



CIVIC PULSE SURVEYS:

JORDAN, POLAND, SOUTH AFRICA AND TAJIKISTAN

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS



DECEMBER 2015

CIVICUS

Who We Are

CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. Founded in 1993, CIVICUS strives to promote marginalised voices, especially from the Global South, and has members in countries throughout the world.

About Civic Pulse

In a rapidly changing world, we need simple, effective and reliable tools to track the frequent shifts in operating conditions for civil society. The Civic Pulse is an online survey, disseminated quarterly and designed to provide regular, customised and at-a-glance data on civic space. While the tool should certainly produce results of interest for researchers and academics, its use will be primarily for activists and civil society organisations themselves to make the case for improved conditions for civil society in their country and globally. The ultimate objective of the Civic Pulse is to present easily understood data, which will provide a basis for further investigation with deeper and more nuanced tools at the regional or country level. It should be viewed as a tool to direct further research, substantiate advocacy positions on shrinking civil society space or identify flashpoints for transformative citizen action. The Civic Pulse is one component of CIVICUS' new Civic Space Monitor (CSM) web platform due to be launched in September 2016.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM CIVIC PULSE SURVEYS OF CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS IN JORDAN, POLAND, SOUTH AFRICA AND TAJIKISTAN

December 2015

During November 2015, CIVICUS conducted four Civic Pulse online surveys in partnership with civil society groups in Jordan, Poland, South Africa and Tajikistan. The surveys were disseminated to panels of leading figures, representing a cross-section of civil society in each country. Participants in the survey were asked to rate conditions for civil society on the basis of a questionnaire that examines respect for fundamental freedoms, funding trends, and civil society's impact on policy making and volunteering. The survey tool collects both quantitative and qualitative data to develop a snapshot of conditions for civil society at the present moment. The Civic Pulse is one part of the development of a new set of tools at CIVICUS, which aim to track conditions for civil society around the world. Eventually, the intention is to produce better, more timely data that civil society can use to defend its space through fact-based advocacy from the local to the global levels.

This briefing paper provides an outline of both country findings and cross-country comparisons. Although it is vital that these results be validated through future Civic Pulse surveys with bigger sample sizes, initial findings demonstrate some interesting trends. The results clearly show that civil society leaders in all four countries share a common concern about their state's inability or unwillingness to protect them and their fundamental freedoms. This finding holds true in states – like Poland and South Africa – where civil society rates overall conditions as above average, as well as in states – like Jordan and Tajikistan – where civil society conditions are rated average or below average. This finding aligns with CIVICUS' recent research that suggests although protective laws may be in place, the lived experiences of activists points to the conclusion that more and more states are taking a combative or confrontational approach to dealing with civil society.

At an overall level, the Civic Pulse shows that civic space is healthiest in Poland, with Jordan ranking second and South Africa third of the four countries polled. Tajik civil society rates their conditions worst of the four. In terms of individual civic space components, civil society in each country points to a different set of particular challenges. For instance, in Poland and South Africa leaders rate freedom of expression as the weakest aspect, while civil society in Tajikistan holds the

view that freedom of assembly is their country's biggest civic space challenge. Jordanian respondents rate each of the three civic space components almost identically.

Civil society leaders in all four countries rate conditions for fundraising as below average. In fact, the average score across all four countries is 3.3 out of 10, underlining the depth of the struggle faced by civil society to secure resources needed for their survival. Respondents were slightly more positive about the levels of volunteering in their country. With funding on the decline, civil society naturally relies more and more on the willingness of people to volunteer their time and effort to a cause. It is worrying therefore that only Jordanian respondents rate conditions for volunteering as above average.

The survey also asked civil society to indicate the likelihood of transformative citizen action in their countries over the year ahead. While civil society in Tajikistan believe that there is little prospect of widespread mobilisation over the year ahead, Polish and South African civil society think transformative action by citizens to be more likely in the next year. Interestingly, results show that civil society is, on average, less confident about their own participation in mass mobilisation, even if they see the possibility of such transformative action as relatively high.

