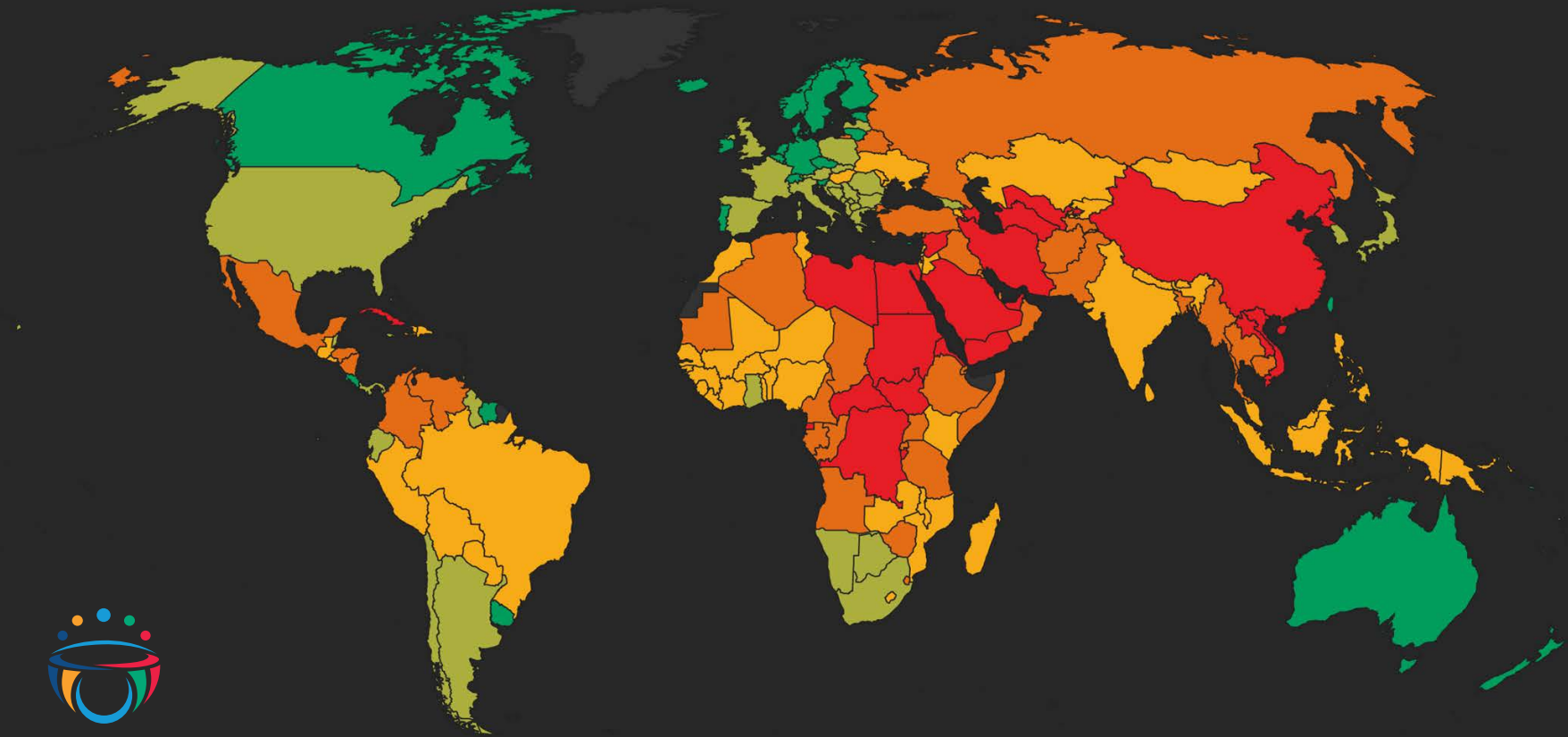


PEOPLE POWER UNDER ATTACK

A GLOBAL ANALYSIS OF THREATS TO FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS



NOVEMBER 2018 | A REPORT BASED ON DATA FROM THE CIVICUS MONITOR

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The CIVICUS Monitor is the product of an ongoing research collaboration between CIVICUS and over twenty research partner organisations which have contributed the bulk of the content upon which this report is based. A full list and description of our partners is found [here](#).

The CIVICUS Monitor is very grateful for the expertise and guidance of a ten-member advisory panel who review all suggested ratings changes and provide overall guidance and advice. Current members of the advisory panel are: Salwa Abdel Wahed, Gayoon Baek, Julia Duchrow, Hannah Forster, Myriam Hernández, Khoo Ying Hooi, Tiseke Kasambala, Vijay Naidu, Ana María Palacios and Shariq Siddiqui.

This report was researched and written by Marianna Belalba Barreto, Josef Benedict, Cathal Gilbert, Dom Perera, Sylvia Mbataru and Ine Van Severen. The report was edited by Andrew Firmin and Mandeep Tiwana. Design and layout by Matthew Reading-Smith.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).



CONTENTS

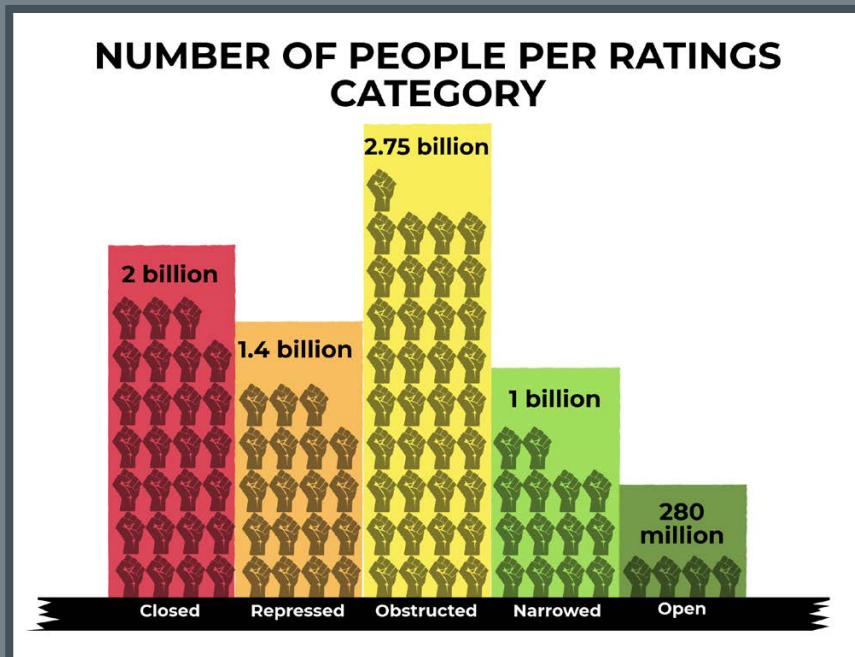
A CONTINUING CIVIC SPACE CRISIS	4
LATEST CIVIC SPACE RATINGS BREAKDOWN	5
CIVIC SPACE DYNAMICS	6
REGIONAL DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES	8
AN UNEVEN CRISIS	9
BRIGHT SPOTS	9
AFRICA	10
AMERICAS	16
ASIA AND PACIFIC	22
EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	27
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	33
REGIONAL CLASSIFICATION	38

A CONTINUING CIVIC SPACE CRISIS

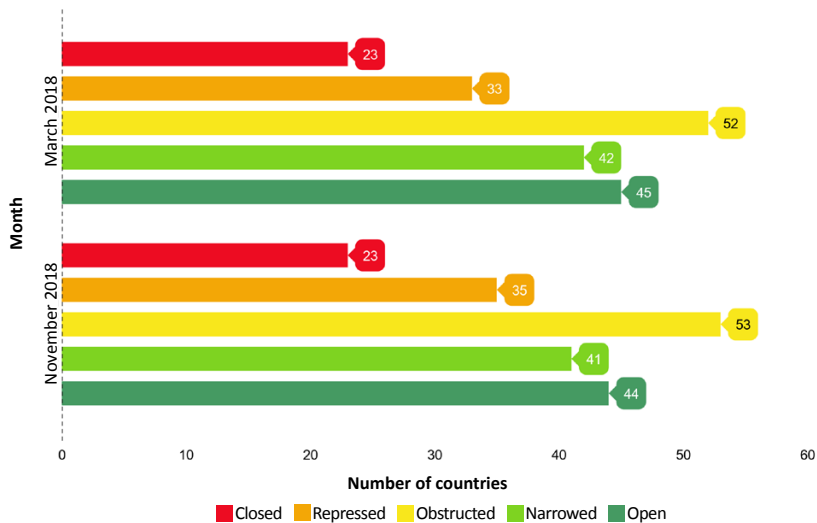
Data from the CIVICUS Monitor shows that civil society is under serious attack in 111 countries, **almost six in 10 countries worldwide**. This is up from 109 countries in our last update in March 2018. This means that repression of peaceful civic activism continues to be a widespread crisis for civil society in most parts of the world, with just four per cent of the world's population living in countries with open space for civil society (civic space). In just the past few months, we have seen blatant attacks on **protesters calling for justice on the streets of Bangladesh**, **assassination of rural activists** defending their right to land in Guatemala and **vilification of civil society organisations (CSOs) supporting refugees** in the Mediterranean. The litany of violations is long and growing.

As societies fracture under the weight of rising social and economic inequalities and the increasing dominance of political leaders seeking to exploit societal divisions for their gain, civil society is bearing the brunt of a consequent drop in respect for the basic freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression. In different regions of the world, issues including the **exploitation of natural resources**, **migration** and **corruption** are also fuelling popular mobilisations and, in turn, repression of those mobilisations. In countries such as **Eritrea** and **Syria**, there is now little or no space for meaningful citizen activism and engagement. In a growing cohort of countries where democratic freedoms have long been considered established, such as **Hungary**, **India** and the **USA**, this space is gradually reducing, a trend felt in particular by journalists and human rights defenders (HRDs). Even in some of the world's most open countries, such as **Australia** and **Germany**, challenges to civic space are growing.

