

# World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development:

## Regional overview of **AFRICA**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Communication and  
Information Sector

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Editor: Courtney C. Radsch, PhD  
Associate Editor: Rachel Pollack  
Graphic design: UNESCO  
Cover design: UNESCO  
Illustrations: Ben Stanford, UNESCO  
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# INTRODUCTION

Freedom of expression in general, and media development in particular, are core to UNESCO's constitutional mandate to advance 'the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication' and promoting 'the free flow of ideas by word and image.' For UNESCO, press freedom is a corollary of the general right to freedom of expression. Since 1991, the year of the seminal Windhoek Declaration, which was endorsed by our Member States, UNESCO has understood press freedom as designating the conditions of media freedom, pluralism and independence, as well as the safety of journalists.

The present text is part of a compendium of regional overviews produced as a supplement to the 2014 publication *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development*.<sup>1</sup> The *World Trends* report, along with its supplemental regional chapters, examines progress as regards press freedom, including in regard to gender equality, and makes sense of the evolution of media actors, news media institutions and journalistic roles over time. The global report also contains an in-depth examination of the gender-related aspects of press freedom, through dedicated sections in each of the four thematic chapters.

*World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* was prepared as the basis of a summary report on the global state of press freedom and the safety of journalists, presented to the General Conference of UNESCO Member States in November 2013, on the mandate of the decision by Member States taken at the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference of the Organization.<sup>2</sup>

The overarching global trend with respect to media freedom, pluralism, independence and the safety of journalists over the past several years is that of disruption and change brought on by technology, and to a lesser extent, the global financial crisis. These trends have impacted traditional economic and organizational structures in the news media, legal and regulatory frameworks, journalism practices, and media consumption and production habits. Technological convergence has expanded the number of media platforms, and access to them, as well as the potential for expression. It has enabled the emergence of citizen journalism and spaces for independent media, while at the same time is fundamentally reconfiguring journalistic practices and the business of news.

The broad global patterns identified in the report are accompanied by extensive unevenness within the whole. The trends summarized above, therefore, go hand in hand with substantial variations between and within regions as well as countries. It is these variations that are explored in the chapters that follow.

1 Available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/world-media-trends>

2 37 C/INF.4 16 September 2013 "Information regarding the implementation of decisions of the governing bodies". <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002230/223097e.pdf>; <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002230/223097f.pdf>

**AFRICA:  
MEDIA FREEDOM**

## OVERVIEW

During the 1990s, in most of the 47 countries of the Africa Group at UNESCO, private newspapers started to flourish. Growing deregulation of the broadcasting sector began to allow for the blossoming of private and community radio and television stations. In newly established multi-party democracies, there was a decline in prosecuting or harassing journalists, and media law reforms were set in motion. Declarations adopted by UNESCO and pan-African bodies mirrored and promoted this progress. Since the turn of the century, however, the building of democratic structures, and with it the promotion of freedom of expression and press freedom, have slowed. Legal reforms with the aim of advancing freedom of expression in the region have moved slowly, and provisions that fall short of international standards have remained on the statute books.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, regional campaigns have successfully promoted the decriminalization of defamation and the adoption of freedom information legislation, and by 2013 at least 19% of the region had decriminalized defamation and ten countries had adopted specific freedom of information legislation.

Some governments in the region, having come into office via elections, have appeared to become increasingly wary of critical or opposition voices. Efforts to transform the dominant state-controlled broadcasters into public broadcasters have remained hampered. A culture of secrecy has continued to prevail at government level in parts of the region and self-censorship reportedly remains common among journalists and citizens who fear to use their rights to freedom of expression fully [see AFRICA: MEDIA SAFETY]. While journalists, media activists and civil society in many countries have largely succeeded in maintaining the space for media freedom gained in the previous decade, efforts to expand this and to firmly entrench freedom of expression as an undisputed right have often been frustrated. After the initial enthusiasm of the 1990s, and some legal reforms regarding the printed press, media issues appear to have declined in importance as an item on the agenda of many civil society organizations.

That the region's media landscape has remained diverse and open appears to be due in part to the courage and commitment of journalists and the increasing determination of citizens to claim their right to know and to make their voices heard. In addition, new media are increasingly relevant in the region, despite limited internet access in many countries. While governments are increasingly aware of the potential influence of online publications and bloggers, as well as the organizational capacity of mobile phones, interference with these technologies has remained rare.

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3 According to a longitudinal analysis by UNESCO of Freedom House's annual press freedom survey, over the past six years the number of sub-Saharan African countries classified by that organization as having 'Not Free' media remained static, whereas there was a decline in the number of those assessed as having 'Free' media and an increase in the ranks of the 'Partly Free.'

## LEGAL/STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

The national constitutions of all 47 countries surveyed in the Africa region contained a guarantee of the right to freedom of expression. Sub-clauses or other pieces of legislation, however, often stipulated limitations based on concepts such as national security, public order, public morality, and public health, among others, without providing a more elaborated understanding of these concepts. Increasingly, however, journalists have resisted constraints, and citizens have been able to express themselves relatively freely via the media, in particular on internet forums and call-in radio talk shows.

Taking the ratification of international treaties which guarantee freedom of expression as an indicator for the commitment of governments to this basic right, the picture has been mixed. All countries in the region have ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) and all but two the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), both of which instruments guarantee freedom of expression. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which was adopted by the African Union in 2007 and seeks, among other things, to promote freedom of the press, has been signed by 38 countries but ratified by only 10 so far, half of which ratified in 2010, with a levelling off since then. Other regional and continental initiatives have been signed and ratified by the overwhelming majority of countries. The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in 2002, has continued to be a lobbying tool and seen to have strong moral force even if it was not legally binding.

However, domestication and implementation of commitments remain a challenge. The impression by many local observers has been that governments adopted such documents primarily for international reasons, while progress towards a more democratic media environment has been achieved mainly due to the activities and advocacy efforts of journalists and civil society.

