

COMMITTEE GUIDE

SOCHUM



Social Cultural and Humanitarian Council

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CCBMUN **XXIII**

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1. Presidents' Letter

Dear Delegates,

We are Emilia Carranza and Juan Manuel Agudelo, two tenth-grade students, your presidents for the latest iteration of the CCB model UN. We would like to formally welcome you to the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee of CCBMUN XXIII, and to invite you to an open discussion and debate regarding topics of human rights, social development, humanitarian issues and so much more. We want to shine a light of understanding on the real-life problems that humanity is facing and the severity of the impact they have on our societies. Ultimately, our main objective throughout this model is to ensure that you have a positive, entertaining and, above all, educational experience.

We understand that this is a mixed committee and have kept in mind the fact that we are very likely to have delegates of varying and contrasting experience and backgrounds. Nevertheless, we not only have strong faith in all of our delegates, but we truly believe in your abilities and skills, and we are sure that you will do exceptionally well as a representative for your nation, provided that you prepare yourself and put in the effort.

This counts for both the actual debate and the days leading up to it, so we strongly recommend that you put as much energy into your preparation as into your actual participation. This would include a comprehensive reading of the guide and an in-depth, complete investigation to complete your documents. As for participation, it is crucial that you make an effort to engage in meaningful debate, offering impactful and poignant interventions to ensure that the two topics on the agenda are subject to purposeful discussions that can move the committee forward.

In short, we could not be more excited about your participation in our committee for this model UN, and we are looking forward to hearing your perspectives and arguments in the context of our debates. Furthermore, we would like to add the fact that we are here to help you. Any inquiries or doubts you may have, feel free to come forward, reach out to us, and we will see what we can do to help you.

Yours sincerely,

Emilia Carranza and Juan Manuel Agudelo,
Presidents of SOCHUM
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Topic 1: News media manipulation as a threat to democratic freedom

I. History/Context

History of journalism and news media

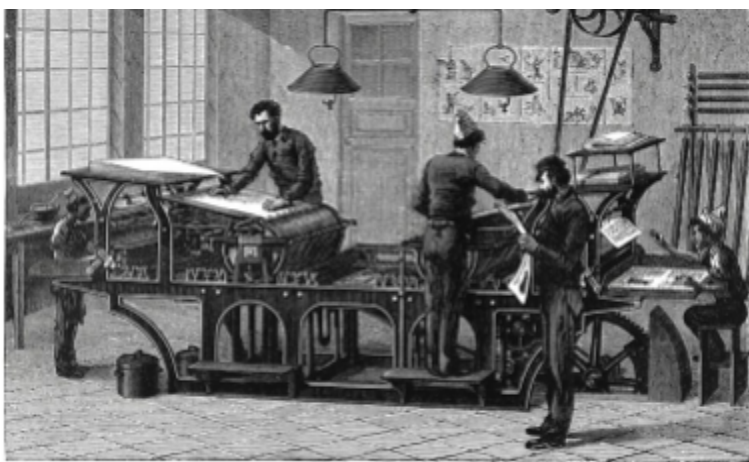


Figure 1: The invention of the printing press revolutionized journalism and news media especially in terms of production and distribution (How Do We Find out What Is Going on in the World? - What Is the Media? - 4th Level Modern Studies Revision, n.d.)

Journalism has long been society's way of finding out what is happening around us. It is far from a novel idea or concept. The earliest recorded instance of journalism dates back to the ancient Romans in 59 BCE, in a news sheet known as the "Acta Diurna". Another example dates back to the Tang dynasty in China between the years 618 A.D. and 907 A.D. when a court

"report" known as a *bao* was issued and distributed to government officials.

Just as the invention of the Gutenberg press and Linotype machines led to extraordinary advances in the mass production of written pages, revolutionising journalism's production and distribution, so did later inventions such as the telegraph, radio and television. These led to the birth of broadcast media, allowing for both wider reach and faster dissemination, including live reporting and breaking news. These broadcasts would be indispensable in historic periods, such as radio broadcasts during WW2 and television coverage of the moon-landing.

Impact of digital technology on journalism

Just as the inventions that came before it, the creation of the internet also generated an irreversible impact on the landscape of journalism. Through the internet, mobile devices and web-based platforms enable instant access and global reach.

More magazines and news services began to appear, each with their own specific interests or niche. Although independent journalism is important, this also enabled the creation of environments where all the information presented affirmed or belonged to one specific idea with little to no possibilities of information or ideas challenging the “popular school of thought” being introduced. That, in part, led to the current problem of “echo-chambers,” where people exist in a community where they only hear one type of opinion, similar to their own. The variety of different outlets allows consumers to follow niche news services, leading to a narrower range of opinions, and even dissemination of extreme ideologies. And because news on the Web is harder to regulate, this facilitates misinformation.

History of Censorship

Censorship can also be traced back to ancient Rome, with the office of censor being established in 443 BCE, this office consisted of an authority in charge of regulating the morals of citizens and civilians. Censors had the authority to penalise individuals who violated moral or civic standards by removing their public rights or assigning them to lower social ranks.

With the development of new technologies, governments have had to adapt according to the evolution of journalism. For instance, book burning and intercepting mail were popular methods implemented by leaders throughout the 18th to 20th century. In recent years, as news coverage has moved to online websites, online censorship and restriction, such as China’s Great Firewall and the UK’s Online Safety Act 2023, have been implemented. Other forms of censorship may include: physical attacks on or imprisonment of journalists, assassinations, government-backed news-outlet ownership changes, regulatory and financial pressure on news outlets, and public denunciations of journalists who uncover information that the government does not want the public to know about.

