



## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS 2008:

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### A YEAR OF GLOBAL DECLINE

A free press plays a key role in sustaining and monitoring a healthy democracy, as well as in contributing to greater accountability, good governance, and economic development. Freedom House has been at the forefront in monitoring threats to media independence since 1980. Our annual index, *Freedom of the Press*, tracks trends in global press freedom and draws attention to countries and regions where such freedom is in jeopardy.

The index, produced since 1980, assesses the degree of print, broadcast, and internet freedom in every country in the world, analyzing the events of each calendar year. Ratings are determined on the basis of an examination of three categories: the legal environment in which media outlets operate; political influences on reporting and access to information; and economic pressures on content and the dissemination of news. Under the legal category, we assess the laws and regulations that affect the media as well as the extent to which the government and private actors use these mechanisms to restrict news outlets' ability to operate. The political category encompasses a variety of issues, including editorial pressure by the government or other actors; censorship and self-censorship; the ability of reporters to cover the news; and the extralegal intimidation of and violence against journalists. Finally, under the economic category we examine issues such as the structure, transparency, and concentration of media ownership; costs of production and distribution; and the impact of advertising, subsidies, and bribery on content.

Ratings reflect not just government actions and policies, but also the influence of nonstate actors and the behavior of the press itself in testing boundaries, even in more restrictive environments. The ratings system is designed to capture the varied ways in which pressure can be placed on the flow of information and the ability of print, broadcast, and internet-based news outlets to function freely and without fear of repercussions. In short, we seek to provide a picture of the entire "enabling environment" in which the media in each country operate. The study also assesses the diversity of news and information available to the public in any given country, from either local or transnational sources. Each country receives a numerical rating from 0 (the most free) to 100 (the least free), which serves as the basis for an overall press freedom designation of "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free."

#### **Findings of *Freedom of the Press 2008***

Out of 195 countries and territories assessed in *Freedom of the Press 2008*, which covered events and conditions in 2007, 72 (37 percent) were rated Free, 59 (30 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 64 (33 percent) were rated Not Free. The previous year's index yielded 74 Free countries, 58 Partly Free countries, and 63 Not Free countries.

In terms of population, the 2008 index found that only 18 percent of the world's inhabitants lived in countries that enjoyed a Free press, while 40 percent had a Partly Free press and 42 percent had a Not Free press. The percentage of those enjoying Free media in 2007 remained steady, while the percentage of people who lived in countries with a Partly Free media environment improved slightly from 2006.

The overall level of press freedom worldwide, as measured by the global average score, worsened slightly in 2007, continuing a six-year downward trend. The averages for the legal, political, and economic categories all worsened as well, with the political category showing a particularly sharp decline.

The year featured few positive regional trends, with declines predominating in almost every part of the world. The largest regionwide decline was seen in the former Soviet Union, while smaller negative trends were apparent in the Americas, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. There were setbacks in a number of key countries, many of which had already been on downward trajectories in recent years. A number of declines occurred in Asia, where restrictions on media coverage were imposed in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, and Vietnam's government cracked down on dissident writers. Backsliding in the former Soviet Union continued, with Russia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan showing declines.

The Americas and sub-Saharan Africa registered both negative status changes for particular countries and numerical slippages. In the Americas, Guyana's status shifted from Free to Partly Free, while the score for Mexico deteriorated by a further three points. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for three of the year's five status changes: Benin declined from Free to Partly Free, and both the Central African Republic and Niger moved into the Not Free category due to authorities' attempts to limit coverage of news stories, particularly in conflict areas.

The Middle East and North Africa region stood out by showing both overall improvement and significant gains in a specific country. The average regional score reflected the fact that in a number of countries, the media environment has benefited from greater access to relatively unrestricted satellite television service and the internet, including new formats such as blogs and social-networking websites. In addition, in the only positive status change of the year, Egypt was upgraded from Not Free to Partly Free as local journalists proved willing to cross the "red lines" that previously restricted their work, and a greater range of viewpoints emerged not only in the traditional Egyptian media but also in the pan-Arab press, informal media, and the blogosphere. This upgrade occurred despite a continuation, and in some cases an increase, in government harassment, repression, and imprisonment of journalists.

Numerical improvements also occurred in several fragile states where the government has relatively tenuous control, such as Haiti, East Timor, and Lebanon; one country emerging from a coup, Thailand; and another Asian country, Malaysia, where journalists, particularly those in the new media, have recently shown greater aggressiveness in covering politically sensitive stories despite authorities' attempts to restrict such expression.

The world's worst-rated countries include Burma, Cuba, Eritrea, Libya, North Korea, and Turkmenistan. In these states, independent media are either nonexistent or barely able to operate, and citizens' access to unbiased information is severely limited. Rounding out the 10 most repressive media environments are two countries in the former Soviet Union—Belarus and Uzbekistan—and two in Africa—Equatorial Guinea and Zimbabwe—where media remain heavily restricted.

*Additional historical data and findings from the annual index can be found at [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org). For more information about our press freedom work, please contact Karin Karlekar, Senior Researcher and Managing Editor, Freedom of the Press, at [karlekar@freedomhouse.org](mailto:karlekar@freedomhouse.org).*

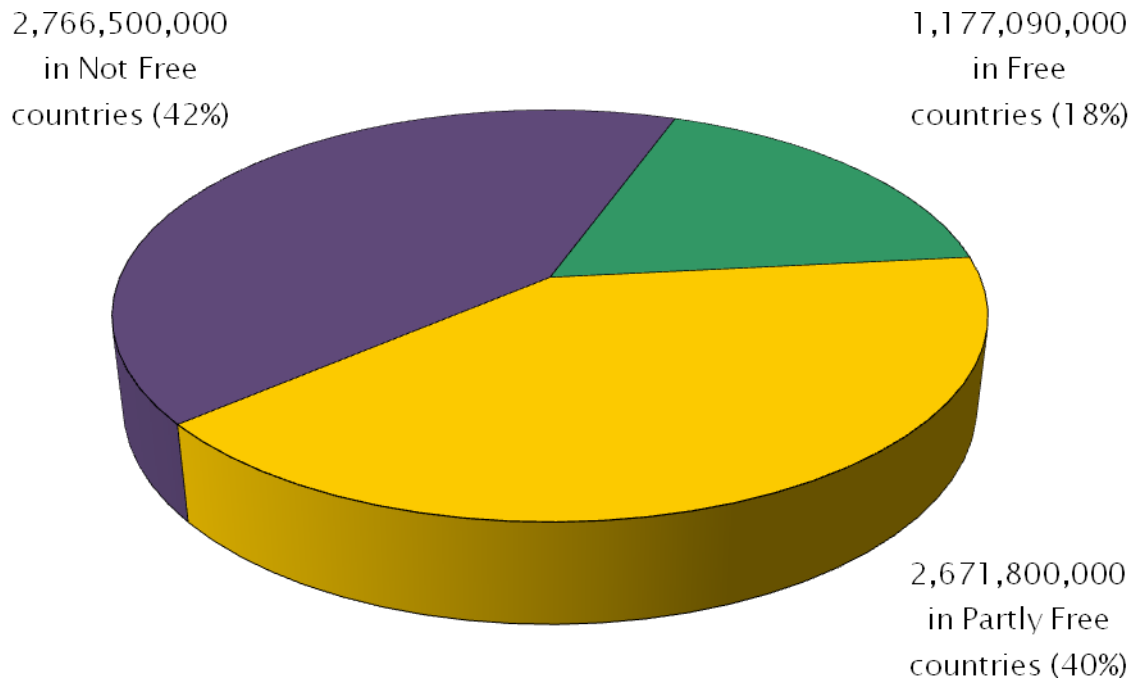
# FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW



