

# **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO COUNTRY REPORT**

## **For the Quebec Plan of Action**

### **Part A: Freedom of Expression**

#### **Section 1: Overview**

##### **1.1 Executive Summary**

Freedom of the press and freedom of expression are basic rights enshrined in the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution. Trinidad and Tobago has signed international treaties and agreements related to freedom of expression, including the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of Chapultepec, and the OAS Declaration, along with specific documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights.

In 2002, the national government signed the Inter-American Press Association's declaration on press freedom.

Though the laws permit free expression, these are limited by restrictions on infringements on the rights of others, and on matters related to national security. Furthermore, despite the constitutional guarantees, specific experiences suggest that the exercise of those freedoms is not always effectively practiced.

Though there are public pronouncements of State commitment to freedom of expression, limitations and manipulation of existing national political and administrative systems compromise the dissemination of some information, thought and creative work.

##### **1.2 Commitments Under the Quebec Plan of Action**

In the Quebec Plan of Action, the participating governments declared that it was necessary "to ensure that national legislation on freedom of expression is applied in an equal manner to all, respecting this liberty and access to information for all citizens, and for States to ensure that journalists and opinion leaders are free to investigate and publish without fear of reprisals, harassment or vindictive actions, including the misuse of anti-defamation laws."

The proposal was also made "to support the work of the inter-American human rights system in the area of freedom of expression through the Special Rapporteur of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR), to promote the dissemination of works of comparative law, and to ensure that national legislation on freedom of expression meets international legal obligations."

Freedom of expression is a right established by numerous charters of fundamental principles, such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Its basic proposal is that any man or woman, whatever his or her station in life, can disseminate what he or she thinks or believes, without prior censorship and using any wording, language, means

or media, subject only to limits established by law aimed solely at ensuring recognition and respect of the rights and liberties of others and satisfying the just demands of the public order and the general welfare of a democratic society. Among these limitations on expression are the prohibition of pro-war propaganda and expressions of national, racial or religious hatred, which constitute incitements to discrimination, hostility or genocide.

### **1.3 Restrictions on freedom of expression in Trinidad and Tobago**

Freedom of expression does not exist without the opportunity to exercise it. Though the statistics point to a number of existing media – radio, television, newspapers, cable, Internet – accessibility remains an issue with related factors such as:

- Economic control of media institutions.
- Ethnic or political bias in operations of State media and in the State's treatment of requests for equality of treatment for particular forms of religious and cultural expressions.
- Legal limitations – the need for licenses to own and operate media institutions.
- Inaccessibility of new technologies by large segments of the population.
- High levels of functional illiteracy (the ability to read and understand a newspaper, for instance), which affects people's understanding and informed analysis of national issues.
- Limited educational and training opportunities for journalists.
- Low compensation packages offered to workers in the media industry, which means that the most competent/most qualified do not stay in the profession.
- Other legal limitations/restrictions - Criminal, civil and military laws that restrict freedom of expression. These include the Libel and Defamation Law, the Summary Offences Act, and provisions to restrict free expression at times of emergency. Laws that makes it easy for an individual or group to prevent publication of an article, and others that place the onus on a person to prove that the State is "ill-intentioned" in situations of bias or discrimination, also act as hindrances to freedom of expression. Clauses for protection on grounds of issues of National Security are also invoked when Government does not want to release information to the public.
- High penalties, fines - Persons who do not respect legal restrictions on the freedom of expression may be subject to severe penalties of imprisonment or fines and both pre-emptive (prior to circulation) and after the fact (post-circulation) court action/orders through the Libel and Defamation Act.

No allegations of violations of the freedom of expression have been presented to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission during the past year, but the Hindu organization Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha won an action in a local high court, claiming Government discriminated against the organisation by not considering the organisation's application for a radio broadcast licence. Several other cases have been brought before the courts involving violations of freedom of expression by journalists/photographers against police officers, other officials and individuals hampering/restricting performance of their duties. Some of these are still pending court judgments.

There are no avenues locally, apart from the courts of law, and a Media Complaints Committee (which has no legal powers) to lodge complaints of abuse or violation of

the freedom of expression. Persons are not aware that they can direct complaints to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights.