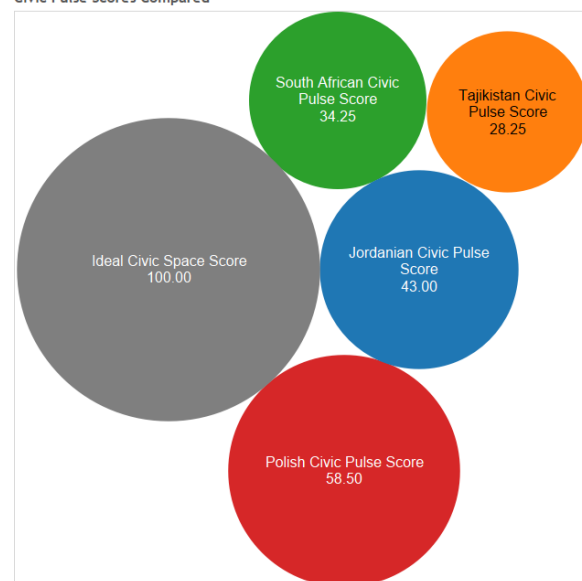
Comparative data and further details on the findings from each country can be found on the following pages.

COMPARATIVE DATA

This round of Civic Pulse surveys targets four very different contexts. Throughout the post-Soviet era, civil society in Tajikistan has encountered routine violations of fundamental freedoms; Jordanian CSOs, too, face many restrictions in a country surrounded by conflict for many decades; since the end of Apartheid, South African CSOs have operated in relative freedom, despite recent threats to free expression and assembly; and Poland remains a largely free society, albeit in the face of a growing trend of intolerance and polarisation across Europe. Cognisant of this diversity of country contexts and the many factors influencing responses to online surveys, this Civic Pulse analyses some comparisons across countries and reflects differing civil society opinions gathered at the same point in time.

Considerable care was taken to mitigate sampling errors (using a quota sampling approach) and to do justice to the spectrum and diversity of civil society in the four selected pilot countries. We must note however that these are some of the very first Civic Pulse surveys to be conducted. As awareness of the Civic Pulse grows in the coming months, we expect sample sizes to grow and as a result findings will be more reliable.

Civic Pulse Scores Compared

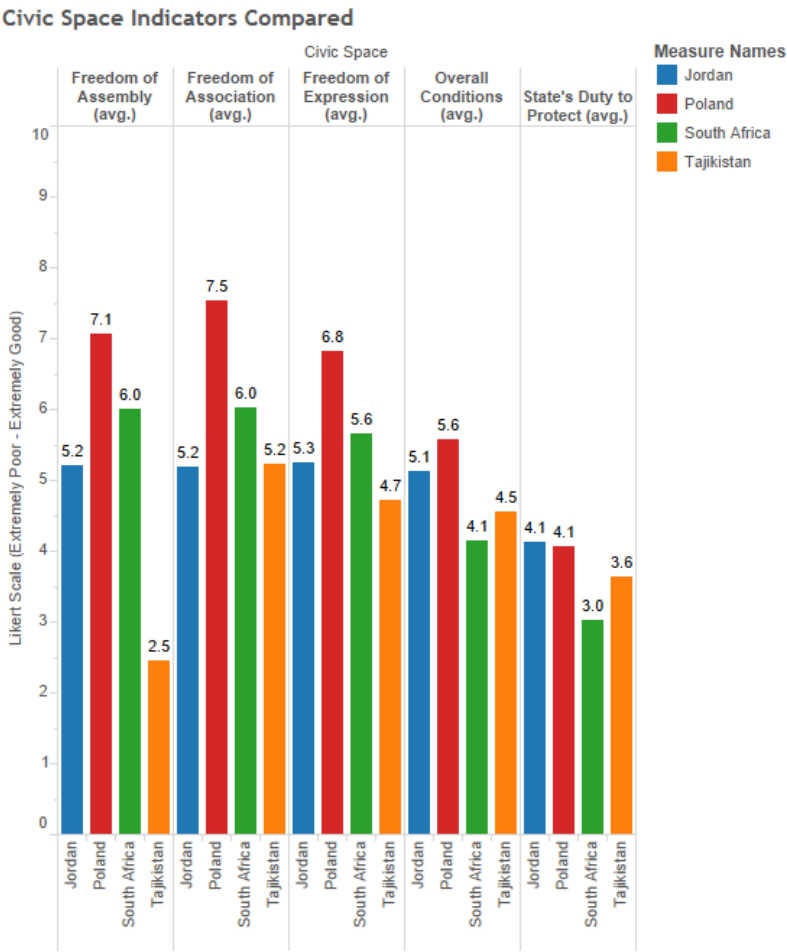


Given that there is no universal database containing every civil society organisation in existence, the results contained within this paper are considered to be purposive – that is reflective of the views of those who participated in the Civic Pulse. They cannot yet be held up as fully representative of civil society in any particular country. The Civic Pulse therefore, only offers results that are *illustrative* of the views of identified civil society leaders and are in no way representative of civil society writ large.

