

UN Human Rights Survey: Civil Society Space (non-States)

In its [resolution 59/10](#), the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to “prepare a thematic report in follow-up to the report containing practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practices and lessons learned, submitted to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-second session, to review progress against the recommendations contained therein, to identify new and emerging trends concerning civil society space, including through an analysis of the specific contribution and risks faced by underrepresented parts of civil society, and to provide an updated set of recommendations in the light of those trends, and to present the report to the Council at its sixty-third session.”

OHCHR invites civil society, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, United Nations entities and other relevant stakeholders, to respond to this online survey. If you are an organization working in a specific country, please provide information related to that country or context. If you represent a global and regional organization, please consider providing information for as many regions and/or countries as appropriate.

Type of organization (NGO, NHRI, UN entity etc.): Non-governmental organization (NGO)

Name of your organization: Derechos Digitales¹

Please indicate whether your organization is global, regional, or work in a particular country:

Derechos Digitales is an independent non-profit Latin American organization founded in 2005, whose mission is the defense, promotion, and development of fundamental rights in digital environments in Latin America.

Civic space trends

In the past ten years, has civic space expanded or contracted globally, regionally and/or in your country (depending on where you operate)?

Choose one of the following answers:

- Contracted a little
- **Contracted considerably**
- Expanded a little
- Expanded considerably

¹ More information, at: <https://www.derechosdigitales.org/en/home/>. This contribution was prepared by Laura Mantilla-León and reviewed by Paloma Lara-Castro. For more information, please contact: paloma.lara.castro@derechosdigitales.org

If it has contracted, how? Please select as many answers as relevant of major trends against civil society actors, human rights defenders, journalists etc., due to:

Select all that apply

- Legal restrictions related to registration and operation (e.g. reporting duties)
- Legal restrictions linked to security, counterterrorism, cybersecurity, foreign agents etc.
- Through funding cuts and other financial measures (e.g. increased taxation, foreign funding laws, burdensome financial reporting measures)
- Killings and enforced disappearances of civil society and journalists
- Criminalization, including criminal or other charges, arbitrary arrests, detention, and torture
- Online and offline attacks against individuals, including surveillance, smear campaigns and harassment
- Attacks against organizations and media, including office raids and dissolutions
- Intimidation and reprisal for cooperating with UN, and other international and regional bodies
- Transnational repression

If other, please provide concrete and factual information:

Our responses to this survey are informed by the widespread shrinking of civic space across Latin America. While our analysis focuses specifically on Peru and Paraguay, we underscore that this regressive trend also threatens civil society in other countries in the region, including Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela, and Ecuador.

In Peru and Paraguay, these trends are further reinforced by the growing imposition of institutional and legal restrictions that could hinder the ability to represent victims and historically vulnerable groups. As a direct consequence, these groups' rights of access to justice and due process is undermined. Notably, in Peru, Law N° 32301, which modifies the law governing the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation considers as a serious infringement the use of international cooperation resources to "advise, assist or finance, in any form or manner, administrative, judicial or other actions against the Peruvian State in national or international bodies". In Paraguay, the registration and reporting obligation imposed by Law N° 7363 "Non-Profit Control, Transparency and Accountability Law", as well as generating excessive administrative burdens on NGOs, puts at risk the privacy of beneficiaries of their actions. Sanctions for non-compliance of such obligations, in addition to significantly restricting organizations' ability to function, directly harm the historically marginalized groups on which NGOs focus their work. This constitutes a serious setback for access to justice and the protection of these groups, such as indigenous communities, LGBTQIA+ people, and women. This is particularly alarming considering these communities have long faced systemic exclusion and institutional harm in these countries.

Civil society has historically played a critical role in defending democracy and human rights, especially amid recurring cycles of authoritarian rule, political instability, and entrenched corruption. In this context, NGOs have been instrumental in advancing human rights, accountability, and social equity. However, the current political and legislative climate has become increasingly hostile toward independent organizations hindering their ability to operate and fulfill their mandate.

In other countries, such as Guatemala and Nicaragua, we observe a distinct but equally concerning trend, has emerged: the forced exile of civil society actors. Former prosecutors, judges, human rights defenders, and journalists have been compelled to go into exile as a result of political persecution and the criminalization of their work, which often involves denouncing abuses and crimes committed by authoritarian regimes against the population. Even from exile, these members of civil society continue their vital work of documenting, investigating, and denouncing state crimes at the international level. In this mission, they require sustained support and protection to continue defending the human rights of the population.

