



# 1st International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

Domotel Kastri Contemporary Hotel

October 29-31, 2021

Individual Freedoms in the Contemporary Era

## **Freedom of the Press in the Modern Era**

Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee

Ioanna Politi, Sciences Po Paris

Louise Desmarchelier, Sciences Po Paris & Columbia University

Athanasios-Michail Sapounas, University of Nicosia

Secretariat Guidance: **Marianna Generali**, University of Athens

Academic Supervision: **Alberto Prati**, Research Fellow in Wellbeing  
Research Centre of University of Oxford & Lecturer of Economics at  
Sciences Po Paris

*under the auspices of the*



**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**  
Ministry of Digital Governance

*Leirion Alternative Library – Art Place*



## Contents

Introduction.....	2
Interest in Knowledge .....	2
Methodological and Theoretical Background .....	2
The 9/11 terrorist attacks.....	4
The effect of the 9/11 attacks .....	4
The effect of the attacks on the context of the freedom of the press .....	4
The attack against “Charlie Hebdo” .....	5
The Charlie Hebdo shooting .....	5
The aftermath of the attack: How was the freedom of the press affected?.....	5
The WikiLeaks Case .....	5
Case Study: <i>The Cablegate</i> .....	6
Summary of the Assange Case .....	6
Questions to be asked about the Assange Case .....	7
Rights and Freedoms of Journalists.....	7
Excesses in the Freedom of Press.....	8
Social media and the rise of online press : when free press equates “fake news” .....	9
Political correctness, identity politics, and the apology of violence: when free press leads to violence.....	11
Countries & Organisations Involved.....	12
World Press Freedom International Rankings .....	13
Addressing the Challenge.....	14
Previous Attempts to solve the Issue .....	14
Possible Solutions.....	14
Bibliography.....	16



## Introduction

The issue of freedom of Press in the Modern Era has been ever present in many conversations taking place in today's political sphere. Nowadays, when political freedom is often brought up, we hear about the "freedom of press". Primarily, when talking about the freedom of the press we refer to the right of news outlets such as newspapers, magazines etc. to report certain news without any influence or control from any governmental authorities. Following the continuous rise of terrorist attacks also known as "The War on Terror", media outlets are a main tool in not only informing people but influencing them and controlling the narrative. There are many instances and events, such as the "Charlie Hebdo" attack, that prove how much can escalate from media outlets and the true reach that they contain. With such magnitude of influence, it is logical for there to be a lot of commotion around controlling certain things that surface. Thus, the importance of the "freedom of the press" cannot be refuted. When talking about this topic one would be ignorant to not talk about the freedoms of the journalists themselves, a sub-topic that is inherently attached. On the other hand, we ought not to omit the other side which is the excess in the freedom press. This often leads to the so-called "fake news" that we often encounter in today's infosphere. Lastly through the total freedom of press we can see the reaction to "political correctness" that often results in extremist views, over discrimination of certain social groups or violent rhetoric. Such topics are going to be discussed through this research accompanied with possible solutions to the different aspects that are brought up.

## Interest in Knowledge

Freedom of the Press is the right to publish and disseminate information, thoughts, and opinions without restraint or censorship. This definition seems to aim in tackling the state-imposed measures of restricting the right to circulate opinions. However, there is a broader aspect of the freedom of the press: the suppression from acts that don't derive from the states, but instead from other citizens individually or collectively. Recent historic events are going to be analyzed below, concerning the state's acts of suppressing the freedom of press, as well as actions from individuals that have the same goal.

## Methodological and Theoretical Background

In order to approach the subject in a meaningful but also critical way, it is important to reflect on how the facts and the information provided in this study guide describe the problem of the limitations in the freedom of press. Specifically, it is vital to draw the comparison between countries that are ranked high in the index shown above and the countries that stand in the bottom lines of it. There are some questions that should be posed, such as whether the quality of the democracy is affected by the limitation of press freedom, and how this can change. It



# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

is also important to get informed about the country or the organisation that you represent in this simulation, in order to have a clear view on where you are by facts standing and afterwards decide in which direction you want to move your resolution proposal. Do you want to implement stricter limitations in the freedom of press, or do you believe that the actor you are representing needs to make steps towards unrestricting the freedom of press? How can the latter be achieved? Or why do you believe that the current situation is not problematic? This study guide provides you with the tools you will need in order to comprehend the issue of the limitations in press freedom, providing the resources in order to deepen your knowledge on the issue and the effect that it has on modern society- the so-called “information society”.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### **Fake News**

False news stories created in order to be widely shared and/or distributed for the purpose of generating revenue, or promoting, or spreading false information.