The issue of censorship

Statistics for freedom of press have grown increasingly bleak. Democracy relies on people being free to choose their leader, but if Freedom of Press is reduced and people are unable to receive accurate information, they are no longer truly at liberty. Censorship, misinformation, and media manipulation violate people’s ability to make informed choices.

The problem is twofold, as although independent journalism can benefit an oppressed society, and alternative news media often give an honest perspective of what is really happening, when mistrust in mainstream media is widespread, this can make a population



more vulnerable to disinformation. Additionally, because many governments justify censorship by saying that they are protecting their populations from disinformation, it is hard to determine what is accurate news, and whether people are truly free enough to uphold a democracy.

Many of these conflicts have been concentrated in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Recent scandals of media manipulation occurred: in the 2024 US elections, during Aleksandar Vučić's administration in Serbia, in Israel when the president Benjamin Netanyahu was put under trial for corruption, exposing his multiple attempts at media manipulation,⁴ as well as in many other democratic countries. In countries with more

authoritarian governments, journalists may be the victims of physical threats, including assassination and imprisonment; at least 360 journalists were imprisoned globally as of 2024.

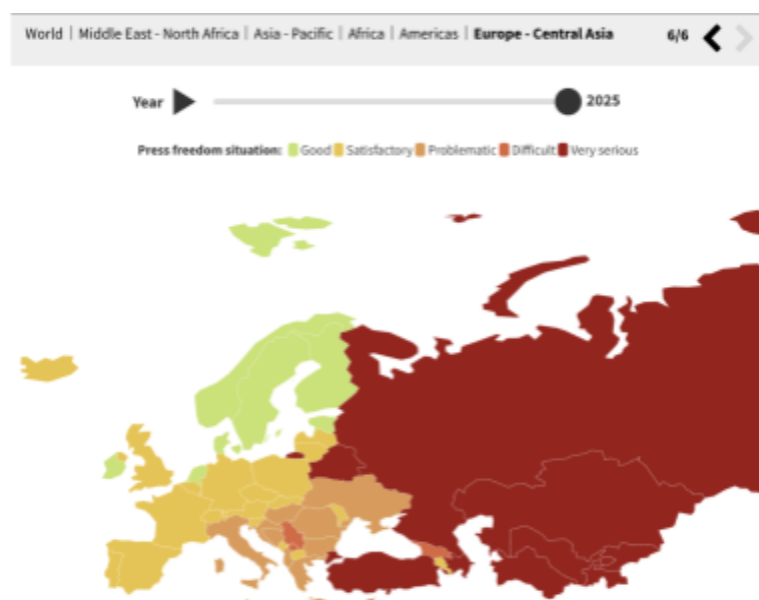


Figure 2: A map illustrating press freedom as of 2025 in Europe and Central Asia (Bocandé, 2025)

“Among Free countries in Freedom House’s Freedom in the World report, 19 percent (16 countries) have endured a reduction in their press freedom scores over the past five years.” (Repucci, 2019)

Important Terms

Freedom of the press: The idea of Freedom of Press was first popularized by the Declaration des Droits de l’Homme in 1789 in France. Six months after the Declaration was published, 1,500 newspapers appeared in the country based on this ideology, which states that anyone should be able to spread thoughts, ideas, news and views by publishing them, free of government intervention. The world's first news agency, the Agence Havas, was established. Although throughout history different political parties have sponsored their own papers, it is thanks to the idea of press freedom being written into the law that newspapers separate from the government are able to exist.

Media Manipulation: Media manipulation consists of using available public information to distort and control public opinion. It can lead to a lack of informed discourse and increase polarization, all of which erode the capacity of making informed choices when it comes to electing leaders, thus threatening democracy.

Misinformation: Information that is either untrue or inaccurate, but does not necessarily have any malicious intent. This includes rumors, pranks, and insults.

Factsheet 4: Types of Misinformation and Disinformation

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information. Examples include rumors, insults and pranks. **Disinformation** is deliberate and includes malicious content such as hoaxes, spear phishing and propaganda. It spreads fear and suspicion among the population.

Types of Misinformation and Disinformation:

1. **Fabricated Content:** Completely false content;
2. **Manipulated Content:** Genuine information or imagery that has been distorted, e.g. a sensational headline or popular 'click bait';
3. **Imposter Content:** Impersonation of genuine sources, e.g. using the branding of an established agency;
4. **Misleading Content:** Misleading information, e.g. content presented as fact;
5. **False Context:** Factually accurate content combined with false contextual information, e.g. when the headline of an article does not reflect the content;
6. **Satire and Parody:** Humorous but false stories passed off as true. There is no intention to harm but readers may be fooled;
7. **False Connections:** When headlines, visuals or captions do not support the content;
8. **Sponsored Content:** Advertising or PR disguised as editorial content;
9. **Propaganda:** Content used to manage attitudes, values and knowledge;
10. **Error:** A mistake made by established news agencies in their reporting.

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has also given birth to new forms of misinformation and disinformation. We call this Synthetic Media to indicate the artificial production, manipulation and modification of data and multimedia by automated means, especially AI algorithms, to mislead or change original meaning. There are fears that synthetic media could supercharge fake news, spread misinformation and distort or mimic and automate creative jobs.

