



# GUIDE TO REPORTING ON CIVIC SPACE

## MEDIA TOOLKIT



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EDITORS: Palwasha Yusaf, Connie Nagiah, Deborah Walter

DESIGNER: Tamzon Woodley, Meghan Judge

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The logo for ARTICLE 19, featuring the text "ARTICLE 19" in white capital letters on a red, stylized banner.

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# 1 ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

## WHY CIVIC SPACE, AND WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all people, everywhere in the world, have the right to speak out, to organise, and to take action. These rights – the freedoms of association, assembly and expression - give us the freedom to form and join groups, peacefully protest, and advocate for the things we want – and to counter the things we don't. These freedoms are called 'civic space' and are an essential part of a vibrant democracy; where debate and discussion thrive, and where people are able to contribute to important decisions that affect them.

According to CIVICUS' monitoring for 2015, there is a growing trend around the world of countries restricting civic freedoms. Many countries have passed laws that restrict citizens' freedoms or make the work of civil society groups more difficult and dangerous; in some cases they've increased surveillance on ordinary citizens, activists and civil society organisations; and in others there's been targeted attacks and arrests. Civil society also faces threats from non-state actors, including powerful corporate entities and extremist groups. Furthermore, civil society activists, journalists and human rights defenders are facing escalating intimidation, harassment and reprisals, including imprisonment, for undertaking the work that fights for and protects human rights for us all. According Frontline Defenders, in 2015 at least 156 of these human rights defenders were assassinated.

This toolkit was produced to be a useful, informative tool for connecting journalists and media with the challenges and opportunities currently happening in civil society.

This toolkit was produced by CIVICUS, the global civil society alliance, as part of the Civic Space Initiative (CSI). A partnership between CIVICUS, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), ARTICLE 19, and the World Movement for Democracy, The Civic Space Initiative (CSI) is working to protect and expand civic space by fostering an enabling legal environment for civil society.

Civic space is the place, physical, virtual, and legal, where people exercise their rights to freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly. By forming associations, by speaking out on issues of public concern, by gathering together in online and offline fora, and by participating in public decision-making, individuals use civic space to solve problems and improve lives. A robust and protected civic space forms the cornerstone of accountable, responsive democratic governance and stable societies.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

This guide helps to define what civic space is, its threats, challenges and the pivotal work being done across the world to protect and promote civic space. It seeks to identify, refine and explain the different groups and processes involved. Most importantly, it provides story ideas, angles, and prompts designed to help media and journalists cover these issues better. You will also find useful resources and hyperlinks for further resources and reading.

## THE GUIDE COMPRISES THE FOLLOWING:

**Section 1** provides information about the toolkit and introductory background on civic space.

**Section 2** outlines key concepts for reporting civic space, including what makes a story newsworthy, and gender balanced reporting.

**Section 3** unpacks the three fundamental freedoms associated with civic space, and offers stories ideas. For each of these freedoms you will find.

- *Summary* - a short outline of what this freedom comprises and the main issues faced around the world.
- *Perspectives* - ideas for how to find angles and perspectives relevant to different audiences – regional, national, etc.
- *Humanise the story* - Suggestions of how to give a local or personal slant to stories, ensure diverse voices are heard.
- *Dig deeper* - Ideas for more in-depth analysis and investigation.
- *Information resources* - background documents, potential sources

You will also find fact boxes, case studies, and media tips from editors and journalists.

## CONTEXT: SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE & MEDIA

This guide has been produced at a time when civil society organisations are facing ever increasing threats, especially from governments and multi-nationals who have vested interests, big budgets and powerful lobbying firms that seek to influence or restrict the critical role and work that civil society performs. In its most recent State of Civil Society Report, CIVICUS tracked threats to civic space in 109 countries. Worryingly, in many cases governments are attempting to weaken civil society organisations by enacting laws which prevent them from accessing the funding they need to survive and from conducting legitimate activities involving expressions of democratic dissent.

*If space exists for civil society to engage, there is a greater likelihood that all rights will be better protected. Conversely, the closing of civil society space, and threats and reprisals against civil society activists, are early warning signs of instability. Over time, policies that delegitimize, isolate and repress people calling for different approaches or legitimately claiming their rights can exacerbate frustrations and lead to instability or even conflict.”*

**UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHRC)**

Minor legal infractions are also being used as a convenient tool to shut down prominent civil society organisations that have been critical of the government, particularly in least developed countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sudan, Yemen and Zambia, where civil society plays a critical role in providing basic services and pushing for democratic reforms.

Encouragingly, civil society is responding by finding new and innovative ways to maintain space. New media or social media has become an effective, accessible tool for active citizen participation and engagement. Operating in real time, new media is often ahead of traditional media in drawing immediate attention to an issue. In Nigeria, activists and everyday users successfully campaigned against a proposed bill that would hinder freedom of expression, including through social media, under the hashtag #NoToSocialMediaBill Similarly, in South

Africa students rallied against rising education fees with a call that #FeesMustFall. All over the world, public opinion is being mobilised through online media.

Media is a critical component of civic space. Not least of all because of the importance of the fundamental freedom of expression, but also because media has the power to hold governments to account, shine a spotlight on violations, and be a platform for the most marginalised voices to be heard. More than ever before, media and journalists have a vital role to fulfill. The rights to speak out, organise, and take action affect everyone, everywhere. By connecting with civil society and exploring some of the topics raised in this guide, you can provide new and unique stories to your readers, viewers, and listening audiences.

### HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL PASSES RESOLUTION ON PROTECTION OF CIVIC SPACE

In July 2016, the UNHRC passed a resolution that urges “States to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment in which civil society can operate free from hindrance and insecurity.” This resolution calls for states to:

- ensure that civil society actors can seek, secure and use resources
- maintain accessible domestic procedures for the establishment or registration of organisations
- ensure that civil society can give input into potential implications of legislation when it is being developed, debated, implemented or reviewed
- adopt clear laws and policies providing for effective disclosure of information
- ensure access to justice, accountability and an end to impunity for human rights violations and abuses against civil society actors.

244 civil society organisations jointly called for the rejection of amendments led by Russia, China and South Africa attacking the heart of the resolution. Though these amendments failed, Russia was joined by HRC member states China, Congo, Cuba, Nigeria, South Africa, and Venezuela in voting against the civil society space resolution as a whole. Nine states abstained on the vote.

The resolution further requests the High Commissioner to report in 2018 on best practices for ensuring civil society involvement with regional and international organisations, including the UN.

Media will be a vital part of tracking progress against this resolution.

# 2

# REPORTING ON CIVIC SPACE: THE BASICS

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CIVIL SOCIETY?

Civil Society, in its broadest and simplest terms refers to “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<sup>1</sup>”. This includes non-governmental organisations, private voluntary organisations, peoples’ 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 medi.

A strong, vigorous and independent civil society is an asset to a democratic society for several reasons. Civic existence provides individuals and groups with vital space to pursue and protect their varied interests (e.g. culture, recreation, sport, social and humanitarian assistance). The existence of such space also ensures that individuals and groups are legally able to put forward diverse - and sometimes competing – viewpoints. This is crucial in a participatory democracy. Moreover, the existence of numerous and diverse civic organisations offers a vital medium for citizens to engage with government.