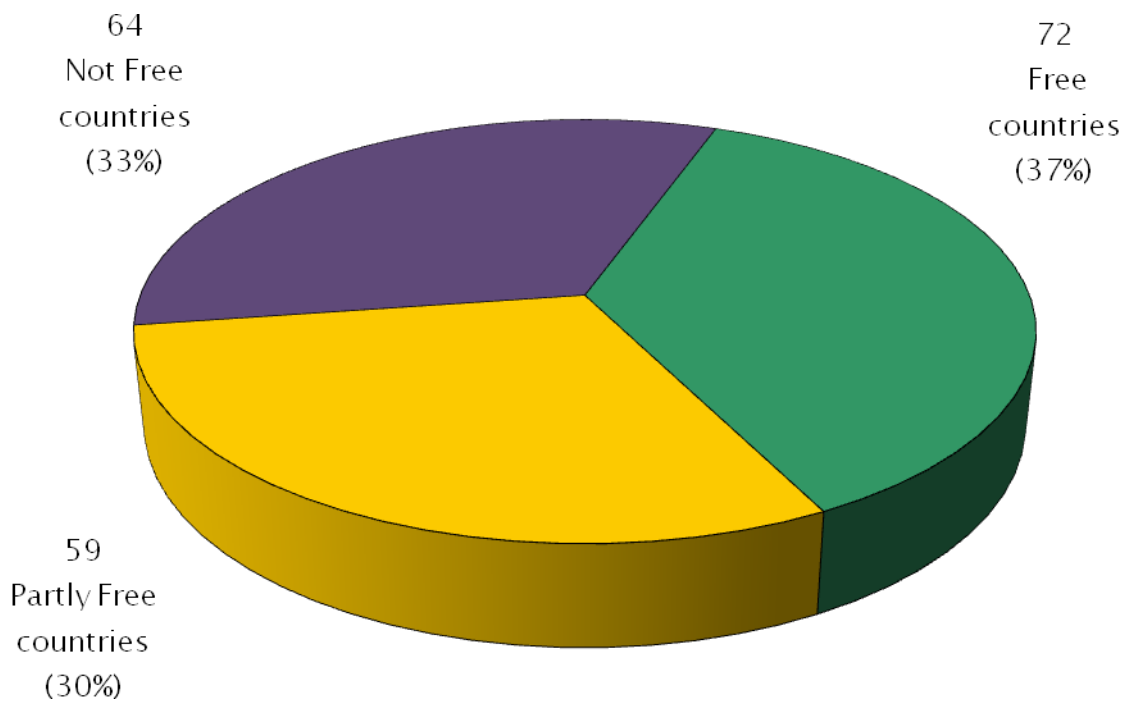


# PRESS FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2008

## By Population

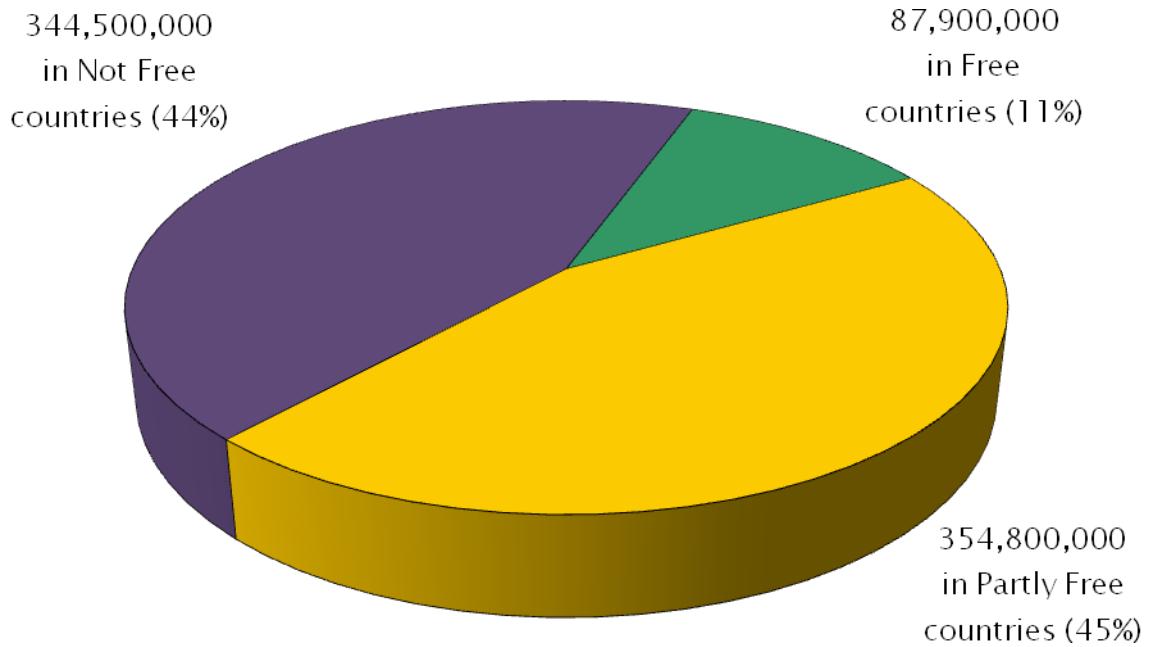


## By Country

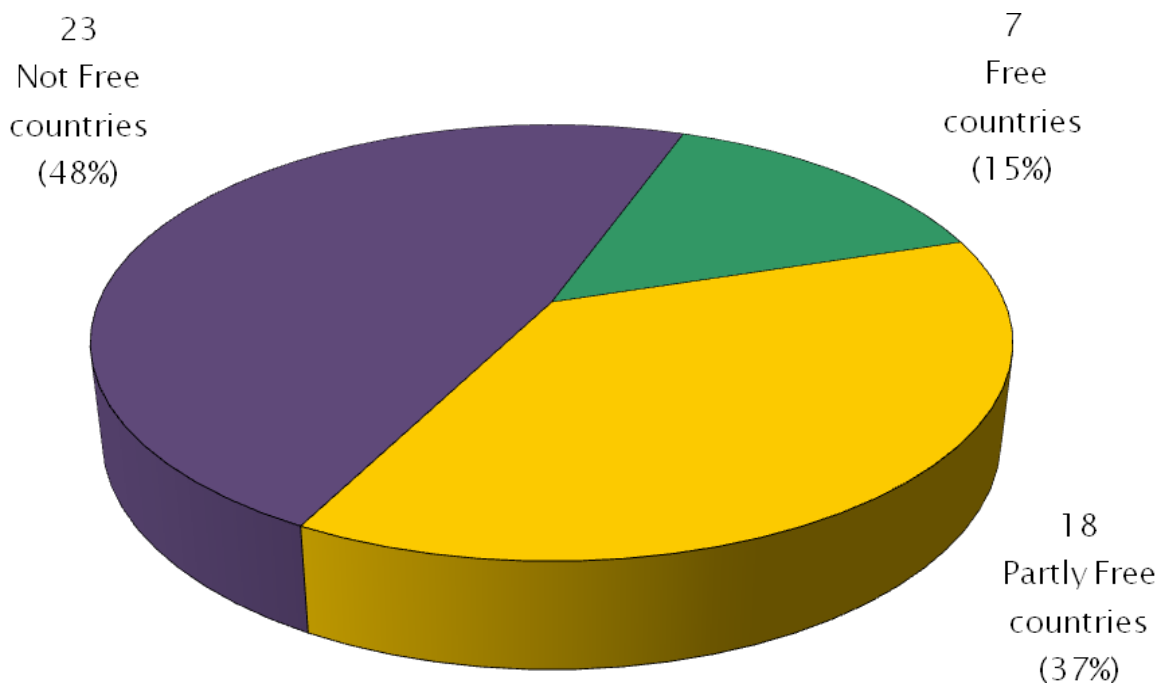


# PRESS FREEDOM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

## By Population

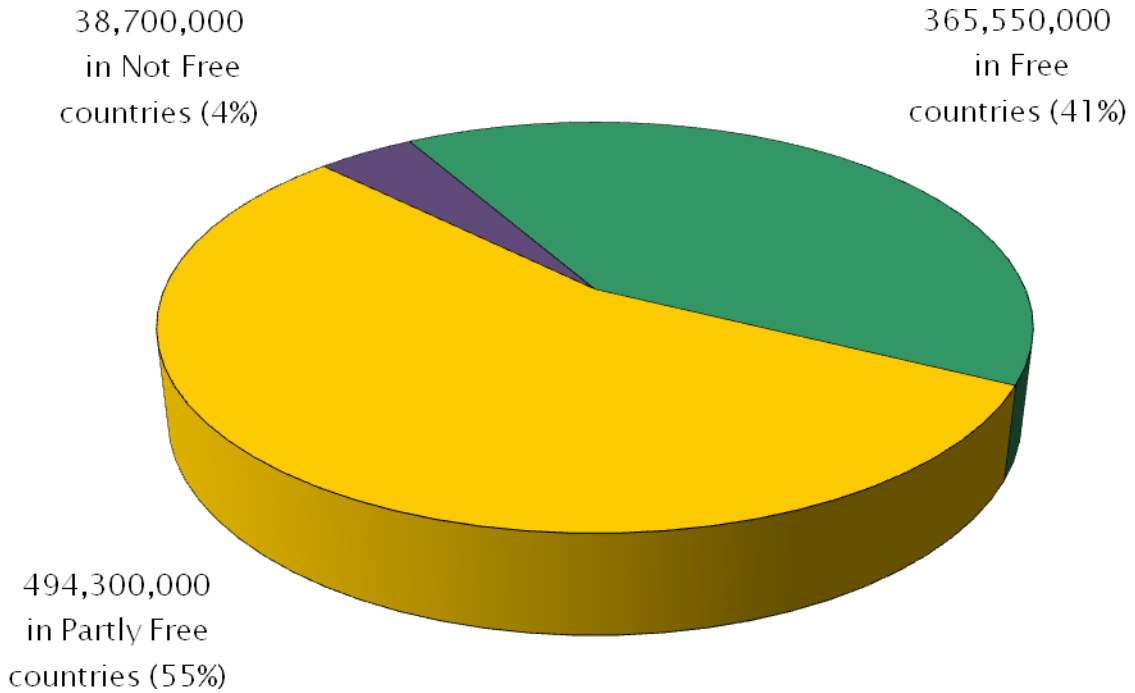


## By Country

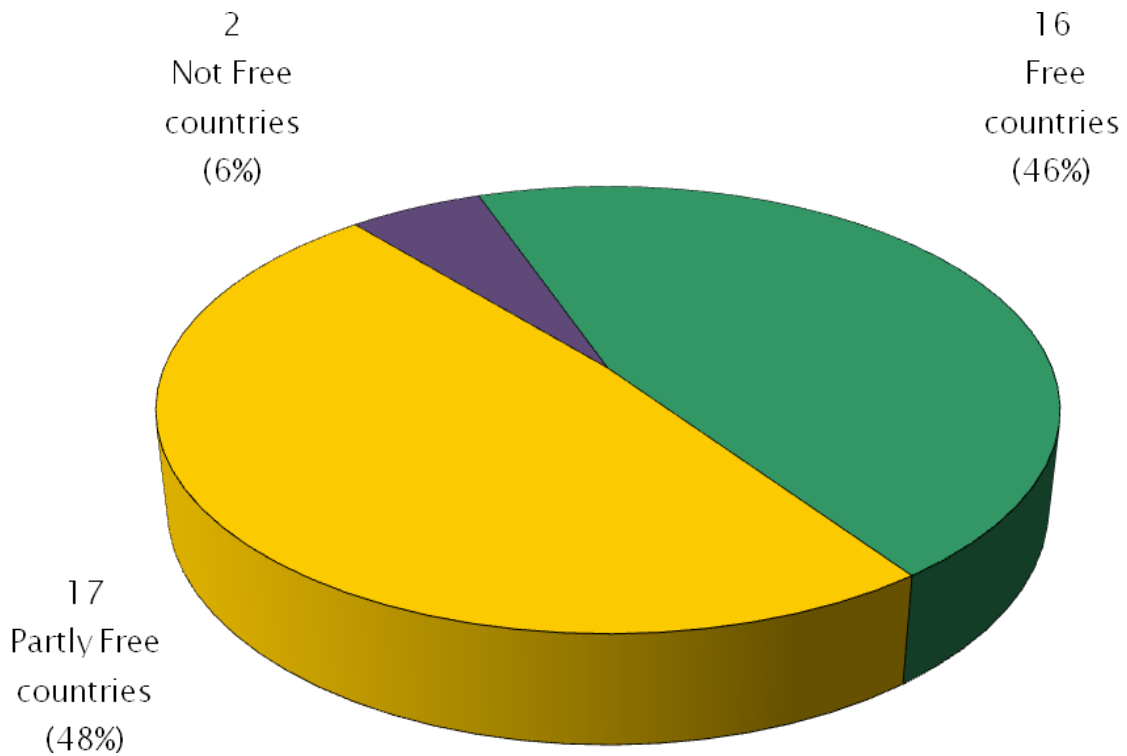