"Deep Fakes" are one type of synthetic media where a person in an existing image or video is replaced with someone else's likeness. While the act of faking content is not new, deep fakes use powerful techniques from machine learning and AI to manipulate or generate visual and audio content with a high potential to deceive. Deep Fakes have garnered widespread attention for their use in revenge porn, fake news, hoaxes and financial fraud. Industry and governments are concerned to detect and limit their use. Some countries already have a national response or national institutions are working on it.

"Speech Synthesis" is another branch of synthetic media that can artificially produce human speech. A computer used for this purpose is called a "speech computer" or "speech synthesizer". Synthesized speech concatenates pieces of recorded speech or it incorporates a model of the vocal tract and other human voice characteristics to create a completely "synthetic" voice.

In addition to new and more sophisticated ways of manipulating content, there are also a growing number of ways in which Social Media can be used to manipulate conversations:

- A **Sockpuppet** is an online identity used to deceive. The term now extends to misleading users of other identities to praise, defend or support a person or organization, to manipulate public opinion, or to circumvent restrictions, suspension or an outright ban from a website. The difference between a pseudonym and a sockpuppet is that the sockpuppet poses as an independent third party, unaffiliated with the main account holder. Sockpuppets are unwelcome in many online communities and forums;
- **Stalking** is a type of trolling or harassment where people are pursued with persistent requests for evidence or repeated questions. A pretense of civility and sincerity is maintained with these requests, but the intention is to harass;
- **Astroturfing** means the sponsors of a message (e.g. political, religious, advertising or PR organizations) to make it appear as though it comes from grassroots participants. The practice aims to give organizations credibility by withholding information about their motives or financial connections;
- **Catfishing** is a form of fraud where a person creates a sockpuppet or false identity to target a particular victim on Social Media. It is common for romance scams or dating websites. It may be done for financial gain, to compromise a victim or as a form of trolling or wish fulfillment.



Figure 3: A fact sheet explaining different types of misinformation and disinformation ("Factsheet 4: Types of Misinformation and Disinformation," n.d.)

Disinformation: Information that is untrue or inaccurate with the deliberate intent of misleading and/or causing some type of harm, this spreads suspicion and mistrust across the general population.



Figure 4: Types of News Media (How Do We Find out What Is Going on in the World? - What Is the Media? - 4th Level Modern Studies Revision, n.d.)

Online Media: Any media that is found digitally. Generally quick, relevant, and easy to comprehend. Includes websites, apps, and social media platforms.

Print Media: Some websites are referred to as “print media” on account of the fact that they are newspapers, however a more precise definition of print media is just a news sheet printed on paper.

Broadcast Media: Is the media that is broadcast on television and radio, meaning news channels and stations.

II. Current Situation

Around the world, it's becoming more common for governments to control the news, claiming it's necessary to protect people from being misinformed. They say censorship helps prevent confusion and harm. But at the same time, false information is spreading quickly in the media, and many people don't have the skills to tell what's true or false. This makes them easy targets for lies and manipulation. So in the end, whether the news is controlled by the government or left unregulated, people still risk being misled and unable to find the full, honest truth.

What does this say for democracy?

If the people are unable to know everything about what is going on around them, their society, politics and government, then how can they be expected to choose the leader that truly upholds their beliefs and values? How would it be assured that the choice they make is truly democratic? Journalism is essential to democracy, and if it isn't being properly implemented so that citizens can see all sides of an issue, they are not really living in a democracy.

What do statistics say as of 2025?

“According to Freedom House’s Freedom in the World data, media freedom has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade, with new forms of repression taking hold in open societies and authoritarian states alike. The trend is most acute in Europe, previously a bastion of well-established freedoms, and in Eurasia and the Middle East, where many of the world’s worst dictatorships are concentrated. If democratic powers cease to support media independence at home and impose no consequences for its restriction abroad, the free press corps could be in danger of virtual extinction.” (Repucci, 2019)

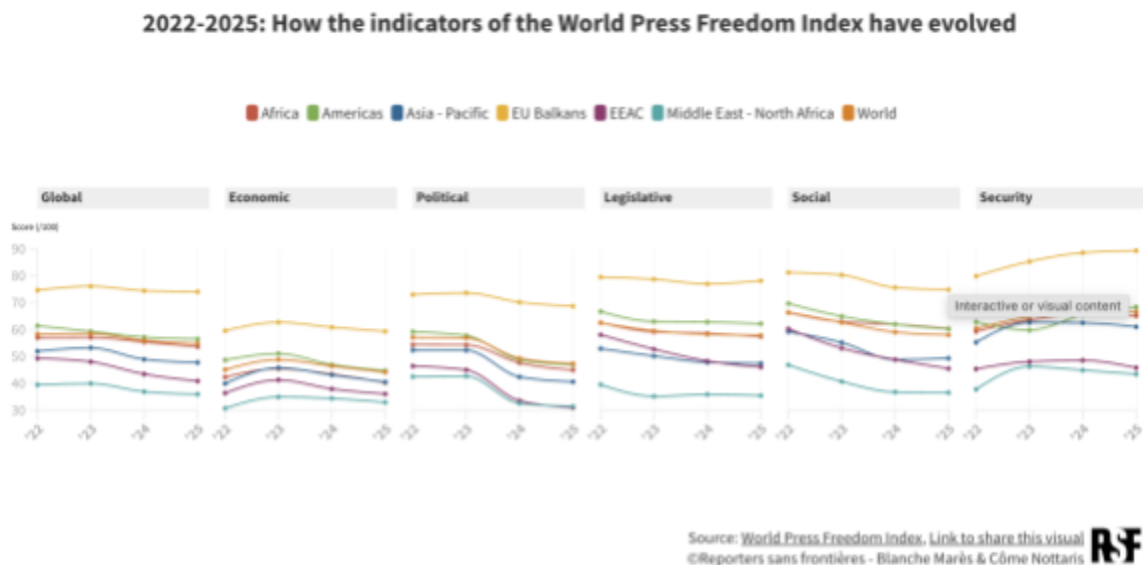


Figure 5: The evolution of World Press Freedom Indicators over time (Bocandé, 2025)

