

# POLICY BRIEF



## Freedom of Speech Around The World - CPAC Freedom of Speech Ratings 2025

CPAC Policy

December 2025

### Summary

Freedom of Speech is one of the most sacred American values, protected in the First Amendment in America's Bill of Rights. Over the centuries, American missionaries, peace corps volunteers, film-makers, soldiers and diplomats have worked to spread freedom to the whole world, with an emphasis on promoting Freedom of Speech. This policy brief creates systematic ratings of the state of Freedom of Speech in 31 countries. **We focus on a simple, objectively measurable criterion: Does this country imprison or execute its citizens for speech?**

### Methodology

We need an objective way to compare the state of Freedom of Speech across countries which have different legal systems. The best method to create an apples-to-apples comparison of freedom of speech across countries is to compare political prisoners. Many countries have laws on the books that claim to protect Freedom of Speech, but in practice people are put in prison for speaking. We need to look at the reality, not just the laws on the books. Most countries have at least one person who was sentenced to prison for speech that would have been protected under the US First Amendment.

For each country, we found the most severe sentence (i.e. longest sentence or death penalty) which was meted out to a speech-criminal. A single imprisonment for speech has a chilling effect on every dissident in that country. Furthermore, one case of imprisonment is a strong indicator of a legal precedent where many other people are being intimidated and silenced by the legal system. We looked only at cases from the last 10 years. Countries get low ratings if they have imprisoned someone just for presenting forbidden ideas. Countries get high ratings if they do not sentence anyone to prison for speech that would be protected under the U.S. First Amendment. Countries get intermediate ratings for cases involving jokes, poems or insults - not plain statements of fact - or if prison terms

were short. A country's score is slightly raised if the country allows independent media to operate.

We selected countries with large populations, large economies, or high degrees of political influence. The countries that received Freedom of Speech ratings for 2025 are:

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Korea, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States, Vietnam, and Qatar

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

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30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

## **Disclaimer**

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## **Caveats**

A high score does not indicate that a country is perfect. Unfortunately, every country has some cases where businesses are legally harassed for their views. In every country, there

is some degree of private-sector censorship of social media. The CPAC Freedom of Speech ratings consider whether independent media is completely banned in a country, but we do not consider cases of government harassment of media that fall short of a complete ban. The unfortunate truth is that every government harasses independent media, so it does not make for a useful cross-country comparison. The purpose of the Freedom of Speech Ratings is to compare countries on the most important type of free-speech violation: when a government imprisons someone for their speech.

Every country also grants and revokes visas selectively based on the ideology of people who apply to enter the country, so visa granting and revocation is also not included in the Freedom of Speech Ratings. It's hard enough to get governments to care about the rights of their own citizens, let alone visa holders.

We also do not consider cases in which a person is sentenced for a speech crime in the same trial in which they are sentenced for a genuine crime, such as money laundering or violent assault.

## **Argentina**

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**Alejandro Bodart** - Argentine communist politician Alejandro Bodart was convicted of anti-semitism under the country's "anti-discrimination" law after he wrote a post on X (formerly Twitter) which criticized Israel. Bodart called the Israeli state "racist and genocidal" and called for "a secular and democratic Palestine, from the river to the sea". He compared Zionism to Nazism in a separate X post. These statements are illegal in Argentina because they are classified as anti-semitism under the IHRA definition of anti-semitism, which was codified into Argentine law in 2020. An Argentine court convicted Bodart of anti-semitism and gave him a **six-month suspended prison sentence**. Bodart had originally been acquitted, but after an appeal by the DAIA (Delegation of Argentine Israelite Associations), he was convicted by a higher court. On September 29,

2025, a third **court overturned the previous conviction**, ending the legal proceedings against Bodart.

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If Bodart had been convicted and imprisoned, Argentina would have received a score of 30% (20% for imprisonment for forbidden ideas + independent media allowed + 10% prison sentence less than one year). Since an Argentine superior court upheld his right to Freedom of Speech, **Argentina receives a score of 90%**, the highest score for a country that does not have a constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech.

