



# KEEPING UP THE PRESSURE:

## ENHANCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS

Key findings of research on protest movements in Bahrain, Chile and Uganda





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 Written and researched by Tor Hodenfield  
 Edited by Andrew Firmin  
 With thanks to Cathal Gilbert

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent years have seen the world swept by new waves of citizen protest. In countries around the world, large numbers of people have marched, demonstrated, occupied and blockaded to call attention to governance failures, demand democracy, stand against autocracy, claim human rights and urge that their fundamental needs are met. While the triggers of protests have varied, the new protest movements that have sprung to life in many parts of the globe in have much in common, including the imaginative and creative tactics they employ, their ability to connect local and immediate issues to larger and longer-term concerns, and their determination to sustain action over time.

However, the needs of protest movements, and the factors that may contribute to the sustainability of such movements, are not always well understood, including by many who are sympathetic towards the movements and may wish to support them, such as other civil society groups and donors. This report aims to help fill a gap in understanding and encourage further reflection on the key factors that may help to sustain protest movements. It explores in particular how protest movements are affected by:

- national-level conditions in the right to the freedom of assembly and the broader space for civil society;
- national-level connections between protest movements and other actors, including other civil society groupings and the media;
- international connections, including with other protest movements, civil society groups, foreign states and multilateral bodies.

The research examines these issues in three countries, Bahrain, Chile and Uganda, drawing from a series of surveys of and interviews with leaders of contemporary protest movements. The three countries vary in their socio-economic contexts and the conditions for civil society, but each of them has been a recent protest movement that was sustained over a period of time.

Each of the protest movements experienced a range of restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly imposed by the state, which made it harder to maintain the momentum of the movements. The inference of this is that restrictions of the freedom of assembly made it harder for protest movements to achieve impact.

This study further found that, in the face of domestic state-driven limitations on protests, there is a lack of adequate support for protest from a range of international stakeholders, including other protest movements, foreign states, United Nations (UN) bodies and international civil society organisations (CSOs). This study concludes that such support is essential for enhancing the sustainability of national protest movements, across all three contexts.

Protest movement leaders are clear about the support they most need, prioritising support for strategic planning and thinking, and for organising. This suggests a clear agenda for enhanced dialogue and cooperation between protest movements and potential sources of international support.

## OVERALL, THE FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH ARE AS FOLLOWS:

### Restrictions on the freedom of assembly undermine the sustainability of protest movements

- All three states covered by the research are failing to facilitate the right to peaceful assembly.
- Protest movement leaders in each country accordingly indicate that the overall conditions for the freedom of assembly are poor.
- All three protest movements, irrespective of their state's overall level of respect for core civil society freedoms, experience a range of unwarranted legal and extra-legal restrictions.
- The major ways in which states undermine the sustainability of protest movements are the excessive use of force, the arbitrary arrest of protesters and the imposition of legal restrictions on the freedom of assembly.
- Protest movement leaders in each country believe that if people were allowed to protest without fear of arrest or persecution, protests would be sustained for longer.

### Protest movements benefit from national level connections and cooperation

- Networking with allies, including with unions, faith groups and other civil society groups, is assessed as important for enhancing the sustainability of protest movements in each country.
- Most protest movement leaders in all three countries report that their movement engages with domestic CSOs in planning and holding protests, indicating that domestic CSOs are playing a prominent role in protest movements.
- However, protest movement leaders in each country believe that domestic CSOs should play a larger role in mobilising support for protest movements.
- All agree that protest movements would benefit from greater coordination with a diverse range of national actors and allies.
- All protest movements make heavy use of social media as a means of mobilising citizens, and all report that they have a strategy for using the media to spread their message.
- No protest movement leaders believe that citizens are unwilling to join protest movements because of a lack of clear messaging.

### Protest movements can benefit from international connections

- International support, including from other protest movements, international CSOs, foreign states and UN bodies, is assessed to be imperative to supporting the sustainability of protest movements.
- However, protest movement leaders are clear that international CSOs, foreign states and UN bodies are not showing adequate support for and solidarity with protest movements.
- Global or national protest movements in other countries appear to show greater support for and solidarity with protest movements than other international actors.

### Looking forward: enhancing the sustainability of protest movements

- The sustainability of protest movements would be enhanced if restrictions on domestic CSOs are removed or eased.
- In particular, the sustainability of protest movements would be enhanced if legal and extra-legal restrictions on the right to the freedom of assembly are removed or eased.
- In the light of domestic restrictions on civil society and the freedom of assembly, international support from civil society, states and the UN is crucial to ensuring that protesters can more freely and fully exercise their fundamental rights.
- Protest movement leaders believe that they and their movements have capacity development needs that are currently not being met.
- In particular, protest movements leaders in all three countries identify support for strategic planning and thinking, and organising, as their most important capacity development needs. Support for fundraising is identified as their least important need.
- Notwithstanding constraints, leaders of all three movements are on the whole optimistic: they believe that public support for their cause will increase over the next year, and their movements will be sustained until their core demands are achieved.



## INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have seen citizens engaged in hard struggles to establish democracy, claim human rights and advance social justice. People around the world have joined together to roll back slavery, overturn colonial and racist systems of governance, and fight gender-based discrimination. Progress has often come at a great human cost and has typically been achieved incrementally, through the painstaking efforts of visionary leaders and civil society movements.

These struggles are worth remembering now, at a time when many hard-won gains are being directly threatened by state and non-state actors all over the world. CIVICUS, and other civil society movements, have documented the scale and speed of the recent decline in respect for human rights, and civil society rights as part of this.<sup>1</sup> Human rights reversals affect people in countries of varying degrees of democracy and autocracy, run by governments of all political identities, in both the global south and global north. At present, a toxic combination of regressive politics, maverick political leadership, nationalism and extremism threatens further to reverse decades of progress.

Attacks on democratic values are occurring as the gap between very wealthy elites and the rest of humanity widens, environmental degradation continues and millions of people are forced to flee their homes because of conflict.<sup>2</sup> In this context, it is unsurprising that thousands of protests are held every day in almost every country in the world. While many of these protests are spontaneous, offering fleeting manifestations of frustration, exuberance and collective sentiment, many more form part of a sustained pattern of protest in which citizens come together in social movements to confront entrenched and systematic problems and propose new solutions.

As they do so, protest movements find themselves on the frontlines of a global attack on democracy and human rights. Protest movements are being met by campaigns of violence and aggression from states that are increasingly brazen about defying global human rights commitments. The scale of the attack on human rights, and civil society rights as part of this, should not be underestimated. In 2016, the CIVICUS Monitor, an online platform that rates the quality of the space for civil society in countries around the world, reported that 3.2 billion people live in countries where their space to organise, speak out and take action is severely impaired.<sup>3</sup> The space for civil society, determined by the realisation of the three fundamental civil society rights, of the freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, is under attack around the world.

The global attack on the space for civil society is closing off institutional avenues through which citizens can raise their legitimate political and socio-economic concerns. When formal spaces for participation are closed, citizens are more likely to take to the streets and protest. As CIVICUS has documented in recent State of Civil Society Reports, new movements have come to the fore in diverse countries to demand democracy, human rights and social justice, and offer alternatives to the politics of the day.<sup>4</sup> In recognition of the power of protest, many states are introducing new restrictions that criminalise protest actions, something that in turn can further fuel citizens' anger, frustration and sense of injustice. Violence is increasingly being used in an attempt to suppress protests: the CIVICUS Monitor's analysis of its initial findings, in October 2016, found that one of the most commonly logged violations of civil society rights was against the right to peaceful assembly, through the excessive use of force by the state against protests.<sup>5</sup>

Even when protests are suppressed, the concerns that motivated citizens to act remain, meaning that protests are likely to recur. However, at the same time, protest movements may be challenged as to whether they achieve impact, and struggle to sustain their momentum in the longer-term. Further, while many may have sympathy with protest movements and interest in supporting them, including donors and other civil society groups, it is not always clear what the key support needs of protest movements are; traditional forms of donor support may not be the most appropriate support mechanism.