## CIVIC SPACE: 3 FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

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, influence the political and social structures around them. While there are some minor differences in definition related to civic space, our work focuses on these three fundamental freedoms.

**Freedom of Association:** Freedom of association is the right to freely associate, join or establish a CSO or group. The right to freedom of association is among the most important human rights we possess. It is one of the core rights - along with freedom of peaceful assembly - designed to protect peoples’ ability to come together and work for the common good. It is a vehicle for the exercise of many other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

The right to freedom of association also plays a decisive role in the emergence and existence of effective democratic systems as they are a channel for dialogue, pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness, where minority or dissenting views or beliefs are respected. Associations can include civil society organisations, clubs, cooperatives, NGOs, religious associations, political parties, trade unions, foundations or even online associations. There is no requirement that the association be registered in order for freedom of association rights to apply. The right to freedom of association also includes the right of groups to access funding and resources.

**Freedom of Expression:** Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. At an individual level, freedom of expression is key to the development, dignity and fulfilment of every person. At a national level, freedom of expression and access to public information are necessary for good governance and therefore for economic and social progress. Civil society organisations are also assured the freedom to carry out investigations and document their findings under this right.

**Freedom of Peaceful Assembly:** The right of peaceful assembly covers the right to hold and to participate in peaceful assemblies but also the right to be protected from undue interference. It further protects those monitoring peaceful assemblies. The right to freely assemble assures civil society the freedom to exercise legitimate dissent through peaceful forms of protest as well as organise meetings and hold demonstrations to forward matters of common interest. International law places the same limitations on the restriction of this right as in the case of freedom of association. Moreover, international standards limit the use of force by the authorities in controlling public assemblies. This right includes the right to participate in meetings, protests, strikes, sit-ins, demonstrations and other temporary gatherings for a specific purpose. States not only have an obligation to protect peaceful assemblies, but should also take measures to facilitate them. Contrary to the actual situation in many countries, international best practice dictates that people do not need to seek the permission of the authorities in order to gather peacefully in public.

**State's duty to protect:** Built into each of the three core freedoms is the understanding that a state must not just refrain from interfering in their enjoyment but must also actively take steps to protect people who choose to associate, peacefully assembly and express themselves. When this is done well, civil society organisations can pursue peaceful causes and express themselves without fear of retribution, while demonstrators are protected during public gatherings. The duty also involves ensuring that violations of these protections are met with thorough investigations by police and prosecutions in the courts. When such steps are not taken, impunity for those that attack civil society prevails

**Trends and how to report on them:** The CIVICUS 2016 State of Civil Society Report is a useful resource that lays out trends, threats and events in global civil society. Social movements and civil society formations have increasingly become under the threat of closure, intimidation and surveillance. Whilst this is indeed worrying, the other side of the coin means that the scope of work and fomenting social justice and human rights remains active. The mobilising of ordinary people throughout the world whether it be accessing social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook or occupying the streets for mass protests, the current trends signify that citizens remain ready and willing to raise their grievances and frustrations and hold their leaders, governments and institutions accountable.

Some strong recent examples of this are seen in social movements like the Arab Spring, #BlackLivesMatter (USA) and #FeesMustFall (South Africa) campaigns which continue to gain traction and support across the world.

*“Trends that have witnessed a decline in the observance of human rights and democratic practice have been the subject of concern among human rights and democracy activists. These trends are now referred to as the closing of civic space and are manifested by high levels of intolerance of dissent by regimes in power, which is evidenced by the enactment of restrictive laws to govern the operations of non-governmental organisations, often the vehicle through which activists organise.”*

– Daily Nation, Kenya

State and non-state actors alike may have vested interests politically and economically for keeping their activities and policies hidden. The role of the media to report on these developments is crucial to making visible corruption, mismanagement and often deliberate efforts to silence the exposure of nefarious activities. Investigative journalism provides a platform for the sharing of information, gaining traction and support and highlighting issues of global concern and interest.

This means engaging with local communities and their leaders to hear their stories and experiences. It also means providing facts and figures, and accurate accounts in the interests of information sharing and knowledge building. Informal platforms such as social media and citizen journalism are establishing themselves as integral facets of contemporary media reporting. It is important to consider these forms in story development.

## RECOGNISING A GOOD STORY –WHAT'S NEWSWORTHY?

A human interest angle will always get the attention of audiences e.g. In a regional conflict, the immediate lived experiences of displaced people are lost in reports and statistics. Putting a human face to conflict to humanise the plight of individuals, families and communities helps bring home the reality of the situation.

Monitor and check for any major reports released, global rankings/ratings, country indexes or policy shifts of international significance e.g. State of Civil Society Report, Corruption Perceptions Index 2015, etc

Identify a hook or unique perspective from an otherwise regular theme or story-localise a topic that resonates with your audience and readers e.g. the negative impacts of climate change upon local farmers, women, island states

Feature case studies and real life accounts of experiences and challenges faced by communities and groups e.g. discrimination, the economy, sexual and gender based violence, gender inequality, political refugees and migrants-are their lives in danger, health and safety compromised, what are the options available to them to ensure a better life and livelihood?

The timing and significance of an event or report is critical to reach audiences and help promote a topic or cause. Often social media platforms like Twitter will break a story before traditional media can report on it. The key is to be responsive but not reactive. Try and verify claims from other sources.

Universal issues like political controversy, corruption, social injustices and exploitation that impact readers directly will raise their interest e.g. the extension of term limits, amending of constitutions by many African leaders in power for decades threatens democracy building in Africa.

Holidays, anniversaries, commemorations of iconic change makers e.g. Nelson Mandela can profile their work and legacy

- Protection of the environment and natural events like climate change e.g La Nina affecting large parts of the globe, the onset of climate migrants, the reality of destructive changing weather patterns that affect a country's economy, disaster responsiveness, displacement of communities and livestock.

### Before writing consider the following:

- Know your audience/s and what issues and themes they're interested and invested in
- The purpose of the piece-is it to raise awareness on a particular issue, influence policy and public opinion or share information with different audiences and stakeholders
- How will it educate or inform your reader? Will it motivate the reader e.g. for a call to action etc.

## ETHICS AND ACCURACY I.E. WHEN INTERVIEWING ACTIVISTS:

- Know your subject and facts- do thorough research on the relevant subject or topic
- Be clear & concise in your questions
- Obtain quotes and references from reputable, credible sources
- Be respectful and confident with your subject/s-create an environment of positive rapport when getting the story
- Have an independent, neutral, fair and balanced article with opposing views represented
- Respect the privacy of sources in delicate, controversial topics/matters. Some may choose anonymity, respect that this is what will protect them from the repercussions of speaking out
- Make sure your interviewee knows where the article/photo/ programme will be published
- Credit photo images correctly - be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or if lives are in danger
- Reconsider working on a story, project/ initiatives in which you may have a personal connection, vested interest or financial interest
- Check and recheck the details against your notes and/or recordings to ensure that you all the correct facts, figures, names, dates, positions/ titles etc.
- When starting to write your article, pause and consider if you have captured the essence of what each subject discussed in the interview- Do you need to do a little more research or balance in the story, have you captured or represented the essence of their responses?
- Clarifying jargon, technical terms clearly so your readers will understand

## THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

A 2010 study by The Global Media Monitoring Project stated that “women made up only 24 percent of the people heard, read about or seen in the news.” This number remained unchanged in 2015.

