

The Media Association Jamaica Limited (MAJ) is pleased to note that the 2013 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranked Jamaica in 13th place, topping the Western Hemisphere.

Sadly, across the world, media workers continue to be impacted by the various tactics employed by some to limit press freedom; the most severe being physical harm and even murder. In Jamaica, while we have been fortunate to avoid that extreme fate, we would err to become complacent and must move to ensure protection of this freedom.

While it is true that our society has benefitted from a relatively free press, given the severity of our country's challenges, we have a need for an even greater degree of press freedom, one which would better enable our journalists to ferret out the corruption which is pervasive at all levels. The media must be allowed to play our critical role for Jamaicans, on whose behalf we gather and disseminate information in defense of our democracy.

In order to tackle these serious challenges we must expedite the implementation of changes to Jamaica's archaic libel laws. We must also continue rigorous debate on the current broadcast regulatory proposals which, if implemented, could severely threaten the financial viability of most industry players.

So while 13th place is commendable, the MAJ will continue to lobby for an even greater degree of press freedom, consistent and fair legal and regulatory practices, acceptable self-regulation and journalistic responsibility with a view to moving Jamaica even further up the ranking.