# PRESS FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAS

## By Population



## By Country

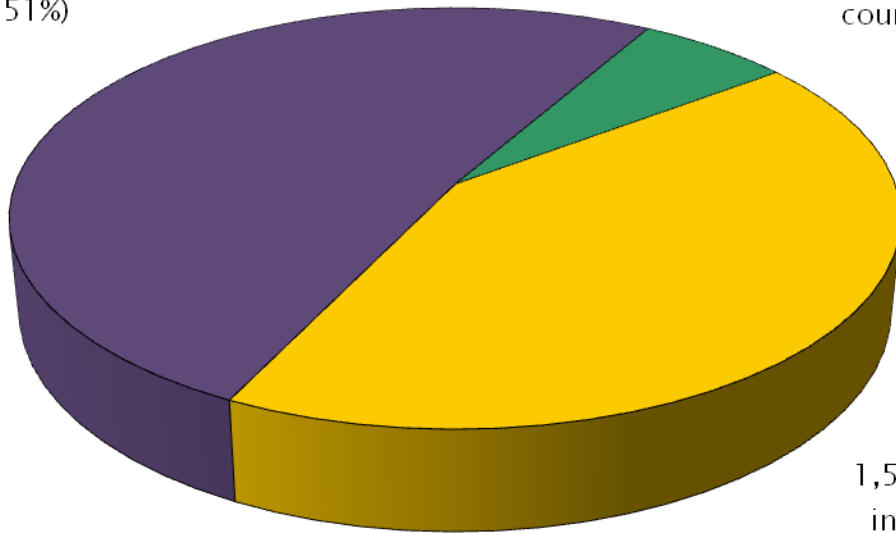


# PRESS FREEDOM IN ASIA-PACIFIC

## By Population

1,885,800,000  
in Not Free  
countries (51%)

238,340,000  
in Free  
countries (7%)

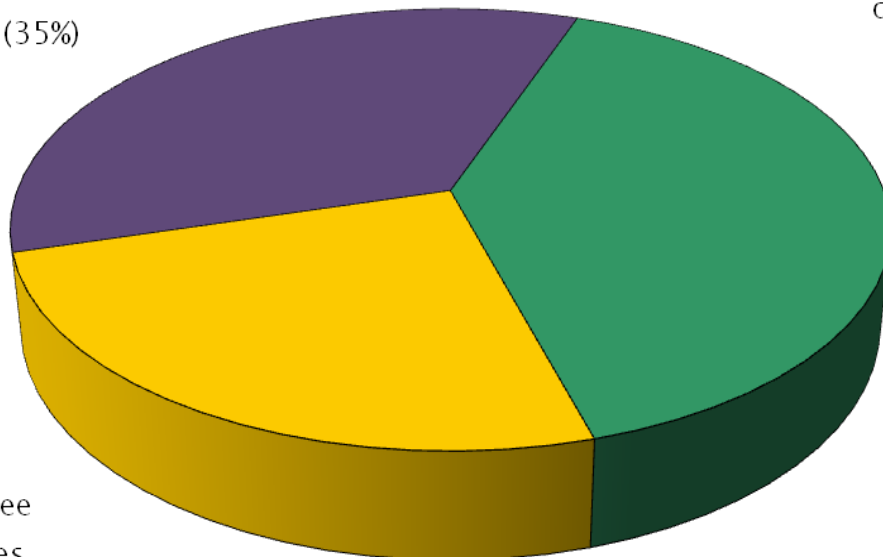


1,564,700,000  
in Partly Free  
countries (42%)