### **Freedom of Press**

The principle that communication and expression through various media, including printed and electronic media, should be a right that is exercised freely.

### **Censorship**

The suppression or prohibition of art, document, or form of communication from being seen or made available to the public because of inappropriate content, or because it contains information one wishes to keep secret.

### **Political Correctness**

The avoidance of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalise or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.

### **Propaganda**

Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.



## The 9/11 terrorist attacks

***Info point: Al-Qaeda*** is a militant Sunni Islamist multi-national organization, which is widely regarded as a terrorist group. Founded in 1988, Al-Qaeda operates as a network of Islamic extremists and Salafist jihadists. The organization has been designated as a terrorist group by the United Nations Security Council, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union, the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Russia, India, and various other countries. One of the key actions that this organization has performed is the September 11 attacks on America by al-Qaeda; they killed 2,977 people – 2,507 civilians, 343 firefighters, 72 law enforcement officers, and 55 military personnel. This event, combined with the fear of future events in an even larger scale of action and geographical scope, resulted in the United States government launching the "War on Terror", which sought to undermine al-Qaeda and its allies.

## The effect of the 9/11 attacks

The September 11 attacks, also called 9/11 attacks, were a series of airline hijackings and suicide attacks committed in 2001 by 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda against targets in the United States and have been deemed the deadliest terrorist attacks on American soil in U.S. history. Approximately 2,750 people were killed in New York, 184 at the Pentagon, and 40 in Pennsylvania.

## The effect of the attacks on the context of the freedom of the press

The "War on Terror" in the United States, known alternatively as the "War on Terrorism" globally marked the beginning of a new era. During the following weeks after the attacks many incidents of press suppression took place around the world: journalists in Uganda were barred from photographing the president because of alleged security concerns, while in the West African country of Benin, journalists were arrested for reporting that Osama bin Laden had contacts in the country. Also, in China, the government restricted anti-American reporting, in Indonesia and the West Bank, police confiscated film from photographers covering anti-U.S. demonstrations.

In addition, in the area of Central Asia, leaders in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan used a new strategic importance in the war against terrorism, in order to escalate their wars on dissidents, including the media, by pointing to a crackdown on radical Islamists as evidence of their support for the United States. However, at the same time, crackdowns on press freedom around the world were related closely to domestic political crises that bore no obvious relationship to the global upheaval resulting from September 11.



## The attack against “Charlie Hebdo”

### The Charlie Hebdo shooting

On the night of the 7th of January 2015, three gunmen identified themselves as belonging to the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which afterwards took responsibility for the attack, forced their way into the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris. Armed with rifles and other weapons, they killed 12 people and injured 11 others. Several related attacks followed in the Île-de-France region between the 7th and 9th of January 2015, including the “Hypercacher” kosher supermarket siege where a terrorist killed four Hebrews.

### The aftermath of the attack: How was the freedom of the press affected?

The use of broad anti-terror laws to crack down on legitimate reporting and journalistic commentary has been a common practice, that saw a significant rise after the Charlie Hebdo attack: a freelance journalist covering alleged human rights abuses by local authorities and the activities of Maoist rebels was charged with terrorism in India in September 2015, who are designated as terrorists in India. Additionally, the UK police started using anti-terrorism legislation, as in the case of a man in Syria and a journalist of the BBC Network, allegedly being an Islamic State member aiming to obtain information from confidential sources of the journalists, as well as requiring Internet Service Providers to enhance their efforts to trace and take down extremist content.

Another sign that marked the following months after the attack, was the governments’ calls for increased surveillance powers and for social media companies to remove extremist propaganda and shut accounts that promote radicalization, which were made after each attack; raising concerns among rights groups, including the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), about the potential impact on free expression. Within the European Union’s context, the creation of Europol’s Internet Referral Unit has resulted in more than 500 referrals to social media companies since July, with more than 90 percent of the content being deleted.

### The WikiLeaks Case

Wikileaks were established in 2006 by a group of 9 people. Out of this group, Julian Assange, was the Editor in Chief of the Wikileaks Website, and presents himself to the press as an activist and a journalist.



# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

WikiLeaks operates as a website in which classified and sensitive information are being published in the sake of transparency and the public good. During the 1st month of the website's operation, over 1.2 million classified documents were published.