Women are often under or misrepresented in mainstream media reporting and decision making whether in the public or private sphere. Much emphasis is placed on the traditional place and role of women in society, perpetuating stereotypes and restrictive limitations that overshadow the critical contributions of women.

“Gender equality, and the empowerment of all women and girls, is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and women’s political empowerment and leadership is squarely addressed among its targets. Under SDG 5 – “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” – Target 5.5 seeks to “ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.”

Internationally, women are slowly but surely being represented in government yet there remains a glaring lack of women holding executive office. Currently, only one in five members of lower or single houses of parliament worldwide is a woman<sup>2</sup>. This uneven representation of women in national governance, let alone on the international stage, means that the voices and agency of the half the human population on the planet are being underrepresented. How can media address the issue and advance women’s rights and justice as part of civic space. A few suggestions could be:

- Shining a spotlight and raising awareness on gender inequality when it comes to accessing civic space – are women equally able to speak out, organise, and take action?
- Regularly reporting on challenges and milestones achieved by the LGBTQI community
- Profiling women as newsmakers and generally provide a platform for their voices to be heard
- Consider the diversity in women’s experiences of gender inequality. The issues affecting poor, rural women for example will be vastly different from those in urban centres.
- Be gender sensitive and responsive to the reality that women are not merely spectators or passive receivers of information, they are active change makers and catalysts for change.

FOR REAL-TIME DATA AND UPDATES ABOUT CIVIC SPACE  
AROUND THE GLOBE, PLEASE VISIT THE CIVICUS MONITOR

**MONITOR.CIVICUS.ORG**



<sup>2</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter5/chapter5.html>

# 3

# THREE FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, ENDLESS POSSIBLE STORIES

This section unpacks the 3 fundamental freedoms that comprise civic space, and offers ideas for media coverage.



## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

### Summary

The right to freedom of association protects the rights of citizens to form or join a group of like-minded individuals to pursue a common interest. Associations can take the form of civil society organisations, clubs, NGOs, religious groups, political parties, trade unions or online collectives. Other associations which could fall under the term association could mean groups formed around shared identity for example the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and intersex (LGBTQI) community, minorities, indigenous peoples, people with a disability and other vulnerable groups who may be targeted for discrimination.

The right to freedom of association is essential for citizens to freely, safely and securely exercise many other civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights. In international law, it is outlined in Article 22 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). As with many other rights, Article 22 is not an absolute right in instances where it threatens national security, public order and morals. However, the limitations are narrow, and lean towards protecting the rights of individuals from interference by the state. It is primarily the state's responsibility to ensure the rights of individuals and prevent their violation. This becomes particularly important when citizens form associations that are *counter* to the state, or offering alternative political opinions.

In the 2015, of the three core civil society freedoms, the freedom of association was the most widely violated, with CSOs that worked on issues of good governance, anti-corruption and the promotion of electoral democracy were most likely to be targeted. Threats from high ranking public officials, harassment of members, increased surveillance and repressive anti-NGO laws were some of the challenges civil society faced. A common accusation experienced by civil

society groups is that they are colluding with foreign powers against the state. This is often used to justify increased harassment and laws and policies which limit their ability to mobilise already limited resources.

The right to association is facing a more complex range of threats now from both state and non-state actors as civic space continues to shrink. In response, groups and associations have taken to alternative ways of organising themselves. Some of this is done transnationally through connecting with activists and associations in other countries using the internet. Depending on the political climate of a nation, groups may be forced to meet clandestinely, with additional measures being taken to protect the identity of group members and limit their exposure publicly.

### Perspectives: Ideas & Angles

Pitching stories on the erosion of the right to association will be easier for some media outlets than others. Some official government media outlets for example may be less interested in seeing these issues from the perspective of civil society than progressive media outlets.

The challenge is to find the balance between telling the personal stories of individuals and communities affected while also including sufficient details about broader and more long term processes such as changes in government policies, ongoing court cases, or UN reviews.

In some cases, linking the story to a broader political movement or global issue may help you to convince your editor of its importance. Describing your source as an activist may also hold cachet with some outlets, since movements such as #Blacklivesmatter have now increased the profile of activists in the political sphere. Freedom of association is currently facing some particular challenges. Here are some examples of how to consider different perspectives when developing a story and make it relatable to your viewers, listeners and readers:

### **Attacks on human rights defenders or leaders and staff of CSOs**

*An annual report analysing the status of the right to freedom of association around the world*

*is published by an international non-government organisation.*

1. Examine the report for whether your country has been mentioned. How does it rank in comparison to other countries regionally and internationally?
2. Compare the nature of the attacks. Are there any regional trends emerging? Have things worsened or improved in the last year for freedom of association around the world? Can you identify any global themes, trends or events that have prompted governments to justify attacks? Are there connections to your local context?
3. Think about the strategic importance of your country. Are increasingly repressive governments still receiving foreign support in the form of international aid or trade partnerships? Has aid and trade in your country been affected by attacks on human rights defenders, civil society activists and organisations?

### **Introduction of restrictive NGO regulations and laws**

*International media report that a high level UN official has criticised new NGO laws in one country. The laws require that no organisation can receive more than 20% of its funds from international sources.*

1. Consider how NGOs and CSOs fundraise in your country. Are there enough resources for them to be able to carry out their work effectively? How much support comes from foreign donors and what would happen if this was restricted?
2. Research how civil society organisations are regarded by the state. Are they welcomed? Are they regarded with suspicion? Are they accused of furthering the interests of foreign powers? How does this affect their ability to operate in your local context?
3. Seek out comment from local legal experts, NGOs and CSOs on the process of forming an organisation. Are there restrictive laws in place in your country? Is it straightforward process or does it involve a lot of red tape?

### **Raids on CSO offices**

*Twitter posts from a local anti-corruption organisation show uniformed authorities ransacking their offices. Computers are being destroyed and documents are seen being taken away in large boxes.*

1. Have there been similar cases in your own country? If so were there any complaint mechanisms for the organisations affected?
2. Consider other rights that may be impacted such as the right to privacy and the right to life. What legal mechanisms are in place to protect organisations and groups in your country? Have they shown themselves to be sufficient over time? Are there experts who are calling for preventive measures to protect civil society from harassment such as this?

### **Public vilification or denigration of a CSO or category of organisation**

*A new anti-homosexuality bill has been introduced into a country's parliament. In response, gay rights activists in the country have become outspoken, staging demonstrations, collecting petitions and demanding that the bill be rejected. Following this, several state-owned newspapers publicly out key activists which leads them to go into hiding.*

1. Certain groups may be made vulnerable by public policy decisions and choose to form associations to advocate for their rights. What are some examples in your own country of groups that have done this? Have they faced similar discrimination?
2. Globally, geopolitical trends may see certain groups targeted. What are the preventive measures in place which protect the rights of these groups in your own country e.g. a Constitution, Bill of Rights? What is the capacity of civil society in your country to work in solidarity with marginalized groups when the environment becomes oppressive for a CSO or category of organisation?
3. Examine the links and networks between local groups and organisations in your country with others in the region, or even internationally. Are there local movements that are connected to larger global movements?

With all of these examples investigate to what extent your government has met its commitments under international law in upholding the right to freedom of association. Look to what extent state and non-state actors have employed similar tactics to the examples above and what has been the impact on civic space as a result.