Impact of laws and policies on civic space

If laws and policies related to issues such as “foreign agents”, terrorism, hate speech, cybercrime, corruption, access to information, elections, functioning of civil society and NGOs (including on access to funding, registration, reporting requirements) have impacted civic space, please describe how and which laws were adopted or were considered for adoption? Where such laws and policies were adopted, amended or repealed, did it lead to improvements and was the process consultative?

Please provide concrete and factual information:

In 2024, Paraguay enacted Law N° 7363 on transparency for non-profit organizations, without meaningful public consultation involving civil society or the public. The law, which contradicts international human rights standards, particularly regarding privacy, freedom of association and expression, requires all civil society organizations that work in the country "directly or indirectly", to register in a national registry and keep detailed records of all funds they receive or manage, whether national or international, public or private. The information required, concerning the purposes, programs, and beneficiaries of NGOs, as well as any personnel linked to their work, puts the privacy and security of donors, beneficiaries, and members of these organizations at risk. This obligation is especially troubling given concerns about how such information may be used, particularly in light of smear campaigns against civil society. Under the euphemism of "control, transparency and accountability", what is intended is to hinder the work of civil organizations that criticize the State by creating a bureaucracy that is difficult to comply with.

In 2025, Peru's Congress approved Law N° 32301. Although presented as a measure to enhance financial transparency and limit foreign interference, the law has been widely criticized by national and international observers for imposing broad, ambiguous, and punitive restrictions that could severely curtail the work of civil society. Under the new framework, civil society organizations must obtain prior authorization from the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation for all projects, programs, and activities. Failure to secure this authorization before using international funds is now considered a serious administrative offense, which can result in heavy fines and the suspension of activities.

According to the last report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) about the situation of human rights defenders in America, other “Anti-NGO” laws in Latin America include:

Guatemala (reform of the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations for Development and the Civil Code that entered into force in 2021), Nicaragua (National Assembly passed the Foreign Agents Act without any participatory process), Ecuador (Integrity Strategy for Civil Society Organizations/NGOs, regulated by Executive Decree No. 193 of October 23, 2017), Honduras (reforms to the Money Laundering Law were approved to include Politically Exposed Persons (PEP)), Venezuela (Law for the control, regularization, performance and financing of non-governmental and related organizations), El Salvador (Foreign Agents Law). These laws have in common that they are based on broad and ambiguous definitions; impose restrictions; spread narratives that explicitly or effectively silence and close off the space of civil society; and, limit free participation in public affairs.

Enabling environment for civil society

How have state institutions ensured that a broad range of civil society actors, including defenders and journalists, can meaningfully and safely participate, offline and online, in decision-making in national and local legislative and policy development processes, and can access information? Have participatory channels been established and in which areas or issues? Has this expanded the opportunity to influence decision-making? How have state institutions responded to restrictions on participation, including instances of strategic litigation against public participation?

Please select the appropriate answer:

Choose one of the following answers

- State authorities have taken many measures to enable civil society to contribute
- **State authorities have taken some measures to enable civil society to contribute**
- State authorities have taken no measures to enable civil society to contribute

If such measures have been taken, which ones?

Select all that apply

- **Online platforms to input and feedback on national law and policy making**
- **Consultations to input and feedback on national law and policy making**
- Online platforms to input and feedback on regional and local law and policy making
- **Consultations to input and feedback on regional and local law and policy making**
- Innovative channels/platforms/formats for involving civil society
- These channels reached a diversity of civil society, including women, youth, migrants and minority communities.

Please provide more details and examples:

We highlight participatory processes particularly in the field of digital rights, for example, the enactment of Law N° 7593/2025 on the Protection of Personal Data, which represents a significant step forward for human rights in Paraguay. This law is the result of collective, diverse, and multisectoral work led by the Personal Data Coalition, bringing together civil society organizations, academia, and experts from both the public and private sectors. However, the final version of the law setbacks in access to public information containing personal data, by establishing that access to public information may be restricted if the "harm to the protected interest" outweighs the public interest. Even so, historically, participation in public policies has been a challenge in Paraguay. In this context, plural and independent voices face constant obstacles to engaging meaningfully and effectively in decision-making. Civil society organizations have expressed growing concern over the advance of authoritarian measures, where the systematic closure of spaces for debate and participation reflects a troubling pattern.