There have been several cases involving obstruction of the dissemination of information, and threats against journalists, mainly covert, and some censorship of media or programs through:

- Pressure from third parties on media sponsors to withdraw support from a program in five or more cases
- Pressure from media sponsors to withdraw a program due to its content
- Financial pressure from creditors on a media outlet due to the content published in three or four cases
- Journalists, though not exiled, have been displaced by corporate manoeuvrings; outspoken ones have had columns terminated

There is some evidence of subtle restrictions on freedom of expression due to membership in an ethnic group, nationality, gender, religion or minority group.

#### **1.4 Communications media in Trinidad and Tobago**

Trinidad and Tobago has three daily English-language newspapers, several weekly newspapers, four television stations, 21 radio stations, two cable companies and one direct-to-home TV provider. The country also is served by an expanding Internet network.

A licensing system exists to operate radio and television. Specific licenses are granted in categories of national or community (localised) programming and for ethnic-centred programming.

The country's diverse ideological and cultural currents are largely reflected in the leading communications media, but many local communities, ethnic and minority groups, and others do not have public guarantees of control over their own communications media (local press, community radio, local television, etc.). This is restricted by the licensing system.

And while there are anti-monopoly laws and regulations, they are not enforced for the communications media. In effect, ownership of the communications media – radio, television, print and magazines - is relatively concentrated to a few owners. There are no laws, apart from general labour laws, covering rights and duties in the relationship between journalists and owners of communications media outlets; though each institution imposes its own regulations on journalists on signing employment contracts.

Public confidence in the communications media is generally low, in relation to all of print and electronic media. Television enjoys the lowest public confidence, newspaper second lowest, and radio perhaps moderate public confidence.

##### ***1.4.1 Artistic Expression:***

Public and private funds do exist to support the arts, and there is some state facilitation and promotion of artistic production and dissemination (e.g., tax exemptions, laws favouring donations).

No works have been censored, or exhibitions closed down, during the 2000-2002 period, although annually there are calls for banning of specific calypsos with perceived racial and ethnic bias.

#### ***1.4.2 Non-media citizen expression***

The population's right to stage public demonstrations is overtly respected, but the requirement that demonstrators must have police permission to stage a demonstration allows room for restricting the public right to stage demonstration, with behind-the-scenes political manipulation.

#### ***1.4.3 New technologies***

Less than 10 percent of the population has an Internet connection, and less than 20 percent has access to the Internet.

Objective opportunities for citizens to express themselves freely are available, largely through radio, with limited opportunities through the print media and even less through television.

This is exacerbated by the fact that functional illiteracy (the ability to read and understand a newspaper or application form) is higher than has previously been acknowledged, and may be as high as 30 to 40 percent.

So while citizens may be disposed to express themselves, their ability to express views that are informed is limited.

There have been reports of police attempts to prevent journalists from conducting their duties, to refuse licenses for proposed marches and suppress demonstrations against poor service from public utilities (water, lights, roads, housing) in particular.

## **Section 2: Mechanisms that guarantee freedom of expression**

### **2.1 Freedom of Expression laws**

#### ***2.1.1 International Laws & Treaties:***

Trinidad and Tobago subscribes to principles on freedom of expression outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of Chapultepec and the OAS Declaration, along with specific documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights. In 2002, it also signed the Inter-American Press Association's declaration on press freedom.

#### ***2.1.2 The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago:***

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, the supreme law of the land, specifically guarantees citizens:

- the right to join political parties and to express political views
- freedom of thought and expression
- freedom of association and assembly
- freedom of the press

### **Section 3: Mechanisms that put freedom of expression into practice**

#### **3.1 The media**

Trinidad and Tobago has three daily (English) newspapers, several weekly newspapers, four television stations, 21 radio stations, two cable companies and one direct-to-home TV provider. It is also served by an expanding Internet network. A licensing system exists to operate electronic media – radio and television. Specific licenses are granted in categories of national or community (localised) programming and for ethnic-centred programming.

##### ***3.1.1 Newspaper***

The three daily newspapers and several weekly newspapers all operate under private ownership. All cater to the two islands.

##### ***3.1.2 Television***

Four television stations exist, three of which have national (Trinidad and Tobago) outreach service. There are some 400 television sets available per 1,000 people in Trinidad and Tobago.

Of the four television stations, two – Caribbean Communications Network and Gayelle TV – are privately owned, while two – Trinidad & Tobago Television (TTT) and The Information Channel (TIC) – are state-owned. The privately-run TV6 and Government-owned TTT and TIC offer a blend of domestically-made programmes, but with a 90 to 95 percent imported programme content. Gayelle's format is for the reverse, as it offers some 80 to 90 percent regional content.

