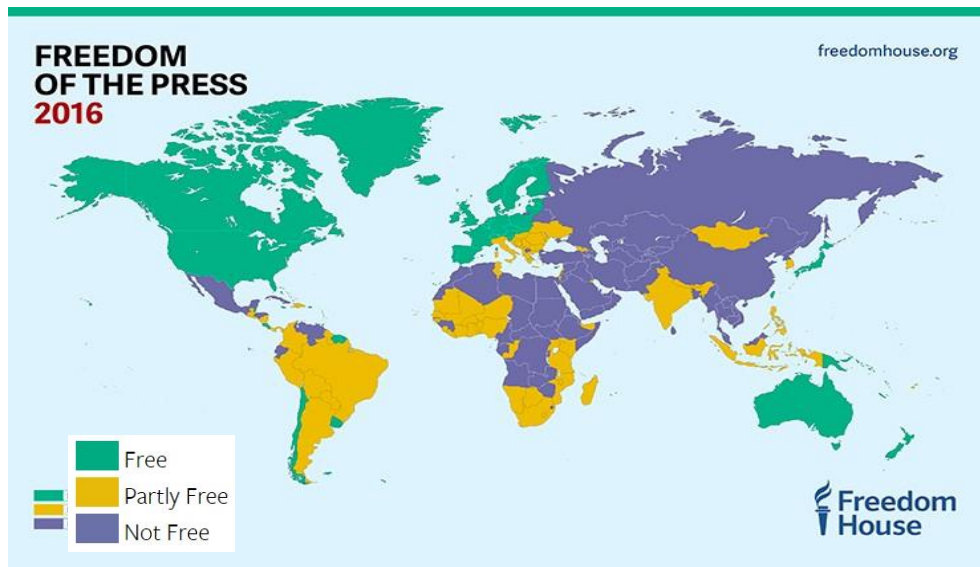


Freedom of the Press Fast Facts

Freedom of speech is a bellweather: how any society tolerates those with minority, disfavored, or even obnoxious views will often speak to its performance on human rights more generally. In international law, access to information and free expression are two sides of the same coin, and both have found tremendous accelerators in the Internet and other forms of digital communication. At the same time, efforts to control speech and information are also accelerating, by both governments and private actors in the form of censorship, restrictions on access, and violent acts directed against those whose views or queries are seen as somehow dangerous or wrong. [Human Rights Watch Free Speech](#)

The freedom of the press, protected by the First Amendment, is critical to a democracy in which the government is accountable to the people. A free media functions as a watchdog that can investigate and report on government wrongdoing. It is also a vibrant marketplace of ideas, a vehicle for ordinary citizens to express themselves and gain exposure to a wide range of information and opinions. [ACLU](#)



Level of freedom of the press in countries around the world in 2016 by Freedom House.

State of the Freedom of the Press Around the World by [Freedom House](#)

- Press freedom declined to its lowest point in 12 years in 2015, as political, criminal and terrorist forces sought to co-opt or silence the media in their broader struggle for power.
- Only 13% of the world's population enjoyed a completely free press in 2016, that is, where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures.
- Among the countries that suffered the largest decline in 2015 were Bangladesh, Turkey, Burundi, France, Serbia and Yemen.

Request for President Trump to protect the freedom of the press from [Human Rights Watch](#)

“During your campaign, you suggested you would attempt to weaken libel laws to make it easier to sue the media. Existing libel laws are designed to protect freedom of expression and ensure that the US has a robust free media, which is essential to ensuring public accountability and strong democratic institutions. Any efforts to erode such freedoms, including by strengthening libel laws, would be profoundly harmful to journalists’ ability to hold government to account. Ultimately, they would harm a fundamental and enduring component of US democracy.” Ken Roth, Executive Director