### **Humanise the story**

Sometimes groups, associations and activists will be engaging with large ideas and ideals. For your viewers, readers or listeners these ideas will be of more interest if they are expressed through human experience. At the same time, it is good to think about whose voices have so far been given attention in the discussion and whose have not.

### **MEDIA TIP: Health advocacy in the news**

*“Patients have to be able to advocate on their own behalf. The fight for HIV treatment was defined by this. From New York to Johannesburg to Mumbai, without activists’ right to stage die-ins and protests, or access to information hundreds of thousands more people would have lost their lives to the virus.”*

*“Know your beat. If you’re not reading, you shouldn’t be writing. The boring stuff like research, reports and papers is hardly ever “the story” but it certainly helps you frame, understand and tell the it. It also helps you take you the story - and the conversation around the issues - further. Cultivate your sources and build relationships. Stay in touch.”*

**Laura González López, Health News editor, Bhekisisa the Mail & Guardian Health Journalism Centre @llopezgonzalez**

Many times, certain voices are privileged over others. It is important to think about whether the right to freedom of association is accessible to *everyone* e.g. LGBTQI, minorities, those living in poverty and women. Some people experiencing multiple layers of disadvantage and marginalisation. Consider for example a disabled woman refugee struggling to adapt to a new country - how does her experience shed a unique light on a story about refugees? How does gender and race intersect with her experience of disability?

Here are some ideas to consider:

- Interviewing men and women who belong to a civil society organisation. Do the organisation's activities equally represent both its male and female members' priorities? If there are laws and crackdowns on the organisation's activities, how are women affected differently from men? Are women at increased risk of sexual and gender based violence as a result of their association with this group? If yes, who is responsible and what are the avenues for justice for survivors? Do women have the same ability to influence the organisation's agenda as male members?
- Find a local human rights activist who has been targeted for their affiliation to a pro human rights or democracy movement. Why did they join/create the movement or association and why was it so important to them? How has their life and the lives of their families been affected by their association with this group? Have they achieved all they wanted to? If no, why not?
- Identify a civil society organisation that is made up of individuals from a particularly vulnerable group e.g. indigenous groups or refugees and asylum seekers. Spend time with them understanding their dynamics and the day to day obstacles they face socially, economically and politically. Try to understand why they began this group and how they attracted members. Are they affected by discrimination and stereotyping? How have they managed to engage with highly bureaucratic systems such as the legal system and policy-makers? To what extent have people in power given them space to be heard? How does the rest of society regard their cause and activities? Are they sympathetic, supportive, disdainful, indifferent?
- Interview the members of an organisation that has a long history. Try and get a sense of how the environment for CSOs in the country has changed over time. Have successive governments and their policies enabled or restricted their ability to work and associate freely? What have been the successes of the organisation? Have they been able to bring about change? What have been the challenges they have faced and from whom? Are they freely able to fundraise for their organisation? Are there any restrictions placed on their organisation? If so, by whom and why?

### Dig deeper

Increasingly, civic space for activists, NGO's and civil society groups is diminishing. Crackdowns on dissenting voices may come from the government and its various quarters.

They can also come from non-state institutions who view certain organisations as a threat to their own objectives.

It is increasingly important to look behind the accusations, descriptions and labels given to civil society groups and organisations from state and non-state actors. In developing your story you will need to connect the dots between a number of competing interests and the tactics used by powerful groups to protect them.

Here are some examples of lines of questioning that can help you go deeper when putting together your story:

*A farmer is jailed after forming a collective with other farmers who have been forcibly displaced from their land in order to make way for a large scale development project funded by an international finance group. The government's official statement describes the collective as being anti-development and unpatriotic. Moving beyond the government's statement could mean asking the following questions:*

- What are the consequences for a CSO, activist or association that is labelled as unpatriotic?
- Investigate the social policies of international financing groups. What are their environmental and social policies? Are they responsible when violations occur?
- Economic growth is viewed as a primary driver of development. Examine the consequences for those who speak out about the *negative* consequences of large scale development projects.
- Is the right to freedom of association only upheld when it is in line with the state's agenda?

*An international donor restructures its funding priorities in line with its government's foreign policy. Funding to civil society programs in other countries have been cut and strict new reporting guidelines introduced. Follow through on the impacts from a change in priority on activists, NGO's and CSO's in recipient countries.*

- Examine the environment in which civil society is able to operate in a particular country or region. How readily are they able to access resources?
- Identify organisations that will be affected by the changes. Elaborate on how the changes will impact their work and the communities they may work with.
- Speak with the head of the donor organisation. Identify the motivations for the changes. Use examples from your case studies with affected CSOs and ask whether the organisation is aware of how their arrangements will disadvantage civic space in a particular context.
- How do the demands of international donors - particularly for measurable outcomes from projects that seek to address systemic, complex issues - impact on the way that national/local CSOs can operate? Are reporting requirements reasonable, or overly cumbersome? Does this funding model impact on CSOs ability to advocate for radical change? Are there ways for local activists/CSOs/citizens of countries that receive funding to hold donors accountable for how money is spent?

## MONITORING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN PAKISTAN

Campaigning against state led human rights violations can come at a high price. For the dedicated members of Bangladeshi organisation Odhikar, this is something they know all too well. As a network of human rights activists who regularly monitor human rights abuses-particularly ongoing cases of enforced disappearance- they are regularly subject to intimidation, threats and arbitrary arrest.

Putting out a monthly bulletin and providing capacity development for human rights defenders through its Human Rights Folk School, Odhikar aims to regularly monitor the human rights situation in Bangladesh. As a result, Odhikar too has become a target. Both its Director and Secretary are currently on bail after spending weeks in jail without charge.

Recently, one of Odhikar's main funding sources, the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), blocked the release of the organization's project funds. Sitting under the Prime Minister's office, the decision by the NGOAB to discontinue funding to human rights project activities shows the environment in Bangladesh for human rights organisations and activists is shrinking. Despite this, Odhikar members say they are more dedicated than ever to supporting victims and families of enforced disappearances.

### Find the story

1. Have there been instances in your country where human rights activists and organisations have been threatened by the government? Why have they been targeted? How safe do members feel in speaking out?
2. How easy is it for civil society to fundraise/gain access to resources in your country?
3. Does the legal environment encourage or make it harder for civil society organisations to operate?

Looking for story in your country/ region? Visit:  
<http://youcanbethechange.com/>

### Information resources

Here is a list of potential sources of information for developing stories on the freedom of association:

United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 22) <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

United Nations Special Rapporteur <http://freeassembly.net/>

African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Article 10) <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/achpr/>

Open Society Foundations <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/search?key=NGO%20LAW>

Global Witness <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/>

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders <https://www.defenddefenders.org/>

International Labor Organisation <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/freedom-of-association-and-the-right-to-collective-bargaining/lang--en/index.htm>

Centre for Trade Union and Human Rights <http://ctuhr.org/>

Civicus Civil Society Watch Report 2016 <http://www.civicus.org/index.php/en/socs2016>



## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

### Summary

The most controversial of the three freedoms is the Freedom of Expression. The international legal framework for freedom of expression can be found in article 19 of the ICCPR. It can also be guaranteed in regional frameworks for example the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa undertaken by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Individual states may also guarantee the right through law.

