

# press freedom

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**Submission date:** 21-Oct-2022 12:35AM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 1930746633

**File name:** Press\_Freedom-7-17.pdf (383.88K)

**Word count:** 6304

**Character count:** 34815

# PRESS FREEDOM: USING CORRECT INFORMATION IN INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT BRIDLE

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## ABSTRACT

*The interpretation of Media Freedom in establishing a Harmonious Relationship between the Mass Media and the Government, vividly illustrates that the collection of information from informants is divided into several findings as stated in the theoretical literature on the discussion of chapter two. However, in fact it strengthens the theory of social responsibility, libertarian theory, development theory, and even the theory of democratic participation. However, there are research findings that require more in-depth research as new model research findings. This means that the freedom of the press in harmony between the mass media, government and society is used as a joint guideline (Guidelines Together), then discussed into a mutual understanding (Mutual Understanding/MU) as a guide for media practitioners and press staff in disseminating research journalism. This was done with a qualitative approach, which involved 20 informants consisting of media actors, government, academics, communication experts, and the public. The results showed that in interpreting the freedom of the press it should not only be in the pattern of freedom of one of the pillars only but in interpreting the freedom must be in freedom for a freedom to fully guarantee community involvement so that communities can acquire and exercise their rights as citizens. The government also assures the people to exercise their rights. In the perspective of freedom, this two -pillar pattern of freedom from and freedom for is important in order to provide a framework governed by press freedom.*

**Key words:** Press, Freedom, Information, Government, Bridle-Indonesia

## INTRODUCTION

The shift of government power from the New Order to the Reformation Order in press freedom in Indonesia is almost indistinguishable. Although during the reform order, threats to media institutions in the form of bans, repeal of SIT and cancellation of SIUPP were carried out in a more subtle way, almost non-existent. With the existence of Law Number 1999 article 4 namely:

1. Freedom of the press is guaranteed as a human right;
2. <sup>3</sup>ditional newspapers are not subject to censorship, ban, or ban on broadcasting;
3. To guarantee the freedom of the press, the national press has the right to seek, obtain, and disseminate ideas and information;
4. In holding the news accountable before the law, the journalist has the right to refuse. The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), which oversees broadcasting, must also provide guarantees for press freedom in Indonesia. Yet, in the midst of this spirit, the threat to journalists in carrying out their

duties still exists, in fact it is as if indistinguishable from the New Order era. For example, crimes against journalists in the performance of their journalistic duties are still ongoing.

