
**INSTITUTE FOR
WAR & PEACE REPORTING**



Syria Media Map

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This report acts as the starting information for the IWPR Media Wiki site for Syria, available at www.syriamediawiki.org. As the media sector in Syria is in constant movement, the media wiki site offers an open, collaborative platform for registered users to update, correct, and add to information regarding the Syrian media sector. Institutions and individuals involved in the sector are encouraged to use and contribute to the Wiki, which is moderated by IWPR.

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Table of Contents

About The Institute for War & Peace Reporting	04
Summary	05
Recommendations	06
Background	07
Freedom of Expression under the Assad Regime	09
Restrictions on Media	09
Restrictions on the Internet	10
The Impact of the 2011 Uprising	11
Prosecution of Journalists and Activists	12
Attacks on Publications and Organizations	14
Deaths of Journalists and Media Workers	15
Conclusion	16
Media Map in Syria	17
Media Framework in Syria	17
State and Government Media	18
State-run News Agencies	18
State-run TV Channels	18
State-run Radio Stations	18
Newspapers	18
State-run and Government Affiliated Newspapers	18
Union Newspapers	18
University Newspapers	19
Private Media	19
Private Newspapers	19
Private Television	19
Private Radio Stations	19
Political Party Media	20
Newspapers in areas under the control of the Syrian rebels	20
Online Media	20
The Kurdish Press	21
Media Support Organizations	22
Media Map in Syria - Lists	23
State-run TV channels in Syria, Table 01.	23
State-run radio stations in Syria, Table 02.	23
State-run newspapers, Table 03.	23
Newspapers published by ministries, Table 04.	24
Private newspapers, Table 05.	25
TV stations, Table 06.	27
Radio stations, Table 07.	28
Newspapers - Pro-government, Table 08.	28
Newspapers - Pro-opposition, Table 09.	29
Newspapers - Published by unlicensed political groups, Table 10.	30
Kurdish newspapers (published in Arabic), Table 11.	31
Kurdish newspapers (published in Kurdish), Table 12.	31

About The Institute for War & Peace Reporting

The Institute for War & Peace Reporting gives voice to people at the frontlines of conflict and transition to help them drive change. IWPR empowers citizens and their communities to make a difference – building their skills, networks and institutions, supporting development and accountability, forging peace and justice.

Working in three dozen countries, IWPR's innovative programs are crafted to respond to the needs of the people they serve. Projects prioritise locally informed objectives and lead to sustainable outcomes. Beneficiaries include citizen and professional journalists, human rights and peace activists, policymakers, educators, researchers, businesses, and women's, youth and other civil society organisations and partners.

Headquartered in London with coordinating offices in Washington, DC and The Hague, IWPR is overseen by an international board of trustees made up of internationally recognized journalists and media professionals, business and financial sector executives, philanthropists and civil society leaders. Its 125-person global staff is led by an executive management team of experts in media and governance, program development and management, policy and advocacy, financial development, finance and human resources.

About IWPR's Programmes

The strength of IWPR's programming is rooted in its ability to help individuals and groups develop the knowledge, skills, relationships and platforms they need to communicate clearly, objectively, effectively, persuasively and safely and to use that knowledge and those tools to affect positive change. Projects and initiatives are developed in partnership with local organizations and are designed to meet the unique needs of the individuals and groups they will serve and the communities in which they operate.

IWPR's Global Programming Focus

Promoting Free Expression

IWPR builds the skills of professional and citizen journalists working in traditional media (newspapers and magazines, radio, TV) and in social and new media (Facebook, Twitter, Internet news magazines and portals, blogs and other online vehicles). Programs train and mentor them to report fairly and objectively with the goal of achieving internationally recognized standards of reporting and analysis. Reporters, editors, producers, bloggers, and managers learn the value of producing substantive content that informs while helping to define the roles of citizens,

civil society, government, the media, business and others in building fair, pluralistic, democratic systems that value and respect the opinions of all constituencies. Whether in repressive or closed societies, transitional environments, or democratically developing states, IWPR encourages the development and exercise of freedom of expression, assembly, and belief and uses journalism as a tool to advance peace and social justice.

Strengthening Accountability

Working with international and local partners, IWPR supports the capacity of civil society and human rights groups to more effectively advocate for government and institutional accountability and transparency, with programming designed to reduce corruption, strengthen rule of law, and promote basic rights. It promotes and publicizes the work of international courts and tribunals that support justice and hold individuals and groups responsible for crimes against humanity. IWPR helps communities to more effectively fight against immediate and longer-term threats by building knowledge, empowering, and supporting citizen activism, and helps countries and regions to heal from conflict and war through support for transitional justice.

Building inclusive Societies

IWPR has supported peace and reconciliation in conflict zones around the world for 20 years. These efforts, along with campaigns and activities that encourage free and fair elections, counter extremism, and enhance the ability of civil society organizations to be effective, are all critical to building societies that value and build on the strengths of all of their peoples, including their women, youth, minorities, and traditionally marginalized communities. Societies are most inclusive and cohesive, and strive for the benefit of all citizens, when economies are strong, people are healthy, and the populace is educated; hence, IWPR's focus on these areas of concern.

IWPR employs a skilled staff and expert consultants in a variety of fields to support its capacity-building activities and to assist in providing journalists, civil society and civic activists with the basic and advanced skills and knowledge that support sustainable and positive change. It employs tools and technologies in programming that encourages citizen understanding, participation, and involvement and builds local expertise. All programs and projects are measured and evaluated to ensure that future initiatives and those who participate in them benefit from valuable "lessons learned."

Summary

Since the Arab Socialist Baath Party came to power through a coup in 1963, it has ruled Syria with an iron fist. The regime has controlled the press and virtually banned any criticism of state officials and the party.

The state or the Baath party run most of the media in the country and individuals either affiliated with or close to the regime own the licensed, private publications. In 1970, Hafez al-Assad, the defence minister and former air force commander, led a successful bloodless coup and ruled the country until his death in 2000. His son, Bashar al-Assad came to power in 2000 and, despite promises of reform and democracy, he has not allowed much room for free speech.

Until 2011 the state used an emergency law to deprive its citizens of their basic political rights such as freedom of expression and the right to due process.

Inspired by the popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, thousands of Syrians began protesting in March 2011 for greater political rights and the downfall of the Assad regime after more than four decades of rule. The regime's forces responded brutally to the peaceful demonstrations, killing thousands of civilians and injuring many more.

The Syrian uprising turned into an armed conflict and as of July 2013 has claimed the lives of more than 100 thousand people, according to the United Nations.

Online activists and citizen journalists have reported and broadcast atrocities against civilians in many parts of Syria. Since the start of the uprising many news organizations have emerged both inside and outside Syria to report on the conflict, political and humanitarian situation in Syria.

The Assad regime has maintained tight control of the media and has used its news outlets to portray the uprising as a "foreign-led conspiracy" against the country and protesters as "terrorists," in order to justify the government's regular assaults on civilian areas.

The conflict in Syria has created a difficult environment for journalists. Since March 2011 hundreds of journalists, media workers and citizen journalists have died or been injured in Syria, according to local and international press freedom watchdogs. Syria has been ranked as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists to work in.

This report addresses the state of the media in Syria; the laws that regulate and restrict the media, and the attacks on the media and journalists. The report will also provide a Media Map, a list of print and online publications, radio and TV stations in Syria.

The list is not necessarily a comprehensive list as the number of publications is constantly changing. More than 25 journalists who cover the Syrian crisis, inside and outside the country, were interviewed for this report.

Recommendations

The reality of media in Syria is complex and the challenges for journalists and media are enormous. The international community should put pressure on the regime to release scores of imprisoned journalists and media activists and also allow international media to operate freely in the country. The international community should also call on the warring parties to end the intimidation of and attacks on journalists and media workers.

To address the needs of the Syrian media, this report proposes these short-term recommendations:

- Fund and support emerging local media organizations that are committed to objective and professional journalism,
- Organize training courses for young reporters and media activists. Among the topics that are urgently needed are journalism training and hostile environment training,
- Organize workshops for journalists and media activists on Internet safety and security to enable them to protect against hacking,
- Set up networks of local journalists in Syria to share information,
- Support local organizations that promote freedom of speech and document attacks on the press.

In the long-term, media openness in Syria will depend on the nature of political life and the legal framework that regulates the press in the country. To address these issues, this report recommends the following:

- Develop a strategic plan for media development based on discussions with local and international stakeholders to assess and provide needs for developing the media in Syria,
- Reform laws that restrict freedom of expression and the press in Syria in order to conform with international standards of freedom of expression and press freedom,
- Put an end to the regime's control and censorship of the media by establishing a public media service that reflects the diverse political, social and religious view of Syrians,
- Eliminate intelligence and security forces' authority to influence, monitor and harass journalists and media workers.
- Support, financially and with capacity building, news organizations that are committed to contributing to pluralism and diversity and provide room for dialogue in Syria.