“Although physical attacks against journalists are the most visible violations of press freedom, economic pressure is also a major, more insidious problem. The economic

indicator on the Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) World Press Freedom Index now stands at an unprecedented, critical low as its decline continues in 2025. As a result, the global state of press freedom is now classified as a “difficult situation” for the first time in the history of the Index.”(Bocanadé, 2025)



Figure 6: Common Tactics used for Controlling the Media (Repucci, 2019)

Main issues

The job of a journalist is to seek out information without following any particular agenda, but in reality many news outlets are under government control or are sponsored by large corporations, which have control over the content of news programmes. Certain nations employ and justify censorship and disguise it as “combating fake news”. Common tactics include government-backed ownership changes, regulatory and financial pressure, and public denunciations of honest journalists. This consolidates media ownership into a select number of entities, which limits the diversity necessary for democratic freedoms, and which raises concerns, as democratic liberties are sacrificed on the pretext of

“national security” or “public order”. With some examples being El Salvador and Serbia, where independent papers have been alleged of multiple different counts from disinformation to money laundering by government actors and Israel where certain media companies are given advantages based on their relationships to the state.

Impact of new technologies

Society is starting to increasingly rely on digital platforms for information and news. As this happens, the potential for misinformation and controlled narratives is significantly increased, posing a significant threat to democratic freedom. Social media platforms have had an impact on this issue, as their unlimited access to information enables, to some capacity, disinformation campaigns that could threaten freedom of speech and democratic process. Algorithms then continue to spread false or untrustworthy news by not promoting content that is veritable and trustworthy but rather content that is popular and people engage with, and since social media posts don't have to go through all the regulation and fact checks that journalistic institutions must comply with, content spreading blatantly false claims might still reach a wide audience. On the other hand the strict regulation of established media institutions serves as a double-edged sword, with trust in mainstream media outlets experiencing a steep decline, with many people believing that these could be subject to government interference and that only independent journalists can be trusted to give unbiased, veritable information.

Economic depression

All of these different factors and pressures are beginning to compound into a tangible threat for the state of modern democracy. One of RSF's five main indicators for measuring World Press Freedom is economics and, currently, the financial conditions of the industry have dragged that indicator to its lowest point in history as of 2025 with the global situation now starting to be considered “difficult”.

This same situation of economic hardship has led to a “wave of media shutdowns” further exacerbating the monopoly of mainstream news media and reducing the variety of information civilians may have access to. According to the data RSF collected for the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, 160 out of the 180 countries assessed, showed media outlets achieving financial stability either “with difficulty” or none at all.



In 2025, the **economic** indicator of the RSF World Press Freedom Index hit its lowest point as **global** state of press freedom becomes “difficult”

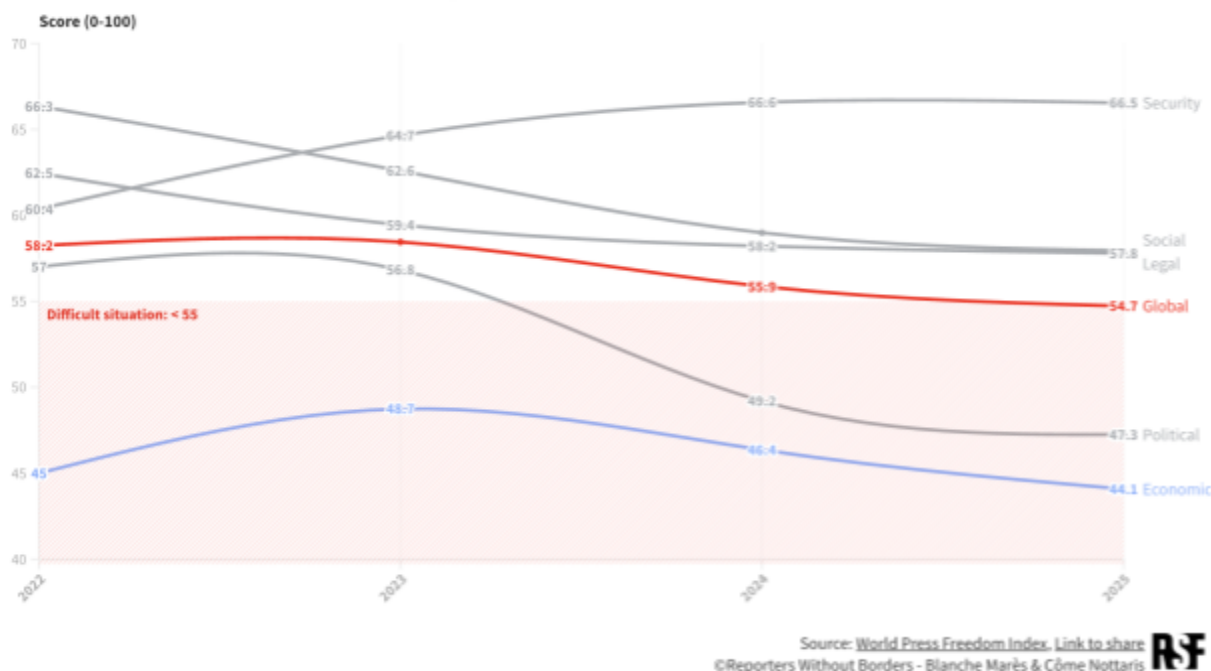


Figure 7: Economic RSF indicator as of 2025 (Bocandé, 2025)