The right to freedom of expression is essential to civil society. It includes the right to speak out and critically analyse the policies and actions of state and non-state actors, access to and the sharing of information and the freedom to publicly draw attention to issues and concerns without a fear of retribution from any quarter. The freedom to carry out investigations, document and disseminate findings is also assured here for civil society.

International law directs that freedom of expression can only be curtailed when it is necessary to protect the rights and reputation of others, maintain national security and uphold public order, public health and morals. Overall though the limitation for the right is narrow and existence of the right itself cannot be jeopardised. National Interpretation of the law is varied and the limitations to this right are also varied

Increasingly, the freedom of expression is under pressure. Regressive media laws which limit journalistic freedom, increased censorship of both print and online publications and increasingly the limiting of expression through digital communications mediums is on the rise.

In response to decreasing civic space, activists and civil society have taken to new platforms. These too are under increasing pressure as governments acquire new ways of monitoring and censoring communications. Globally, in 2016 it was shown that the right to freedom of expression was under strain as states failed to meet their commitments under international law.

### Perspectives

As different forms of media have evolved, freedom of expression has become an increasingly hot topic in reporting. In the face of shrinking space to advocate and lend a dissenting voice, activists and civil society organisations have embraced emerging media platforms to express, document and promote their shared interests. Social media applications like Facebook, Twitter and Youtube have all been harnessed by local and international groups to quickly reach global audiences.

Reporting on freedom of expression can take a number of different perspectives and ignite diverse public discussions. Globally, many readers, listeners or viewers may be used to engaging with different media platforms in their day to day lives. Finding perspectives that introduce regional or local perspectives on global themes of expression will make stories more topical for your intended audience.

Identify your audience, and try to find a local angle that will appeal to them. For example, those working in information and communication technology may be interested to know about privacy software developed by an independent programmer in Bangladesh.

Here are some possible examples:

#### **Censorship**

*An artist creates a video documentary capturing the growing environmental pollution in her country's capital city. The documentary is disseminated via the internet and is free to download for all viewers. Originally, it was made with the consent of government authorities. However, when the video attracted over 200 million viewers from around the globe, authorities removed it from popular live streaming channels. Forum discussion was originally permitted but was eventually censored.*

- Examine environmental reports for the country to see if there has been a rise in pollution levels. Why have authorities decided to limit access to the video once it became widespread?
- Identify what government department or authority was responsible for removing the video and censoring discussion on the internet. What are some of the reasons given for not allowing access to the documentary? Have these reasons been given at other times historically to censor public dissent?
- Consider the story from the perspective of public health. Who is affected by the information in the documentary and how important is it that the information is

made public? What are some consequences of limiting the dissemination of the information in the documentary and public discussion on its content?

- Think about how big business may be involved in limiting the freedom of expression. How are global internet and telecommunications providers collaborating with government to limit users' freedom?

#### **Criminalising free speech**

*In response to regional attacks attributed to Islamic extremism, the government introduces a new counter terror bill. The bill aims to restrict extremist thinking and includes a broad definition which suggests that any expression counter to the nation's values, democracy and the rule of law will be subject to criminal prosecution.*

- Why is this bill being introduced now? With such a broad definition, can the law be applied to anyone who disagrees with laws and policies that are viewed as oppressive?
- Will this law be applied disproportionately to certain groups and if so what are the broader consequences for the nation when one group's freedom of expression is limited?
- When a state actor restricts the parameters of free speech using the law, what are the ways in which civil society can work to protect the rights of vulnerable groups who are impacted negatively?

#### **Restrictive media laws**

*After investigative journalists uncover a high-ranking government official's involvement in corruption, the government introduces a new press law for domestic and foreign journalists. It requires them to be registered and accredited by a government-run body.*

- What are the implications for domestic journalists from the press law? Foreign journalists? What will registration mean for reporting on stories that are seen to be critical of government? What are the complaint mechanisms in place if journalists feel they have been treated unfairly by the body?
- Have similar laws been introduced in other countries, and if so what has been the impact on journalism in those countries? How does freedom of the press compare to other countries in the region, worldwide?

#### **Denial of access to information**

*A country's leader has held power for over 20 years. Leading up to elections, an opposition candidate has become increasingly popular with polls showing him to be a serious contender to the leadership. Much of his popularity comes from active campaigning on social media accounts. In the week of the election, all social media sites are shut down by the government. Voters get around this by downloading VPN's which they use to document instances of vote rigging, ballot stuffing and police brutality by supporters loyal to the current leader.*

- Is access to the internet a human right? If so what are the safeguards that can be put in place to maintain it as a space where information can be freely accessed by all? Who has access to the internet and telecommunications technology in your

country? Are there some people who do not have access? If so, what is the impact for them in terms of being able to access up-to-date and diverse information?

- Who provides the software that allows governments to shut down social media and other forums? What obligations do owners/leaders of global social media and technology companies have in situations like these?

### **Attacks on journalists and bloggers**

*Due to security concerns, anti-extremist activists have taken to the internet to continue their advocacy work in the country. Fundamentalist religious discourse has gradually entered political discussions with recent elections seeing an increased number of religious figures securing positions in government. After a strongly worded blog analysing the implications of extremist religious doctrine on policy-making, a blogger is found murdered in her home. An extremist group linked with one of the elected religious government officials takes responsibility for her assassination.*

- Consider creating a timeline of harassment, detention and attacks on journalists and bloggers. Can this death be viewed as part of a systematic attempt to silence dissenting voices?
- Are there particular issues raised by journalists and bloggers that attract violent crackdowns locally, regionally and globally? Does the law protect journalists and bloggers from censorship and attacks either physical or online?

With all of these examples, investigate to what extent your government has met its commitments under international law in upholding the right to freedom of expression. Investigate to what degree state and non-state actors in your country have employed similar tactics to the examples and the impact on civic space.

### **Humanise the story**

Putting a human face to your reporting will help bring it to a level where your readers, listeners and viewers can feel more engaged. Even if you are reporting on a change in government policy or a particular demonstration, you may attract more readers if you begin your article with a perspective from somebody who is directly involved or affected.

Here are some suggestions on how to do this:

- Interview a controversial blogger. Who are her main audiences? How have people reacted to her blogposts? Why is she using the internet to express her point of view and how much of an impact has she had? What are some of the challenges of writing about these issues in her country and how does she get around them? Has she ever felt the need to self-censor?
- Find a spokesperson for a group that has been adversely affected by a law affecting freedom of speech. Why does she believe her group has had the law drafted and/or applied to them? What has been the impact of the law on the community's sense of

safety? How are community members feeling? Compare this to other ways in which the group is being singled out and marginalised socially, economically or politically?

- Identify a civil society group that has been operating for several decades. How has freedom of expression been affected over time? Has digital technology affected the way in which the group communicates to its audience? How do they see the environment for freedom of expression changing in the future in their country? Do they feel that they remain free to express themselves without intimidation?
- Identify a woman who is publicly outspoken on a certain issue. Why does she believe it is important to speak out on this issue? What backlash has she experienced? If any, who has she experienced this backlash from and in her opinion why? What does she believe are the particular challenges faced by women who speak out publicly in your country/region?
- Find an artist whose work has been politically censored. What are their views on having their work censored? Why is freedom of expression important to the creative arts? How has their work been received locally, regionally and internationally?