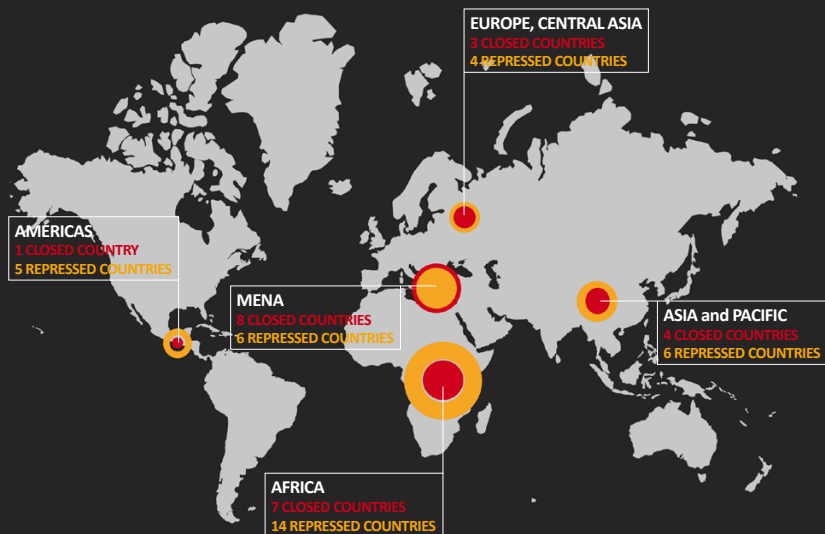
In an attempt to capture these dynamics on a global scale, **over 20 organisations** joined forces on the CIVICUS Monitor to provide an evidence base for action to improve civic space on all continents. Together, we have



COUNTRIES BY CIVIC SPACE RATING, MARCH 2018 AND NOVEMBER 2018



NUMBER OF CLOSED AND REPRESSED COUNTRIES PER REGION



now been tracking conditions for civil society for over two years and we have posted over 1,400 [civic space updates](#) in the last two years, data which is now analysed in this report.

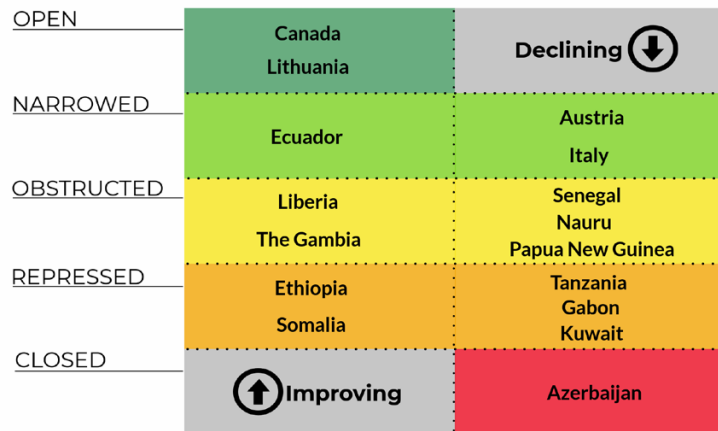
In order to draw comparisons at the global level and track trends over time, we produce civic space ratings for 196 countries. Each country's civic space is categorised as either **closed**, **repressed**, **obstructed**, **narrowed** or **open**, based on a [methodology](#) that combines several sources of data on the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression.

LATEST CIVIC SPACE RATINGS BREAKDOWN

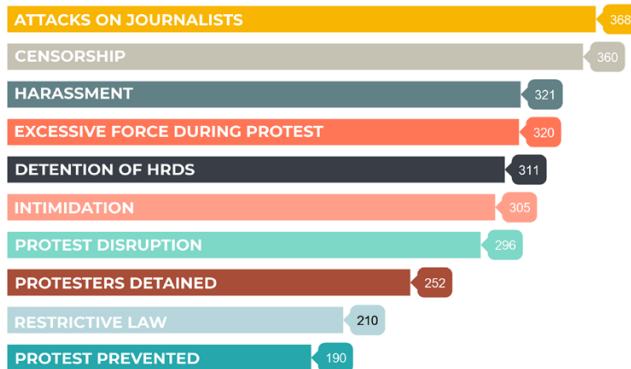
Following an update of our ratings in November 2018, the CIVICUS Monitor continues to tell a worrying story. The data shows that there are now 23 countries with closed civic space, 35 countries in the repressed category and 53 in the obstructed category. This means that civic space remains under serious threat in **almost six out of 10** of the world's countries. Just 44 countries receive an open rating, while 41 countries are rated narrowed. In terms of population, over a quarter of all people on the planet live in countries with closed civic space, while just four per cent live in countries with open civic space. At the regional level, countries in Central and Eastern Africa, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Central Asia and parts of South East Asia continue to have the worst civic space conditions.

Ratings have changed for 18 countries since our last update in March 2018: ratings have improved in seven countries and worsened in eleven. Notably, while Africa remains home to some of the worst conditions for civic activism, ratings have improved for four countries in the region, demonstrating the resilience of civil society and the importance of positive political transitions. [Ethiopia](#) moves from closed to repressed and both

RATINGS CHANGES NOVEMBER 2018



TOP 10 GLOBAL CIVIC SPACE VIOLATIONS



Based on analysis of 1,433 civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24 October 2016. The numbers above represent the number of times this violation was referenced in one report. Based on this we see that attacks on journalists are referenced in over one quarter of all reports published on the CIVICUS Monitor in this period.

the **Gambia** and **Liberia** move from repressed to obstructed.¹ **Somalia's** rating also improves from closed to repressed, due to some modest civic space progress. While this progress is still tentative, these are important bright spots for civil society in an otherwise difficult environment for civil society in Africa. This is illustrated by the fact that there are still seven closed and 21 repressed countries in the region, and by the three ratings downgrades for **Gabon**, **Senegal** and **Tanzania**.

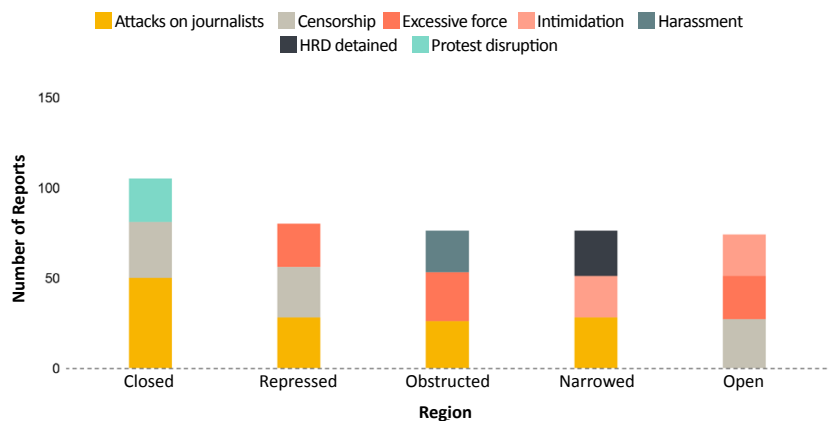
While our **downgrading of Nicaragua** to repressed in September 2018 pointed to a worsening situation for civic freedoms in the Americas this year, the region also recorded positive moves, with the rating for **Canada** improving to open and **Ecuador** moving from obstructed to narrowed. Worrying signs for civic space continue to be recorded in Europe and Central Asia (ECA). **Azerbaijan's** rating drops to closed, in the midst of a continuing shutdown of all space for dissent, while both **Austria** and **Italy** move from open to narrowed, a consequence of the negative influence of right-wing governments on the space for civic activism. Two countries in the Pacific – **Nauru** and **Papua New Guinea** – both drop from narrowed to obstructed, partly due to increased restrictions on the freedom of expression in the context of the detention of refugees by Australia in both countries. In MENA, the situation for civic space remains dire, with none of its 19 countries rated open or narrowed. There was just one change in the region in this period, with **Kuwait** moving from obstructed to repressed due to the continued targeting of the freedom of expression, particularly online.

CIVIC SPACE DYNAMICS

Of the three freedoms that we track on the CIVICUS Monitor, the freedom of expression is most commonly targeted by repressive regimes. This conclusion is based on our analysis of 1,433 **civic space reports** posted on

1 In this report, the Africa region includes all countries on the continent except Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, which are classed as part of the MENA region.

TOP 3 VIOLATIONS PER RATINGS CATEGORY



Based on analysis of civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24 October 2016: 210 updates for closed countries, 411 for repressed, 371 for obstructed, 309 for narrowed and 128 for open. The numbers above represent the percentage of reports in which that violation was referenced. The three most commonly-reported violations are displayed for each ratings category.

the CIVICUS Monitor in the two years since October 2016. This analysis shows that **attacks on journalists** and **censorship** feature most commonly, appearing in over a quarter of all reports. As the graph below shows, states also regularly violate the right to the freedom of peaceful assembly through the use of **excessive force**, the **detention of protesters** and the **banning of protests**. Completing our list of top 10 violations reported on the CIVICUS Monitor are incidents of **harassment**, **intimidation** and **detention** of civil society activists, and the introduction of **repressive laws** that fail to adhere to international law on civic space.

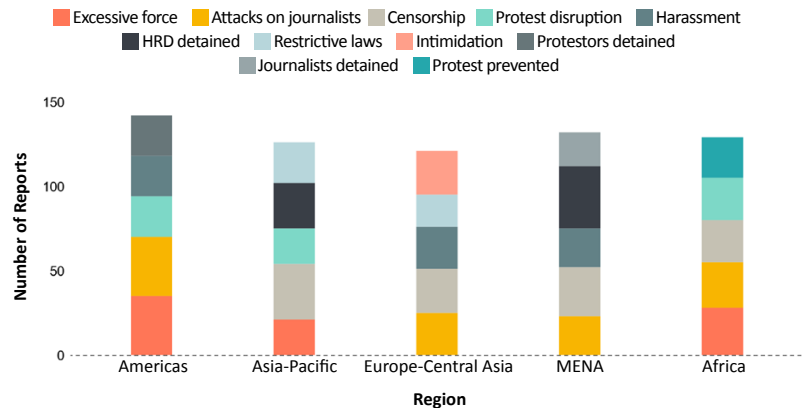
At a time when a growing number of political leaders are attacking the media, this data underscores the reality that it is becoming harder for journalists to do their job, and for the public to access reliable and impartial information. Attacks on journalists take many forms, including targeting on social media, being **dragged through the courts** in vexatious lawsuits and **physical beatings** while trying to report on protests. While the perpetrators of many of these attacks are rarely identified or brought to justice, states and their agents bear the bulk of the responsibility for the perilous situation faced by journalists today. Censorship is perhaps a less blatant, yet equally effective, tool used by states to silence critics and suppress dissent. It can happen through state authorities **blocking access to news websites**, selectively **shutting down TV stations** or **seizing hard copies of books**. The frequency with which these tactics are used does not appear to depend on overall civic space conditions in a country. When we look at which civic space violations are reported most commonly for countries in each of our five ratings categories, we find that attacks against journalists and censorship are at the top of the list, regardless of the underlying level of freedom experienced by civil society.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Across the five regions included in our analysis, we see some common trends, but also some regional differences. For instance, in the Americas, attacks on journalists are the most commonly reported violation, featuring in 35 per cent of all CIVICUS Monitor reports in the past two years.

