



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL
of Philadelphia

Yemen

Republic of Yemen



Key Facts



World Freedom Press Global Index Ranking (Overall): Ranked 168 (61.66)

Head of State / Head of Government: President Abd Rabuh Mansur HADI (since 21 February 2012); Vice President ALI MUHSIN al-Ahmar, Lt. Gen. (since 3 April 2016)
Capital city: Sanaa

Population: 28,667,230 (July 2018 est.)

Official Language(s): Arabic

Ethnic Groups: predominantly Arab; but also, Afro-Arab, South Asian, European

Currency:

Gross domestic product (PPP):

Internet penetration: 24.6 %

Most trusted medium of information:

Legal System: mixed legal system of Islamic (sharia) law, Napoleonic law, English common law, and customary law

Political system: in transition

Journalists Killed/Imprisoned: 1

Media Environment: state-run TV with 2 stations; state-run radio with 2 national radio stations and 5 local stations; stations from Oman and Saudi Arabia can be accessed. Two years of war have changed the Yemeni media landscape for worst in terms of number of publications, independence, freedom of the media and the press and distribution. According to Freedom House in 2016 the status of freedom of the press in Yemen was not good. There is actually no freedom. All the rates about legal environment, political environment, and economic environment are high, considering that higher Freedom House rates mean worst situations (ranging from 0 meaning the best to 40 or 30 meaning the worst). The final press freedom

score of the Yemen landscape is 83 to 100, very close to the worst picture ever. The development of journalistic professionalism in Yemen has reached a minimum term. War destroyed any ambition. Journalists who are still working take part in a propaganda game, positioning themselves with or against the loyal government and paying consequently the price. Most of them stopped working and changed activity. Some tried and are still trying to leave the country, asking asylum abroad to save their lives, dignity and families.

Media Issues: Press freedom has been dramatically curtailed by major political upheavals and violence, including the seizure of the capital Sanaa by Houthi rebels allied with former President Saleh in September 2014, the collapse of the alliance with Saleh (who was murdered in 2017) and the Saudi and Emirati-led Arab military intervention that began in March 2015. Journalists are constantly exposed to threats, attacks and abduction when they are not the victims of the Arab coalition's air strikes. At least 16 journalists and media workers are currently held by the Houthis, most of them since 2015, and one is being held by Al-Qaeda. A journalist who had been held by the Houthis died just days after his release in 2018. Journalists are also arrested arbitrarily and abused by militias in the part of the country controlled by the so-called legitimate government. Independent coverage of the war is rare throughout the country, as most media are controlled by the various parties to the conflict. Online access to media outlets has been blocked ever since the Houthis seized control of the telecommunications ministry. In all parts of the country, citizen-journalists are monitored and can be arrested for a single social network post.

Popular Forms of Media Consumption

Radio: Local radio stations are commonly referred to as "kitchen radio" because it is very common that especially women listen to them while they are cooking. Actually, there are more the 10 radio channels, most of which broadcast in the medium waves, except for Sana'a Radio that also broadcasts in the short waves and locally in the FM. These radios broadcast in the following provincial capitals: Ataq, Al Hodeidah, Hajjah, Ibb, Lahj, Al Mukalla, Saada, Sayun, Taiz and Zinjibar.

Television: Television is the main source of news and entertainment and is more popular and influential than radio. A survey of media consumption habits carried out by the BBC World Service Trust in 2010 found that 86 percent of the respondents watched television on a daily basis, whereas only 19 percent listened to the radio and 12 percent read newspapers. TV viewing was equally popular among the young and elders alike. It is also widespread amongst all social and income groups, from wealthy, sophisticated citizenry to the rural poor. Television is still the most popular and consumed media, followed by social media networks at huge steps.

Digital Media: A proposed new law to regulate the broadcast and online media was approved by the cabinet and submitted to parliament in December 2010. The draft law is principally aimed at defining the conditions under which private radio and television would be allowed to exist. However, it also aims to regulate news websites based inside Yemen. Under the terms of the draft law, the government would charge a fee of 20m riyals (approximately US\$90,000), for a license to set up and run a news website. Few independent operators could afford such a sum until now. Several political parties and news organizations have established an online presence. About 200 Yemeni news websites are accessible from within the country but limited public access to computers and government filtering of Internet content make it difficult for ordinary Yemenis to take full advantage of them. Many of the news websites are government-controlled, Others are propaganda mouthpieces for various opposition groups. There are several

professionally designed pro-government sites that concentrate on news from particular regions. These include: Akhbar al-Janub (News of the South), Lahj News, Ibb News and SaadahPress.

Social Networks: The Arab Social Media Report 2015, by the Arab Social Media Influencers Summit in Dubai, shows that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most used social media channel across the Arab World, while Facebook was the most used social media channel at an aggregate level of the Arab World. In Yemen, as of 2015, 93 percent of the population who accesses Internet uses Facebook; 92 percent has WhatsApp; YouTube is also popular (41 percent), while Google+ is used by 35 percent of Yemenis and Instagram reached 31 percent. The Facebook users' rate is one of the highest in all the Arab World, along with Libya (93 percent), Lebanon (95 percent) and Syria (97 percent) that takes the first place. Regarding censorship and social media, Skype was banned by TeleYemen (Government Owned) in 2010 on the grounds that it provided an "unauthorized" communications service.