

Over half of people in the Americas live in countries with serious civic space restrictions.

Johannesburg, 27th November, 2018

Findings based on data released today by the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) a global research collaboration which rates and tracks respect for fundamental freedoms in 196 countries.

[People Power Under Attack 2018](#), a new report released today by the CIVICUS Monitor shows that 54% of people in the Americas live in countries with obstructed, repressed or closed civic space; meaning that governments in the region are seriously restricting people's fundamental freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression.

"While the Americas has only one country in the closed category, it has increasingly become a deadly region for activism, with high levels of violence against human rights defenders, especially land rights defenders." said Marianna Belalba Barreto, Civic Space Research Officer at CIVICUS.

The report, which is based on data from the CIVICUS Monitor - a global research collaboration - shows that civil society is under serious attack in 111 of 196 countries, or almost six in ten countries worldwide. In the Americas, 14 of 35 countries are rated in the three worst categories on the CIVICUS Monitor. In practice, activists, social leaders and journalists continue to face serious violations, including targeted assassinations of human rights defenders in at least ten countries in the Americas: Belize, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Perú, Honduras, Ecuador, Mexico and Nicaragua. Similarly, journalists are subjected to threats, physical and verbal attacks, and, in unparalleled numbers when compared with other regions, targeted killings.

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.

Our most recent ratings for the Americas show a slight improvement in two countries - as Canada and Ecuador both upgrade their ratings. Canada's rating has moved from narrowed to open. Although threats to civic freedoms still persist, especially for indigenous, immigrant and other marginalised communities, 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.

However, substantial challenges persist elsewhere, with Nicaragua downgraded to repressed in September 2018 after massive protests were met with excessive and lethal force by the police and non-state actors. As a consequence, more than 300 were killed and hundreds remain in detention.

This report also contains detailed analysis of how civic space is being restricted 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.**

“That so many governments in the Americas feel empowered to violently repress peaceful protesters and even use lethal force to disperse and prevent activism should be a major concern. There is a long tradition in this region of peaceful protest as a means for citizens to express discontent and demand change. It is vital that space for this protest be safeguarded,” said Belalba Barreto.

Concerns also persist about respect for civic space in the most powerful country in this region. Although the United States' civic space rating remains unchanged, in recent months the CIVICUS Monitor has documented a worrying series of attacks on the freedom of expression, including by president Trump himself, as well as an encroachment on protest rights through restrictive laws and the arrest or mistreatment of protestors.

[Over twenty organisations](#) collaborate on the CIVICUS Monitor to provide an evidence base for action to improve civic space on all continents. The Monitor has published more than 1,400 [civic space updates](#) in the last two years, data which is analysed in *People Power Under Attack 2018*. Civic space in 196 countries is categorised as either closed, repressed, obstructed, narrowed or open, based on a [methodology](#) which combines several sources of data on the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact::

Marianna Belalba Barreto, Civic Space Research Officer, CIVICUS

marianna.belalba@civicus.org

<https://monitor.civicus.org/>