### **Dig deeper**

You may need to expand your knowledge of emerging platforms for expression. This can include social media and telecommunications but can also include the arts. Not all communities have equal access to the internet and it is important to consider this when developing your story. Who has access to newer forms of communication and who does not? It is important to think about how new inequalities may be emerging from some people having access to mediums like the internet and others not.

When censorship is present, the circulation of independent news and newspapers can be restricted. It is important to look beyond official sources of information. This may mean spending some time in different internet forums, getting a sense for what alternative opinions may exist. There are several online organisations which remotely support bloggers, internet sites and activists. If information from inside a country is difficult to come by, contacting an online group outside of the country who are supporting those activists or groups can help shed more light on the story.

Here is an example of how to deepen your investigation for a story. At a press conference the Minister for Communication says that freedom of expression is a privilege, not a right, and national security must come above all else. Here is an example of a line of questioning that could be used:

- Point out the government's commitments to freedom of expression under international, regional and domestic legal frameworks. If it is enshrined in law, does this make it a right or a privilege?

- Is there any evidence globally to suggest that there is a link between limiting freedom of expression and national security?
- How does this compare to countries where freedom of expression is more fully realised as a right? Have there been adverse effects on their national security as a result?

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In 2013, a small stretch of green in Istanbul unwittingly became the site where Turkey's young found their political voice. The Gezi Park protests ignited conversations on the right to freedom of expression under an increasingly invasive government led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP).

There are strong indications that Turkey's young population are finding alternative ways to express their discontent with the ruling party. The 140journos counter media group is one such movement that aims to provide alternatives to the often censored news presented in the majority of Turkish media.

Deriving its name from Twitter's 140 character limit, 140 journos became essential to the Gezi Park protest's visibility. The rapid tweeting of citizens via 140 journos twitter handle provided both national and international audiences with up to date and rapid information on the events at Gezi. Reporting on otherwise ignored instances of police brutality by mainstream media, it quickly gained an impressive number of followers.

In the wake of 2016's attempted coup in Turkish politics, over 100 journalists were detained, two newspaper offices were raided by security staff and 330 journalists had their press credentials revoked by the prime minister's office. Backed by over 300 volunteer content creators, movements such as 140journos represent the dynamism that new media provides to freedom of expression in Turkey's increasingly stifled media environment.

### Find the story

1. In your country, how free and diverse are media sources? Has censorship affected citizens' right to access credible and accurate information?
2. What are the ways in which new forms of media (such as Twitter and Facebook) have influenced the ways in which society is able to access information?
3. What is the environment for journalists and new media producers to freely and safely deliver information to the public?

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- Freedom of expression includes the right to access information. Currently, do all segments of the population have equal access to the main sources of information such as print, radio, television and the internet? If not, how can government policy prevent inequality in accessing information?

Responses may not defer from official government lines. Yet, questioning the motives of public policy decisions, asking for evidence and pointing out inequalities can sometimes reveal underlying ideologies. Together with other sources and a strong understanding of the background on the issue, you can develop a story that is much richer in detail than what is officially presented by government sources.

### Information resources – background documents, potential sources

Below are some useful documents and information sources to give you a background on the issue:

UN ICCPR (Article 19) <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

United Nations Special Rapporteur <http://freeassembly.net/>

African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Article 10) <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/achpr/>

Digital Freedoms Project <http://digitalfreedoms.idebate.org/>

Amnesty International <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/freedom-of-expression/>  
 Article 19-Defending freedom of expression and information <https://www.article19.org/pages/en/who-we-are.html>

Index on Censorship: <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/>

Committee to Protect Journalists: <https://www.cpj.org/>

Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index: <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

IFEX Global Network Defending and Promoting Free Expression: <https://www.ifex.org/>



## FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

### Summary

The international legal framework for the right to freedom of peaceful assembly can be found in article 21 of the ICCPR. It is also enshrined in a number of regional frameworks like the European Convention on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. Individual country laws may also guarantee this right.

Assembly can mean a temporary gathering in a private or public space to express legitimate dissent through peaceful means. Examples can be sit-ins, protests, demonstrations and strikes. Freedom of assembly has a strong place in civic space as it is a vehicle for mobilizing the population to address the policies and actions of state and non-state actors.

“It’s always important not to lapse into insider language. Words such as activist or volunteer may get more traction than NGO or civil society depending on your audience. In the US, activism is now interesting to editors due to Black Lives Matter. So instead of “Shrinking Civil Space” try “Police Crack Down on Transgender Activists in Bangladesh” or “Government Shuts HIV Groups out of Crucial HIV Talks”

- Lyndal Rowlands, United Nations Bureau Chief,  
IPS - Inter Press Service @lyndalrowlands

Similar to the freedom of association, international law places limited restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly. States are required to provide an enabling environment for peaceful assembly and refrain from using intimidation and force to restrict these activities. Contrary to the actual situation in many countries, international best practice dictates that people do not need to seek the permission of the authorities in order to gather peacefully in public.

### Perspectives

Historically, citizens have always gathered in public or private spaces for a common purpose though methods and means of peaceful assembly will vary given the local and regional context. Some countries may use less violent means of repressing instances where citizens assemble while others may respond violently with arrests and intimidation or even assault. With globalisation, the rise of extremist groups and increasingly polarised politics there are some emerging issues affecting this right.

International stories of peaceful assembly like the events in Taksim square can sometimes seem remote. Your job is to identify perspectives which your readers, listeners and viewers a rounded understanding of the social, economic and political influences on an instance of peaceful assembly. Occupying public or private space also has different cultural implications. Some spaces may be regarded as sacred or off limits. Large groups of people gathering publicly may be regarded with suspicion. It is your job to try and find perspectives which communicate the many factors which led to and influence a peaceful gathering of citizens. Finding key spokespersons will be essential to gaining the interests of your audience and an editor or producer.

Reports show that there are some particular trends affecting the right to peaceful assembly. Here are some perspectives to consider:

#### Excessive or unlawful use of force on public assemblies by police

*Student groups gather for a peaceful protest outside the Ministry of Education in the country’s capital. They are protesting the privatisation of their university and are asking policy makers to widen consultation with students in their plans for the university. Riot police are called and 14 students are detained, with eyewitness reports saying they were beaten while in police custody.*

1. Draw parallels to the situation in your own country. What are the regulations for freedom of assembly in your country? How easy is it to occupy public or private space for citizens to express themselves? What have been the consequences for sit-ins, protests and strikes in your country?
2. Examine police and court reports where protesters have been arrested. Was their case heard in court and what were they charged with?

#### Unlawful or unreasonable denial of permission to gather peacefully

*An opposition candidate has organised a public rally for his supporters in the lead up to the election. The rally is being held in a public stadium where previous candidates have held large public rallies in the past. On arrival at the venue, the candidate is told that the event is cancelled because they do not have police permission to use the venue as the protest may turn violent.*

1. To what extent does the law allow for peaceful assembly? How easy is it to obtain permission to hold a peaceful demonstration, protest or sit-in in your country?
2. Have there been instances when the interests of public order and national security have been used to deny permission to certain groups to gather peacefully? There may be some groups who are given easier access to assemble freely. Why are some groups afforded this right more freely than others?