Mexico, the **USA** and **Venezuela** are three of the countries in which this violation has been most frequently reported. In Asia and Pacific, attacks on journalists feature less frequently in CIVICUS Monitor posts, while censorship is the number one violation reported, featuring in 33 per cent of posts. It is no surprise the most reports about censorship in Asia and Pacific focus on the government of China's **attempts to control** the public narrative. Censorship is also reported as a problem in countries such as **Cambodia** and **Pakistan**. Censorship tops the list as well in ECA, where intimidation and harassment of activists is also reported with worrying frequency. Such violations are creating climates of fear for journalists and activists in many countries, including in **Italy**, **Kazakhstan** and **Serbia**. In MENA, the detention of activists is the most commonly reported violation, appearing in 37 per cent of CIVICUS Monitor posts and reflecting the wholesale incarceration of HRDs in countries such as **Bahrain**, **Egypt** and the **United Arab Emirates**(UAE). In Africa, the use of excessive force against protesters tops the list, with 28 per cent of posts featuring this type of civic space violation. This reflects a concerning trend involving the indiscriminate use of teargas, baton charges and live ammunition in countries including **Nigeria**, **Togo** and **Uganda**.

TOP 5 VIOLATIONS PER REGION



Based on analysis of civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24th October 2016: 332 updates for Americas, 203 for Asia-Pacific, 387 for Europe and Central Asia, 194 for MENA and 312 for Africa. The numbers above represent the percentage of reports in which that violation was referenced per region. The five most commonly-reported violations are displayed for each region.

AN UNEVEN CRISIS

The attack on civic space does not affect all civil society groups in the same way or to the same degree. Our monitoring clearly shows that civic actors such as journalists, human rights defenders (HRDs) and those leading protests on the ground are likely to bear the brunt of the assault on fundamental freedoms. Digging deeper, we also see that some other societal groups are more likely to be involved in the contestation for civic space.

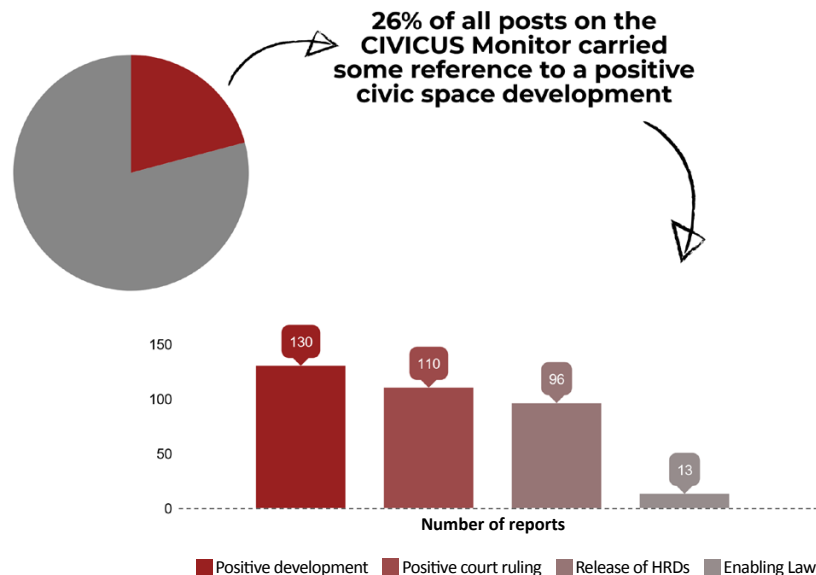
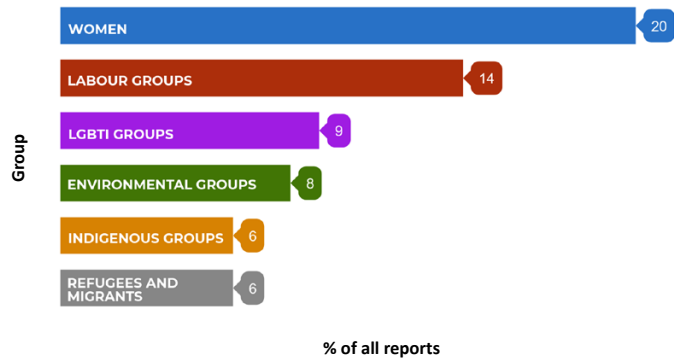
By a large margin, **women**, including groups advocating for women’s rights and women HRDs, are the group most commonly mentioned in reports on the CIVICUS Monitor, featuring in one in five of all posts. This holds true in all regions except Africa, where **groups representing labour** were more often referenced. Labour groups, including trade unions, feature in 14 per cent of all posts on the CIVICUS Monitor. Other groups regularly mentioned include **LGBTI groups** (nine per cent of posts) and **environmental groups** (eight per cent).

BRIGHT SPOTS

Our monitoring also documents **improvements in civic space conditions**. While violations dominate, the CIVICUS Monitor has documented many instances where civic space is opening up and progress is being achieved in improving respect for fundamental freedoms. In countries including **Ecuador**, **Ethiopia** and **Malaysia**, changes in political leadership have led to an improving environment for civic activism.

Our analysis of the 1,433 posts on the CIVICUS Monitor also shows that almost one in 10 carried some news of an improvement in civic space. These included the **overturn of a ban** on a popular newspaper in Somalia, **Macedonia’s new prime minister encouraging CSOs** to be “vigilant

GROUPS COMMONLY INVOLVED IN CIVIC SPACE INCIDENTS



correctors” of the government and the **rejection by Dutch voters** in a referendum of a proposal to increase state surveillance powers. The CIVICUS Monitor has also documented dozens of **court rulings** that have defended or expanded civic space, as well as instances where HRDs have been released from detention or acquitted of charges against them. We have also reported the passing of a number of enabling civil society laws, although these are still few in proportion to the number of repressive laws that are still being introduced.

The following sections provide additional detail on civic space trends for each region.

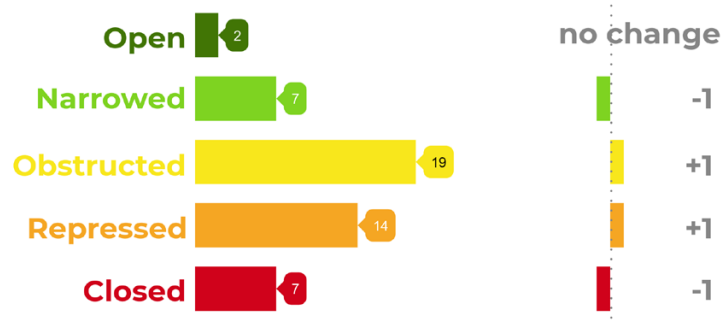
AFRICA

RATINGS OVERVIEW

Africa is a vast region, encompassing 49 countries and approximately one billion people. Although it is home to some of the world’s worst civic space conditions, 2018 offered signs of hope as important improvements in civic space were made in some countries, including Ethiopia. This demonstrates that, even in some of the most repressive contexts, progress on civic space is possible when there is a commitment to dialogue and positive political leadership. Africa is home to eight countries rated as having closed civic space, 13 rated repressed and 18 rated obstructed. There are eight African countries with narrowed civic space, while just two receive a rating of open.

Entrenched authoritarian or dominant-party governments, armed conflict and weak rule of law are some of the factors that contribute to poor respect for fundamental freedoms across the region. Conflict has negatively affected civic space in Central Africa, where most countries have either a repressed or closed civic space rating. Civic space is being undermined both by long-running conflicts, such as that in the Central

Countries per category November 2018 Change from March 2018



Based on ratings on the CIVICUS Monitor 1st March 2018 and 21st November 2018 for 49 countries in the Africa region.

TOP 10 VIOLATIONS: AFRICA



■ Excessive force
 ■ Attacks on journalists
 ■ Protest disruption
 ■ Censorship
 ■ Prevention of protest
 ■ HRD detained
 ■ Intimidation
 ■ Protesters detained
 ■ Harassment
 ■ Journalist detained

Based on analysis of civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24th October 2016: 312 updates for Africa. The numbers above represent the percentage of reports in which that violation was referenced.

African Republic, and newer ones, notably between armed separatists and the government in the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

Meanwhile most countries in West Africa are rated obstructed, with outliers including Cape Verde (open) and Ghana (narrowed). Notable recent developments include a change of government in the Gambia, which has resulted in the opening of space for civil society, and an increased crackdown on opposition protests and dissent in Togo. In Southern Africa, changes in political leadership recently occurred in Angola and Zimbabwe, but substantial progress on civic freedoms has so far failed to materialise. In Tanzania, the space for civil society has significantly declined through a combination of restrictive laws, intimidation and a crackdown on independent media. Civic space in the East and Horn of Africa is undermined by the authorities' increasing intolerance of dissenting voices. Closed civic space in Burundi has forced many activists and journalists into exile, while the authorities in Rwanda have used judicial harassment to remove any realistic opposition to the ruling party. However, in Ethiopia, a change in leadership has sparked reforms, including the release of political prisoners, the lifting of a state of emergency and moves to repeal repressive laws.

CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS

The most common civic space restrictions in Africa in the past two years were the **excessive use of force** by security forces against protesters, **attacks on journalists**, the **disruption of protests** and **censorship**. Other civic space violations frequently reported in the region include prevention of protests, intimidation, harassment and the detention of HRDs, protesters and journalists.

USE OF EXCESSIVE FORCE BY SECURITY FORCES AND PROTEST DISRUPTION

Over the past two years, the CIVICUS Monitor has reported incidents involving the excessive use of force against protesters in at least 30 of 49 African countries. Over a quarter of updates for Africa mentioned security forces using teargas, batons and in some cases live ammunition to disperse

“

WHILE SOME
PROTESTS TURNED
VIOLENT, WITH
DEMONSTRATORS
THROWING ROCKS
AND BURNING
TYRES, THE
RESPONSE BY
SECURITY FORCES
WAS OFTEN
DISPROPORTIONATE

”

and discourage protesters. Although the majority of the protests that were met with excessive force were opposition protests, election-related protests and anti-government protests, student protests and labour rights protests were also met with force. While some protests turned violent, with demonstrators throwing rocks and burning tyres, the response by security forces was often disproportionate.