##### ***3.1.3 Radio***

Radio remains the most popular, widespread and most easily accessible media for the majority of the population. Individual stations have developed niche markets that broadly cater to ethnic listeners of the two major races in the country, Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians.

Some 700,000 radio sets (584 per 1,000 people) are fed by the 21 radio stations through AM 2 and FM 12.

The Government-owned National Broadcasting Network (of which TTT is a part) operates three radio stations on the FM band – 100 FM, 98.9 FM, and 91.1 FM, as well as 610 on the AM band. Of those, two are ethnic-based, with 98.9 FM catering

mainly to the tastes of Afro-Trinidadian listeners and 91.1 FM to Indo-Trinidadian listeners.

Private ownership also operate ethnic-focused media: Clico Communications operates Radio 90.5 FM for Indian programming; Ebony 104 for non-Indian music and culture and 97 FM for easy listening.

The privately owned Trinidad Broadcasting Company operates Radio Trinidad (730 AM), Sangeet 106.1 FM, and 95.1 FM.

Other ethnic-centred, privately owned radio stations are Radio i95.5 FM, Power 102 FM, 93.3 FM and 105 FM, all of which cater largely to the non-Indo-Trindidian population. Indo-centred stations include 103 FM, 90.5 FM, Radio Shakti 94.1 FM, and Masala Radio 101 FM.

Radio Toco and the Eastern Voice Community Newspaper in 1999 combined operations to form the Radio Toco/Eastern Voice Community Communications network.

Tobago is served by Radio Tambrin.

### **3.2 New Media: Internet**

There are some six Internet hosts in Trinidad and Tobago, according to the ITU (International Telecommunication Union), and 17 Internet service providers (serving some 150,000 Internet users, or 103 per 1,000 people). Users access these services through some 100,000 personal computers (68 per 1,000) and an unknown number of corporate ones. **This represents some 0.01 Internet use per 1,000 people.**

## **Section 4: Mechanisms that restrict/regulate freedom of expression**

### **4.1 Legislative mechanisms**

#### ***4.1.1 Libel and Defamation Act***

The Libel and Defamation Act, which dates back to 1946 (amended 1950), is the main law that governs free expression in Trinidad and Tobago.

This Act states in part that:

*“... in any action for a libel contained in any public newspaper or other periodical publication, it is sufficient for the defendant to plead that the libel was inserted in the newspaper or other periodical publication without actual malice, and without gross negligence, and that before the commencement of the action, or at the earliest opportunity afterwards, he inserted in the newspaper or other periodical a full apology for the libel, and every such defendant upon filing such plea, be at liberty to pay into court a sum of money by way of amends for the injury sustained by the publication of the libel; and the payment into the court shall be of the same effect and be available in the same manner and to the same extent as any payment into court under the rules of the Supreme Court.”*

Within the Libel and Defamation Act, Section 10 (1) states that:

*“On the trial of any indictment for a defamatory libel, the defendant having pleaded the plea as mentioned in this section, the truth of the matters charged may be inquired into, but shall not amount to a defence unless it was for the public benefit that the matters should be published; and to entitle the defendant to give evidence of the truth of the matters charged as a defence to the indictment, it shall be necessary for the defendant in pleading to the indictment to allege the truth of the matters charged in the manner required in pleading a justification to an action for defamation, and further to allege that it was for the public benefit that the matters charged should be published, to which plea the prosecutor shall be at liberty to reply generally denying the whole thereof; but if after the plea the defendant is convicted on the indictment, it shall be competent to the Court pronouncing sentence to consider whether the guilt of the defendant is aggravated or mitigated by the plea, and by the evidence given to prove or disprove it.”*

This makes investigative reporting virtually impossible, as any individual, corporation or group can apply to a court to stop publication of an article on a plea of libel, with the onus of proof being on the media house that it is in the public interest. To avoid the complications and costs of court process, media houses therefore generally shy away from investigations.

#### **4.1.2 Summary Offences Act**

Amendments to the Summary Offences Act require that permits for public meetings and rallies be applied for 48 hours in advance instead of 24 hours, and make it an offence to hold a public meeting without a permit under the guise of conducting an exempted religious, educational, recreational, or sports function.

There have been several instances in which individuals, groups and organisations, including political organisations, have been denied the required advance permits for street marches, demonstrations, or other outdoor public meetings.

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respect this right in practice.