THESE STRUGGLES ARE WORTH REMEMBERING NOW, AT A TIME WHEN MANY HARD-WON GAINS ARE BEING DIRECTLY THREATENED BY STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS ALL OVER THE WORLD.



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Within this context, this report presents the findings of a study to explore key factors that may contribute to or undermine the sustainability of contemporary protest movements. We have done so by examining protest movements that are working in circumstances where the issues that sparked protests remain unresolved. Our report seeks to build on our existing understanding of protest movements by providing perspectives from those leading and actively involved in protests.

Our research assessed ongoing protest movements in Bahrain, Chile and Uganda, using an interview and survey-based qualitative research methodology. While these movements are each driven by a determination to tackle distinct problems, of democratic deficits, inequitable education policies and state corruption, they are all grounded in an attempt to advance human rights, democracy and good governance. By exploring protest movements in three countries that are diverse, in their geography, degree of democracy and respect for civil society rights, we sought to identify common factors that contribute to the sustainability of protest movements.

OUR RESEARCH ASSESSED ONGOING PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN BAHRAIN, CHILE AND UGANDA, USING AN INTERVIEW AND SURVEY-BASED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, 'Discarding Democracy: a return to the Iron Fist', Freedom House, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1RDbWE6>; 'Year in Review: Civic Space', CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report 2016, <http://bit.ly/2jUpsXo>; 'The Dangerous Rise of Populism: Global Attacks on Human Rights Values', Human Rights Watch, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2igNuOF>.

<sup>2</sup>On the gap between wealthy elites and the rest of humanity, see 'Just 8 men own same wealth as half the world', Oxfam International, 16 January 2017, <http://bit.ly/2jOcybW>.

<sup>3</sup>CIVICUS Monitor Findings Report', CIVICUS, 27 October 2016, <http://bit.ly/2j7wqec>.

<sup>4</sup>'Year in Review: Protest and Activism', CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report 2016, <http://bit.ly/2kw4f4Y>.

<sup>5</sup>CIVICUS Monitor Findings Report', op. cit.

## METHODOLOGY

This research utilised an empirical research methodology that sought to prioritise the lived experiences of individuals and groups who are organising and leading protest movements.

To gather primary data, we combined online multiple choice surveys with open-ended semi-structured verbal interviews with leading members of present-day protest movements and relevant civil society leaders. We intentionally sought out leaders of protest movements from Bahrain, Chile and Uganda who played a central organising role in physical, as opposed to virtual or online, protests in response to rights-based grievances; we believe that while virtual and online protests are also a valuable form of participation, they have their own characteristics that demand separate study.

The survey included a combination of 24 open and close-ended questions. Between 12 and 47 responses were secured from each country over the course of a month, with steps taken to ensure gender and age diversity. Following the completion of the survey, we conducted between one and three open-ended, semi-structured telephone interviews with leaders of protest movements in each country. These interviews provided an important opportunity to elaborate on key issues identified through the survey.

Given the legitimate security concerns present in each of the countries selected, all necessary precautions were taken to safeguard the identity of respondents. The names and other identifying information of the respondents, each of whom confirmed that they were over 18 years of age and consented to taking part in the survey, have not been disclosed.

The decision to focus on Bahrain, Chile and Uganda ensures that our study analyses protests that take place in a diversity of regime types. The countries selected have varying levels of respect for protest-related rights, including the rights to the freedoms of association, assembly, expression and political participation.

All of the movements selected began during or after 2011, which meant that protest organisers in different countries were potentially able to apply similar tactics and technologies. They have achieved various levels of success in securing their objectives, and all remain active to some degree.

## DEFINING PROTEST MOVEMENTS

Manifold definitions exist of the term ‘protest’, and the picture is further complicated by the evolving nature of online and on the ground protests, blurring the contours and boundaries of protest movements. These difficulties acknowledged, this study attempts to piece together a broad definition by examining the various definitions available of assemblies, non-violent civic action and protests. Our definitions draw from sources that include international CSOs, UN human rights experts and academic literature.

International human rights treaties do not provide a definition of the right to protest. Instead protest, and the rights essential to its realisation, are subsidiary to the right to the freedom of assembly.<sup>6</sup> An important step was, however, taken in March 2016 when the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary killings put forward a definition of assemblies. In their landmark report, ‘On the proper management of assemblies’, the Special Rapporteurs articulated that assemblies:

*“...express a common position, grievance, aspiration or identity and... diverge from mainstream positions or challenge established political, social, cultural or economic interests.”<sup>7</sup>*

The implication here is that protests, by their very nature, involve a challenge to existing norms, policies or practices. In other words, they maintain a dissenting element.

An equally important principle of protests is their temporal nature. While an individual protest is typically a temporary phenomenon, protest movements require sustained efforts. These set them aside from one-off, spontaneous assemblies in which participants cannot expect to bring about significant long-term change.<sup>8</sup>

Our definition of protest is also intentionally limited to gatherings in physical spaces. While there is a growing recognition of the importance of ‘virtual protests’, the intention here is to examine the range of variables that specifically shape protests in physical spaces as a particular form of protest.<sup>9</sup>

A final component of our definition of protest is the centrality of non-violent civil action as a matter of policy.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, while acts of violence by individual members of a protest do not necessarily undermine the non-violent objectives of a protest movement as a whole or forfeit the rights of the protesters, protest movements must maintain an instrumental commitment to non-violence to be considered legitimate.<sup>11</sup>

By combining these elements, we arrive at the following definition of a protest movement, employed in this report: a continuous public and physical gathering of a group of individuals committed to using non-violent tactics to effect some political, social, cultural or economic change that diverges from mainstream or extant political positions or practices.

OUR DEFINITION OF PROTEST IS ALSO INTENTIONALLY LIMITED TO GATHERINGS IN PHYSICAL SPACES. WHILE THERE IS A GROWING RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ‘VIRTUAL PROTESTS’, THE INTENTION HERE IS TO EXAMINE THE RANGE OF VARIABLES THAT SPECIFICALLY SHAPE PROTESTS IN PHYSICAL SPACES AS A PARTICULAR FORM OF PROTEST.

<sup>6</sup>‘International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights’, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A, 1976, <http://bit.ly/Jz4HwZ>.

<sup>7</sup>Joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on the proper management of assemblies’, United Nations Human Rights Council, A/HRC/31/66, March 2016, <http://bit.ly/1Rq4Pu2>.

<sup>8</sup>‘Why Civil Resistance Works’, Maria J Stephan and Eric Chenoweth, MIT Press, 2008.

<sup>9</sup>‘The Right to Protest: Principles on protection of human rights in protests’, ARTICLE 19, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2cQeKiK>.

<sup>10</sup>‘Nonviolent Action: A Research Guide’, Gene Sharp, Garland, 1997.

<sup>11</sup>UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, “Factsheet: Recommendations on managing assemblies,” 2016, <http://bit.ly/2c7gP7A>.



## POLITICAL CONTEXT

With a population of fewer than 1.5 million people, Bahrain is one of the smallest countries in the Middle East. It has a per capita GDP of almost US\$25,000 and a predominantly Shia Muslim population.<sup>12</sup> As of February 2017, the CIVICUS Monitor describes civil society space in Bahrain as closed, indicating that “there is complete closure - in law and in practice - of civic space.”<sup>13</sup>

The contemporary protest movement in Bahrain began in earnest in February 2011 as part of the wave of protests that swept through the Middle East and North Africa from December 2010, commonly referred to at the time as the ‘Arab Spring’.<sup>14</sup> Protesters sought to overcome the absolute authority of the Bahraini monarchy, led by Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and to institute pro-democracy reforms.

The epicentre of the protests was the Pearl Roundabout in the capital, Manama. Protesters occupied the Pearl Roundabout for several weeks and also organised marches and demonstrations across Bahrain, which were attended by thousands of people. In March 2011, at the behest of the Bahraini government, military personnel from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) occupied parts of Bahrain to suppress the protest movement.