In Kenya, in the days following the elections of 8 August 2017, police **killed** scores of people and injured hundreds during repression of protests in opposition strongholds in Nairobi. In August 2017, Togo’s civic space deteriorated quickly when security forces **used live ammunition** to disperse opposition protesters demanding a return of the two-term limit for presidents, leading to several fatalities and injuries. Several more **died** during opposition protests in Togo on 19 October 2017. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), between December 2017 and February 2018, several people were killed by security officers who used live ammunition and teargas during a series of after church mass protests to demand the implementation of the Saint-Sylvestre political agreement – an agreement between ruling and opposition parties on the holding of elections without president Kabilia seeking a third term – including against civilians seeking refuge in churches. Another country where there have been major violations is Uganda, where police forces have employed heavy-handed responses to **protests** opposing the removal of the constitutional presidential age limit. Opposition legislators and supporters have also been subjected to brutality and torture, as seen in the August 2018 **#FreeBobiWine campaign**, when supporters were forcefully dispersed and legislators were detained and severely tortured in detention. Nationwide protests in the days following this incident saw security forces use live ammunition to disperse protesters, leaving at least three people dead and hundreds injured.

The CIVICUS Monitor also documented brutal responses to **student protests, anti-austerity and labour rights protests**, for example in **Chad, Kenya, Senegal** and **Swaziland**.

“
 ATTACKS
 AGAINST
 JOURNALISTS
 ARE COMMON
 EVEN IN
 COUNTRIES
 CONSIDERED TO
 BE RELATIVELY
 STABLE
 DEMOCRACIES
 ”

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS

At least 83 CIVICUS Monitor updates in 31 African countries mention incidents of attacks on journalists. Attacks on journalists were carried out by both state and non-state actors and often occurred during elections and protests, or in response to reporting on sensitive topics such as corruption.

Attacks against journalists are common even in countries considered to be relatively stable democracies. In Ghana, according to a media watchdog, in the space of 15 months **17 journalists** were attacked by state and non-state actors. In South Africa, on 28 August 2016, several journalists and photographers were **beaten, punched and pepper-sprayed** during student protests.

Attacks perpetrated by non-state actors including those carried out by vigilante groups connected to ruling political parties, as has been the case in **Nigeria**. In South Sudan, journalists face **ensorship, harassment and threats** from all sides, while in Somalia, **intimidation, harassment and attacks against journalists** remain of serious concern.

Journalists covering protests, contested elections and sensitive topics are particularly vulnerable to attack, as evidenced in Zimbabwe, where several journalists were reported as being **assaulted** during opposition protests and post-election violence on 1 August 2018. In Mozambique in March 2018, a political commentator who had been critical of the government was **abducted** in broad daylight in Maputo, beaten and left unconscious in the outskirts of the city. There is almost complete impunity for physical attacks against journalists, with Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan included in the Committee to Protect Journalists' **2018 Global Impunity Index**.

CENSORSHIP

In the past two years, censorship was imposed in at least 31 countries in Africa. Several African governments **disrupted internet access, including**

“

GOVERNMENTS
OF SEVERAL
COUNTRIES
INCREASED
CENSORSHIP
THROUGH LAWS
RESTRICTING THE
FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION

”

by **blocking social media platforms**. In Cameroon, internet access in Anglophone regions was **deliberately slowed down or temporarily cut off** several times in 2017 and 2018. In the DRC, when faced with major protests against President Joseph Kabila, authorities **shut down** access to the internet and social media. In Togo, access to social media was **disrupted** and internet speed was reduced in September 2017. Internet restrictions were also recorded in **Chad, Ethiopia** and **Mali**.

In several countries, the authorities also imposed censorship by **suspending media outlets**. In Benin, the regulator suspended **four media outlets** in November 2016 without prior notice, and the **La Nouvelle Tribune newspaper** in May 2018. In August 2018, Gabon’s communication authority **suspended** two newspapers and French TV channel France 24, which was blocked after airing a documentary critical of President Omar Bongo. In Somaliland, authorities in June 2018 sought to **deregister Waaberi, a local newspaper**. In South Sudan, the South Sudanese Media Regulatory Authority **attempted to take** the independent United Nations (UN)-operated Radio Miraya off the air for allegedly refusing to comply with the country’s broadcast laws. In Sudan in August 2018, the authorities **confiscated** the print circulation of more than 10 newspapers.

Governments of several countries increased censorship through **laws restricting** the freedom of expression. Tanzania’s Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations 2018 **requires** bloggers, radio and TV stations streaming online, and other online platforms, to obtain licenses and pay up to US\$900 in fees before publishing online content. In Mozambique, decree 40/2018 was **enacted** on 23 July 2018, setting exorbitant fees for the accreditation of local and foreign journalists and fees for the registration and licensing of media outlets. In Uganda in July 2018, the government introduced a new **social media tax**, which makes social media access prohibitively expensive for people on low incomes.

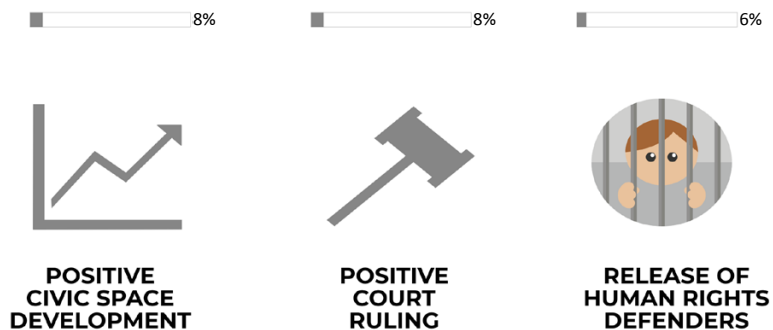
POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Despite widespread repression, we have also recorded a number of positive civic space developments in Africa. These include legal reforms. For example, in Burkina Faso and Mali laws were **passed** on the protection of HRDs. In July 2018, Liberia's parliament **approved** a bill repealing provisions in the Penal Code on sedition, criminal malevolence and criminal libel against the president. In May 2018, the Lesotho High Court **ruled** that the offence of criminal defamation was unconstitutional. Positive developments also stemmed from political shifts in some countries. In **the** Gambia, space for civil society opened up after the end of the brutal, 22-year regime of former President Yahya Jammeh.

BRIGHT SPOT: ETHIOPIA

Since 2005 in Ethiopia, the rights to the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression have been systematically suppressed through a combination of legislative and extra-legal measures. However, **Since** Abiy Ahmed **took over power** as Ethiopia's Prime Minister, after Hailemariam Desalegn stepped down in late March 2018, a wave of reforms has quickly opened civic and democratic space in the country. In early June 2018, the government lifted a state of emergency. Many political prisoners, including journalists, bloggers, activists, academics and opposition leaders, were released between April and June 2018, while mobile internet services were restored in early April 2018. A justice reform advisory council was set up to revise restrictive laws, including the draconian Charities and Societies Proclamation. Between July and October 2018, the government **signed** peace agreements with **opposition** movements and removed them from a contentious list of banned terrorist groups maintained by the previous government, allowing activists to return to Ethiopia after years in exile. On 9 July 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed **signed** a historic declaration to end the "state of war" with neighbouring Eritrea.

PERCENTAGE OF ALL REPORTS WHICH INCLUDE GOOD NEWS STORIES



Based on 312 updates on the CIVICUS Monitor for 49 countries in the Africa region.

COUNTRY OF CONCERN: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Since the start of the political and election-related crisis in 2015, authorities in the DRC have systematically cracked down on dissenting voices, including activists, HRDs and opposition members. Protesters demanding that elections be held and calling for the departure of President Kabila, whose constitutionally mandated term ended in December 2016, have been **brutally repressed**, leaving hundreds dead. Protests have been systematically banned, and several civil society activists, in particular from **social movements** such as Lutte pour le Changement (Fight for Change) and Filimbi, have been arrested and **prosecuted**. The freedom of expression has also been severely curtailed under this crackdown, with an increasing number of attacks on journalists and media outlets. Despite the announcement that President Kabila is not running for a third term, serious **human rights concerns** persist. Civic space is further eroded in the DRC's multiple conflict zones. In May 2018, the DRC was placed on the CIVICUS Monitor's **Watchlist**, which draws attention to countries where there are serious and ongoing threats to civic space.

Countries per category November 2018



Change from March 2018



Based on ratings on the CIVICUS Monitor 1st March 2018 and 21st November 2018 for 35 countries in the Americas region.

AMERICAS

Over half of people in the Americas live in countries with serious civic space restrictions. CIVICUS Monitor ratings show that, although civic space is **open** in 11 of 35 countries in the region and **narrowed** in 10, 54 per cent of people live in countries with obstructed, repressed or closed civic space. Eight countries are rated **obstructed**, five **repressed** and one **closed**.

Our most recent ratings for the Americas show a slight improvement in two countries – Canada and Ecuador both improve their ratings – but substantial challenges persist elsewhere, with Nicaragua **downgraded** to repressed in September 2018.

TOP 10 VIOLATIONS: AMERICAS



■ Excessive force
 ■ Attack on journalist
 ■ Protestors detained
 ■ Protest disruption
 ■ Harassment
■ Intimidation
 ■ Censorship
 ■ HRD detained
 ■ Killing of journalist
 ■ Restrictive law

Based on analysis of civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24th October 2016: 332 updates for Americas. The numbers above represent the percentage of reports in which that violation was referenced.

Canada's rating improves from narrowed to open because, although threats to civic freedoms still persist, especially for indigenous, migrant and other marginalised communities, under the Justin Trudeau government, most Canadians are currently **able** to associate, protest and freely express opinions. Civic space has also improved in Ecuador since Lenin Moreno was elected President in April 2017. Since then, activists prosecuted by the previous government for their involvement in peaceful protests have been **pardoned**, while laws restricting the freedoms of association and expression have been repealed or are in the process of **being** amended.

THE AMERICAS: A DEADLY REGION FOR ACTIVISM

Although the Americas has only one country in the closed category and fewer countries in the repressed category than any other region, activists, social leaders and journalists continue to face a range of very serious violations. Since December 2017, the CIVICUS Monitor has **documented** the killing of HRDs in at least 10 countries in the Americas: Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru. According to Front Line Defenders, 312 HRDs were **killed** globally in 2017, and more than two-thirds of those murders – 212 – took place in the Americas. In 2018, the CIVICUS Monitor reported an increasing level of violence against HRDs, and particularly land rights defenders, in **Colombia** and **Guatemala**, where dozens have been killed in 2018 alone.

CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS

In the Americas, over the past two years, the CIVICUS Monitor has most often documented the **use of excessive force during protests, attacks on journalists, the detention of protesters and disruption of protests**. Other relatively common violations include the harassment and intimidation of HRDs, journalists and activists, censorship, the detention of HRDs, the introduction or enactment of restrictive legislation and the killing of journalists.

“

IN COUNTRIES WITH NARROWED CIVIC SPACE, WHILE THE STATE NORMALLY ALLOWS INDIVIDUALS AND CSOS TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND EXPRESSION, THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN SEVERAL INSTANCES DOCUMENTED BY THE CIVICUS MONITOR WHERE PROTESTS HAVE BEEN REPRESSED

”

USE OF EXCESSIVE FORCE DURING PROTESTS

Since October 2016, the CIVICUS Monitor has published 117 reports of security forces using excessive force to disperse and disrupt protests. Such violations have been reported in countries in all CIVICUS Monitor ratings categories, ranging from countries where civic space is open, such as Canada and Costa Rica, to the most repressive countries such as Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Although not a common tactic, excessive force is still sporadically used by security forces in Costa Rica. The CIVICUS Monitor **reported** one such case in December 2017, when police used teargas to disperse a group of residents from Guanacaste province who opposed the construction of an aqueduct. In Honduras in 2016, the CIVICUS Monitor's first update **reported** on how police violently dispersed protests by indigenous people demanding an investigation into the murder of activist Berta Cáceres. Two years later, this tactic **continues** to be used commonly in Honduras, with the student movement one of the worst affected groups. In 2017 the CIVICUS Monitor documented **several** cases where security forces used excessive force to disperse protests, resulting in many students being **injured**, **detained** and, in one case, **killed**.

In countries with **narrowed** civic space, while the state **normally** allows individuals and CSOs to exercise their rights to peaceful assembly and expression, there have also been several instances documented by the CIVICUS Monitor where protests have been repressed. In Chile, for example, student protests and protests by the indigenous Mapuche community are **often** met with force. In March 2018, one such student protest was severely **suppressed** by police: a student was dragged across the street and 17 students were arrested.

In Argentina, protests over pension reforms were **disrupted**. In the USA, opposition to the Trump administration's policies and rhetoric has led to an **increased** mobilisation of protests. Protest rights have been curtailed as a result, with several **reports** of arrests of activists and protesters, including the detention of **hundreds** of women protesting against restrictive immigration policies in June 2018. In Panama, throughout 2018

“

SOME OF THE
DEADLIEST USES
OF EXCESSIVE
FORCE IN
2018 WERE
WITNESSED IN
NICARAGUA

”

there were **cases** of repression of protests after citizens blocked roads, with police officers using teargas and physical force to remove citizens from the streets.

In the most extreme cases, security forces have used live ammunition against demonstrators. Venezuela, for example, was in the spotlight in 2017 when massive protests took place with people demanding the resignation of the government. In response, the police systematically used force against protesters, resulting in more than 100 people being **killed**. This tactic is not only used by security forces to silence protests deemed to be political. In 2018 alone, at least 15 people were **killed** in Venezuela during protests demanding food and healthcare.

Some of the deadliest uses of excessive force in 2018 were witnessed in Nicaragua. Widespread protests began in April 2018, after the government proposed regressive amendments to the social security system. The government reacted to the protests with a harsh crackdown that involved the use of excessive force and violence. Violence against protesters was also **perpetrated** by armed pro-government groups that were alleged to be operating in collusion with or with the acquiescence of the police. According to the latest **data**, 325 individuals have been killed, hundreds remain in detention, 180 people have disappeared, and 14 are still missing since the crisis began.

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS

Governments in the Americas continue to attack journalists frequently, with 116 reports documented over the past two years by the CIVICUS Monitor. Journalists are subjected to threats, physical and verbal attacks and, in unparalleled numbers when compared with other regions, targeted killings. The most dangerous countries in the region include Brazil, Honduras and Mexico. Other than the world's major conflict zones, Mexico is the deadliest place to work in the media. The surge in attacks on journalists and their media outlets, which also include kidnapping, death threats and online harassment, have driven many reporters out of the

“ AT LEAST
20 JOURNALISTS
HAVE BEEN
KILLED IN MEXICO
OVER THE PAST
TWO YEARS, WITH
PERPETRATORS
ENJOYING HIGH
LEVELS OF
IMPUNITY ”

profession or caused them to self-censor. At least 20 journalists have been **killed** in Mexico over the past two years, with perpetrators enjoying high levels of **impunity**. Journalists in Brazil face a similar situation: at least four have been **killed** in 2018.

Even in Canada, an open country, attacks have occurred against journalists, particularly while covering **protests**. For example, on 11 August 2018, a Toronto Sun photographer was **attacked** while covering a rally and counter-protest outside Toronto’s city hall.

In the USA, alarming developments have been documented over the past two years. From physical attacks by **individuals** and **police** officers against journalists documenting protests by the far-right group Unite the Right to verbal **attacks** by President Trump, the environment for media workers continues to deteriorate. The media has been **repeatedly** described as “the enemy of the American people,” “very dishonest” and “fake news” by president Trump and others in his administration. In June 2018, five employees, including four journalists, were **killed** and two others were injured when a gunman opened fire in the offices of the Capital Gazette newspaper. A few months later, in August 2018, a masked man entered a Madison, Wisconsin radio station and **opened** fire on employees and volunteers.

PROTESTERS DETAINED AND PROTEST DISRUPTION

Instead of engaging with protesters, who usually take to the streets to challenge government policies or demand basic services, governments often use excessive force with the aim of disrupting demonstrations. This tactic is often used in the Americas, with 81 reports recorded by the CIVICUS Monitor. Police successfully disrupted protests in **Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador** and **Venezuela**.

Another common tactic deployed by governments in the Americas is the detention of protesters. Some governments used this as a pre-emptive measure to prevent activists from taking to the streets, for instance in

Cuba. In Nicaragua, hundreds of protesters have been **detained** since the start of the political crisis in April 2018. Most of them remain in detention, **accused** of terrorism, organised crime and similar offences.

COUNTRY OF CONCERN: GUATEMALA

2018 was a lethal year for those defending and protecting their land and the environment in Guatemala. The CIVICUS Monitor **reported** the assassination of at least 21 defenders during 2018. Further, from January to October 2017, 328 acts of aggression against HRDs and 72 against indigenous and land rights activists were **documented**. Most cases related to the extractive industries, corruption and illegal armed actors. President Jimmy Morales' government **failed** to protect defenders and investigate attacks properly, creating a climate of impunity that further exacerbates the violence. On the contrary, efforts have been made by the government to limit the work of human rights institutions such as the country's Ombudsman, who it has **attempted** to remove from office. The authorities have also responded to peaceful protesters with intimidation. For **example**, in September 2018, protests were blocked when thousands took to the streets to reject the government's decision not to renew the mandate of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, a UN-sponsored institution charged with assisting corruption investigations.

PERCENTAGE OF ALL REPORTS WHICH INCLUDE GOOD NEWS STORIES



Based on 332 updates on the CIVICUS Monitor for 35 countries in the Americas region.

BRIGHT SPOTS

The CIVICUS Monitor also reports on positive developments. Civic activism continues despite restrictions, and in some cases, it has led to positive changes in the Americas. In Canada, after years of protests, indigenous and environmental groups claimed a **victory** in their campaign to halt the Trans Mountain Pipeline project when an appeal court overturned the government's approval of the project. In some cases, perpetrators of violence have been brought to trial, as in the USA when **police** arrested a California man accused of threatening the employees of The Boston Globe. Similarly, in the Dominican Republic in April 2018, a court **sentenced** the perpetrator of the 2011 murder of journalist José Agustín Silvestre to 20 years in prison. Ecuador, a country making positive developments after

the election of President Lenin Moreno, has seen a **decrease** in freedom of expression violations, and the government has shown commitment to transparency and open government policies by **joining** the Open Government Partnership.

ASIA AND PACIFIC

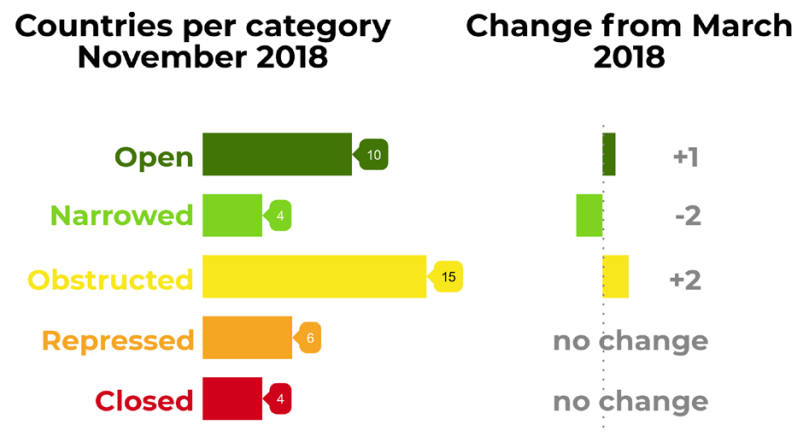
RATINGS OVERVIEW

The state of civic freedoms in Asia remains challenging. In China, **ensorship** aided by new technologies has reached unprecedented levels since President Xi Jinping took power, while Pakistan experienced an **assault on the media** ahead of its July 2018 elections. In Myanmar, the **repressive practices** of previous military governments are returning, with HRDs being prosecuted. In Viet Nam, hundreds of activists are being detained by the one-party state as a means of maintaining control and silencing dissent. In Bangladesh, mass citizen protests have been met with **violence** by state and non-state actors, while in Thailand, the military junta has continued to **criminalise** peaceful protests as it seeks ways to remain in power.

This dismal picture is reflected in the ratings compiled by the CIVICUS Monitor. Out of 23 countries in Asia, four countries are rated closed, six repressed and 10 obstructed. A staggering 94 per cent of people in Asia live in countries with closed, repressed or obstructed civic space. Civic space in Japan and South Korea is rated narrowed, while Taiwan is the only country that is rated open.

In the Pacific, the story is more positive, with seven countries rated open and two rated narrowed, although Nauru and Papua New Guinea are downgraded to join Fiji in the obstructed category.

The downgrading of Nauru is due in large part to increasing restrictions on media freedom. Nauru imposes a non-refundable visa fee of around



Based on ratings on the CIVICUS Monitor 1st March 2018 and 21st November 2018 for 38 countries in the Asia and Pacific region. The CIVICUS Monitor did not have a country rating for Taiwan in March 2018, but added a rating in June 2018.