World Map Here:

[https://public.tableau.com/views/FreedomofSpeechRatings/CPACFreeSpeechRatings?:language=en-US&:sid=&:redirect=auth&:display\\_count=n&:origin=viz\\_share\\_link](https://public.tableau.com/views/FreedomofSpeechRatings/CPACFreeSpeechRatings?:language=en-US&:sid=&:redirect=auth&:display_count=n&:origin=viz_share_link)

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<https://periodismodeizquierda.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/FALLO-BODART.pdf>

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scorecard, please send the details of the case to [slaird@conservative.org](mailto:slaird@conservative.org). To meet our methodological criteria, the person must be 1) imprisoned or sentenced to prison for speech that would have been protected under the US first amendment, 2) a citizen of the country in which they are imprisoned, 3) received a sentence of imprisonment for at least one month OR were imprisoned without being sentenced for at least 3 months 4) not imprisoned for any actual crime during the same period for which they were sentenced for a speech crime.

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**Jacob Hersant** - One week after the Australian state government of Victoria passed a blasphemy law that created a sentence of one year in prison for performing a Nazi salute, activist Jacob Hersant performed a Nazi salute outside a Melbourne courthouse. It is unclear whether the salute was a deliberate act of defiance or an impulsive celebratory action, as Hersant had just been spared jail time in a case stemming from a physical altercation in a national park. Hersant was arrested and became the first person convicted under the new law banning the Nazi salute. Judge Brett Sonnet sentenced Hersant to **one month in prison** and noted that Hersant was unrepentant and did not enter a guilty plea. The court case regarding the altercation in the national park gave Hersant a conviction for violent disorder.

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Imprisonments for blasphemy are rated at 40%. Since Hersant's sentence was less than one year, there is a 10% bonus, and **Australia receives a final Freedom of Speech Rating of 50%.**

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**Leo Lins** - In 2025, Comedian Leo Lins was sentenced to **8 years in prison** for jokes that he told at a comedy show in 2022. A Brazilian court declared that Lin's jokes were racist and offensive to obese people and disabled people. Sentencing judge Barbara de Lima Iseppi wrote, "Freedom of expression is not absolute nor unlimited... When there is a confrontation between the fundamental precept of liberty of expression and the principles of human dignity and judicial equality, the latter should win out." In 2022, Lin was forced to pay \$8,000 to the mother of an autistic child whom Lin had offended. He is appealing his conviction.

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Imprisonment for jokes, poems, or insults is rated at 30%. **Brazil's Freedom of Speech Rating is 30%.**

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/06/07/brazil-comedian-leo-lins-free-speech/>

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**Robert Hoogland** - Robert Hoogland is the father of a transgender-identified child. He is currently serving a prison sentence for using the pronouns "she" and "her" to refer to his daughter. Hoogland's ex-wife started to put their 14-year-old daughter on puberty blockers, a form of chemical castration from which most children are moved on to cross-sex hormones. When Hoogland objected, A Canadian court placed a gag order on him, which stipulated that he could not refer to his daughter by her birth name, could not refer to her by female pronouns, could not attempt to persuade her to stop taking puberty blockers, and could not discuss the case with the media. When Hoogland refused to obey these violations of his right to Freedom of Speech, he was convicted of "family violence." Hoogland faced the choice of going to trial and facing a five-year prison sentence. Instead, he chose to plead guilty in exchange for a reduction of sentence to 6 months in prison, of which he served **2 months in prison**. As a condition of the plea, there will not be a full hearing of the issues in court, which limits the amount of information about this case that is available to the public.



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Imprisonment for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 20% when independent media is allowed. Independent media is allowed in Canada. There is a 10% bonus when the time in prison was less than 6 months. **Canada's Freedom of Speech Rating is 30%.**

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<https://thepostmillennial.com/rob-hoogland-canada-prisoner-of-conscience>  
[https://voz.us/en/society/230830/7167/canadian-father-jailed-for-objecting-to-daughters-gender-change-wins-in-court-of-appeal.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://voz.us/en/society/230830/7167/canadian-father-jailed-for-objecting-to-daughters-gender-change-wins-in-court-of-appeal.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

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**Ruan Xiaohuan** - Ruan Xiaohuan is a Chinese information security specialist who started the blog ProgramThink. Ruan wrote explanations of how to bypass the internet blockade in mainland China. He also wrote critiques of the Chinese Communist Party. He was captured by the Shanghai police and charged with "inciting subversion of state power." Prosecutors claimed that Ruan "composed over 100 seditious essays... smeared the current political system of our country... and attempted to overthrow the socialist system." He is currently serving a **seven-year prison sentence**. The details of the case and the trial proceedings were not fully available to the public. In 2024, his appeal was dismissed by the Shanghai High People's Court. Ruan has family connections to political dissent in China. Both of his parents were members of non-communist political parties.

