

INFOGRAPHICS



INFOGRAPHICS: CIVIC SPACE EXPLAINED

Design · Letícia Coelho

..... **What is civic space and civil society?**

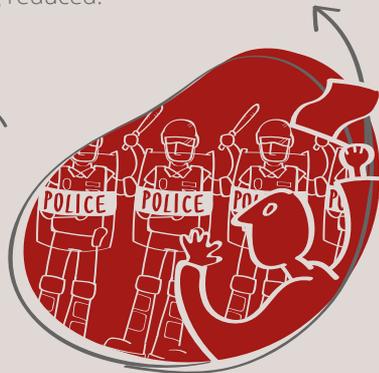
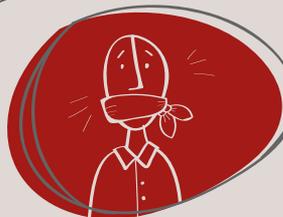
A healthy or open **civic space** implies that civil society and individuals are able to organise, participate and communicate without hindrance, and in doing so, claim their rights and influence the political and social structures around them. Three fundamental freedoms – of association, assembly and expression – define the boundaries of civic space. (Source: CIVICUS)

Civil society is the arena – outside of the family, the state, and the market – which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests. This includes non-governmental organisations, private voluntary organisations, people's movements, community-based organisations, trade unions, charities, social and sports clubs, cooperatives, environmental groups, professional associations, consumer organisations, faith-based organisations and the not-for-profit media. (Source: CIVICUS)



Is civic space under threat?

Governments around the world are putting restrictions on the freedom of assembly, expression and association. Access to civic space is therefore being reduced.



..... How are governments doing this?

By placing restrictions (often hidden) within the following types of legislation (not an exhaustive list):



Laws regulating assembly, association and expression



Laws governing NGOs



Anti-terrorism laws



Legislation restricting foreign donations



Cyber security and telecommunications laws



Tax laws



Anti-money laundering laws

Aside from restrictive legislation, civil society is also under attack via:

- the stigmatisation, detention and criminalisation of activists and groups
- increasingly securitised environments and counter-terrorism measures
- surveillance and cyber attacks
- raids on offices, workshops and meetings
- threats, physical violence and killings
- travel bans
- asset freezes and having funding blocked

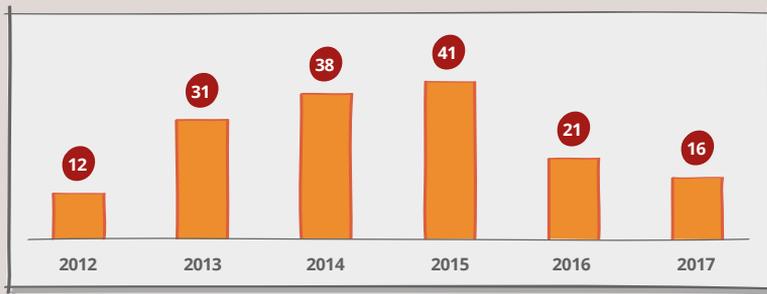
Some parts of civil society experience specific and additional risk and threats, including defenders of the rights of women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI), and indigenous peoples.

Often states and private actors (corporations, organised crime, religious extremists) collude in the backlash against progress in human rights and civic participation.

..... Why is this issue being discussed now?

Restrictions on freedom of assembly, expression and association by governments is not new. However, the rapid geographic spread and variety of ways governments are using the law has presented a significant additional challenge to civil society.