Background

Modern Syria gained independence upon the departure of French Mandate forces in 1946. The country already had a functioning parliament and a constitution that protected freedom of speech and of the press. The decade that followed independence was mired in political instability and rulers restricted freedom of the expression and the press as they tried to control the media and silence criticism.

In 1958, Syria became part of the United Arab Republic, a partnership with Egypt. Three years later, Syria seceded from the union and, in 1963, the Arab Socialist Baath Party led a successful coup. The Baathist regime passed an emergency law that suspended civil liberties and granted authorities sweeping powers to suppress activities that threatened “security or public order.”

Article 4 of the Emergency Law provided the regime with the power to “monitor all types of letters, phone calls, newspapers, bulletins, books, drawings, publications, broadcasts, and all forms of expression, propaganda, and advertisements prior to publication. It is required to seize, confiscate, discard, cancel their concession and close their printers’ shops.”

Shortly after the law entered into force in 1963, authorities shut down all independent publications and confiscated printing equipment, and took over property that belonged to owners of publishing houses. The emergency law was lifted in 2011 following massive anti-regime protests.

The Baath party regarded the media as a tool for indoctrination, mobilization and ideological propaganda. This was only further emphasized when Hafez al-Assad led a successful bloodless coup in 1970. Article 8 of Assad’s 1973 Constitution described the Arab Socialist Baath Party as the “leader of state and society.”

The state and the ruling Baath party subjugated the press and virtually wiped out the concept of critical, independent or opposition media by passing restrictive laws and regulations.

Ahmed Iskandar, minister of Information from 1974 to 1983, once famously compared his job as the minister to the job of a maestro and journalists as musicians; “where all the musicians keep an eye at the wand he carries and play accordingly to movements of his wand.”¹

Article 3 of the Ministry of Information’s bylaw stated that “the mission of the Ministry of Information is using all forms of media to enlighten the public, instil an Arab nationalist inclination in the

country, and strengthen relations with Arab and friendly states, based on the principles of the Arab Baath Socialist Party and the policy of the state.”²

The idea of loyalty to the regime became the main duty of journalists. Article 3 of the 1990 Journalists’ Syndicate Law stated that the organization was committed to achieving the goals of a united Arab nation “based on the decisions and directions from the Arab Baath Socialist Party.”

Article 4 stated that the goal of the press was “to strengthen the fraternal bonds among the people of the Arab Nation and take part in the struggle to achieve its goals of unity, freedom, and socialism, in addition to supporting its struggle against imperialism, Zionism, and their racist platform [Israel] in Occupied Palestine and exposing all their collaborators.”

The only newspapers allowed to publish during much of Hafez al-Assad’s rule were Tishreen, al-Baath, and al-Thawra, which were all state-run, in addition to newspapers published by groups affiliated with the Baath party. Television and radio stations and more recently satellite channels were run by the government and the ruling party.

When Bashar al-Assad inherited power, after his father’s death in 2000, he promised a new era of transparency and democracy, a short-lived period known as the “Damascus Spring.” During this period, the authorities allowed political and human rights activists to organize meetings and established informal groups. However, in 2001 the Syrian government began to clamp down on individuals affiliated with the Damascus Spring.

In 2001 Bashar al-Assad decreed a new press law that lifted the blanket ban on publications. However many restrictions remained. The authorities then permitted some people and groups, affiliated with the government and the Baath party, to launch newspapers and magazines. However, the government was not tolerant when any of these organizations reported on topics that were prohibited or considered taboo.

For instance, in 2003 the government shut down Al-Domari, a satirical publication, when it published a cartoon showing Saddam Hussein and his generals “stuffing the Iraqi people as cannon fodder in the face of the impending US invasion,” at a time when the Syrian government’s policy was to oppose the invasion of Iraq.³

¹ Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, The situation of the media and freedom of expression Syria 2006. http://scm.bz/?page=show_det&category_id=86&id=141&lang=ar

² The mission of the Ministry of Information, <http://www.moi.gov.sy/ar/aid11.html>

³ Human Rights Watch report, A Wasted Decade, July 16, 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/node/91580/section/4>

In addition to laws that restrict the press, ministerial orders are another tool that the Syrian authorities have used to repress the media and freedom of expression. For instance, in 2001 the Minister of Information issued an order (No. 297) placing undue restrictions on the publications including setting the number of pages newspapers should be printed on, how many editors publications should have, and requiring news organizations to subscribe to the government-run Syrian News Agency. Thus, the ministry effectively took over editorial decisions from editors and journalists.

The Syrian Baathist regime viewed the press as a means to control the masses, and journalists' role was to indoctrinate the public and rally the masses behind its "Arab nationalism" project. The concepts of and principles of the media such as impartiality, publishing and broadcasting accurate and credible information, and holding authorities accountable simply did not exist in Syria under the reign of the Baath Party.

In March 2011 thousands of Syrians took to the streets in many parts of the country demanding greater political rights. The regime's security forces used lethal forces to quell the civil revolt. What started as a peaceful uprising in Syrian has slid into an armed conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives and has forced millions to flee the country.

The uprising provided a chance for many news organizations to emerge both inside and outside Syria to publish reports on the government's atrocities against civilians. Since March 2011 dozens of media outlets have been established in areas outside the control of the regime. These news media and press activists have and continue to post thousands of video clips about protests and security forces killings in different parts of the country. The international media, often not allowed to access areas under the regime, have relied on the information and footage provided by these news outlets.

The regime has also aggressively used the media to portray the uprising as a "foreign led" conspiracy against the country and protesters as "terrorists." The Syrian war has claimed the lives of hundreds of journalists and media workers, making it the deadliest county for journalists in the world.⁴

⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists; Journalist deaths spike in 2012 due to Syria, Somalia, 18, December, 2012, <http://cpj.org/reports/2012/12/journalist-deaths-spike-in-2012-due-to-syria-somal.php>

Freedom of Expression under the Assad Regime

Restrictions on Media

Freedom of expression is enshrined in Syria's 1970, 1973 and 2012 constitutions. For instance, articles 42 and 43 of the new 2012 constitution guarantee – in theory – freedom of belief, as well as the right of Syrian citizens to express their opinions freely and openly in speech, writing, or any other means of expression. However, through a mix of restrictive laws, policies and repressive practices Syrian regimes have tightly controlled the media and curbed freedom of expression. In the past four decades the regime has prosecuted journalists and activists, and has banned or closed publications deemed critical of the regime. This has not changed to date.

In 2013 Reporters Without Borders ranked Syria 176 out of 179 countries for press freedom. In a 2011 report Human Rights Watch said that the Syrian authorities, “regularly rely on broadly worded security provisions” in Syria’s Penal Code, such as bans on “issuing calls that weaken national sentiment” or “spreading false or exaggerated information,” to restrict free expression and to detain and prosecute activists.⁵

The Assad regime still either controls all media outlets or licenses media publications that are established and owned by individuals and parties close to or affiliated with the regime. Journalists are subject to control by the Ministry of Information and the security services and are often questioned or prosecuted because of their work. Editors-in-chief receive editorial instructions from the Ministry of Information on what and how to cover issues.

The 2001 Press Law (Law No. 50) technically allows people to establish media outlets but gives the authorities “sweeping control over newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals, as well as virtually anything else printed in Syria, from books to pamphlets and posters.”⁶

Under Article 12 of the press law, only the Prime Minister had the authority to license media outlets. Applicants could not appeal rejected applications and had to wait one year and then submit a new application. Article 7 of the press law required managers to submit copies of each publication to authorities and specify the number of copies they intended to print.

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, in

its annual report for 2010-11, said that the Syrian government controlled and suppressed the media and freedom of expression by requiring all media outlets to be licensed by the regime; controlling the distribution of publications; monopolizing advertisement (one of the main sources of revenue for any publication); requiring news organizations to re-syndicate news from the state-run Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA).

In a study about the state of press freedom in Syria that was published in 2008, Syrian writer Akram al-Bunni wrote that the 2001 press law “is less a coherent press law than a list of severe punishments to be imposed on anyone exercising free speech.”⁷

In the wake of the March 2011 uprising and under pressure to initiate some reforms, Bashar al-Assad decreed a new press law that in some aspects relaxed the government’s control over the media. Under the 2011 press law, a nine member supreme media council has the authority to license media outlets and applicants can appeal denial decisions at an administrative court.⁸ However, the effectiveness of this law and authorities commitment to applying the law remains to be seen.

The 2011 press law also contained numerous restrictions including the prohibition of publishing articles that might “offend the symbols of the state” or “news and information about the armed forces unless they are published or authorized by the military” or “anything that has been banned in the Penal Code.”⁹

The International Press Institute said the new law “will entrench government control over the media, criminalize criticism, and put media regulation in the direct control of the Syrian cabinet.”¹⁰

The Committee to Protect Journalists in 2012 ranked Syria among the 10 “most censored countries” in the world. The organization said the Syrian regime “imposed a blackout on independent news coverage, barring foreign reporters from entering and reporting freely, and detaining and attacking local journalists who try to cover protests.”¹¹

⁷ Al-Bunni, Syria's Crisis of Expression, 2008, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ord871=orgagrp&ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=96127>

⁸ Press Law (No. 108) Article 37(c)

⁹ Press Law (No. 108) Article 12

¹⁰ <http://www.freemedia.at/home/singleview/article/new-syria-media-law-en-trenches-state-control.html>

¹¹ Ten Most Censored Countries, The Committee to Protect Journalists, 22 May, 2012, <http://www.cpj.org/reports/2012/05/10-most-censored-countries.php#3>

⁵ Human Rights Watch, Syria: President Assad Fails to Deliver Reform, March 30, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/03/30/syria-president-asad-fails-deliver-reform>

⁶ Ibid.

