

## 4. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

### 4.1. Country performance<sup>1</sup>

This overall evaluation comes from the arithmetic average of each indicator rating. The indirect indicators 'general conditions' and 'legal environment' were weighted singly and the next three direct indicators were given double weighting. For example, because countries with totalitarian regimes subject all social activities to comprehensive control, the resulting absence of any civil actors, due to the repression, should not lead to a positive rating for 'non-state repression'.

The aggregated ratings correspond approximately to an interval scale. Some variations are noticeable when these indicator ratings are compared to the single report's ratings. The variations are the result of the encoding process. First, the expert reports were subjected to an independent fourfold encoding. Second the expert ratings were compared to each other and made proportional. Afterwards, this process was repeated with the two results. This procedure was used to provide quality assurance in order to guarantee the ratings' validity and reliability. The small number and size of the variations between the single expert reports and the overall ratings highlight the advantages of the chosen expert questionnaire method.

The following overviews are meant to provide a survey of the states that were examined. In order to provide information and analysis as close as possible to the data received from the authors, the states were dealt with individually; the data were not summarised nor were comparisons made within each category group. It would be possible to compare the states category by category but the

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results would not be very informative, since every country has its own set of social factors, legal framework, and political and economic conditions. Given the limited length of this report, a comparative section would have simply taken up too much space because the report had to include a short section on every state in order to fulfil its objective of providing succinct information on the freedom of the media in the selected countries. Not doing that would have jeopardised the coherence of the report. Therefore we decided to include a section on the trends in media freedom in each state, which concludes the report by giving information on general processes and developments.

#### **4.1.1. Argentina**

General conditions The literacy rate for Argentina is high and the media landscape is quite diverse. The regional television and radio stations are more important than the national ones. However, newspapers are the most important source of information. Even radio stations gather their news from the printed media. Since the advent of democracy, the media in Argentina have had a highly significant influence on the formation of political opinion. The general media landscape is dominated by private media groups. However, the Argentine government owns some media networks. Due to the fact that the government appoints the senior personnel in these media networks, there is a serious risk of turning the media into an instrument of state advertising for the current administration.

Legal environment Argentina established a working legal environment to guarantee media freedom, but only in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. In the rural provinces journalists still face problems with the local administration or corrupt courts. However, there are no reports of state censorship of the media. Another problem is the way the media landscape is dominated by cartels. A loophole in the legislation has allowed this to happen and has not been closed by recent administrations, although the media cartels are a menace to the quality of media coverage. Furthermore, several Argentine administrations have encouraged foreign investment in the media, which has aggravated this development.

Political conditions In Argentina no group in society is deliberately excluded from participating in the media, although there appears to be disproportionately less coverage of topics such as the rights

of indigenous communities or children rights. When it comes to self-censorship Argentina's journalists are divided. One group is willing to trade restraint in investigations for commercial favours, but there is also the opposite kind of journalists who are not willing to remain silent. It has to be said that given the often complex connections between the objects of investigation (e.g. families who own regional papers) and the media business itself, reporters often have to think of keeping their jobs under economic pressures or intimidation before deciding to investigate corruption cases. The mechanisms the government uses to influence the media are of an indirect kind. The awarding of state subsidies and the provision of special insider information are effective instruments for manipulating the press. Internet access is not hindered in any way by the state but is at the top of the government's agenda.

In the past five years there has been a strong worsening of media freedom, particularly since under President Kirchner the policy of restricting information has intensified. The Argentine state owns 28.8 per cent of the biggest paper supplier in Argentina. Although the government could use this to put pressure on the dependent media houses it has almost never been used to influence the content of the media.

Apparently, direct state subsidies are not considered an issue by the private media in Argentina. However, indirect measures such as tax exemptions, rebates and flexible legislation leave journalists and the media prone to self-censorship. More importantly, official advertising is being used to directly influence the media. It thus becomes a means of economic pressure, because of the government's 'existing untidy ... policy toward the media and the shady administration of official advertising funds'. Through disproportionate spending, the government funds those media outlets it regards as friendly – which are not necessarily those with the most viewers. This clearly affects freedom of expression and the citizens' right to information. The annual official advertising budget increased significantly from 2003 to 2004. This combined with the economic dependence of most media houses on financial assistance has contributed to greater self-censorship. However, the Cultural Wealth Preservation Act limits the shareholding and voting rights on the boards of media companies, which partly ensures the independence of the media.

Economic pressures

Non-state repression While the return to democracy in Argentina has reduced the non-state repression of journalists, soft or indirect means aimed at silencing or controlling the press are observed to have strengthened. This applies to the harassment of journalists in court, the discretionary use of official advertising and the tolerance shown to businesses and media belonging to the same conglomerate. In poorer provinces the picture is even further obscured by the fact that government is closely linked with those who own the media. Hence, a democratic gap prevails: non-state repression when it occurs does so in the interior of the country against local newspapers and broadcasters. Generally, media freedom faces only minor restrictions from non-state repression. The tendency, however, shows a slight worsening.

#### 4.1.2. Belarus

General conditions The literacy rate in Belarus is nearly 100 per cent. Also the media landscape is quite diverse. Media access is high, demonstrated by the fact that nearly every Belarussian owns a television. The media itself has a significant influence on the formation of political opinion but most of the media are directly controlled through the government. Independent electronic media simply do not exist; independent print media suffer from state repression. The coverage of the state-run media can only be described as propaganda.

Legal environment The regime in Minsk has established a legal environment that allows it to have full control of media coverage in Belarus. Direct and indirect censorship, the withdrawal of press licences, the selection of the directors-in-chief and the strong regulation of the press market are just a few of the legal methods of repression on the endless list used by the Belarussian state to maintain control over the media.

