

SENEGAL

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ON MEDIA AND MEDIA USE

The literacy rate in Senegal is 39.3 per cent. This relatively low rate is due to the insufficient funding devoted by the state to widening access to education. Besides, there is still strong resistance to the establishment of modern schools, particularly in the rural areas. The number of girls attending school is extremely low compared to the number of girls among children of school-going age. However, there is an important group of people who can read and write in indigenous languages and in Arabic and who are not taken into account by official statistics.

Literacy and education

In January 2008, there were 75 radio stations, four television stations and 21 daily newspapers published on a regular basis. Private radio stations have been in existence since 1994, the year which marked the end of the state monopoly of the electronic media. The first television station began operating in 2005.

Media landscape

Three private radio stations are owned by influential members of the ruling party, the Senegalese Democratic Party. At the opening of these stations, their owners held the positions of president of the National Assembly, prime minister and minister. The latter was also in charge of propaganda for the ruling party. In addition to these radio stations, which started broadcasting two years before the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, more than five daily newspapers are directly owned by leading members of the ruling party or are closely controlled by them. The opposition owns no media of any kind.

Party media

There are three main independent newspapers that can be accessed on the internet; they generally repeat information already provided by the private or public media. They sometimes publish exclusive information. So far the government has not attempted to gag these newspapers and they are very independent. There have not been any particular improvements in operating conditions on the internet to ensure the freedom of content of these media, but the operators who put their newspapers on line are not complaining about the existing operating conditions. In Senegal, an estimated 540,000 people have access to the internet according to statistics published by the Observatory on Information Systems, Networks and Information Highways (OSIRIS). There are approximately 800 internet access points in the country.

Internet media

There are no statistics on the number of Senegalese citizens who have access to all the traditional media, the internet and satellite broadcast programmes.

General media access

It should be emphasised, however, that radio is by far the most popular medium. It is widely used as a source of information. Television and newspapers lag far behind. The use of the internet as a source of information is not very common. Verbal communication remains a powerful means of sharing information.

Media consumption

In any case, the media have a strong impact on shaping political opinion in Senegal. It is partly because of the public's generally low level of education. People take for granted what the media say, most of the time without a critical analysis.

Media influence on political opinion

State-owned media The state-run media make up an important group with regard to their number. In the broadcast media, they are all part of Radio Television of Senegal (RTS), with one TV channel and 12 radio stations located in Dakar and inside the country. The state controls the government daily *Le Soleil*, which is the most powerful newspaper in terms of financial capacity, technical infrastructure and human resources. There is a single national news agency, the Senegalese Press Agency (APS), which is also state-owned.

There are no laws protecting state media newsrooms from government pressure. Their officials are directly appointed by the government without consultation with any other organisation. They are selected from among journalists who are close to the political regime and who systematically defend its options.

State-owned media and published opinion The influence of the state media on public opinion has significantly declined with the development of the private media, which began in the mid 1970s. It has become clear that the private media have a greater influence on the political opinion of the Senegalese people.

The state media's editorial lines totally conform with the government's policy. They are systematically favourable to the government and are often used as political propaganda instruments. This has created suspicion among the public. The state-run television and the government daily newspaper play this role very well. Television is the window of the government and is the medium closest and most loyal to the regime. The state radio and the government daily remain favourable to the government with a slight opening towards the opposition and groups that are not allied to the government.

Government press conferences Ministers, the head of state and his spokesperson frequently give press conferences to inform the public about the government's policy. These meetings can be broadcast without any restrictions by public or private radio and television stations. As a general rule, all channels are admitted but in practice the state-controlled electronic media coordinates these meetings.

2. LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

Freedom of expression Free opinion and free speech are established as fundamental rights of the individual by the constitution of the Republic of Senegal, in its Article 8. However, some provisions of the penal code and the code of penal procedure contain restrictions to this fundamental right.

The restrictions apply to matters such as disrupting public order, attempts against the state's security or offences against the president of the republic. They are frequently cited as reasons to accuse political opponents or journalists and put them on trial before a tribunal. They also serve as a justification for preventive detentions, sometimes followed by a release without trial.

Free media coverage The constitution also establishes, in Articles 10 and 11, the right to a free press and free content of the media. But the enforcement of these provisions is, in turn, limited by the laws relating to threats against public order and state security and offences against the president.