Many countries continued to have on their statute books provisions that do not measure up to international standards which require limitations of freedom of expression and press freedom to be narrowly defined, necessary and proportionate. These include provisions on 'false news' and news deemed to potentially cause 'alarm to the public.' Some national laws allow for the banning of media if they are 'likely to breach public order' or if they are 'contrary to the public interest.' In the wake the events of 11 September 2001, some countries in Africa introduced anti-terrorism laws with vague definitions of 'terrorism.' An example is wording referring to a 'serious interference or disruption of any public service,' which could lend itself to abusing rights to publish. In at least two cases, such legislation has been used to prohibit reports because the authorities felt they might lead to strikes in the public service.

There appears to be an emerging regional trend towards the recognition of the need to decriminalize defamation. In 2010, the ACHPR adopted a resolution appealing to African Union member countries to repeal criminal defamation or insult laws and in 2012 the

Pan-African Parliament passed a resolution to encourage AU heads of state to sign the 'Declaration of Table Mountain,' which called for dismantling criminal defamation and which has been signed by two countries. In most cases – criminal or civil – the burden of proof has continued to be on the defendant, and it has been rare to have public interest recognized as a defence. Members of government have continued to initiate most such cases. There has been a trend towards using civil defamation cases in lieu of criminal cases, but with demands for extremely high damages with the potential to bankrupt media outlets, although the courts have often dismissed such cases.

According to an analysis by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, laws against 'defamation of religion' have remained on the books in 13 countries (27%), four countries had laws penalizing apostasy and two had anti-blasphemy laws.

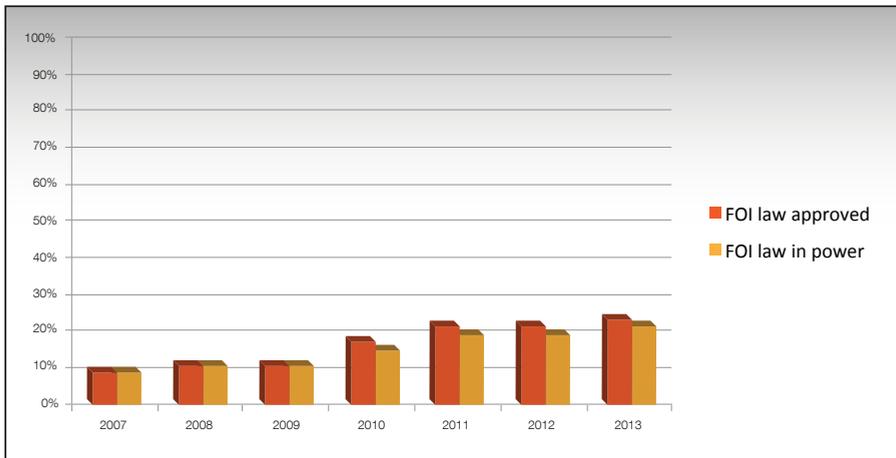
There has been little development on the protection of sources over the past six years. Out of the 27 countries where information could be found, only ten legally guaranteed confidentiality, but in most cases there were legislative ambiguities or instances where the police attempted to pressure journalists to disclose their sources. In three other countries, courts of law have given legal backing to the protection of sources or do not insist on disclosure. In 2002 the ACHPR elaborated the right of protection of sources under Article 9; and a 2007 study by Banisar for Privacy International found that in Africa, countries that were previously French colonies made up about two-thirds of the total number of countries with legal protection of sources, while countries in PALOP (Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa) were disproportionately represented in terms of such a positive dispensation. There has been little indication this pattern has changed.

The lack of protection of sources has been one reason for the general scarcity of investigative journalism in the region, an on-going trend that other factors have exacerbated, including limited capacities with regard to financial means, time and professional skills. However, investigative journalism has been on the rise in at least three countries, due in part to financial support from international organizations. Official Secrets Acts – typically a relic of colonial rule – make it difficult for public servants to speak to the media. In general, when it has come to information held by the state, the emphasis has been on blocking access, thus creating what has often been referred to as a 'culture of secrecy.' In 2003, the AU adopted the Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, which requires member countries to take legislative measures to protect whistle-blowers; since 2005, 23 countries have ratified the convention, bringing the total to 31, with several putting such measures in place.

Ten countries in the region have had specific freedom of information (FOI) laws, four of them adopted during the last six years, with others in the process of considering bills; five of these laws provided for a public interest override of otherwise protected information. In ten out of the remaining 20 countries where data were available, access to public information was guaranteed by the constitution and/or other instruments such as press legislation. In practice, however, such information has been difficult to obtain, the list of exceptions extensive, and civil servants have hidden behind secrecy legislation to refuse disclosure. In all cases the procedure has tended to be lengthy and complicated and thus

acts as a deterrent. There have been only two pieces of legislation that stipulate proactive provision of meaningful information by government, and there has been little indication that other countries are likely to follow suit. Recent international and continental initiatives may have helped to power or reinvigorate FOI campaigns by civil society groups in the various countries.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1**  
Percentage of Member States with freedom of information (FOI) laws: Africa



**Sources:** freedominfo.org. (2013, March). *Consensus list of 93 countries with freedom of information laws or the equivalent*; Vleugels, R. (2012, 30 September). *Overview of all FOI laws. Fringe Special*; Open Society Justice Initiative. (2013, March). *List of Countries with Access to Information (ATI) Provisions in their National/Federal Laws or Actionable Decrees, and Dates of Adoption & Significant Amendments*

International media have been freely accessible in nearly the entire region, although there were a few cases of international radio stations being jammed or banned during short periods of time, especially during elections, and at least one country has been accused of jamming satellite signals that carry exile media. There has generally not been registration required for internet use as such, although increasingly registration for SIM card ownership has been required. Websites and blogs with international domain names have been allowed to be set up freely; only a few countries have required registration or licensing by a regulatory authority. Systematic filtering or censorship of internet content has remained the exception; certain opposition websites have been blocked in some countries with nationwide internet filtering of political content much less common.

4 In 2011, a Pan-African Conference on Access to Information, organized by the Windhoek+20 Campaign on Access to Information in Africa in partnership with UNESCO, ACHPR and the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, adopted an African Platform on Access to Information (APAI) which lists a number of principles to advance freedom of information. In 2012, the African Commission developed a Model Freedom of Information Law and called on the AU to endorse this document.