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90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

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Imprisonment for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 20% when independent media is allowed and 10% when independent media is not allowed. Independent media is not allowed in China. **China's Freedom of Speech Rating is 10%.**

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**Vincent Reynouard** - Vincent Reynouard, a French neo-nazi, was sentenced to **one year in prison** for writing a book in which he argued that the Oradour-sur-Glane massacre had been committed by the French Resistance rather than the Waffen SS. He also posted a comment on an online video in which he called the Holocaust a "false story." Reynouard fled France and went into hiding in Scotland. He was found by UK "counter-terror" intelligence agents and sent to France, where he was sentenced to 12 months in prison.

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**Ursula Haverbeck** - Ursula Haverbeck became known as the 'Nazi Grandma' when she was imprisoned by the German government in 2004 at the age of 77 for denying the Holocaust. She had previously led the ecofascist group Collegium Humanum, which was active in environmental activism and neo-nazi political organizing until the group was outlawed by the German government in 2008. Haverbeck had taken over leadership of the group after the death of her husband, Werner Georg Haverbeck, who had been a subordinate of Rudolf Hess. Haverbeck was first prosecuted in 2004 when she published holocaust denial in her magazine. The German police seized the issues of the magazine, and Haverbeck was sentenced to 180 days in prison and fined. Haverbeck refused to recant her beliefs, and she was prosecuted many times over the next 20 years for publishing and sharing Holocaust denial literature. Over her many convictions, she spent about **4 years in prison**. Her last conviction was on June 26, 2024, and she died in November 2024 at the age of 96.

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## **Hungary**

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**Ilaria Salis** - Mainstream media has portrayed Ilaria Salis as a political prisoner in Hungary. Salis, an Italian citizen, was imprisoned in Hungary after she was accused of participating in politically motivated violent assaults. Ms. Salis had traveled to Hungary with a far-left “antifa” group for the alleged purpose of assaulting right-wing activists at a demonstration in Hungary. Ms. Salis pleaded not guilty. One of the assaults that Ms. Salis is alleged to have committed broke the victim’s shinbone, and another victim had to have 20 stitches on his head. Ms. Salis was arrested and held in a Hungarian prison for 15 months as she awaited trial on charges of assault. While in prison, Italian activists made Ms. Salis into a cause célèbre. Her supporters proposed to elect Ms. Salis as a member of the European

Parliament (MEP) on the ticket of the Green and Left Alliance because MEPs enjoy substantial immunity from prosecution, and Hungary would be forced to drop charges against her.

In June 2024, Ms. Salis won the election to the European Parliament and was released from house arrest in Hungary. She returned to Italy, and she assumed office in July of 2024.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Salis was charged with breaking a man's shin and injuring another man causing him to need 20 stitches on his head. Assault is not protected under the US First Amendment. No one in Hungary has been imprisoned for speech that would be protected by the US First Amendment in the last 10 years. **Hungary's Freedom of Speech Rating is 90%.**

World Map Here:

[https://public.tableau.com/views/FreedomofSpeechRatings/CPACFreeSpeechRatings?:language=en-US&:sid=&:redirect=auth&:display\\_count=n&:origin=viz\\_share\\_link](https://public.tableau.com/views/FreedomofSpeechRatings/CPACFreeSpeechRatings?:language=en-US&:sid=&:redirect=auth&:display_count=n&:origin=viz_share_link)

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<https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/antifa-attacks-in-budapest-an-unmistakable-act-of-foreign-provocation/>

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## **Indonesia**

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**Muhammad Kace** - Muhammad Kace, a former Muslim cleric who converted to Christianity in 2014, uploaded hundreds of videos on his YouTube channel in which he criticised Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, including a sermon in August 2021. He was arrested in Bali on 24 August 2021 during a police investigation. On 6 April 2022, the Ciamis District Court (West Java) convicted him of charges under Indonesia's electronic information and blasphemy-related laws, concluding his content had intentionally spread hatred and public unrest, and sentenced him to 10 years in prison, later reduced to **8 years**.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee



100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 20% when independent media is allowed. Independent media is allowed in Indonesia. **Indonesia's Freedom of Speech Rating is 20%.**

World Map Here:

