

Afrika

Political tensions in Africa

The long crisis in Ethiopia (150th) that began with the November 2005 round-ups began to abate in the spring of this year with the acquittal of some of the imprisoned journalists. An additional step was achieved in July with the release of leaders of the opposition party that had been accused of trying to overthrow the government, and with them, the release of the last of their journalist co-defendants. As a result, Ethiopia has risen from the botting rungs of the ranking even if the frequent imprisonment of journalists, the climate of self-censorship and the unclear status of political prisoners, including two Eritrean journalists captured in Somalia, still weigh heavily.

Another year has gone by in Democratic Republic of Congo (133rd) in which journalists were killed. The way the authorities handled the murder of Radio Okapi journalist Serge Maheshe in June is indicative of the climate of impunity and injustice, one sustained by the government's open contempt for the press. This explains why the country remains stuck in the red zone.

As for Niger (87th), where Moussa Kaka, the correspondent of RFI and Reporters Without Borders, is facing the possibility of a life sentence, its position does not reflect the enormous step backwards it took with his arrest on 20 September (after the 1 September cut-off date for this year's ranking). Until then, Niger had been regarded as a country with significant problems (arrests, censorship and threats). But now it has taken the road of the authoritarian regimes at the bottom of the index.