Astratmadja (2012) recorded a series of press freedom cases in Indonesia at the time of the Reformation Order as shown in Table 1.3 below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Case</b>
2003-2004	Physical attacks on journalists and pressure on the press by (mass) rioters in the offices of newspaper companies <sup>4</sup>
	The kidnapping of two RCTI journalists, Ersu Siregar and Fery Santoro by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), and resulted in the death of Ersu Siregar in a shootout between TNI soldiers (Indonesian National Army) and GAM.
	Prohibition by military personnel for journalists at home and abroad to cover reporting on the conflict that occurred in Aceh.
2005-2007	The decision of the State Court that sentenced a journalist to prison for his journalistic work, among them are: Karim Papatungan and Supratman editor of Rakyat Merdeka Press, five- and six-months imprisonment respectively on 10 and 12 months of trials;
	Bambang Harymurti, editor -in -chief of Tempo magazine, sentenced to one year in prison for his journalistic work in Tempo magazine, which contained a caricature of DPR Chief Akbar Tanjung
	Three journalists Bambang Harymurti, Ahmad Taufik, and Tengku Iskandar Ali were decided to pay a fine of Rp. 500,000,000,- (five hundred million rupiah) or as much as RM 142,858
2010-2012	Ridwan Salamun, a SunTV reporter who was making news coverage was beaten by a community who was fighting in two nearby villages to death.
	Mangun was killed while investigating a civil fight in Tual, Maluku, and the three perpetrators of the murder were acquitted by the Maluku District Court.
	Alfrets Mirulean, editor of Pelangi Weekly was killed in Maluku while investigating the illegal trade in fuel, the perpetrators of which have not yet been revealed.
	Merauke TV journalist Ardiansyah Matra'is in Papua was killed when exploring the conflict in Papua.
	Muhammad Syaifullah, Head of the Kompas Press Bureau in Kalimantan died in a suspicious situation while investigating various illegal logging in Kalimantan, and to date there is still no explanation for the journalist's death.
	Muhammad Usman, a Radio 68H news reporter in Jakarta was arrested by security personnel from "Sinar Mas" company in Riau, a company that has networks with large businessmen in America, Europe, and China.
	Banjir Ambarita, a correspondent for Jakarta Globe and Vivanews.com in Jayapura, Papua, suffered serious injuries after being stabbed by two male motorcyclists, whose identities have not been revealed so far. The murder occurred when Ambarita covered about sexual harassment committed by a police officer against a detainee.
	Garuda Magazine, a magazine published by Garuda Indonesia flights, was fined Rp. 12.5 billion or as much as RM 3,571,429 by the Jakarta State Prosecutor's Office on the threat of Hutomo Mandala Putra alias Tommy, the youngest son of former President Soeharto.
	Suryadi Darma, a weekly newspaper reporter "Monitor Medan" was killed and his body was found in a ditch near his motorcycle in Lawe Two, Aceh, until now there is still no explanation on the perpetrators of the murder.
	Andri Jufri, KompasTV and Vivanews.com reporter was beaten by a motorcycle gang on his way home from Makassar while looking for news about the motorcycle gang's wild race.
Khoe Seng, a reader's letter writer at Pembaharuan Press and Warta Kota in Jakarta, was convicted and sentenced to six months in prison during a one -year probation period by the Jakarta State Court. Khoe Seng Seng's complaint about stall buying and selling transactions in the market to the detriment of buyers has been deemed to tarnish one's reputation.	

The various events above provide a solid picture and evidence of the threat to press freedom. This also explains that the press is no longer critical and causes journalists

to choose to make the news "normal" and reduce investigations. When this situation continues, people will lose their right to enjoy one of the dimensions of human rights, which is the human right to freedom of opinion. Society will lose the right to know, which is an important factor in shaping independent thinking is. The right to know information (right to know) needed in shaping and developing thoughts and opinions on the one hand and the right to express thoughts and opinions (right to speech) on the other. The murder of journalists in the course of their professional duties is the evidence that the freedom of journalists in Indonesia at the time of the reforms was under fundamental threat (Syaifullah, 2013). The phenomenon of attacks and violence against the media and journalists is the evidence of the lack of freedom of journalists. Worse, when the government stated that they could not afford to do anything to protect institutions and journalists from the acts of physical violence suffered by journalists at the time of this reform. Theoretically, this suggests that the existence of the press at the time of this reform was still inseparable from the authoritative press system. As explained by McQuail (2012) that an authoritative press system is a system in which the journalist has no freedom in his organization and work. The second *modus operandi* that hinders the freedom of journalists is lawsuits by individuals or groups against press institutions. This claim does not have an element of violence, but serves as a stern reminder for journalists to limit journalistic activities. Such demands can lower and disrupt the press institution in carrying out the social mission it bears.

Legal lawsuits against press institutions on the one hand are legitimate and educative instruments, but lawsuits on fabricated grounds can be instruments that impede the freedom of journalists. Journalists, who are supposed to convey information, are constrained by demands and warnings from the plaintiffs. Materially, the lives of Indonesian journalists are very simple and still face the threat of lawsuits. Threats against journalists forced the press administration to face the reality that the lawsuit could result in the institution going bankrupt and eventually thousands of officials would lose their jobs. This is a burden on the part of the administration of the press institution.

Legal lawsuits against journalists may interfere the freedom of journalists. While performing their duties, journalists are haunted by various demands and overshadowed by judges who accept bribes. As Ariyanti said, "... journalists investigate and dismantle to get information that the public should know, but at the same time they are overshadowed by lawyers who work with judges who accept bribes ..." (Ariyanti, 2010). This statement is reinforced by the report presented by Atmakusumah in his writing on "Our Press Freedom Declines" (Atmakusumah, 2012). In this case, the right to sue is not an instrument to uphold justice but it is an instrument that haunts the freedom of journalists. Restrictions on the freedom of journalists are not only detrimental to society, but are also capable of detrimental to the foundations of civilization. One of the efforts to protect and guarantee the freedom of journalists so that they are not disturbed is to provide protection for journalists in carrying out their journalistic duties professionally. The government is obliged to be responsible for human rights, as well as to provide protection to the freedom of journalists and to provide legal guarantees in legislation as stipulated in article 28 of the 1945 Constitution.