Restrictions on the Internet

Online media created new venues for Syrians to express themselves freely in a public space for the first time in a very long while. However, from the very moment the Internet was introduced to Syria in 2000, the regime and its security apparatus have heavily censored and filtered it.

By the end of 2010 more than 20 per cent of the population had Internet access.¹² The Syrian government tightly controls the Internet through the Syrian Information Organization (SIO) the Ministry of Communications' Syrian Telecommunications Establishment (Syrian Telecom – STE). The STE controls all landline communication infrastructures.¹³

Online journalism in Syria is subjected to intense monitoring and filtering by the regime and authorities have arrested and prosecuted many writers, bloggers and journalists for posting articles on online media outlets. The regime has also blocked hundreds of websites including those belonging to local opposition and human rights groups, Arab and foreign websites. The regime's policy of blocking critical websites has prompted many Internet users in Syria to apply proxies to access them.

In 2007, the Ministry of Communications ordered website owners to keep personal information of writers who published articles on their websites.¹⁴

In 2009, the Committee to Protect Journalists ranked Syria 3 out of 10 worst countries for bloggers. CPJ said that Syrian authorities "detai[n]ed bloggers for posting content, even third-party material, deemed to be "false" or detrimental to "national unity."¹⁵

During the uprising, in 2012, CPJ stated that in order to silence the media coverage the Syrian regime "disabled mobile phones, landlines, electricity, and the Internet. Authorities ... routinely extracted passwords of social media sites from journalists through beatings and torture."¹⁶

However, increasing access to social networking sites played an important role in the protest movement that began in March 2011. Human rights and opposition activists and citizen journalists started posting footage of the regime's brutal response to peaceful protest throughout the country.

The Syrian regime sought to impose strict controls on online communication and the flow of information. In the past two years the Syrian regime has more than once cut off the country's

entire Internet system. On Friday, June 3, 2011, news media reported Internet blackout in most parts of the country. Friday protests are usually massive as people gather after the noon prayer.¹⁷ Immediately after the blackout activists uploaded what appeared to be security forces opening fire at protesters in Hama.¹⁸

On 29 November 2012, the regime shut down all Internet communication again for two days, raising fears among human rights activists that security force were preparing to use lethal force against protesters and preparing to attack the rebels.¹⁹

During a May 2013 two-day Internet blackout the regime blamed a "malfunction in an optic cable" for the shutdown, but Syrian human rights groups and opposition activists said that it was part of military operation against rebels.²⁰

Recently pro and anti-government hackers have targeted many websites including news organizations. The Syrian Electronic Army, a pro-regime hacker group, has claimed responsibility for attacking many websites including Al-Jazeera, the Washington Post, and the Independent.²¹ Anonymous, an international hacker group, has also hacked Syrian government websites, obtaining more than 2 million emails that WikiLeaks published in 2012.²²

In October 2011 news media reported that the Syrian government used a technology made by the U.S.-based Blue Coat Systems to crack down on opposition websites. The company admitted that its products were used in Syria but said that it did not sell them to the Syrian regime but to "a department of the Iraqi government. However, the devices—which can block websites or record when people visit them—made their way to Syria." Following the news media revelation of the Blue Coat story, the State Department launched an investigation.²³

¹² Freedom House, Freedom of the Net 2012: Syria, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2012/syria>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Arrest of human rights defender Habib Saleh, Frontline Defenders, 13 May, 2008, <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/ar/node/13097>

¹⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists, 10 Worst Countries to be a Blogger, <http://cpj.org/reports/2009/04/10-worst-countries-to-be-a-blogger.php>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Syria's Internet Blockage Brings Risk of Backfire, Wall Street Journal, 3 June, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304563104576363763722080144.html>

¹⁸ Videos of Killings Emerge after Syria's Internet Shutdown, The Atlantic Wire, 4 June, 2011, <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/global/2011/06/videos-killings-emerge-after-syrian-web-shut-down/38495/>

¹⁹ Syria's Internet shutdown leaves information void, may signal escalating war, Washington Post, 29, November, 2012, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-29/world/35585439_1_syrian-people-hama-opposition-coalition

²⁰ Syria back online after internet blackout, Al-Jazeera, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/05/2013581576471212.html>

²¹ The Syrian Electronic Army are at cyber war with Anonymous, Vice, 4 April, 2013, http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/the-syrian-electronic-army-hacked-the-bbc

²² Anonymous Group Says It Gave Syrian E-mails to WikiLeaks, Wired, 9 July, 2012, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2012/07/anonymous-syrian-emails/>

²³ Syria Uses US Technology in Cyber Crackdown, Mother Jones, 19 October, 2011, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/10/blue-coat-systems-internet-blocking-syria>

The Impact of the 2011 Uprising

The March 2011 uprising enabled many individuals and groups to break the fear of government reprisal and to start their own media organizations, creating an alternative to the regime's media. For the first time in decades activists and citizen journalists reported on the issues they chose to cover rather than issues that the regime wanted.

Despite the government's tight control on the Internet, activists used various technologies and proxies to circumvent the regime's filtering. Many people and groups throughout Syria have created pages and forums on social media networks and launched channels on YouTube to freely report on and express their views about various issues, including politics, which for decades had been taboo. They depend on the social networking sites, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Skype, and use simple cameras and mobile phones to document events and report on issues inside Syria.

As the uprising progressed, social media established itself as an effective outlet for the anti-regime protest movement. Regional and international satellite channels often aired footage of protests and the government's crackdown as documented by activists. These news organizations – largely banned from working inside the country – used opposition videos and sources (via Skype and Viber) to cover the Syrian events.

The newly established news outlets are often staffed by individuals who lack experience and journalism skills.

Here is how Mohammad Aloush, founder of the Facebook journal *Watani al-Hurr* (My Free Country) described the state of the media in Syria:

There are many decentralized news outlets, but we still don't have one independent news outlet that represents the Syrian people, or that manages to reach out to Syrians both inside the country and abroad, and offers a comprehensive view of issues such as the political situation and the living conditions of the refugees.²⁴

Aloush said that the main obstacles to creating a reliable media outlet are "funding" and the unstable security situation in the country.²⁵

Others say that they decided to join the pool of citizen journalists mainly because nobody else was doing it. In September 2012, the volunteer chief editor of *Enab Baladi* (Local Grapes) who identified himself as Natur, told AFP:

We are witnesses to our history, and we are part of the society that is going through this revolution... We feel we have a responsibility to speak out and document what is happening around us... Our goal is to run an objective paper that is open to every Syrians' views... right now, while we're being shelled, it's a little hard not to take sides.²⁶

Despite all the challenges that the opposition media and citizen journalism face in Syria, the boom of the media outlets since the March 2011 uprising has confirmed one undeniable fact: the era of the regime's total control over the media is over. The government media are no longer the main sources of news in Syria and the regime can no longer tightly censor the media, particularly in areas under the control of anti-regime forces.

The new era of media plurality has a long road before media outlets become more professional, but some of them can be seeds of diverse, professional and objective reporting if they receive adequate training and financial support.

²⁴ The Syrian Revolution Creates its Own Media, *Syria Untold*, 13 June, 2013, <http://www.syriauntold.com/en/story/2013/06/13/3530>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Revolutionary press blooms underground in Syria, AFP, 27 September, 2012, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hjvEs4H-jz35Bs48SPU1egAvblQrg?docId=CNG.dbc892dd707cd35467a975f24949b937.at>

Prosecution of Journalists and Activists

Since the start of the uprising in March 2011, Syria has been one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work. Syrian security forces, pro-government militias and anti-regime rebels have targeted foreign journalists, killing tens and injuring many more. However, during the past four decades of Baathist rule in Syria, authorities have often targeted journalists, writers and media workers for what they have written and published.