## By Country

14  
Not Free  
countries  
(35%)

16  
Free  
countries  
(40%)

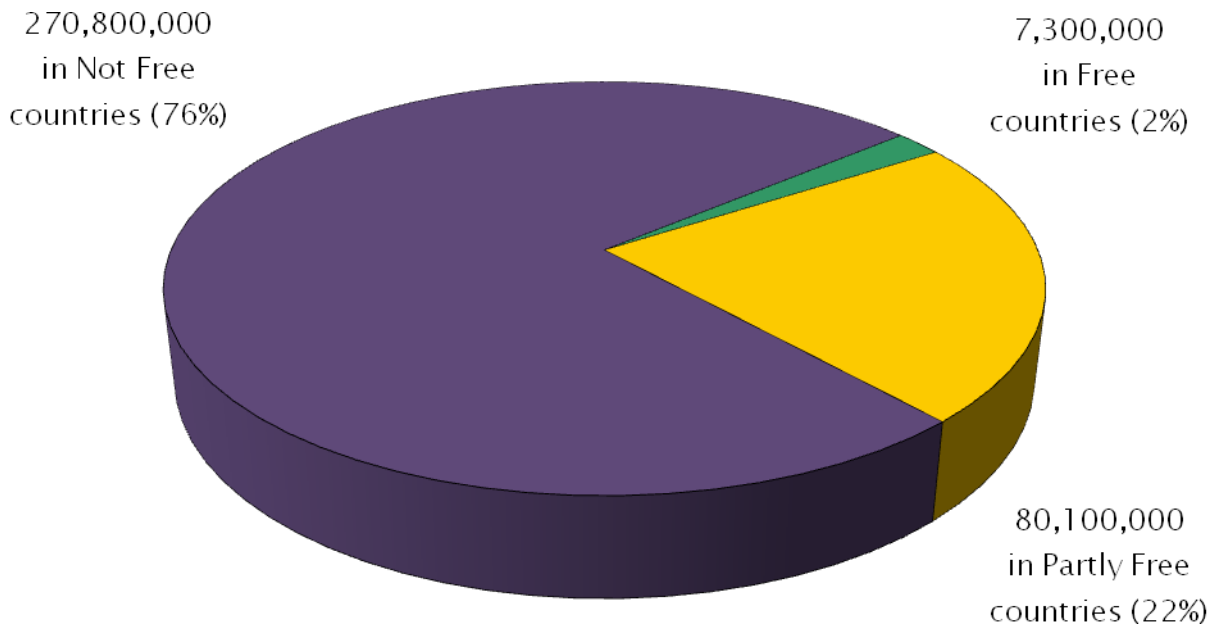


10  
Partly Free  
countries  
(25%)

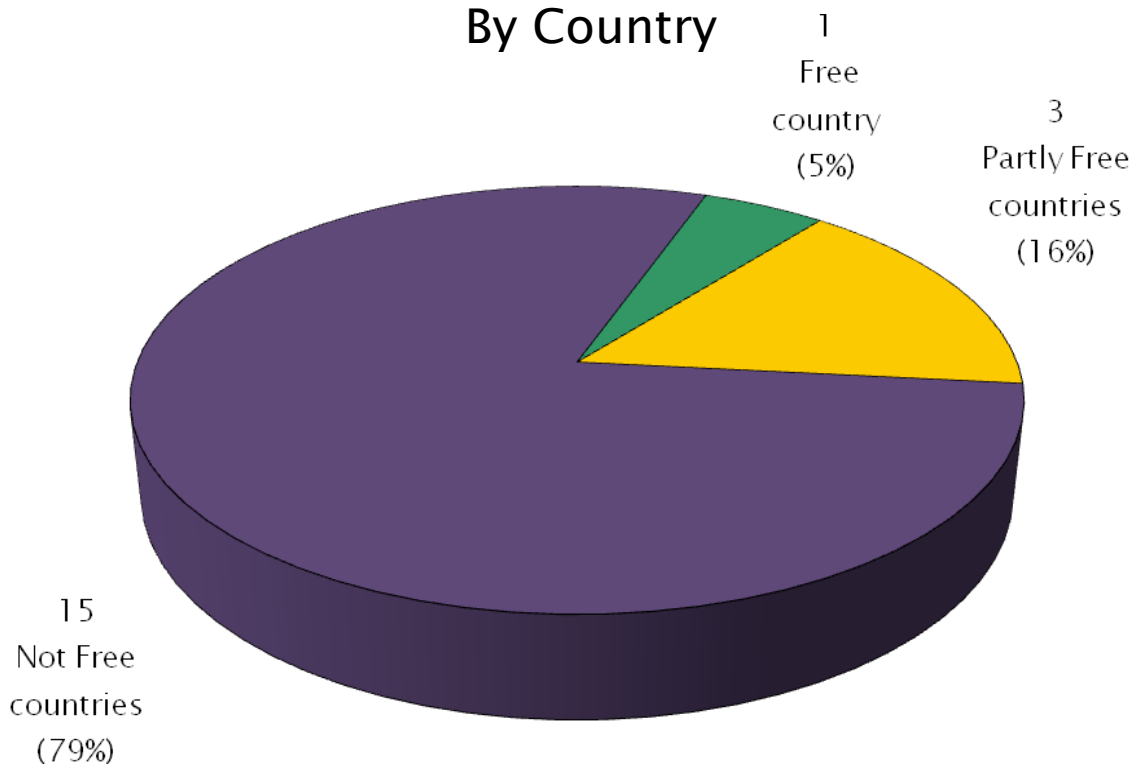


# PRESS FREEDOM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

## By Population

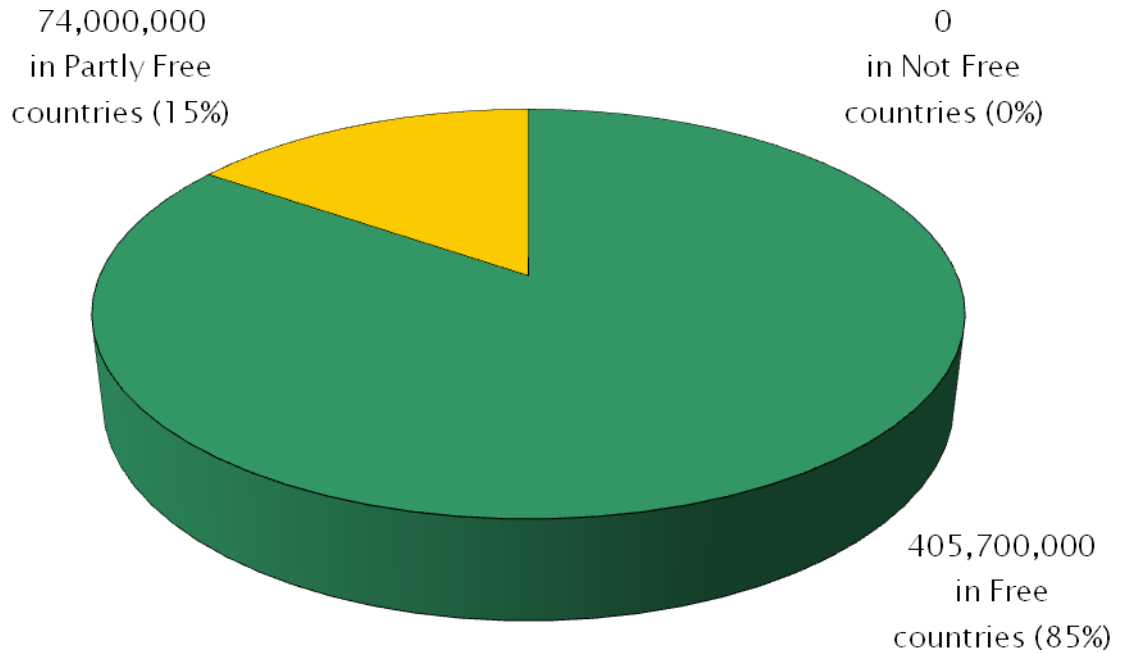


## By Country

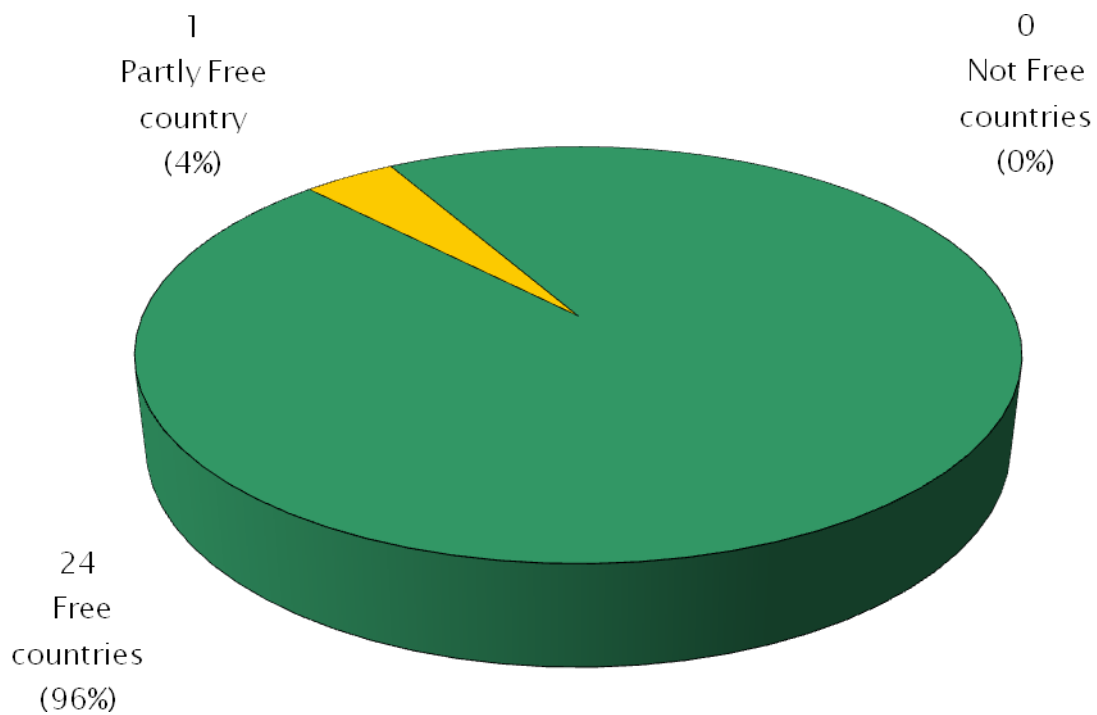


# PRESS FREEDOM IN WESTERN EUROPE

## By Population

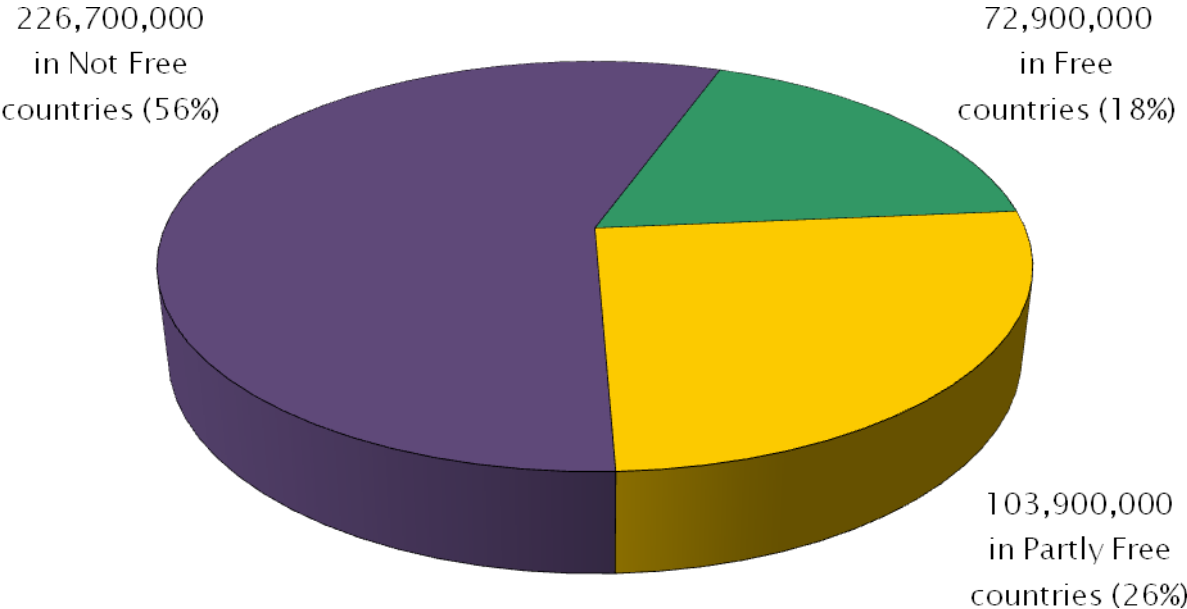


## By Country

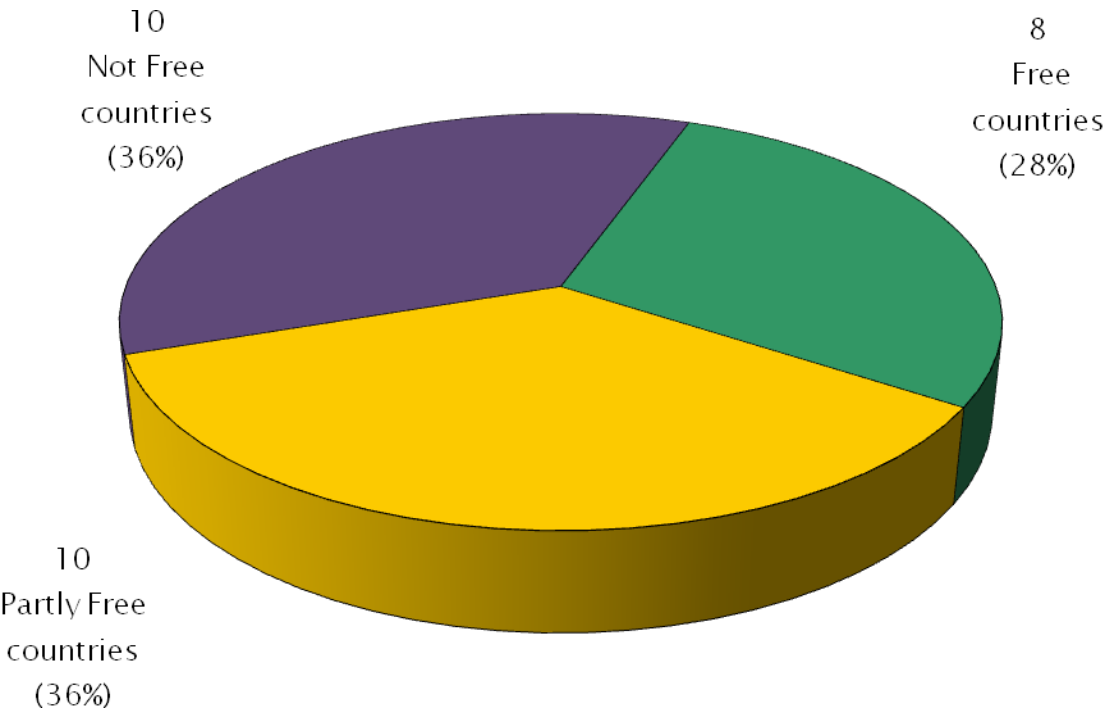


# PRESS FREEDOM IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE/FORMER SOVIET UNION

## By Population



## By Country



# FREEDOM OF THE PRESS 2008

## Table of Global Press Freedom Rankings

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
1	Finland	9	Free
	Iceland	9	Free
3	Denmark	10	Free
	Norway	10	Free
5	Belgium	11	Free
	Sweden	11	Free
7	Luxembourg	12	Free
8	Andorra	13	Free
	Netherlands	13	Free
	New Zealand	13	Free
	Switzerland	13	Free
12	Liechtenstein	14	Free