Political conditions There is significant under-reporting of many social groups and topics in Belarus. The media can be described as an instrument of pure propaganda for the regime. That there is a minority problem in Belarus is denied; social problems and the bad economic conditions appear to be non-existent. Opposition, democratic or NGO activities and opinions are not covered.

The government does not accept any form of media that is not friendly towards the regime, so self-censorship is often practised even in non-state media organisations. Illegal state repression is common in Belarus. It usually appears before

important political events and is aimed at silencing any opinion that voices views contrary to the propaganda. State authorities also observe which media are the most active and critical and then impose sanctions on them. Access to independent websites containing critical information is usually blocked during election days. The government also has important control over printing facilities and the distribution of newspapers. This enables state authorities to often deny printing material and infrastructure to independent newspapers. Overall, the situation of freedom of the media in Belarus has very severely worsened over the last five years.

The government of Belarus runs the entire broadcasting sector; hence, it can fully exert its influence over it through licences and content control. Stronger media control before the 2004 referendum disintegrated citizens even further of their right to information. Generally speaking, the economic situation is very weak. The government impedes non-state newspapers because it controls the distribution network and prohibits independent presses from increasing the number of newspapers they distribute. For the simple reason that the private media do not receive any state subsidies, the independent media are left largely dependent on foreign assistance. In addition to this kind of economic pressure, moreover, the government has also established various other means of economically damaging the independent press. Higher charges for delivery, for example, leads to higher subscription rates and thus to lower circulation and lower outreach to citizens.

Economic pressures

It is stated that non-state repression in Belarus is rare, but that is because of the comprehensive control by the government of all areas of social life. Thus the indicator 'non-state repression' is not rated. The repression by the authorities is alarming: court decisions to impose absurdly high fines on independent papers have only one intention, namely to ruin them. Moreover, as observed, the means of repression used by the state against the media and journalists have become more efficient.

Non-state repression

#### 4.1.3. Bolivia

It can be said that Bolivian society is highly 'mediatised'. Because of the literacy rate and the small market for newspapers the print media are not very important. The media in Bolivia have a highly significant influence on the

General conditions

formation of political opinion. People trust the media because they are clearly dominated by the private sector and normally oppose the government.

Legal environment In Bolivia protection against state repression is guaranteed much less by the courts than by the weakness of the Bolivian state. With four administrations in the last five years, general conditions are changing quickly, which influences the legal environment. Accordingly, press censorship, although illegal, can occur, depending on the current administration. The attempts by former governments to close down several media houses failed because of massive resistance, which shows the general strength of the media in Bolivia. Journalists can claim their rights in court. In the current situation the legal environment can be estimated as free.

Political conditions Bolivia appears to be the fulfilment of all theories about rule by the media. The state itself is weak and the media are a dominant player in political life. Opinionated newspapers or broadcasters strongly influence the formation of political opinion. There are no sectors of the population or no social strata whose political concerns are not represented in the media or who are deliberately excluded from the right to information. Because of the overall weakness of the state there is no self-censorship by the media and there is no illegal state repression to be feared. Although there was some repression from 1997 to 2001 under the Banzer administration, when some media houses were cut off from state propaganda and advertising, even in the state-owned media houses the state has almost no influence on the content. Although the media is as free as it can be from the influence of the state the question has to be raised whether the rather poor quality of the published content has a positive effect in a state with a weak government. Given that Bolivia is a country with a population that turns more to radio and television it could be asked if this part of the media lives up to its responsibility to inform and educate.

Economic pressures Most of the private media in Bolivia benefit from partial and soft state subsidies from advertising. While the media is not exclusively dependent on state funding, the lack of it could lead to severe economic disadvantages. However, in 2004 the state applied austerity measures and cut back its advertising budget by 60 per cent and eliminated, later demoted, the Ministry of Communications. A further 40 per cent decrease in funding is expected in 2005. However, while being state

subsidised, no private media network appears to be either unconditionally friendly towards or overly prejudiced against the government; hence, a state subsidy does not appear to exert much influence on the independent media. Nonetheless, the media with the highest circulation or best rating receive more government advertising – an economic pressure applied in the ‘principle of efficiency’.

While the media appear to be the most powerful force in Bolivia, social groups made violent attacks on the media during the 2003 socio-political upheavals. However, in ‘normal’ times, those attacks are very rare and isolated. The media emerged as the key players, and therefore do not fear repression. However, there has been a tendency for the standing of the media to deteriorate.

Non-state  
repression

#### 4.1.4. Cambodia

The literacy rate in Cambodia is low and the media scene is small. In addition access to the media is poor, especially in rural areas. As a result the influence of the media on political opinion is slight. There is virtually no private media sector in Cambodia. The state-owned media dominate and usually produce propaganda for the government. The leading positions are appointed to by the Ministry of Information hand in hand with the President.

General  
conditions

However, Cambodia has made huge steps towards democracy since the end of the Khmer Rouge dictatorship. The legal framework is adequate, but moderate state repression still exists. The most negative aspect of Cambodia’s legal environment and media freedom is the occasional censorship. Although censorship is illegal in Cambodia, journalists seldom take legal action against the government because of the poor chance of success. In such trials the courts mostly act as puppets of the government.