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## **Iran**

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**Yousef Mehrad and Sadrolla Fazeli** - Iranian atheists Yousef Mehrad and Sadrolla Fazeli Zare were **executed for blasphemy** on May 8, 2023. The two men were members of a Telegram channel in which they criticized Islam and Mohammed. A video of a burning koran was found on Mehrdad's phone. Mehrdad and Zare ran a Telegram channel called "Critique of Superstition and Religion". Both men were convicted in April 2021 and were not permitted to have family visits or make phone calls for eight months. They were hanged in May of 2023. The hangings came in the wake of the protests following the death of a young woman who died in police custody after she was arrested for refusing to wear a hijab.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Execution for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 0%. **Iran's Freedom of Speech Rating is 0%.**

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## **Japan**

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**Hiroji Yamashiro** - The most high-profile political prisoner in Japan, according to Amnesty International, is Hiroji Yamashiro. Hiroji is an anti-war activist who was imprisoned for 5 months without being able to see his family. He was arrested because he cut open a wire fence to break into the military base and allegedly assaulted a guard. Since those actions are not protected under the US First Amendment, Hiroji's case does not count against Japan's Freedom of Speech Rating.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

No Japanese citizen has been imprisoned for speech that would have been protected under the US First Amendment. **Japan's Freedom of Speech Rating is 90%.**

World Map Here:

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Sources:

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## **Mexico**

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**Armando Linares Lopez** - Journalist Armando Linares Lopez was executed by a drug cartel on March 15, 2022, after he published articles accusing former Zitacuaro Mayor

Carlos Herrera of embezzlement and influence peddling. Lopez was the co-founder of the Monitor Michoacan news outlet. His colleague Roberto Toledo Barrera had been executed by the cartel earlier in that year. In some parts of Mexico, the cartels have become de facto governments and can execute journalists who investigate them.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

The purpose of the Freedom of Speech Ratings is to gauge the de facto level of Freedom of Speech in each country. Since Lopez was executed by a quasi-state authority for his speech, **Mexico receives a Freedom of Speech Rating of 70%.**

World Map Here:

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<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/director-general-condemns-killing-journalist-armando-linares-lopez-zitacuaro-michoacan-mexico>

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## **Nicaragua**

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**Miguel Mora and Lucia Pineda** - Journalists Miguel Mora and Lucia Pineda ran the news website 100% Noticias. Police raided their offices and arrested both journalists. Both were charged with "inciting violence and hate" and "promoting terrorism." Both were kept in solitary confinement in extremely harsh conditions for 6 months. They did not have access to sunlight or proper toilet facilities. Pineda holds Costa Rican citizenship, but Costa Rican officials were not allowed to contact her while she was in prison. Neither of the prisoners was allowed to contact a lawyer. The Nicaraguan government seized the 100% Noticias office. Mora and Pineda were finally released along with about 800 other prisoners who had been arrested during anti-government protests.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonments for presenting forbidden ideas are rated at 20% when independent media is allowed. There is no blanket ban on independent media in Nicaragua. Since Mora and Pineda spent less than one year in prison, there is a 10% bonus, and **Nicaragua receives a final Freedom of Speech Rating of 30%.**

World Map Here:

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Sources:

<https://cpj.org/2019/07/nicaragua-journalists-miguel-mora-lucia-pineda-jailed-ipfa/>

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## **Nigeria**

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**Agba Jalingo** – Journalist Agba Jalingo, publisher of the news site CrossRiverWatch, wrote an article accusing Ben Ayade of embezzling 500 million Nigerian Naira of state funds. Ben

Ayade was the governor of the Nigerian state of Cross River. The funds had been earmarked for a microfinance bank. Jalingo was arrested on August 22, 2019, in Lagos and held in Calabar prison on charges of terrorism, treasonable felony, and cybercrime. He was held in prison for 6 months. In 2022, a higher court dismissed the charges against him. Parts of the trial were conducted in secret with masked witnesses.

The score scale is:

- 0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas
- 10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed
- 20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed
- 30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults
- 40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)
- 70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)
- 90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee
- 100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 20% when a country allows independent media. Independent media is allowed in Nigeria. There is an additional 10% bonus because the term of imprisonment was less than one year. **Nigeria's Freedom of Speech Rating is 30%.**

World Map Here:

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<https://guardian.ng/news/court-dismisses-terrorism-charges-against-journalist-agba-jalingo/>

**Why Not Omoyele Sowore?**



In addition to speech crimes, Sowore was convicted of money laundering. For the Freedom of Speech Ratings, we consider only people who are sent to prison purely for speech offenses.