The Government limits the number of foreign missionaries allowed to enter the country to 30 per denomination. Missionaries have to meet standard requirements for an entry visa, must represent a registered religious group, and cannot remain in the country for more than three (3) years.

Citizens occasionally complain about the efforts of some groups to proselytise in neighbourhoods where another religion is dominant. The most frequent public complaints have come from Hindu religious leaders against evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. Such complaints mirror the racial tensions between the Afro-Trinidadian and Indo-Trinidadian communities.

#### **4.2 Government agencies and other regulatory bodies**

#### ***4.2.1 Telecommunications Authority***

In 2004, Government introduced for discussion a new policy for the development and regulation of the broadcast industry, which includes introducing competition in the cable and direct-to-home satellite TV sectors to curtail monopoly. It also introduces several forms of curtailment of freedom of expression, including further licenses. It recommended that if a monopoly persists, Government shall consider bringing rates in this area under the Telecommunications Authority. The Authority comes under the Telecommunications Act.

The document states that Government views as unacceptable the existence of monopolies in the cable and direct TV sectors or any other area of the broadcasting sector. In order to introduce competition, it states Government shall work toward offering additional licenses for both wired and wireless services.

Cable and satellite TV operators shall be required to make available devices which will give subscribers the option to block access to channels and programming which their subscribers consider unsuitable for viewing.

The Telecommunications Authority, under which cable and satellite TV may be placed if a monopoly continues, will be the regulatory body for all matters pertaining to the broadcast industry.

The document also states that Government will enter into dialogue with the industry to decide on a voluntarily imposed quota for local content on local TV and radio stations.

Government proposes to provide exposure to, and development of local culture through development of a public broadcasting service. Spectrum will be reserved in the FM broadcast band plan for the provision of the service.

The document conveys the belief that Tobago has been largely underserved by existing licensees, and proposes more stringent steps to ensure that when national broadcast licenses are issued, transmission in Tobago is given equal priority. The new policy document also states that award of community licenses will be subjected to more stringent scrutiny.

Where the Internet is concerned, Government policy includes developing effective mechanisms to deal with matters such as promotion of a rating and filtering system to help users control Internet exposure in the home, illegal material on the Internet and intellectual property rights.

Government will also call on the industry to present an effective broadcast code of practice for delivery of services. This includes effective means of redress when service standards are not met.

Should the broadcast industry fail to meet the challenge, Government will then pursue an effective regime of consumer protection through an institutional framework and relevant legislation.



Government also proposes to encourage the broadcast industry to take account of the special circumstances of disabled people.

#### ***4.2.2 Board of Film Censors***

A Board of Film Censors is authorized to ban films it considers to be against public order and decency or contrary to the public interest. This includes films that it believes may be controversial in matters of religion, seditious propaganda, or race. In practice, films are rarely prohibited.

#### ***4.2.3 Media Complaints Committee***

There is a Media Complaints Council to which members of the public can bring grievances and complaints against the media.

#### ***4.2.4 The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago***

Members of the local media can join The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT), a professional organisation that sometimes engages in self-analysis and self-censorship and in promoting ethical standards and education among journalists.

### **Section 5: Structure of Media Organisations**

#### **5.1 Ownership and control**

Two television stations and three radio stations are government-owned and government-controlled. All other media operations are privately owned, and all of the print media are owned by private conglomerates or business interests.

#### **5.2 State and Media**

Despite the guarantees enshrined in the Constitution of freedom of the press and freedom of expression, Government has a considerable level of control over freedom of expression through:

- Control over the state-owned media
- Its power to license private media organisations
- Its power to hinder/facilitate foreign exchange for their purchase of newsprint and other supplies by private media owners
- Its power to hinder/facilitate the functions of the business conglomerates who operate media houses or seek Government favours
- Its exercise of power over freedom of assembly and public demonstrations through stipulations (eg. the need to get a permit to stage public demonstrations, and that in the presence of large contingents of law-enforcement officers).

There exists a high level of public perception of Governmental bias in policy decisions of granting media licenses and facilitating the exercise of free expression.

Successive Governments have also been hostile to the media and media workers. Both the current Government and the former, now in Opposition, have established

patterns of public hostility towards the media. In January 2004, the current Prime Minister called on members of the ruling People's National Movement (PNM) to protect the party against "attacks" by the media.

### **5.3 Censorship through the Law**

The existing law makes it virtually impossible for the courts to rule in favour of charges of discrimination by the state, because complainants must prove not only that they were treated unequally, but also that there was "bad intentions" on the part of the state.