Legal  
environment

There are no sections of the population whose political interests are not covered by the media; this is also true of the right of access to information. Self-censorship occurs in the media, especially in the newspapers that are partisan. The owners, publishers or editors-in-chief are in most cases members of the ruling CPP and therefore the newspapers are an instrument of party propaganda and aimed at the political opposition. Illegal state repression is a common phenomenon in Cambodia; most journalists therefore apply self-censorship. Threats, intimidation or lawsuits are regular

Political  
conditions

consequences of critical coverage and have to be feared. The government does not pose any obstacles to Internet access because it is simply irrelevant. Slight improvement can be seen in the state-media relationship; this is due to the increased professionalism of the journalists and to associations and international organisations enhancing this development.

Economic pressures The private media (mostly newspapers) sector in Cambodia is comparatively small. High taxation on paper and other imports of printing materials as well as high prices for gas and electricity create major disadvantages for media houses. While in principle the independent media are not directly subsidised through advertisements, they still need this kind of support. They therefore voluntarily report in favour of the government and the ruling party, which provide them with financial and material support. Consequently, this leads to self-censorship among journalists. The weak economy contributes to this ongoing restriction of the independent media – publishers always face the danger of bankruptcy.

Non-state repression The media in Cambodia not only fear state repression but also repression by political parties (especially the CPP). The parties, it is reported regularly and often, threaten and intimidate journalists through their members. Non-state repression most often involves violence, crime or defamation. While there has been no significant change, things have tended to become a little bit easier for journalists as their behaviour has become more professional – as a result of seminars and training.

#### **4.1.5. Democratic Republic of Congo**

General conditions The DR Congo has quite a varied media landscape but in fact access to the media is poor. This is for the simple reason that just 5 per cent of the territory of Congo is connected to electronic power. The state-owned media dominate the market. Along with the fact that the television stations publish their allegiance to several political and social groups, this indicates why the Congolese media only have slight influence on the formation of political opinion. The media, especially those that are state-owned, are close to the government, sometimes even going so far as producing propaganda for the government.

Though the DR Congo has many political, economic and social problems it has a pretty liberal press law. The problem



lies, as in many other Africa countries, with its implementation. The DR Congo is often called a failed state, which is incorrect in that there is a working Congolese state in the core provinces. The main disadvantages of the press law are the people's lack of knowledge about it, the weakness of the courts and an administration that actively works against this liberal law.

Legal environment

Although there are no sectors of the population of the DR Congo whose political concerns are excluded from media coverage, there are groups whose interests are seldom discussed in the media. This applies especially to Banymulenge Tutsis in the Kivus and the Pygmies in the Province of Equateur. Furthermore, there are no sectors of society which are deliberately excluded from access to information by the state authorities. Self-censorship does exist in the Democratic Republic of Congo, although the direct form of censorship by the Minister of Information is predominant in the public networks: 'No statements which are critical towards the current government will pass...'. This is combined with other forms of state repression contrary to the law: state authorities violate the press law and deprive aggrieved journalists of their right of reply, correction, etc. There are also cases of outspoken journalists being summoned before the police and even being imprisoned. There is no control over the distribution of the print media, which means that the state cannot use distribution as an instrument of control and influence. It has to be said that it is possible to observe a slight improvement in state repression during the past five years 'due to the liberalisation of free speech'.

Political conditions

Due to a generally unfavourable economic environment in the DR Congo all the media have to cope with disadvantages. While the state does not subsidise the private media sector, the Press Law provides for indirect and financial aid. However, no information is given on the terms for receiving indirect funding (reduced import taxes on paper, equipment and films). The lack of modern equipment, the low circulation rate of newspapers, the low income of potential consumers as well as the lack of transport facilities outside the capital lead to the assumption that the independent media are greatly disadvantaged compared to the state-owned media, which reach by far the biggest part of the population.

Economic pressures

Non-state repression Generally, the media in the DR Congo do not face non-state repression. Since the 1990s there has been no pressure from non-state groups. It is stated that no intimidation can be detected due to the development of a pluralistic media sector – ‘concerted intervention by civil society [has become] superfluous.’

#### 4.1.6. Egypt

General conditions Experts estimate that about 50 per cent of the population is literate. There are a large number of radio stations but only eight television channels. Nearly all households own a radio and 96 per cent have also TV. The influence of the media on the formation of political opinions is significant. All local television stations, most of the local radio stations and nearly all of the print media are in the hands of the state. The leading positions in the state-owned media are appointed by the Ministry of Information, which is the reason that the media in Egypt provide quite government-friendly coverage.

Legal environment As Egypt has been under martial law for more than 20 years, there is an adverse legal environment for freedom of the media. Although there has been a slight improvement in press freedom in the last five years, the Egyptian state still uses a wide variety of legal methods to control the media. Since the frequency of direct censorship is decreasing, self-censorship is strongly increasing in the media. This is because of the licensing practices of the administration. The strict defamation laws also prevent free media coverage.

Political conditions In Egypt certain groups in society are excluded from media coverage, such as the Christian minority. There is also a clear bias which marginalises the population not living in the capital because all daily newspapers are concentrated in Cairo. Thus the coverage concentrates more on issues that are national and which relate to central government than on regional matters. Self-censorship is an essential part of the Egyptian media: all state-owned and state-friendly media practise it and even foreign publications must be approved by the state censors before they can be printed. The issues vulnerable to censorship are criticism of the president, crucial religious issues, political Islamism, the presidential succession and the relationship with Israel. Repression today is mostly bureaucratic in nature. There is also a regular increase in state action against the media before elections. As for Internet access, the Egyptian state blocks Islamist, pornographic or other websites seen as offensive to religion.

There is considerable control over the print media by the government, which basically censors most press or ensures the press are self-censored. Although the engagement in the war on terror constitutes an additional reason for the government to intensify repression the quality of the repression has not changed in the past five years.