Press freedom and human rights organizations have documented numerous cases of harassment and prosecutions by Syrian authorities against critical journalists and activists. The following selected cases highlight the government's repressive policy against journalists and writers:

- On 1 of August 2002 security forces arrested journalist Anwar Sateh Asfari as he was returning from a trip to the United Arab Emirates. He was charged with joining an organization that aimed at "changing the political and economic entity" of the state under article 306 of the Penal Code and was sentenced to five years imprisonment. He was released in July 2007 after serving his time.²⁷ He was formerly detained and arrested in 1978 on charges of belonging to the Arab Socialist Baath Party of Iraq. After his release in 1993, he worked in Gulf newspapers and managed an online forum for civil dialogue.
- Habib al-Salah, a writer and human rights activist, was arrested twice, in 2002 and 2006, and spent two years and three months in detention because of his human rights activities and "publishing false news." He was arrested on 9 May 2008 in Tartus, northwestern Syria, for writing articles on some websites including Elaph (www.elaph.com).²⁸ In March 2009 the Second Criminal Court in Damascus found him guilty of "publishing false news" and sentenced him to three years imprisonment.²⁹
- On 31 March 2006 authorities arrested journalist and novelist Mohammed Ghanem at his home on al-Raqqa province, north of the country. Ghanem ran a website called Sooryoon (Syrians), www.sooryoon.net. He was interrogated at the Palestine Branch of the Syrian Military

Intelligence in Damascus and later transferred to a military court on charges of "insulting the president," "harming the reputation of the state," and "inciting sectarian discord." He was sentenced to one-year imprisonment in June 2006. His sentence was later reduced to six months.³⁰

- Journalist Michel Kilo was arrested on 15 May 2006, days after he signed the Damascus-Beirut Declaration. The declaration was a statement signed by hundreds of Syrian and Lebanese writers and civil society activists calling for demarcating the Syrian-Lebanese border and for an end to political assassinations in Lebanon. The Syrian regime had been blamed for many political killings in Lebanon. Kilo had been arrested and charged several times in the past under article 285 of the Penal Code for "weakening the national sentiment" and for violating articles 287, 307 and 376, which forbid "undermining the prestige of the state and inciting sectarian discord." On October 19, 2006 a court acquitted Kilo, but prosecutors immediately filed new charges and just two days later, on Saturday, which is weekend holiday, a criminal court found him guilty of "weakening the national sentiment" and "undermining the image of the state."³¹ After spending three years in prison he was released in May 2009.³²
- On 5 April 2009, security forces in Aleppo, northwestern Syria, arrested Kurdish journalist Faruq Haji Mustafa and held him incommunicado. Citing the Beirut-based Samir Kassir Foundation, the CPJ reported that authorities had asked him to appear at the political security office after he met with a foreign journalist.³³ He was released in June 2009.

Since the beginning of protests in Syria in March 2011, security services have increasingly harassed and arrested journalists. A number of journalists and media workers are in jail because of their work. The following are some examples of journalists and media workers known to be jailed by the Syrian regime:

- Security forces and Air Force Intelligence arrested Nabil al-Shorbaji on the evening of 26 July 2012 at a checkpoint

²⁷ Journalist Anwar Sateh Asfari released, Zaman al-Wsl, 26 July, 2007, <http://www.zamanalwsl.net/readNews.php?id=588>

²⁸ Arrest of human rights defender Habib Saleh, Frontline Defenders, 13 May, 2008, <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/ar/node/13097>

²⁹ Syrian court sentences opposition writer to three years imprisonment, Al-Wasat, 17 March, 2009, <http://www.alwasatnews.com/2384/news/read/42450/1.html>

³⁰ Writer Mohammed Ghanem Sentenced, The Syrian Human Rights Committee, 8 August, 2006, <http://www.shrc.org/data.aspx/d3/2673.aspx>

³¹ Syrian dissident Kilo freed, AFP, 20 May, 2009, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iS6Uyxd22UfA6aimWRyghqiUZQ>

³² Ibid.

³³ Syrian journalist held incommunicado, another on trial, The Committee to Protect Journalists, 22 April, 2009, <http://cpj.org/2009/04/syrian-journalist-held-incommunicado-another-on-tr.php>

in Daria near Damascus. The arrest was denounced by international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, and many human rights activists expressed concerns for his life and feared that he may be subjected to torture.

- Mohamed Abdel Mawla el Hariri, a media activist, was arrested on 16 April 2012, after giving an interview to Al-Jazeera about the humanitarian and security situation in his hometown of Daraa. Fellow activists reported that he might face charges of treason, which can carry the death sentence.
- Bilal Ahmed Bilal, a journalist and film director, was arrested on 13 September 2011.
- Thabet al-Muhaisen, editor of Syria News, was detained at a military checkpoint in Damascus on 2 August 2012.
- Mohammed Hussein Tome was arrested in the city of Zakia in Rif Dimashq on 20 December 2011.

Several activists who faced arrest or harassment during the revolution were forced to leave the country after their release, due to being closely watched by the authorities. Reporters Without Borders says that as of July 2013 Syrian authorities jailed 40 journalists and citizen journalists.³⁴

The following are some of the journalists and activists known to have fled Syria since the start of the uprising in March 2011:

- **Mohieddin Issu**, secretary of the Syrian Journalists Association, and a member of the Committees for the Defense of Democratic Liberties for Human Rights in Syria, fled the country after security forces raided his house in Damascus twice. He fled to Iraqi Kurdistan in July 2012.
- **Amer Matar**, director of the Street Association for Media and Development and a member of the Syrian Journalists Association, was arrested on 28 March 2011 by State Security. He was detained for 16 days in Damascus. He was detained again on 3 September 2011 for four months by military security and was held at Adra central prison. He fled to Jordan in March 2012 and later went to Germany.
- **Nasser al-Ayed**, a journalist and novelist, was arrested by Syrian security forces on 4 February 2011, while participating in demonstrations in support of the uprisings in Egypt and Libya. After his release he moved to Deir al-Zor. He left Syria on 16 July 2012 to Turkey.
- **Amina Brimku**, a press freedom activist began reporting on clashes in different Kurdish areas between demonstrators and security forces. She went to Jordan in early April 2012 for fear of being arrested and then left to Turkey and eventually to Sweden.
- **Amr Khaite**, a journalist from the city of Zabadani in Rif Dimashq, worked for the economic magazine al-Iqtisadi.

He covered the events in Zabadani during the revolution through video, photography, and written reports. This threatened his life so he fled to Lebanon.

- **Jaber Bakr**, journalist, left Syria in secret on 12 August 2012 to Lebanon after Syrian security forces raided his home in Babila in Rif Dimashq. He reported for Orient News and worked as a relief worker. He had previously been arrested in 2002 and 2004.
- **Omar Asaad**, was arrested on 4 July 2011 and released two weeks later. He was arrested again on 4 August 2011 and spent four months in jail. He was charged with "weakening national sentiment," "disseminating false news," and "forming an illegal organization that sought to change the structure of the state." He left Syria on 25 January 2012 when he learned that security services were looking for him.

³⁴ Reporters Without Borders, 2013: Journalists Imprisoned, <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-barometer-journalists-imprisoned.html?annee=2013>

Attacks on Publications and Organizations

In the past four decades the Syrian authorities have either banned any publication not owned by the state or closed down many publications critical of the regime and its policies. In the past decade the trend only increased. The following are some examples of the media outlets that the regime has shut down:

- **Al Mobki:** On 18 June 2005 the Council of Ministers closed down al-Mobki, a social weekly newspaper owned by Joseph Marish. The newspaper's last issue, published on 22 May 2005, had criticized the governor of Homs, Eyad Ghazal, and accused him of corruption. The Council of Minister justified its decision to close the publication on the grounds that the newspaper had a non-political license.³⁵
- **Al-Doumary:** Al-Doumary newspaper started publishing in 2000 as the first private newspaper in Syria since 1963 and in the era of Syria's then-new president, Bashar al-Assad. Cartoonist Ali Farzat started the paper and was its owner. He brought together a group of writers, including Hakam al Baba.³⁶

On 31 July 2003 Al-Doumary was closed down for "violating the law on publications," based on a decision by former Information Minister Adnan Omran. In an interview on the subject, Farzat said:

Ever since the beginning, Al-Doumary had been subject to attacks by an official newspaper. They began by threatening journalists who are working with us with dismissal, although the law was not being applied. In 2003, they published two full pages over two days, defaming me and trying to pit Syrians against me, at a time when not even [former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel] Sharon got a quarter of a page. I pressed charges against that newspaper and the courts decided I should be compensated, but they did not carry out the sentence and even refused to publish the reply I sent them.

In 2012, Farzat said he planned to re-launch the newspaper in Cairo.

- **Shaam Satellite TV:** Shaam Satellite television channel was closed on 28 October 2006. Former Minister of Information Mohsen Bilal decided to stop broadcasting the private channel owned by television producer and former Member

of Parliament Mohammad Akram. The station reopened in Cairo in 2007.

- **Orient News:** On 29 July 2009 Orient TV, authorities shut down the TV station, owned by businessman Ghassan Abboud. Security agents informed employees of the decision and ordered them to leave their offices immediately. The satellite channel was shut down following a media campaign by some news sites against the owner of the station. Headlines like "Abboud Accuses the Political Elite and Official Institutions of Stupidity" and "This Channel Is Going Nowhere, the Minister of Information Must Close it Down" began to appear.

Orient TV is now licensed in the United Arab Emirates, and broadcasts from Dubai Media City. Syrian businessman Ghassan Abboud still owns the station, and it began broadcasting again on 2 February 2009.³⁷

- **The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression in Syria:** On 16 February 2012, Air Force Intelligence Forces raided the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) headquarters in downtown Damascus. They arrested the employees, including the center's director, Mazen Darwish, his wife, Yara Bader, and bloggers Razan Ghazzawi, Hanadi Zahlout, Hussein Gharir, Hani Zaitani among others. Two days later all the female detainees were freed.