TOP 10 VIOLATIONS: ASIA and PACIFIC



■ Censorship ■ HRD detained ■ Restrictive laws ■ Excessive force ■ Protest disruption ■ Harassment
 ■ Torture/ill treatment ■ Protestors detained ■ Criminal defamation ■ Intimidation

Based on analysis of civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24th October 2016: 203 updates for Asia-Pacific. The numbers above represent the percentage of reports in which that violation was referenced.

US\$6,000 on foreign journalists entering the country, restricting media freedom and hampering independent scrutiny of Nauru's policies and practices. There is a particular challenge relating to the media's ability to report on the Australian-run refugee detention centres in Nauru, about which there have been widespread reports of abuse. **Media freedom** continues to deteriorate in Papua New Guinea, with journalists subject to harassment and attacks. Environmental, land rights and anti-corruption activists have also faced **threats** and **arrests** for opposing development projects and extractive industry developments.

CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS

CSOs and activists in many Asia and Pacific countries continue to operate in a difficult environment. This is borne out by CIVICUS' regular monitoring of the situation since October 2016, which reveals that **censorship** is the most common civic space violation across the region. Governments are continuing to prevent information from reaching the public, silencing activists and the media and prosecuting or attacking some journalists because of their reporting.

Activists and government critics are also regularly **detained and prosecuted** or face **intimidation** and **harassment** from both state and non-state actors. Activists who have taken to the streets to protest have had their activities disrupted, primarily by security forces. Our monitoring also shows the worrying use of both excessive and lethal force against protesters. Groups particularly experiencing violations of their civic freedoms in Asia and Pacific include women, labour groups, environmental groups and land rights groups.

CENSORSHIP AND ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Analysis of research undertaken by the CIVICUS Monitor between October 2016 and 2018 shows that in Asia and Pacific, government censorship is occurring in at least 20 countries. China has the largest and most sophisticated online **censorship operation**, which has increased under Xi Jinping. Through the use of the 'Great Firewall', the government selectively

“

ANOTHER MAJOR
CIVIC SPACE
VIOLATION
DOCUMENTED
IN ASIA AND
PACIFIC IS THE
DETENTION OF
HRDS, RECORDED
IN 16 COUNTRIES,
WITH LARGE
NUMBERS
DETAINED IN
BOTH CHINA AND
VIET NAM

”

blocks critical outlets and social media sites such as Facebook, Google, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, and has also blocked the encrypted messaging app, WhatsApp. North Korea continues to have some of **tightest** censorship controls and maintains a strict system of surveillance on communications within the country. In Pakistan, the military escalated its censorship of the media ahead of the 2018 elections, with Geo TV taken **off the air** and the circulation of Dawn, Pakistan’s most-respected English-language daily newspaper, **blocked** for refusing to follow the military line. Ahead of Cambodia’s July 2018 elections, Prime Minister Hun Sen **shut down** dozens of news outlets, ordered the **blocking** of websites and **issued** regulations restricting journalists from expressing their opinions or publishing news that affected “political and social stability.” In Asia, the CIVICUS Monitor has also documented acts of censorship in Bangladesh, Thailand and Viet Nam, and in the Pacific in Fiji, Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

As well as restrictions on access to information, our research also showed that journalists continue to face various risks for undertaking their work, with reports of journalists detained in 12 countries and attacks against journalists in 10 countries. In Bangladesh, in August 2018, journalists covering protests were **attacked** by mobs allegedly linked to the ruling party, while in Nepal, journalists have been threatened and attacked for **exposing** illegal businesses. Other countries where attacks by both state and non-state actors have occurred include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. In at least six countries, journalists were killed.

DETENTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Another major civic space violation documented in Asia and Pacific is the detention of HRDs, recorded in 16 countries, with large numbers detained in both China and Viet Nam. In China, police often detain HRDs outside formal detention facilities, sometimes incommunicado and for long periods, in a practice known as ‘residential surveillance in a designated location’ (RSDL). The practice brings increased risks of torture

“

CIVIC SPACE
VIOLATIONS
AROUND
PEACEFUL
PROTESTS IN
21 COUNTRIES
IN THE REGION,
INCLUDING THE
PREVENTION AND
DISRUPTION OF
PROTESTS AND
THE DETENTION
OF PROTESTERS

”

and other ill treatment of detainees. HRD and anti-censorship advocate Zhen Jianghua was **detained** in September 2017 and placed under RSDL outside the protection of the law. He was not formally arrested until March 2018. In Viet Nam, more than 100 **activists** are in detention facing long periods of imprisonment for their activism. Environmental activist and blogger Le Dinh Luong was **sentenced** to 20 years' imprisonment in August 2018 for seeking compensation for farmers and fishers affected by a 2016 toxic spill in the central coastal region that destroyed livelihoods and the environment. Other countries where HRDs are detained include India, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand. Many have been jailed for crimes related to criminal defamation, charges of national security, separatism and terrorism, and links to banned groups. Attacks against HRDs were also reported in 14 countries in the region.

RESTRICTIONS ON PEACEFUL PROTESTS

The CIVICUS Monitor has also documented civic space violations around peaceful protests in 21 countries in the region, including the prevention and disruption of protests and the detention of protesters. In the West Papuan region of Indonesia, security forces have systematically dispersed peaceful **protests** calling for human rights accountability and independence from Indonesia. In Viet Nam, police have used excessive force on numerous occasions over the last two years, primarily against protesters demanding accountability for the 2016 **toxic spill**, or protesters mobilising against a repressive **cybersecurity bill**. In Myanmar, scores of peaceful protesters have been **prosecuted** since May 2018 for demanding the protection and safe movement of civilians trapped by armed conflict in Kachin State, while in Thoothukudi, India in May 2018, police **fired** live ammunition into a crowd protesting against pollution, killing at least 10 people. The use of excessive or lethal force by security forces against protests was also documented in 16 other countries in the region, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Positive civic space developments have also been documented. In June 2017, legislation was **passed** in Mongolia to protect the LGBTI community from hate crimes after sustained advocacy by civil society. In March 2018, the government of Sri Lanka decided to **withdraw** restrictive amendments to their NGO law after pressure from civil society, while in September 2018, a number of political prisoners were **released** in the Maldives following its elections. In Thailand, the courts **dismissed** charges of defamation brought against migrant workers by a poultry company that had accused them of labour abuses, while in the Solomon Islands, a new Whistleblowers Protection Act was **passed** in July 2018 that promises to protect activists who expose corruption from reprisals.

COUNTRY OF CONCERN: BANGLADESH

In the last two years, our research has shown that the **Bangladesh** authorities have increased their use of **repressive laws** to crack down on the freedom of assembly and target and harass HRDs and journalists, including photojournalist **Shahidul Alam**, arrested in August 2018 on charges of spreading propaganda and false information. Civic space conditions have deteriorated further ahead of national elections scheduled for late 2018. Members of the student wing of the ruling party have **attacked** student activists, academics and journalists with impunity. Scores of activists and government critics have been detained around protests and some are facing criminal defamation charges under Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, which has been systematically used to silence dissent. A new **Digital Security Act** passed in September 2018 incorporates Section 57 of the ICT Act and contains other measures that are overly broad and vague, and inconsistent with Bangladesh's international human rights obligations. The authorities have also embarked upon intensive and intrusive **surveillance** and monitoring of social media and have attempted to **weaken** opposition parties by arresting their members and dispersing their gatherings. Cases of **enforced disappearances** continue to be reported.

PERCENTAGE OF ALL REPORTS WHICH INCLUDE GOOD NEWS STORIES

7% 7% 7%



POSITIVE
CIVIC SPACE
DEVELOPMENT



POSITIVE
COURT
RULING



RELEASE OF
HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS

Based on 203 updates on the CIVICUS Monitor for 38 countries in the Asia and Pacific region.

“

THREE
COUNTRIES –
AUSTRIA, ITALY
AND LATVIA –
MOVE FROM OPEN
TO NARROWED
AND ONE –
AZERBAIJAN –
MOVES FROM
REPRESSED TO
CLOSED

”

BRIGHT SPOT: MALAYSIA

The May 2018 elections in **Malaysia** saw a new ruling coalition come into power after 61 years of rule by the former ruling party, bringing with them commitments to democratic and civic space reforms. Since then, scores of activists and other government critics who had faced prosecution under the Sedition Act and the Peaceful Assembly Act for expressing themselves or participating in peaceful protests have been **acquitted** by the courts or have had their charges dropped. The government has also promised to **ratify international human rights treaties**, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and repeal or revise an array of restrictive laws used by the previous regime to silence dissent. The authorities have also made commitments to undertake media reforms and enhance press freedom. In September 2018, the Prime Minister **announced** the establishment of the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission, a police oversight body, to handle cases of police misconduct in the context of civic space violations.

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

RATINGS OVERVIEW

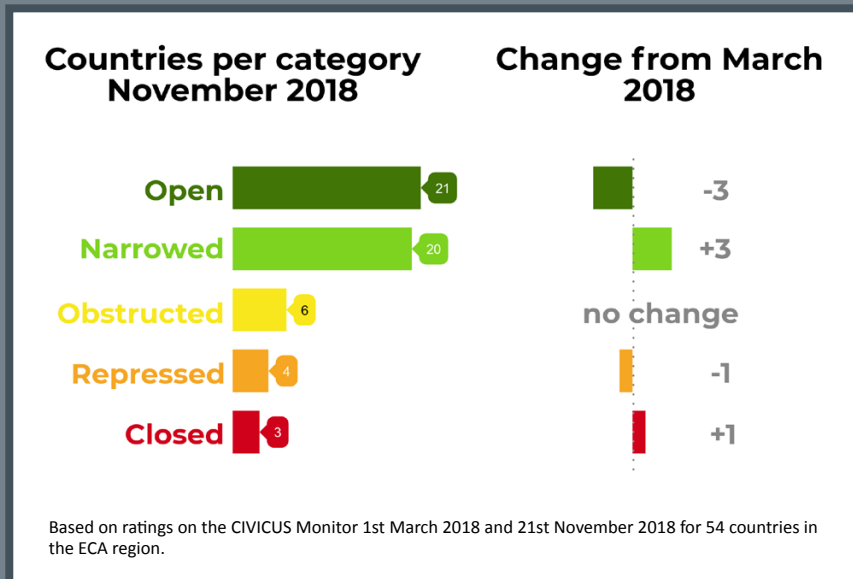
The ECA region covers 54 countries with a wide range of civic space conditions. Our latest analysis shows an overall decline in the quality of civic space since we last updated our global dataset in March 2018. Three countries – Austria, Italy and Latvia – move from open to narrowed and one – Azerbaijan – moves from repressed to closed.¹ Lithuania improves its rating from narrowed to open. The number of countries in the obstructed category remains unchanged.

