. RSF said press freedom was "problematic" or worse in three quarters of the nations assessed. In over half of the world, conditions were "difficult" to "very serious". In 2013, fewer than a third of countries were given this classification. Press freedom was considered "problematic" in over 70 per cent of countries. The RSF said conditions were "good" in only seven countries. These were all in northern and western Europe.

The RSF report highlights growing authoritarian pressure on journalists. It wrote: "Political pressure on the press is intensifying, authoritarian tendencies are growing, and the media market is heavily weakened....The Index's analysis highlights an alarming deterioration in the conditions for journalism in many parts of the world." The Index describes a worrying trend across the globe. It says there was a "systematic policy" of attacks on journalists in the USA. It wrote in Russia, "laws designed to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism" were used to "restrict press freedom". RSF said "67 media professionals killed in the past year were victims of war or criminal networks".

Sources: [dw.com](http://dw.com) / [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) / [rsf.org](http://rsf.org)

### Writing

Journalists should be free to write and publish whatever they like. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

press freedom / organization / reporters / borders / media / countries / Europe / authoritarian / pressure / journalism / the globe / terrorism / extremism / war

### True / False

- 1) The article says press freedom has never been lower. T / F
- 2) Reporters Without Borders looked at press freedom in 180 countries. T / F
- 3) Conditions for journalists were very serious in 75% of countries. T / F
- 4) There were only seven countries in which conditions were "good". T / F
- 5) There is increasing authoritarian pressure on reporters. T / F
- 6) Reporters Without Borders said the press is pressuring politicians. T / F
- 7) Reporters Without Borders said Russia has new laws to protect reporters. T / F
- 8) A report said 167 reporters were killed in wars in 2025. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. <b>according to</b>  | a. troublesome  |
| 2. <b>annual</b>        | b. grave        |
| 3. <b>assesses</b>      | c. casualties   |
| 4. <b>serious</b>       | d. yearly       |
| 5. <b>problematic</b>   | e. worsening    |
| 6. <b>authoritarian</b> | f. limit        |
| 7. <b>deterioration</b> | g. as stated by |
| 8. <b>combat</b>        | h. dictatorial  |
| 9. <b>restrict</b>      | i. fight        |
| 10. <b>victims</b>      | j. evaluates    |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Why is press freedom important?
- c) What are the most trusted news sources?
- d) What impact are authoritarian governments having on the news?
- e) What can we do to protect journalists?
- f) What examples do you know of fake news?
- g) What will journalism be like in the future?
- h) What questions would you like to ask journalists?

## Phrase Match

- |                                    |                              |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. It has released its annual      | a. are growing               |
| 2. the degree to which the media   | b. the nations assessed      |
| 3. in three quarters of            | c. and western Europe        |
| 4. a third of countries were given | d. pressure on journalists   |
| 5. These were all in northern      | e. the globe                 |
| 6. growing authoritarian           | f. in 180 countries is free  |
| 7. authoritarian tendencies        | g. separatism and extremism  |
| 8. an alarming deterioration in    | h. this classification       |
| 9. a worrying trend across         | i. the conditions            |
| 10. combat terrorism,              | j. World Press Freedom Index |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about press freedom?
- How free do you think the press in your country is?
- Do you believe everything reported by the press?
- What do you think of the job of a journalist?
- What do you think of war correspondents?
- How has social media affected news reporting?
- What difficulties do journalists face?
- What advice do you have for journalists?

## Spelling

- rdccanogi ot a report
- its laannu World Press Freedom Index
- the eedger to which the media...
- three quarters of the nations edsssase
- countries were given this islasacotifcni
- hnetnrro and western Europe
- iuanraotrhait pressure
- an alarming rineoeodirtat
- a ityasscmte policy of attacks
- combat terrorism, separatism and mxrmeesit
- rtstiecr press freedom
- media faesspionsorl

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. j	4. b	5. a
6. h	7. e	8. i	9. f	10. c

## Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What is the name of the organization that compiled a report?
2.	What is the name of the report?
3.	How many countries did the organization look at?
4.	In 2013, how many countries were classed as "difficult" to "very serious"?
5.	What was press freedom considered as in more than 70% of countries?
6.	What kinds of pressure did the report say were on journalists?
7.	What did the report say was being weakened?
8.	Where is there a worrying trend?
9.	Where did the report say there was a policy of attacks on journalists?
10.	What were 67 journalists victims of in the past year?

## Speaking – News

Rank these with your partner. Put the most interesting news at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| • World politics    | • Technology    |
| • National politics | • Motoring      |
| • Sport             | • Entertainment |
| • Business          | • Local news    |

### Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	F	4	T	5	T	6	F	7	F	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.