



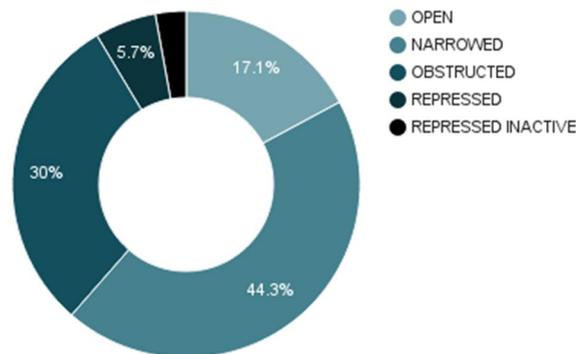
CIVICUS Monitor Findings for active OGP countries

December 2016

Research by CIVICUS shows that there are many Open Government Partnership (OGP) countries in which citizens and civil society organisations are denied basic civic freedoms. The [CIVICUS Monitor](#), an online tool to track and compare civic freedoms on a global scale, finds that civic space - which is the respect for the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly - is obstructed or repressed in 25 of the 68 active OGP countries.¹

The CIVICUS Monitor rates countries based on how well they uphold civic space and also provides regular updates to constantly track developments. Countries are rated as open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed or closed. Ratings are dynamic and based on a combination of inputs from local civil society activists, regional civil society experts and research partners, existing assessments by national and international civil society organisations, user-generated input and media-monitoring. Local views are prioritised.

Distribution of CIVICUS Monitor ratings for OGP countries

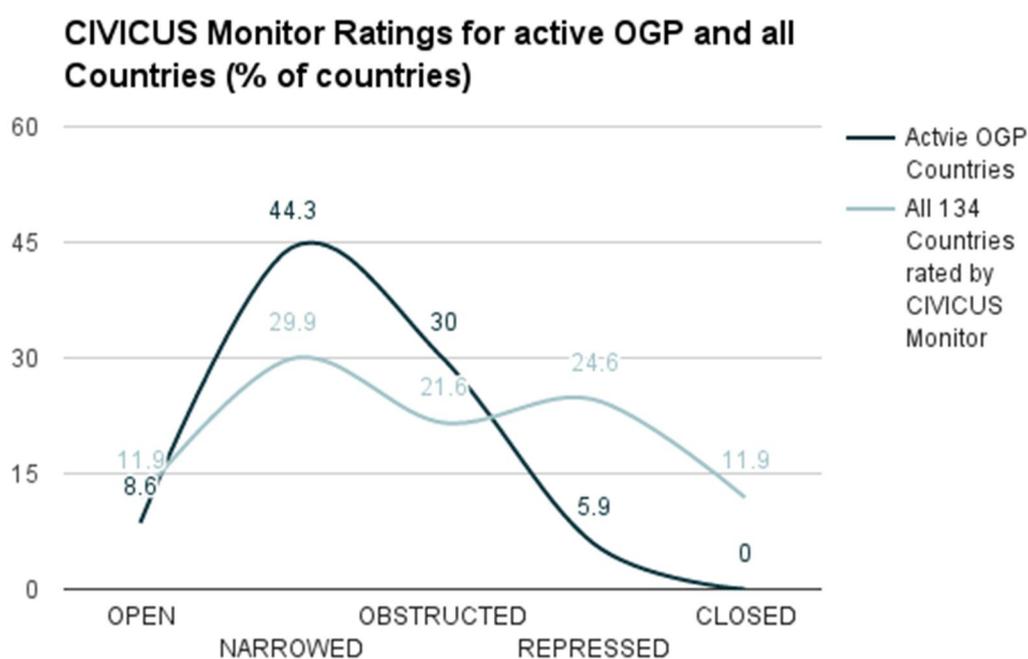


¹ Azerbaijan and Turkey have been declared inactive by the OGP. The CIVICUS Monitor rates both repressed and documents severe civic space restrictions in [Turkey](#) and [Azerbaijan](#) in recent months.

Ratings

Of the 68 active OGP member countries, four are rated as having repressed civic space: Colombia, Honduras, Liberia and Mexico. In these countries, human rights defenders and civil society members who criticise power holders risk surveillance, harassment, intimidation, imprisonment, injury and death. Twenty-one OGP countries are rated obstructed on the CIVICUS Monitor. An obstructed rating indicates conditions in which civic space is heavily contested by power holders, who impose a combination of legal and practical constraints on the full enjoyment of fundamental rights. Thirty-one OGP countries are rated narrowed and 12 are rated open on the CIVICUS Monitor.

When compared to all 134 countries² for which the CIVICUS Monitor currently has ratings, civic space within active OGP countries is noticeably better. The graph below illustrates that the share of active OGP countries in the CIVICUS Monitor's more open categories is higher than the global share. Similarly, there are fewer active OGP countries in the less open categories. While there are currently 16 countries rated as CLOSED on the CIVICUS Monitor, none are OGP countries.