Harming the morale of the army and/or citizens is another charge used against press reports of events in the southern Senegalese province of Casamance. This province has been the scene of an independence rebellion for 25 years. The government does not tolerate press coverage of this conflict unless supervised by a military or political authority. This sentiment has led the authorities to introduce the notion of 'violation of sensitive information' to characterise any disclosure by journalists of information within the competence ambit of national defence that can be used against Senegal by a hostile country. 'Sensitive information' is a broad concept that can include the most unexpected topics.

Regulation of media coverage The Senegalese legal system has a law on defamation, which can be invoked by anyone, including ordinary citizens and the authorities. It is a key factor in accessing information because its very strict enforcement by tribunals very often leads to the sentencing of journalists in controversial

cases. The severity of this law lies in the fact that the evidence given by the journalist, even if it is irrefutable, is not admissible beyond a period of ten days after the trial starts. Moreover, if the evidence has not been obtained from official sources, the journalist may be faced with a new accusation of possessing administrative documents. In fact, it is very difficult for journalists to carry out investigations because holding the evidence they need to support their assertions can be seen as a new offence and the investigation, therefore, backfires on them. The publication by a local newspaper of official correspondence between the finance minister and the president about corruption in the customs services led to the imprisonment of the paper's editor for several weeks. However, the authorities never confirmed nor denied whether the information contained in the letter was true.

The 1996 Law on the Press partially reflects the spirit of the provision on defamation. Its Article 34 stipulates that the journalist 'has a duty to respect people's privacy'. However, it adds that this injunction is only valid if this so-called privacy 'does not interfere with the public duties these persons are invested with or pretend to be invested with'. This section of the law sets the limits of the protection of the public authorities' privacy against press investigations. The same Law on the Press states (Article 26) that the journalist has free access 'to all sources of non confidential information and the right to investigate freely facts relating to public life'. But the authority may interpret the law according to circumstances and according to the information the journalist is seeking. The sources authorised for the journalist's use are not very likely to disclose interesting information. This creates a certain ambiguity in practice.

The Law on the Press defines the principles guiding the journalist's professional behaviour, therefore dictating the content of the media. Almost all the articles relate to the definition of principles such as freedom of information, of comment and criticism, information verification, respect of other people's convictions, etc. The law makes no provision for censorship before publication. Nevertheless, severe measures can be enforced if the authority finds flaws in the content of a newspaper in circulation. The withdrawal of copies from sale is then ordered on the grounds that its content is against the law.

In 2001, a photomontage of the prime minister of the time led to the withdrawal from sale of a newspaper's entire edition. It was followed by legal proceedings. The content of the media is subject to restrictions regarding certain questions which are designed and sanctioned by the authorities. This mainly refers to information about the independence rebellion that has been going on for 25 years in Senegal's southern province of Casamance. The infringement of this restriction led to a 24-hour suspension in 2006 of the private radio station Sud FM and the arrest of the staff found on the premises. The station had broadcast an interview with the leader of the separatist movement's military wing. In 2007 a newspaper editor spent several weeks in jail because of his paper's comments on the army's attitude in the face of rocketing prices that occurred throughout the year in Senegal. Also in 2007, two other journalists were arrested and held in detention for two months following the publication of an article on the president's late-night outings. The article was described as an offence against the head of state and a false report.

Between 2000 and 2002 at least five journalists from the daily newspapers *Le Matin* and *Le Populaire* were arrested and summoned for questioning by the criminal investigation department for reporting information on the Casamance conflict. A correspondent of *Radio France International* was also asked to leave Senegal following her interview with a military leader of the independence rebellion.

Reports about the army, judges, high-level administration and government officials also expose journalists to being summoned by the criminal investigation department, arrest and trial. These officials, protected by law, are bound by the duty of secrecy. Their statements are very formalised and are subject to hierarchical approval. They are not free to make comments in the press on matters relating to their duties. There is system of prior authorisation by the government or any other authority before the publication of newspaper articles or the broadcast of radio or television programmes. The same conditions apply to the launching of a newspaper. Article 11 of the constitution stipulates: 'the creation of a newspaper for political, cultural, sports, social, recreational or

scientific information is free and is not subject to any prior authorisation. The law requires only a simple declaration and submission of legal documents.' The content of public and private radio and television programmes is also broadcast without prior authorisation. It may, however, be subject to remarks and criticism from the National Council for the Control of Broadcasting (CNRA). The council's members are exclusively appointed by the government, without consultation with any association or union. The CNRA took office on the eve of the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections.

