

Historical Developments The earliest attempts to establish a popular press in what is now Syria had to contend with the highly restrictive laws of the Ottoman Empire. It also included provisions protecting freedom of speech and the right to access public information (Article 3), as well as eliminating prior censorship of content "if the media does not fail its responsibilities" (Article 6). Under the law, the Ministry of Information is responsible for evaluating applications, issuing and revoking licenses to private media organizations, monitoring the operations of media outlets, and issuing accreditation and press credentials to non-Syrian journalists who wish to operate in the country (Article 22). The law, however, keeps in place the broad restrictions on content that "harms national unity," "incites sectarian or confessional strife," and "harms state symbols," and all unauthorized content on the armed forces (Article 12). The first comprises regions that have remained under the control of the central government (in particular, the coastal regions of Latakia and Tartus, the cities of Homs and Hama, and the capital Damascus) reflect, more or less, a continuation of the authoritarian logics of the Syrian regime from pre-2011 with only limited attempts at upgrading and reforming the system. In northeastern Syria, Kurdish forces, led by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), established a de facto autonomous region--Rojava--with its own largely independent institutional and regulatory frameworks and media, which comprises the third media environment.