The graphic on the left shows how respondents to the Civic Pulse can help to build a picture of how civic space conditions in one country compare to others. When placed against the “ideal” civic space score, we can begin to see the how poor perceptions of civic space are, based on an overall Civic Pulse Score. (Please see the last page

of this briefing paper for information on how this score is calculated.) In this example, Poland scores the highest with a score of 58.40 and Tajikistan the lowest, with a score of 28.25. In our selection of pilot countries only one managed to get over half marks (Poland), with Jordan scoring 43 and South Africa scoring 34.25. In all cases, scores were dragged down by the poor scores given in all countries when respondents were asked to rate performance of the state against its duty to protect civil society.

Individual civic space scores compared



When the four countries are compared against the five indicators of civic space used in the Civic Pulse (*Fig 1*), we begin to see clear trends emerging. Overwhelmingly, we note that the “State’s duty to protect” civil society scores particularly poorly across all pilot countries. Indeed, no country achieved a score of 5 (average protection) or above. In all countries assessed, even in democratic Poland, civil society does not feel it is being offered adequate protection from external aggression, which is necessary in order for civil society to function effectively.

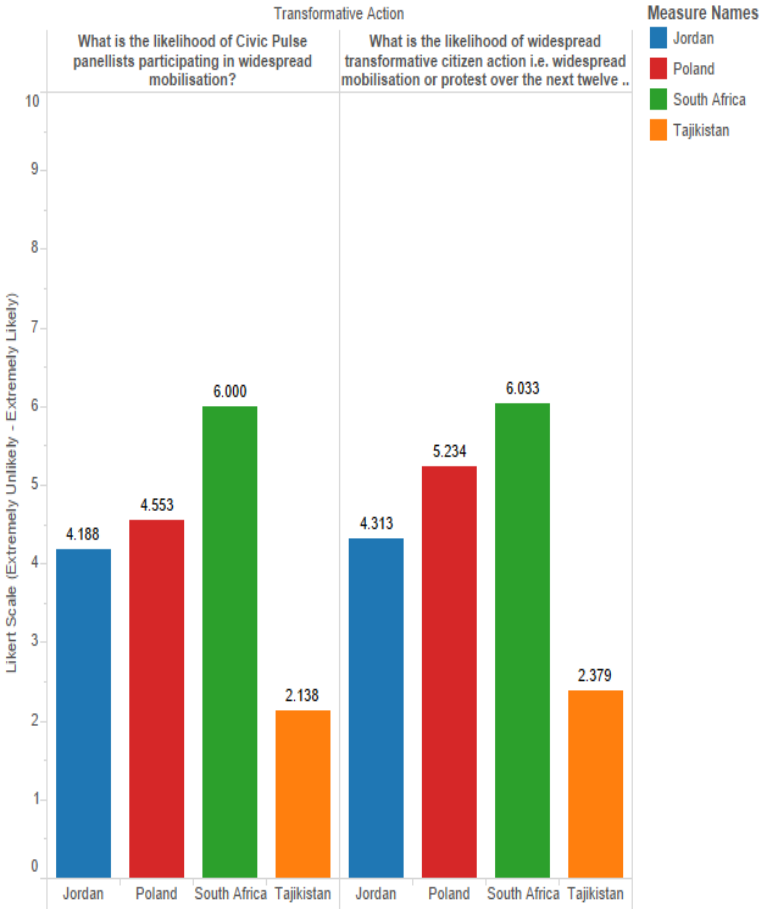
This comparison also highlights that, almost without exception, civil society rates free association – in other words the ability for groups to be formed and operate free from interference - as the most protected civic space component. By comparison, and although the difference is not substantial, civil society believes that respect for free expression and peaceful assembly are less respected in each of the four countries polled.