There is also a press council named the Council for the Respect of the Professional Code of Ethics (Cred), which groups representatives of the journalists, editors and consumer associations. There is no government authority over this council which can be called upon by the public, the authorities or individuals in matters regarding professional ethics in the treatment of information. The Cred can also initiate proceedings on its own. In 2004, a minister reported in a newspaper as holding properties abroad had seized the Cred. Unfortunately, this case, like many other cases, the Cred would be powerless to take action. That is why the public almost never appeals to this institution.

Changes in the past five years The implementation of the laws on the media has not changed over the last five years. The existing law on the press has not been modified since it was voted on by the National Assembly in February 1996. The government has not kept its promise to abolish prison sentences against journalists sentenced for press offences. The Union of Information and Communication Professionals (Synpics) is trying to obtain this decriminalisation. The 11th of September 2001 attacks in New York have not inspired any exceptional laws in the press sector. Neither has a law against terrorism been introduced which could impact on the free content of the media.

In fact, the content of the media has been modified to some extent as a result of frequent conflicts between the independent press and the political powers. Journalists have become more cautious in the way they report events about the independence rebellion in Casamance. Likewise, statements, facts and actions by the president are treated with more circumspection. All these developments have to some extent modified the content of the media.

Legal censorship Legal censorship does not exist because no publication or broadcast is subject to the government's prior approval. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, certain groups, namely the military and civil servants, are subject to the duty to preserve secrecy in their jobs. This restriction is seen as a matter of regulation, not of censorship. Journalists complain about this provision, which they consider to be an attempt to withhold information and a refusal by the authorities to give an account of their governance of public affairs to citizens.

If the authorities do not want the information broadcast by press organisations, the sanctions applied so far include withdrawing newspapers from sale, closing radio and television stations and arresting journalists. These measures occur after publication or broadcast. If the case goes to trial, the fines are variable. However, the amounts claimed may go far beyond what the accused press organisations can afford. As a consequence, they risk bankruptcy, all the more as news organisations are financially extremely fragile in Senegal. After a while, the press organisation and its editorial staff grows disorganised and ineffective and the organisation is very likely to go bankrupt. News organisations may also be suspended and prohibited from publication. Two daily newspapers were banned in 2007 for releasing articles seen as pornographic by a tribunal under the instructions of the authorities. The journalists who wrote these articles were held in detention for six months, the longest prison sentence ever for journalists.

Media licenses In the printed press no prior authorisation is required to start a newspaper. A simple declaration of publication is required. The managers of the newspapers must, however, submit legal records before the paper goes into circulation. Things are more complicated for electronic media because radio and television need a frequency to broadcast their programmes. The first radio stations came into existence between 1996 and 2000. During this launch period, economic operators were able to obtain licences under relatively easy conditions. However, the decision is made by the political powers in the person of the minister of communication. Since 2000, the date of the political power

shift known as 'alternance', the licence has been issued by the (Artp), the state entity charged with issuing licences for the operation of radioelectric (radio and TV) frequencies, which is directly controlled by the president. It is therefore not politically independent. Many requests for frequencies have been turned down. The official justification is that there are very few frequencies. However, it is mostly because the authorities are reluctant to let groups or individuals they do not control enjoy the right to broadcast their programmes freely. With television the authorities are even more parsimonious. Only four licences have been granted since 2005, after a long wait by the applicants.

However, none of the licences granted to radio or television organisations has been withdrawn by the authorities. The closing down of private radio stations happens as a result of the organisations going bankrupt. Temporary closure happened in cases such as Sud FM, following the broadcast of the interview with a leader of the independence rebellion in 2006 or when the radio or TV organisation fails to pay copyright taxes. However, these situations are extremely rare.

In Senegal, the journalist profession is in practice free and accessible to anyone. No official authorisation is needed. No degree is compulsory. As a matter of fact, the majority of Senegalese journalists have not attended professional schools. They have been trained on the job. The Law on the Press and the collective Convention for Journalists define as a journalist any graduate of a school of journalism or any person whose main and regular activity is the exercise of their profession in a newsroom, this activity being the main source of their income. The second part of this definition explains the rush towards newsrooms of many people, mostly students or university dropouts or other individuals, who see the press as a means to escape unemployment.