Some of the leaks concerned very sensitive war information such as the Baghdad Airstrike<sup>1</sup>, the Afghanistan War logs, but also sensitive diplomatic information, with one of the most important scandals of the 2010s to be triggered by the WikiLeaks, the so-called *Cablegate*.

## **Case Study: *The Cablegate***

On the 28th of November 2010, El País (Spain), Der Spiegel (Germany), Le Monde (France), The Guardian (United Kingdom) and The New York Times (United States), published parts of 280 diplomatic cables of the United States. This came after an agreement between WikiLeaks and a vast number of Media mainly across the United States and the European Union. After the leaks the United States government launched a criminal investigation into WikiLeaks. Shortly after this event, Sweden issued an international arrest warrant for Assange on the grounds of sexual misconduct, with the allegations characterised by Assange as a pretext for his extradition from Sweden to the United States, in order to face charges over his role in the publication of the Cablegate leaks.

Julian Assange lost the battle against extradition to Sweden but took refuge in the Embassy of Ecuador in London, where he was granted asylum in August 2012 on the basis of political prosecution; if his extradition to Sweden was achieved, he would be eventually extradited to the United States. As the Swedish prosecutors' investigation against Assange was dropped in 2019, his asylum was also withdrawn by the Ecuadorian authorities over a series of disputes. Afterwards Assange was found guilty of breaching the Bail Act and sentenced to 50 weeks in prison, but the United States' request for extradition was ruled out on the 4th of January 2021, on the basis that this would be "oppressive", given Assange's mental health condition.

## **Summary of the Assange Case**

The case marked an outbreak of various reactions, as it raised serious press freedom concerns, with a part of the indictment devoted to describing activity that journalists engage, practices such as cultivating government sources, confidential communications and the very important aspect of protecting the identity of the journalist but also of the source. The indictment charged Assange with three counts of violating the Espionage Act of 1917<sup>2</sup> by publishing classified information. There is a strong view about how news organizations can

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://military.wikia.org/wiki/July\\_12,\\_2007\\_Baghdad\\_airstrike](https://military.wikia.org/wiki/July_12,_2007_Baghdad_airstrike)

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Espionage\\_Act\\_of\\_1917](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Espionage_Act_of_1917)



# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

responsibly report about war, national security and foreign relations without disclosing confidential information.

## Questions to be asked about the Assange Case

- Is publishing classified information an accepted journalism practice, or does it violate the right of governmental acts of privacy - as it interferes with the classified status, and the information becomes declassified after a period of time?
- Do you think that information leaking is an act of espionage, or should not be seen as a crime, but more so as a pro society act?

## Rights and Freedoms of Journalists

### Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The UDHR was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. In **Article 19** it's affirmed that: *"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."*

### Report on strengthening media freedom: the protection of journalists in Europe, hate speech, disinformation and the role of platforms (2020/2009(INI))<sup>3</sup>

The report adopted by the European Parliament (**by 553 votes to 54**) draws the conclusion that Media freedom has deteriorated in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified this decline and has also highlighted the importance of the media and the right to access independent, diverse and reliable information. Also, it was stated that freedom, pluralism, independence and safety of journalists are essential components of the right to freedom of expression and information and are indispensable for the democratic functioning of the European Union and its Member States. The resolution strengthens media freedom: the protection of journalists in Europe and disallows hate speech, disinformation and the role of platforms.

### Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights

The right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media is also protected by Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights, pillars of democratic security in Europe. In the Article it's affirmed:

---

<sup>3</sup>Strengthening Media Freedom: the Protection of Journalists in Europe, Hate Speech, Disinformation and the Role of Platforms: <https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1641500&t=e&l=en>





# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

*Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This Article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.<sup>4</sup>*

## **Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**

In the specific article it's solemnly affirmed:

1. *Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.*
2. *Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.*
3. *The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be for example provided by law and are necessary: (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (order public), or of public health or morals.<sup>5</sup>*

## **Excesses in the Freedom of Press**

Freedom of Press has been considered an extension of the natural inalienable right to freedom of expression since it was arguably first coined in the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789. However, in the past decades, the technological revolution has morphed the press into new forms with unprecedented consequences. In a world where news spreads more easily and rapidly than ever, and in which identity and ideological groups are able to reconnect beyond physical borders to consume and share information, one can only wonder whether our societies must review and redefine the notion of free press.

Indeed, a failure to adapt to these changes in the press has entailed dangers - which will be detailed in following subparts - within our societies, especially in the Western world, which is most exposed to technological advances. It is hence a necessity to envision the different causes behind what we shall call “excesses of freedom of the press” as well as the different potential solutions which governments have put in place, or should.

