

Pressemitteilung

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## **Absolute and autocratic control of information**

Press freedom has deteriorated dramatically, as evidenced by two major events. In Burma, the military coup of 2021 led to an extremely harsh repression of journalists. As a result, the country, ranked at the low end of RSF's World Press Freedom Index (176<sup>th</sup> of 180), has become one of the world's largest prisons for media professionals. In Afghanistan (156<sup>th</sup>), the Taliban's seizure of power has further worsened conditions for reporters and news organisations, who are the targets of all forms of intimidation and violence.

The Asia-Pacific region, which holds more than half of the world's population, is also affected by more structural issues. The first of these is the policy of absolute control of information by the government. While North Korea (180<sup>th</sup>) is the worst country for press freedom, China (175<sup>th</sup>) continues to extend its information control model not only within its borders, but also beyond them. Thus, the semi-autonomous region of Hong Kong (148<sup>th</sup>), now controlled by Beijing, has registered the steepest drop in ranking (68 places) in the 2022 Index. The governments of Vietnam (174<sup>e</sup>) and Singapore (139<sup>e</sup>) have also tightened their grip on the media.

In countries reputed to be more democratic, the media face pressure from increasingly authoritarian and/or nationalist governments, such as India (150<sup>th</sup>), Sri Lanka (146<sup>th</sup>), and the Philippines (147<sup>th</sup>). Some critical journalists are targets of intense harassment campaigns, such as the one aimed at Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa.

This region's media also fall prey to the growing control of large industrial groups, whose influence encourages the self-censorship of journalists and editorial staff, as is the case, for example, in Japan (71<sup>st</sup>), South Korea (43<sup>rd</sup>), and Australia (39<sup>th</sup>).

Conversely, the free exercise of journalism plays a major role in the consolidation of emerging democracies, as in Mongolia (90<sup>th</sup>), Bhutan (33<sup>rd</sup>), and East Timor (17<sup>th</sup>). Having developed institutional safeguards against political and economic influence, New Zealand (11<sup>th</sup>) is a model in the region.