The authorities in February 2013 charged Darwish, Gharir and Zaitani, along with two colleagues who had been conditionally released, with "publicizing terrorist acts" under Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Law, enacted by President Bashar al-Assad in 2012. If convicted the men may be imprisoned for up to 15 years.

³⁵ Syria-news.com, "Al-Mobki Will no Longer be Published," http://www.syr-ia-news.com/readnews.php?sy_seq=7443

³⁶ Zeina Arhim, "Ali Farzat Recounts to Syria News the Continuing Saga of Al-Doumary," Syria News, <http://www.syria-news.com/var/articlem.php?id=2350>

³⁷ Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), "Closure of Orient TV," <http://www.anhri.net/syria/scm/2009/pr0729.shtml>

Deaths of Journalists and Media Workers

Since the start of the Syrian uprising until June 2013 more than 100,000 people have been killed in the conflict, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.³⁸ The conflict has also resulted in the death of and injury to tens of journalists, media workers and citizen journalists.

The exact figure of journalists' casualties is difficult to determine because of the ongoing conflict. The Committee to Protect Journalists, which categorizes deaths of journalists based on motive of the killing, says that 52 journalists and media workers have been killed as of July 2013.³⁹ Reporters Without Borders' July 2013 figures indicate that 84 journalists and citizen journalists have been killed in Syria since the start of the uprising in March 2011.⁴⁰

The Syrian Journalists Association says that as of July 2013 it has documented the death of 153 journalists and media workers in Syria since the start of the uprising. Regardless of the different figures of journalist and media worker casualties in Syria, the majority of press freedom watchdogs agree that Syria is currently the most dangerous place for journalists to work.

³⁸ War Deaths in Syria Said to Top 100,000, the New York Times, 26 June, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/27/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0

³⁹ The Committee to Protect Journalists, journalists killed in Syria, <http://cpj.org/killed/mideast/syria/>

⁴⁰ Reporters Without Borders, Syrian Barometer since March 2011, <http://en.rsf.org/syria.html>

Conclusion

Baathist rule in Syria has taken its toll on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The Assad regime has used the media as a tool of indoctrination, spreading propaganda and rallying the masses around the regime's platform.

The laws and policies that regulate the media and the press in Syrian are designed to protect the regime and suppress critics rather than safeguard and promote freedom of expression.

For decades the regime had a blanket ban on any private publications. Since early 2000s the regime has permitted some private media. However, these permissions have generally been granted to groups and individuals affiliated with or close to the Baath regime and the ruling elite.

In March 2011 Syrians throughout the country took to the streets demanding greater political rights and the downfall of the Assad regime. When government forces opened fire against peaceful civilians, activists and citizen journalists started reporting on the government crackdown.

The Syrian revolution has now turned into a brutal civil war that has claimed the lives of more than 100,000 and has forced millions to flee the country. Journalists and media workers have also been victims of intimidation, abduction and killing by both the government and the rebel forces. Dozens of journalists and media workers from pro-government, opposition groups and the international media have been killed in Syrian since March 2011. The regime has imprisoned scores of journalists and press activists.

Since the March 2011 uprising dozens of online news media have emerged inside and outside Syria, creating a diversity of media that the country has not seen before.

The regime has actively sought to restrict Internet communication, a venue most used by journalists and activists to report on the government's atrocities. Over the past two years, the government has shut down the Internet, virtually cutting off the country from the rest of the world.

In light of the Syrian regime's brutal response to the pro-democracy uprising and its repressive practices to stifle freedom of the press, it is unlikely that it will allow genuine media reforms in the future.

To address the needs of the media in Syria it is important to engage local stakeholders, especially journalists and press

freedom activists, to develop a strategy for media reform in the country. The international community and media development organizations should provide funding and training courses for media establishments in Syria that are committed to professional and objective reporting and that promote diversity and tolerance in the country.

Media Map in Syria

Media Framework in Syria

The vast majority of media outlets in Syria are owned by or run by the state – only a few Syrians have been permitted to establish and own private media.

Syria's first private satellite channel, "Al-Sham," was owned by Syrian Parliamentarian Mahmoud Akram al-Jundi. The station was established in 2006 but was shut down after just eight months. Other independent stations met similar fates, such as Orient TV, owned by Syrian businessman Ghassan Abboud, who was forced to sell his shares to Syrian oligarch Rami Makhlof, a cousin of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and a supporter of the regime. Abboud has since reopened the station in Dubai and the station has been backing the uprising against the regime.

Currently, there is the pro-government Addounia TV channel and its sister channel, Sama TV. Addounia is allegedly owned by a group of merchants and businessmen linked to the regime. The station came under European Union sanctions in 2011. In 2012 Addounia conducted an interview with Bashar al-Assad.

The government controls the Syria Satellite Channel, in addition to several radio stations, including the private, pro-regime "Sham FM," and newspapers such as October, Baath, and al-Thawra, in addition to al-Watan newspaper, owned by Rami Makhlof.

There are also several websites primarily controlled by the regime and funded through it, such as www.eSyria.sy, established by the Syrian Scientific Society for Informatics, which is run by the Syrian government.

Opposition supporters have established independent, opposition-affiliated radio stations both inside and outside Syria, such as Watan station from Damascus and Yasmin al-Sham. Yasmin al-Sham is based in Saudi Arabia and transmits via the Internet, featuring activists from inside and outside Syria. Pro-revolution TV stations were established outside Syria, such as Barada, Syria al-Shaab Channel, al-Gad TV, and Orient TV. Several newspapers are printed undercover inside Syria, such as Enab Baladi and Ahd al-Sham.

Syrians were creative in covering the beginning of the Syrian uprising and many have become citizen-journalists who act as eye-witnesses to events inside the country, recording everything they see and documenting it by the minute to show and share via social networking sites. These citizen-journalists remain a

primary target for the regime to persecute or neutralize. To date, the Freedom Committee of the Syrian Journalists Association (SJA) has documented more than one hundred cases of violations against journalists and citizen-journalists.

The Syrian government has failed to create objective, independent or reliable media due to the regime's control, despite the fact that the media institutions are saturated with administrative and journalistic staff. It is estimated that the General Organization for Radio and TV in Syria employs around 3,400 workers, in addition to 1,200 in al-Wehda, which runs the printed outlets. This was a result of employment policies based on bureaucratic relations, favoritism, and nepotism, regardless of professional achievement or personal merit. This is in addition to an unspecialized and unqualified administrative staff appointed through bureaucratic promotions, and due to Baath party and security services connections.

State and Government Media

Article 3 of the law that established and regulates the Syrian Ministry of Information states “the task of the Ministry of Information is to use all forms of media to enlighten public opinion, to reinforce Arab nationalism in the country, and to support links with Arab countries and neighboring friendly states in accordance with the principles of the Arab Socialist Baath Party and its state policies.”

The state and government controlled media were the main source of news for the public until recent years. Since satellite receivers were allowed in Syria, and the introduction of the Internet in 2000, Syrians have been able to receive news from sources other than the government-owned media. However, this diversity of the media has hardly improved the state of freedom of the press in the country.

State-run News Agencies

The Syrian Arab News Agency (www.sana.sy), founded in 1965, is Syria’s official government news agency. The news agency is based in Damascus and run by the Ministry of Information. The agency has offices in 14 Syrian governorates, in addition to International offices in Beirut, Paris, Moscow, Jordan, Iran, Kuwait, Cairo, Libya, and Turkey, with approximately 43 correspondents in Arab and foreign countries.

State-run TV Channels

The General Authority for Radio and Television (www.rtv.gov.sy) runs state TV channels. The first state-run Syrian television programming began broadcasting in July 1960.

The Syrian satellite channel began broadcasting in 1996. At the start of 2010, the Syrian satellite news channel (Syria News) began to broadcast.

The Radio and TV Authority includes a committee for surveillance and censorship. The regime’s monitoring and censoring of state-run media has spiked since the start of the Syrian uprising in March 2011.

See **Table 01, page 21** for list of state-run TV channels

State-run Radio Stations

The state has a number radio stations. Damascus Radio started broadcasting in 1947; Sawt al-Shaab (Voice of the People) was launched in 1979; and Sawt al-Shabab (Voice of Youth) was founded in 2002 on the FM wave.

See **Table 02, page 21** for list of state-run radio stations

Newspapers

Until 2001 the regime only allowed government agencies to establish and launch newspapers. In 2001 the government permitted political groups that were affiliated with or close to the Baath party, such as the National Progressive Front (NPF), to issue their own newspapers. However, the circulation of these newspapers is limited to party members only. Additionally, these newspapers do not publish anything that is critical of the regime.

Publishing houses are required to keep a record of all works and publications printed and to deposit a copy at the Ministry of Information.

Violations are punished by 10 days to three months of jail and a fine up to 50,000 Syrian Pounds.

