

Shrinking Civic Space in Jordan: Concerning Developments Before and After COVID-19

Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies

January 2021

Summary:	1
Background on Civic Space in Jordan:	1
The Effect of COVID-19 on Civic Space in Jordan:	4
Impact on Availability of Funding for CSOs	5
Impact on Service Provision and Project Implementation	6
Impact on Civil Liberties (Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Press, and Freedom of Association)	7
Opportunities, Strategies, Innovations, and Best Practices for CSOs in Jordan:	8
Recommendations:	10
References:	11

Summary:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching consequences for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Jordan, as they face two simultaneous sets of challenges: first, challenges caused by the outbreak of the disease itself and its global socio-economic impact; second, challenges caused by the Jordanian government's doubled-down imposition of undue restrictions on civic space. Worrying developments include the activation of a Defense Law which expands state power beyond what can ordinarily be considered constitutional for an indeterminate amount of time, the obstruction of CSO's ability to get funding and carry out activities, the imprisonment of journalists and other media figures, the dissolution of labor unions and imprisonment of union leaders, and the continued assault on freedom of speech and freedom of association. Rather than utilizing the rich experience of CSOs in Jordan to assist with both immediate relief efforts and long-term strategic response plans, the Jordanian government has chosen to continue to deny civil society's partnership role in the formulation and implementation of public policy. Restrictions on the funding and operation of CSOs under the COVID-19 pandemic reflect a broader degradation of civic space that has been unfolding in recent years. However, the expansion of partnerships and innovative viability strategies among CSOs offer a beacon of hope regarding the future of Jordanian civic space. The government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is strongly urged to heed the Belgrade Call to Action by taking concrete steps to protect civil society and reverse the shrinking of civil space, as civil society is an essential partner in the national endeavor to achieve sustainable development.

Background on Civic Space in Jordan:

Civil society in Jordan has a rich history, with roots extending back to the philanthropic traditions and practices of Bedouin tribes, religious organizations, and charitable societies. After a series of popular protests and consequential democratization reforms in 1989, the work and scope of civil society began to expand. Similarly, the Arab Spring in 2011 was a catalyst for the evolution of civic space in Jordan. There was a rise among the ranks of CSOs concerned with human rights, sustainable development, and wider socio-economic policy. These organizations have played a role in both shaping national dialogues, maintaining social cohesion, and supporting the Jordanian government in its aims to meet its international obligations. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) - including Royal NGOs affiliated with the royal family - and International Non-Governmental Organizations also play an important role in providing essential services to vulnerable and marginalized communities in Jordan. Civic space in Jordan is not limited to just NGOs and INGOs; instead, it encompasses other community-based organizations (CBOs), trade unions and their societies, cultural and scientific organizations,

journalists and media institutions, as well as students' movements. Thus, civil society is an indispensable part of the fabric of Jordanian society.

Most CSOs in Jordan focus on providing aid and essential services to beneficiaries. However, the financial support made available to CSOs by the Jordanian government is limited. The Ministry of Social Development's Society Fund, managed by the Registrar of Societies, is the only source of government funding for societies and NGOs in Jordan. However, the fund excludes many organizations and lacks stable, predictable and transparent rules. Additionally, support from private citizens and the private sector is in short supply, due to a lack of tax incentives for financial donations as well as chronic economic challenges.¹ Moreover, fundraising activities are restricted by strict regulations by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD). Thus, because of the aforementioned limitations on domestic aids, most CSOs - particularly NGOs - are heavily dependent on foreign aid. The exception is RNGOs, which enjoy special access to government funding not available to other CSOs and consequently tend to have stronger organizational capacities.

At the end of 2019, there were 6,800 societies registered with the MoSD. Some organizations explicitly prefer to register as a nonprofit company - rather than as an NGO or as a society - to avoid the obstacles presented by the Law on Societies (Law 51 of 2008), which places severe restrictions regarding the establishment and operation of CSOs. Those organizations can register as civil, non-profit companies with the Company Control Department of the Ministry of Industry Trade and Supplies (MOITS) under the Companies Law 22 of 1997 and the Regulation for Non-Profit Companies 73 of 2010. According to the most recent data, there are approximately 600 civil, non-profit companies registered at MOITS. There are also approximately 10 Royal Non-Governmental Organizations (RNGOs), established by special laws based on royal decrees and parliamentary endorsement, which do not need to register with a particular ministry. Informal and unregistered organizations are prohibited under the Law on Societies of 2008.