---

<sup>4</sup> European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR):  
[https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention\\_eng.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>



# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

One should not forget the guiding principle behind the right of peoples to access a free and independent press. It is governments' challenge to navigate the fine line between justified and unjustifiable limitations to the freedom of press, to use this defining principle of liberalism so as to curb its excesses. In order to guide their choices, the Committee has gathered information about two phenomena which are arguably instances of "excesses of freedom of the press" : the rise of social media and online press as platforms for "fake news" (II-A), and the increasing influence of political (in)correctness, identity politics, and the apology of violence within the press, as vectors of violence (II-B).

## **Social media and the rise of online press : when free press equates "fake news"**

The term "fake news", first used at the end of the 19th century, made a resurgence during the 2016 American Presidential campaign so as to designate false information circulating about the Clinton campaign. The circulation of such news was facilitated by its online nature, and the omnipresence of social media during the campaign. It is undeniable the circulation of such fallacious information played a role in the outcome of the election, hence one must question whether unregulated information can sometimes present a danger to the societies it circulates in. The following segment will go over instances where a free press has led to the circulation of false information, resulting in a danger for society, and how governments could remediate such issues.

### 1. Instances of fake news presenting dangers to societies

The instances of fake news entailing a danger to liberal democracies are numerous. For example, Fox News has participated, all along the Trump presidency, to the spread of fake information, most importantly during the 2020 sanitary crisis. Indeed, the American Association of Poison Control Center (AAPCC) recorded a dramatic increase of respectively 93% and 121% in poisonings caused by the intake of bleach, household cleaners and other disinfectants over the months of March and April.

Similarly, in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, the French Media corroborated inaccurate statements from the government about the usefulness of mask-wearing. Indeed, the average French citizen was led to believe that mask-wearing was inefficient in the protection from the disease, a belief which was later dismantled by experts and the government itself.

However, the issue of fake news is not limited to western countries. In India or Nigeria for instance, where levels of access to technology are lower, facebook is often conflated with the internet. The platform is used by many to exchange information, without being weary of its quality. Politicians as well as people involved in monetary scams utilize social norms of online



# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

interactions, which notably give social validation to those first sharing the information, so as to spread disinformation with sometimes severe economic and political consequences on the populations at hand.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond those specific examples, one can take a look at the general misconceptions about the state of the world relayed by the media. In his work *Factfulness*<sup>7</sup> Hans Rosling debunks facts which are considered common knowledge and constantly relayed by the media, such as the North/South divide, poverty rates and the needs of poorer populations. He later explains how the spread of such inaccurate information, even amongst the most educated, leads decision-makers and active citizens - himself included - to make well-intended yet poor decisions. With the increasing accessibility of information and media, this incorrect knowledge spreads faster than ever, showing that no one is averted from being subjected to false information.

## 2. Considering solutions to these excesses

Solutions to limit the spread of misinformation have been explored by certain countries. For instance, in the UK, the \$18 million Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) has been dedicated to the funding of independent media. The goal of such measures is to produce accessible media content of quality, adapted to the numerical format currently in expansion. Here, it appears the choice made is to fight fire with fire: increasing the scope of free press to cure excesses of press freedom.

Although attacking the problem at its source, by influencing the supply of information, is one solution, a consumption-based approach has been explored in India: working on education to develop critical thinking and prevent fake news from having such a strong hold on populations as it has today. By increasing funding in schools and campaigns of prevention, the government can decrease the consumption of low-quality news and hence its importance.

Governments have been less quick to consider direct restrictions on the free circulation of information, as such measures would likely spark a heated debate around the potency of fundamental rights and freedoms - the constant underlying debate about the extent of First Amendment Rights in the USA is merely a token of the controversy around the limitation of freedom of expression. Although it has been suggested that increasing freedom of the press can curb its excesses, can any form of restriction be justified and viable? Should the ability to provide true information be considered a condition to the existence of free press? Governments ought to consider the ethical tensions behind such problems; they ought to

---

<sup>6</sup> « What We've Learnt about Fake News in Africa ». BBC News, 12 novembre 2018. [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46138284>.

<sup>7</sup> The essential of *Factfulness* is available on the website created by its co-authors Ola and Anna Rosling, of the following address : <https://www.gapminder.org/>



# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

envison how, although having for long worked alongside one another, the terms “free” and “press” can be considered as antinomical.