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## **North Korea**

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**Unknown 22-year-old man** - A young man from Hwanghae province was **publicly executed** in 2022 for watching South Korean films and K-pop music. He also distributed these songs and films, which is a violation of North Korea's law against "reactionary ideology and culture." The man has not been named. His execution was revealed in the 2024 Report on North Korean Human Rights, which was released by South Korea's unification ministry, a division of the South Korean government that seeks the reunification of Korea as a free society under a non-communist government. South Korean media is popular among North Korean youth. The South Korean government sometimes launches balloons into North Korea, which contain USB sticks with Korean movies and songs as well as anti-Pyongyang leaflets. North Korea is responding by cracking down even harder on anything that comes from outside culture, including so-called "capitalist hairstyles."

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas  
10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed  
20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed  
30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults  
40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)  
70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)  
90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee  
100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Execution for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 0%. **North Korea's Freedom of Speech Rating is 0%.**

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/28/north-korea-execution-man-k-pop-human-rights-report>

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## **Paraguay**

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**Lourenço "Leo" Veras** - Lourenço "Leo" Veras was the owner and manager of Porã News, a website that covers drug trafficking, organized crime, and policing. On February 12, 2020, a team of three men raided Veras' home and shot him 11 times. Police believe that the attack was committed by the drug cartels as retaliation for Veras' reporting. One month prior to the murder, Veras said that he was receiving death threats from drug dealers.

The score scale is:

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- 20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed
- 30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults
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- 70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)
- 90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee
- 100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

The purpose of the Freedom of Speech Ratings is to gauge the de facto level of Freedom of Speech in each country. Since Veras was executed by a quasi-state authority for his speech, **Paraguay receives a Freedom of Speech Rating of 70%.**

World Map Here:

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Sources:

<https://cpj.org/data/people/lourenco-veras/>

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## **Poland**

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**Mateusz Woźnicki** - A former priest, was convicted in Poland of "hate speech" and sentenced to six months of community service. The man is identified as Mateusz Woźnicki. He condemned "international Jews" and implied that all Jews should be expelled from Poland. In 2019, he had been detained for "inciting hatred." This case raises some concerns about Freedom of Speech in Poland, but his sentence was community service rather than jail time, so Poland receives a score of 90%. The Freedom of Speech Ratings rank countries according to the most serious kind of free-speech-violation: whether a government imprisons or executes its citizens for speech.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)  
90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee  
100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Since his sentence was to community service rather than prison, **Poland's Freedom of Speech score is 90%.**

World Map Here:

[https://public.tableau.com/views/FreedomofSpeechRatings/CPACFreeSpeechRatings?:language=en-US&:sid=&:redirect=auth&:display\\_count=n&:origin=viz\\_share\\_link](https://public.tableau.com/views/FreedomofSpeechRatings/CPACFreeSpeechRatings?:language=en-US&:sid=&:redirect=auth&:display_count=n&:origin=viz_share_link)

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## **Qatar**

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**Remy Rowhani** - Remy Rowhani is a leader in the Baha'i faith in Qatar. In August 2025, he was sentenced to **five years in prison** for promoting "the ideas and beliefs of a religious sect that raises doubts about the fundamental principles and teachings of the Islamic religion." Rowhani had been convicted in absentia on a different charge in 2021. The Qatari government told Rowhani that he would not be detained if he visited Qatar, but when Rowhani went to Qatar for a short holiday in December 2024, he was detained at the Doha airport. Rowhani's current charge stems from social media posts that he made on X (formerly Twitter), which promoted the Baha'i faith. Shiite Muslim clerics consider Baha'is to be apostates. The Baha'i faith is banned in Iran, and the Iranian government has been accused of encouraging repressive policies against the Baha'i faith in Yemen, Egypt, and Qatar.

The score scale is:

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10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 20% if the country allows independent media and 10% if the country does not allow independent media. Qatar does not allow independent media. **Qatar's Freedom of Speech Rating is 10%.**

World Map Here:

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## **Russia**

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**Alexei Navalny** - Nationalist activist Alexei Navalny was sentenced to 19 years in prison for "rehabilitating Nazi ideology." He **died in prison under suspicious circumstances in 2024, presumably murdered**. Navalny sympathized with Russia's neo-nazi movement (including the 2006 "Russia March") and opposed the immigration of nonwhite people from the Caucasus and Central Asia into Russia. In a comedic video, Navalny compared muslims from the Caucasus to cockroaches and said that one needs a pistol, not a fly swatter, to deal with them. He viewed illegal immigration as one of the most important issues facing Russia, "100 times more important than any Ukraine." Navalny documented corruption and

graft by the United Russia party, Putin's party, and the dominant political party in Russia. He supported legalized civilian firearm ownership and Freedom of Speech.

