

'Online press freedom eroding'

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People sit around laptop computers at a cafe in Beijing on May 29, 2013

US mass surveillance, restrictive legislation and a wave of global cyberattacks drastically restricted online press freedom during 2013, a New York-based media watchdog warned Thursday.

The Committee to Protect Journalists has for the first time included cyberspace on its list of [countries](#) because of what it called "the profound erosion of freedom in the Internet".

"Violence and repression continue to be the greatest threat to journalists worldwide, but online censorship and massive state surveillance are also disrupting the global flow of information," said CPJ executive director Joel Simon.

The Internet is a vital platform for journalists around the world to carry out their reporting and publish their stories.

Simon said government censorship and monitoring from China to Iran had grown more sophisticated and "online repression has increased."

He also held the United States accountable, however.

"While the Obama administration has championed online freedom, the NSA spying program has undermined global confidence in the Web as a means of independent expression," he said.

US intelligence leaker Edward Snowden last year sent shockwaves around the world by revealing the extent of electronic surveillance by the National Security Agency.

CPJ said the countries where press freedoms had deteriorated the most in 2013 were Egypt, Bangladesh, Syria and Vietnam.

It also included Ecuador, Liberia, Russia, Turkey and Zambia—"nominal democracies where the space for free expression and independent newsgathering is rapidly shrinking," it said.

CPJ said the countries on its "risk list" are countries where it had documented the worst deterioration of freedoms during 2013.

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