

# The New Press Index: Varying Effects of Press Freedom and its Relation to Citizen Journalism

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A free press exists to disseminate information essential to sustaining an informed public that defends and advances a free world. Today, 77% of the world lives with suppressed sources of information as global press freedom hit the lowest point in over a decade in 2015. While formal chains of journalism fight the decline in press freedom, the turn of the century has brought about unprecedented technological advancements resulting in the rise of citizen journalism. Media scholars have focused on identifying distinctions between the two, but I posit that emphasis must also be put on identifying and analyzing the connections and effects one has on the other. The existing models of journalism are in the process of shifting globally and show no definitive path to the future. Understanding the connection between these two phenomena provide benefits including safety of citizen journalists and protection of formal journalists' rights to information. These newfound understandings will lead to a definitive future of global journalism. This inquiry analyzes both chains of journalism within Eritrea, Iran, and Syria from 2002-2015, the thirteen years of consecutive press freedom decline, to identify trends that establish a relationship between press freedom and citizen journalism. Eritrea, Iran, and Syria fell 28, 36, and 30 places respectively in Freedom House Project's annual status of the press report. This project employs empirical research methods through document analysis of the three countries with the intent to establish underlying themes between citizen journalism and press freedom. My research revealed the existence of citizen journalism's relation to local activism and the conspicuous collective theme of government suppression as a main limitation to the success of both chains of journalism. These findings reinforce the importance of citizen journalism and reveal its future as a part of the 'new normal' in the global information dissemination process.