Article 16 of the Jordanian Constitution guarantees the right to the freedom of association. Despite this, the legislation governing the formation and operation of is overly restrictive and as such violates the right to the freedom of association. The Law on Societies of 2008 institutionalized a disproportionate government control over the work of NGOs, allowing the government to remove an NGO's management and replace it with state functionaries, in addition to dissolving the NGO for minor infractions of the Law. Under the Law on Societies, all societies or associations must register with the Registry Council within the MoSD to operate lawfully. Law 51 also requires societies and NGOs to submit annual plans to the government in advance, to admit government officials in meetings, and to seek prior approval to receive any

¹ According to a mapping conducted in 2020 by Phenix Center on CSOs in Jordan, private enterprises are the largest source of funding for local CSOs, followed by private donors, royal subventions, and individual donations, respectively.

foreign funding. In early January 2020, Jordan introduced a new mechanism and a Specialized Committee for approving foreign financing granted to CSOs. Although this new mechanism was intended to accelerate the process and shorten the examination of funding procedures to 30 days, CSOs have reported experiencing repeated delays and obstructionism. The mechanism gives the committee 20 days to examine the funding request. After the request is submitted to the Council of Ministers for assessment, a decision should be taken within 10 days. However, on the ground, CSOs are often denied funding unless they have *wasta* ("connections") within the ranks of the government. CSOs have also reported that some members of the Specialized Committee lack the capacity to read and understand project reports and budgets. More alarmingly, the Specialized Committee has repeatedly attempted to strong-arm organizations to allocate funds for the State, either through direct means such as donating funds to the government or indirect means. Projects that are research-based or have objectives regarding long-term sustainable development are routinely denied approval, due to not aligning with undefined "national priorities". These restrictions on the financial freedom of CSOs do not align with international standards.

The Jordanian Labor Law No. (8) Of 1996, which governs the operations of trade unions and employees' associations along with union-specific laws, is inconsistent with international standards for labor and human rights. As it stands, Jordanian law limits the right to organize to a mere seventeen trade unions and restricts the right of workers in various sectors to form unions, deprives non-unionized workers the right to utilize tools of collective labor dispute resolution, and denies the majority of workers in the private sector the right to entering into collective bargaining with employers. Moreover, general assemblies of the trade unions are deprived of the right to choose their own by-laws, and there is an absence of mechanisms of internal democratic action on these trade unions.

Moreover, the protection of the right to freedom of assembly guaranteed by the Constitution extends only to Jordanian citizens. While the 2011 amendment of the Public Gathering Law made great strides in legally enshrining citizens' right to freedom of assembly, as it decriminalized peaceful assembly no longer required obtaining written authorization from an administrative governor to organize a demonstration. However, the amendment of the law did not go as far as to codify enforcement for citizens' right to assembly: authorities reportedly continued to selectively restrict public gatherings. Moreover, the law dictates that organizers must provide notification to the governor at least 48 hours in advance, including names, addresses, and details of the organizers must be provided as well as the purpose, time and venue of the gathering. Organizations continue to seek permission from Jordan's Interior Ministry to host public gatherings, and Jordanian law makes no provision for spontaneous demonstrations.

Although Articles 15 and 18 of the Jordanian Constitution guarantees the fundamental freedoms of opinion, privacy, and press, constitutional loopholes have allowed Jordanian

authorities to impose undue restrictions on the inalienable right to freedom of expression. Journalists in Jordan must be affiliated with the state-controlled Jordanian Press Association and Media Commission. The overhaul of the Press and Publication Law in 2012, spurred by a wave of protest following the Arab Spring, has led to increased restrictions on the freedom of the press. Over the past decade, the Jordanian government has passed various laws that place strict restrictions on the freedom of expression, in violation of international standards of human rights and the spirit of its Constitution. Jordanian authorities routinely invoke these laws to suppress dissenting voices by prosecuting activists and journalists. For instance, under the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 55 of 2006 and its amendments in 2014 - which broaden the definition of terrorism to include acts that are deemed to disturb "public order" or "relations with a foreign state" - journalists may face imprisonment or sanction when expressing views that are deemed offensive or critical of government institutions, foreign countries. While the criminalization of dissent was already embedded in the Jordanian Penal Code, the codification of the Anti-Terrorism Law allowed harsher sentences with a minimum of five years imprisonment. Additionally, authorities have used the introduction of the overly broad 2015 Cyber-Crime Law - which criminalizes "hate speech" and "fake news" - as grounds for detaining and jailing citizens for publishing articles or social media. The Media Commission also regularly issues gag orders, which limit journalists' access to information on sensitive issues.