Journalists' legal status

Journalists have the right to attend all public meetings of the government and parliament. Access to these meetings is allowed to all press organisations, even if the authorities always make sure that the state media is present to ensure favourable coverage. These meetings can also be broadcast by all media organisations without restriction, whether they are National Assembly sessions or press conferences by members of the government.

Journalists can use legal appeals to confront state repression. The constitution and the Law on the Press define the principles and conditions for exercising freedom of opinion and the *raison d'état* which the authorities want to put above the public's right to be informed. On these occasions, the press, on the whole, enjoys the support of civil society and many lawyers who volunteer to defend the journalists.

The attitude of the tribunals is fairly variable. It is within their powers to halt the state's repression or, in contrast, to uphold it. During the Sud FM trial mentioned earlier, the judge rejected the accusations made against the journalists. However, in other cases, the tribunals conform with the wishes of the authorities, as happened with the six-month imprisonment without remission verdict inflicted on the journalists accused of writing articles of a pornographic nature and the suspension of their newspaper.

The Senegalese Law on the Press does not allow monopolies and limits the number of trusts. The state held a monopoly over radio and television until 1994. This year has seen the appearance of private radio stations and the disappearance of the state monopoly on the electronic media. Such a monopoly never existed, neither in law nor in practice, in the printed press. Trusts are limited by the Law on the Press, which says in its Article 4 that no one 'can own or hold the majority of more than three mass media enterprises'. This provision is rather vague because it allows certain promoters to own several radio stations, several newspapers and one TV channel.

Monopolies and cartels

There is no private monopoly in any media sector. Despite other types of media concentration, the situation of the Senegalese press is not truly characterised by trusts or media conglomerates. We cannot attribute to owners of several media organisation well-defined political projects, even though some of them give their opinions with much determination and regularity in their own newspapers and/or on the waves of their own radio or television stations.

Political authorities enforce the law on the establishment of trusts in a fairly flexible manner. It should be noted that with regard to media control, no promoter has so far reached a number which has concerned the authorities. Besides, the independent press organisations are widely shared out among different owners.

3. POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Coverage of marginal groups Generally, the interests and concerns of the Senegalese people are taken into account in media programmes. However, it is worth underlining that some social categories or some sectors of activity are privileged. The media take a keen interest in politicians to the detriment of matters relating to the economy, poverty, education, health, rural areas, unemployment, income generation, access to healthcare and education, for example. Good governance and local governance are also among the preoccupations of citizens, who need to know and enjoy their rights. So is the state of women in a predominantly male society or of children, who are so often ignored by the media.

The press is attracted by very active and organised groups, such as political parties, trade unions and civil society organisations, who all have programmes of activity about which they regularly keep journalists informed. Besides, these associations are often engaged in activities that fuel controversy, which attracts the media.

Generally, every category of people is given news coverage. However, it is necessary to balance this statement and emphasise the fact that the state media, television in particular, almost never give members of the opposition the opportunity to give their views on the situation in the country or comment on any aspect of national or international news. This attitude is deplored and described as ostracism by opponents of the government. Civil society and the journalists' union also deplore it but they are unable to change it because it is deeply rooted in the habits of the media, which are instruments at the service of political power. Yet the government daily newspaper and the state radio are less hermetically closed to the opposition than state television, even if editorial lines are invariably benevolent towards the authorities and their political parties.

Another key characteristic of the Senegalese press, taking all media into account, is its clear preference for politics and other subjects such as sports or social issues. It does very little field reporting and investigation, and usually limits its coverage to reporting events. Investigations could throw some light on life in rural areas, on the state of women and children, on health or access to electricity and safe water in areas outside the urban centres. The Senegalese press remains an urban phenomenon. Almost all the newsrooms have their offices in the capital, Dakar.

Self-censorship Self-censorship is a reality in the Senegalese media, public as well as private. It is the rule in the state-controlled media, which follow the positions outlined by the government. These media avoid making any comments likely to embarrass the political powers with which they are identified.

The press as a whole is very careful in its treatment of information relating to religion, especially Muslim brotherhoods, to which 95 per cent of the country's population are affiliated. Journalists avoid antagonising brotherhoods and their spiritual guides. This behaviour is either the result of sincere sentiment or caution. Religious sentiment and affiliation is real among many journalists. They treat religious matters as though they were sacred, without objectivity or critical appreciation. This attitude may also be inspired by a certain caution. In 2007 a journalist was severely beaten up with bicycle chains by followers of a religious leader on the grounds that the journalist made disrespectful reports about their spiritual guide. A few years before, followers of another religious leader set fire to a journalist's room on similar grounds.