Directly following the military intervention, the state orchestrated a systematic campaign to undermine the peaceful protest movement and suppress civil society, political opposition and Shia religious groups (the Bahraini royal family comes from the Sunni minority). Among other tactics used, the state imposed martial law, forcibly cleared the Pearl Roundabout, extra-judicially killed scores of protesters and arrested thousands of others.

Since the protests began, the movement has decreased in size, but has not fully dissolved. Pro-democracy protests continue sporadically across the country on a daily basis.<sup>15</sup> Extra-legal and legislative restrictions also continue to be imposed on protesters and perceived sympathisers and dissenters.<sup>16</sup> Many of the movement’s leaders have been arrested or forced into exile. Others have had travel bans imposed, and some have even had their citizenship revoked. Some prominent leaders have been convicted during politically-motivated trials and sentenced to lengthy jail terms.

## BACKGROUND ON THE PROTEST MOVEMENT

The total number of survey respondents from Bahrain was 47. This high number of responses reflects two primary factors: the ongoing and entrenched nature of the protest movement, and the strength of Bahraini national CSOs, which have maintained strong connections between the protest movement and international advocacy groups. These factors meant that it was relatively easy to access leaders of the movement.

The movement in Bahrain appears to have wide geographical spread. The vast majority of respondents, 83 per cent, indicated that protests took place in Manama, while 72 per cent reported that protests occurred in other cities and towns outside the capital, and 58 per cent that they also did in rural areas. There was broad consensus regarding the scale of the protests, with 77 of respondents indicating that between 250,000 and 500,000 people, and perhaps more, took part in the movement during its peak.

Many respondents expressed the view that the objective of the protest movement in Bahrain was to support democratisation. Similar to many of the respondents from Chile and Uganda, discussed below, respondents from Bahrain articulated that under the banner of democratisation, protesters sought progress on a number of interrelated human rights issues and grievances, including issues of freedom, justice and political reform.

THE CONTEMPORARY PROTEST MOVEMENT IN BAHRAIN BEGAN IN EARNEST IN FEBRUARY 2011 AS PART OF THE WAVE OF PROTESTS THAT SWEEPED THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA FROM DECEMBER 2010, COMMONLY REFERRED TO AT THE TIME AS THE ‘ARAB SPRING’.



## THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

There is strong agreement, by 88 per cent of respondents, that the conditions for the freedom of assembly are extremely poor. This near unanimity contrasts with views on the environment for protest in Chile and Uganda, in which zero respondents and 29 per cent of respondents respectively rated the conditions for freedom of assembly as extremely poor. In addition, 94 per cent said the protest movement was subjected by the state to unwarranted limitations and restrictions on the right to protest. The implication is that as well as the limitations imposed on the pro-democracy movement, there are more general restrictions on the freedom of assembly.

All respondents indicated that the movement and protesters were subjected to excessive force, arbitrary arrest, legal restrictions, infiltration by the state, restrictions on journalists and civil society groups, limitations on social media, vitriol from the state and harassment of protest monitors – defined as individuals and groups mandated or supported to monitor the conduct of police during protests. This consensus that a wide range of restrictions are imposed by the state is consistent with the CIVICUS Monitor’s assessment of Bahrain as having closed civic space.

Among these structural conditions, respondents assessed that the excessive use of force against protesters is the factor that most undermines the sustainability of the protest movement in Bahrain. Closely following are legal restrictions on the right to the freedom of assembly and arbitrary arrest of protesters. The direct suppression of protesters is therefore seen as the biggest challenge for sustaining protests.

<sup>12</sup>‘Bahrain: Freedom in the World 2016 Report’, Freedom House, <http://bit.ly/2fPEmNz>.

<sup>13</sup>Bahrain pages, CIVICUS Monitor, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2gIkRtn>.

<sup>14</sup>‘Bahrain protests prompt global concerns’, BBC, 15 February 2011, <http://bbc.in/1dzAeNp>.

<sup>15</sup>‘The Bahraini Uprising, 4 Years Later’, The Atlantic, 21 January 2015, <http://theatlntc/1zGihHq>.

<sup>16</sup>Reports, Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2fpbSL5>; ‘Bahrain: the crackdown continues’, CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report 2015, <http://bit.ly/2jsGY6s>.



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**FIGURE 1: BAHRAIN – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

*“The findings are consistent with what we see on the ground; persecution of protests, either through legal means or excessive force, is much more debilitating for the movement than similar persecution of actors on the outside such as journalists or protest observers.”* PROTEST LEADER, BAHRAIN

There was strong agreement that the state is failing to facilitate the right to protest, with 75 per cent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Most respondents, 78 per cent, also agreed or strongly agreed that the state’s rhetoric about the protest movement discouraged some people from participating. However, only 52 per cent believed that people were reluctant to join the movement because of a fear of state persecution. From this it can be inferred that while attacks on protesters by security forces dissuaded some people from participating in the movement, the state’s anti-protest rhetoric was more effective in discouraging potential protesters. Respondents did not agree with the statement that a lack of vibrant CSOs prevented the movement from maintaining momentum, reflecting the vitality and resilience of Bahrain’s civil society.

**NATIONAL CONNECTIONS**

The pro-democracy movement reported that it uses social media as a mobilisation tool. Further, 93 per cent of respondents said the movement has a strategy for using the media to get its message out.

In terms of strategy and tactics, 83 per cent of respondents stated the movement utilises a variety of different non-violent civic action techniques. Only 35 per cent said that the movement had a designated leadership, indicating that the movement has a more organic, mass-based support structure. Connections with CSOs are, however, important: 70 per cent reported that the movement engaged with national CSOs in planning and holding protests, and 79 per cent that CSO observers monitored the protests and restrictions placed on them.

Respondents assessed that the use of social media was the national-level factor that contributed most to the sustainability of the movement, followed by the sharing and use of innovative non-violent protest action tactics. Leadership and coordination of the movement and networking with allies, including unions, faith groups and other forms of CSOs, were also rated as important.

RESPONDENTS ASSESSED THAT THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA WAS THE NATIONAL-LEVEL FACTOR THAT CONTRIBUTED MOST TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MOVEMENT, FOLLOWED BY THE SHARING AND USE OF INNOVATIVE NON-VIOLENT PROTEST ACTION TACTICS.

**FIGURE 2: BAHRAIN – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

*“Bahrain has one of the highest per capita Twitter activity rates in the MENA region. Twitter is made is even more important due to the fact that the national media is completely controlled by the government.”* PROTEST LEADER, BAHRAIN

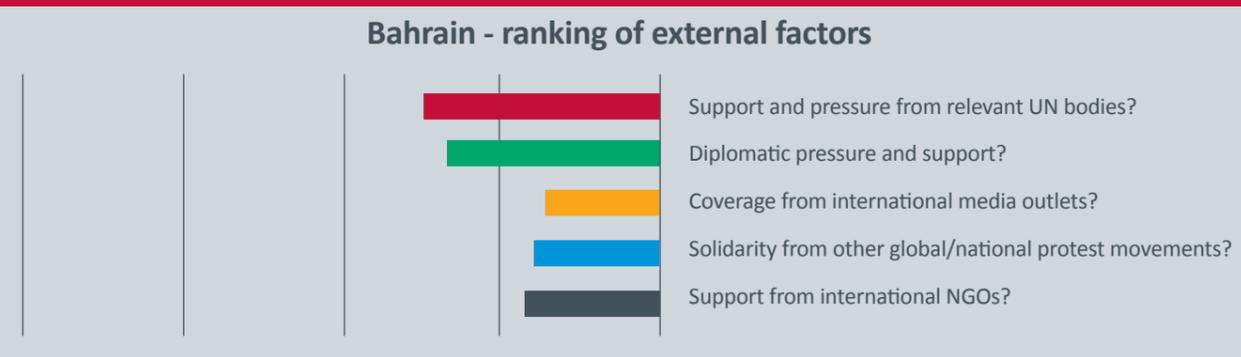
Respondents were clear that greater national level connections could enhance the movement. Almost all respondents, 92 per cent, believed that CSOs should play a larger role in mobilising support for the protest movement. A majority, 67 per cent, took the view that the movement would benefit from greater coordination with a diverse range of sectors. All respondents also agreed that if people were allowed to protest without fear of arrest or persecution, the protests would more easily have been sustained. This further suggests that there may be strong political will to join the movement, but this is challenged by the state’s restrictions.