Libertarian theory and social responsibility theory can be used to explain the various cases that still occur. A study conducted by Andang (2009) found that there are still many criminal acts on press freedom despite the slogan of citizenship democracy has been launched by the government since the reform era to the present. Andang's study is in

line with UNESCO studies. Law enforcement can be the solution to press freedom while avoiding authoritarian power and oppression (Harris in UNESCO) (UNESCO, 2007).

In general, the freedom of journalists in the reform era was much better than the situation in the previous era. Entering the reform era, journalists experienced looser regulations. Although it must be admitted that criminal acts against journalists in this reform era are still going on. This means that, from a legal point of view, the government gives meaning and atmosphere to the freedom of journalists by opening up restrictions on freedom in general, especially the demand for reform in the field of journalists, which was never experienced during the New Order.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative inquiry is multi-method in focus; therefore, the investigation process is carried out with thematic analysis in stages through collecting data by means of in-depth interviews with 20 informants in Jakarta, Surabaya, Malang, and Makassar. Performing data analysis in order to select and combine themes in order to answer study questions as well as headers using the Nvivo10 program to improve the results of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Neither media freedom nor press freedom is basically interpreted as the behavior (activity) of the media that is responsible for the interests of society. This is because the responsibility of the media really belongs to the public. This philosophy is in line with the goal of creating a healthy media, because a healthy media will make a harmonious society and country.

### Responsible to the Public

In creating that responsibility, media practitioners need to be guided by the basic rules of compliance with the Law, the Code of Ethics, and Responsibility to the Public. The results of this study are in line with the opinion (Mahdi, 2015) which states that "freedom of the press is very useful for citizens to access civil rights, political participation, access to health and education programs, as well as maintain the power to fight corruption and misconduct. ....". Similarly, to the opinion (Siregar, 2011) who said, "Freedom that can be realized by the press covers a series of processes from public life (public fact), then becomes a public issue (public publication), and finally becomes a form of journalistic information published by the mass media".

The second view of the experts mentioned above further reinforces the results of this study that the interpretation of press freedom is grounded and accountable to the public interest. According to the researcher, press freedom can be interpreted depending on the perspective (point of view) of public interest, for which significant press freedom can be part of the process of public policy and public service in a democratic system of governance such as in Indonesia, which is the locus this research.

The individual is the most important fundamental element in interpreting the freedom of the press and the democratic system of government in Indonesia. Neither the social responsibility press theory nor the development press theory uses the civil society as a shield in running a serving and responsible newspaper, although the element of

serving the public has also not been specifically found in previous press theory.

### Legislation

Findings from the results of the selection of themes and sub-themes in accordance with the statement of the informant, rather than enforced by the Broadcasting Law which is the enforcement of Public Lands. The existence of the law becomes the backbone to guarantee the freedom of the press, at the same time the press is also responsible for not arbitrarily exercising their freedom. The law is to expand the life of the press in Indonesia in creating a harmonious relationship between the press with the public and the government. Consistent with the findings of the interviews found that the press law in Indonesia decides a number of things, namely the broadcasting law, the press law, and the Systematic Framework of state administration.

The analysis of the interviews found that the form of responsibility to the public as a whole is based on existing legislation including the 1945 Constitution Law (UUD) which guarantees the right to assemble, express opinions or do things permitted by law. Based on the 1945 Constitution, law enforcement must comply with four acts, namely Act 40 of 1999, Broadcasting Act, Electronic Transaction Information Act (ITE) and Public Information Disclosure Act (KIP).

Basically, the interpretation of media freedom from the interview results can be categorized as fully responsible to the public or the public who need to meet the legal criteria of the 1945 Constitution. The public, where the government or private institutions and institutions that receive budget assistance from the National Income and Expenditure Budget (APBN) or the District Income and Expenditure Budget (APBD) must provide information to the public transparently as the government's responsibility in managing people's money.