The space for civil society in Jordan is currently rated as 'obstructed' by the CIVICUS Monitor, indicating that "civic space is heavily contested by power holders, who impose a combination of legal and practical constraints on the full enjoyment of fundamental rights."² Jordan has a "partly free" rating according to Freedom House's annual study of political rights and civil liberties worldwide,³ due to structural obstacles to freedom of association and free speech. Jordan was also ranked 128th in the 2020 Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index.⁴

Representatives of CSOs in Jordan say that their work continues to be impeded by the Jordanian government in 2020, expressing concern surrounding the Jordanian government's perceived lack of commitment towards reforming laws constricting civil liberties. The Kingdom of Jordan, which is a party state to several international human rights treaties, has repeatedly stressed its commitment towards reform and human rights. Despite this, advocacy groups, unions, journalists, and CSOs continue to be subject to state censorship and state surveillance. Moreover, instead of ensuring the inclusive participation of civil society and building a

² The CIVICUS Monitor is a research collaboration between CIVICUS and partners that provides regularly updated information and analysis on the space for civil society and citizen activism in every country of the world. See: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/jordan/>

³ *Freedom in the World* is Freedom House's flagship annual report, assessing the condition of political rights and civil liberties around the world. It is composed of numerical ratings and supporting descriptive texts for 195 countries and 15 territories. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/jordan/freedom-world/2020>

⁴ The 2020 World Press Freedom Index, compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), reflects the degree of freedom that journalists, news organizations, and netizens have in each country.

cooperative approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jordanian government has used the global health crisis as a pretext to limit the freedom of civil society.

The Effect of COVID-19 on Civic Space in Jordan:

The COVID-19 crisis has allowed the Jordanian government to limit the freedoms of civil society further. The decree of a state of emergency under Art.124 of Jordan's Constitution⁵ on account of the Coronavirus pandemic, validated the activation of emergency provisions of Defense Law 13 of 1992, has allowed state power to expand beyond what would ordinarily be considered constitutional. According to the decree and the Defense Law, the Prime Minister has the authority to suspend certain individual rights, including freedom of movement and expression. Despite the fact that then-Prime Minister Omar Razzaz pledged to carry it out to the "narrowest possible extent," the Jordanian government exploited the Defense Laws to arbitrarily limit civil liberties.

The discourse of the government likened the pandemic response to a war effort, to which citizens responded positively. According to public opinion surveys conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, the government's approval rating shot from 45% in January to 77% in late March, indicating an increased amount of goodwill as a result of the response effort. However, this goodwill would falter in the face of repressed dissent and a lack of transparency. The implemented COVID-19 response also came at a heavy price for Jordan's economy: the unemployment rate hit an unprecedented 23% while its public debt skyrocketed to 30.1 billion Jordanian Dinars. Vulnerable communities bore a disproportionate brunt of the economic burden as poverty rates skyrocketed.

Rising national poverty levels meant that beneficiaries' need for services became more urgent than ever. While demand for aid and service provision increased, many CSOs faced a reduction in financial resources and ability to carry out activities as stay-at-home orders and lockdown measures halted the implementation of several projects.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the government's response to the pandemic on civic space in Jordan can be analyzed under three categories: impact on financial well-being and availability of funding for CSOs, impact on project implementation, and service provision, and impact on civil liberties and freedom. However, the experience of CSOs under COVID-19 has not been uniform. While the pandemic has exacerbated challenges for the institutional viability of several organizations, it has also led to innovations and new opportunities.

⁵ Art. 124 reads: "In the event of an emergency necessitating the defense of the Kingdom, a law, which shall be known as the Defence Law, shall be enacted giving power to the person specified therein to take such actions and measures as may be necessary, including the suspension of the operation of the ordinary laws of the State, to ensure the defense of the Kingdom. The Defence Law shall come into force upon its proclamation by a Royal Decree to be issued on the basis of a decision of the Council of Ministers."

Impact on Availability of Funding for CSOs

The availability of funding for CSOs in Jordan has been greatly impacted by COVID-19 on several levels. Firstly, donor fatigue among a deep recession has posed significant financial constraints on most CSOs in Jordan, especially as private sector businesses struggle to survive and as the economic crisis pushes more individuals into poverty. Secondly, even when CSOs in Jordan were eligible for grants, gaps in capacity can often cost organizations the opportunity to be selected as the winner of the grant. Thirdly, CSOs have reported that competition over grants seems to be increasing in the aftermath of COVID-19. Finally, even when a grant is won, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided the Committee which is tasked with approving foreign funding with a pretext for rejecting projects which they deem to clash with government priorities.

The Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARRD), a local CSO, conducted research on the experiences of CSOs in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic. All CSOs surveyed were members of the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF), which is one of the largest and most prominent civil society networks in the nation. 75% of CSOs surveyed reported that their funding shrunk in the aftermath of the pandemic, while a mere 10% reported that their funding has increased.

One explanation for this uneven experience among CSOs in Jordan is donors' increased preoccupation with funding programs that provide aid for the humanitarian crises related to COVID, which has been accompanied by comparative neglect for funding programs that work towards development.

While restrictions of local CSOs' ability to access foreign funds was an issue threatening capacity enhancement efforts before COVID-19, the pandemic has heightened pre-existing challenges. According to one representative of a local CSO, there were many obstacles facing organizations hoping to attain prior approval for foreign funding: "When we receive a grant for a program with 'political development' as one of the program objectives, we are denied approval for funding. The Committee claims that 'political development' is not one of the essential priorities of the nation or the government, which contradicts the government's dialogue and international commitments." Other representatives agreed, expressing concerns that the Committee faces large challenges in its capacity to understand the importance of long-term strategies towards achieving national goals. For example, one CSO received a rejection for a project, which partially aimed to work towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Specialized Committee's alleged reasoning for rejecting this project was that the SDGs would not have to be achieved until the deadline of 2030, so it would be "unreasonable" to permit CSOs to attain funding with a goal of working on the SDGs a mere ten years before the deadline. The restrictions on CSOs' ability to accept grant funding from international agencies have been unofficially tightened in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other

CSO representatives felt that CSOs are viewed as service providers, and work such as policy mapping and research is undermined in terms of importance, which leads to developmental and human rights CSOs being more likely to receive rejections in their bids for foreign financing approval.

Furthermore, there were multiple reports that CSOs were pressured into providing financial support to the state or accepting state surveillance in exchange for receiving approval for foreign-funded projects. One representative reported that the committee “requested that we (*sic*) provide funding towards the government and Himmat Watan fund⁶ in order for our (*sic*) project to be approved, which could not be approved by the donors.” The same representative opined that the Specialized Committee wanted to redirect funds towards the State.

Others reported that the Committee denied CSOs’ request for foreign funding approval with the reasoning that any research conducted on COVID should not receive funding as it was not a “national priority”, and that funds are more urgently needed in national relief efforts to fight the pandemic. However, the claim that resources were redirected to national priorities related to the pandemic is dubious at best. The programs that were obstructed due to denied funding - which the organization was then unable to execute - did not have their funding redirected towards response efforts to COVID-19 after being rejected. Moreover, the lack of clear criteria and transparent processes with regards to the government’s approval mechanism for foreign funding creates additional administrative burdens for CSOs while making accountability more difficult.

Issues with the Specialized Committee and the government’s mechanism for approving foreign financing for CSOs seemed to stem from two essential flaws in the mechanism. Firstly, the attitude of some members of the Specialized Committee considered that the State is in competition with CSOs for foreign funding. Thus, those members would vote to deny funding for projects with the reasoning that the CSOs had not allotted funding to state programs, such as the National Aid Fund and the Himmat Watan programs, which form an essential part of the Jordanian government’s COVID-19 response plan. For instance, the Committee would allegedly sometimes directly contact donors and ask them to redirect funding from CSOs to the state directly or the MoSD. Secondly, another issue stems from a capacity gap faced by members of the Specialized Committee. Some members of the Specialized Committee reportedly have difficulties when it comes to reading and understanding financial reports and budgets, indicators for monitoring and evaluations, project cycles, or implementation activities. Sometimes, members of the Specialized Committee would not understand references to international standards or international treaties, including ones which Jordan is internationally obligated by - such as the SDGs. The lack of institutional capacity, combined with this feeling of

⁶ The Himmat Watan Fund (National Initiative Fund) was created through Defence Order No. 4 to receive donations from individuals, the private sector and other institutions.

competition, creates a large obstacle. This leads to CSOs needing *wasta*, or connections, to obtain the approval of the Specialized Committee and Council of Ministers. According to a CSO Mapping by Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics, while approximately one-third of CSOs in Amman have applied for international sources of funding, a mere 13% subsequently received both the grant and approval for the grant.