Examples of the press freedom situation in different countries

The United States of America

Such is the case for the United States, which is down 2 places from its previous spot at 55 (it is now located at 57). However, it is its economic indicator which is the most shocking; this has dropped by over 14 points in the past 2 years, and with the current economic hardship the country is experiencing, progressively more local news outlets have been forced to shut down. This has left entire regions devoid of reliable news outlets; over 60% of journalists and media experts located in Arizona, Florida, Nevada and Pennsylvania interviewed by RSF said that earning a living wage as a journalist was difficult, whilst 75 percent mentioned that the average media outlet struggles for economic viability.

This constant state of economic challenge has been exacerbated by Donald Trump's government, which has, of late made a number of controversial decisions regarding press freedom which has raised concerns:

- Gutting Radio Free Asia (RFA).
- Ordering to cut funding for the National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).
- Limiting and selecting which outlets get to cover the White House depending on their bias, particularly the Associated Press (AP), who were barred from reporting on any White House events due to refusing to utilize the term “Gulf of America” instead of “Gulf of Mexico”.
- Ending funding for the US Agency for Global Media, which was not only limited to the US, but also affected over 400 million citizens worldwide, who were deprived of access to reliable information.
- Ending funding for the international agency USAID; many international news stations relied on USAID for funding, and its closure caused many to shut down, particularly in the Ukraine.



Considering all of these instances and more, the country suffered a severe 28-place drop in the social indicator further, suggesting an increasingly hostile environment for press and journalism.

Fig 8: The placement of the United States on the index as of 2024 and 2025 (Reporters Without Borders, 2025)

Media Ownership

The economic depression the news industry is facing also works to exacerbate yet another problem in terms of freedom of press, or at least in terms of giving citizens access to enough unbiased information for them to make informed choices - media ownership. In some countries, all sources of news media are essentially monopolized and consolidated



into one single school of thought, making it nearly impossible to find any opposing, bias-free information:

1. **Russia:** down 9 places and now at 171st: Press companies are owned and controlled by figures closely connected to the Kremlin.



Fig 9: The placement of Russia on the index as of 2024 and 2025 (Reporters Without Borders 2025)

2. **Hungary:** in 68th place - state advertising unfairly skews favour of pro-government outlets.



Fig 10: Hungary on the index as of 2024 and 2025 (Reporters Without Borders 2025)

3. Countries which have enacted a variety of different laws against what they deem to be “foreign influences” (which are commonly used to silence independent journalists):
 - a. *Georgia:* Down 11 places and presently at 114th.
 - b. *Tunisia:* Now 129th after dropping 11 places.
 - c. *Peru:* 130th.
 - d. *Hong Kong:* 140th.



4. More highly ranked countries in which most news outlets all belong to the same wealthy circles:

- a. *Australia*: 29th
- b. *Canada*: 21st
- c. *Czechia*: 10th
- d. *France*: 25th

This problem becomes further alarming considering the fact that 92 of the 180 countries evaluated by the index reported that media owners “often” or “always” limit editorial independence.

Press freedom at a global level



Figure 11: Government tactics for “controlling the narrative” through positive and negative outlets (Repucci, 2019)

Across the world, some governments are exhibiting even more outright violations of freedom of press, through censorship and manipulation of the media. This is becoming a trend, and is increasingly common, at times, even normalised. Countries with more

authoritarian governments present a different, more dangerous threat to journalists - physical violence.

El Salvador

1. President Bukele declared a state of emergency for the country in March 2022 suspending constitutional rights and civil liberties, and leaving journalists particularly vulnerable.
2. Newspapers are subject to constant legal threats, lawsuits, and audits, with outlets such as El Faro being accused by Bukele himself of money laundering ; despite not filing any formal charges, the paper was subject to multiple costly audits, forcing it to move administrative operations to Costa Rica.
3. Journalist's families have been arrested, detained and targeted; such is the case for Benjamin Amaya, the father of an environmental journalist, who was arrested under the state of emergency for charges related to association with gangs.
4. Due to the state of emergency, legal oversight of public fund use, state contracts and the right to access public information have been suspended, making journalist's jobs tangibly harder.
5. Ongoing legal restrictions and the suspension of rights and liberties has led to self-censorship.

Israel

1. Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu was the subject of a political dishonesty trial, which had a large focus on his multiple attempts to try and manipulate multiple media outlets with financial favours.
2. The CEO of the news outlet, Walla News, testified about messages, emails and recordings of the president attempting to utilize his power to try and manipulate the narrative, in order to facilitate his possibilities of reelection.
3. Case 4000: Netanyahu allegedly promoted regulations favouring the telecom company BEZEQ during the years 2015-2017, when he was acting as communications minister, in exchange for positive coverage of him.