#### Unwillingness of states to protect peaceful protesters from violent counter-demonstrations

*A peaceful march is held in support of large recent influxes of refugees and asylum seekers in a country. A group of counter protesters emerge and block the path of those marching. The march organisers approach police who are standing aside, warning them that counter protesters have become threatening. Police ignore requests for support from march organisers with counter protesters eventually turn violent. Most of the arrests made that day are of peaceful marchers.*

1. News reporting will often be drawn to the violent nature of protesters. Examine eyewitness accounts to provide different perspectives on how police reacted. Speak with legal experts on the validity of charges. Identify the state’s response. Have they made guarantees to protect peaceful protesters and did they uphold their duty?
2. Investigate official police/government narratives. It is not unheard of for state-sponsored ‘agent provocateurs’ to instigate violence at otherwise peaceful protests, with the aim of detracting from the message of the protest or criminalising peaceful protesters. Sometimes groups use marshals or stewards in an attempt to prevent this from happening; speak with them about their observations if possible.

#### Introduction of new anti-terrorism laws that have effect of curtailing the right to freedom of assembly

*A group of indigenous activists working on land rights issues peacefully occupy a government building. Excessive force is used to evict them with some protesters publicly questioning police on their actions. The government states that the protesters had threatened the safety of the nation by occupying a government building. Shortly after an amendment is made to existing*

*anti-terror legislation which includes the occupation of government buildings as illegal and constituting a terrorist activity.*

1. Anti-terror laws have become increasingly common in many countries in the world. Collate anti-terror bills that are both drafted and passed and examine them for their impact on freedom of assembly. Do they limit the number of people that can gather publicly at one time?
2. Is national security used to prevent large public protests and what is the state's response in the event that this happens? Is the law being applied disproportionately to civil society organisations and is this happening a lot in the region?

With all of these examples investigate to what extent your government has met its commitments under international law in upholding the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Consider to what extent state and non-state actors engaged in the above activities in your own country and region and the implications for civic space.

### Humanise the story

Giving personal accounts will give depth and thought-provoking angles to your reporting. Depending on your target audience, seek out stories which give a human perspective to some of the big themes that may underpin your story.

- If you are writing about a movement focus on its leader. Consider her characteristics and use these as vehicle to say something about the organisation. For example 'Preeti is the movement's diminutive but dynamic leader who has led over 15 demonstrations.' Instead of 'The movement has held 15 such demonstrations in the past.'
- Focus on eyewitness accounts. A protest or sit-in may have led to 14 arrests but who was arrested? What are their views on why they were arrested?
- Follow the cases of those who have been arrested or arbitrarily detained. What happened after their arrest? Were they held safely in police custody? Were any of their other rights violated? What happens to female protesters who are arbitrarily detained?
- Speak with authorities. Try to understand the extent to which the right to freedom of assembly is understood and internalised. What is police procedure for sit-ins, demonstrations and protests? Is there a policy about how to work with peaceful protesters? Do police offer protection to peaceful protests or do they see assembly as a matter of crowd control?
- Compare different instances of peaceful assembly. What were their characteristics? Consider race, age, sex and ability. Do some groups feel more confident in assembling than others?
- Talk with legal experts. Understand what international, regional and local laws have come into play and get an expert's perspective on how laws may inhibit the right to peaceful assembly.
- If there has been an instance of a protest turning violent, speak with local hospital

- staff. What kinds of injuries were they seeing? Was there evidence of teargas, rubber bullets, live ammunition or injuries from baton charges?
- Journalists play an important role in the monitoring of civil society spaces. Attend a peaceful protest, demonstration or sit in. Pay attention to the messages being put out, the types of people who have attended the event, the behaviour of the general public, businesses and authorities.

### Dig deeper

Like the freedom of association and expression, peaceful assembly is a critical component of a thriving, democratic civic space. As your knowledge of the various forms in which peaceful assembly takes place grows, you will begin to see some trends in the ways in which state and non-state actors respond to it. There can be a number of actors who are involved when an assembly takes place.

Many public spaces are becoming privatized. It is not only state actors who sometimes respond adversely to examples of peaceful assembly, but also businesses. This is an important point to consider when looking at the relationship between police forces, the state and private business. For example, to what extent can the police be used to fulfil the wishes of private business who wish to disallow peaceful assembly?

Many times, protests and demonstrations are depicted as being disruptive and violent. Though there is the chance that they can turn violent, a peaceful assembly should have the opportunity to proceed and indeed be facilitated by the state. This would indicate a strong commitment to supporting civic space. On the outside, governments and businesses may support the right to freedom of assembly while at the same time using excessive force or bureaucracy to discourage it. In your reporting consider questions which seek to highlight contradictions in what states may say and what they may do in practise.

An official press release from the police justifies the use of excessive force during a land rights demonstration. This is an example of different lines of questioning you can use to dig deeper.

- What were the events leading up to the use of violence?
- Did police work together with the leaders of the demonstration to ensure the assembly remained peaceful?
- Several eyewitness accounts show that police initiated a baton charge which caused demonstrators to panic. Who gave the order for the charge and why?
- What are the rights of demonstrators using public space? Try to understand the extent to which authorities are aware of the right to peaceful assembly. You can refer to national, regional or international law.
- If there are instances where other groups have been able to successfully and safely occupy and assemble in a public space give this example and ask why this group were unable to.

- Look for links between government and business. Who does the land in question belong to—the state or private business? In whose interest is it to silence dissent on this issue?

Responses may not defer from official government lines. Yet, questioning the motives of public policy decisions, asking for evidence and pointing out inequalities can sometimes reveal underlying ideologies. Together with other sources and a strong understanding of the background on the issue, you can develop a story that is much richer in detail than what is presented officially by government sources.

#### Information resources – background documents, potential sources

Here is a list of potential sources of information for developing stories on the freedom of peaceful assembly:

UN Special Rapporteur <http://freeassembly.net/about/freedoms/>  
 UN ICCPR (Article 21) <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>  
 African Charter on Human and People's Rights <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/achpr/>  
 Human Rights Watch World Report 2016 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016>  
 Human Rights Law Centre <http://hrlc.org.au/right-to-peaceful-assembly-upheld-by-european-court-of-human-rights/>

## FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Safeer Khan Durrani is a peace activist in Khyber Pakhtunwa (KP), one of Pakistan's most dangerous regions. On December 16 2014, the world was horrified by the attacks on a school in Peshawar which left over 144 school children dead and 500 injured. So too was the young Durrani, who decided to hold a sit-in demanding the right to life, safety for educational institutions and protection for the families of victims from the Pakistani government.

With burgeoning poverty, ongoing conflict to the North and West of the country, Pakistan's youth population live in a state of perpetual insecurity. Epitomised tragically in the Peshawar attacks, the ability to build a safe and secure future is being hampered by ongoing conflict and corruption involving terrorist organisations and strong-arming from political parties. Indeed, during Durrani's sit-in, it was both government and terrorist groups which threatened himself and fellow protesters outside Peshawar's Press Club where the group sat for over two weeks.

As depicted in Durrani's case, the right to freedom of assembly continues to face opposition from state and non-state actors globally. Yet, groups of concerned citizens and activists continue to use demonstrations, public protest and sit-ins as a way to demand attention to critical issues. For Durrani and his group of committed activists, their sit-in led to the building of 144 new schools in KP province and commitments from government officials to improve security for schools, colleges and universities.