The government's influence on the private media (mostly press; there are only a few private radio and TV networks) is considerable in Egypt, and is done 'more with a stick than with a carrot'. While the government cannot afford to apply any direct funding – subsidies are not provided through advertisements – economic influence is exerted by means of bureaucratic delays or unexpected tax increases for printing and distribution. The only way for the private media to avoid this is by not moving too far from 'the accepted guidelines on what can and cannot be published'. The recent devaluation of the Egyptian pound has created further disadvantages for private media because they are reliant on imported paper.

Economic pressures

While non-state repression was carried out by religious groups during the 1990s, this is no longer a serious problem in Egypt. Although rising discontent can be detected over the media coverage of US and Israeli policy in the Middle East, there have been no Islamist-inspired attacks on journalists since the Luxor incident in 1997.

Non-state repression

#### 4.1.7. India

The literacy rate in India is unsatisfactory especially for woman. Although the media landscape is relatively diverse, state-owned media dominate. Those media are very friendly to the government, sometimes going as far as providing government propaganda. Radio is the most accessible medium with nearly 100 per cent coverage, followed by television. Print products are usually only published irregularly and suffer from the high illiteracy rate. The influence of the media on the formation of political opinion is significant.

General conditions

India has an adequate legal framework and strong, courageous courts. So freedom of the press is, as far as possible, guaranteed by the legal environment. The source of India's trouble with freedom of the media is the government, which often tries to exclude journalists from information and uses a wide variety of methods of legal

Legal environment

repression against hostile media. At the moment India is going through a period when cartels are being created. Although these media cartels do not have the negative influence on media coverage that the cartels in Latin America or Russia do, this is a development which is not being appropriately faced by the government.

Political  
conditions

In India the private media are concentrated only in the cities. The rural population is therefore dependent on the state-owned media. For commercial reasons, the private media ignore the concerns of economically and socially deprived people. Criticism of the state is not often seen in the Indian media. Large parts of society (the poor, the underprivileged, the deprived and the indigent) are excluded by state action from their right to freedom of information. The reasons behind this are more structural in origin than physical: the lack of rural electrification, a weak commitment to literacy programmes and poor educational systems are factors that lead to the exclusion. Self-censorship is present across the whole range of media in India. The topics that are omitted are: national defence, sensitive neighbouring states and, in part, the judiciary. The private media, however, even exercise self-censorship in business matters and some omit critical coverage of powerful politicians. Illegal state repression occurs rarely across the whole of India but in some states it is often practised. The form of state repression is again economic, which means the state holds back payments for its advertisements. Political manipulation of lawsuits, denial of legal protection against physical attack and suppression of media coverage of these issues and cases are also quite common. The government exercises control of the media through the office of the registrar of newspaper, whose licence is needed to import newsprint with the concessional customs tariff. This instrument is seldom used to influence the content of newspapers but there have been attempts to restrict the distribution of newspapers that are critical of parties whose affiliated unions control the distribution in some states. Overall there is no significant change in the quality of state repression.

Economic  
pressures

India's private media (newspapers and TV; radio is mostly state owned) is heavily reliant on state subsidies. Thus, because of the fear of going bankrupt, some newspapers tend to be in favour of the government. However, the government needs the neutral (independent) newspapers because of their reach. Moreover, private TV, while in need

of subsidies, is even less dependent. Because the private media need to be commercially viable, economic restrictions on their freedom are nonetheless observable.

Journalists in India generally face unrestrained non-state repression from all quarters: advertiser pressure (this is most common form; those who are unfriendly do not get the advertisements); pressure from opposition groups; threats of violence by militant and terrorist organisations to prevent the media from reporting in a free and unbiased way; and denial of access to information. Businesses frequently apply pressure whenever they feel they are not getting the exposure they want. Political groups use the channel of trade unions and exert influence by raising unwarranted and unjustified demands on media management. However, this happens only rarely. Threats and violence from militant and terrorist groups, however, occur very often in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, in large parts of north-eastern India, and in those parts where Maoist guerrilla groups operate. They all sometimes deny access to information as well. Greater competition among media houses, fractured mandates and growing unrest among terrorist groups aggravate the current situation.

Non-state  
repression

#### 4.1.8. Indonesia

Compared to other countries of the region Indonesia has an average literacy rate. The media scene is varied and diverse. Most Indonesians have access to television and use it as their primary source of information. The influence of the media, particularly the electronic media, on the formation of political opinion is very high. The state-owned media still represent the government's view, but the market is clearly dominated by the private media. There are no reports of censorship of the media in Indonesia.

General  
conditions

The legal environment for media freedom has considerably improved since the end of the Soeharto regime. Press freedom is widely realised. The major problem with the legal framework is its weakness. Incompetent and corrupt law enforcers are the reason that many journalists do not take legal action against repression. Many do not even know about their rights or are still afraid of state repression, as a result of their negative experiences in the past.