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

Turning to connections in the international sphere, exactly half of respondents said they did not believe they received adequate solidarity and support from international CSOs, while slightly more, 56 per cent, indicated that global-level protest movements and movements from other countries did not show adequate support and solidarity. More still, 80 per cent, believed that foreign states and multilateral bodies, including the UN and its various mechanisms, did not adequately support the movement, while 72 per cent stated that international media outlets failed to cover the movement and the backlash against it adequately. The inference is that support from all international quarters was deemed insufficient, but that international civil society and protest movements were considered more supportive than the UN and foreign states.

These deficits matter because, as can be seen in the figure below, support and pressure from relevant UN bodies and foreign states were considered to be the external factors that would contribute most to the sustainability of the protest movement, far ahead of support from international CSOs. This suggests some clear potential to enhance the sustainability of the movement that is not currently being realised.

**FIGURE 3: BAHRAIN – RANKING OF EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE MOST TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENT**



**FIGURE 4: BAHRAIN – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

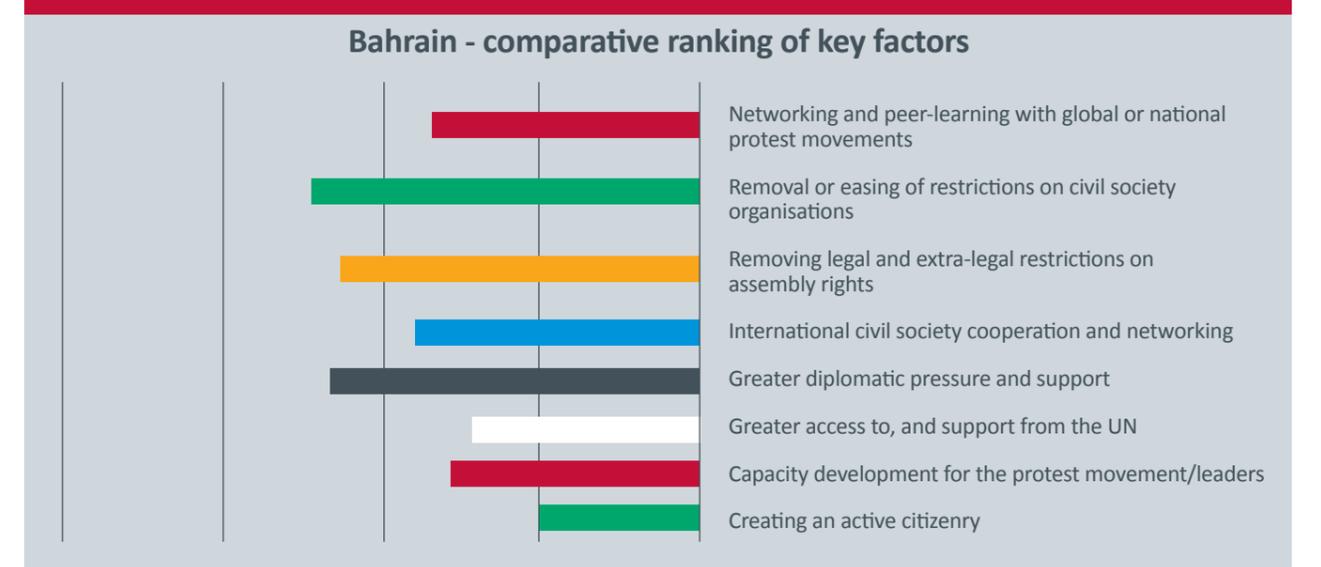
*“In the case of the impact of UN and diplomatic pressure, the exception proves the rule. The only protest and civil society leaders, including myself, who have been released from prison in Bahrain are those whose cases were aggressively taken up by the UN and the international community.”* PROTEST LEADER, BAHRAIN

When asked what more could be done, 92 per cent of respondents agreed that the international media should have done more to follow-up on reporting of the protests, with the inference that media outlets failed to continue to cover the protests after their peak. The same figure, 92 per cent, also said that international CSOs should focus more on supporting protest rights, with 64 per cent strongly agreeing with this statement, further suggesting that international CSOs could do more to support the movement in Bahrain. Similarly, 84 per cent agreed that solidarity and technical support from international protest movements would contribute to the sustainability of the movement. Some value from the international community was acknowledged, with 72 per cent reporting that the UN principles on the right to protest are a useful tool to guide protests. However, 80 per cent felt that the diplomatic community was reluctant to support the right to protest or condemn restrictions on the movement, something that makes it harder to realise these principles in practice.

**COMPARISON OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FACTORS**

Overall, the main priority identified for enhancing the sustainability of the protest movement was the removal or easing of restrictions on CSOs. In close second and third were greater diplomatic pressure and support, and the removal of legal and extra-legal restrictions on the right to the freedom of assembly.

**FIGURE 5: BAHRAIN – COMPARISON OF KEY FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENT**



**FIGURE 6: BAHRAIN – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

*“When the protests began in 2011, the movement had access to public spaces and civil society was less constrained, which allowed for the movement to spread and grow quickly. However, the government’s systematic crackdown on both NGOs [non-governmental organisations] and protests rights since 2011 has imposed severe obstacles to the use of public space and greatly restricted civil society groups.”*

PROTEST LEADER, BAHRAIN

When respondents were asked to identify which capacity development resources are most important, support for strategic planning and thinking, and organising, were assessed as the most critical needs. Interestingly, support for fundraising was assessed as the least important capacity need.

Considering the future prospects of the movement, 74 per cent of respondents believed that public support will significantly increase over the next year. The respondents were also largely optimistic that the movement will be sustained until its core objectives are achieved, with half indicating that this is likely or very likely, and 40 per cent moderately optimistic.



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## POLITICAL CONTEXT

Chile has a per capita GDP of approximately US\$15,000 and a population of over 18 million. It is often characterised as having a pluralistic and consolidated democracy.<sup>17</sup> The CIVICUS Monitor describes Chile's civic space as narrowed, denoting that "while the state allows individuals and civil society organisations to exercise their rights to the freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, violations of these rights also take place."<sup>18</sup>

Chile's contemporary student protest movement began in May 2011, with wide-scale protests attracting hundreds of thousands of people across the country. The protests, largely known as the Chilean Winter, were comprised primarily of secondary and tertiary students advocating against the privatisation of education and increased tuition fees at universities and colleges. The movement later evolved to include a broader constituency, including labour unions, and embraced a broader set of socio-economic issues. Protesters, who participated in mass marches, demonstrations and sit-ins, were reportedly subjected to both legal and extra-legal restrictions, including the denial of permission to hold protests and mistreatment by police officers.<sup>19</sup>

The state made concessions to the protesters to address some of their grievances. However, student leaders did not believe that the authorities had sufficiently addressed their underlying concerns, which meant that talks largely stalled.

