

Sarah Repucci ~ Freedom And The Media: A Downward Spiral



Key Findings:

- Freedom of the media has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade.

- In some of the most influential democracies in the world, populist leaders have overseen concerted attempts to throttle the independence of the media sector.

- While the threats to global media freedom are real and concerning in their

own right, their impact on the state of democracy is what makes them truly dangerous.

- Experience has shown, however, that press freedom can rebound from even lengthy stints of repression when given the opportunity. The basic desire for democratic liberties, including access to honest and fact-based journalism, can never be extinguished.

The fundamental right to seek and disseminate information through an independent press is under attack, and part of the assault has come from an unexpected source. Elected leaders in many democracies, who should be press freedom's staunchest defenders, have made explicit attempts to silence critical media voices and strengthen outlets that serve up favorable coverage. The trend is linked to a global decline in democracy itself: The erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles, a fact that makes it especially alarming.

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.

Experience has shown, however, that press freedom can rebound from even lengthy stints of repression when given the opportunity. The basic desire for democratic liberties, including access to honest and fact-based journalism, can never be extinguished, and it is never too late to renew the demand that these rights be granted in full.

Read more: <https://freedomhouse.org/freedom-media-2019>