Legal  
environment

Marginal groups in Indonesia were not given equal media coverage until 1998. In particular, the Chinese-Indonesians

Political conditions	did not get much media attention in the Soeharto era. This changed with the democratisation of Indonesia. There are also no parts of society that are deliberately restricted from their right to information by the state. Self-censorship sometimes occurs in the Indonesian media, for example during Ramadan, which makes it more a social mechanism than state repression. There are attempts at illegal state repression but 'despite the fact that many ex-New Order individuals are in strategic positions, the political change in favour of freedom of the press is difficult to challenge'. The vast majority of the Indonesian people do not have access to Internet although there is no major obstacle to it. The Internet is a strongly growing market but as yet the equipment is too expensive for most Indonesians. Overall it can be said that there has been a strong improvement in the last five years concerning the role of the state in freedom of the press. State repression has become very rare and there is no monitoring of the distribution of papers or of distribution systems although non-state repression carried out by paramilitary or the youth organisations of political parties still happens.
Economic pressures	Generally, the private media in Indonesia do not receive state subsidies. This is, however, different during elections: the government and, predominantly, the political parties spent huge amounts on advertising during the 2004 election campaigns. However, government spending is small compared to that of private companies. The government, it appears, is 'still not familiar enough with modern communications approaches including advertising'. Hence, the media has the tendency to follow 'market demand' rather than providing public education – its main function. Profits dominate over education and, thus, restrict the media economically. The monopolistic tendency of the media has not yet converted the media into a propaganda tool of the owner's interest, but has to be watched carefully by the independent press council and the Indonesian broadcasting commission.
Non-state repression	Non-state repression in Indonesia is on the rise. Beatings, terror, intimidation and harassment as well as physical damage to offices and property are rising in numbers. The perpetrators are most often the paramilitary organs of political parties, gangsters and youth organisations. Separatist rebels of the Free Aceh Movement are also involved. The number of occurrences has increased; however, the intensity or form of non-state repression has

changed for the better. The filing of legal action is replacing physical repression.

#### 4.1.9. Jordan

Jordan enjoys a relatively high literacy rate for the region. There are no private television or radio stations in Jordan. The government appoints individuals to the leading positions in the state-owned media in a process which is less than transparent. The state-owned media are very friendly towards the government, sometimes even working as a propaganda tool. As a result of the small size of the country, people can get access to television and radio stations in neighbouring countries, which to a large extent improves the quantity and quality of media coverage. The media in Jordan have a large influence on the formation of political opinion.

General  
conditions

Since the death of King Hussein II and the accession of his heir Abdullah II, Jordan has been taking huge steps towards freedom of the media. As far as possible, Abdullah has abolished his father's restrictive press. Nonetheless the legal environment has not been removed of all restrictions. The state owns most of the media and has achieved a quasi-monopoly of information. However, the improvements which have been made in the legal environment are impressive. Today, even moderate criticism of the government is allowed.

Legal  
environment

Specific groups in Jordan are not systematically excluded by the media, but there are certain groups that cannot express their opinions for social reasons, such as 'the poor, the unemployed, and the disadvantaged in general'. Providing access to information is a government obligation, although in practice bureaucratic hurdles are commonly erected to prevent access. Journalists apply self-censorship, for fear that those in charge (editors, etc.) will reject an article or that the administration will consider them as members of the opposition. The topics that are susceptible to censorship include anything about the activities of the royal family, security matters, minority issues, the country's political alliances, sexuality and religious issues. Although there is some political influence, journalists in Jordan do not have to fear extra-legal forms of repression from the state. As for access to the Internet, the government has not built any barriers: the Jordanian state encourages the spread of Internet technology and with the decline of Internet prices

Political  
conditions

more citizens are gaining access to the World Wide Web. The government does not have any control over the print media; it does not monitor their production and distribution. Furthermore, these sectors are completely privatised, even for the government's publications. Overall, the relationship between the state and the media has improved considerably over the past five years. Under the new King, there has been a strong increase in freedom of expression and other democratic values.

Economic pressures As Jordan owns the TV and radio stations and controls the leading newspapers, state subsidies to the independent press are marginal. However, the main dailies have to publish the government's advertisements or else face adverse consequences. The considerable financial resources required to establish a newspaper and the high costs of printing and distribution constitute major obstacles for some papers and make it difficult for them to survive. As there is not much political advertising, except during elections, the government's economic leverage over the private media is regarded as not being very strong.

Non-state repression While there are no specific groups that exert an influence over the media in Jordan, non-state repression is noticeable whenever issues of religion or reconciliation with Israel are touched upon. Defamation of journalists and attacks on newspapers happen rarely, however; issues are usually resolved informally or in court. However, the media is not completely free of non-state repression: in almost a contradiction in terms, the Journalists Association puts pressure on journalists. Membership is obligatory for those who want to practise the profession, so if members do not act according to the JA's rules or policies they face the loss of their membership and the official right to work. However, things have improved in Jordan and repression now seldom occurs.

#### **4.1.10. Mexico**

General conditions The illiteracy rate in Mexico appears to be quite high for the Americas, but this due to internal regional imbalances. The media scene in Mexico is very diverse. Therefore, the media has a highly significant influence on the formation of political opinion. The media market is dominated by private media networks, which are very critical of the government. However 80 per cent of the media in Mexico are owned by



just two companies, which are beginning to ‘negotiate “political favours” to pursue their interests’.

In Mexico the legal environment for media freedom is not much more than a conglomeration of a few vague laws. Although journalists consider these laws to be very inadequate, they are able to create an environment which guarantees a high degree of press freedom. As a result of the problematic legal environment, the major difficulty in Mexico is the creation of media cartels, which is comparable to Argentina. The influence of these cartels on the quality and content of media coverage is to a great extent detrimental.

Legal environment

There are several groups that are excluded from media coverage: indigenous communities, workers’ organisations, social organisations and the radical left. One reason for this is that programmes covering these groups generate low ratings. In order to get sufficient advertising deals TV stations have to have good ratings; if a topic is not going to generate good ratings it will not be covered. Solutions for overcoming the non-representation of large groups of Mexican society are hindered by the legal requirements to operate community radios. Considerable financial and technological resources are needed to operate a station. As a result, only those with enough resources are able to broadcast, thus leading to the establishment of illegal stations. The main opposition to reform comes from the private media sector, which is not willing to accept further competition. There is self-censorship in Mexico, again for economic reasons. Newspapers are dependent on advertising and therefore avoid publishing information that could be inconvenient to the authorities. Journalists tend to avoid harming the interests of the owner and putting their jobs at risk by publishing critical information. This happens more often in newspapers than in radio.