	Palau	14	Free
14	Ireland	15	Free
	Jamaica	15	Free
16	Estonia	16	Free
	Germany	16	Free
	Monaco	16	Free
	Portugal	16	Free
	St. Lucia	16	Free
21	Marshall Islands	17	Free
	San Marino	17	Free
	St. Vincent & Grenadines	17	Free
	United States	17	Free
25	Canada	18	Free
	Czech Republic	18	Free
	Lithuania	18	Free
	United Kingdom	18	Free
29	Barbados	19	Free
	Costa Rica	19	Free
	St. Kitts & Nevis	19	Free

<b>Rank 2008</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Status</b>
32	Bahamas	20	Free
	Malta	20	Free
	Taiwan	20	Free
35	Australia	21	Free
	Austria	21	Free
	Hungary	21	Free
	Japan	21	Free
	Micronesia	21	Free
40	Belize	22	Free
	Cyprus	22	Free
	Dominica	22	Free
	France	22	Free
	Latvia	22	Free
	Slovakia	22	Free
46	Slovenia	23	Free
	Spain	23	Free
	Suriname	23	Free
	Trinidad & Tobago	23	Free
	Vanuatu	23	Free
51	Grenada	24	Free
	Poland	24	Free
53	Kiribati	26	Free
	Mauritius	26	Free
	Tuvalu	26	Free
56	Ghana	27	Free
	Greece	27	Free
	Mali	27	Free
59	Cape Verde	28	Free
	Israel	28	Free
	Nauru	28	Free
	Papua New Guinea	28	Free