The score scale is:

- 0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas
- 10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed
- 20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed
- 30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults
- 40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)
- 70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)
- 90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee
- 100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Execution for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 0%. **Russia's Freedom of Speech score is 0%.**

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## **Saudi Arabia**

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**Ahmad al-Shammari** - Ahmad Al Shamri is a Saudi Arabian dissident who is currently in prison and is facing the **death penalty for apostasy and blasphemy**. He was first prosecuted in 2014 after he allegedly renounced Islam on social media. He was 18 years old at the time. At his trial in 2015 al-Shamri pleaded insanity and claimed that he was under the influence of drugs and alcohol when he made his social media posts. He was convicted of apostasy and blasphemy and sentenced to death. Multiple appeals upheld his conviction and he remains in prison.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Execution for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 0%. **Saudi Arabia's Freedom of Speech Rating is 0%.**

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## **Singapore**

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**Ai Takagi** - Ai Takagi, a woman of Japanese descent with an Australian passport was arrested in Singapore over articles which she had written for her website "The Real Singapore." Prosecutors claimed that her articles were fake news and "slow-burning sedition." The court alleged that her writings "were intended from the outset to provoke unwarranted hatred against foreigners in Singapore". She was arrested while on a vacation in Singapore. Takagi apologized for her writing, saying "I was not fully aware of the level of sensitivity needed when dealing with topics related to racial and religious issues in Singapore." She was sentenced to **10 months in prison**. Despite the conviction, Takagi said she still wants to move to Singapore and live there permanently.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 20% when independent media is allowed. Independent media is allowed in Singapore. Since Takagi's sentence was less than one year, there is a 10% bonus and **Singapore receives a final Freedom of Speech Rating of 30%.**

World Map Here:

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## **South Korea**

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**Lee Yoon-seop** - Lee Yoon-seop, a 68 year old South Korean poet was sentenced to 14 months in prison for violating the National Security Act. Yoon-Seop had written a poem which praised North Korea. In 2016 his poem won a North Korean poetry contest and was announced as the winner on the North Korean website Uriminjokkiri. South Korean prosecutors argued that this amounted to supporting an "anti-state organization." Authorities argued that his poetry which glorified North Korea endangered South Korea's liberal democratic order. Amnesty International called upon the South Korean government to abolish or amend Article 7 of the National Security Act, the law that was used to prosecute Yoon-seop. The Seoul Central District Court sentenced Yoon-seop to **14 months in prison**.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)  
70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)  
90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee  
100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for poems, jokes, or insults is rated at 30%. **South Korea's Freedom of Speech Rating is 30%.**

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## **Spain**

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**Isabel Peralta** - 18-year-old Isabel Peralta gave a speech at a protest outside of the Moroccan embassy in 2021. In April of 2025 a judge decided that her 2021 speech constituted "hate speech" and sentenced Peralta to **one year in prison**. She had said "We will not let them invade us. Death to the invader!" Peralta has identified with fascist parties from a young age. Her father was a right wing pundit, but her parents expelled her from home at the age of 13 for her extreme views. She was banned from Germany in 2021 for possession of Nazi symbols.

The score scale is:

- 0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas
- 10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed
- 20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed
- 30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults
- 40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)
- 70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)
- 90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee
- 100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Peralta's speech would have been protected under the US First Amendment. Her speech was inflammatory and took place outside the Moroccan Embassy, which means that her sentencing may have been based on the tone and context of her speech, rather than the content of the speech itself. For this reason, Spain receives a score of 40%, rather than 20%. **Spain's Freedom of Speech Rating is 40%.**

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[https://en.ara.cat/politics/neo-nazi-from-madrid-has-been-sentenced-to-one-year-in-prison-for-hating-moroccan-immigrants\\_25\\_5345344.html](https://en.ara.cat/politics/neo-nazi-from-madrid-has-been-sentenced-to-one-year-in-prison-for-hating-moroccan-immigrants_25_5345344.html)

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## **Sweden**

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**Rasmus Paludan** - A Swedish court convicted Rasmus Paludan of violating Sweden's blasphemy laws by burning a koran. Paludan was sentenced to **four months in prison** which he will serve if he loses his appeal. Prosecutors charged him with "incitement against an ethnic group." Paludan led anti-Islam protests around Sweden. At one protest outside of the Turkish embassy he burned a koran. In response to his protests, Muslims in Sweden violently attacked natives and destroyed property. Paludan is a moderate. He said "I am a critic of Islam and criticize Islam, not Muslims." He added "I want to criticize ideas, not people."

