

Daily abuses suffered by journalists

Following World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, Reporters Without Borders takes a look at the breaches of freedom of news and information in Nigeria during the first quarter of 2012, turning the spotlight on one of the most dangerous countries in Africa for journalists. For the first time, it has included the Islamist militia Boko Haram in its latest list of Predators of Freedom of Information.

The press freedom organisation outlines all breaches of freedom of information recorded between 24 December 2011 and 24 March 2012. It highlights the almost daily arrests and assault of journalists and the obstruction of access to, and distribution of, information, and describes the insidious atmosphere in which journalists have to carry out their work.

During the period in question, Reporters Without Borders recorded: the murder of one journalist, the killing of another with no proof that it was linked to the victim's work, nine assaults, seven arrests, three journalists threatened, four instances of seizure of equipment or deletion of files, three cases of access to information being cut off, three court cases against journalists and news organisations, the closure of a press centre and a media outlet's premises vandalised.

The report also covers disturbances in April when there were bomb attacks on the offices of two newspapers, in Abuja and Kaduna.

Whether these abuses - obstruction of information and control of the government's image, or gratuitous violence and threats - were carried out by the government or private organisations using armed groups, they confirm the authorities' desire to silence journalists who try to report on the instability now gripping the country.

Nigeria embodies a paradox. On the one hand, it is a country where freedom of news and information is effective so far as the pluralism and vitality of the media are concerned, and on the other, it has one of Africa's worst records for infringements of press freedom and a worrying level of danger for journalists.

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