Impact on Service Provision and Project Implementation

Most CSOs were not granted permits by the government to resume activities during lockdown, including NGOs which ordinarily provide healthcare services and operate primary health clinics. Thus, most CSOs had to attempt to switch to the provision of remote services. However, Royal NGOs and charities have not stopped their activities as they did not require special permits to continue their activities.

With regards to service provision and ability to continue activities, CSOs in Jordan were restricted by Jordanian laws and the Defense Orders which limited gatherings to under 20 people at a time. This meant that many CSOs were largely prevented from carrying out their programs - such as workshops, training, and general meetings. Representatives of CSOs reported that the government's enforcement of the Defense Orders was marred by double standards, as the same rules that were imposed on CSOs were not enforced upon private sector businesses.

The ARRD survey found that 70% of CSOs were forced to move their services and provide them remotely, and 77% were forced to come up with new activities. Approximately 50% of CSOs had failed to get travel permits for their employees, which would have deemed their employees essential and allowed them to use cars during government-mandated lockdowns. Furthermore, according to a report by Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics on local resources and needs assessment for CSOs in Jordan, approximately four-fifths of CSOs in Jordan had their activities either completely or partially stopped because of COVID-19. The same report indicated that less than one-third of beneficiaries surveyed reported being able to access online services provided by CSOs. The digital gap in Jordan is spread unevenly across poorer households, as the UNICEF rapid needs assessment (conducted in April 2020) found that 23% of vulnerable households in Jordan did not have internet access, and the majority had limited data packages.

Representatives of CSOs also reported experiencing technological issues, which were a barrier to the implementation of remote and online services. Even representatives of INGOs with a relative wealth of technological and digital resources reported that the sudden switch to online service came with a series of unforeseen challenges. These disruptions led to a build-up of activities throughout the last four months of the year 2020, after restrictions were somewhat

eased, which in turn led to the duplication of efforts and increased administrative burden for CSOs.

Impact on Civil Liberties (Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Press, and Freedom of Association)

Following the Defense Law that was activated in March and the enactment of the Defense Law No. 13 of 1992, decrees issued by the Prime Minister in Jordan brought measures that would restrict the public's access to information. Some of these measures taken under the state of emergency included the temporary halting of printing of newspapers, on the grounds that physical newspapers may help spread the virus.

Defense Order No. 8, a decree published in April of 2020, prohibits “publishing, re-publishing or circulating any news about the epidemic in order to terrify people or cause panic among them via media, telephone or social media.” The Public Security Department’s (PSD) Cyber Crimes Unit announced that it has started procedures to “arrest whoever creates, publishes or circulates fake news and hand them to the relevant justice authorities.” Moreover, the Jordanian Health Minister institutes a policy requiring that all hospital directors and Health Ministry officials obtain permission from the Ministry before speaking with members of the press.

Several incidents occurred where authorities restricted the freedom of the press. On 14th April 2020, authorities detained Salim Akash, a Jordan-based Bangladeshi journalist, because of his coverage on the impact of lockdown measures on Bangladeshi migrant workers in Jordan. Moreover, in July, Human Rights Watch reported that Jordanian authorities used arrests and a sweeping gag order to prevent media coverage of ongoing protests related to the arbitrary closure of the Jordanian Teachers' Union. Some journalists who covered the protests were allegedly beaten by the police. Journalists were also arrested for their coverage of a parents' protest against school closures. In August, leading Jordanian cartoonist Emad Hajjaj was arrested for publishing a cartoon that criticized the UAE-Israel peace deal for allegedly harming relations with a "friendly country". Jamal Haddad, the editor of the news website Al-Wakaai, was arrested on December 24 for his report claiming that Jordan had secretly received a supply of COVID-19 vaccines and that some senior officials had been vaccinated. Haddad was arrested for allegedly "endangering public security and causing sedition and public disorder."

The Jordanian government’s effort to silence dissent was not limited to punishing critical coverage of protests. While Jordanians no longer require government permission to hold public demonstrations or events since the amendment of the Public Gatherings Law in 2011, organizations routinely request permission from the Ministry of Interior to do so. The government refused to provide permits for peaceful protests throughout the pandemic, citing

COVID-19 regulations which ban gatherings of 20 people or more. Simultaneously, the government curtailed its citizens' freedom of assembly even in online spaces. Rather than shutting off the internet or blocking social media sites as it had done in previous years, the government chose to throttle video CDN servers and live event-streaming services such as Facebook Live - a less conspicuous way to prevent the flow of information during protests.

