PRESS FREEDOM

"Freedom of the press, if it means anything at all, means the freedom to criticise and oppose."

George Orwell (1903 – 1950), English novelist and journalist

1. Press Freedom Discussion

1. Should the press be allowed to write stories about anything they want? Why or why not?
2. What shouldn't they be allowed to write about? Why?
3. Which celebrities have been in the news recently? Why were they in the news?
4. Should the press be allowed to write about the private lives of celebrities? Why or why not?
5. Are you interested in celebrities' private lives? Have you ever read a story about the private life of a celebrity? If so, what made you read that story?
6. Who is to blame for press intrusion into people's private lives, the journalists who write the stories or the people who read the stories?
7. Does the press have a duty to report about the private lives of politicians or other public servants? Why or why not?
8. Can you think of any recent stories about the private lives of politicians?

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2. Press Freedom Vocabulary

- **to censor** (verb), **censorship** (noun) – *the prohibition of material or subject matters in books, films or the news.*
- **media blackout** (noun) – *the censorship of a particular topic or event, either voluntarily or by force.*
- **the Fourth Estate** (noun) – *the idea that the media represents a 'fourth' pillar of government (in addition to the executive, legislature and judiciary) due to its ability to frame political issues.*
- **the paparazzi** (noun) – *a photographer who takes photos of celebrities or other well-known people.*
- **super-injunction** (BrE) / **gag order** / **gagging order** (nouns) – *a legal ruling preventing the publication of specific information.*
- **phone hacking** (noun) – *using the factory-set password to access the voicemail of a mobile phone number from another phone.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun)

1. Despite having obtained a _____ to prevent the press from reporting about his extramarital affair, Ryan Giggs was unable to maintain this secrecy after a member of parliament used his privilege to mention his name in a parliamentary debate.
2. Totalitarian governments use a high level of _____ to control what information the people have access to.
3. The latest _____ revelations revealed that a journalist had accessed the phone of a recently murdered schoolgirl, giving hope to the parents that their daughter was still alive.
4. There was a _____ after the Prime Minister was caught having an affair.
5. If the media truly does represent the _____ of government, it should face the same level of scrutiny as other areas of government.
6. The same people who complain that _____ invade people's privacy are the same people who buy newspapers to find out about the private lives of celebrities.

Press Freedom vocabulary comprehension questions

1. Do you think censorship is a problem in your country? What other factors can prevent the press from reporting a story?
2. Can you think of any media blackouts, either from your country or others?
3. Do you agree that the media represents the Fourth Estate of government? Why or why not?
4. What do you think of the paparazzi?
5. Are super-injunctions or gag orders a threat to press freedom or can they be necessary is certain situations?
6. In the UK, it was discovered that the press had engaged in phone hacking by accessing the voicemail of various public and private figures in order to obtain information to write stories in newspapers. What do you think of this? Could something similar could happen in your country?

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3. Video: The World Press Freedom Index, 2018

You are going to watch a video by The Washington Post called "Reporters Without Borders 2018 World Press Freedom Index: Region-By-Region."

Watch the video here: https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-press-freedom/

Multiple choice

1. European journalists were murdered as they investigated what?
   a) drug smuggling *b) arms trafficking* *c) corruption*
2. Where does the UK rank in the Press Freedom Index?
   a) 30 *b) 40* *c) 50*
3. What is the trend for murders of journalists in Latin America?
   a) justice *b) compensation* *c) impunity*
4. Which country is the second most dangerous for media workers?
   a) Mexico *b) Malaysia* *c) Mozambique*

Sentence completion

5. Despite falling in the rankings due to the harassment of journalists, _____ is a good example of press freedom in Latin America.
6. The main concerns for press freedom in Africa are widespread _____.
7. Journalists covering the fight against _____ have been jailed or harassed by the police in Africa.
8. African governments have tried to limit access to information about where _____ are happening.

Short answer

9. What type of legislation was used to target journalists in the Middle East?
10. Which country is the deadliest for journalists?
11. In which country are most journalists in prison?
12. Independent bloggers in Vietnam face prison sentences of up to how many years?

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4. Press Freedom Conversation Questions

1. Is it ever right to censor the news? What about for matters of national security? In which countries is the media not free to report on any topic it wants to? Why is this?
2. What risks do journalists face? Why do they face these risks? In which countries do you think it's most dangerous to be a journalist? Do journalists in your country face any risks? If so, why?
3. How do politicians incite hatred against the press? Why would they do this? Does this happen in your country?
4. Donald Trump said that the press is the "enemy of the American people." Why do you think he said that, and do you agree with him? What effect could this have on press freedom and the safety of reporters?
5. How do governments interfere with the freedom of the press? Should political leaders ever be allowed to refuse to speak to the press?
6. Are journalists ever prosecuted, investigated or spied on because of the stories they write in your country? Can you think of any examples?
7. Is complete press freedom necessary for a country to be considered democratic? Why?
8. What responsibilities does the media have in a democracy?

5. Press Freedom Writing Task

Write about your opinion of press freedom. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, include the following topics:

- The importance of a free press.
- The threats to the freedom of the press.
- How the press can be protected from these threats.

Alternative exam practice question:

The media should be allowed to write what it wants about who it wants. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

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