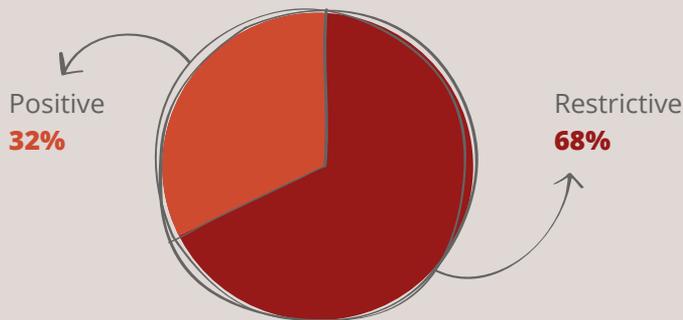
RESTRICTIVE INITIATIVES* ENACTED GLOBALLY SINCE 2012



Source: The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

Since 2012, governments around the world have proposed or enacted more than double the number of initiatives that restrict civil society than initiatives that protect civil society.

TOTAL PROPOSED AND ENACTED INITIATIVES*



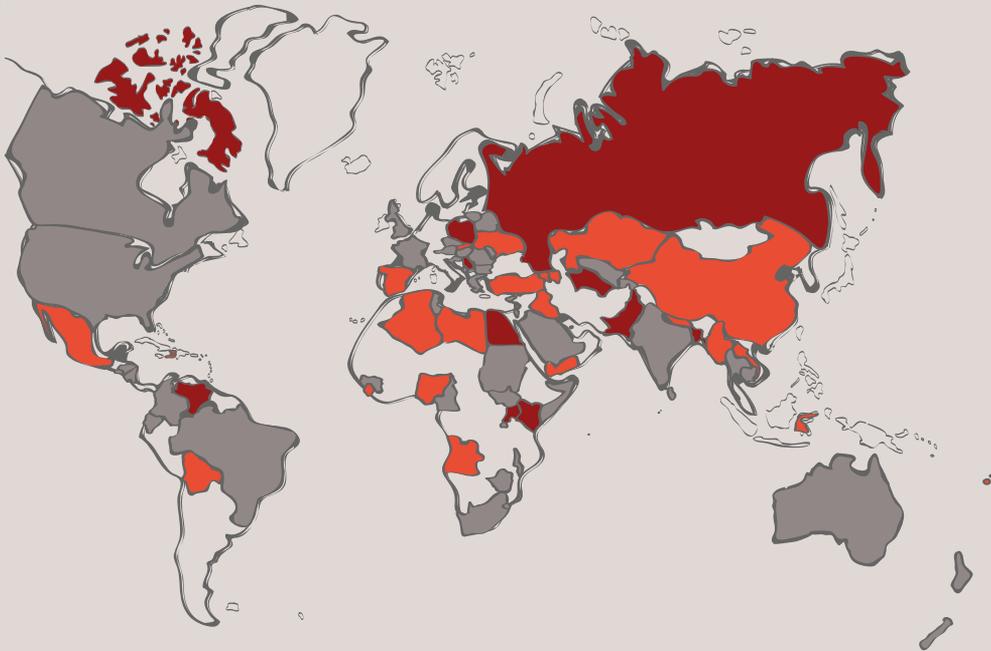
Source: The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

* Data for these infographics has been kindly provided by ICNL. "Initiatives" means proposed or enacted laws and regulations that affect civil society organizations (CSOs) and the rights to freedom of association and assembly.

..... **Is this the case around the world?**

Governments across the globe – in the North and South – are enacting or proposing legislation that restricts civic space.

Since 2012, 83 (of 193 United Nations countries) countries have enacted or proposed restrictive initiatives affecting lifecycle, foreign funding, and assembly legislation.



Country has enacted or proposed:

- One category of restrictive initiatives*
- Two categories of restrictive initiatives*
- Three categories of restrictive initiatives*
- No initiatives proposed on lifecycle, assembly or foreign funding

Source: The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

* Data for these infographics has been kindly provided by ICNL. "Initiatives" means: proposed or enacted laws and regulations that affect civil society organizations (CSOs) and the rights to freedom of association and assembly. ICNL organises these initiatives according to the following categories: "Lifecycle": Initiatives affecting the establishment, registration, activities, supervision and dissolution of civil society organizations. "Foreign funding": initiatives that affect the ability of CSOs to receive funding from non-domestic sources. And "Assembly": Initiatives that affect the right to peaceful assembly.