Twelve African governments have reportedly forced the closure or temporary suspension of particular websites between 2010 and 2012, at an average instance of four such closures per year. Most countries seemed to lack the technical means to filter internet content, but there has been growing concern over the setting up of monitoring mechanisms that could lead to filtering. Although there was evidence of systematic filtering and/or surveillance by just two African governments, there are indications of a growing trend in the number of governments that have attempted to introduce legislation to this effect. Some governments have blocked access to SMS in times of unrest.

Authorities have tended to resort to more direct forms of internet censorship, such as the harassment or arrest of bloggers and online journalists, rather than sophisticated URL blocking or systematic filtering because they did not yet have the technical capability to do so. However, as governments have become increasingly technologically savvy and internet penetration has continued to grow, this could change and restrictions on freedom of expression online (possibly mandated by specific legislation) may emerge as a trend.

Governments in the region have been wary of the potential influence of the 2011 uprisings in parts of the Arab region on the sub-Saharan region. Recognizing how social media acted as an enabling factor in the uprisings, some governments have banned reference to those events on both the internet and traditional media.

**AFRICA:  
MEDIA PLURALISM**

## OVERVIEW

The most visible development for media pluralism in the 47 countries here over the last six years has been the exponential growth in mobile telephony penetration and mobile internet access. Another regional trend has been continuation of the transition to privately-owned and advertising-supported media. There has been no significant change in legal provisions for media ownership generally. Thus government control of state-owned media remains intact generally, with only a handful of countries enacting legislation to transform state broadcasters into public service broadcasters. Though reliable data are generally non-existent, there has been observable growth in private radio and TV ownership across the board; newspaper circulation and readership, however, do not appear to have followed the same trends. There has also been a significant and growing use of radio and TV owned by religious groups.

However, a number of countries have seen a tendency towards concentration or monopoly in the media. Laws defining the precise place and regulation of the three-tier broadcast system, as well as forms and parameters of ownership (e.g. concerning concentration and cross-ownership), have remained absent or ambiguous in many countries and have particularly hampered the development of the community broadcasting sector.

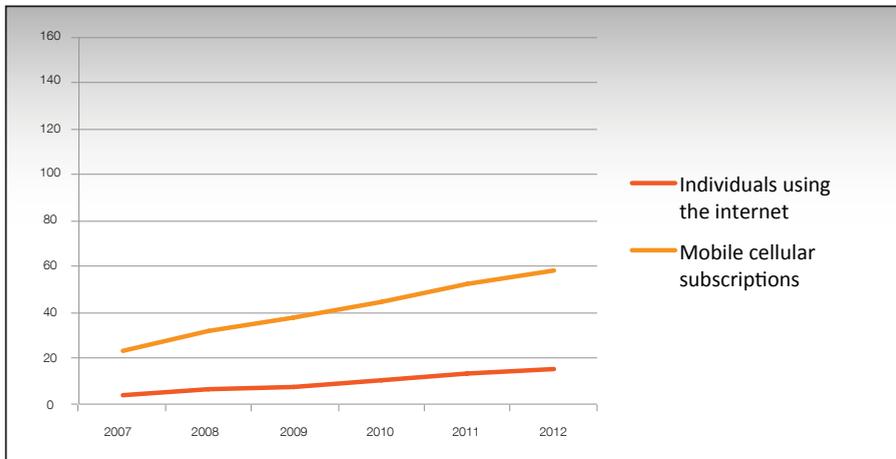
Satellite television (subscription-based) via the South African-owned DStv has maintained its continental presence. However, other cross-border expansion has not been common, and the Nation Media Group's expansion into East African economies has been a distinct rarity, and not likely indicative of a trend. The key challenges confronting the growth and consolidation of media pluralism have continued to include the need for legislative and structural reforms to enhance the independence of regulatory mechanisms [see AFRICA: MEDIA INDEPENDENCE]. Economic constraints persist, including those impeding wider adoption of digital technologies.

## ACCESS

Over the past six years, access to printing facilities and the high cost of newsprint and other inputs continued to be a hurdle for the growth of the print sector. Another critical impediment has been the poor infrastructure for distribution, especially to rural areas. Overall, the most difficult obstacles have remained the persistence of illiteracy, low readership, and personal incomes that have been too low to patronize the print media. Yet many newspapers have endured these difficulties for well over the past six years, indicating that print media could be sustainable as a factor for media pluralism in urban areas into the near future. However, many newspapers have tended to be published in English or French and have not been translated into local languages. This has limited the accessibility of content in the print media in particular.

According to data collected by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the rate of internet penetration in Africa nearly quadrupled between 2007 and 2012, from 4% of individuals using the internet in 2007 to 15% in 2012. Over the same time period, the ITU found that the rate of mobile-cellular subscriptions nearly tripled, from 23 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2007 to 59 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2012.<sup>5</sup> Cellular phones have increased public access to participation in radio programming across the continent.

**Figure 2**  
Internet and mobile cellular penetration per 100 inhabitants in Africa



**Sources:** For internet penetration rates and number of mobile subscriptions, see International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2013, June). 'Individuals using the Internet' and 'Mobile Cellular Subscriptions'. *World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database 2013 (17th Edition)*. For population, see World Bank. (2013). *World Databank: World Development Indicators*.

The multiplicity of media outlets has opened up a greater variety and diversity of sources of news and information. Radio broadcasts – including through some online channels – in larger numbers of local languages have widened access to a wider range of media users. Most newspapers and radio stations have internet outlets for their content. Online and/or mobile platforms as media sources have been growing, but have appeared unlikely to catch up with radio for a considerable time to come because of limitations from low general literacy and low media and information literacy in the use and applications of new technologies as well as limited access to computers. A study of mobile media services in two East African countries concluded that despite the high level of mobile phone use, the use of mobile media services remained at a low level.<sup>6</sup> The low revenues that publishers have received from mobile operators have not encouraged rapid growth in investment in

5 Another analysis by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the African Media Initiative found that by 2011, mobile penetration in Africa had grown at a rate of 65% over the previous five years.

6 The WAN-IFRA and African Media Initiative study observes that many newspapers in Kenya, Uganda and South Africa abandoned their mobile services after a few years.

mobile news service provision. In addition, electricity shortages have added to the high cost of production that afflicts media all over the continent.

