

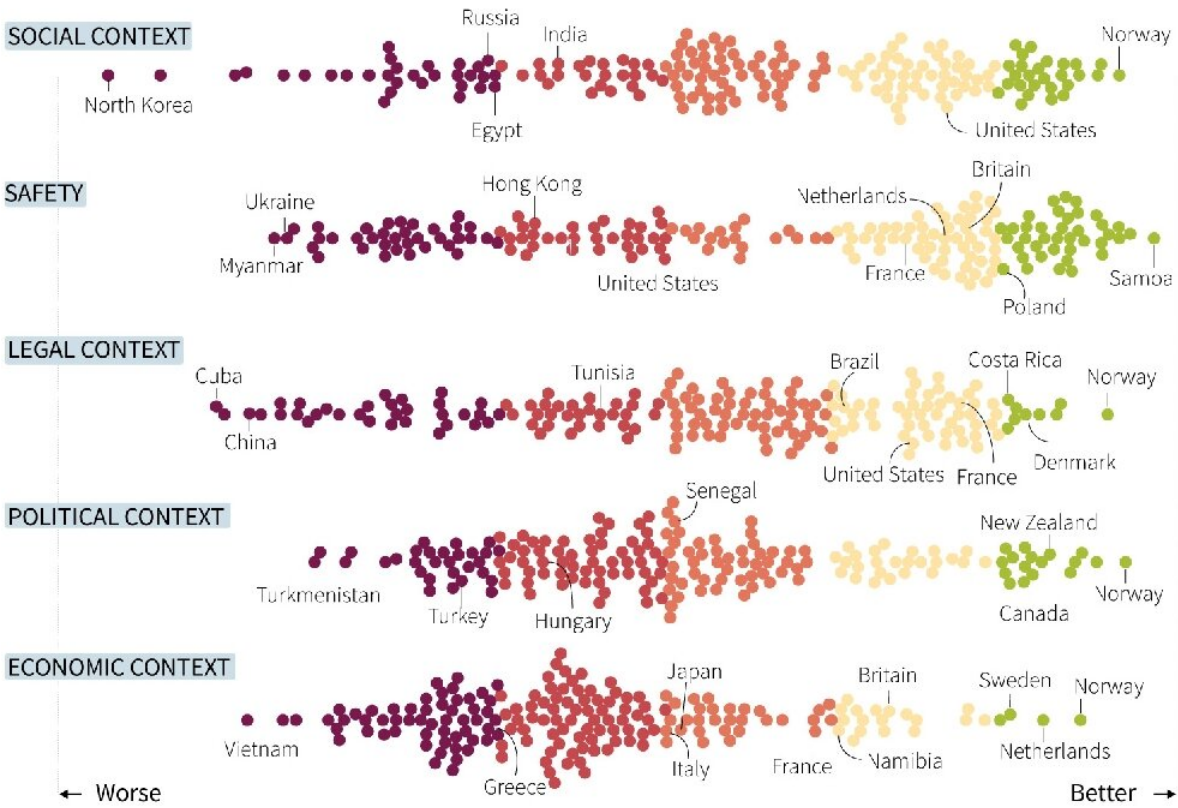
Tech industry allowing 'deluge' of misinformation: RSF

May 3 2023, by Paul RICARD

Global press freedom

Of 180 countries evaluated by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), only Denmark and Norway are classified as in a "good situation" for each category

Situation ■ "Very serious" ■ "Difficult" ■ "Problematic" ■ "Satisfactory" ■ "Good"



Source: Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 2022 Index published on May 2023



Ranking on global press freedom in several categories from the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index 2022, published in May 2023.

Journalism is being battered by propaganda and increasingly sophisticated fakes, aided by AI software and a failure of oversight from tech companies, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said Wednesday.

Overall, the environment for journalists was rated as "bad" in 70 percent of the 180 countries in the NGO's annual ranking, and "good" in just eight countries.

Norway and North Korea remain best and worst, respectively, for [press freedom](#), according to the 21st annual report, which was published on World Press Freedom Day.

This year, RSF put a spotlight on the myriad forms of misinformation that are "drowning out" trustworthy news—a problem compounded by the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence.

"It is the [tech industry](#) that allows disinformation to be produced, distributed and amplified," RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire told AFP.

"Reliable information is drowned in a deluge of disinformation," Deloire added. "We are less and less able to perceive the differences between the real and the artificial, the true and the false."

He said a prime example was Elon Musk, who took over Twitter in late 2022. The report criticizes his new paid-for verification system, saying Musk was pushing "an arbitrary, payment-based approach to information to the extreme".

The report used the example of Midjourney, an AI program that generates high-quality images that are "feeding [social media](#) with

increasingly plausible and undetectable fake 'photos'", such as those of Donald Trump being manhandled by police and a comatose Julian Assange in a straitjacket that recently went viral.

Systematic propaganda

Traditional forms of political interference are also gaining ground in many countries, RSF said.

Some two-thirds of countries have [political actors](#) who are "often or systematically involved in massive disinformation or propaganda campaigns", it said, highlighting the cases of Russia, India and China.

They are assisted by a vast disinformation industry.

RSF recently supported a consortium of investigative journalists working on "Forbidden Stories", a project which uncovered the activities of Israeli firm "Team Jorge" which specializes in producing disinformation.

The worst countries in the new ranking, apart from North Korea, were Vietnam, "which has almost completed its hunt of independent reporters and commentators," and China, "the world's biggest jailer of journalists".

India fell from "problematic" to "very bad", thanks to "media takeovers by oligarchs close to Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi", and also in Turkey, where the government "has stepped up its persecution of journalists in the run-up to elections scheduled for 14 May".

The United States fell three places to 45th, in part due to a deteriorating security situation for journalists.

The biggest falls were seen in Peru (down 33 places to 110), Senegal (down 31 to 104) and Haiti (down 29 to 99th).

Major improvement was seen in Brazil, up 18 to 92 thanks to the departure of far-right president Jair Bolsonaro.

The Middle East and North Africa remains the most dangerous region for journalists, RSF said, while Europe remains the safest, though attacks on journalists in Germany saw it drop five places.

The ranking is compiled by combining data on abuses committed against journalists with hundreds of surveys sent to journalists, academics and human rights activists.

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