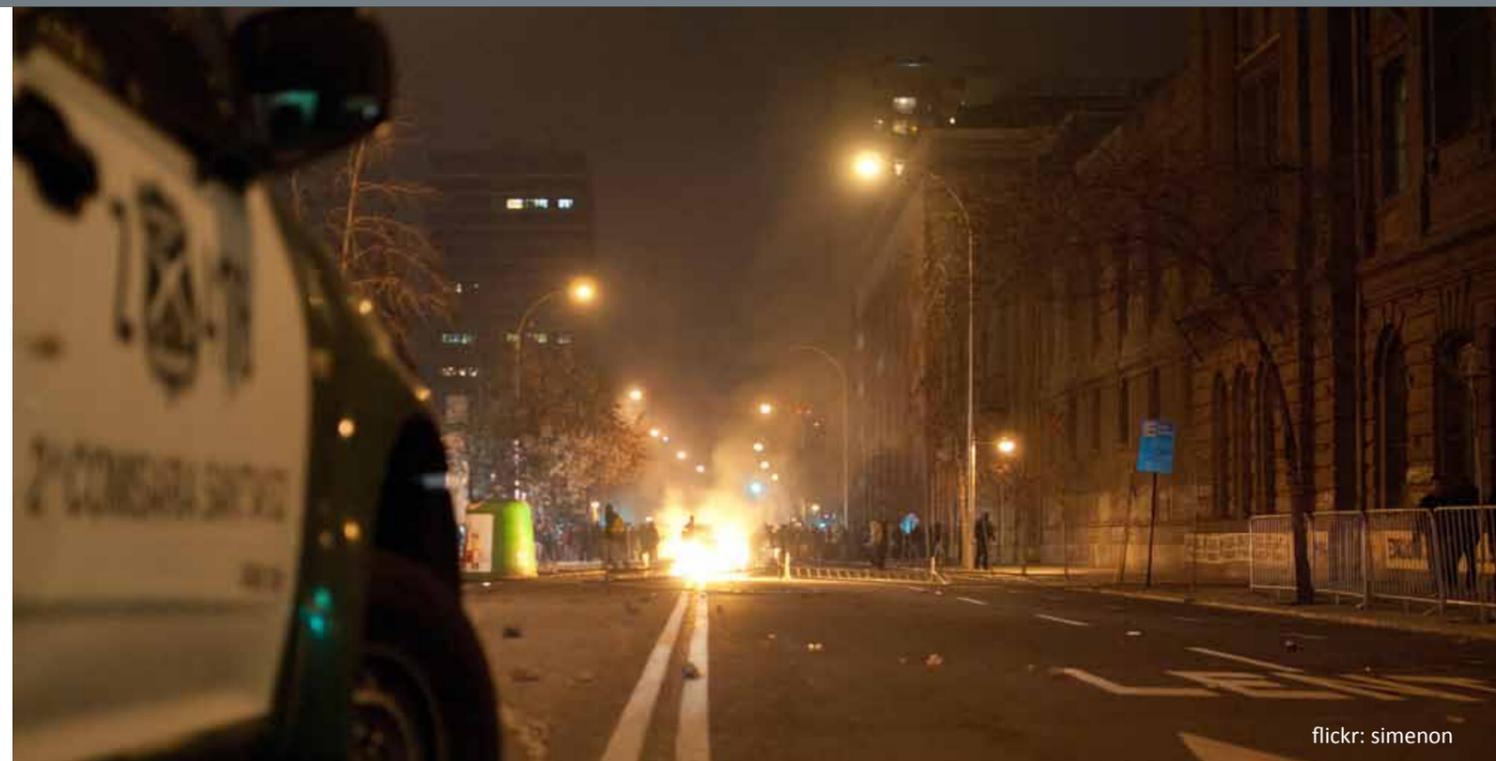
Student-led protests continue today across Chile. Hundreds of thousands of students and others continue to protest and advocate for education reforms.

STUDENT-LED PROTESTS CONTINUE TODAY ACROSS CHILE. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS AND OTHERS CONTINUE TO PROTEST AND ADVOCATE FOR EDUCATION REFORMS.

<sup>17</sup>'Chile: Freedom in the World 2016 Report', Freedom House, <http://bit.ly/2g1q2An>.

<sup>18</sup>Chile pages, CIVICUS Monitor, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2fnhnGE>.

<sup>19</sup>CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report 2016, op. cit.; 'Threats to Civic Space in Latin America and the Caribbean', CIVICUS, December 2016, <http://bit.ly/2gC4LRt>; 'Thousands of Chile students in fresh reform protests', BBC, 26 April 2012, <http://bbc.in/2gIGCsT>.



flickr: simenon

## BACKGROUND ON THE PROTEST MOVEMENT

In total, 12 respondents participated in the survey, all of whom were leaders of the student movement. As with Bahrain, respondents reported that protests were dispersed throughout the country: 90 per cent indicated that they occurred in the capital, Santiago, and all respondents stated that protests took place in towns and cities other than the capital. There was strong consensus that the purpose of the movement was to secure free and improved public education. There was also broad agreement that the protests attracted hundreds of thousands of people, with 81 per cent indicating that between 500,000 and one million people, perhaps more at peak, took part in the protests.

## THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

As might be expected, given Chile's CIVICUS Monitor rating, a smaller percentage of respondents than in Bahrain and Uganda indicated that conditions for the freedom of assembly were disabling. However, with 63 per cent of respondents indicating that the environment for protests is poor compared to only 25 per cent who said that it is either good or very good, the implication is that the structural conditions are not wholly supportive of the right to assembly.

While the general conditions for the freedom of assembly are appreciably better than in the other two countries, 88 per cent of respondents reported that the movement was subject to unwarranted limitations and restrictions by the state on the right to protest. Excessive use of force and the arbitrary arrest of protesters was reported by 87 per cent of respondents, while 67 per cent said that the movement was subject to legal restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly. Harassment and intimidation of protest monitors was reported by 75 per cent, while 87 per cent indicated that there was infiltration of the movement by members of the state. Similarly, 87 per cent indicated that the government made disparaging or critical public statements. Restrictions on and the persecution of journalists and media outlets for reporting on the protests, and the persecution of or imposition of unwarranted limitations on civil society groups, were reported by 62 per cent of respondents. Far fewer restrictions on social media were recorded, with only 13 per cent indicating that these exist.

Respondents assessed that the sustainability of the protest movement was most undermined by the targeted persecution of civil society groups, closely followed by legal restrictions on the rights to freedom of assembly.



flickr: simenon

**FIGURE 7: CHILE – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

*“Persecution of civil society was particularly damaging to the sustainability of the protests in Chile, because it vilified the champions of the movement in the public eye. By demonising and criminalising protest and civil society leaders, the government could change the discourse and engender a loss of public support for the movement.”*

PROTEST LEADER, CHILE

The vast majority of respondents, 92 per cent, felt that the government fails to facilitate the right to protest. Compared to this, only 25 per cent of respondents believed that an absence of vibrant CSOs prevented the movement from maintaining momentum, indicating that, as in Bahrain, respondents believe that organised civil society is crucial to the movement. The risk of violence does not seem to be an important deterrent against protesting: only 13 per cent of respondents felt that people were reluctant to join the protest movement for fear of state persecution.

**NATIONAL CONNECTIONS**

All respondents said that the movement used social media as a mobilisation tool. All also reported that they engaged with domestic CSOs in planning and holding protests, and that the movement had a designated leadership. Moreover, 75 per cent of respondents affirmed that the movement had a strategy for using the media to get its message out, and the same proportion stated that CSOs and other observers monitor the protests and the restrictions placed on them.

The most important domestic factors that contribute to the sustainability of the protests, as assessed by respondents, are local media coverage and the sharing of innovative non-violent protest tactics. Networking with allies, including unions, faith groups and other civil society groups, is also important.

All respondents agreed that the movement employed a variety of non-violent action and protest strategies. But the potential to do more was identified: 75 per cent of respondents agreed that domestic CSOs should play a larger role in mobilising support for the protest movement, while 88 per cent believed that the movement would benefit from greater coordination with a diverse range of sectors. Only 25 per cent believed that potential participants were reluctant to join the movement because of a lack of clear messaging about its objectives, compared to 75 per cent who believed that if people were allowed to protest without fear of arrest or persecution, the protests would have lasted longer.