### Find the story

1. How easy is it for citizens to assemble publicly in your country? What are the restrictions, legal or safety wise, which might prevent them from doing so?
2. What are some instances when peaceful assembly has brought about positive change? What motivated the participants to use protest/sit-ins demonstrations/ other methods of assembly to advocate for change?
3. How can the government in your country create a safer, easier environment for citizens to peacefully gather for a common purpose? Are there some legal restrictions that could be amended? Are participants of peaceful assemblies safe from other protesters/those who disagree? What can be done to ensure their protection from harassment, intimidation and violence?

Looking for story in your country/ region? Visit:  
<http://youcanbethechange.com/>

## Yearly Round-up

International days of remembrance and commemoration are a media-friendly opportunity to cover civic space. Many civil society organisations also use these days to host events, launch reports, and make statements to highlight what’s happening across the globe. Along with the following table, this toolkit includes a printable poster with a selection of dates that you can post in your newsroom.

DATE	BRIEF BACKGROUND	STORY IDEAS
<b>20 February</b> World Day of Social Justice	Recognises the need to promote efforts to tackle issues such as poverty, exclusion and unemployment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seek out the sources of injustice in your country, who is most affected and how?</li> <li>● Profile activists and groups making inroads for social justice.</li> </ul>
<b>8 March</b> International Women’s Day	A global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women, also marks a call to action for accelerating gender equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The World Economic Forum estimates at current rates gender parity in the workplace will not be achieved until 2133 - 117 years - how can we accelerate and advance this?</li> <li>● Women human rights defenders face unique gender based challenges – profile a selection of these women and their work.</li> </ul>
<b>21 March</b> International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	Commemorates lives lost to fight for democracy and equal human rights in South Africa during the Apartheid regime, now recognised globally as a call to intensify efforts against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Draw on stories and parallels on recent social movement mobilisations i.e.. BlackLivesMatter, #FeesMustFall</li> <li>● Profile case studies and raise awareness on the destructive impacts of xenophobia, relate this to the world’s current unprecedented migrant and refugee movements.</li> </ul>
<b>April 22</b> Earth Day	Events worldwide are held to demonstrate support for environmental protection. It was first celebrated in 1970, and is now coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network and celebrated in more than 193 countries each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to Global Witness, on average two people are killed every week defending their land, forests and waterways against the expansion of large-scale agriculture, dams, mining, logging and other threats. Find out more.</li> <li>● Profile the activists and organisations around the globe who are at risk defending their communities against environmental threats.</li> </ul>
<b>3 May</b> World Press Freedom Day	An opportunity to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom, assess the global state of press freedom, defend the media from attacks on their independence, and pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.	<p>Check the World Press Freedom Index – how does your country rank?  <a href="https://rsf.org/en/ranking">https://rsf.org/en/ranking</a></p>
<b>20 June</b> World Refugee Day	Commemorates the strength, courage, and resilience of millions of refugees around the world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>As of 2016</b>, the UN estimates about 43 million uprooted victims of conflict and persecution worldwide; more than 15 million of them are refugees. Explore the global refugee crisis and how your country is responding.</li> <li>● Put a human face of the global issue of refugees, profile both people who have had to flee their countries helping them resettle in new homes.</li> </ul>

<p><b>12 August</b> International Youth Day</p>	<p>An opportunity to draw attention to youth issues worldwide, during IYD, concerts, workshops, cultural events, and meetings involving national and local government officials and youth organisations take place around the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Young people are often at the forefront of change, what are the new and creative ways youth are advocating for change.</li> <li>● Create and publish a list - 20 young people who are being the change they want to see.</li> </ul>
<p><b>23 August</b> World Humanitarian Day</p>	<p>An annual reminder of the need to act to alleviate the suffering. It is also an occasion to honour the humanitarian workers and volunteers toiling on the frontlines of crises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prompt your readers/ listeners/ viewers to name the greatest humanitarians of the year/ or decade through social media. Feature these in a report released on this day.</li> </ul>
<p>International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances (September)</p>	<p>A day created to draw attention to the fate of individuals imprisoned at places and under poor conditions unknown to their relatives and/or legal representatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Who are the global disappeared? Create an infographic/ to call attention to their cases.</li> </ul>
<p><b>16 September</b> International Day of Democracy</p>	<p>An opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world; only with the full participation of and support by the international community, national governing bodies, civil society and individuals, can the ideal of democracy be made into a reality to be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feature - 10 (or however many you want) Quotes About Democracy For International Day Of Democracy</li> <li>● Goal 16 of the 2016 Sustainable Development Goals - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Use this day to annually monitor progress.</li> </ul>
<p><b>21 September</b> International Day of Peace</p>	<p>Commemorates the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples, a globally shared date for all humanity to commit to building a culture of peace.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Profile a series of peacemakers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2 October</b> International Day of Non-Violence</p>	<p>Marked on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, this is an occasion to disseminate the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness, to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Violent protest often gets the most media coverage, showcase how people speak, out, organise and take action through non-violent means.</li> </ul>
<p><b>24 October</b> World Development Information Day</p>	<p>Draws the attention of world public opinion each year to development problems and the necessity of strengthening international co-operation to solve them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In 2016, Global leaders agreed to the Sustainable Development Goals highlight these goals and how civic space is being used to advocate for them, including the global Action for Sustainable Development platform.</li> </ul>
<p><b>16 November</b> International Day for Tolerance</p>	<p>UNESCO's Declaration of Principles on Tolerance qualifies tolerance not only as a moral duty, but also as a political and legal requirement for individuals, groups and States. It situates tolerance in relation to the international human rights instruments drawn up over the past fifty years and emphasizes that States should draft new legislation when necessary to ensure equality of treatment and of opportunity for all groups and individuals in society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Case study examples of countries that have not ratified the Declaration- what does this mean for freedom of expression and diversity for people.</li> <li>● Enlist the support and endorsement of high profile individuals, collectives e.g. The Elders to highlight issues, raise awareness and commitments to raising tolerance.</li> </ul>

<p><b>9 December</b> Anti Corruption Day</p>	<p>International day to raise awareness of corruption and the role of the UN Convention against Corruption in combatting it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Opportunity to profile some of the many civil society organisations and activists fighting corruption and working on governance issues around the world - groups who often experience severe state interference</li> </ul> <p>Corruption at state-level distorts the democratic process and reduces opportunities for CSOs and citizens to influence policy. How does your country compare to others on the Corruption Perceptions Index or Global Corruption Barometer, does corruption prevent CSOs from operating fully? (<a href="http://www.transparency.org/cpi">www.transparency.org/cpi</a>; <a href="http://www.transparency.org/research/gcb">www.transparency.org/research/gcb</a>)</p>
<p><b>10 December</b> Human Rights Day</p>	<p>Commemorates the day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It, an opportunity to assess progress towards securing human rights and showcase those fighting for rights around the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Profile the human rights defenders - activists and groups making inroads human rights around the world.</li> <li>● How is your country/ region faring when it comes to human rights?</li> </ul>



# CONTACT US



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



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



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



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

## SOUTH AFRICA



CIVICUS House  
24 Gwigwi Mrwebi  
Street Newtown  
Johannesburg, 2001  
Tel: +27 (0)11 833 5959

## SWITZLAND



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

## UNITED KINGDOM



Unit 60  
Eurolink Business Centre  
49 Effra Road  
London SW2 1BZ  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7733 9696