The highest score for any indicator in any country is respect for freedom of association in Poland (7.5 out of 10), indicating that even in the best cases, there is significant room for improvement on the civic space front.

Likelihood of Transformative Citizen Action

Fig 2 illustrates the scores for the likelihood of transformative citizen action in the next 12 months and assesses how likely survey respondents were to take part in

Likelihood of Transformative Citizen Action Over the Next 12 months Compared with the Likelihood of Civic Pulse Panellists Participating in Transformation Action



such action. We can see that both Poland and South Africa score above 5. In other words, civil society in those countries believe that transformative action is at least somewhat likely over the year ahead. These scores are in stark contrast to the opinions of civil society leaders in Tajikistan, who rate the possibility of transformative citizen action as extremely low.

While it is not possible to say with certainty what lies behind these scores, it is conceivable that Polish and South African civil society leaders are influenced by the fact that they have their roots in transformative action and both countries have a culture of protest and mass mobilisation. On the other hand, it is possible that Tajik civil society is influenced by a very different set of historical factors and the reality of entrenched state repression over many years.

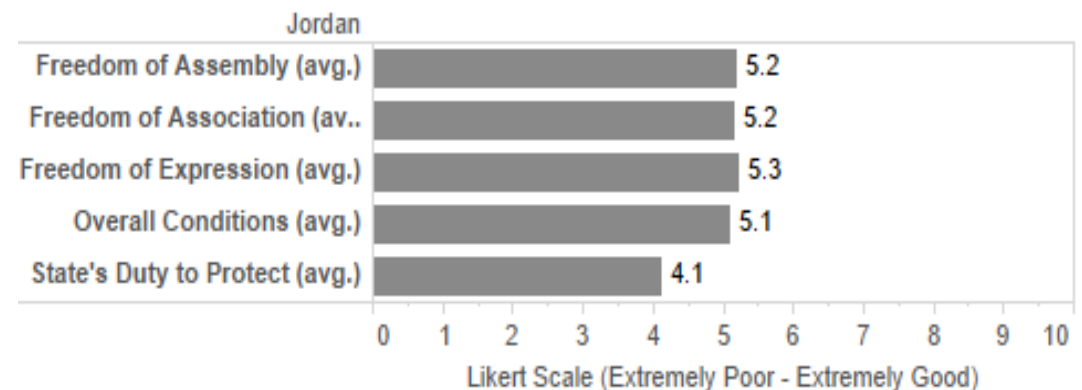
When the prediction of “widespread transformative citizen action” is compared to the “likelihood of Civic Pulse panelists participating in widespread transformative action” we note that a similar pattern emerges, with Polish, South African and Jordanian civil society much more likely to take part in mobilisation than their Tajik counterparts.

JORDAN

Civic Pulse results in Jordan demonstrate that civil society leaders are most concerned about the failure of the state to fulfill its duty to protect the sector. Survey respondents rank respect for the freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression at roughly average (or 5 on the Likert scale), however they rate the willingness of the state to protect the sector and investigate abuses a full point lower, at just over 4. Almost 9 in 10 Jordanian respondents gave this indicator either a score of average or below average, indicating a general impression that the Jordanian state does not offer adequate protection to civil society.

The survey also asked participants to gauge how likely they felt it was that transformative citizen action (for instance a repeat of the mass citizen uprisings witnessed across the Middle East in 2010 and 2011) would occur in Jordan in the next 12 months. Their responses indicate that transformative action in Jordan is just below “somewhat likely”. Half of respondents felt that transformative action was between “somewhat likely” and 8 on the Likert scale. This means 5 out of 10 respondents can foresee a mobilisation of some kind on the horizon, however the likelihood is not imminent.