The law also allows courts to shut down presses or libraries temporarily or permanently for “repeated violations that breach the country’s security, sovereignty, and safety.” (Article 43(a)).

State-run and Government Affiliated Newspapers

After the Baath party took power in Syria, it banned all private media institutions and established a number of government newspapers. These newspapers adopted the goals of the ruling party by aiming to indoctrinate people with the ideology of the Baath party and rally the masses around the party’s platform.

All these media organizations are linked to the Ministry of Information and funded by the government. The ministry directs government media organizations to focus on a specific topic or to refrain from covering certain subjects or personalities. Private media are not excluded. In fact since the start of the uprising in March 2011, private media that are affiliated with the government have taken similar positions to those of the state media in attacking prominent Arab or international figures who support the uprising in Syria.

The only difference between private and public media organizations is the number of employees’ private organizations employ far fewer employees than public media organizations.

See **Table 03, page 21** for list of state-run newspapers

See **Table 04, page 22** for list of newspapers published by ministries

Union Newspapers

Union newspapers are the weakest forms of the Syrian press. The content of union newspapers is generally very limited and weak and they all fall under the tutelage of the established political system. There are 21 union newspapers in Syria but they

are generally only circulated among the union's employees and the governing bodies of those unions.

University Newspapers

There are only three university newspapers and they have a scientific focus. One is issued for the University of Damascus, one for the University of October, and the third for the University of Aleppo. Scientific research in these newspapers is not recognized on an international level due to its low quality.

Private Media

The first private newspapers in Syria were for advertising and classified advertisement. The government started licensing private newspapers in Syria in early 2000s. However, the government cancelled licenses from some private newspapers, such as al-Dabbour and al-Doumary, after they published articles that were deemed critical of the regime. Private newspapers that have not covered political issues and generally worked within the government redlines have been able to continue publishing.

Private Newspapers

There are eight private newspapers that deal with culture, six that deal with sports, and eleven that deal with a variety of different topics. There are four newspapers specialized for tourists, a dozen scientific newspapers, seven other specialized newspapers, and 13 product and service guides.

There are newspapers that are not subject to Syrian press laws and often appear in the duty free zone, such as Syria Today. Syria Today was a monthly, English-language current affairs magazine, but was shut down for financial reasons. There is also Baladna, a newspaper dedicated to social issues. It featured many articles addressing the uprising in Syria while operating without a license. This is because the owner, Majd Suleiman, is close to the ruling family and security services.

See **Table 05, pages 23-25** for list of private newspapers

Private Television

Dunya TV is the only surviving private television channel in Syria. It was founded in 2005 and is financed by a number of businessmen, most notably Mohammed Hamsho. The channel has various entertainment programs and one news program. Since the beginning of the revolution in Syria, the channel has mainly broadcast news.

See **Table 06, page 25** for list of private TV channels

Private Radio Stations

Most private radio stations are broadcast on the FM wave. There are 16 radio channels that are for entertainment and advertising. After the start of the uprising in Syria, these channels began to support the political positions of the regime. The best known of these channels is Sham FM Radio.

See **Table 07, page 26** for list of private radio stations

Political Party Media

The most widespread political party media outlet in Syria is the Baath Newspaper, which belongs to the ruling party. However, the majority of Syrians do not recognize it as a party newspaper, but that of the state. The Ministry of Information has its headquarters in the newspaper's building, and not vice-versa. Most government-run newspapers are printed in the same building. The paper plays a vital role in leading the Syrian media because of the strong relationship between the party and the state.

There are seven other newspapers that belong to licensed parties but these operate under the umbrella of the ruling party and security institutions so that they may serve the policies of the regime and ensure its survival.

See **Table 08. page 26** for list of pro-government parties' newspapers

In addition to the eight newspapers that belong to licensed parties, ten other newspapers operate in the name of unlicensed parties. The most well-known of these newspapers is Kassiou, which belongs to a leftist group that was opposed to the ruling party. They have recently joined the government. Their leader Qadri Jamil was appointed Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs. It is not clear who is funding these publications that belong to unlicensed parties or how they are allowed to be released under a repressive authoritarian security system.

Newspapers in areas under the control of the Syrian rebels

Since the beginning of the March 2011 uprising, individuals and groups have started publishing newspapers in liberated areas. These publications focus on covering local news and often lack efficient printing equipment.

See **Table 09. page 27** for list of pro-opposition newspapers

See **Table 10. page 28** for list of newspapers published by unlicensed political groups

Online Media

The regime's repressive policy on freedom of expression has extended to online publications and communications since the Internet was introduced to Syria in 2000. Since the start of the uprising in March 2011 the regime has increasingly filter the Internet and occasionally shutdown the entire Internet system in the country.

Online journalism in Syria is subjected to intense monitoring and filtering by the regime and authorities have arrested and prosecuted many writers, bloggers and journalists for posting articles on online media outlets. The regime has also blocked hundreds of websites including those belonging to local opposition and human rights groups, Arab and foreign websites.

However, increasing access to social networking sites played an important role in the protest movement. Human rights and opposition activists and citizen journalists have used the Internet to post footage of the regime's atrocities throughout the country.

The Kurdish Press

The Syrian government recognizes Arabic as the only official language in the country, thus bans publications printed in languages of the country's minorities, such as Kurdish.

However, Kurdish political groups have often published newsletters and periodicals in Kurdish, such as the Voice of the Kurds, a newsletter of the first Kurdish party established in Syria, in 1957, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (KDP-S). The majority of Kurdish journals are issued in Arabic and suffer from a lack of professional staff and irregular publishing due to financial and security problems. These publications are not circulated to the public and the groups continue to distribute them among party confidants.

See **Table 11. page 29** for list of Kurdish newspapers published in Arabic

See **Table 12. page 29** for list of Kurdish newspapers published in Kurdish

Media Support Organizations

International Media Support Organizations	
Name	Website
Agence Francaise de Cooperation Medias	http://cfi.fr
Deutsche Welle	http://dw.de
Doha Center for Media Freedom	http://dc4mf.org
Free Press Unlimited	http://freepressunlimited.org
Frontline Defenders	http://frontlinedefenders.org
Hivos	http://hivos.nl
Institute for War & Peace reporting	http://iwpr.net
Internews	http://internews.org
IREX	http://irex.org
Reporters without borders	http://en.rsf.org
Sharq	http://sharq.org
Small World News	http://smallworldnews.tv

Syria Media Map - Lists

#	Channel Name
1	Syria TV - Channel 1
2	Syria TV - Channel 2
3	Syria TV - Satellite Channel
4	Syria TV - Syria News

#	Channel Name
1	Damascus Radio
2	Sawt al-Shaab
3	Sawt al-Shabab

#	Newspaper	Type	Frequency	Owner	Location
1	Al-Fedaa	Political	Daily	Wehda Association	Aleppo
2	Al-Furat	Political	Daily	Wehda Association	Deir al-Zor
3	Al-Jamaheer	Political	Daily	Wehda Association	Hama
4	Al-Orouba	Political	Daily	Wehda Association	Homs
5	Al-Wehda	Political	Daily	Wehda Association	Latakia
6	Syria Times	Political	Daily	Teshreen Association	Damascus
7	Thawra	Political	Daily	Wehda Association	Damascus
8	Tishreen	Political	Daily	Teshreen Association	Damascus

Table 04. Newspapers published by ministries

#	Publication	Type	Frequency	Issuing Department	Issuing Ministry	Location
1	Al-Funoun	Variety	Monthly		Ministry of Information	Damascus
2	Al-Maarifa	Culture			Ministry of Culture	Damascus
3	Arab Soldier	Military	Monthly	Political Department of the Army	Ministry of Defense	Damascus
4	Arts Life	Specialized			Ministry of Culture	Damascus
5	Cinema Live	Specialized			Ministry of Culture	Damascus
6	Military Thought	Military		Political Department of the Army	Ministry of Defense	Damascus
7	People's Army	Military	Monthly	Political Department of the Army	Ministry of Defense	Damascus
8	Police Magazine	Police	Monthly		Ministry of Interior	Damascus
9	Shurufat al-Sham	Culture	Half Monthly		Ministry of Culture	Damascus
10	Standardization World	Specialized		Syrian Arab Standards and Metrology Organization	Ministry of Industry	Damascus
11	Syrian Cotton	Agriculture			Ministry of Agriculture	Damascus
12	The Arab Teacher	Specialized			Ministry of Education	Damascus
13	The Economy	Economy			Ministry of the Economy	Damascus
14	The Environment	Environment			Ministry of Local Administration and Environment	Damascus
15	The Islamic Way	Islamic			Ministry of Awqaf	Damascus
16	The Law	Specialized			Ministry of Justice	Damascus
17	Theater Life	Specialized			Ministry of Culture	Damascus
18	Trade and Supply	Specialized			Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade	Damascus
19	Urbanism	Specialized			Ministry of Housing and Construction	Damascus
20	Usama	Children			Ministry of Culture	Damascus