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

- 30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults
- 40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)
- 70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)
- 90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee
- 100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for koran burning is rated at 40%. Since his prison sentence was less than one year, there is a 10% bonus. **Sweden's Freedom of Speech Rating is 50%.**

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## **Switzerland**



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**Alain Soral** - Writer and commentator Alain Soral was sentenced to **60 days in prison** for calling a journalist a "fat lesbian." Soral made the insult in a facebook video. The journalist, Catherine Macherel, complained to the police and Soral was arrested. After being convicted of "defamation, discrimination, and incitement to hatred" Soral was fined and sentenced to two months in prison. LGBTQ groups celebrated his jailing, with Murial Waeger, co-director of a lesbian activist groups writing "This court decision is an important movement for justice and rights of LGBTQI people in Switzerland... The conviction of Alain Soral is a strong signal that homophobic hatred cannot be tolerated." The case was a landmark application of a 2020 law that criminalized "discrimination" on the basis of sexual orientation. The conviction was upheld by the Swiss criminal court in 2024.

The score scale is:

0% - Death penalty for presenting forbidden ideas

10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed

20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed

30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for jokes, insults or poems is rated at 30%. Since his prison sentence was less than one year, there is a 10% bonus. **Switzerland's Freedom of Speech Rating is 40%.**

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## **Syria**

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**Suleiman Rashid Saad** - In December of 2024 the Syrian government was taken over by an al-Qaeda-linked militia. After the takeover, government-backed militants **slaughtered hundreds of Christians and Alawites**. The Alawite religion is an esoteric form of Shia Islam which incorporates some Christian and Zoroastrian elements. Muslim extremists are very hostile to Alawites. An influential Islamic cleric who inspired the Salfist terrorist

movement said that Alawites are "even greater unbelievers than Christians or Jews." In March 2025 the Washington Post reported that hundreds of Alawites had been massacred. One of the victims was 25 year old Suleiman Rashid Saad. Muslim terrorists cut out Suleiman's heart and put it on top of his chest.

The score scale is:

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- 10% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, NO independent media allowed
- 20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed
- 30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults
- 40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)
- 70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)
- 90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee
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Execution for belief is rated at 0%. The militants who murdered Suleiman were agents of the Syrian government, even if they were not acting on direct government orders. **Syria's Freedom of Speech Rating is 0%.**

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## **Taiwan**

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**Clara Chou and Tsai Yu-Chen** - Clara Chou and Tsai Yu-chen, two talk show hosts in Taiwan, were sentenced to 18 months in prison for aggravated slander against a beauty pageant winner who was connected to Taiwanese political figures. However, the case was a legitimate prosecution for defamation. Chou and Yu-Chen knowingly spread false and malicious information about the beauty pageant winner, alleging that she had had an affair with the father of the current mayor of Taipei. Since prosecution of actual defamation is allowed under the US first amendment, Taiwan is not considered to have any political prisoners and **Taiwan receives a Freedom of Speech score of 90%**. If it had a constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech analogous to the US First Amendment, Taiwan would receive a score of 100%.

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## **United Kingdom**

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**Sam Melia** - British citizen Sam Melia was sentenced to two years in prison (released after 10 months) following his 2024 conviction for posting stickers which expressed illegal messages. In 2021, Mr. Melia posted stickers in public places with messages such as "It's OK to be White," "Nationalism is Nurture," and "We will be a minority in our homeland by 2066" as well as other, more offensive messages. Mr. Melia was arrested after police found the stickers in his wallet. Police then searched Mr. Melia's home where they found his fascist book collection which was used as evidence against him in court.

On March 1st, 2024 Mr. Melia was sentenced to two years in prison at Leeds Crown Court. Commenting on Melia's views, the sentencing judge Tom Bayliss KC said "The publication of this kind of material is corrosive to our society." The judge then said that Mr. Melia was "a racist and a white supremacist."

British prison authorities forbade Mr. Melia's wife from bringing their children to visit him in prison on the grounds that his children might be influenced by Melia's ideas.

