

Freedom of the Press

Your Name

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The invention of printing has drastically changed the way people receive information about the world they live in. Before printing, all information stored in the written form could be accessed only by privileged people. Every book had to be written by hand, thus it was a very time-consuming and painstaking task. As a result, books were not so widespread and cost a lot for an ordinary person to buy. Printing gave such people an opportunity to get more information by publishing books, which took less time and effort compared to handwriting on parchment. In fact, books were used to store the knowledge of the previous generations. On the other hand, people needed a source of information about things that were of current importance for them. And so the press, as a form of mass-media, emerged.

The Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.” That means people of the press have the right to express opinion the way they want it and the way they find it, whether it is in print or in an Internet magazine or newspaper. Now let us try to figure out whether it is correct to control newspapers using censorship or if it is important to allow them do whatever they want.

An ideal newspaper, magazine, website, or blog should express objective opinions and represent points of view of all people regardless of age, sex, race, or social status. In reality, it is very difficult to describe a situation objectively. A journalist may have a biased viewpoint without even realizing it. Well, that is not a big problem, since there are many sources of information, so people can analyze and compare the information they receive. Another problem is the press is excessively controlled by the state. Of course, there are things that should not be disclosed, for example information that is regarded as a state secret. State law must define such things and journalists should be well aware of them. However, when the state censors certain information that should normally be allowed to be published, that is

surely a violation of press freedom. Another example of press freedom violation is the state fully controlling what information is published in the newspapers. This is usually in autocratic countries where the press is used for propaganda purposes. Journalists are often persecuted, punished, or even killed if their viewpoint differs from that of a state.

Freedom of the press is measured every year and is represented as a Press Freedom Index. It is based on numerous factors such as media independence, violence against reporters, pluralism of thoughts expressed in the press, censorship, etc. As of 2014, Finland tops the list of countries with the largest index of press freedom for four years in a row. Several international organizations monitor current situations with press freedom in nearly 160 countries around the world. Some of the most well-known are Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, and World Press Freedom Committee.

Having free press as a mass-media source of information is an essential need of every member of society. Thus, it is important that we receive objective and up-to-date information to be aware of all the aspects of the world in which we live, and press freedom is one of the steps to make it possible.

Bibliography

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