Among other factors that promote self-censorship, it is worth mentioning the fussy attitude of the government regarding the army and the treatment of the situation in Casamance, the propensity of the public prosecutor to summon before the criminal investigation department and a tribunal

those journalists accused of being irreverent towards the president, as well as a tribunal that accuses journalists of being disrespectful of the president and blurry definition of notions like the 'disruption of public order', 'violation of national security', 'false report' or 'offence against public morality'.

Self-censorship occurs in all sectors of the media (newspapers, radio and television). Matters relating to sexuality are also treated with a modesty influenced by a cultural heritage which is largely shared by the public. A newspaper specialising in scandals was definitely banned from publication. With regard to self-censorship on topics of sexuality, it is a little less obvious in newspapers because of the use of French, which tones down certain words, more than if national languages were used. Electronic media organisations have many difficulties dealing with these subjects and avoid such topics.

Journalists, press companies and news organisations may fear legal state. It is fairly frequent for journalists to be put on trial by the authorities and summoned before the criminal investigation department. Four types of sanctions are used: prison sentences, fines that are sometimes very heavy, the temporary suspension or indefinite prohibition of the press organisation and, finally, expulsions, which are reserved for foreign journalists, such as the correspondent of Radio France International who was asked to leave Senegalese territory after her interview with the head of the military wing of the independence rebel movement in Casamance.

State repression

Senegalese tribunals have taken all these actions against journalists and press organisations, but even if trials have become more frequent, they rarely lead to these sanctions. Very often the political authorities drop pending charges or the verdict is not effectively enforced.

The state does not place any obstacles in the way of internet use. There are presently about a dozen daily and weekly newspapers that are online on the web, sometimes even before they are on sale on the street. At least six private radio stations broadcast their programmes on the internet, where it is also possible to access sites with content generated by journalists, politicians or other people. Different organisations also have websites where they can freely express themselves. Many Senegalese citizens participate in discussions on the internet.

Obstacles to internet access

The fear of state repression has seriously worsened in recent years. It has not reached the stage of panic, but undoubtedly and unquestionably there has been an escalation compared to the situation which prevailed until 2000. Relations between the regime and the press were not free of conflict, but at no time developed into the kind of confrontation that now occasionally occurs with the new political regime. The regime in place since 2000 often engages in a trial of strength with the independent press, which it wants to subject to its dictate, to the extent where the president announced in 2007 that he could not see why he should continue to give financial support to a press which continuously challenged him. Yet this financial support comes from a law voted on by the National Assembly.

Changes in the past five years

The state media have no control over the production and the distribution of the printed press. Certes, the government newspaper, owns the most powerful colour rotary press in Senegal and prints some independent newspapers, but there is tough competition on the market. There is a tendency for independent newspapers to acquire sophisticated printing companies. Four of them have their own rotary presses, including two colour ones. These printing companies broaden the competition and provide printing services to other newspapers. As a result, therefore, the situation gives the authorities no control mechanism for exerting pressure on independent newspapers.

Government control over print media

Printing paper is directly imported by some independent newspapers for their own use or purchased from economic operators in this sector. There was an attempt to group all newspapers into a purchasing unit to reduce the costs of the imported printing paper but the initiative failed.

4. ECONOMIC PRESSURE

State subsidies The state grants the privately owned media (printing and audiovisual) annual financial aid, the terms of which are outlined by the Law on the Press (Articles 58 to 61). The amount has gone up, from 40 million CFA francs in the 1990/2000 decade to 300 million CFA francs since 2006 and 2007. In spite of this significant increase, the amount of aid to the press remains low compared with the needs of the media who are its beneficiaries.

Further aspects In addition to this annual aid, the state regularly allows ministries, public agencies and enterprises to broadcast free of charge advertisements that normally would have to be paid for. Ministries frequently make announcements on children's vaccination campaigns, the fight against diseases such as malaria or HIV/AIDS, the registration of young girls for school or of young voters on the electoral lists. State enterprises such as the Port of Dakar, the national lottery and the electricity company broadcast commercials or announcements on the private radio and TV stations. The profits generated by these commercials are very much appreciated by the privately owned media. However, they do not have any real impact on the editorial line of the press. The privately owned media are generally very critical of the state.