	Sao Tome & Principe	28	Free
	South Africa	28	Free
65	Italy	29	Free
	Samoa	29	Free

<b>Rank 2008</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Status</b>
67	Chile	30	Free
	Hong Kong	30	Free
	Namibia	30	Free
	Solomon Islands	30	Free
	South Korea	30	Free
	Uruguay	30	Free
73	Benin	31	Partly Free
	Guyana	31	Partly Free
	Tonga	31	Partly Free
76	Bulgaria	33	Partly Free
77	India	35	Partly Free
78	Botswana	36	Partly Free
	Croatia	36	Partly Free
80	Fiji	37	Partly Free
81	East Timor	38	Partly Free
	Mongolia	38	Partly Free
	Montenegro	38	Partly Free
84	Antigua & Barbuda	39	Partly Free
	Bolivia	39	Partly Free
	Dominican Republic	39	Partly Free
	Serbia	39	Partly Free
88	Mozambique	40	Partly Free
89	Burkina Faso	41	Partly Free
	Ecuador	41	Partly Free
91	Brazil	42	Partly Free
	El Salvador	42	Partly Free
93	Nicaragua	43	Partly Free
94	Panama	44	Partly Free
	Peru	44	Partly Free
	Romania	44	Partly Free
97	Bosnia	45	Partly Free
	Philippines	45	Partly Free
99	Lesotho	46	Partly Free
100	Argentina	47	Partly Free
	Macedonia	47	Partly Free

