

South Africa ranks highly on Press Freedom list

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South Africa has been ranked 26th in Press Freedom among 139 countries measured by Reporters Without Borders. Joint first were four countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway and the Netherlands. The USA ranked 17th.

Eritrea (132nd) and Zimbabwe (122nd) are the most repressive countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Canada did well at fifth but the USA was only 17th, largely because of arrests of journalists crossing police lines.

Africa's Benin is in 21st place despite being classified by the UN Development Programme as one of the world's 15 poorest countries. Other African states considered to have genuine press freedom include South Africa, Mali (43rd), Namibia (31st) and Senegal (47th).

South Africa's ranking was today welcomed by the Press Freedom committee of Print Media South Africa. Chairman Peter Sullivan said it would be great to be top of the list, but being in the top 20 percent showed that the country could be proud of its current press freedom record. He adds however that we need to remain ever vigilant. "We beat Italy and South Korea which are among the world's most developed countries, and the US only beat us by a few places. Europe did brilliantly while Africa suffered a bit so I think our priority must be to focus on this continent within the Nepad initiative."

The full list is:

Ranking	Country	Score
1	Finland	0,50
-	Iceland	0,50
-	Norway	0,50
-	Netherlands	0,50
5	Canada	0,75
6	Ireland	1,00
7	Germany	1,50
-	Portugal	1,50
-	Sweden	1,50
10	Denmark	3,00
11	France	3,25
12	Australia	3,50
-	Belgium	3,50
14	Slovenia	4,00
15	Costa Rica	4,25
-	Switzerland	4,25
17	United States	4,75
18	Hong Kong	4,83
19	Greece	5,00
20	Ecuador	5,50
21	Benin	6,00
-	United Kingdom	6,00
-	Uruguay	6,00
24	Chile	6,50

-	Hungary	6,50
26	South Africa	7,50
-	Austria	7,50
-	Japan	7,50
29	Spain	7,75
-	Poland	7,75
31	Namibia	8,00
32	Paraguay	8,50
33	Croatia	8,75
-	El Salvador	8,75
35	Taiwan	9,00
36	Mauritius	9,50
-	Peru	9,50
38	Bulgaria	9,75
39	South Korea	10,50
40	Italy	11,00
41	Czech Republic	11,25
42	Argentina	12,00
43	Bosnia and Herzegovia	12,50
-	Mali	12,50
45	Romania	13,25
46	Cape Verde	13,75
47	Senegal	14,00
48	Bolivia	14,50
49	Nigeria	15,50
-	Panama	15,50
51	Sri Lanka	15,75
52	Uganda	17,00
53	Niger	18,50
54	Brazil	18,75
55	Ivory Coast	19,00
56	Lebanon	19,67
57	Indonesia	20,00
58	Comoros	20,50
-	Gabon	20,50
60	Yugoslavia	20,75
-	Seychelles	20,75
62	Tanzania	21,25
63	Central African Republic	21,50
64	Gambia	22,50
65	Madagascar	22,75
-	Thailand	22,75
67	Bahrain	23,00
-	Ghana	23,00
69	Congo	23,17
70	Mozambique	23,50
71	Cambodia	24,25
72	Burundi	24,50
-	Mongolia	24,50

-	Sierra Leone	24,50
75	Kenya	24,75
-	Mexico	24,75
77	Venezuela	25,00
78	Kuwait	25,50
79	Guinea	26,00
80	India	26,50
81	Zambia	26,75
82	Palestinian National Authority	27,00
83	Guatemala	27,25
84	Malawi	27,67
85	Burkina Faso	27,75
86	Tajikistan	28,25
87	Chad	28,75
88	Cameroon	28,83
89	Morocco	29,00
-	Philippines	29,00
-	Swaziland	29,00
92	Israel	30,00
93	Angola	30,17
94	Guinea-Bissau	30,25
95	Algeria	31,00
96	Djibouti	31,25
97	Togo	31,50
98	Kyrgyzstan	31,75
99	Jordan	33,50
-	Turkey	33,50
101	Azerbaijan	34,50
-	Egypt	34,50
103	Yemen	34,75
104	Afghanistan	35,50
105	Sudan	36,00
106	Haiti	36,50
107	Ethiopia	37,50
-	Rwanda	37,50
109	Liberia	37,75
110	Malaysia	37,83
111	Brunei	38,00
112	Ukraine	40,00
113	Democratic Republic of the Congo	40,75
114	Colombia	40,83
115	Mauritania	41,33
116	Kazakhstan	42,00
117	Equatorial Guinea	42,75
118	Bangladesh	43,75
119	Pakistan	44,67
120	Uzbekistan	45,00
121	Russia	48,00
122	Iran	48,25
-	Zimbabwe	48,25

124	Belarus	52,17
125	Saudi Arabia	62,50
126	Syria	62,83
127	Nepal	63,00
128	Tunisia	67,75
129	Lybia	72,50
130	Irak	79,00
131	Viet Nam	81,25
132	Eritrea	83,67
133	Laos	89,00
134	Cuba	90,25
135	Bhutan	90,75
136	Turkmenistan	91,50
137	Burma	96,83
138	China	97,00
139	North Korea	97,50

HOW THE INDEX WAS DRAWN UP:

- This index measures the amount of freedom journalists and the media have in each country and the efforts made by governments to see that press freedom is respected.
- Reporters Without Borders sent out a questionnaire based on the main criteria for such freedom and asking for details of direct attacks on journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical assaults and threats) and on the media (censorship, confiscation, searches and pressure). It also asked about the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for such violations.
- The questionnaire recorded the legal environment for the media (such as punishment for press offences, a state monopoly in some areas and the existence of a regulatory body) and the behaviour of the state towards the public media and the foreign press. It also noted the main threats to the free flow of information on the Internet.
- Reporters Without Borders has not just taken into account the excesses of the state but also those of armed militias, underground organisations and pressure groups that can be serious threats to press freedom. In addition, the state does not always use all its resources to fight the impunity the perpetrators of such violence very often have.
- The questionnaire was sent to people with a real knowledge of the press freedom situation in one or more countries, such as local journalists or foreign correspondents living in the country, researchers, legal experts, specialists on a region and the researchers of the Reporters Without Borders International Secretariat.
- The countries included in the index are those about which Reporters Without Borders received completed questionnaires from several independent sources. Other countries have not been included for lack of reliable information. Countries that got equal scores have been ranked in alphabetical order.
- This index of press freedom is a portrait of the situation based on events between September 2001 and October 2002. It does not take account of all human rights violations, only those that affect press freedom.
- Neither is it an indicator of the quality of a country's media. Reporters Without Borders defends press freedom without regard to the content of the media, so any ethical or professional departures from the norm have not been taken into account.

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Peter Sullivan

Group Editor-in-Chief, Independent Newspapers and Chairman of the Print Media SA Media Freedom Committee