4. Case 2000: Netanyahu allegedly made a deal with the owner of “Israel’s biggest-circulation daily” Yedioth Aharonot, offering to reduce the influence of their competitor in exchange for more positive coverage. The competitor was a free newspaper, and the president attempted to pass a law limiting the distribution of public newspapers.

Serbia

1. The country has never had a good reputation in terms of freedom of press; journalists are described as “working under duress” and being “insulted, intimidated, and attacked in the field” and on TV as “targeted by the top public officials”.
2. Most recently the government has come under fire for its improper targeting and handling of public protest, with many journalists reporting these events falling victim to all sorts of transgressions, for example, Marjan Vucetic, who was attacked from behind with blows to the back and neck, the event organizer being witness to the whole incident and refusing to respond.
3. Gavrilko Andric was detained while covering courthouse protests; although he was released after two hours, he was prevented from documenting the events.
4. At the largest protest in Serbia, on March 15 2025, during a silent vigil a strange sound caused immediate panic, unrest and forced dispersion, and afterwards non-government agencies compiled 3032 testimonies alleging a sonic weapon had been used. The government labeled these testimonies as disinformation, with the minister of justice getting multiple prosecutors involved, encouraging them to “act against those who ‘publish disinformation and intentionally cause panic among citizens.’” (Wiseman, 2025)
5. For media outlets to be able to broadcast their information, they are required to obtain a licence, which is administered by Regulatory Body for Electronic Media (REM), an organization closely associated with the current government.

China:

1. China could be considered by many what the end result could be for many of these nations if they continue to censor and disrupt the freedom of the press, an



ultimately non-democratic nation wherein freedom of speech is considered a privilege, not a right.

2. In recent years Chinese authorities have claimed that they tolerate criticism however, the “criticism that they speak of is done by senior members of the Communist Party, in government-controlled forums no less.
3. At the Sixteenth Party Congress last November former aide to Mao Zedong and retired Chinese Communist Party (CCP) official gave a speech calling for greater democracy, the speech was later featured in the China Chronicle.
4. However the state would never tolerate such blunt language from an average citizen or even an independent journalist as within the countries’ legal framework they can be denied legal representation and placed for six months in the states’ “black prisons” under “Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location”.
5. The only entities afforded a minimum amount of leeway or grace are the major chinese media corporations such as “Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television (CCTV), China National Radio (CNR), and newspapers China Daily, People’s Daily and the Global Times,” (Reporters Without Borders, 2025). Which are conveniently state owned and sanctioned.



Fig 12: China's steep decline in press freedom, 2015-2025 (Statista, 2025)



III. Key points of the debate

- The impact of ownership by governments, corporations, and political allies on media objectivity
- The implications of a misinformed or uninformed population on democratic legitimacy
- The significance of media literacy for combating misinformation and disinformation
- Combating misinformation without turning to censorship
- Differentiating misinformation from opposing opinions
- Protection for independent journalists against accusations of misinformation
- Protections for vulnerable citizens against actual misinformation and disinformation campaigns

IV. Guiding questions

1. To what extent does your government support independent journalism?
2. How is media ownership distributed throughout your country? Is it concentrated amongst select entities and individuals? How does it impact the amount of information available to the public?
3. Are there any documented instances of censorship and media manipulation in your country?
4. Has your nation experienced any foreign or domestic disinformation campaigns? If so, what measures were taken in response?
5. Does your country have regulation for social media platforms operating in its borders? If so, how severe are these measures - are they effective in combating misinformation, or have they overstepped on democratic freedoms?
6. Should independent and citizen journalists have the right to report whatever they want, even if it goes against the general narrative?



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Topic 2: The impact of artificial intelligence on the right to privacy

I. History/Context

“Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. It includes learning, reasoning, and self-correction”. (Craig et al., 2024)

- **Learning:** the acquisition of information and rules (algorithms) for using this information
- **Reasoning:** using rules to reach approximate or definite conclusions
- **Self-correction:** changing the algorithms to achieve more accurate results



Figure 1: Sullivan, M. Examining Privacy Risks in AI System (2023, December 1).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has advanced significantly in the last decade, being used in many sectors of society such as healthcare, finance and banking and social media. This involves the collection of personal data, which has many benefits but, at the same time, creates a higher risk concerning the right to privacy.

The right to privacy is a fundamental human right from the United Nations article 12, which protects individuals from any interference with their privacy. In this case, this right should also

apply to AI and how it uses the private information it gathers. This right has adapted to new threats, especially those caused by technology.

The term “right to privacy” was first introduced in the late 19th century in the 1890 Harvard Law Review article *“The Right to Privacy,”* written by Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis, which outlined the principles of protecting individuals from intrusion in order to safeguard personal freedom and dignity. This entitlement has evolved over the centuries and has changed to guarantee more privacy for people and to protect them from new dangers like governmental surveillance that became officially recognized after WWII in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the 20th century, when new technology was introduced, the Internet was created as a global platform where private information could be accessed and stored. This marked an important point in history for privacy rights, as it required updates of legal frameworks to respond to digital threats.

With the creation of the World Wide Web (1991), many people started using the internet to access information through the use of websites. This revolutionised the way in which people interacted with information and services, but they had little knowledge of the risk that came with its use. Many websites started collecting information from their users without their consent, often by the user accepting “cookies”¹ that were originally used to track the user's behaviour, but unfortunately, can also collect your name, email address, personal information and your IP address. This happened because people were not aware of the risk of the internet, or did not know that accepting cookies was optional. Also, there were no regulators like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

With the emergence of AI technologies, further privacy concerns were intensified. AI systems can now process massive datasets, recognise patterns in personal behaviour, and even make decisions that affect individuals' lives. Constant interaction with AI allows a programme to develop a user profile based on all of the information given and the research made through it. This results in a collection of personal information in every conversation that occurs. The speed, scale and efficiency of AI have outpaced many existing privacy laws, creating urgent global debates about how to regulate AI while preserving human rights. As AI users are growing in a massive way, governments, universities, and different types of companies are highly concerned about the collection of data and information that is obtained through the use of AI.