Yet, over the past six years, radio and TV have continued to enjoy high access levels. More than 90% of the population in West Africa, for example, listen to radio. Television has also attracted large audiences in many cases, although with little choice in local content. Access to international news has expanded, especially among the middle classes and urban residents through the growth of satellite broadcasting transmission services – in particular international news services such as the BBC, CNN, CCTV and VOA – which have been broadly available in Africa, some with a Kiswahili service in East Africa. However, media outlets other than the major state-broadcasters have typically lacked the capacity to cover the entire country. Continued governmental control of the state-owned media has tended to limit access to those media by social and political groups who express dissenting or opposing viewpoints on public affairs.

## ECONOMIC MODEL

Generally, there have appeared to be significantly uneven levels of private media development in different regions of the continent. Anglophone African countries have experienced stronger growth in the media sector than the other parts of the region. State ownership and private commercial ownership have continued to dominate the media landscape for all media types in all countries in the Africa region. The number of countries where absolute state monopolies control media platforms has so dwindled over the past two decades that there remains only one country in the region where this is the case.

Compared with broadcasting, newspaper publishing has not been growing as strongly, though it was booming in some countries, especially in East and Southern Africa. In at least seven countries, there is still not a daily newspaper whether public or private. In one country, and possibly others, a decline in total newspaper circulation was accompanied by a greater increase in average readership due to sharing of print copies and the growth of digital readership, as well as some expansion of hard-copy African-language newspapers. Generally, the print media business has thrived in the Africa region, but with serious financial handicaps as the economics of the industry have not improved significantly over the past six years. Advertising revenues have remained insufficient and there has been a lack of investment in new technology and personnel. With the exception of a handful of countries, state-owned and controlled newspapers have remained. There have been a few significant examples of community-run newspapers or magazines across the region, and in some countries newssheets serving rural and other communities have been produced and distributed for free by some of the dominant print companies.

Private and public radio broadcasting exist in at least 39 countries, with eight countries having only state-owned radio. In at least four countries, there has been partial privatization of television markets, which occurred prior to 2007. Though various media development

NGOs have mounted advocacy campaigns for public service broadcasting in Africa for some years, state-owned broadcasting has functioned mostly as a government broadcast service almost everywhere with the few exceptions unlikely to be indicative of a trend. The growth of university campus radio stations, which are usually adjuncts of journalism schools or student government initiatives, has been a noticeable trend. Community broadcasting has flourished with little restraint in many countries, but has come under various levels of control in many others. Although community radio has expanded exponentially in the past 25 years from 10 stations in 1985 to several hundred in 2012, the sector has not been recognized in some countries and/or has been restricted from broadcasting news.

Media ownership dynamics have tended to detract from the independence of the media across much of the African region [see AFRICA: MEDIA INDEPENDENCE], usually due to the high degree of governmental or political ownership and control within the broadcast and print sectors, a situation that has remained largely unchanged over the past six years. Indeed, the trend towards dominance of government-owned media described in a decade-old study by Djankov et al. does not appear to have changed substantially; that study found that, on average, governments in Africa controlled 61% of the top five daily newspapers by circulation, and reached 85% of the audience for the top five television stations, with two-thirds of African countries having state monopolies in television broadcasting. Within private ownership, concentration has been emerging as a growing issue, though it is already dominant in a few countries, and especially as leaders in the print sector have expanded into radio and TV. Legal limits on ownership have not been specific or explicit in most countries and therefore cross-ownership, especially of broadcast and print media, is common; the state has often been the first example of this practice. The absence of clear legislation and regulatory checks has allowed radio owners with substantial capital to buy out smaller competitors or expand their presence in different areas of the same country.

Funding and business management have been among the biggest challenges to the sustainability of pluralistic media in the Africa region. Support for the establishment of media outlets has come predominantly from private entrepreneurs or the state, and in some cases the practice of politicians or their family members owning, buying up or starting up media outlets has not changed significantly in the past six years. Mainstream financial institutions, such as banks, have not been an important source for financing media in Africa, although initiatives for soft credit facilities have made important contributions to accessing start-up capital or funds for sustaining and expanding the media business.<sup>7</sup> In most African countries, the advertising market alone has not been sufficient to support a robust, independent and pluralistic media sector, with little indication that this situation is likely to change, in part due to the lack of audience surveys and market research.<sup>8</sup>

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7 Examples include MISA's Southern African Media Development Fund based in Gaborone, Botswana, and the global Media Development Loan Fund based in Budapest.

8 Well-established and nationally-networked advertising and marketing agencies exist in few African countries, and related research data are most often not produced.

While Africa's economy is said to have seen around 5% annual growth over the past decade, this does not seem to have affected fundamentally the advertising revenue sources for media in most countries in the region. Advertising revenue in the region's biggest market, for example, grew from \$3.78 billion in 2007 to \$3.96 billion in 2011, according to WAN-IFRA. Reliable data on media circulation and advertising revenue in the region have been difficult to obtain or not collected at all, although marketing research has indicated a growth in mobile advertising alongside the general surge in mobile phone subscriptions.

In many countries in the region, the state and parastatals have dominated advertising, and revenue from these sources has not usually been accessible to all media on an impartial basis. Governments have often provided state subsidies to the media, usually in the form of advertising allocations, in a majority of African countries, with ministries and state-owned companies comprising the largest advertisers. In 18 of 30 African countries, such advertising was reportedly used for purposes of partisan political support, while the threat of the withdrawal of advertising awarded on a non-partisan basis has been used to pressure certain media outlets. In much of that part of Africa formerly colonised by France, the state has provided some direct financial subsidy also for the private media sector, based on the model of supporting a diversity of outlets, although in many cases it has been a small amount, or allocated on a partisan basis. There has been no indication of improvement in the financial dynamics influencing the mix of media in the system.

## CONTENT

Public participation in online media production has been growing, although it has remained low, while the rapid expansion of mobile penetration has facilitated popular participation, particularly in radio via the talk show format and in TV programmes. In many African countries, this development has helped media to carry viewpoints from across the political spectrum and diverse cultural expressions. Though the breadth of news content has been wider as a result of the growth in media outlets, the political elites have still dominated the headlines and news content.