Table 05. I. Private newspapers						
Political						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Abyad wa Aswad (Black and White)	Political-Economic-Cultural	Weekly	Ayman al-Doqr	Mohammed Bilal Turkmani	Damascus
Economic						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Alam Al-Iqtisadi	Economic Magazine	Monthly	Tarek Ofash		Damascus
2	Al-Iqtisad wal Naql	Economic Magazine	Monthly	Abdul-Salam Haykal		Damascus
3	Al-Iqtisadia	Economic Magazine	Weekly	Waddah Abed Rabbo		Damascus
4	Al-Mal	Comprehensive Economic Magazine	Monthly	Nabil Sarrouf		Damascus
5	Boursat wa Aswaq	Finance and Trade	Half-monthly	Mohammed Ibrahim		Damascus
6	Mutalaat	Economic Magazine	Weekly	Jihad al-Hallaq		Damascus
Cultural/Social Interest						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Bi'a wal Insan	Cultural Magazine	Monthly	Suhail Fadel		Damascus
2	Al-Bi'a wal Sahha	Cultural-Social Magazine	Bi-monthly	Mohamed Hisam al-Zein		Damascus
3	Al-Dad	Cultural-Social Magazine	Monthly	Adbullah Hallaq		Aleppo
4	Al-Jadida	Cultural-Social Magazine	Weekly	Salma Kamel		Damascus
5	Al-Nass	Cultural-Social Newspaper	Weekly	Abdel Nasser Najjar		Damascus
6	Al-Thaqafa	Cultural Theory Magazine	Weekly	Midhat Okash		Damascus
7	Ayat	Cultural-Social Magazine	Monthly	Mohamed Mousa		Damascus
8	Shabablek	Cultural-Social Magazine	Monthly	Mohammed Iyad Sharabajee		Damascus
Sports Magazines						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Asil	Sports Magazine	Monthly	Mohammed Zuhair Jinan		Damascus
2	Al-Malaeb	Sports Newspaper	Twice-weekly	Mohammed Iyad Kalkoush		Damascus
3	Al-Osbou Al-Riyadi	Sports Magazine	Weekly	Hassan al-Bunni		Damascus
4	Al-Riyada	Sports Gazette	Weekly	Mohammed Bashar al-Obari		Damascus
5	Al-Riyadiya	Sports Newspaper	Twice-weekly	Ayman Douba		Damascus
6	Al-Sanabel Al-Riyadiya	Sports Gazette	Weekly	Ahmed Tibo		Aleppo

Table 05.II. Private newspapers

Variety						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Azmina	Cultural Social Political Economic Magazine	Monthly	Ahd al-Azzou		Damascus
2	Al-Dabbour	Social Criticism Magazine	Weekly	Ahmed Bassam Taleb		Damascus
3	Al-Ghirbal	Variety	Monthly	Hanadi Mazloum		Damascus
4	Al-Kinana	Political-Entertainment-Sports Magazine	Weekly	Hasnaa al-Nouri		Damascus
5	Al-Warda	Variety Magazine	Monthly	Ayman al-Ghazali		Damascus
6	Ninar	Fashion Magazine	Monthly			Damascus
7	Rua al-Hayat	Cultural Social Variety Magazine	Monthly	Wael Qans		Damascus
8	Saleb Moujab	Social Newspaper	Weekly	Maher Shahin		Damascus
9	Silver Jubilee	Cultural Social Variety Newspaper	Monthly	Kamal Odaimi		Lattakia
10	Tasliya wa Fann	Cultural Social Magazine	Monthly	Toufiq Andani		Damascus
11	Waterlily	Children's Magazine	Monthly	Reem Jwijati		Damascus
Tourism						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Siyaha	Tourism Ad Magazine	Monthly	Bassima al-Kasm		Damascus
2	Tourist Guide	Tourism Promotion Magazine	Monthly	Rizq Elias		Damascus
3	What's On	Tourism Magazine	Monthly	Fadi Homs		Damascus
4	Where to Go	Cultural Tourism Magazine	Monthly	Abdul-Alim Ghazal		Damascus
Scientific						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Dawajin	Poultry	Bi-monthly	Mohammed Mizanazi		Homs
2	Al-Hadith fil Tub	Medical Magazine	Bi-monthly	Fouad Atallah		Deir al-Zor
3	Al-Jadid Fi Amrad al-Hadm	Digestion Illnesses	Bi-monthly	Dr. Samir al-Haffar		Damascus
4	Al-Jawab al-Shafi	Social Medical Magazine	Monthly			
5	Al-Raqmiya	Science	Bi-weekly	Rashad Kamel		Damascus
6	Alam al-Sohha	Specialized Health Magazine	Monthly	Toufiq al-Kousa		Damascus
7	Ishtar	Medical	Monthly	Ahmed Haidar		Lattakia
8	Oloum al-Ard	Geographical Geological Environmental Scientific Magazine	Seasonal	Feryal Hajj Ibrahim		Damascus
9	Sham Teknolojia al-Maaloumat	Information Technology	Bi-weekly	Ayham Hijazi		Damascus
10	Teknolojia al-Ittisalat	Communications Technology	Monthly	Abdel-Salam Fat		Damascus
Specialized						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Adiyat	Heritage and Thought	Seasonal	Zaki Hanoush		Aleppo
2	Al-Jisr	Expatriate Affairs Magazine	Monthly	Samir Arbash		Damascus
3	Al-Muhit	Specialized Legal Magazine	Monthly	Issam Sheikh al-Ard		Damascus
4	Al-Oula Décor	Arts and Décor	Seasonal	Omar al-Nimr		Damascus
5	Al-Qadaa wal Qanun al-Muqaran	Comparative Legal and Judiciary Magazine	Seasonal	Yusuf Dib		Damascus
6	Ibdaat Handasiya	Engineering	Seasonal	Mohsen Maksoud		Damascus
7	Insurance Development	Insurance and Reinsurance Magazine	Monthly	Abdellatif Abboud		Damascus

Table 05. III. Private newspapers

Classifieds and Advertising						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Fahras	Classifieds Newspaper	Weekly	Taysir Mahfouz		Tartous
2	Al-Fareis lil Sayyarat	Classifieds Newspaper	Bi-weekly	Hanadi Tohme		Damascus
3	Al-Iqariya	Classifieds Newspaper	Monthly	Motaz al-Homsi		Damascus
4	Al-Mustahlik	Classifieds Newspaper	Weekly			Deraa
5	Al-Safahat al-Khadra'	Classifieds Newspaper	Weekly	Manal al-Homsi		Damascus
6	Al-Shati'	Classifieds Magazine	Weekly	Marwan Alio		Lattakia
7	Al-Shiraa	Classifieds Magazine	Bi-weekly	Suheil Suleiman		Tartous
8	Al-Wasila	Classifieds Newspaper	Weekly	Zeina Kheir		Damascus
9	Aswaq	Classifieds Magazine	Bi-weekly	Hala Jdid		Damascus
10	Dalil al-Aamal	Classifieds Newspaper	Weekly	Luna al-Hallaq		Damascus
11	Mir'at al-Fikr wal Thaqafa	Classifieds Magazine	Monthly	Mayada al-Dewachi		Damascus
12	Siwar	Classifieds Newspaper	Bi-weekly	Kinda Jaafar		Homs
13	Sobh wa Masa	Technical, Services, and Classifieds Magazine	Weekly	Ahmed Jifan Ibrahim		Damascus
Published in the Free Zone						
#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-Watan	Political Newspaper	Daily	Waddah Abed Rabbou	Rami Makhlof	Free Zone
2	Baladna	Social Newspaper	Daily	Georges Hajouj (Editorial Secretary), the Dina Jabbour*	Majd Suleiman and Bashar Kiwan	Free Zone

* Closed after the start revolution

Table 06. TV stations

Pro-opposition		
#	Station name	Description
1	Barada TV	Opposition channel that existed before the uprising. Broadcasts from Britain.
2	Free Army Channel	News of the FSA
3	Orient TV	Broadcast from the UAE, it had correspondents on the ground before and after the revolution. Opposed the regime since the beginning of the uprising.
4	Shada TV	Broadcasts from Jordan.
5	Syria al-Ghad	Broadcasts from Egypt.
6	Syria al-Shaab	Started broadcasting from Jordan immediately after the uprising began.
7	Wisal - Safa	Religious channels that existed before the revolution. Anti-Regime.
Pro-government		
#	Station name	Description
1	Al-Manar	Controlled by Lebanese Hezbollah.
2	Mayadeen TV	Established by former Al-Jazeera correspondent Ghassan Bin Jiddo. Broadcasts from Lebanon, supports the "resistance," and linked to Hezbollah.
3	Press TV - Al-Alam Arabic service	Iranian Government.
4	Russia Today - Arabic	Arabic-language version of Russian state-owned international network.

