

## **INTRODUCTION**

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This e-book is the result of a panel organized in the Fifth European Congress of African Studies (ECAS 5) that took place in Lisbon in June 2013. We thought of organizing this panel on “Press Freedom and Right to Information in Africa” since the question of freedom, especially press freedom, is presently extremely important in all African countries. However, it is not yet well known, both in the academic context and by the public.

With rare exceptions (Cape Verde can represent this category, in the group of countries analyzed in this e-book), all African countries are ranked low according to the international index of press freedom. The majority of them (such as Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan) occupies the last positions in this international index.

Although this kind of rankings can be sometimes criticized for the methodologies used nobody can deny the difficulties facing free press in Sub-Saharan Africa. The link with the process of democratization of the continent is immediate: in fact, one of the axis of democratization is the political power’s level of tolerance towards the “fourth power”. This relationship is rarely embedded in Africa in a mutual respect between political and media power, which means that the room for investigating “hot issues” is extremely reduced, thus highly limiting the desirable “watchdog” role of the media.

The articles gathered in this volume share a reflection on journalism and right to information in some African countries. It was impossible to cover a large number of African States, so we privileged research resulting from the ECAS 5 panel communications, asking for further contributions from colleagues with large experience on this issue, even if they have not participated in this Congress.

Tilo Grätz is the author of the first article. It presents an exhaustive overview of the situation of journalism in Benin, discussing the difficulties and advances of media freedom in this francophone African country. Grätz argues that indirect modes of censorship and daily working conditions may also obstruct the improvement of press freedom. However, journalists, especially younger and engaged, are creatively facing these challenges.

Miguel de Barros and Fátima Tchumá Camará present a study on community radios in Guinea Bissau. Here, they underline the importance and the difficulties of this pivotal means of communication in one of the poorest countries of Africa, as an instrument to increase the sense of citizenship of people living in conditions of marginality.

Luca Bussotti draws a picture of media freedom in Mozambique, starting from its legal framework to the identification of the various phases Mozambican press experienced. This study basically analyses the relationship between media freedom and political power.

Mário Fonseca and Júlio Manjate carry out an analysis on the Mozambican newspapers coverage of environmental questions. This is a new perspective, since till today there was no available research on this important issue for Mozambican journalism.

Redy Wilson Lima offers a clear and original perspective on journalism in Cape Verde, focusing the local press coverage of urban violence and more specifically the conflict between gangs.

Finally, the Angolan journalist Ana Margoso shows how Angolan journalism has been losing independence from the political power in the past years. Through an active experience on the field, Ana Margoso points out the nature of constraints Angolan journalists are facing especially after the end of civil war.

We warmly thank the Centro de Estudos Internacionais of ISCTE-IUL, Lisbon, for the opportunity to publish this e-book. We hope it will be able to draw the attention of scholars, journalists and lay people too, since this important issue is one of the pillars for the establishment of real democratic regimes in Africa.