**FIGURE 8: CHILE – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

*“It is important to distinguish between local and alternative media and national mainstream media. During the protests there was a flourishing of local media, including online, student and community outlets, and YouTube channels. These outlets were imperative to sustaining the movement.”*

PROTEST LEADER, CILE

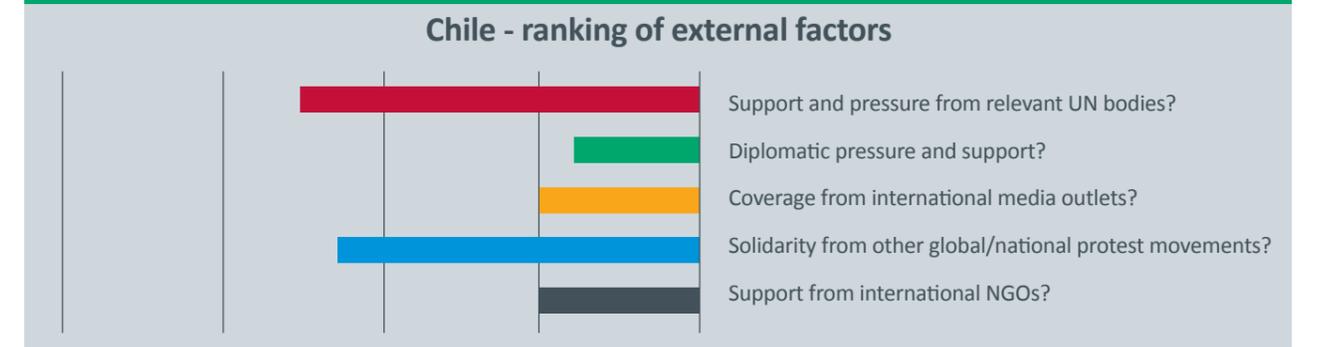
Respondents were clear that greater national level connections could enhance the movement. Almost all respondents, 92 per cent, believed that CSOs should play a larger role in mobilising support for the protest movement. A majority, 67 per cent, took the view that the movement would benefit from greater coordination with a diverse range of sectors. All respondents also agreed that if people were allowed to protest without fear of arrest or persecution, the protests would more easily have been sustained. This further suggests that there may be strong political will to join the movement, but this is challenged by the state’s restrictions.

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

Only 57 per cent of respondents felt that they received adequate solidarity and support from international CSOs. However, as in the case of Bahrain, respondents were more critical still about levels of support from foreign states and intergovernmental bodies: only 28 per cent said that foreign states adequately supported the movement, and only 14 per cent indicated that adequate support came from multilateral bodies, including the UN and its various mechanisms. Compared to this, 86 per cent of respondents believed that other national or international protest movements showed adequate support and solidarity, and 71 per cent that international media outlets adequately covered the movement and the backlash to it.

The support deficits identified give grounds for concern, because support and pressure from relevant UN bodies and other protest movements were assessed by respondents as the most important factors for enhancing the sustainability of the movement. Support from international CSOs and other national protest movements was also assessed as important.

**FIGURE 9: CHILE – RANKING OF EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE MOST TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENT**





**FIGURE 10: CHILE – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

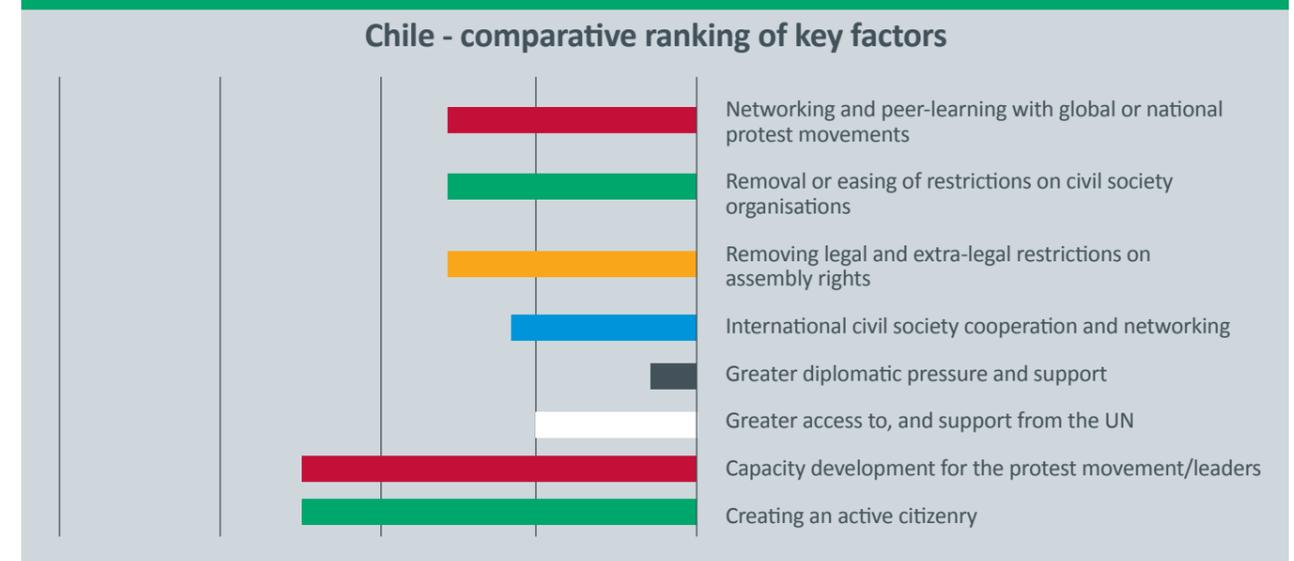
*“In Chile, the UN is seen as an honest broker. We have several UN offices based in Chile, including which were supportive of the movement.”* PROTEST LEADER, CILE

When asked what more could be done, all respondents indicated that international CSOs should focus more on supporting protest rights, with 57 per cent selecting the highest possible score. Further, 57 per cent also said that solidarity and technical support from international protest movements would have contributed to enhancing the sustainability of the movement. Eighty-six per cent believed that the international media should have done more to follow up on reporting of the protests. Only 57 per cent were moderately convinced that UN principles on the rights to protest are a useful tool to guide protests.

**COMPARISON OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FACTORS**

The most important overall factors identified for enhancing the sustainability of the protest movement in Chile were creating an active citizenry and developing the capacity of the protest movement and its leaders. It was also identified as important to remove restrictions on assembly rights and CSOs.

**FIGURE 11: CHILE – COMPARISON OF KEY FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENT**



As with Bahrain the most important capacity development need identified was in strategic planning and thinking, with support in organising also assessed as important. Support in developing protest tactics and fundraising were identified as less important.

Respondents were fairly evenly split between those who felt the movement would be sustained until its core objectives are achieved and those who did not. In addition, 40 per cent of respondents believed that there would be increase in public support for the movement over the next year, while 33 per cent anticipated that levels of support would be unchanged.



## POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Republic of Uganda has a population of approximately 40 million people and a per capita GDP of almost US\$700.<sup>20</sup> The CIVICUS Monitor determines that the space for civil society in Uganda is repressed, indicating that “civic space is heavily constrained. Active individuals and civil society members who criticise power holders risk surveillance, harassment, intimidation, imprisonment, injury and death.”<sup>21</sup>

In November 2012 civil society leaders and concerned citizens launched a national protest campaign to “fight the maleficent theft of public resources.”<sup>22</sup> The protest movement, the Black Monday Campaign, was organised by a collation of CSOs with the intention of mobilising Ugandan citizens.

The protesters used a variety of non-violent tactics, including regular marches and demonstrations. In response, the movement’s leaders and participants were subject to arrest and other restrictions.<sup>23</sup> While the movement raised public awareness about the misuse of public funds by political figures and political officials, it did not appear to achieve its core objectives, and public protest momentum largely dissipated. However, at the time of writing the Black Monday Campaign leadership continue to undertake residual campaigning actions, primarily online or through private channels.

WHILE THE MOVEMENT RAISED PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT THE MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS BY POLITICAL FIGURES AND POLITICAL OFFICIALS, IT DID NOT APPEAR TO ACHIEVE ITS CORE OBJECTIVES, AND PUBLIC PROTEST MOMENTUM LARGELY DISSIPATED.

## BACKGROUND ON THE PROTEST MOVEMENT

The online survey was completed by 14 leaders of the Black Monday Movement. Respondents represented a cross-section of the movement, including people who were involved in its coordination and leadership. According to the respondents, the movement took place primarily in the capital, Kampala. However, 64 per cent indicated that protests were also held in other cities and towns outside Kampala. There was not a consensus on the question of how many people participated during the peak of the protests, although the majority of respondents indicated that the number of participants was between several hundred and several thousand.