<b>Rank 2008</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Status</b>
102	Madagascar	48	Partly Free
	Tanzania	48	Partly Free
104	Senegal	49	Partly Free
105	Albania	50	Partly Free
106	Congo-Brazzaville	51	Partly Free
	Honduras	51	Partly Free
	Mexico	51	Partly Free
	Turkey	51	Partly Free
110	Guinea-Bissau	53	Partly Free
	Nigeria	53	Partly Free
	Uganda	53	Partly Free
	Ukraine	53	Partly Free
114	Comoros	54	Partly Free
	Indonesia	54	Partly Free
	Kuwait	54	Partly Free
117	Lebanon	55	Partly Free
	Malawi	55	Partly Free
119	Haiti	56	Partly Free
	Mauritania	56	Partly Free
	Thailand	56	Partly Free
122	Nepal	57	Partly Free
123	Guatemala	58	Partly Free
124	Colombia	59	Partly Free
	Egypt	59	Partly Free
	Seychelles	59	Partly Free
	Sierra Leone	59	Partly Free
128	Cambodia	60	Partly Free
	Georgia	60	Partly Free
	Kenya	60	Partly Free
	Paraguay	60	Partly Free
132	Bhutan	61	Not Free
	Central African Republic	61	Not Free
134	Algeria	62	Not Free
135	Angola	63	Not Free
	Jordan	63	Not Free

<b>Rank 2008</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Status</b>
135 (cont.)	<b>Niger</b>	63	Not Free
138	<b>Morocco</b>	64	Not Free
	<b>Qatar</b>	64	Not Free
	<b>Zambia</b>	64	Not Free
141	<b>Cameroon</b>	65	Not Free
	<b>Liberia</b>	65	Not Free
	<b>Malaysia</b>	65	Not Free
144	<b>Armenia</b>	66	Not Free
	<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>	66	Not Free
	<b>Guinea</b>	66	Not Free
	<b>Maldives</b>	66	Not Free
	<b>Moldova</b>	66	Not Free
	<b>Pakistan</b>	66	Not Free
150	<b>Sri Lanka</b>	67	Not Free
151	<b>Bangladesh</b>	68	Not Free
	<b>United Arab Emirates</b>	68	Not Free
153	<b>Gabon</b>	69	Not Free
	<b>Iraq</b>	69	Not Free
	<b>Singapore</b>	69	Not Free
156	<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	70	Not Free
157	<b>Afghanistan</b>	71	Not Free
	<b>Bahrain</b>	71	Not Free
	<b>Oman</b>	71	Not Free
160	<b>Djibouti</b>	72	Not Free
161	<b>Burundi</b>	74	Not Free
	<b>Chad</b>	74	Not Free
	<b>Togo</b>	74	Not Free
	<b>Venezuela</b>	74	Not Free
165	<b>Brunei</b>	75	Not Free
166	<b>Ethiopia</b>	76	Not Free
	<b>Swaziland</b>	76	Not Free
168	<b>Azerbaijan</b>	77	Not Free
	<b>Tajikistan</b>	77	Not Free
170	<b>Kazakhstan</b>	78	Not Free
	<b>Russia</b>	78	Not Free



Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
170 (cont.)	Sudan	78	Not Free
	Yemen	78	Not Free
174	The Gambia	79	Not Free
175	Congo-Kinshasa	81	Not Free
	Saudi Arabia	81	Not Free
	Tunisia	81	Not Free
178	Vietnam	82	Not Free
179	Laos	83	Not Free
	Syria	83	Not Free
181	China	84	Not Free
	Israeli Occupied Territories/ Palestinian Authority	84	Not Free
	Rwanda	84	Not Free
	Somalia	84	Not Free
185	Iran	85	Not Free
186	Equatorial Guinea	89	Not Free
	Zimbabwe	89	Not Free
188	Belarus	91	Not Free
189	Uzbekistan	92	Not Free
190	Cuba	94	Not Free
	Eritrea	94	Not Free
	Libya	94	Not Free
193	Turkmenistan	96	Not Free
194	Burma	97	Not Free
195	North Korea	98	Not Free

Status	Number of countries	Percentage of total
Free	72	37%
Partly Free	59	30%
Not Free	64	33%
<i>TOTAL</i>	195	100%

# FREEDOM OF THE PRESS 2008

## Press Freedom Rankings by Region

### SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
1	Mauritius	26	Free
2	Ghana	27	Free
	Mali	27	Free
4	Cape Verde	28	Free
	Sao Tome & Principe	28	Free
	South Africa	28	Free
7	Namibia	30	Free
8	Benin	31	Partly Free
9	Botswana	36	Partly Free
10	Mozambique	40	Partly Free
11	Burkina Faso	41	Partly Free
12	Lesotho	46	Partly Free
13	Madagascar	48	Partly Free
	Tanzania	48	Partly Free
15	Senegal	49	Partly Free
16	Congo-Brazzaville	51	Partly Free
17	Guinea-Bissau	53	Partly Free
	Nigeria	53	Partly Free
	Uganda	53	Partly Free
20	Comoros	54	Partly Free
21	Malawi	55	Partly Free
22	Mauritania	56	Partly Free
23	Seychelles	59	Partly Free
	Sierra Leone	59	Partly Free
25	Kenya	60	Partly Free
26	Central African Republic	61	Not Free

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
27	Angola	63	Not Free
	Niger	63	Not Free
29	Zambia	64	Not Free
30	Cameroon	65	Not Free
	Liberia	65	Not Free
32	Cote d'Ivoire	66	Not Free
	Guinea	66	Not Free
34	Gabon	69	Not Free
35	Djibouti	72	Not Free
36	Burundi	74	Not Free
	Chad	74	Not Free
	Togo	74	Not Free
39	Ethiopia	76	Not Free
	Swaziland	76	Not Free
41	Sudan	78	Not Free
42	The Gambia	79	Not Free
43	Congo-Kinshasa	81	Not Free
44	Rwanda	84	Not Free
	Somalia	84	Not Free
46	Equatorial Guinea	89	Not Free
	Zimbabwe	89	Not Free
48	Eritrea	94	Not Free

Status	Number of countries	Percentage of total
Free	7	15%
Partly Free	18	37%
Not Free	23	48%
<i>TOTAL</i>	48	100%

