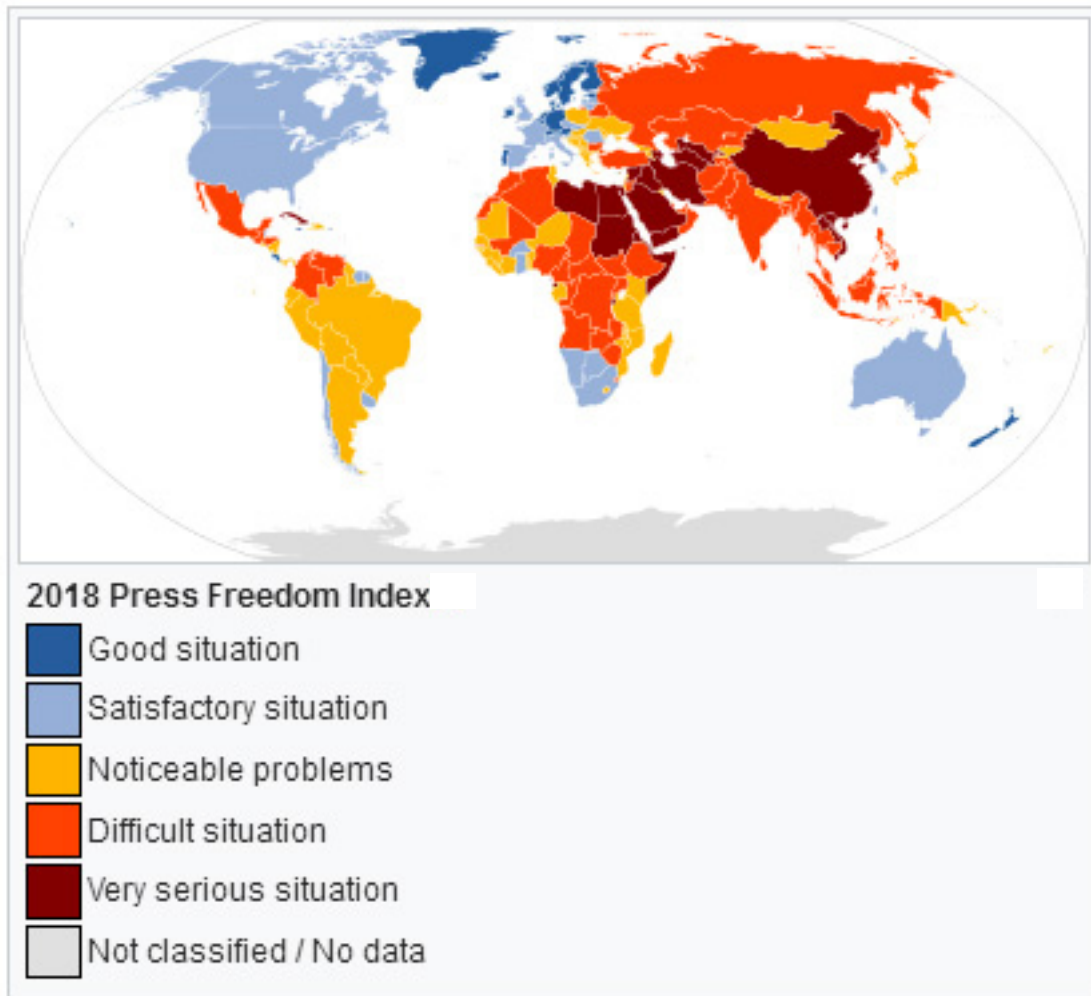


From the Editor - Freedom of the Press



Freedom of the press is being whittled away at the great cost of ordinary citizens of the world.

While war is always an abomination and peculiar to mankind, truth 'the first casualty in war' is one of the few ways we can combat it by bringing a level of shame on the perpetrators. Even those who conduct crimes against humanity like to believe that they are entitled to their hatred and brutality. Truth holds up a mirror to their delusions.

Equally a free press informs increasingly disenfranchised people about what is really happening to their planet and their lives. Press freedom even has an influence on what people pay for their daily loaf of bread or bowl of rice. It is vital to maintain some checks and balances. We may feel 'something out there is dreadfully wrong' but without a few facts it is hard to pinpoint. The current batch of despots and dictators have learned to both attack the free press (labelling it as 'fake news') and disseminate fake news themselves - as sadly many people are gullible and labels can stick if people are not properly informed.

Sadly our time has seen incredibly brutal and more sophisticated attacks on civilians and the free press.

Daphne Caruana Galizia, a blogger whose investigations focused on corruption led the Panama Papers investigation into corruption in Malta, was killed in a car bomb near her home in 2017. Her car was destroyed by a powerful explosive device which blew the vehicle into several pieces and threw the debris into a nearby field. The 'overkill' (literally) was no doubt designed to inflict a level of fear into all journalists and truth speakers.

The Freedom for Media, Freedom for All Network, Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, Philippine Press Institute (PPI), MindaNews, and Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) advise that attacks and threats against the Philippine media, continue to rise under the administration of President Rodrigo R. Duterte. In the 28 months of the Duterte presidency, from July 1, 2016 to Oct. 31, 2018, they documented at least 99 cases of direct and indirect assaults against journalists and news media agencies.

US President Donald Trump has concerned thinking people with claims that the mainstream media that speaks out against his side of politics are spreading "fake news" and are "enemies of the people". Meanwhile those media moguls who are wealthy corporate giants support his attacks on the free unaligned media on behalf of capitalist interests.

Many Turkish journalists have been thrown in jail and the recent murder of Saudi commentator Jamal Khashoggi, while in Turkey, was a high profile case, the brutality of which shocked the world.

The Committee to Protect Journalists reports that 2017 set a new high for the number of journalists in prison around the world with Turkey, China and Egypt named as “the world’s worst jailers” of journalists.

It is not just political reporters being attacked. In her reporting on Colombia’s crime cartels Jineth Bedoya Lima’s story about being kidnapped and raped espouses that gender-related threats to journalists are quite real and that they go beyond personal safety. As she was being brutally raped by her captors, Bedoya writes, one of them told her they were sending a message to the media.

Attacks on the press do not just rob journalists, they rob all citizens of their livelihoods, their dignity, honour and their justice.

The propaganda wars currently happening on this planet are as nefarious as the more open and conventional warfare against innocent people.

Truth is the only defence humanity really has.

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