In line with the rules in the Public Information Disclosure Law (UU KIP) which requires Public Bodies or Public Institutions to be transparent, the press in interpreting press freedom must remain compliant with other legal provisions, so that the press is not free to publish news. In this case the press gives the freedom of the community who are readers, listeners, and viewers to come together to give feedback on the news. On the other hand, the press should also be ready to be monitored by the community or the board no matter where they are.

The interpretation of media freedom from the point of view of the 1945 Constitution stipulates that the mass media in broadcasting news to the public should be based on the Press Law, which the entire content of the law must be complied with fairly. One of the main conditions as the duty of the mass media is to comply with government regulations. Another condition as stated by the informant is that the press must be able to self-censor, so that the granting of freedom of the press must be able to realize as expected by the Press Law and related laws, especially the 1945 Constitution.

The role of the press as an agent of government information dissemination is further strengthened by the Press Law which outlines media control management procedures including:

1. Legal;
2. Limited;

3. Self -filtering and
4. Freedom.

In general, this is a convergence of four previous press theories including theories of democratic participation and development. Meanwhile, the findings of the study related to the item "cooperation between the media and the press with the government and society" in the interpretation of press freedom create a harmonious relationship as presented by the informant must meet the conditions:

1. There is similarity of perception;
2. Formulate benefits and harms and
3. The Press Council should be firm.

### Code of Ethics

Findings from the results of the selection of themes and sub-themes are in accordance with the informant's statement that practicing the Code of Ethics well by enforcing Behaving Honestly, the media or press should practice with attention,

1. Joint load,
2. Control each other,
3. Journalistic skills,
4. Improve quality and
5. Balanced.

It means the media when exercising freedom by practicing the process of achieving results rather than making into information truthfully with constraints from the government. Also need a barrier from the inside by running the 5 things above.

Findings of the study related to the Freedom of the Press which is responsible based on the Code of Ethics with the enforcement of Be Honest, as a whole clarifies that the media in this case journalists must present information correctly and prioritize in through the information product process there is a shared burden or responsibility, internal strength of the media as well should control each other, meaning take care of each other so that the news product from the media is broadcast properly. Other internal strengths as a condition of running the Code of Ethics well, then must be supported by skilled journalists, quality chairmen, other than that the whole news product must be balanced (cover both sides).

The findings of the study related to Press Freedom which is responsible based on the Code of Ethics with Dignified, as a whole clarifies that the media must convey information correctly and prioritize in through the information product process, the inner strength of the media should maintain dignity, based on the Code of Ethics, should be Restricted. Therefore, adopting the Code of Ethics by enforcing dignified currents carries out the above 4 restrictions well. The findings of the study related to Press Freedom which is based on the Code of Ethics enforced by Ethical Professionals, as a whole clarifies that the media must convey information correctly and prioritize in through the information product process, correctly and continuously perform Check and Recheck, always internal control itself with quality, and willing to grant the Right of Liability when there is an error or mistake from an internal staff to the public detriment.

Findings from the results of the Press Freedom study by obtaining the enforcement of Be Honest, Dignified, and Ethical Professionals, mean that in such practice, the media

or press should be free to access information as much as possible with restrictions as the results of the study on this issue. Also, free to communicate dengan the other party without pressure from anything, except control from within the media with journalistic skills and quality. It is as stated that: "Freedom of the press is about two main things; free to access as much information as possible and free to communicate with others without pressure from anything" (Behmer, nd). Therefore, responsible media freedom in terms of the responsibility of Freedom of the Press is based on the Code of Ethics with the enforcement of Being Honest, Dignified, and Professionally Ethical explained that the media should maintain its dignity with: professionals in order to produce news products from the right group of published information.

The findings of this study showed that freedom of the press not only means freedom from government pressures and obstacles as was once experienced in the time of the old order and the new order. But it is also free from the pressure of the interests of capital owners and internal bureaucracy in the press itself. Jamhur Poti said that:

"Freedom of the press may initially only be construed as the freedom to disseminate information and thoughts through the media without any restrictions from the authorities, now increasing not only freedom from, but also freedom to. Which freedom of the press is freedom that includes external freedom and internal external freedom is a guarantee of independence for the press to publish news writing without any interference from other parties. Meanwhile, internal freedom is the freedom of the press in news written and broadcast without threats from within, such as the party bureaucracy of the media institution itself" (Poti, 2011).