Voices of organized opposition groups and parties have found expression in many media, although state-owned media have frequently muted or marginalized opposition and dissenting views, especially during election periods in several countries in the region. In countries with high levels of state monopoly or government control, the internet (and occasionally satellite TV), have provided the platform for dissenting and or opposition voices to express themselves, often from foreign or trans-border states. Action against independent media in some countries saw a number of journalists enter exile to launch several 'internet newspapers', radios and a satellite news channel. [See AFRICA: MEDIA SAFETY].

Outside of the larger countries with the strongest and most longstanding commercial newspaper industry, newspapers in most countries in the Africa region have tended generally to take on the political party colours in their environments. It has not been uncommon to find titles espousing the politics and ideologies of political parties in some countries. Political partisan biases and prejudices have also been rife on radio in some cases. In some countries, partisan political orientations of media outlets have helped to fuel violence, hate speech and divisiveness, especially in electoral processes in recent years. The availability of diverse media outlets has also boosted religious revivalism in some countries, underpinned by related revenue streams.

The gender content and character of news media in the Africa region have barely changed over the past six years, with women consistently representing only 19% of people in the news and reporting on 30% of the news according to the Global Media Monitoring Project. News stories have tended to reinforce gender stereotypes, regardless of whether the reporter is male or female. Although women have made inroads at senior management levels and have been employed in full-time media jobs that typically pay about the same salaries for women and men, the salary discrepancy becomes more acute in the more senior management echelons. The governance structures of media houses in the Southern African region have been predominantly male (72%) and only 23% of the top managers in the region's media houses are women, according to a 2009 study by the NGO Gender Links. Women comprised 41% of media employees in 14 Southern African countries, although their representation dropped to 32% if South Africa was excluded.

**AFRICA:  
MEDIA INDEPENDENCE**

## OVERVIEW

The state of the independence of the African media has remained relatively static since 2007, as difficulties that existed prior to 2007 have continued with very limited gains. Three of the 47 countries in this region have had no independent media or regulation, since the institutional media were entirely under the control of the government.

In many countries, self-regulatory bodies for the media have remained weak, underfunded and ineffectual, and statutory regulatory bodies established by the state have not tended to operate independently from governments. The weak economic position of the media industry has continued to exacerbate the problems of self-censorship, widespread bribery and unprofessional journalism, as well as negatively impacting the sustainability and independence of media outlets. Editorial independence in the state-owned media has continued to be largely lacking, and the independence of the private media has suffered from a variety of conditions, including owner interventions, actions by government and other actors, including threats and intimidation. There have also been media outlet closures and criminal lawsuits, as well as polarized media and politicized environments that have impacted on independence. The effectiveness of the supporting institutions such as NGOs and educational facilities may be in slow decline, although there were some exceptions.

There has appeared to be a causal relationship between the immediate concerns of many governments in the region and their exercise of pressures on the independence of media. Restrictive measures have flared up and simmered down sporadically, rather than revealing steady or consistent trends.

## INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-REGULATORY MECHANISMS

Regulation of media ownership in the Africa region ranges from conditions that require no licences for print, to more demanding conditions that require approval of the regulator and a deposit of fees. At least 19 (41%) governments in Africa either regulate or license the print media specifically, which means that these media outlets then face the potential of de-registration, while 10 (22%) governments continue to require professional journalists to be licensed. A significant number of governments issue press cards and/or practise favouritism in accreditation, which affects which journalists may attend government events or access government information, and has included selective practices which lack impartiality and constrain independence. This situation has remained largely static over

the past six years.<sup>9</sup> Although some countries have rescinded governmental registration policies for journalists, others have newly adopted journalist registration requirements, indicating a conflicting trend that has resulted in stasis at the regional level since the total number of countries that impose such restrictions on publications or journalists has remained unchanged. Almost no African countries have required online platforms and/or websites to be licensed with the state, with two exceptions.

Statutory regulatory bodies such as broadcast regulators have often been subject to political control, which in turn has implications for the independence of the broadcasters they license. This situation appears to have remained largely unchanged since 2007.

Mechanisms of self-regulation have often been subject to either official or unofficial governmental-control or political influence, a pattern in existence since before 2007. Many of the self-regulatory bodies (specifically press councils) were established in the late 1990s, some by law and others not.<sup>10</sup> Statutory versions, which have seldom been legally or structurally independent of government, were often reportedly established regardless of the existence of self-regulatory bodies, to which the latter have often been made subservient. Self-regulatory bodies in general have often been unable to facilitate the independence or freedom of the media, and some were not functional or ceased their regulatory activities shortly after starting up, usually due to a lack of funds. Self-regulatory bodies have often lacked universal recognition and authority, and have been accused by governments of being ineffectual. There has not been a trend towards hybrid systems of regulation, although the Press Council of South Africa, for example, recently restructured its systems and converted from being a self-regulatory body to a mechanism of independent co-regulation between journalists and members of the public. Newspapers in only two African countries have been regular members of the Organization of News Ombudsmen.<sup>11</sup>

Media regulation in much broadcasting in the region has lacked independence, and this general consistent trend throughout the region has amounted to political licensing, as well as inhibition of new entrants. Broadcast regulatory bodies have usually remained under the authority of the president or have been part of the Ministries of Information or Communication, which have continued to directly or indirectly influence the awarding of licences. The regulators' lack of independence has hampered transparency in the acquisition of broadcast licences. State-owned or public broadcasters have mostly been unable to operate with editorial independence from governments, and only a few countries have had laws to protect the neutrality of these broadcasters. This situation, which existed pre-2007, has continued to persist since without notable or effective

9 The research summary report of the African Media Development Initiative published in 2006 reported that four governments required the registration of professional journalists out of a sample of 17 African countries, indicating 23.5% of governments surveyed, as compared to the 22% in the region which were recorded as doing the same during the 2007-2012 period.

10 According to a 2011 study by Meyer, 15 African countries have established press codes for ethical practice in journalism.

11 As of June 2013 these two countries were South Africa and Kenya.

continent-wide progress to ensure the political independence of the broadcast media in general and state-owned media (both broadcast and print) from political interests [see [AFRICA: MEDIA PLURALISM](#)]. A ten-country regional media regulation study conducted in 2007 for UNESCO found that most of the licensing authorities, regardless of whether they regulated individual journalists or media institutions, were still a long way from being independent, and there has been little indication that the picture has changed substantially since then. In most of the region, there have not been quotas on equal representation of women in media regulatory bodies.

## JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Editors and journalists at state-owned media have generally continued to be legally classified as civil servants instead of autonomous professionals, and they have been mandated formally or informally to promote the interests of government. Conversely, many private media outlets have positioned themselves as the opposition media, and their reporting has been hyper-critical of the government, all of which has continued to reflect the lack of editorial independence and professionalism of the media.

The market incentives and economic conditions of the media ecosystem in Africa, particularly the dynamics of the media's relationship with business and the advertising sector, have tended to reinforce a trend towards self-censorship. In most countries, advertising has been concentrated in a few big companies and the sector has been relatively weak and insufficient to support an independent press [see [AFRICA: MEDIA PLURALISM](#)]. The fear that companies will withhold or withdraw advertising has resulted in limited criticism and limited investigative reporting amongst much of the private media. In media markets where state advertising subsidizes the industry, media have also tended to self-censor when reporting on governmental matters. Journalists have further tended to avoid specific subjects, such as human rights abuses, corruption and criticism of the government, for fear of reprisal [see [AFRICA: MEDIA SAFETY](#)]. Parts of the private commercial media have kept a check on government accountability, although their oversight of the private sector, including multinationals, has been less robust.

The persistent trend of poor remuneration of journalists has continued to be the dominant situation in the vast majority of countries in the region, making it difficult to make a living from the profession. In many countries there have been large variances in the salaries between journalists: those working in the private media have tended to make substantially more than journalists employed by state-owned media, and staff journalists have typically earned more than freelancers. Across all occupational levels, men's and women's salaries do not vary considerably either at the average low ranges or at the average high ranges. However, the top-level governance and management form two exceptions where men's salaries were found by the *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* to be clearly higher than women's.

In a large majority of African countries, journalists have continued to display regular ethical lapses in reporting, usually attributed to inadequate professional training and the willingness of many to accept or solicit bribes. Where most journalists have earned very low salaries, if they were paid at all, and where media institutions have often been politicized, journalists have reportedly regularly succumbed to accepting inducements in return for publishing distorted media reports. As a result, bribery has reportedly continued to be a common feature within the journalistic profession across the Africa region and this widespread problem does not appear to have declined significantly, if at all, within the period of study.<sup>12</sup> In an attempt to address this, the African Media Initiative has developed ethical guiding principles for media owners and operators on the continent.

The continuing trend of a lack of financial resources within the media sector, poorly functioning business models, and a difficult economy have maintained a situation where underpaid journalists witness the devaluing of their profession and have been left vulnerable as regards the quality of their work. The success of independent associations or professional groups for journalists, editors or media owners across the region, have not revealed steady trends, but vary widely depending on the particular conditions within each country. Such organizations operate in a reported 31 African countries, but with widely varying degrees of success with regard to promoting freedom of expression and representing the interests of their members. In 11 countries such organizations have reportedly failed almost entirely in representing the interests of their members during the past six years.

## PROFESSIONALISM AND THE BROADER MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

An important trend in the region is the slow increase in the availability of education and training of journalists both at university level and through professional development training, although it has not yet been sufficient. At least 29 countries have offered university degree programmes in journalism during the past six years while at least 26 countries offered short course professional development training opportunities, the latter typically facilitated by NGOs. At least seven countries had no university degree programmes or professional development courses. Institutions that support independent media, such as professional organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions, have continued to operate across much of the continent. Although in many places these institutions have been quite active in supporting the independent media, a countervailing trend of declining

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<sup>12</sup> The widespread problem of the bribery of journalists in Africa is known by a number of different and often culturally specific terms across the region, including brown envelop journalism, coupage, soli, gratu, gumbo, camorra, plugging, coasting, tips and ndalamayamatako.

presence has been observed in research indicators between 2006 and 2010.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, a UNESCO evaluation showed that at least 12 of the UNESCO-recognized potential centres of excellence in journalism education in Africa have improved in the last six years, and these have become founding participants in the Organization's exploration of a Global Initiative for Excellence in Journalism Education.

There has been a varied trans-continental trend with regard to the involvement of media actors in the work of campaigning for press freedom and media independence. In some countries such activities have been on the rise, whereas in other countries media actors have faced intimidating barriers. Activities in support of media freedom and independence during the past six years have included participation in protest marches, petitions, the publication of memoranda and communiqués, participation in the formulation of media laws, participation in civil society campaigns and in one instance a week-long news blackout. A significant number of pan-regional activities have taken place in South Africa, including in 2007, with the adoption of the Declaration of Table Mountain<sup>14</sup> and the 2011 adoption of the African Platform on Access to Information (APAI),<sup>15</sup> and the formation of the Right2Know Campaign 2010. The Pan-African Parliament in May 2013 initiated a continent-wide campaign for press freedom. Conversely, in three African countries the opportunities for media actors to partake in such activities has been severely limited, since no media outlets were independent from government, and journalists faced severe repression and intimidation [see AFRICA: MEDIA SAFETY]. Non-governmental organizations have actively advocated for press freedom throughout most of the region, and there have been a handful of groups such as the African Media Institute, the Media Institute of Southern Africa, the Media Foundation for West Africa and the African Editors Forum that were active in many countries. But in 11 African countries, such press freedom NGOs were absent, either because governments imposed stringent restrictions on the activities of all NGOs, or because NGOs in these countries prioritized other human rights issues.

13 Although supporting institutions rated consistently as the highest indicator across the African region in the IREX *Media Sustainability Index 2010*, 10 African countries displayed a significant drop in the rating of supporting institutions between 2006 and 2010. In 2006 these 10 countries achieved an average rating of 2.4 (out of 4 rating points, or 60%) but in 2010 the same 10 countries achieved an average rating of only 1,828 (45.7%). This indicates a rating drop of 0.572 (or 14.3%). By comparison, none of the 41 African countries surveyed by IREX displayed a significant rise in the rating of supporting institutions from 2006 to 2010.