¹ Latvia's rating was changed in April 2018.

THE EUROPEAN UNION – FREEDOM’S FORTRESS UNDER SIEGE

Just over half the countries in the ECA region are members of the European Union (EU), which has traditionally prided itself on strong respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In November 2018, the EU remains the region of the world with the most countries with open civic space – 15. There are no repressed or closed countries in the EU.

According to our latest data however, there are now 13 EU countries that are rated as having either narrowed or obstructed civic space. A key trend that lies behind this is an increasing willingness of some governments to impose restrictions on the so-called **‘political’ activity of CSOs**. The governments of Hungary and Poland have led by way by imposing restrictions on **when and where CSOs can protest** and passing **laws restricting the operations of CSOs providing support to refugees and migrants**. Other countries, including **France** (see below), **Italy**, **Spain** and the **United Kingdom** have reduced the space for CSOs critical of the state and the private sector. Very often, the targets of these restrictions are social movements, environmental groups or groups providing support to refugees and migrants. The rise of right-wing and far-right parties in a number of EU countries, including **Austria** and **Germany**, is also having a negative impact upon civic space, as political leaders express **less tolerance for a diversity of opinions** and freedom of speech, sometimes engaging in reckless **smear campaigns** against civil society. This phenomenon is also leading to the spread of restrictive practices across borders, such as the potentially negative **influence of media allied to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Slovenia’s elections**. Legislation is being used in some cases to justify an encroachment by the state into the internal affairs of CSOs, as seen in **Romania** in 2018. The private sector is having a damaging influence on civic space, as documented in France and Portugal, where private companies are suing activists through lawsuits known as **Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)**.



RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE TO THE EAST

In the countries to the east of the EU, conditions for civic space are much worse, with Georgia the only non-EU country rated narrowed on the CIVICUS Monitor. All other countries in this area are rated either obstructed (three), repressed (five), or closed (three). Russia's dominance in this region has **negatively impacted on civic space**, either through indirect political influence on pro-Russian politicians who push the policies of 'illiberal democracy' or, as in the case of **Central Asian states**, the continued imposition of repressive measures by longstanding authoritarian regimes.

At home, the government of Russia shows no signs of reversing course in its drive to shut down space for CSOs, particularly human rights organisations, who have been hit hard by the **foreign agents law**, which restricts their ability to receive foreign funding. **International CSOs** and **media** have also now been targeted with similar rules curbing their activities in Russia. Anti-government protests continue to be regularly targeted with bans or police violence, encrypted messaging service **Telegram was blocked**, and many HRDs and government critics languish in prison on trumped-up charges. In early October 2018, Amnesty International researcher Oleg Kozlovsky was **kidnapped, beaten and harassed** while attempting to monitor a peaceful protest in the south of Russia.

CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS

In ECA, over the past two years, the CIVICUS Monitor has most often documented **ensorship, intimidation, harassment, attacks on journalists** and the **imposition of laws** aimed at restricting civic space. The disruption of protest, detention of HRDs, bureaucratic restrictions on protest, public vilification of activists and the detention of protesters round out the top 10 violations in the ECA region reported on the CIVICUS Monitor over the past two years.

TOP 10 VIOLATIONS: EUROPE and CENTRAL ASIA



■ Censorship
 ■ Intimidation
 ■ Harassment
 ■ Attack on journalist
 ■ Restrictive Law
 ■ Protest disruption
 ■ HRD detained
 ■ Bureaucratic restriction
 ■ Public vilification
 ■ Protestors detained

Based on analysis of civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24th October 2016: 387 updates for Europe-Central Asia. The numbers above represent the percentage of reports in which that violation was referenced.

“
 INTIMIDATION IS
 USED TO MAKE
 AN ACTIVIST OR
 JOURNALIST
 FEARFUL OF
 ATTACK OR DETER
 THEM FROM
 CONTINUING
 THEIR WORK
 ”

CENSORSHIP

Over the past two years, the CIVICUS Monitor has reported government-imposed censorship in 33 of the 54 ECA countries. Censorship is often framed in terms of the need to protect ‘reputation’, ‘security’ or ‘public morals’ and yet, in the most extreme cases, it allows the authorities to control the public narrative and stifle dissent and debate. In one example, in 2017 editors at a public broadcaster in Serbia admitted that they **regularly censor the content of journalists’ articles**, a practice designed to shield the ruling Serbian Progressive Party from criticism. Censorship in the ECA region can also result from attempts by the government to restrict speech related to **religion** or topics such as **abortion** that authorities deem politically sensitive. Censorship can result in the public being denied access to some parts of the internet, as was seen in Azerbaijan in August 2018 when a court ordered the **blocking of four news websites** for allegedly containing ‘defamatory statements’. In one of the most extreme forms of censorship in this region, authorities in Tajikistan went as far as to **restrict the quality of mobile phone services**.

INTIMIDATION AND HARASSMENT

Intimidation is used to make an activist or journalist fearful of attack or deter them from continuing their work, while harassment has the same goals but involves the repeated targeting of activists or journalists. Intimidation and harassment often go hand in hand as tactics used by state and non-state actors to curtail civic space in the ECA region. Over the past two years, the CIVICUS Monitor recorded instances of intimidation or harassment in 38 out of 54 ECA countries. Powers of arrest and detention are often used to intimidate and harass. In one example in Uzbekistan, journalist Aleksei Volosevich was arrested and **detained for 18 hours** for taking pictures of a town. These tactics can also cross borders, as we saw in early 2017 when **Dutch police had to provide protection measures for journalist Basri Doğan** who received death threats and was named as a terrorist by a media platform controlled by an ally of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Harassment sometimes results in homes being

“

THE CIVICUS
MONITOR
REPORTS
ATTACKS
AGAINST
JOURNALISTS
IN 35 OUT OF
54 COUNTRIES
IN EUROPE AND
CENTRAL ASIA

”

broken into, as happened to **Croatian investigative journalist Domagoj Margetic**, who has also suffered assaults and threats, including a death threat, as part of a pattern of behaviour aimed at getting him to stop his investigations.

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS

The risks to the safety of journalists in ECA have been brought into sharp focus by killings in **Bulgaria**, Malta and **Slovakia** since October 2017, when Maltese **journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was killed** in a car bomb attack. The CIVICUS Monitor reports attacks against journalists in 35 out of 54 ECA countries. Verbal attacks are sometimes made openly by political leaders, as was seen in July 2018 in Moldova when **local mayor Ilan Şor made a video threatening journalists** who were accused of collaborating with political opponents. Many physical attacks have also been recorded on the CIVICUS Monitor in the past two years, including against journalist Vladimir Kovacevic, who was **severely beaten with metal rods** in Bosnia and Herzegovina in August 2018. Despite the severity of these crimes, impunity is common, with authorities either unwilling or unable to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. Threats via the internet and social media are also becoming common. For example, at the end of August 2018, Matija Stepišnik, editor in chief of the Slovenian daily newspaper Večer, **received** a death threat on Facebook in a context of increasing hate speech against journalists around elections.

COUNTRY OF CONCERN: FRANCE

In early October 2017, the French parliament **approved** legislation making permanent some of the temporary emergency powers activated in the wake of terrorist attacks in 2015. This gave the French police expanded powers of arrest, detention and surveillance, without adequate judicial oversight or due regard for the proportionality of measures taken to restrict fundamental freedoms. During the state of emergency, these powers were used to **target** environmental activists and Muslim civil society groups. More recently, civil society groups **opposing nuclear power, defending the environment** and **supporting refugees and**

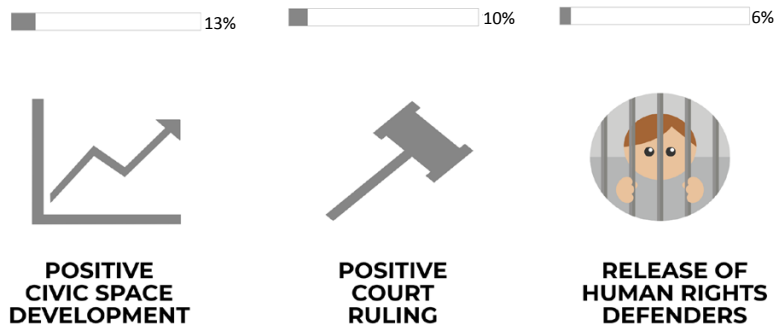
migrants have experienced a range of violations, including coordinated raids and detention, excessive force to clear occupations and coordinated harassment campaigns. Journalists and CSOs in France are also concerned about the impact of a **costly defamation action** in a SLAPP brought by powerful corporations in response to investigations into exploitation of land in Cameroon. French media have expressed concerns about the commitment of the government of President Emmanuel Macron to the freedom of expression, pointing to **criminal complaints** against journalists by cabinet ministers and the **removal of the press room** from the Elysée Palace.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

While the bulk of CIVICUS Monitor reports concern actual or potential violations of civic freedoms, we are also reporting some positive developments. This is a reflection of the continued resilience and activism of civil society in many parts of the region.

Although Uzbekistan remains rated closed on the CIVICUS Monitor, over the past year, the authorities have made **some steps towards the creation of a more enabling environment for civic activism**, including the conditional release from detention of HRD Azam Farmonov and the granting of permission for an independent film festival to take place. As noted above, **improved government-civil society relations** are leading to an opening of civic space in Macedonia. Courts across the region are sometimes proving themselves to be an important ally in efforts to defend civic space. In the past two years, the CIVICUS Monitor documented 38 reports in the region involving a court ruling that had a positive impact on civic space. These included a December 2017 judgment by a French court that **ordered the local authorities of the city of Hayange to restore basic services** to the building occupied by Secours Populaire, a CSO providing services to migrants.