In the history of Trinidadian law, there are only three successful cases of discrimination. They are: *Smith v LJ Williams Co Ltd*; *CCN v the State*; and, recently, the *Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha v the State*.

A high court ruled on February 5, 2004, that the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, a Hindu religious organisation, was not treated equally by the Trinidad and Tobago Government when it was bypassed for a radio broadcast license in favour of Citadel Ltd, owned by a Government supporter/sympathiser.

That judge stated that inaction by the Cabinet in dealing with the SDMS' application "constituted a constructive refusal of the licenses and is a prima facie case of unequal treatment."

It is noteworthy that powerful corporations and organisations brought the above-named cases. An average man in the street has never succeeded in bringing a case of discrimination in the history of the legal system. That is because one needs to prove discrimination that is oftentimes secreted in the bosom of the discriminator; discrimination that is hidden in the records of the service commissions and the administration offices, or in Cabinet minutes, management and Board decisions and clandestine meetings, which are inaccessible to the public. (*See section on Access to Information*)

Citizens must prove that the action was hostile, intentional and deliberate – a virtually impossible task. This amounts to the judicial imposition of an almost insurmountable burden of proving intention and "bad faith," which undermines the protection given by this important right to equal treatment.

### **5.4 Private ownership**

The media – print, radio and television – is largely concentrated in the hands of five conglomerates and a few powerful business interest groups:

- Government owns and operates two television and three radio stations
- Neal and Massy Holdings owns one television and one radio station
- AnsaMcAL owns a daily newspaper and four radio stations
- Clico Investments owns three radio stations
- Hindu Credit Union owns one weekly newspaper and two radio stations
- Various business interests separately own the third daily newspaper and radio stations Power 102 FM, 103 FM, and i95.5 FM

This in itself sets the stage for a largely urban-based agenda, reflective of urban bias.

Through policy decisions and boardroom directives, owners and management decide what qualifies as news; what is given prominence and front page attention; which news items to be reported upon and the perspective from which reports are written; and which columnists/commentators will receive air time or editorial space. Such power structures therefore dictate that owners and management possess significant influence over the information disseminated to the general public, information that informs the public's choice of the cultural path along which the country evolves.

This has resulted in a peculiar phenomenon, in which even programmes/articles that are popular with the public are subject to forms of "censorship," which include withdrawal of support by ownership/management; withdrawal of sponsorship; pressure or threats by Government and powerful advertising interests to withdraw their business if, for example, sensitive investigations are not stopped.

### **5.5 Effective censorship through licensing and sponsorship**

While implementation of a system of offering "licenses" to several groups to run radio and television stations was hailed as opening up the media industry, in effect it has placed the industry into the hands of Government and the pockets of large business interests. For instance, though licenses for seven independent television production houses were granted in 1990, local content has dropped from 30 percent in 1991 to less than half of that today.

Local productions that give ordinary people a voice are being replaced by programming produced by those with the deepest pockets; access is effectively limited to those who can pay, with the voice of general public being increasingly marginalized.

A virtual monopoly over the local television industry exists. Private production houses involved in independent investigations and analyses have been known to have been squeezed out of business because of the miniscule compensation – much below production costs – that they receive for their programmes to be aired on the existing channels.

Local producers have been unable to compete with foreign productions, mainly from the United States. Although local costs of production are lower, economies of scale immediately place local producers at a disadvantage.

Additionally, to supplement the small compensation for production they receive from the TV stations, local producers are forced to seek sponsorship, and sponsors demand rights over content, etc., before attaching their names to a particular programme. This is in itself a form of censorship. Because of the lack of any real policy or vision on what television programmes are aired – either through state-run or privately owned stations – the independents generally have had to shy away from the controversial or adventurous topics or face the consequences, as two popular producers Banyan and AVM television (since absorbed by Government as TIC) have had to do over the years.

## **5.6 Issues of training and education**

Limitations in both sufficient educational opportunities and access to existing educational opportunities curtail the ability of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago to function at the highest professional standards. This also effectively represents a form of curtailment on freedom of expression.

There are few opportunities for formal training of journalists in Trinidad and Tobago. The country's major tertiary institution, the University of the West Indies, offers no full programme in journalism. Its sister institution, located in Jamaica, West Indies, offers only a diploma in mass communication.

COSTAAT, a College of Science and Technology offers courses in journalism, but inefficiencies have hampered its level of success. Media houses failed in meeting their side of a matching-grant arrangement with a private training institution, Roytec, to run courses in journalism, and that training has since been discontinued.