Political conditions

Illegal state repression rarely happens nowadays in Mexico and a major improvement can be noticed, although in some regions the situation has worsened. A positive development can also be seen in the moral curiosity of society about the influence of the government on the media. The government has no control over production and distribution of the printed press.

Economic pressure from the government on the freedom of the private media in Mexico is generally low. While almost all the media could not subsist without government and

Economic pressures

party (during elections) advertisements, there appears to be little intervention to promote friendly coverage of the government. However, the picture is mixed when taking into account that those advertisements primarily benefit the largest private media groups. Moreover, unemployment is still high among journalists, which apparently forces them to refrain from reporting or publishing information unfavourable to the government.

Non-state repression State repression appears to be marginal compared to what can be labelled the downside of media freedom in Mexico: non-state repression not only happens frequently, it is also characterised by the utmost brutality. The cause of this is drug trafficking. Investigative journalists who report on the sensitive issue of drug trafficking receive serious threats and even run the risk of being assassinated. The murders of journalists have increased, and their cases will probably never be solved. While investigative journalism is a clear sign of freedom of the media, the kind and quantity of non-state repression is alarming; therefore, in this regard the media in Mexico (especially in the northern regions) are not free.

#### **4.1.11. Nigeria**

General conditions The literacy rate for Nigeria is low, even for an African country. However the media landscape, both electronic and printed, is diverse, with most of the media being state owned. Ten to 15 per cent of the population have access to the World Wide Web, which is quite large and is due to the presence of a large number of Internet cafés. The influence of the media on political opinion is highly significant. The President or regional governor appoints to the leading positions in the media. There is no doubt that the 'information' provided by the media can be regarded as propaganda for the government. To get access to the government's press conferences, journalists have to be accredited. This accreditation is often withdrawn when a media house falls out of favour with the government.

Legal environment Nigeria has a relatively liberal press law. Though the constitution generally allows for media coverage of public officials or state secrets to be restricted there is no law that does this. Nevertheless, there is censorship in Nigeria and in many cases the current administration is more restrictive than the former (military) government. Furthermore, the state can control the licensing of media through the 'press

council', which plays a decisive (adverse) role in the administration of the Nigerian press and is not independent.

In Nigeria there are no social groups whose interests the media are not allowed to cover. Although prisoners are denied access to the mass media the rest of the population is not denied their right to information. Self-censorship is very common in Nigeria's media, especially in electronic broadcasting, which is constantly monitored by the National Broadcasting Commission, although at a lower level, self-censorship is also found among the press. If a print journalist wants to keep his job, he always has to bear in mind the economic interests of the corporation he works for and the political standpoint of his CEO. Even then, there are still the papers' editors, who keep a close eye on what is published and what is not. Issues most vulnerable to censorship are state security, law and order and the abuse of power by politicians or the military.

Political conditions

Even under a civilian regime journalists still have good reason to fear state repression, including physical attacks and even illegal detention. There are fewer of the occurrences than under military rule but they are still a 'cause for concern'. It can therefore be said that there is a slight improvement in the state repression of journalists. There is no governmental agency that controls the production and distribution of the print media, so the government cannot use it as an instrument of influence.

The private media in Nigeria are only marginally subsidised by the state. It seems that they depend more on private funding. However, this does not mean that the private media are not vulnerable to economic pressure. The big political parties as well as big businesses exert their influence behind the scenes; their interests prevent the media from reporting or publishing unfavourable information about them.

Economic pressures

Non-state repression in Nigeria is generally rare. However, it sometimes occurs with attacks carried out by Islamic fundamentalist groups, ethnic militias and other political groups. At any rate, non-state repression is seen by journalists as having little effect on the freedom of the media. If it occurs it is downright brutal, which has disqualified Nigeria from having a higher rating in this category.

Non-state repression

#### 4.1.12. Russia

General conditions	Russia has high literacy standards and a varied media scene. Access to radio and television is nearly 100 per cent. The major problem in Russia is the hegemony of the state-owned media over press coverage and the formation of opinion. The leading positions in TV stations and newspapers are appointed to by governmental officials. Needless to say, the state media are very friendly towards the government.
Legal environment	There has been a slight worsening of the legal environment in Russia. Since September 11 <sup>th</sup> and the Russian fight against Islamist terror as a result of the Chechen wars the media have become much more loyal to the state. Above all the rising press empires show a strong connection to the current administration. Media coverage of anti-terror warfare or military subjects is restricted. Irrespective of this, the actual legal environment has not changed and most of the problems over media freedom result from illegal or financial repression.
Political conditions	In Russia all sectors of the population are covered by the media. There is, however, a clear bias in the media's disproportionate concentration on Moscow to the disadvantage of the provinces. It is possible that the Russian people do not see improvements in freedom of speech and the right to information as being as important as economic improvements. Self-censorship occurs on daily basis in the Russian media: 'The pro-government media manipulate public voices according to the prevailing political situation.' Since the state controls most of the media houses it is not easy to differentiate between the direct and indirect influence of the state and whether the editor is acting pro-actively or under the direct command of a state official. The most influential broadcasting channels show a clear preference for official state policy. Due to the frequently selective implementation of the law, lawsuits against state measures are not very successful. Internet access is not hindered by the Russian government but it must be said that most Russians do not have access to the Internet, especially in the provinces. The production of newspapers is controlled by monopolies (state and private) and a large amount of a nationwide newspaper company's money is spent on the federal mail service. Over the last five years there has been no direct repression of the press but the government has planned and executed a policy of concentrating the media in

the hands of the state and state-affiliated groups. The state of media freedom therefore worsened slightly.