The Jordanian government shut down the Teacher's Syndicate, arrested its board members), forced a number of members to retire or face suspension, and formed a government committee to manage the Syndicate's affairs. This pattern of union busting and restrictions on the freedom of association continued in 2021: in January, Jordanian security services disbanded a joint sit-in by teachers and politicians that took place in front of the parliament headquarters in Amman. Security forces also arrested many of the participants.

Opportunities, Strategies, Innovations, and Best Practices for CSOs in Jordan:

Most CSOs in Jordan switched to remote or online services. This indicates flexibility, adaptability, and innovation in the face of adversity. The digitization of CSOs presents an innovative strategy for institutional viability when services could not be offered in person. This has potential to increase accessibility towards people with disabilities that limit their mobility, as well as potential to achieve improved organizational efficiency. Most Jordanian CSOs have made the leap towards utilizing social media and the internet to assist them in achieving their goals.

The best practices for CSOs in dealing with COVID-19 include following health and safety guidelines regarding wearing masks and social distance protocols, as well as prioritizing the well-being of constituents and employees. Beyond these basic steps, however, CSOs must work to ensure institutional survival.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of CSOs in Jordan, CSOs must create emergency response plans in consultation with their key stakeholders to prepare for crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, CSOs should aim to build post-incident resilience by laying a plan for rapid recovery from the disruption caused by emergencies. However, these levels of forethought and strategic thinking must be accompanied by both institutional capacities to create such plans as well as to implement them. Opportunities for CSOs to enhance their capacity lay in building networks of mutual partnership and support. While coalition-building among CSOs remains mostly sporadic, there have been promising signs of a shift towards a more collaborative culture in Jordan's civil society. Jordanian CSOs increasingly formed coalitions and engaged in participatory action, the most prominent of which are HIMMAM and JONAF.

Furthermore, RNGOs and INGOs in Amman are uniquely advanced in organizational capacity, due to having more financial support at their disposal. Therefore, they must bear a proportionate role in advocating for struggling CSOs and challenging restrictions on Jordanian civil society.

CSOs in Jordan have historically played an important role in democratization and achieving sustainable development. However vexingly, as the freedom of civil society shrinks, its ability to advocate for an expansion of civil freedoms shrink with it. At the same time, crises such as famines, wars, and disease have historically acted as a trigger for societal change as they tend to affect views on the responsibilities of the state to provide social protection for its constituents. Therefore, Jordanian CSOs should continue to push for the vision of achieving human rights commitment on the ground, sustainable development, and an expansion of civil liberties.

CSOs can play a key role in promoting democratic governance and prosperity and advancing Jordan's development goals. By creating an enabling environment for civic engagement and a fully engaged civil society, Jordan can make great strides towards social and political reforms.

Recommendations:

- Reverse the shrinking space for civil society, protect human rights defenders, and stop the undermining of democratic participation.
- Amend Jordan's laws that bar non-citizens from enjoying their full human rights, including the rights to freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly.
- Plan all emergency response measures in accordance with the 10 Principles of Action published by the Special Rapporteur of the UN on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.
- Remove legal and policy measures that unwarrantedly limit the right to the freedom of association to foster a safe, respectful and enabling environment for civil society.
- Remove all procedures that unduly restrict CSOs' ability to receive international funding, as it is the right of CSOs to be able to obtain funding without cumbersome and strict regulations.
- Revise or repeal the Law on Societies, which places undue restrictions on the freedom of association. Introduce a new law for the regulation of non-governmental organizations that would be guided by Jordan's obligations under international law.

- Take concrete steps to involve CSOs in policy-making decisions, including drafting new legislation for civil society that complies with international best practice.
- Amend or repeal the Jordanian Labor Law, which places undue restrictions on the formation of independent labor unions.
- Ratify ILO Convention No. 87 concerning the freedom of association and protection of the right to organize.
- Amend the Press and Publication Law, Penal Code, Cyber-crime Law, and Anti-Terrorism Law to ensure that the legal framework is following best practice and international standards in the area of freedom of expression.
- Amend the Public Gathering Law to guarantee fully the right to the freedom of peaceful assembly and provide recourse for judicial review and effective remedies in cases of the unlawful denial of the right to the freedom of assembly by state authorities.