According to the researcher, in interpreting the <sup>4</sup>freedom of the press should not only be in the pattern of freedom of one of the pillars as stated by Poti (2011) above, namely the freedom of the press in performing its role (freedom from). But in interpreting the freedom must be in the pattern of two pillars as said by Poti above, namely freedom for. A freedom to fully guarantee community involvement so that communities can acquire and exercise their rights as citizens. The government also assures the people to exercise their rights. In the perspective of freedom, this two-pillar pattern of freedom from and freedom for is important in an effort to provide a framework governed by press freedom. Similarly, the laws incorporated into the regulations set out the two pillars of freedom that foster understanding between the media, the public and the government. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 40 of 1999 on the Press has guaranteed a pattern of freedom of those who seat both pillars in one hand balanced between the media, the public and the government.

According to Lesmana (2005), Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press as enshrined in Article 2, asserts that "freedom of the press is one of the most popular manifestations of sovereignty based on the principles of democracy, justice and the rule of law," clause it is very clear that the press is positioning itself as the executor of the people's sovereignty, or "the arm of the people". Because the country belongs to the people, freedom must be widely emphasized to carry out the mandate of the people before. Similarly, Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 32 of 2002 on broadcasting has emphasized the two poles of the pattern of press freedom through broadcasting reform from centralized to decentralized. Both of the laws mentioned above provide morale and ethics. At the same time, this position places the government as dominant in interpreting press freedom. Freedom of the press as an important element in democracy in the long run, by making the people as the goal and ethic to maintain dignity in carrying out the meaning of



freedom of the press.

## CONCLUSION

The interpretation of press freedom by being able to provide true information to the public with the constraints of the Indonesian government shows that in principle, the press obtains information from information providers and all information in practice must meet the stipulations as research findings. In other words, the media as well as the press, media practitioners as well as press staff as collectors of raw information from information providers, must publish true, authentic and quality information. In saying this, "Freedom of the press also affects the level of literacy and education in a country. The media is not only about reporting but also a broader understanding of society" (UNESCO, 2008). Therefore, a healthy media and press is a key condition of press freedom as the media should be restricted (according to law). Media owners should produce newspapers with sufficient capital, skilled in newspaper management, understand and comprehend the rules and regulations regarding newspapers as well as related laws. As stated by informant 12 that, "The Broadcasting Law does indeed stipulate the freedom of journalists. There are even two regulations on the protection of freedom of journalistic work, namely through the Press Law and the Broadcasting Act for staff on radio and television, and the ITE Law for staff on social media".

Media practitioners and press staff must be skilled in managing information to be used as newspaper products, whether in the form of print media, electronic media or social media/websites/online such as, "A lot of pressure to threats to the American, Chinese, and Russian media because of what reportedly considered to be disruptive to national stability" (Dunham, 2013).

Interpret freedom of the press by being able to provide accurate information with the constraints of the Indonesian government, provide professional guidance to media owners, media practitioners, and press staff in carrying out duties in accordance with the profession, as well as the truth of information communication and information collection useful for personal and social development. They also have the right to seek, acquire, possess, store, process, and communicate information using all types of existing channels. "Press freedom in the third world is understood in a limited sense and is not completely free so that one freedom does not eliminate another" (Oloyede, 2005).

The results show that in interpreting the freedom of the press should not only be in the pattern of freedom of one of the pillars only but in interpreting the freedom must be in freedom for. A freedom to fully guarantee community involvement so that communities can acquire and exercise their rights as citizens. The government also assures the people to exercise their rights. In the perspective of freedom, this two-pillar pattern of freedom from and freedom for is important in an effort to provide a framework governed by press freedom. Similarly, laws are incorporated into regulations that set out the two pillars of freedom that foster understanding between the media, the public and the government. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 40 of 1999 on the Press has guaranteed a pattern of freedom of those who involve both pillars balanced among the media, public and government

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