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- 20% - Imprisoned for presenting forbidden ideas, independent media IS allowed
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- 90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee
- 100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 20% if the country allows independent media. The UK allows independent media. Sam Melia was released on good behavior after serving **10 months** of his two year sentence. Since he spent less than one year in prison, there is an additional 10% bonus. **The United Kingdom receives a Freedom of Speech Rating of 30%.**

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## **United States of America**

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**Douglass Mackey** - US twitter (X) user Douglass Mackey was given a seven month prison sentence after a politically motivated prosecution. The case stemmed from Mackey's 2016 posting of a meme which urged Hillary Clinton voters to "Avoid the line. Vote from home. Text 'Hillary' to 59925." While this speech could be construed as election interference which is not protected by the First Amendment, left-wing twitter (X) users posted identical content urging Trump voters to "[Skip poll lines at #Election2016 and TEXT in your vote! Text votes are legit. Or vote tomorrow on Super Wednesday!](#)" The left-wing posters were not charged, which suggests that political affiliation, not conduct, was the cause of Mackey's prosecution. Mackey was sentenced to seven months in prison, but did not serve any time

because his sentence was stayed until it was overturned by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

The score scale is:

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30% - Imprisoned for jokes, poems, or insults

40% - Imprisoned for the tone but not the content of ideas (e.g. blasphemy, koran burning)

70% - Speech punished by non-state actors (e.g. drug cartels, terrorist groups)

90% - No one is imprisoned for speech, but no Constitutional guarantee

100% - No one is imprisoned for speech, a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech

+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Since Mackey did not serve any time in prison, the **USA receives a Freedom of Speech Rating of 100%**. The USA is the only country in the world with a Constitutional guarantee of Freedom of Speech.

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**Why Not Mahmoud Khalil or Rumeysa Ozturk?** - Unlike Douglass Mackey, anti-Israel (and allegedly pro-Hamas) activists Mahmoud Khalil and Rumeysa Ozturk did spend time in prison for activities that courts found may have qualified as protected speech under the First Amendment (although the legal process is still ongoing.) For the purposes of the Freedom of Speech Ratings, we only consider cases where a government prosecutes its



own citizens for speech. Neither Ozturk nor Khalil are US citizens and their imprisonment was related to deportation proceedings. The fact is that every country has ideological litmus tests to receive a visa, and nearly every country has arrested and expelled visitors who have been found to have undesirable ideological beliefs. Since it is hard enough to get countries to care about the rights of their own citizens, these Freedom of Speech scorecards are focused on the rights of citizens to speak freely without retaliation from their own government. Nonetheless, the Khalil and Ozturk cases are cause for concern. If a US citizen were imprisoned for speech similar to Kahlil's or Ozturk's the USA would receive a 30% Freedom of Speech Rating.

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## **Venezuela**

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**Leopoldo López** - Leopoldo López, an opposition politician and founder of the Popular Will party, organized a rally at which he gave a speech condemning the corruption and disastrous economic policies of Nicolas Maduro. Later in the day, after López had left the rally, some of the rally-goers damaged property and clashed with police. López was held legally responsible for the crimes of the rally-goers. Venezuelan authorities charged López with public incitement to violence, association to commit crimes, arson and damage to public property. On September 10 2015 he was sentenced to **13 years 9 months in prison**.

In 2019 López was released to house arrest. The following year he escaped from Venezuela via the Spanish Embassy and travelled to Spain. Since 2025 Venezuela has been trying to get INTERPOL to arrest López, but he remains free in Spain.

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+10% bonus if the prison sentence was less than one year

Imprisonment for presenting forbidden ideas is rated at 20% if the country allows independent media and 10% if the country does not allow independent media. Venezuela does not allow independent media. **Venezuela's Freedom of Speech Rating is 10%.**

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**Pham Doan Trang** - Activist Pham Doan Trang criticized Vietnam's human rights record at the United Nations. The next year she was imprisoned by the Vietnamese government. Watchdog groups believe that her imprisonment is retaliation for her statements to the UN. Vietnam has broad cybersecurity laws which are used to persecute critics of the government. Even when dissenters flee to neighboring countries such as Thailand, the government of Vietnam pursues them for deportation. Trang was convicted of "conducting propaganda against the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam". She is serving a **nine year prison sentence**.

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**December 2025**  
**American Conservative Union**  
**Simon Laird**  
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