The core objective of the movement, according to the respondents, was to fight corruption, which is consistent with the narrative put forward in national and international media sources and the movement’s literature. The breadth of the issue of corruption was evident in respondents’ perceptions of the movement’s causes and consequences. While the vast majority of respondents indicated that the main purpose of the movement was to address corruption, responses encompassed other grievances, including the holding of flawed elections and the imposition of restrictions on media and civil society.



Isaac Kasamani

## THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

At 86 per cent, the vast majority of respondents indicated that conditions for the freedom of assembly in Uganda were poor to extremely poor, and all respondents stated that the Black Monday movement was subjected to unwarranted limitations and restrictions on the right to protest by the state. These responses are consistent with findings from a wide range of national and international civil society bodies that have raised concerns about the state’s willingness to promote and protect the right to protest.<sup>24</sup>

The vast majority of respondents indicated that the authorities used a range of restrictive laws and practices to stifle the protest movement, and all respondents indicated that laws on assembly were employed to undermine protests. In addition, the authorities appear to harass and intimidate protesters routinely. In contrast, limitations on media outlets, journalists and social media were assessed by respondents to be less prevalent.

Respondents judge that the restrictions routinely imposed by the state are those that most undermine the sustainability of the protest movement. These include the application of anti-protest laws, excessive use of force and arbitrary arrest of protesters. Similarly, the issues identified as least significant are also those judged least likely to undermine the sustainability of the protest movement, including government anti-protest rhetoric and restrictions on social media. In addition, although they are prevalent, the harassment of protest monitors and infiltration of the movement by state personnel were not assessed to play a major role in undermining the sustainability of the movement.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Uganda: Freedom in the World 2016 Report’, Freedom House, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2gjN5qk>.

<sup>21</sup> Uganda pages, CIVICUS Monitor, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2fnu2Jz>.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Black Monday’, Uganda National NGO Forum, 2012, <http://bit.ly/2bRkUPw>.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Assessing civic space restrictions in Uganda: what role for the Universal Periodic Review?’, CIVICUS, February 2017, add URL once published.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review, 26th Session of the UPR Working Group, Republic of Uganda’, CIVICUS and Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, 24 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/2fDDjOE>.

**FIGURE 12: UGANDA – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

*“Excessive use of force, arrest of protesters, and legal restrictions on assemblies directly effects the core participants of the movement and is the most effective tactic the government can employ to dissuade people from participating in the protests.”*

- PROTEST LEADER, UGANDA

Respondents did not feel that a lack of connection with CSOs caused the movement to lose momentum, reflecting the instrumental role that civil society groups played in organising the protests. Rather, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the government failed to facilitate the right to protest and that people were reluctant to join the protest movement for fear of persecution by the state, with 77 per cent strongly agreeing that the fear of persecution was an issue. There was also strong agreement, from 79 per cent of respondents, that the legal framework on the right to assemble is not enabling, and from 84 per cent of respondents that the government’s rhetoric about the protest movement discouraged people from participating.

**NATIONAL CONNECTIONS**

All respondents indicated that they engaged domestic CSOs in planning and holding protests, underlining further that organised civil society played a prominent role in the movement. There was, however, less consensus, at 66 per cent of respondents, that CSOs and other observers actively monitored protests and the government’s response to them. All respondents agreed that the movement had a designated leadership and a strategy for using the media to get its message out, and that it utilised a variety of non-violent civic-action techniques. Almost all respondents, 92 per cent, reported that social media was used as a mobilisation tool.

The use of social media was assessed by respondents to be the most important tactic for enhancing the sustainability of the protest moment. Also important were strong leadership and coordination of the movement, and networking with allies including unions, faith groups and other civil society groups. Local media coverage and the sharing and the use of innovative non-violent protest action tactics were also assessed as central to the sustainability of the movement.

**FIGURE 13: UGANDA – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

*“The Black Monday Movement was one of the first protest movements in Uganda that went viral. Social media, and other online platforms, gave us unparalleled opportunities to communicate expeditiously and easily.”* PROTEST LEADER, CILE

Overwhelmingly, respondents believed that domestic CSOs should play a larger role in mobilising support for the protest movement: 92 per cent agreed with this statement, and 66 per cent strongly agreed. At 60 per cent, most respondents agreed that the movement would have benefited from greater coordination with a diverse range of sectors. A majority, 58 per cent, also strongly agreed that if people were allowed to protest without fear of arrest or persecution, the protests would have lasted longer. The possibility that potential participants might be reluctant to join the movement because of a lack of clear messaging on its objectives was discounted by most respondents.

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

A majority of respondents, 69 per cent, stated that the movement did not receive adequate solidarity and support from international CSOs. The same percentage indicated that other global or national protest movements did not show sufficient support and solidarity, while 62 per cent assessed that the diplomatic community and foreign states did not adequately support the movement. Only half of respondents believed that international media outlets adequately covered the movement and the backlash to it. The UN and other multilateral bodies were viewed as less supportive still: 85 per cent said that they did not adequately support the movement.

As with other countries, the implication is that there may be important support potential that is not being realised: solidarity from other global and national protest movements and diplomatic pressure and support were assessed as the most important external factors that could contribute to the sustainability of the protest movement. Support from international CSOs was also assessed to be important.

**FIGURE 14: UGANDA – RANKING OF EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE MOST TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENT**



In particular, all respondents agreed that solidarity and technical support from international protest movements would have significantly contributed to their movement’s sustainability. Further indicating that support from international CSOs is important, 85 per cent stated that such CSOs should do more to support protest rights globally. At 92 per cent, there was strong consensus that international media could have done more to follow-up on reporting of the protests. With regard to international state support, 36 per cent felt that the diplomatic community was reluctant to support the right to protest or condemn restrictions on the movement. At the UN level, 82 per cent agreed that the UN principles on the rights to protest offer a useful tool to guide protests.

**COMPARISON OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FACTORS**

Overall, the analysis suggests that the most important factor for the sustainability of the protest movement in Uganda would be to have a safe and enabling environment for civil society and for protesters to be able to exercise their fundamental rights. This priority is complemented by a need to support the development and resilience of the movement through capacity support for the movement and its leaders, and peer-learning with global protest movements and international CSOs.



**FIGURE 15: UGANDA – COMPARISON OF KEY FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENT**

Uganda - comparative ranking of key factors



**FIGURE 16: UGANDA – PROTEST LEADER COMMENT**

*“For protest movements to sustain anywhere in the world the role of civil society groups cannot be underestimated. This is particularly true in Uganda where NGOs played a prominent role in the movement.”* PROTEST LEADER, CILE

When asked which capacity development resources would be most important for their movement, respondents identified support for strategic planning and legal support and support to develop defence skills. While the restrictions imposed by the state have caused the movement to lose momentum, the leadership is generally optimistic about its prospects, with 70 per cent expecting that public support for the movement will increase over the next year. Further, 90 per cent were to some extent optimistic that the movement will be sustained until its core objectives are achieved.



# COMPARATIVE FINDINGS

## BACKGROUND ON PROTEST MOVEMENTS

The responses from each country indicated that there is strong cohesion in perceptions of the explicit objectives of the protest movements. In all three countries there was a consensus about what the protests were trying to achieve. This unity of purpose is seen throughout the responses, and can only be an asset to help sustain the protest movements.

## THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

It should be a matter of concern that across the three countries, 82 per cent of respondents indicated that the overall conditions for the freedom of assembly were poor or extremely poor. This can only be something that limits the effectiveness of protest movements. There is also a strong correlation between a country's overall level of restrictions on civic space, as indicated by its CIVICUS Monitor rating, and the extent to which the freedom of assembly is assessed to be unjustifiably limited. The inference of this is that the restriction of the freedom of assembly forms a major part of how civic space as a whole is restricted; and also that any efforts to strengthen the ability of citizens to protest peacefully may need to take account of wider civic space conditions in the particular context, and the drivers and enablers of restriction.