Table 07. I **Radio stations - Pro-government**

#	Station name	Owner
1	Al-Baydaa	Al-Baydaa Company
2	Mazzika	Golden Lock Company
3	Radio Arabesque	Direct Media Company
4	Radio City	Al-Kanar Company
5	Radio Fann	Fann Company
6	Radio Farah	Al-Farah Company
7	Radio Majum	Anas al-Madani International Company
8	Radio Melody	Melody Company
9	Radio Mix	United Media Company
10	Radio Ninar	Ninar Company
11	Radio Shahba	Shahba Company
12	Radio Style	Style Company
13	Radio Syria Tomorrow	Voice of Tomorrow Company
14	Sham FM Radio	Al-Harith Company
15	Virgin Radio	Arnous Bros. Company
16	Voice of Music	Voice of Arab Music

 Table 07. II **Radio stations - Pro-opposition**

#	Station name	Description
1	Al-Aasima Online (Damascus Online)	Established by a group of young students and graduates of the Faculty of Information and transmitted via the Internet from Damascus. Provides news about the city.
2	Baladna Radio	Belongs to Charter of the Revolution movement; broadcasts from Jordan via the Internet.
3	Watan Radio	The only FM station supervised by a group of media activists in Damascus.
4	Yasmine al-Sham	Established by a group of young Syrian media activists in Syria and abroad. Broadcast via the Internet from Saudi Arabia.

 Table 08. **Newspapers - Pro-government**

#	Publication	Type	Frequency	Editor	License Owner/Publisher	Location
1	Afaq	Political	Bi-weekly	Suleiman al-Dawoud	Arab Socialists	Damascus
2	Al-Binaa	Political	Monthly	Mohamed Akl	Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party	Damascus
3	Al-Fajr	Political	Bi-weekly			Damascus
4	Al-Mithaq	Political	Bi-weekly	Samir Arbash	The Socialist Union	Damascus
5	Al-Nour	Political	Weekly	Ycoub Karro	Syrian Communist Party (Unified)	Damascus
6	Al-Wihdawi	Political	Bi-weekly	Ahmad al-Ahmad	Socialist Unionist Party	Damascus
7	Baath	Political	Daily	Elias Mourad	Arab Socialist Baath Party	Damascus
8	Sawt al-Shaab	Political	Weekly	Ammar Bakdash	Syrian Communist Party (Bakdash)	Damascus

Table 09. Newspapers - Pro-opposition

#	Arabic Name	Transliterated name	Web address
1	عنب بلدي	3neb baladi	http://enab-baladi.com
2	سورياتنا	Suriatna	http://issuu.com/souriatna
3	أوكسجين	Oxygen	http://www.syriaoxygen.com/
4	طلعنا الحربية	Tel3na 3l-hurieh	https://www.facebook.com/Lcc.Newspaper
5	الكرامة	Alkarameh	https://www.facebook.com/alkarameh.newspaper
6	سورية بدا حرية	Suria beda hurieh	http://www.sbhmagazine.com/
7	عهد الشام	3had alsham	https://www.facebook.com/Ahed.alsham
8	حنطة	Hentah	http://goo.gl/9JiAg
9	إميسا عاصمة الثورة	Imisa 3asemieh altawrah	https://www.facebook.com/emissa.Newspaper
10	زيتون	Zeitun	https://www.facebook.com/ZaitonMagazine
11	أحفاد خالد	Ahfad Khaled	https://www.facebook.com/ahfadkhaled.talbesah
12	البركة بالشباب	Albarkah bilshabab	https://www.facebook.com/albarkah.blshabab
13	أبونا	Abuna	http://www.aaboona.com/
14	الجولان المباع	Aljolan almaba3	https://www.facebook.com/alhajaralasad
15	جنوب العاصمة دمشق الإلكترونية	Jenoob al3asimah dimashq	https://www.facebook.com/Magazine.south.capital.Damascus.electronic
16	شام	Shaam	http://shamjournal.net
17	الكتائب	alKata'ib	https://www.facebook.com/alkataebjareda
18	قلم رصاص الإلكترونية	Qalam resaas alelektronieh	https://www.facebook.com/electronicpencil
19	العهد	Al3had	http://www.al3ahdnewspaper.com
20	زيتون وزيتونة	Zeitoon wa zeitoona	http://sraqeb.com/Publish/ZaytonAndZaytonah/
21	الكواكبي	alKawakby	https://www.facebook.com/AlkawakbiMagazine
22	الغربال	alGherbal	http://www.algherbal.com

Table 10. Newspapers - Published by unlicensed political groups

#	Publication name	Type	Frequency	Editor	Publisher	Location
1	Al-An	Political	Monthly		Party of Communist Action	
2	Al-Arabi	Political	Monthly		Socialist Unity Party	
3	Al-Dimuqrati	Political	Monthly	Abdul-Hamid Hage Darwish	Progressive Kurdish Party in Syria (PDPKS)	
4	Al-Dimuqrati al-Arabi	Political	Monthly		Arab Revolutionary Workers Party	
5	Al-Mawqif Al-Dimuqrati	Political	Monthly		Opposition National Democratic Gathering	
6	Al-Rai	Political	Monthly		People's Party	
7	Al-Wehda	Political	Monthly	Muhieddine al-Sheikh (Party General-Secretary)	Kurdish Union Democratic Party in Syria (PYDKS) (Yekiti)	
8	Kassioun	Political	Weekly	Qadri Jamil	The National Committee for the Unity of Syrian Communists (NCUSC), also known as the Party of the Popular Will, a splinter of the NPF Party	Damascus
9	Mashro	Political	Monthly		Revolutionary Organization	
10	Voice of the Kurds	Political	Monthly	Abdul Hakim Bashar (Party General-Secretary)	Democratic Kurdish Party in Syria (PKDSP) (Parti)*	

Table 11. **Kurdish newspapers (published in Arabic)**

#	Kurdish Name	Type	Frequency	Publisher
1	Ajras	Cultural-Political-Theoretical Seasonal	Stopped	
2	Al-Dimokrati	Political Newspaper	Half Monthly Continuing	Kurdish Progressive Democratic Party Syria (PDPKS)
3	Al-Hiwar	Theoretical Seasonal	Continuing	
4	Al-Jabha	Political Newspaper	Stopped	Kurdish Democratic Front in Syria
5	Al-Muthaqaf al-Taqaddumi	Political Theoretical Seasonal	Sporadic	
6	Al-Tahalof	Political Newspaper	Stopped	Kurdish Democratic Alliance in Syria
7	Al-Wifaq	Political Newspaper	Continuing	Kurdish Democratic Union Party
8	Al-Wihdah	Political Newspaper	Continuing	Kurdish Union Democratic Party Syria (PYDKS)
9	Avdar	Theoretical Magazine	Stopped	Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)
10	Azadi	Political Newspaper	Continuing	Azadi Kurdish Party
11	Birbank	Social Cultural Variety Monthly	Continuing	Kurdish Youth Wifaq Organization
12	Dank		Stopped	Kurdish People's Union in Syria
13	Halwast	Theoretical Seasonal	Stopped	
14	Ittihad al-Shaab	Political Newspaper	Stopped	Kurdish People's Union in Syria
15	Jin	Cultural Monthly (Kurdish and Arabic)	Continuing	Democratic Kurdish Party in Syria (PKDSP) (Parti)
16	Khanaf		Stopped	Mahmoud Sabri
17	Klawiz	Literary-Cultural-Heritage Magazine	Stopped	Democratic Kurdish Party in Syria (PKDSP) (Parti)
18	Klizar	Children's Magazine	Stopped	Lawki Haji/Mahdi Daoud
19	Kulistan	Cultural-Heritage Magazine	Stopped	Jakar Gawin
20	Kurdish Future Current	Political Newspaper	Continuing	Kurdish Future Party
21	Norouz		Stopped	Yekiti – Jabal al-Kurd
25	Qadaya wa Hiwarat	Political Seasonal	Continuing	
26	Rouj		Continuing	Ahmed Ijja
27	Rujda	Literary-Cultural Newspaper	Continuing	PKK
28	Satir	Cultural-Heritage Magazine	Stopped	Roze Osei Zagros Hajo
29	Sawt al-Akrad	Political Newspaper	Continuing	Democratic Kurdish Party in Syria (PKDSP) (Parti)
30	Surkul	Theoretical Magazine	Continuing	Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)
31	Tariq al-Shaab	Political Newspaper	Continuing	Kurdish Left Party in Syria
32	Tariq al-Yasar	Political Theoretical Seasonal	Stopped	
33	Yekiti	Newsletter	Continuing	Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria

 Table 12. **Kurdish newspapers (published in Kurdish)**

#	Kurdish Name	Type	Frequency	Publisher
1	Aso	Cultural Newspaper	Stopped	Siamand Ibrahim Kofi Abdul Alelam Dare
2	Dalaf	Newspaper	Continuing	Koma Runiz
3	Hifi	Student Newspaper	Sporadic	Bahzad Rassoul
4	Kurdistan	Political Newspaper	Stopped	Moqdad Midhat Badrakhan
5	Kurdistan Newspaper	Newspaper	Stopped	
6	Surmi	Theoretical Literary Magazine	Stopped	Jarara Library for Kurdish Culture in Syria
7	Zah Fi	Cultural (Kurdish Latin)	Continuing	Archif Oskan, Mohammed Issa Oskan, Midaseh Azizi