In Peru, we highlight civil society's participation in the definition of the Regulation document of the AI Law. The drafts of the document featured open and closed discussion sessions as well as the possibility of submitting comments from interested stakeholders. Throughout these participatory processes, civil society's main concerns focused on corporate responsibility, accountability, and the effective protection of human rights in the face of AI deployment risks. Another example is the submission of comments on Bill No. 10880/2024-CR, which seeks to protect children and adolescents in digital environments. In this process, civil society submitted recommendations to the Congress of the Republic, emphasizing the need to conduct a proportionality test for each measure proposed in the bill. Participatory efforts have also been led by the Secretariat of Government and Digital Transformation, which opened channels for stakeholder input on policies such as the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence 2026–2030.

How have state institutions prevented and responded to offline and online attacks and harmful practices against civil society by/facilitated by state entities as well as private actors, including by preventing crackdowns on peaceful protests, strengthening protection of civil society, and ensuring access to justice? Have such attacks (online and offline) occurred across borders and, if so, what responses have been developed? Do you have any statistics to share on the number, types and nature of such online and offline attacks?

Please provide concrete and factual information:

In Paraguay, civil society organizations have reported systematic online attacks including hacking and takeover of personal, collective, and media accounts; removal or sabotage of content for censorship or retaliation; identity theft and malicious use of public profiles; gender-based digital violence; non-consensual sharing of intimate images; and the use of artificial intelligence to manipulate images, voices, or videos for discrediting, fraud, or disinformation purposes.

State institutions have failed to respond or take action to prevent these attacks, which aim to silence critical voices, hinder reporting processes, and weaken public participation. Moreover, regarding discrediting campaigns, evidence suggests they are carried out by the ruling party. Far from being isolated incidents, the cases reported followed clear patterns of aggression. In response, civil society

organizations have been accompanying and assisting victims to the extent their capacities allow, while also documenting cases and attempting to generate data on these attacks.

In Peru, the contraction of civic space since 2022 has manifested in attacks against collectives, unions, and human rights defenders, who face disproportionate police assaults, criminal and administrative proceedings, and online harassment campaigns. Human rights defenders are specifically targeted by both public and private actors. The country has witnessed high levels of repression during social protests, unfounded accusations of corruption against long-standing human rights organizations, and systematic digital violence that spills over into physical environments. In particular, an organization called "La Resistencia" has attacked several human rights organizations, carrying out harassment and stigmatization campaigns against them. One case related to this group's actions involved a Facebook post targeting the executive secretary of the Coordinación Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDDHH), which had been manipulated using artificial intelligence to show her face covered in blood, alongside a message accusing her and her organization of alleged acts of corruption and violence. The State institutions have failed to respond or take action to prevent these attacks.

How have state institutions, and other actors, ensured that civil society is properly resourced, from internal and external sources, e.g. through tax exemptions or innovative funding modalities? Please indicate which legal or other restrictions, if any, have been imposed on civil society, including through abolishing tax exemptions and restricting access to foreign funding?

Please select the appropriate answer:

Choose one of the following answers

- Funding available to my organization has not changed and we received the same amount of funding from internal and external sources
- **Funding from State and other internal sources has decreased by at least 25%**
- Funding from State and other internal sources has decreased by at least 50%
- Funding from State and other internal sources has decreased by at least 75%
- Funding has stopped or was cut completely

Please provide concrete and factual examples:

Both Peruvian Law N° 32301 and Paraguayan Law N° 7363 restrict civil society's access to foreign funding. In the first case, organizations must obtain "prior approval" from the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation to implement their plans, projects, and activities. This subjects their work to State authorization and restricts their autonomy and independence. If an NGO executes resources without this approval, it commits a "serious infringement," which could paralyze its operations and limit its funding.

In the second case, the law enables the State to control national and international private funds received by organizations. It establishes prohibitions and requirements for State agencies and entities to sign agreements with organizations if these are not registered and if the cooperation funds do not pass through the General Budget of the Nation. Since the law refers to international cooperation funds intended to promote citizen participation and public policies by NGOs, this measure would make implementation impossible.