Protest leaders in each country overwhelmingly indicated that their government is failing to facilitate the right to assemble. This consensus is consistent with the critique advanced by the UN Special Rapporteur on the freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in 2016 that many states believe that freedom of assembly "is a privilege rather than a right."<sup>25</sup> States, instead of actively seeking to protect and promote the right to assemble, are treating protest actions with hostility.

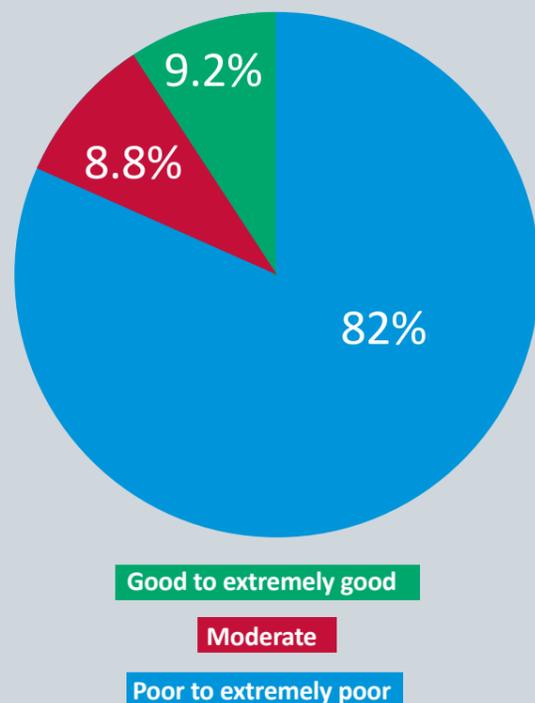
Across the three countries, a staggering 94 per cent of respondents reported that their movements were subject to a range of unwarranted legal and extra-legal restrictions by state actors. Respondents indicated that the following measures were used to restrict protest movements in their country:

- 1) excessive use of force against protesters by the authorities;
- 2) arbitrary arrest of protesters;
- 3) legal restrictions on the freedom of assembly;
- 4) harassment of protest monitors;
- 5) infiltration of the movement by members of the government;
- 6) restrictions on journalists and media outlets reporting on protests;
- 7) persecution of civil society groups;
- 8) disparaging or critical public statements by governments about the movement.

<sup>25</sup>UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, "Visit to the United States of America," (2016), <http://bit.ly/2axCO85>

**FIGURE 17: BAHRAIN, CHILE AND UGANDA - CONSOLIDATED PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONDITIONS FOR THE FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY**

Average conditions for freedom of peaceful assembly in Bahrain, Chile and Uganda



flickr: Freedom House,

Across the three countries the structural issues that are assessed to most undermine the sustainability of protest movements are the state's excessive use of force, the arbitrary arrest of protesters and the imposition of legal restrictions on the freedom of assembly. Respondents in all three countries also expressed the view that if people were allowed to protest without fear of arrest or persecution, protests would have been sustained for a longer period.

**FIGURE 18: STRUCTURAL ISSUES THAT UNDERMINE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS**

RANKING	ISSUE
1	Excessive use of force
2	Arbitrary arrest of protesters
3	Legal restrictions on the freedom of assembly
4	Government rhetoric critical of protest movements
5	Restrictions on protest monitors and journalists
6	Infiltration of protest movements by members of the government

### NATIONAL CONNECTIONS

A majority of respondents in all three countries indicated that their movement engaged domestic CSOs in the planning and holding of protests, suggesting that CSOs are playing a prominent role in protest movements. All three movements also indicated that CSOs and other observers monitored the protests and the restrictions placed on them. Networking with allies, including unions, faith groups and other civil society groups, was also identified as important in each country.

However, some potential for enhanced connection and support was identified, with respondents in each country indicating that domestic CSOs should play a larger role in mobilising support for the protest movement. Further, all agreed that the movements would have benefited from greater coordination with a diverse range of national actors and allies.

All three movements indicated that they had a strategy for using the media to get their messages out. They also reported that they used social media as a mobilisation tool, and utilised a variety of different non-violent civic-action techniques. No respondents believed that people were unwilling to join their movement because of a lack of clear messaging. Coverage of the protest movement in local media was only assessed to be important to the sustainability of the movement in Chile; this is likely because Chile has a more pluralistic and independent media sector than Bahrain and Uganda, and so may be more open to civil society.<sup>26</sup>

### EXTERNAL FACTORS

Across the three countries, global and other national-level protest movements are assessed to demonstrate greater support for and solidarity with the movements than international CSOs, foreign states and UN bodies. Respondents agreed that these three groups are not showing adequate support and solidarity. This suggests that there is underexplored opportunity for support, as other protest movements, international CSOs and UN bodies are all seen by respondents as potentially important actors for enhancing the sustainability of protest movements.

Only the movement in Chile believed it received adequate international media coverage, reflecting again the relative greater extent of media freedom in Chile compared to the higher level of restrictions imposed on international media and journalists in Bahrain and Uganda.

### COMPARISON OF NATIONAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS

In all three countries, key measures identified as critical for enhancing the sustainability of protest movements include the removal and easing of legal and extra-legal restrictions on the right to the freedom of assembly and on civil society rights in general.

Capacity development was also identified as an important need for all three protest movements and their leaders. All three identified that their key capacity development requirements are support for strategic planning and thinking. In contrast, support for fundraising was identified as the least important need.

Finally, all three protest movements shared a sense of optimism: all movements believed that public support would increase over the next year and that their movements would be sustained until their aims are achieved



wikimedia: Al Jazeera English

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## CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### BACKGROUND ON PROTEST MOVEMENTS

This research has attempted to identify key structural, national-level and external factors that contribute to the sustainability of protest movements in diverse political contexts. It has taken a grounded constituent-based perspective, with the aim of contributing to the growing academic, civil society and intergovernmental literature on the causes, consequences and efficacy of contemporary protest campaigns.

It is clear that the broader trend of civic space restriction that CIVICUS has tracked around the world in recent years impacts on protest movements, with the right of peaceful assembly experiencing a range of restrictions, in laws and actions, from states. Within this context of restriction, a key conclusion of our research is that support and solidarity from international stakeholders, including other protest movements, international CSOs, states and UN, is currently inadequate. There is potential, not currently being realised, for support to make a difference to the sustainability of protest movements. There is also clear demand articulated by protest movements for support in developing capacity, particularly for strategic planning and thinking, and organising.

In keeping with the tenor of its constituent-based research methodology, this report does not seek to provide a set of prescriptions on how challenges can be addressed and opportunities realised to enhance the sustainability of protest movements. Rather, by interrogating key factors that impact on protest movements, this research has sought to highlight the challenges and needs of protest movements in different political climates. CIVICUS will continue to build on our findings, based on the needs articulated by the protest leaders who contributed to this analysis. We urge all potential stakeholders, including civil society, states and intergovernmental bodies, to incorporate and apply our learning in their work to ensure that adequate support and solidarity is provided to protesters and protest movement leaders to ensure that they can effectively and safely exercise their right to peaceful assembly.

<sup>26</sup>2016 World Press Freedom Index, Reporters without Borders, <http://bit.ly/1YGtJug>.

# CONTACT US



[civicus.org](https://civicus.org)



[info@civicus.org](mailto:info@civicus.org)



[/CIVICUS](https://www.facebook.com/CIVICUS)



[@CIVICUSalliance](https://twitter.com/CIVICUSalliance)

## SOUTH AFRICA

CIVICUS Hub

25 Owl Street

Auckland Park 2092

Johannesburg

South Africa

Tel +27-11-833-5959

## UNITED KINGDOM

Unit 60

Eurolink Business Centre

49 Effra Road

London SW2 1BZ

Tel: +44 (0)20 7733 9696

## SWITZERLAND

11 Avenue de la Paix

CH - 1202

Geneva

Tel: +41 (0)22 733 3435

## UNITED STATES

355 Lexington Ave

New York

NY 10017

United States