14 The Declaration of Table Mountain called for African governments to abolish insult and criminal defamation laws, which frequently led to the arrest and imprisonment of journalists across the continent, as well as initiate a number of additional measures to ensure the freedom of the press in Africa. This particular work is currently being sustained by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information to the ACHPR, who has recently launched a campaign for the decriminalization of libel laws in Africa.

15 APAI calls on all African states to establish law which promotes access to information as a fundamental human right. The APAI declaration notes that in 2011 five African countries adopted access to information laws, bringing the total number of African countries to adopt such laws to 10, which may indicate an increasing trend among governments within the region to institute access to information laws.

**AFRICA:  
MEDIA SAFETY**

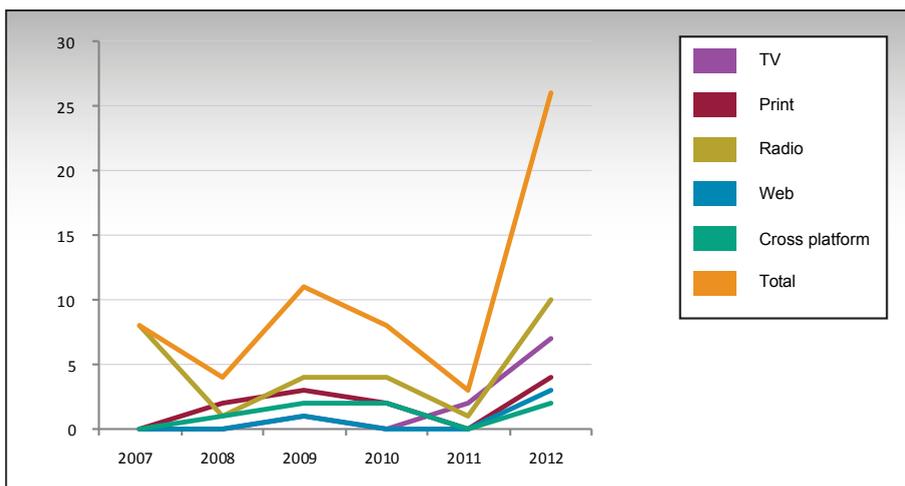
## OVERVIEW

The past six years have reportedly seen increased imprisonment of journalists in this region, while impunity remained across many of the 47 countries. In this context, self-censorship remained reportedly widespread. The types of threats that journalists, and increasingly bloggers, face have remained relatively stable between 2007 and 2012, linked to violent conflict, elections, corruption and single-party rule. As journalism has moved online and blogging has expanded, citizen journalists in the region have become targets along with their professional counterparts.

## PHYSICAL SAFETY AND IMPUNITY

UNESCO's Directors-General condemned the killings of between three and 11 journalists in the region each year from 2007 through 2011, with an increase in 2012 to 26, primarily due to violent conflict in one country. Among those killed, radio journalists have typically outnumbered their colleagues working in other platforms, underscoring the continued importance of this medium in the region. All the journalists killed whose deaths were condemned by UNESCO's Directors-General during the period were men, going beyond the statistic that regionally women have comprised only about one third of journalists working as reporters in the region and significantly less in many countries [see AFRICA: MEDIA PLURALISM]. The number of countries in Africa where killings of journalists took place rose fairly steadily from two in 2007 to six in 2012.

**Figure 3**  
Killings of journalists in Africa per year by medium



Source: UNESCO's internal database of *Journalist Killings and Status of Judicial Inquiry, 2007-2012*

Impunity for killings of journalists has remained. As of mid-2013, three (23%) of the 13 Member States in Africa where journalists were killed had responded to requests by UNESCO's Directors-General for a voluntary update on the status of judicial inquiry, with one noting that the perpetrator was convicted. Impunity for the killings of journalists appears to have increased in the last six years in places with the highest number of killings.

Journalists across the Africa region have reportedly faced threats, arbitrary detention and arrest, especially in countries experiencing armed conflict. Threats, harassment and violence have often emanated from state actors in some countries, particularly when journalists were affiliated with or covering the opposition. Elections have continued to be particularly perilous times for journalists. Some of the vulnerability that journalists have faced during such periods is linked to them being seen in some cases as mouthpieces of political actors rather than as independent professionals. Furthermore, inflammatory speech by certain politicians in some countries during election season has created insecurity for journalists and put the media in the middle of heated electoral battles.

Since 2005, the African Union's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information had sent approximately 60 urgent letters of appeal to more than 40 States related to '[i]ntimidation, harassment, kidnapping, threats, unwarranted detention/arrest and murder of journalists and media practitioners, closure of newspapers and media houses.'<sup>16</sup> Analysis of the Rapporteur's cases suggests that the kind of threats to journalists in the Africa region have remained relatively stable over the past six years.

## OTHER DIMENSIONS

The number of journalists reported as imprisoned in the region rose from 20 in 2007 to 44 in 2012.<sup>17</sup> This did not indicate a new overall trend, however, since the increase was particularly in only a few countries, with one country accounting for more than half of journalists reported as imprisoned in the region in 2011 and 2012.

The continued existence of criminal defamation and the use of anti-terrorism laws have been the primary enablers of journalistic imprisonment in Africa. Bloggers, who have faced harassment and arrest in at least 10 African countries, have often been arrested and/or charged under anti-terrorism and national security laws, as well as for their coverage of the private sector and political protests. Cases reported in the crowdsourced monitor

<sup>16</sup> The African Union mandate includes a number of countries that are included with UNESCO's Arab States voting group, and thus some of these letters from the Rapporteur covered States that were not within the UNESCO Africa region.

<sup>17</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the figures for imprisoned and exiled journalists have been compiled from reports by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Threatened Voices<sup>18</sup> suggest that such harassment and arrests may have increased over the period as internet use has expanded and media outlets have moved online; many such bloggers have also been working as journalists for the mainstream media. Many journalists who have been imprisoned have been reportedly held incommunicado and under poor conditions, often without charge or trial.<sup>19</sup>

Over the past six years, at least 230 African journalists have reportedly fled their home countries and gone into exile because of threats and harassment, primarily from state officials and security forces, with a spike in 2009 when at least 73 African journalists went into exile. Over the same period, there were continued cases of beatings and physical attacks by officials, along with raids on newsrooms and broadcasting stations. Anti-terrorism bills in several countries in the region have been seen to have increased governments' ability to conduct surveillance for loosely defined national security purposes.