# AMERICAS

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
1	Jamaica	15	Free
2	St. Lucia	16	Free
3	St. Vincent & Grenadines	17	Free
	United States	17	Free
5	Canada	18	Free
6	Barbados	19	Free
	Costa Rica	19	Free
	St. Kitts & Nevis	19	Free
9	Bahamas	20	Free
10	Belize	22	Free
	Dominica	22	Free
12	Suriname	23	Free
	Trinidad & Tobago	23	Free
14	Grenada	24	Free
15	Chile	30	Free
	Uruguay	30	Free
17	Guyana	31	Partly Free
18	Antigua & Barbuda	39	Partly Free
	Bolivia	39	Partly Free
	Dominican Republic	39	Partly Free
21	Ecuador	41	Partly Free
22	Brazil	42	Partly Free
	El Salvador	42	Partly Free
24	Nicaragua	43	Partly Free
25	Panama	44	Partly Free
	Peru	44	Partly Free
27	Argentina	47	Partly Free
28	Honduras	51	Partly Free
	Mexico	51	Partly Free
30	Haiti	56	Partly Free
31	Guatemala	58	Partly Free
32	Colombia	59	Partly Free

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
33	Paraguay	60	Partly Free
34	Venezuela	74	Not Free
35	Cuba	94	Not Free

Status	Number of countries	Percentage of total
Free	16	46%
Partly Free	17	48%
Not Free	2	6%
<i>TOTAL</i>	35	100%

## ASIA-PACIFIC

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
1	New Zealand	13	Free
2	Palau	14	Free
3	Marshall Islands	17	Free
4	Taiwan	20	Free
5	Australia	21	Free
	Japan	21	Free
	Micronesia	21	Free
8	Vanuatu	23	Free
9	Kiribati	26	Free
	Tuvalu	26	Free
11	Nauru	28	Free
	Papua New Guinea	28	Free
13	Samoa	29	Free
14	Hong Kong	30	Free
	Solomon Islands	30	Free
	South Korea	30	Free
17	Tonga	31	Partly Free
18	India	35	Partly Free
19	Fiji	37	Partly Free
20	East Timor	38	Partly Free
	Mongolia	38	Partly Free
22	Philippines	45	Partly Free
23	Indonesia	54	Partly Free
24	Thailand	56	Partly Free
25	Nepal	57	Partly Free
26	Cambodia	60	Partly Free
27	Bhutan	61	Not Free
28	Malaysia	65	Not Free
29	Maldives	66	Not Free
	Pakistan	66	Not Free
31	Sri Lanka	67	Not Free

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
32	Bangladesh	68	Not Free
33	Singapore	69	Not Free
34	Afghanistan	71	Not Free
35	Brunei	75	Not Free
36	Vietnam	82	Not Free
37	Laos	83	Not Free
38	China	84	Not Free
39	Burma	97	Not Free
40	North Korea	98	Not Free

Status	Number of countries	Percentage of total
Free	16	40%
Partly Free	10	25%
Not Free	14	35%
<i>TOTAL</i>	40	100%

## MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
1	Israel	28	Free
2	Kuwait	54	Partly Free
3	Lebanon	55	Partly Free
4	Egypt	59	Partly Free
5	Algeria	62	Not Free
6	Jordan	63	Not Free
7	Morocco	64	Not Free
	Qatar	64	Not Free
9	United Arab Emirates	68	Not Free
10	Iraq	69	Not Free
11	Bahrain	71	Not Free
	Oman	71	Not Free
13	Yemen	78	Not Free
14	Saudi Arabia	81	Not Free
	Tunisia	81	Not Free
16	Syria	83	Not Free
17	Israeli Occupied Territories / Palestinian Authority	84	Not Free
18	Iran	85	Not Free
19	Libya	94	Not Free

Status	Number of countries	Percentage of total
Free	1	5%
Partly Free	3	16%
Not Free	15	79%
<i>TOTAL</i>	19	100%



## WESTERN EUROPE

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
1	Finland	9	Free
	Iceland	9	Free
3	Denmark	10	Free
	Norway	10	Free
5	Belgium	11	Free
	Sweden	11	Free
7	Luxembourg	12	Free
8	Andorra	13	Free
	Netherlands	13	Free
	Switzerland	13	Free
11	Liechtenstein	14	Free
12	Ireland	15	Free
13	Germany	16	Free
	Monaco	16	Free
	Portugal	16	Free
16	San Marino	17	Free
17	United Kingdom	18	Free
18	Malta	20	Free
19	Austria	21	Free
20	Cyprus	22	Free
	France	22	Free
22	Spain	23	Free
23	Greece	27	Free
24	Italy	29	Free
25	Turkey	51	Partly Free

Status	Number of countries	Percentage of total
Free	24	96%
Partly Free	1	4%
Not Free	0	0%
<i>TOTAL</i>	25	100%

## CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE/FORMER SOVIET UNION

Rank 2008	Country	Rating	Status
1	Estonia	16	Free
2	Czech Rep.	18	Free
	Lithuania	18	Free
4	Hungary	21	Free
5	Latvia	22	Free
	Slovakia	22	Free
7	Slovenia	23	Free
8	Poland	24	Free
9	Bulgaria	33	Partly Free
10	Croatia	36	Partly Free
11	Montenegro	38	Partly Free
12	Serbia	39	Partly Free
13	Romania	44	Partly Free
14	Bosnia	45	Partly Free
15	Macedonia	47	Partly Free
16	Albania	50	Partly Free
17	Ukraine	53	Partly Free
18	Georgia	60	Partly Free
19	Armenia	66	Not Free
	Moldova	66	Not Free
21	Kyrgyzstan	70	Not Free
22	Azerbaijan	77	Not Free
	Tajikistan	77	Not Free
24	Kazakhstan	78	Not Free
	Russia	78	Not Free
26	Belarus	91	Not Free
27	Uzbekistan	92	Not Free
28	Turkmenistan	96	Not Free

Status	Number of countries	Percentage of total
Free	8	28%
Partly Free	10	36%
Not Free	10	36%
<i>TOTAL</i>	28	100%



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**Freedom House is an independent private organization supporting the expansion of freedom throughout the world.**

Freedom is possible only in democratic political systems in which governments are accountable to their own people, the rule of law prevails, and freedoms of expression, association, and belief are guaranteed. Working directly with courageous men and women around the world to support nonviolent civic initiatives in societies where freedom is threatened, Freedom House functions as a catalyst for change through its unique mix of analysis, advocacy, and action.

- **Analysis.** Freedom House's rigorous research methodology has earned the organization a reputation as the leading source of information on the state of freedom around the globe. Since 1972, Freedom House has published *Freedom in the World*, an annual survey of political rights and civil liberties experienced in every country of the world. The survey is complemented by an annual review of press freedom, an analysis of transitions in the post-communist world, and other publications.
- **Advocacy.** Freedom House seeks to encourage American policymakers, as well as other governments and international institutions, to adopt policies that advance human rights and democracy around the world. Freedom House has been instrumental in the founding of the worldwide Community of Democracies, has actively campaigned for a reformed Human Rights Council at the United Nations, and presses the Millennium Challenge Corporation to adhere to high standards of eligibility for recipient countries.
- **Action.** Through exchanges, grants, and technical assistance, Freedom House provides training and support to human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and members of the media in order to strengthen indigenous reform efforts in countries around the globe.

Founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and other Americans concerned with mounting threats to peace and democracy, Freedom House has long been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and a steadfast opponent of dictatorships of the far left and the far right. The organization's diverse Board of Trustees is composed of a bipartisan mix of business and labor leaders, former senior government officials, scholars, and journalists who agree that the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad is vital to America's interests abroad.