While the Russian constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities to all enterprises, the opposite appears to be the reality. Private media have to pay higher prices for electricity, postal service and utilities, and access to information is restricted because the state-operated media are granted preferential access. However, while current state subsidies benefit those publications loyal to the federal and regional governments, as of January 2005 subsidies, according to new legislation, were due to be cancelled, which means a serious loss of funding for the private press. The independent newspapers are further hindered by the need to find their own means for circulating their papers. The state-controlled TV is the main source of information for the majority of the population. Economic pressure is the main issue for freedom of the media in Russia, since it is practically monopolised by the state. Further pressure stems from the government's efforts to 'educate' the public on 'the need for state interference in the information arena'; hence, the state makes the public distrust the private media. Media freedom is, moreover, hampered by the temporary suspension of disloyal media as well as the size of the audience the media houses generally achieve: the higher the circulation of a media house the greater the preferential treatment it receives from the state agencies. Recently, this has been boosted by the emergence of businesses that regard themselves as 'partner of the government and the foundation of the nation'. Another critical point is debt. Government leverage over the private media has become more important. As the media are dependent on loans, the state greatly restricts private outlets by demanding that they pay back their loans, while not requiring the same of the state media. Media organisations are punished differently for identical violations of law and there is no continuity of legislation from region to region.

Economic pressures

Non-state repression is a common feature in the Russian media. Pressure, violence, attacks and acts of terror carried out by organised crime, extreme political, religious, and separatist groups and organisations rank among the largest number for all of Europe; and while there has been no serious change in the level of the repression, the prospects are not too bright.

Non-state repression

#### 4.1.13. South Africa

General conditions Compared to other African countries South Africa enjoys a wide range of local and national media. As a result of the apartheid legacy the literacy rate is not very high. As acquiring a television or Internet access is quite expensive and technical preconditions like electric power are not available in rural areas, radio is the main source of information. The influence of the media on the formation of political opinion is significant.

Legal environment Although the media laws are nearly the same as they were under the apartheid regime, the courts in South Africa, bound by South Africa's new constitution, generally interpret the law in favour of the media, which guarantees freedom of the media from a judicial point of view.

Political conditions After the abolition of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic government, the media also had to redefine their role. There are journalists who support the government's policies and there are those who play a critical role towards it and there is the press that is not opinionated and is just performing the task of informing the public. There is a strong self-consciousness evident among South African journalists, who see themselves as independent and professional, although from another perspective, the media is often seen by state authorities as being white controlled and too critical; crucial issues are the AIDS policy and the relationship with Zimbabwe.

Concerning the Internet, access is mainly limited to the white middle class. No politically aligned association or person is allowed to own a licence and the direct influence that can bring. Obstacles to Internet access are only of economic origin.

Economic pressures While some funding comes from the Department of Communication, this appears not to have an influence on the content of media publications and reports in South Africa. The private media are not restricted by the government in their editorial content, which puts the country in a comparatively unusual position regarding freedom of the media in the countries covered by this report. However, concern grows stronger that journalism is only market driven and is thus prone to the 'dumbing-down' of content. Journalists lament that 'editing content is now often subservient to commercial agendas, and democratic

considerations come second'. Nonetheless, the media can be labelled as free of economic pressure from the state.

Free speech is a cherished right in South Africa, although there are occasional cases of non-state repression. These are, however, not politically motivated but rather a result of social frictions. Racial identity, xenophobia against foreigners from other African countries, economic standing of classes, and gender lead to self-censorship, which is not conducive to democracy.

Non-state  
repression

#### 4.1.14. Tunisia

The literacy rate in Tunisia is about 74 per cent. Additionally, the media scene is not very diverse. The number of people who have access to newspapers has been decreasing since 1996. The assessment of Tunisia shows the clear hegemony of the state-owned media. The media are far more an instrument of government propaganda than a source of information.

General  
conditions

The country has one of the most restrictive press laws in the world. Journalists are prevented from doing their work by the constitution as well as the ordinary law. The state controls the media through licensing and censorship. As for current development, there has been a slight improvement in the situation as a result of international pressure.

Legal  
environment

The state uses major repression against the media. Action by state authorities against journalists is very frequent and the line between state and non-state repression cannot always be drawn. Common practice for non-state political organisations close to the ruling powers is for them to make use of repression to maintain the status quo. Marginal groups such as Islamist groups are vigorously attacked by the government and so not covered by the media.

Political  
conditions

Self-censorship is an exercise performed on a daily basis by Tunisian journalists. The reason for this is the all pervasive self-restraint of the media in favour of the government. That is because the ones in charge – even in private media houses – are often controlled by 'someone close to the powers that be'. Thus journalists themselves censor the articles that are very likely to be censored anyway. The state repression features physical and non-physical attacks not only on the domestic media but also on the international media. The Tunisian government has complete control over Internet

access. It controls the companies offering the service through the Agence Tunisienne d'Internet (ATIE), which leads to total government control over the protocols and the allocation of accounts. The same can be said of all the audio-visual media, which are completely under state control. Government organisations also control the production and distribution of the print media. The situation in Tunisia has been slightly aggravated, with the repression occurring in a wavelike manner, especially intensifying before decisive political events such as the referendum in 2002. The engagement of the Tunisian government in the fight against terrorism played an important role in the worsening situation.