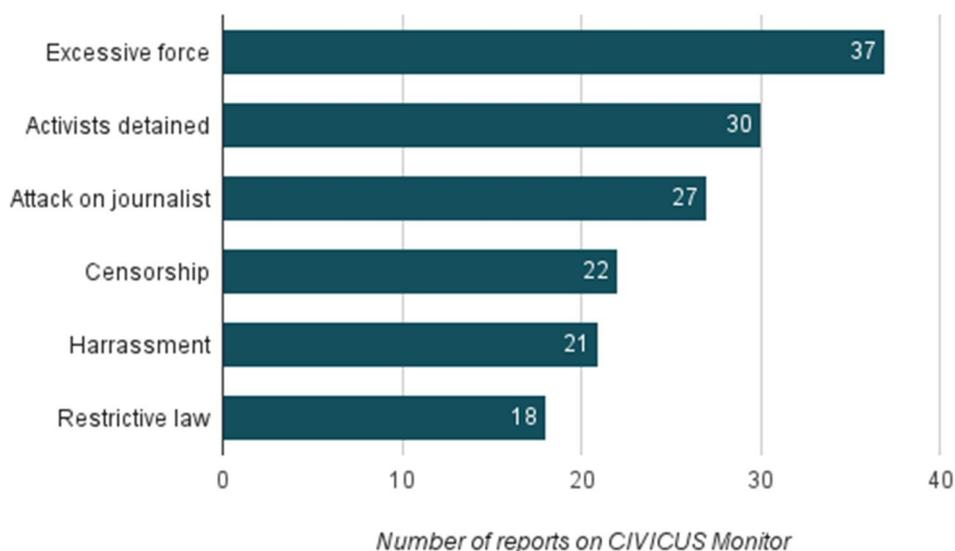
Violations

In addition to a comparative measure of civic space through ratings, the CIVICUS Monitor also offers a database of evidence on the tactics being used to close civic space in OGP countries. Our analysis of 135 CIVICUS Monitor [updates](#) covering 54 active OGP countries published between 14th June and 29th November shows that civic space is most frequently violated through the use of **excessive force** during protest, **detention of activists** and **attacks on**

² Ratings for remaining countries will be added between now and April 2017.

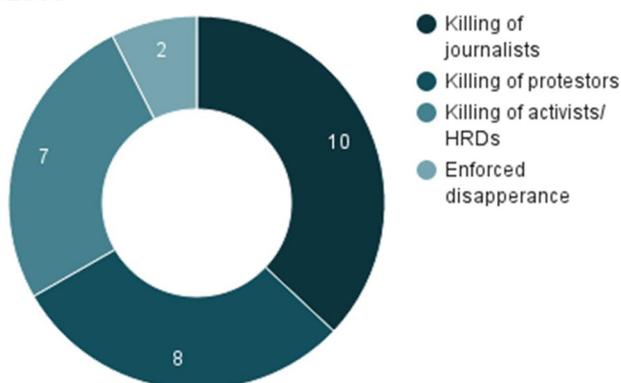
journalists.³ Other commonly reported violations include harassment of activists, censorship of the media and the proposal or imposition of legislative restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

Number of reports of civic space abuses in active OGP countries by category, Jun-Nov '16



In this period the CIVICUS Monitor also received a number of reports concerning the most serious kinds of civic space violations. Between June and November, the CIVICUS Monitor received 10 reports of the killing of journalists, eight reports on the killing of protestors and seven reports of the killing of civil society activists or human rights defenders in active OGP countries. The Monitor also recorded two cases of enforced disappearance in this period.

Numbers of reports of most serious civic space violations from active OGP countries Jun-Nov 2016



³ The date range here refers to the date of publication of the update on the Monitor. Some of the violations described here took place prior to June 2016.

A wide range of other violations categories were also recorded by the CIVICUS Monitor between June and November in active OGP countries. These include obstructions on social media, hate speech and public vilification of human rights defenders, the imposition of disproportionate time and place restrictions on protests and travel bans.

Bright spots

While there is little doubt that civic space is under serious pressure in many active OGP countries, as civil society continues to fight to defend its space. In some cases, civil society has also successfully pushed for improvements. The CIVICUS Monitor is tracking a number of improvements in civic space - including improvements to laws in [Armenia](#), the release of activists in [Guatemala](#) and progressive court rulings in [Costa Rica](#).

We are also tracking examples of the successful exercise of the rights to the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, including the successful conduct of [peaceful protests](#), for which we documented 50 reports between June and November. This reflects the reality that in the vast majority of cases peaceful protests in active OGP countries are well-policed and people are able to take to the streets to make their voices heard without being disrupted or attacked. The CIVICUS Monitor will continue to track these trends in the months ahead.

The following sections briefly analyse the three most common types of civic space violation recently reported to the CIVICUS Monitor.