## **Political correctness, identity politics, and the apology of violence: when free press leads to violence**

The ongoing rise of identity politics<sup>8</sup> since the 1970s has been recently prompted by the resurgence of right-wing extremism in the Western world and the spread of social media, and has led to new discussions about terminologies used in the press. While some media outlets have made the choice to review their writings, submitting to the rules of the “politically correct”<sup>9</sup>, others have overtly opposed such trends. Ranging from political incorrectness, to overt discrimination and violent rhetoric, certain news outlets have participated to the spread of violence against specific social groups. Hence, governments ought to consider this issue and evaluate the extent to which it can be defined as an excess of freedom of the press.

### 1. Instances of politically incorrect or discriminatory news presenting dangers to societies

One of the most blatant examples of dangerously violent rhetoric in American News was Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson’s statements in the aftermath of the August 3rd 2019 El Paso Shooting which cost the life of 22 Americans. Although the shooter murdered primarily Hispanics not long after posting a tweet expliciting his concern for the “Hispanic invasion”, when mentioning the event, Carlson went on to state that white supremacy “is not a real problem in US”, more a “hoax issue to divide the country”. This violent disregard for hate crimes has been prevalent in the American conservative media, which in turn has merely decreased the legitimacy of the fight against racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.

Nonetheless, the issue has not been limited to the very polarized American political context. In all countries, instances of rhetoric reinforcing rape culture within the media are numerous. The instagram account @preparezvouspourlabagarre reports such instances within the French press, ranging from culpabilisation of victims, to excusing offenders and playing down the gravity of sexual offenses. Such rhetoric cannot be excluded when thinking of the causes

---

<sup>8</sup> “politics in which groups of people having a particular racial, religious, ethnic, social, or cultural identity tend to promote their own specific interests or concerns without regard to the interests or concerns of any larger political group”. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity%20politics>.

<sup>9</sup> “conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated”. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politically%20correct>. For additional information about political correctness, an interesting resource to consider is *Explained*, Season 1 Episode 3, “Political correctness”.



# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

of the persisting exposure of women to sexual assault, as 1/3rd of women in the world are at risk being sexually assaulted and abused in their life, according to the BBC World Service.

## 2. Considering solutions to these excesses

Although there is no law to “protect people from being offended”, since the end of World War II, several European countries and the European Union itself have ratified laws forbidding the circulation of hate speech. For instance, article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) states that freedom of expression is subject to restrictions “for the protection of the reputation and rights of others.” The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) go even further, with respectively article 4a of the CERD forcing its signatories to “all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred” a punishable offense, and article 20 of the ICCPR banning “any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence.”

However, although explicit hate speech appears to be banned in certain countries, indirect discourses promulgating racial or gender discrimination - and hence indirectly producing violence - is much harder to regulate. Although France is part of the European Union and is hence a signatory of the regulations mentioned above, none of the articles promoting rape culture have been condemned for their words. Hence one can only wonder to what extent regulations can indeed be put in place, as well as the extent to which they are desirable. In an increasingly polarized political debate, new regulations on freedom of speech and press are quick to be rejected by defenders of fundamental freedoms, whose legitimate worries are to be fully considered. Governments must then question whether true freedom of expression can come at the cost of higher levels of violence in their respective societies.

## Countries & Organisations Involved

### China

China has been a country where freedom of press has not been a completely welcome notion. With jailings of multiple journalists, dubbed by organizations such as Reporters without borders “the world’s biggest jailer of press freedom defenders”, it’s a country that is definitely included in the conversation. Since the emergence of Covid-19 especially, the Chinese authorities have tightened their already existing grip on the news even more. Now even more than ever, putting faith in the utilization of new technologies, the new regime has imposed a model of online citizen surveillance and control of news.



## United States of America

In countries such as the United States of America that are in a seemingly better position when it comes to press freedom there are still instances that are continuously happening. For example, during President Trump's final year in office nearly 400 journalists were assaulted and 130 detained. Most of the assaults happened when journalists were attempting to cover the nationwide protests against systemic racism that were happening. And while during the first days of the Biden presidency seeming transparency has been in place, there are many chronic symptoms that remain such as the disappearance of local news or the distrust of mainstream media that has been widely cultivated.

## Reporters Without Borders

One of the main Non-Governmental Organizations that works in defending journalists all around the world is "Reporters without Borders (RSF)". With many initiatives in place RSF works in informing people on matters that revolve around the elimination and restriction of press freedom. Their actions and initiatives include activities on and off the field, revolving around condemning abuses and religious intolerance, they completely encompass the matter of limitations in the freedom of press.