Economic pressures      The private media sector (press) in Tunisia is not only small, but also heavily dependent on the state's money. The ATIE distributes the state's advertising budget, controls the accreditation of local and foreign journalists and acts as the principal propaganda instrument of the government. Media not in line with the government are not granted any subsidies, so many newspapers have gone bankrupt. Along with the greatly restrictive allocation of funding, state authorities can also ban the distribution of critical publications.

Non-state repression      In Tunisia non-state repression is not very different from that carried out by the government. The major perpetrators of non-state repression are political organisations closely linked with the ruling RCD or the family of the president. The situation gets continuously worse, including the tendency to harass journalists. This more subtle repression is a direct consequence of the system of fear and control which prevails in Tunisia. And since the country has become an ally in the fight against terrorism and international criticism has been silenced, the tendency for things to get worse is even stronger.

#### **4.2. Conclusions and perspectives**

On the basis of the data from these 14 selected countries, six general conclusions can be generated about the status quo and the prospects for media freedom:

##### ***International cooperation matters***

In eight of the 14 countries examined, freedom of the media has improved over the last five years. The experts doing the



survey ascribe this development mainly to international scrutiny and political cooperation. Especially in countries which are trying to open up to the international community, state repression has declined. The first step has frequently been the modification of the legal framework. Although liberal media laws do not automatically lead to free media coverage in practice, they are a fundamental precondition for positive developments. Furthermore, unclear legal situations and a lack of knowledge about the legal framework are reasons for self-censorship. In contrast to this positive trend, totalitarian regimes accept international isolation as the price of maintaining their power. Significant progress cannot be expected as long as these regimes are in power. Probably because of its political and economic interests, the international community seems to accept state repression against journalists and media companies. But successful political cooperation needs favourable international and national frameworks to tap its full potential.

***Political repression is not continuous***

Political repression of the media comes in waves. As elections approach or during political crises the amount and intensity of state repression increases, often staying on the same level for some time after the event. Repressive regimes often monitor the media at these times and repress the most active elements. Thus it is evident that to international election monitoring has to be added election campaign monitoring.

***All - powerful as well as weak state authorities can threaten the freedom of the media***

Non-state repression and economic pressure pose an increasing threat to media freedom. If state authorities are not able to maintain their monopoly on the use of force or to implement the laws, non-state violence, economic monopolies and cartels intensify. In such cases improving the bureaucratic infrastructure of a country simultaneously leads to an improvement in free media coverage. In other cases where the state authorities are strong, media monopolies are also frequently loyal to the government. This kind of vicious circle is a 'division of labour' that cannot be easily overcome. A possible way of doing so is to support small and independent newspapers or radio stations.

***Economic Development and education do not guarantee media freedom***

In this sample<sup>2</sup> the correlation between a higher level of economic development (measured as GDP) and freedom of the media is not very strong (Pearson Correlation: 0.284). The correlation between the level of media freedom and literacy levels is even weaker (Pearson Correlation: 0.1857). That could be due to the fact that (in the view of authoritarian regimes) the need for repression and restriction depends on the opportunities (education and technical access) for using media coverage as a tool for manipulating the public. When literacy levels are low and the reach of the media is narrow, the cost of control and intervention can be reduced. On the other hand, economic and educational levels that generate high media prevalence (radio or TV, or large numbers of readers) make it possible to stabilise power by using the media as propaganda instruments. The lack of alternative sources of information opens up opportunities to shape long-term values and dispositions. As economic prosperity increases so do the need and advantages of restricting and repressing the media.

In addition, the existence of very different sources of non-state repression (from organised crime in South America to religious fundamentalism in the Middle East and Asia) does not correlate with the state of economic development. In this sample non-state repression is even negatively correlated with low GDPs (Pearson Correlation: -0.321). Thus the increasing volume and intensity of non-state repression cannot be automatically ascribed to the level of economic development. Questions of political culture and conflict modulation are more influential than economic issues.

***An efficient private media sector guarantees pluralism***

State-owned media are subject to strong political influence from governments. In transformation states legal frameworks that guarantee independent coverage by publicly run broadcasting services (like in Germany or the

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<sup>2</sup> For a more extensive comparative study the Research Group Governance is about to publish a paper that will focus on the evaluation of freedom of the media as a key factor for democratization in the examined countries. Using an ordinal scale the paper will rate the countries according to the development of freedom of the media. See Dittrich, Daniel: *Media freedom – a measure for democracy?* Duisburg 2006 (forthcoming).

UK) are normally unknown or difficult to implement. Apart from three exceptions, the state-run media in this sample are used as propaganda instruments by the ruling class. Only a high volume of private media outlets offers the opportunity for building pluralistic opinions. Private monopolies do indeed have the same consequences as state-run monopolies. Thus a quality private media sector can only flourish in a free market economy. Radio should be seen as the key media when it comes to supporting the private media sector. Radio is the most frequently used source of information. Particularly in economically underdeveloped countries with low literacy rates, independent local radio stations can play an important role in the democratisation process. It is relatively inexpensive to use and broadcast, no permanent electrical power is needed to use it, and it has got a wide range.

### ***Economic pressures favour self-censorship***

Economic pressures are the main source of self-censorship. In developing countries the economic situation of journalists is not significantly better than in other sectors of the economy. Journalists working for an influential media conglomerate or a state media outlet in an authoritarian regime have to keep in mind that writing unfavourable coverage of those in charge could mean losing their jobs. Therefore journalists in such a situation often restrict themselves and write pro-government material in order not to lose their livelihoods.

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