References:

Al-Dabbas, Ali, editor. National Center for Human Rights. "The Role of Civil Society Organizations (Associations and Unions) In Enhancing Peoples' Right to Participation In Public Affairs in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." 2018. Available at: http://www.nchr.org.jo/Admin_Site/Files/PDF/feb956af-3bb4-4030-a7e4-d01ac06c0697.pdf

Arab Network for National Development. "Enabling Environment for Civil Society in the Arab Region." *ANND*. 2017. Available at: <http://www.annd.org/data/file/files/enabling%20environment-eng.pdf>

Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development. "Strengthening Localization in Jordan," *ARDD*. 2020. Available at: <https://ardd-jo.org/Publications/strengthening-localization-in-jordan-localization-reinforce-and-support-do-not>

Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists. "Women-led Civil Society Organizations Empowered Vulnerable Women During Covid-19 Pandemic: the Indebtedness of Women in Jordan." *CDFJ*. 2020. Available at: <https://ardd-jo.org/Publications/women-led-civil-society-organizations-empowered-vulnerable-women-during-covid-19>

Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists. "JONAF Response to COVID-19 Assessment." *CDFJ*. 2020. Available at: <https://ardd-jo.org/Publications/jonaf-covid-19-response-assessment>

Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists. "Media Freedom Status in Jordan During COVID-19." *CDFJ*. 2020. Available at: <https://cdfj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Media-Freedom-Status-in-Jordan-During-COVID-19.pdf>

Center for Strategic Studies. "Jordanian Indicator Polls Series the Pulse of the Jordanian Street." March 2020. Available at: <http://jcss.org/ShowNews.aspx?NewsId=817>

CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness. "Civil Society Reflections On Progress In Achieving Development Effectiveness: Inclusion, Accountability and Transparency." *CPED*. 2019. Available at: <https://csopartnership.org/2019/07/civil-society-reflections-on-progress-in-achieving-development-effectiveness-inclusion-accountability-and-transparency/>

CIVICUS. "CIVICUS Monitor: Jordan." 2020. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/jordan>.

Constitutional Court, Interpretative Decision (No. 6), August 2013.

Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952, as amended in 2011. Available at: <http://www.cco.gov.jo/en-us/Jordanian-Constitutional>

"Facebook Live Streams Restricted in Jordan during Teachers' Syndicate Protests." *NetBlocks*, Aug. 2020. Available at: netblocks.org/reports/facebook-live-streams-restricted-in-jordan-during-teachers-syndicate-protests-XB7K1xB7

FHI360 & USAID & ICNL. "2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index For The Middle East And North Africa 8th Edition." 2020. Available at: <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-csosi-mena-2019-report.pdf>

Human Rights Watch. "Jordan: Arrests, Forced Dispersal at Teacher Protests." Human Rights Watch, 28 Oct. 2020. Available at: www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/27/jordan-arrests-forced-dispersal-teacher-protests.

Human Rights Watch. "Jordan: Escalating Repression of Journalists." Human Rights Watch, 28 Oct. 2020. Available at: www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/18/jordan-escalating-repression-journalists.

Human Rights Watch. "Jordan: Free Speech Threats Under Covid-19 Response." Human Rights Watch, 28 Oct. 2020. Available at: www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/05/jordan-free-speech-threats-under-covid-19-response.

Human Rights Watch. "Jordan: Release Prominent Cartoonist." Human Rights Watch, 28 Oct. 2020, www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/28/jordan-release-prominent-cartoonist.

ILO. "World Social Protection Report 2017–19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals." International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2017. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/secsoc/information-resources/publications-and-tools/books-and-reports/WCMS_605078/lang--en/index.htm

"Instructions on Spending and Support of Associations from the Associations Support Fund," NO. 148 of 2010. Issued pursuant to Article 28 of the Societies Law no. 51 of 2008. Published by the Minister of Social Development. Available at: https://mk0rofifiqa2w3u89nud.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/Jordan_Reg_NotForProfit_companies_2010_arabic.pdf?_ga=2.35663780.566609747.1611061631-66528439.1611061631

Jordan Labor Watch. "Teachers denounce attempts to eradicate and assault their union." 2021. Available at: <http://labor-watch.net/ar/read-news/151989>

Jordan Labor Watch. "Continuing their previous sit-in ... teachers sit in front of the Parliament." 2021. Available at: <http://labor-watch.net/ar/read-news/151971>

Jordan Labor Watch. "Teachers sit in front of the Parliament to protest government measures." 2021. Available at: <http://labor-watch.net/ar/read-news/151952>

Jordan Labor Watch. "Dissolving the teachers union and imprisoning its council members for a year." 2020. Available at: <http://labor-watch.net/ar/read-news/151948>

Jordanian Law on Societies, No. 51 of 2008 as amended by Law No. 22 of 2009. Available at: <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Jordan/51-2008-En.pdf>.