Protest disruption through excessive force

Between 14th June and 29th October 2016, the CIVICUS Monitor recorded 37 separate cases when police employed excessive force to disrupt peaceful protests - the most common civic space violation recorded in active OGP countries. In the most extreme cases, police used live ammunition against unarmed and defenceless crowds. In [Mexico](#), police shot dead 10 and injured 100 during teachers' protests in Oaxaca; and [Nigeria](#), 17 pro-Biafran demonstrators were shot dead on 30 May; while in [Peru](#), one person died following police disruption of a protest against the Las Bambas copper mine.

Data on the CIVICUS Monitor shows that police are using excessive force against protesters who **criticise government decisions and policies or expose high level corruption** within the government. CIVICUS Monitor reports clearly show that some governments are intolerant of any public displays of dissent on the streets. Popular opposition to international agreements is also being met with violence, such as when police fired flares and tear gas at an anti-Trans Pacific Partnership protest in [Peru](#), injuring several protesters.

Many people are also being attacked when they protest to call for the state to do better at meeting their **social and economic needs**, including employment, social welfare payments and access to government services. In [Colombia](#), authorities used excessive force to disrupt protests of the Minga movement, which rejects the neoliberal economic model and calls for the creation of a more equitable society. Protests related to people's social and economic

needs have also been recently met with excessive force in other active OGP countries including Argentina, Cote d'Ivoire, Jordan, the Philippines and Sierra Leone.

Police in several countries have also used excessive force against protesters calling for action on **human rights abuses** committed by state or non-state actors. In [Honduras](#) for example, police violently attacked a group of indigenous people after they gathered outside the president's office to demand an investigation into the murder of Berta Cáceres, an environmental and indigenous people's rights activist.

The CIVICUS Monitor is also tracking a wave of teacher and student protests which is being met with excessive state force. Teacher and student protests calling for **educational reform or student demands** to be met are particularly common in active OGP countries in Latin America ([Chile](#), [Mexico](#) and [Peru](#)) and Africa ([Ghana](#), [Malawi](#) and [South Africa](#)). Typically protesters are occupying campuses and taking to the streets to make a range of demands, including better working conditions for teachers, reduced student fees and an end to corruption by university authorities.

CIVICUS views these peaceful assembly violations as extremely serious, and as a direct and deliberate attempt to stifle dissent and popular mobilisation. A forthcoming CIVICUS research study examines the factors influencing the sustainability of protest movements around the world. One of this study's main findings is that the use of excessive force by states is among the top structural factors likely to impede a protest movement's chances of being sustained. As stated by one protest leader:

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

Detention of activists

Between June and November, the CIVICUS Monitor published 30 updates from active OGP countries containing information about people detained because they tried to protest, organise or speak out. Analysis of the data shows that states frequently detain people in order to prevent them from **criticising or challenging state officials, policies or institutions**. Active OGP countries that have done this recently include [Macedonia](#), [South Africa](#) and the [USA](#). Often, arrests and detentions come as part of concerted efforts to suppress rising tides of anger and frustration at an ineffective, corrupt and authoritarian state. While governments sometimes arrest large numbers of critics during demonstrations, they also target key individuals who may be leaders of social movements, protest organisers or journalists covering protests.

Large numbers of people concerned with issues of **basic economic and social needs** are being arrested and detained in active OGP countries simply as a result of exercising their civic rights. Authorities detained people because they were making public calls for the state to meet their basic needs, including access to land, decent working conditions and greater social protection. We reported an example of this recently in [Jordan](#), when authorities arrested at least 22 people who protested to highlight high levels of unemployment. A handful of updates also recorded the arrest of activists working on **environmental activism**.

Journalist killings and attacks

Data on the CIVICUS Monitor shows that there are a wide variety of reasons why journalists are physically or verbally attacked, or killed. Many attacks take place while journalists are **reporting on protests**. In some cases, these attacks were perpetrated by security force officers attempting to prevent the journalist from photographing or recording the use of inappropriate policing tactics or excessive force during protests. Sometimes these attacks are highly targeted and perpetrated, despite the journalists wearing visible identification of their role.

At other times, journalists get caught up in untargeted violence against protests. Sometimes, as happened recently in the [Netherlands](#), the state is not responsible for civic space violations, rather an attack was perpetrated by protesters angered at a journalist's perceived political affiliation. In such cases the state has a duty to properly investigate and prosecute the individuals responsible.

Reporting on **political affairs** in general can, in some countries, be dangerous. CIVICUS Monitor reports show how, in active OGP countries as diverse as [Brazil](#), [Cote d'Ivoire](#), [Macedonia](#), and [Mexico](#), stating an opinion or reporting on political events can have serious consequences for journalists. The situation in Mexico is particularly grave, with rights groups documenting 16 attacks against the press in a four day period in June.

Similarly, those who publish articles in order to **expose government corruption or mismanagement** run a serious risk of being attacked. These reports often concern local media being attacked because of their reporting on wrongdoing in local municipalities or police stations.

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If you have questions about this analysis, or would like to find out more about the CIVICUS Monitor, please send an email to monitor@civicus.org.