II. Current Situation

In the 21st century, the impact of artificial intelligence on the right to privacy has been a major concern for governments, organizations and individuals. In recent years, the use of AI in many apps and websites has grown significantly, leading to systems that collect and store large amounts of personal data. This information is collected through website browsing, social activity, online behaviour, facial recognition and voice recordings. All the data that has been collected helps to make apps or websites more efficient and to improve the AI model, but it also increases issues concerning data privacy, potential bad use and

¹ A cookie is a text file carrying some information that a website places on a user's computer. It allows the website to identify the user and improve their future web browsing experience. (Kerner, 2021)



lack of regulation over how personal data is collected and stored. This has created debate about whether AI can be used without affecting human rights.

AI has become an essential tool in recent years. This technology has advanced significantly and is now used by governments and private companies for purposes such as facial recognition and behavior analysis to track individuals in both public areas and digital spaces. For example, AI can identify people in real time through street cameras and live CCTV, detect gestures and actions, record and analyze voice patterns, and monitor online activity.



Figure 2: During Covid, Chinese authorities installed surveillance cameras inside rental housing as well as on the streets.



Figure 3: . "Skynet", China's massive video surveillance network. Shen, X. (2018, October 4)

China is the leader in using AI-powered surveillance to monitor its citizens with the government network Skynet. This high-tech public security system uses AI monitoring cameras and facial recognition to monitor public spaces and citizens in real time. Moreover, the Chinese government employs AI systems to monitor its citizens' internet activity for political and social control, maintaining social stability and national security. These systems involve advanced censorship, facial recognition, and behaviour-tracking technologies, often resulting in the suppression of freedom of expression and broader surveillance over public and digital spaces. However, the Chinese government says it helps to prevent crime, to manage urban life

efficiently and to deter disruption.

Many other governments have started implementing AI for surveillance and other tasks. In the United Kingdom, police forces have begun to use facial recognition in public places, similar to Skynet, to facilitate the labour of the police and to make it easier to locate criminals and to stop crime. Similarly, India employs AI-based systems in urban areas for crowd control and surveillance, largely as a response to its high population density. Other countries, such as the USA, Russia and Israel, have implemented AI systems to track the behaviour of their citizens.

The loss of consent and the right to privacy has had an impact on the use of AI in surveillance, which mostly operates without the consent of the user. In public areas, street cameras will monitor any citizen without requiring their permission or consent to do so. Many social media platforms lack transparency about how they use personal data, leaving users uncertain about whether their online behaviour is being tracked. This undermines the right to privacy, as algorithms continuously analyse and exploit user patterns.

AI has also been used as a monitor in order to filter out and remove online content that governments do not approve of. In the same way, social media platforms use AI to detect and remove inappropriate, dangerous and explicit content for a variety of reasons. Although the main purpose of AI's use is for the greater good, it can also bring many risks, for example, by creating false positives, which are posts that have been rejected or banned unfairly or due to a misunderstanding of interpretation. This might create an ambience of bias for people who consume content, and unfair treatment due to restrictions on people who create or post information. A clear example of this is the misuse of AI to regulate political news. Algorithmic bias often results in the removal or censorship of content that criticises the government or specific political institutions. Consequently, this fosters self-censorship and broader forms of control, limiting individuals' ability to freely express their views on sensitive topics without fear of being flagged or judged. Ultimately, such practices undermine freedom of expression and restrict civic emancipation.

One of the most harmful consequences of AI surveillance is the mistakes of facial recognition due to failures in the recognition systems. During the early development years of this technology, there were many instances when people could be mistaken for others due to similar physical characteristics, which represented a risk in security measures, as it demonstrated how the technology lacked accuracy.

"Police use of facial recognition technology places innocent New Yorkers on a perpetual line up and violates our privacy rights. Facial recognition is ubiquitous, unregulated and should be banned," said Mutale Nkonde, Founder and CEO of AI For the People. (Amnesty International, 2021).

Although this technology has helped a lot in identifying people and has been very useful for authorities, facial recognition often makes mistakes in the recognition of people of colour, especially women and children. This leads to wrongful arrests, unfair targeting, and a lack of accountability in decisions. AI has the capacity to significantly affect someone's life based on an error in the algorithm. An example of this happened in 2025 in New York when a man was falsely arrested and jailed for two days even though he didn't match the



physical description given by the victim of a sex crime. He said that the only similarities were that *“they were both Black men with locks.”* (Cranmore, 2025)

The use of AI in surveillance has negatively impacted citizens’ psychological well-being, creating a persistent sense of being monitored. This perception of constant oversight reduces personal autonomy, as individuals feel less free to explore ideas or make independent choices. As a result, rates of anxiety have increased, fueled by the awareness of continuous tracking. Moreover, activism has been suppressed, as many people avoid participating in protests out of fear that they will be identified, monitored and accused of unlawful behaviour.



Figure 4: Artificial Intelligence: Emerging Legal & regulatory environment and Board of Directors Responsibility - ET LegalWorld. (ETLegalWorld.com.)