Jordanian Law 5 on Public Meetings. 2011. Available at: https://mk0rofifiga2w3u89nud.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/Jordan_jordanlaw.pdf?_ga=2.72746007.566609747.1611061631-66528439.1611061631

Jordanian Labor Law No. (8) of 1996, as amended in 2019 by Law No. (14). Available at: <http://www.mol.gov.jo/AR/List/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%86>

National Center for Human Rights. "The sixteenth annual report on the human rights situation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the year 1441 AH - 2019 AD." 2020. Available at: http://www.nchr.org.jo/User_Site/Site/View_ArticleAr.aspx?type=1&ID=314&name=%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1%20%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9%20%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%85%D9%84%D9%83%D8%A9%20&lc=0

Ministry of Labor. "List of International Treaties." 2020, http://www.mol.gov.jo/AR/List/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9.

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. "Jordan 2017 National Review." <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/15110Jordan.pdf>.

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. "Strategic Plan." 2020, https://mop.gov.jo/En/List/Strategic_Plan.

Phenix Center for Economic Studies and Informatics. "Freedom of Association in Jordan: Fact Sheet." 2016. Available at: <http://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/000/456/original/PDF2.pdf?1469200423>;

Phenix Center for Economic Studies and Informatics. "Policy Paper on Civil Society Organizations in Jordan: Between shrinking freedom and challenging the legal framework." 2021. Available at: <http://phenixcenter.net/category/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%b5%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%aa/%d8%a3%d9%88%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%82-%d8%b3%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%aa/>

Phenix Center for Economics and Informatics. "Study on the Toll of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Jobs and Businesses in Jordan." 2020. Available at: <https://en.phenixcenter.net/coronavirus-pandemic-takes-heavy-toll-on-jobs-businesses-study/>

Reporter Without Borders. "Jordan Bans Coverage of Teachers' Protests: Reporters without Borders." RSF, 14 Aug. 2020. Available at: rsf.org/en/news/jordan-bans-coverage-teachers-protests.

Reporters Without Borders. "Two Jordanian TV Journalists Arrested after Broadcasting Criticism of Lockdown: Reporters without Borders." RSF, 14 Apr. 2020. Available at: rsf.org/en/news/two-jordanian-tv-journalists-arrested-after-broadcasting-criticism-lockdown.

Tadros, Amjad & Reals, Tucker. "After Hundreds of Teachers Arrested, Coronavirus Is Just the Start of Jordan's Back-to-School Challenges." CBS News, 27 Aug. 2020,

www.cbsnews.com/news/jordan-teacher-strike-arrests-protest-coronavirus-school-freedom-of-speech-journalist-ag-order/.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review 31st Session of the UPR Working Group. Submission by CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, NGO in General Consultative Status with ECOSOC Arab NGO Network for Development- NGO in Consultative Status with ECOSOC-Roster And The Phenix Center for Economic & Informatics Studies. 2018. Available at: <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=5647&file=EnglishTranslation>

The Office of the Jordanian Prime Minister, "Defense Orders," 2020, <http://pm.gov.jo/content/1588539907/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%86-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%91-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%91-10-%D9%88-11.html>.

UNDP. "Human Development for Everyone: 2016 Human Development Report on Jordan", 2020, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/JOR.pdf.

UN Human Rights Committee. "Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report on Jordan." 2017. Available at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR/C/JOR/CO/5&Lang=En.

UNICEF; Jordan Strategy Forum. "JORDAN'S NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION RESPONSE DURING COVID-19." 2020. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/3921/file/Jordan's%20National%20SP%20Response%20During%20COVID-%20UNICEF%20%20JSF.pdf>

UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3aa0.html>

UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III). Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html>

UN General Assembly, Rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, 14 September 2016, A/71/385. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57fde9854.html>

UNICEF. "Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 on Families in Jordan." April 2020. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/reports/multi-sectoral-rapid-needs-assessment-covid-19-jordan>

World Food Programme. "Jordan Food Security Update - Implications of COVID-19 (July-August 2020)", 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-food-security-update-implications-covid-19-july-august-2020>.

World Health Organization. "ApartTogether survey: preliminary overview of refugees and migrants self-reported impact of COVID-19." Geneva: World Health Organization. 2020.