Media organisations occasionally run in-house training programmes, but journalists are required to continue to perform their duties while attending the training, and the scheduling of both often conflicts to the point that such programmes are effectively in name only.

Additionally, media workers who seek to take advantage of external – international or privately run – training programmes locally must compete with the demands of employers and hectic pace of the job to balance their education. Access to opportunities at a foreign institution entails problems of acquiring permission from management or being required to sign prohibitive contracts that ties the journalist to the company on their return without related compensation.

Generally, higher priority is placed on attracting low-cost workers rather than trained and competent journalists, which results in loss of talent to other, better paying professions – generally public relations or corporate communications – once they have received some exposure. Thus, little priority is given to attracting the most experienced, highly trained or skilled journalists to stay in the profession due to the priority of keeping costs down.

## **5.7 Compensation**

The level of compensation for journalists has restricted better-qualified and more competent persons from accessing or staying in the profession. For example, journalists generally put in far more hours per month than teachers, but receive less compensation. Not surprisingly, standards of conduct of the profession have suffered as those who possess the greatest experience and training and who are best suited to withstand the challenges of the profession – political manoeuvring, corporate politicking, limits on critical and investigative flexibility – either do not enter the profession or leave the field as soon as they are able.

## **Section 6: Policy Recommendations**

### **6.1 National policy**

This country report recommends the following action on policies related to freedom of expression in Trinidad and Tobago:

- Revisiting and revising the Libel and Defamation Laws and Summary Offences Act to allow for investigative reporting and removal of prohibitive clauses and to make these laws less easily manipulated by the authorities and business classes
- Revising the licensing system to ensure that media ownership is dispersed among larger and wider segments of the population
- Enforcing monopoly laws over the ownership and structure of media institutions
- Establishing laws to protect journalists in the exercise of their duties
- Establishing a proper broadcast authority, with a policy on content such that there is a variety of US, European, South and local programming
- Redefining of the role of TTT, the state-run media, so that it does not have to compete with the commercial media, since advertising enforces its own restriction and censorship
- Levying an annual licensing fee on TV receivers, which, along with TTT profits, would go into a fund for the support of local production.

### **6.2 International policy**

This country reports recommends the establishment of minimum standards for assessing a country's level of adherence to principles of Freedom of Expression. This will include defining minimum levels of training and compensation for journalists so as to lift the quality of the profession.

## **Appendix A**

### **OBJECTIVE RESOURCES**

#### **Official Government Sources:**

- Freedom of Information Website
- The Freedom of Information Unit, Ministry of Information, Level 1, 45A - 45C St Vincent Street, Port of Spain.
- Freedom of Information Act (1999 revised 2003): gives the public the right to access to certain types of information in the possession of government ministries and departments and other public authorities.
- Libel and Defamation Act
- Summary Offences Act

#### **National Institutions:**

- Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
- Ministry of Legal Affairs
- Consumer Affairs Division
- The Constitution
- National Library Services (NALIS)

**NGOs and Private Institutions:**

- The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago
- The Media Complaints Authority
- Artists Against AIDS
- Youth Organisations
- Women's Organisations
- Disabled Organisations
- Environmental Lobby
- Political Parties communications arm
- Consumer Affairs activists/group
- Police Complaints Authority
- Chambers of Commerce
- Law Association
- Constitutional Reform Forum
- TT CAN – Citizens for Constitution Reform
- Independent Senators for Constitutional Reform

**International Institutions/Data sources:**

- World Resource Institute, Access to Information
- Reports of World Bank
- Transparency International
- Human Rights Bureau, USA
- Amnesty International
- UNDP
- UN General Assembly Resolution 59 of 1946 (I: "Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and ... the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated.")
- Abid Hussain, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, 1995 Report to the UN Commission on Human Rights
- The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)
- Article 10, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
- Article 19, (paragraph 3), of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The UN Commission on Human Rights
- The Commonwealth Secretariat, Expert Group Meeting in March 1999
- ARTICLE 19, ICCPR: June 1999, The Public's Right to Know: Principles on Freedom of Information Legislation, setting out a number of standards in this area, drawn from international and comparative national practice: to help promote progressive and effective freedom of information legislation, particularly in those countries currently developing such laws.
- UN General Assembly Resolution 2200 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976.
- Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Communiqué, Doc. 99/68, 15 November 1999.