PERCENTAGE OF ALL REPORTS WHICH INCLUDE GOOD NEWS STORIES



Based on 387 updates on the CIVICUS Monitor for 54 countries in the ECA region.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

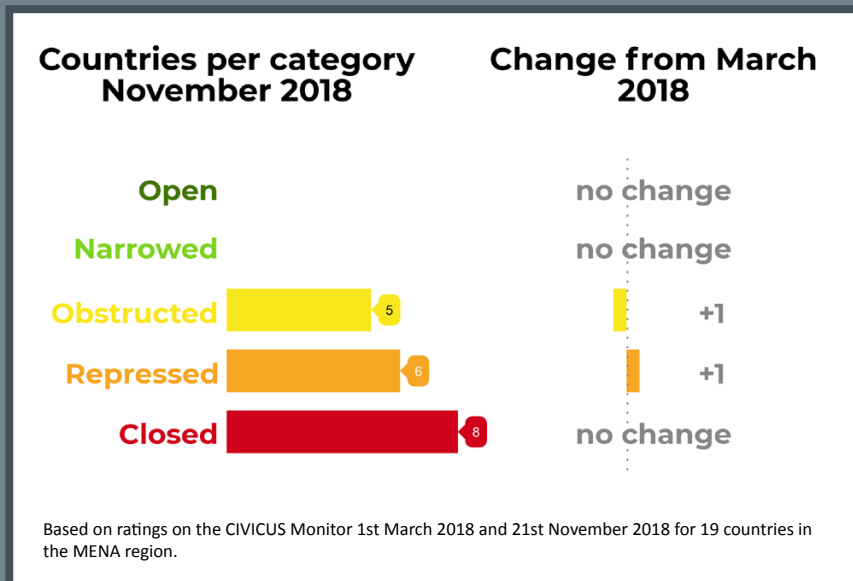
RATINGS OVERVIEW

MENA is a region of 19 countries and over 400 million people. Civic space across much of MENA is severely constrained, with our latest data showing that eight countries in MENA have closed civic space, while six are rated repressed and six obstructed. MENA is unique in that it has no countries in the open or narrowed categories. When compared with our previous ratings update in March 2018, most countries retain their ratings, apart from Kuwait, which is downgraded from obstructed to repressed.

This data shows that the fallout from the wave of popular protests across the Arab world in 2010 and 2011 continues to be mostly negative for civic space and civil society. As governments in countries including Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE double down on repressive tactics, attempts to challenge authority or criticise those in power remain highly dangerous for activists. Our monitoring also shows that repression across the region has a particularly adverse impact on women and women's rights activism. In several countries, including Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia, women have been specifically targeted because of their attempts to promote the empowerment of women or oppose policies that discriminate against women. At the same time, our monitoring illustrates the resilience of women and women HRDs across MENA.

CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS

In the past two years, the CIVICUS Monitor has documented **detentions of HRDs, censorship and attacks on journalists** as the three most common violations in the MENA region. Harassment by authorities, detention of journalists, killings of journalists, the use of excessive force, intimidation, torture and protest disruption complete the list of the 10 most common civic space violations documented.



DETENTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The detention of HRDs has become widespread in MENA. It is the most highly recorded violation on the CIVICUS Monitor for MENA over the past two years. Reports relating to the detention of HRDs were recorded in 71 out of 194 CIVICUS Monitor MENA region updates in this period. These reports came from 15 of the 19 countries in MENA.

HRDs were detained for a wide range of reasons, including expressing their views on social media, as happened in August 2018 when Kuwaiti HRD and blogger **Anwar Dashti** was prosecuted for defending the freedom of expression on Twitter. In Iran, a crackdown on environmental and human rights defenders resulted in the **mass detention of activists**. **Lawyers** who represent HRDs in Iran are also facing detention, including Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was charged in 2018 for criticising the judiciary and for acting as the lawyer for two women who were charged with removing their hijabs in public. In Bahrain, the authorities have systematically cracked down on the freedom of expression by detaining and sentencing HRDs, including **Nabeel Rajab**, who was jailed for tweeting about the war in Yemen and torture in a Bahraini Prison.

Perhaps the most visible aspect of the wave of detentions across the MENA region is the detention of women HRDs, and activists defending women's rights. In MENA, women are the specific group most commonly associated with civic space violations reported on the CIVICUS Monitor. This is borne out by an examination of the situation in countries such as Saudi Arabia, where the highest number of cases of detention of HRDs has been recorded. Despite some superficial reforms such as the right to drive, women activists have been systematically **targeted and detained**. In Iran as well, people **defending women's rights** are frequent targets of detention, a trend starkly illustrated by the solitary detention of HRDs Atena Daemi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee. In order to further intimidate and silence these activists, the authorities have now begun to target **their families**. In Egypt, women HRDs who speak out against sexual harassment have found themselves targeted by the authorities, something highlighted

TOP 10 VIOLATIONS: MENA



HRD detained
 Censorship
 Attack on journalist
 Harassment
 Journalist detained
 Killing of journalist
 Excessive force
 Intimidation
 Torture/ill treatment
 Protest disruption

Based on analysis of civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24th October 2016: 194 updates for MENA. The numbers above represent the percentage of reports in which that violation was referenced.

“

CENSORSHIP
WAS THE
SECOND MOST
COMMON
CIVIC SPACE
VIOLATION
RECORDED BY
THE CIVICUS
MONITOR IN THE
MENA REGION

”

by the case of **Amal Fathy**, who was arrested after posting a video on social media highlighting her experiences of sexual harassment.

CENSORSHIP

Censorship was the second most common civic space violation recorded by the CIVICUS Monitor in the MENA region. Fifty-seven of 194 reports from MENA countries recorded incidents of censorship by the authorities, encompassing 16 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia and the UAE.

Censorship in MENA can be blatant, sometimes involving the banning of media outlets, as was the case in Yemen when soldiers acting on orders from authorities in Taiz **forced Al Jazeera's local office to close** in January 2018. Blocking websites is another common tactic employed in a number of states, including the UAE, where the website of online news organisation the Middle East Eye was **blocked** by the authorities after reporting widely on the UAE's involvement in the war in Yemen. Domestic media, too, are frequent targets of censorship, either being denied permission to report on specific events, or being shut down altogether. In Algeria in May 2017, the government **prohibited local media stations** from reporting on an election boycott called by political parties after concerns about the lack of transparency in the electoral process. The same month in Iran, the **authorities closed down satellite news channel Diljah TV** after it aired a report exposing local government officials' involvement in smuggling. In Egypt, **writers have also been arrested and detained** for expressing views that are critical of the government. For example, the authorities arrested Abdel Khaleq Farouk, an economic researcher, for publishing a book in October 2018 that was critical of Egypt's economic policy. In Lebanon, the authorities have coerced HRDs into **signing agreements barring them from posting** content on particular human rights issues on their social media accounts.

“

JOURNALISTS
BEAR THE
BRUNT OF THE
CRACKDOWN
ON FREE
EXPRESSION IN
THE REGION

”

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS

Journalists bear the brunt of the crackdown on free expression in the region. Nowhere is this more true than in the context of the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, which have had dire consequences for the work and lives of journalists.

Over the past two years, 44 CIVICUS Monitor updates out of 194, from nine MENA countries, included information relating to journalists being attacked. Attacks have taken a variety of forms, including kidnapping, highlighted by the case of **journalist Anwar al Rakan**, who was taken and held by Yemen’s Houthi militia for one year. He died only days after his release due to mistreatment during his detention. In July 2018, Yemeni journalist **Mazen Al-Shaabi** was attacked by unknown assailants while driving home. In Iraq as well, media workers face attacks, including murders, while perpetrators are rarely prosecuted. Protests in Palestine have also been a flashpoint for attacks on journalists. Since March 2018, **protests in Gaza have led to the targeting of journalists** wearing press jackets by Israeli security forces. In many cases these media workers were covering protests by Palestinian civilians at the border with Israel, during which at least 154 Palestinians have been killed.

COUNTRY OF CONCERN: SAUDI ARABIA

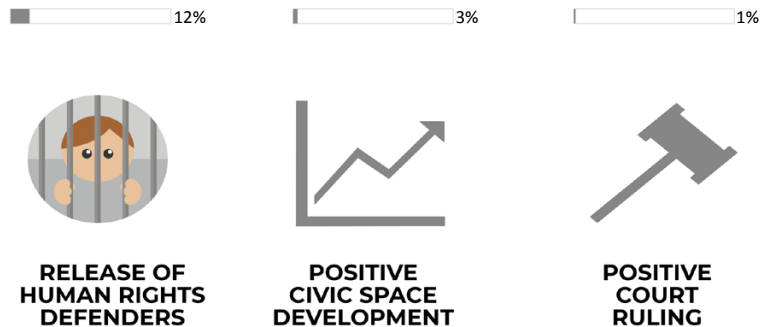
For many years, Saudi Arabia has been in the spotlight because of systemic violations of the human rights and civic freedoms of its citizens. HRDs, journalists, media outlets and human rights organisations have all been the targets of some of the worst peacetime rights violations the world has ever witnessed. This situation has not improved since the CIVICUS Monitor began tracking the situation in 2016. In September 2017, Saudi authorities embarked on a **wave of arrests of HRDs, religious leaders and activists**, with more than 60 people arrested between September 2017 and February 2018. In a subsequent effort to silence dissent, the authorities undertook a further wave of arrests in May 2018. Some of Saudi Arabia’s best-known women HRDs were arrested. Those **arrested**

included seven leaders and supporters of the #Oct26driving, #Right2Drive and #IAmMyOwnGuardian campaigns who spoke out against human rights violations experienced by women in the kingdom. These arrests came just a week before Saudi Arabia lifted its ban on women driving. In July 2018, **security forces arrested two more women HRDs**, Samar Badawi and Nassima Al-Sadah. Free expression and access to information on geopolitical matters is also curtailed in Saudi Arabia. In the context of the 2017 dispute between Qatar and the other Gulf states, **Saudi authorities shut down the Saudi bureau of Al Jazeera**. Similarly, **access to the website of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) was blocked in Saudi Arabia**, just before GCHR was due to publish two reports on human rights violations in Saudi Arabia.

BRIGHT SPOTS

There was limited good news for civic space in the MENA region recorded in recent months on the CIVICUS Monitor. In Lebanon, **the Right to Access to Information law was passed by parliament** in January 2017, eight years after the first draft was submitted. The law, which allows members of the public to access documents of a regulatory nature from public entities, was welcomed by rights advocates, who view it as the beginning of a new era of accountability by the authorities. In Syria, **armed group Hay'at Tahrir al Sham released Syrian citizen-journalist Hossam Mahmoud** in June 2018, six months after they had held and detained him.

PERCENTAGE OF ALL REPORTS WHICH INCLUDE GOOD NEWS STORIES



Based on 194 updates on the CIVICUS Monitor for 19 countries in the MENA region.

REGIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Africa: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Americas: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela.

Asia and Pacific: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, North Korea, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Vietnam.

Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan.

Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

CIVICUS: WORLD ALLIANCE
FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

25 Owl Street, 6th Floor

Johannesburg, South Africa, 2092

Phone: +27 (0)11 833 5959

Email: monitor@civicus.org

 @CIVICUSMonitor