This freedom has a price because the authorities may decide to punish certain media they regard as being hostile to the government by deliberately withdrawing commercials. The privately owned group Sud Communication, which manages about ten radio stations in Dakar and the interior of Senegal, is sometimes 'forgotten' in advertising campaigns during periods of tension with the government. Other media enterprises may or may not receive the same treatment, depending on the nature of their relationship with the authorities at the time these advertising campaigns are taking place.

The content of the privately owned media benefiting from the aid to the press or from government promoted commercials is very similar in the three media sectors (newspapers, radio and television). The critical approach of these media organisations is reinforced by their desire to give the opposition the chance to express itself on their airwaves or in their newspapers. This is not always to the authorities' liking.

The fragile financial state of the privately owned media is worsened by the weakness of and lack of equilibrium in the advertising market. Three factors contribute to this aggravation:

State television continues to take huge shares of this advertising market by taking advantage of the poorer equipment of its private competitors, who each cover only a tiny part of the national territory around the capital Dakar. The government daily newspaper also takes advantage of the power resulting from its proximity to the state when compared to its competitors. The attitude of some state companies who exclusively reserve their advertisements for the government-controlled media for fear of being suspected of complicity with a press often on bad terms with the authorities. The privately owned media face heavy costs (rents, telephone and electricity bills, vehicles for field reporting, paper and wages).

5. NON-STATE REPRESSION

Repression by non-state groups Journalists must regularly deal with threats from non-state organisations. Physical abuse (as in the attack with a bicycle chain and the setting on fire of a news correspondent's room mentioned above), threats and insults on the phone are no exceptions. These attacks are carried out by political militants or members of religious groups or sometimes by militant supporters of sports clubs. In attacks by political groups, journalists friendly to the state are exposed to irreverent remarks from opposition militants, who regard the journalists as government mouthpieces.

Yet, non state-controlled repression is fairly rare. Self-censorship acts like a fire door that subdues or cancels potential conflicts. In theory, the state pursues the perpetrators of attacks against journalists, but in fact, its response is very selective. No action was taken against those respon-

sible for the bicycle chain attack on a journalist, although the victim had made a complain and disclosed the names of his assailants. The silence of the authorities can be explained by the position of the spiritual leader to whom the assailants are affiliated. He is a powerful religious leader and an important electoral intermediary whose voting instructions can direct the choice of thousands of voters. During the February 2007 electoral campaign followers of this leader violently attacked the vehicle of a group of journalists who were covering the activities of a candidate who was not his ally. There was no legal follow-up of this case.

State protection of journalists is extremely rare. A journalist and author of a book which annoyed the president has benefited from state protection for some time. This is a unique example.

Non-state controlled repression has significantly intensified in the last past five years because of the arrival of religious leaders in the political environment. Their followers transfer to the political ground their devotion to their spiritual guide. They do not tolerate any criticism made against him by his adversaries or journalists. These politician religious leaders themselves cannot accept having their words and actions treated by the media as coming from any politician. This increasing tension is also due to rivalries within the ruling party. Each group has a tendency to classify the media and journalists according to the way they treat the different protagonists.

Changes in the past five years

6. CONCLUSIONS

Freedom of the press exists in Senegal. However, restrictions have increased in number and in diversity. The strong worsening of the situation results from the repressive attitude of the government towards journalists and press organisations.

Freedom of the media: general situation

The free functioning of the media has changed because of the multiplication of trials and threats against journalists and also because of the conflicting relationship between the independent media and the authorities. Self-censorship and cautious attitudes are observed.

Changes in the past five years

To many journalists, obstacles to the existence of a free media are essentially financial. They call for increased support from the state. Press publishers received by the president of Senegal in December 2007 renewed this request. Others put the emphasis on the confusion affecting the status of journalist. Current trends within the journalists' union are in favour of the creation of an association of journalists in order to regulate entry into the profession and raise the level and the status of information professionals.

Major obstacles to free media coverage

Above all there is a problem of training. People start in the profession without serious preparation, without sufficient knowledge of writing techniques and genres and completely ignorant of journalists' professional code of ethics. The training also applies to new information and communication technologies (IT). The legal environment should remove the threat of the law being used against the media and journalists. This reform of the legal framework is not in any way designed to place the journalist above the law, as some authorities would argue.

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