Self-censorship has reportedly been practised widely across the African region. Apart from restrictive legal provisions [see AFRICA: MEDIA FREEDOM], freedom of expression in the media has mainly been constrained by the self-censorship of journalists due to such laws, threats from officials and fear of losing their jobs and livelihoods. Studies have suggested that the governments which expect journalists to promote the ruling party have weakened the professional values of independence and resistance to self-censorship [see AFRICA: MEDIA INDEPENDENCE]. In some privately-owned media, such self-censorship has been a result of a compromised political relationship with ruling or opposition parties, which has also had an impact on the safety of associated journalists.

In countries where ethnic and religious tensions have caused violence or civil conflict, many journalists reportedly practise self-censorship by avoiding certain stories altogether for fear that extremists could exploit the information to provoke violence. In some cases, fear of incurring adverse repercussions for doing journalism has appeared to be higher in rural areas where correspondents live in small communities and have often been dependent on the goodwill of local leaders and authorities. Self-censorship has been most virulent during or immediately after periods of internal crises or during election campaigns. Private as well as community radio stations and newspapers have often been closed down and/or raided at such times, creating insecurity for journalists at large.

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18 Threatened Voices is a Global Voices collaborative crowdsourced mapping project that has aimed to build a database of bloggers who have been threatened, arrested or killed for speaking out online and to draw attention to the campaigns to free them.

19 The precise number of journalists imprisoned has been difficult to verify with accuracy since reports from monitoring NGOs have differed with regard to such figures, and States have not generally been proactive in providing such information.

# APPENDICES

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Under the direction of UNESCO, an Advisory Group of specialists from around the globe renowned for their expertise in one or more of the thematic dimensions covered in *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* contributed to the research, drafting and peer-review of the global report and its supplemental regional overviews. In addition, consultation with UNESCO communication and information specialists in each region and at headquarters took place at various times throughout the drafting process. Responsibility for the content herein rests with UNESCO.

Information for this report includes that sourced from several UN bodies, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Appreciation is also expressed to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, Global Voices and WAN-IFRA for sharing proprietary databases, which helped the tracking of trends over time as well as quantification where appropriate.

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## ADVISORY GROUP

Abeer Najjar, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Aboubakr Jamai, Journalist and Editor of Lakome.com in Morocco

Agnes Callamard, PhD, Director, Global Freedom of Expression Project, and Special Adviser to the President, Columbia University, New York, USA, and former Executive Director of ARTICLE 19

Ammu Joseph, Independent journalist and author based in India

Beata Klimkiewicz, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University, Poland

Ben Wagner, PhD, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Biljana Tatomir, Deputy Director and Director for Programme Strategy and Policy of the International Media Support, Denmark

Carolyn M. Byerly, PhD, Professor, Department of Communication, Culture & Media Studies, Howard University, USA

Cherian George, PhD, Director, Asia Journalism Fellowship and Adjunct Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies, Singapore

Damian Tambini, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Media and Communications Department at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

David Souter, PhD, Managing Director of ICT Development Associates and Visiting Senior Fellow, Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

Daya Thussu, Professor of International Communication and Co-Director of India Media Centre at the University of Westminster, UK

Eduardo Bertoni, PhD, Professor of Freedom of Expression & Internet and Director of the Center for Studies on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information at Palermo University School of Law, Argentina

Helge Rønning, PhD, Professor, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Norway

Hendrik Bussiek, Journalist and international media policy adviser, Germany

Julie Reid, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication Science, University of South Africa (UNISA) and project leader, Media Policy and Democracy Project

Karin Karlekar, PhD, Project Director of *Freedom of the Press* at Freedom House, USA

Kwame Karikari, PhD, Former Executive Director of the Media Foundation for West Africa in Ghana

Margaret Gallagher, Media Monitoring Expert, EU Neighbourhood Barometer, UK

Marius Dragomir, Senior Manager and Publications Editor, Media Program at the Open Society Foundations, UK

Pranesh Prakash, Policy Director, Centre for Internet and Society in India

Paula Martins, South America Director, ARTICLE 19, Brazil

Rasha Abdulla, PhD, Associate Professor and Former Chair, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, the American University in Cairo, Egypt

Remzi Lani, Executive Director, Albanian Media Institute, Tirana, Albania

Ricardo Corredor, Executive Director, Fundación Gabriel García Márquez para el Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano (FNPI), Colombia

Ulla Carlsson, PhD, Director, NORDICOM, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Yavuz Baydar, Columnist, Today's Zaman; Contributing Writer, Al-Monitor website; and Member of the Board, Organisation of News Ombudsmen (ONO), Turkey

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2. Internet and mobile cellular penetration per 100 inhabitants in Africa
3. Killings of journalists in Africa per year by medium

## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

APAI: African Platform on Access to Information

ATI: Access to information

AU: African Union

FOI: Freedom of information

ICT: Information and communication technology

ITU: International Telecommunication Union

MISA: Media Institute of Southern Africa

NGO: Non-governmental organization

PALOP: Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WAN-IFRA: World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers

## LIST OF COUNTRIES IN THE REGION

As this publication was prepared for a report to UNESCO's General Conference, the presentation is organized around the six regions that make up the voting groupings within UNESCO.

Accordingly, the countries that make up the Africa region, defined on this basis, are listed below.

### GROUP V.A. AFRICA (47)

Angola	Ethiopia	Nigeria
Benin	Gabon	Rwanda
Botswana	Gambia	Sao Tome and Principe
Burkina Faso	Ghana	Senegal
Burundi	Guinea	Seychelles
Cameroon	Guinea-Bissau	Sierra Leone
Cape Verde	Kenya	Somalia
Central African Republic	Lesotho	South Africa
Chad	Liberia	South Sudan
Comoros	Madagascar	Swaziland
Congo	Malawi	Togo
Côte d'Ivoire	Mali	Uganda
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mauritius	United Republic of Tanzania
Djibouti	Mozambique	Zambia
Equatorial Guinea	Namibia	Zimbabwe
Eritrea	Niger	