## World Press Freedom International Rankings

Reporters without Borders is an international non-governmental organisation with a vast network of correspondents from 130 Countries. According to the annual reports the organisation publishes annually, in 2021 these are where some of the countries rank<sup>10</sup>:

Ranking	Country	44	United States
1	Norway	111	Brazil
13	Germany	142	India
14	Canada	150	Russia
29	Spain	153	Turkey
33	United Kingdom	166	Egypt
34	France	174	Iran
32	South Korea	177	China

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/ranking#>



## Addressing the Challenge

### Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

- ◇ **Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict**, December 23, 2006 (S/RES/1738)
- ◇ **The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity**, December 18, 2013 (A/RES/68/163)
- ◇ **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**
- ◇ **European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms**  
The Convention is legally binding for the States that are signatories of the Convention, as a result it is not only legally binding for the EU Member States, but instead for all of the Convention's signatories, as it's not part of the EU Law. The Convention was created by the Council of Europe.
- ◇ **Handbook for Journalists**  
UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (A/RES/74/44).
- ◇ **Resolution A/HRC/20/L.13**  
A previous resolution on this issue that has passed is one drafted by the United Nations Human Rights Council. Resolution A/HRC/20/L.13 was backed by more than 70 countries and includes the "promotion, protection, and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet." Multiple resolutions such as A/RES/1684(XVI), on the Freedom of Information, have been debated but are inconclusive as they are without a vote.
- ◇ **Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors**
- ◇ **Medellin Declaration on Securing the Safety of Journalists and combating impunity**

### Possible Solutions

The current challenge around freedom of the press revolves around its very extent: although some governments and individuals repress freedom of the press, hence infringing on human fundamental rights, in other instances, an unregulated press can be dangerous for societies.

#### 1. Instances of restrictions of the Freedom of the Press

In such cases, as stated earlier, governments can consider different plans of action to ensure that fundamental freedoms are respected. Firstly, they themselves ought to refrain from directly or indirectly encouraging state-controlled media. According to article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression": it is hence every country's responsibility to secure such freedom, by avoiding taking part in any unjustified restrictions to the free circulation of information.



# 1<sup>st</sup> International Model United Nations Conference Leirion

Moreover, as freedom of the press is sometimes threatened by external actors, it is of the government's responsibility to punish such actors and prevent them from infringing the rights of others.

## 2. Instances of excesses of Freedom of the Press

To deal with excesses of freedom of the press and their dangerous consequences, be it by the spread of fake news or violent rhetoric, governments can act either on the supply or the demand for information. Indeed, by funding independent journalism or regulating the content of the press, governments have attempted to curb the production of toxic news directly at its source. On the other hand, governments can also act, notably through education, so as to drift people away from toxic news outlets and prevent their consumption. Whatever the solution found, governments must navigate the thin border between protecting their societies from the dangers of an excessively unregulated press, and their ability to provide and protect their citizens' right to express and inform themselves.





## Bibliography

“2020 World Press Freedom Index | Reporters without Borders.” *RSF*, 2020, [rsf.org/en/ranking#](https://rsf.org/en/ranking#). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

“2020/2009(INI) - 25/11/2020 - Strengthening Media Freedom: The Protection of Journalists in Europe, Hate Speech, Disinformation and the Role of Platforms.” *Europa.eu*, 2020, [oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1641500&t=e&l=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1641500&t=e&l=en). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

BBC News. “What We’ve Learnt about Fake News in Africa.” *BBC News*, BBC News, 12 Nov. 2018, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46138284](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46138284). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

European Court of Human Rights. *European Convention on Human Rights*. 2010.

“Gapminder.” *Gapminder.org*, 2020, [www.gapminder.org/](https://www.gapminder.org/). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

“July 12, 2007 Baghdad Airstrike.” *Military Wiki*, 2014, [military.wikia.org/wiki/July\\_12,\\_2007\\_Baghdad\\_airstrike](https://military.wikia.org/wiki/July_12,_2007_Baghdad_airstrike). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

“Merriam-Webster Dictionary.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2021, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity%20politics](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity%20politics). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

“Merriam-Webster Dictionary.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2021, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politically%20correct](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politically%20correct). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

“OHCHR | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.” *Ohchr.org*, 2019, [www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

Wikipedia Contributors. “Espionage Act of 1917.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 28 July 2021, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Espionage\\_Act\\_of\\_1917](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Espionage_Act_of_1917). Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.