

what is **shrinking** CIVIC space



**a global pattern
of repression**

against independent civil society & people's organisations



Why do states curtail civic space?

Independent civil society organisations act as agents of change that challenge unequal or unjust social structures, and this threatens the elitist political and economic interests of those in power. **Thus, the need to:**

- **Restrict** the people's participation in areas of public concern
- **Reward** their allies who hold a stake in silencing critical voices
- **Protect** corporate interests
- **Quash** dissent
- **Limit and depoliticise** civil society's advocacy work
- **Delegitimise** independent civil society



targets of

shrinking
civic
space

rights defenders

community-based
organisations

civil society organisations

research institutions

faith-based groups

THAT WORK FOR

gender equality land rights environmental protection
humanitarian response
indigenous peoples' rights
alternative journalism transparency and accountability
reforms in health, education, and housing services



forms of attacks

legal & judicial actions

restrict public participation
and day-to-day operations

defamation & vilification

portray rightful resistance as unpatriotic,
terroristic, or anti-development

subtle repression

like red tape, close monitoring, and
administrative burdens hinder organizations
from securing legal registration, joining networks and coalitions, obtaining
funding from donors, and operating where they are needed the most

actual violations

of rights to life, liberty,
expression, and association



why is

shrinking
civic
space

bad?

The shrinking of civic spaces is a threat to human rights, and runs counter to the notion of a democratic society.

Civic spaces in a democracy are sites of engagement and struggle where civil society organisations and rights advocates and community members can organise to play their role of contributing to development by articulating their positions, demanding and promoting accountability, and voicing their dissent whenever necessary.



What are the rights & freedoms being put in peril?

free expression

association

peaceful assembly

participation in public affairs



Where these are under threat, people cannot effectively fight for their civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights.

What is the relationship
between development and **shrinking
CIVIC
space**

Real and
transformative
progress **will**
not be possible

without a fully engaged
civil society and population.



**What actions
have CPDE taken
in relation to**

**shrinking
CIVIC
space**

CPDE rallies its membership, collaborates with other CSO networks, and calls on all development actors to heed the **Belgrade Call to Action** adopted in April 2019 at the Civil Society Summit held in partnership with the Balkan Civil Society Development Network, Action for Sustainable Development, and Civic Initiatives.

The document calls on UN Member States to stop the attacks against development workers and human rights defenders, and fulfil the sustainable development goals.

 **View our call!**

bit.ly/CPDEBelgradeCall

What actions have CPDE taken in relation to

shrinking CIVIC space

CPDE is also supporting National Campaigns against Shrinking Civic Spaces 2020 in the following countries:



Armenia



Malawi



Gabon



Mexico



Jordan



Nepal



Kyrgyzstan



Nigeria



Lebanon



Philippines

The campaign aims to:

- **monitor** the status of implementing the international commitments to provide a CSO enabling environment;
- **increase awareness** of different citizen groups on the need to reverse this trend; and
- **raise concerns** to relevant national agencies for addressing gaps in EDC implementation.



→① To take concrete steps to **protect and enable space for civil society**, including enabling laws and regulations, democratic accountability based on human rights norms and human rights standards, and the full protection of civil society under attack – such as social leaders, human rights defenders and gender equality activists.

→② To embed **inclusion and meaningful accountability** to people in development practices. →③ To implement and respect **democratic country ownership of national development plans** and implement **transparency and accountability** for inclusive SDG delivery. →④ To lead by example with concerted action to **challenge major human rights violations**, including deteriorating conditions facing peoples' organizations, trade unions, women's rights organizations, indigenous peoples, and community-based environmentalists, among many others. →⑤ To recognise the importance of the **interconnected themes** in achieving Agenda 2030—civil society voice, eradicating poverty, women's empowerment, fighting inequality, decent work, climate action, and environmental justice.

Belgrade Call to Action