As a result of this huge advance in the use of AI, many countries have developed laws and ethical structures for specific subjects that involve how AI collects data. Deciding when and how facial recognition can be used and the rights citizens have to appeal AI-based decisions.

Efforts to regulate the use of AI



Figure 5: European Parliament Adopts the AI Act: Implications for Culture. (culture action europe, 2024)

The European Union (EU) has emerged as one of the most influential global actors in this area, positioning itself as a leading force in safeguarding the right to privacy against emerging threats. In particular, in 2023, the EU finalized its Artificial Intelligence Act, the world’s first comprehensive law governing corporate AI use. It will take full effect by August of 2026, applying to any company that operates in Europe or that provides services to EU consumers. This measure is meant to

implement strong standards in the use of AI regarding the use of data collection, transparency and human oversight in order to protect the right to privacy of European citizens. These standards are also focused on companies based in the United States, which are the most frequent users of AI, and which do not always have the pertinent regulations to protect user data or privacy. To find out more about this act, please visit the following link: [EU approves AI regulation](#).

Other countries, such as the United States, have begun drafting laws to regulate AI and protect citizens' rights. However, this process has been slow and often ineffective, with no comprehensive framework yet finalised or in use. For instance, former president Joe Biden issued an executive order in October 2023 named "Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy AI" to guide federal agencies. However, they are not able to regulate private companies. Similarly, the current president, Donald Trump, signed Executive Order 14179, directing federal agencies to develop an "AI Action Plan." While the plan has been released, progress on its implementation has been gradual and is still unfolding. Some experts believe that the US is not interested in adopting any strong regulations, even though (or maybe because) it is the global leader in AI research and development. They point out how AI impacts an immense market, and how AI developers fear that laws or measures of this type could affect current research, resulting in a loss of leadership and efficiency in the field due to the rigidity of the proposed laws.

Many activist groups all around the world are pushing for moratoriums on facial recognition. Collective groups that fight for human rights have warned about serious violations when implementing facial recognition technology. Important human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and European Digital Rights have called for a ban on AI-powered facial recognition technologies, raising serious concerns about their implications for human rights and the discriminatory impacts of surveillance. These groups argue that there is an insufficient evidence base, a lack of robust safeguards, inadequate legal frameworks, and no clear democratic mandate to justify the deployment of such controversial technologies. For example, Clearview AI, a US company, trawled billions of social media sites to "scrape"² 20 billion images. It then sells its facial recognition services to police departments so that they can upload their own images to find a match in the Clearview database.

² "An image scraper can extract images from websites by accessing web pages, identifying image files, and downloading images in bulk for content aggregation, analysis, or repurposing. An image scraper can collect the metadata (eg: image URL, alt text) of the pictures while an image downloader only downloads the picture itself." (Jones, 2025)



A balance between innovation and human rights protection

It is clear that AI can be a force for research, innovation, and creativity, and its importance is essential in improving various business and social sectors such as medicine, climate science and education, amongst others. However, there is a need to know how to control it, which is why many governments, companies, and citizens are considering ways to regulate the use of AI when they use it. The objective is to find a balance between innovation in AI and the protection of human rights so that privacy is not violated and so that AI is used ethically, with transparency and responsibility.

Nations with more AI development

		Overall	Talent Infrastructure Operating Environment			Research Development		Government Strategy Commercial		Scale	Intensi.
		▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
	United States	1	1	1	28	1	1	8	1	1	5
	China	2	20	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	21
	Singapore	3	4	3	22	3	5	16	4	10	1
	United Kingd...	4	5	24	40	5	8	10	5	4	10
	Canada	5	6	23	8	7	11	5	7	7	7
	South Korea	6	12	7	11	12	3	6	18	8	6
	Israel	7	7	28	23	11	7	47	3	17	2
	Germany	8	3	12	13	8	9	2	11	3	15
	Switzerland	9	9	13	30	4	4	56	9	16	3
	Finland	10	13	8	4	9	14	15	12	13	4

Figure 6: This global index ranks which nations dominate AI development. (Ortiz, 2023)

III. Key points of the debate

- The collection of personal data like faces, voices, and online behaviour by AI without clear consent
- The use of AI by governments and tech companies to monitor people in both public spaces and online platforms
- The use of AI surveillance without transparency or user awareness, violating the right to privacy
- Errors and bias in facial recognition systems, leading to wrongful arrests and discrimination
- Self-censorship and anxiety caused by constant AI surveillance, affecting mental health and freedom of expression
- Lack of global laws and regulations to control how AI collects and uses personal data
- The challenge is finding a fair balance between AI innovation and the protection of human rights and freedoms

IV. Guiding questions

1. To what extent does your government use AI to monitor and track its citizens, and what are its plans for the future? *(For example, through facial recognition, social media posts or banking transactions.)*
2. What laws are there in place to protect citizens and foreign visitors from excessive government surveillance in your country, if any?
3. Has AI been used in your country to combat crime? If so, how effective has it been?
4. How does your country balance the benefits of AI for public security with the protection of fundamental human rights, such as privacy and freedom of expression?
5. What are the concerns of citizens in your country about the use of AI by governments to track them?



6. What non-government organisations are there in your country that are working on the issue of government use of AI surveillance vs human rights, and what is their position?
7. Should there be international treaties to define limits of the use of AI by governments for surveillance? Should the UN strengthen existing human rights mechanisms to address privacy violations caused by AI technologies?

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