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India press freedom score falls, says Reporters sans Frontieres

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slipped in their rankings. The government has in the past dismissed international rankings of freedoms in India as propaganda.

Norway and Denmark topped the RSF table while Eritrea was at the bottom, with Syria just ahead of it. The government has in the past dismissed international rankings of freedoms in India as misinformed and propaganda driven.

“Press freedom around the world is being threatened by the very people who should be its guarantors — political authorities,” RSF said, noting that press freedoms fell by an average 7.6 points globally.

The press freedom questionnaire covers five categories — political context, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context and security. Scores for India dropped (worsened) in all but the security indicator.

“India’s media has fallen into an ‘unofficial state of emergency’ since Narendra Modi came to power in 2014 and engineered a spectacular rapprochement between his party, the BJP, and the big families dominating the media,” the RSF country file on India said. Reference is also made to “Godi media” as mixing populism and pro-BJP propaganda. Indian journalists who are very critical of the government are subjected to harassment campaigns by BJP-backed trolls, the India country report says.

“Yes, the elections context matters massively in India. I think this is one of the countries where there’s a perception of authorities participating in sort of mass disinformation and propaganda campaigns,” Rebecca Vincent, a Director at RSF said, at a briefing organised by the Foreign Press Association in London, to launch the index release.

Ms Vincent said that among the countries going to the polls this year, the U.S. was the most concerning in terms of press freedoms, including because of the global impact developments there had. The U.S.

“We saw the catastrophic effects globally of the first the Trump presidency and his attitude towards media, who were labeled enemies of the state and treated as such on on the campaign trail,” she said. The U.S. press freedom score fell from 71.22 to 66.59 and its rank deteriorated from 45 to 55.