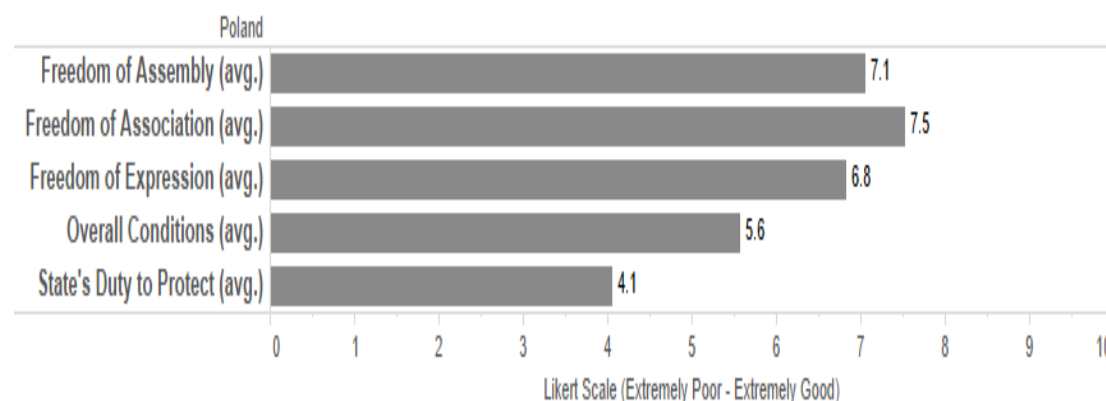
Civic Space Indicators



POLAND

Views from civil society leaders reflect that civic space in Poland is the healthiest of the four countries polled. Although the Civic Pulse Score for Poland (58.5) is higher than any other country in this round of surveys, it is still far from reflective of an ideal civic space. Indeed, the survey results place overall conditions for civil society in Poland as just above average and, in line with responses from all other countries, serious concerns are raised about the state's willingness to protect the sector.

Civic Space Indicators



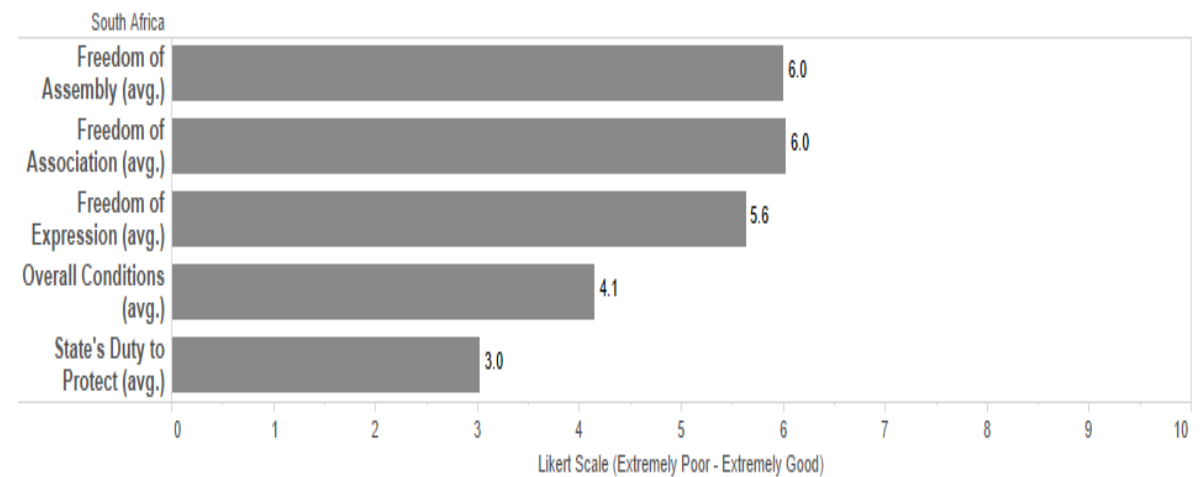
Regarding the core components of civic pulse – association, peaceful assembly and expression – it is evident that Polish CSOs enjoy considerable freedom: for instance over 95% of respondents rated the ability to freely associate as average or above. This implies that there is an overwhelmingly positive perception among civil society leaders about the ability to associate with one another and set up groups to advance their shared interests. Most civil society leaders also rate their ability to freely assemble as above average, while conditions for free expression are rated slightly lower. These positive aspects of Polish civic space are however marred by a poor perception of the state's duty to protect the sector. 76.06% of Polish Civic Pulse respondents rated the performance of the state in its duty to protect to civil society as average or below.

Interestingly, civil society believes that the potential for transformative citizen action in Poland is slightly above “somewhat likely.” 8 out of 10 of respondents to the Civic Pulse survey rated the likelihood of transformative action between “somewhat likely and extremely likely”.

SOUTH AFRICA

This survey was conducted following a turbulent three months for civil society in South Africa, when cities across the country witnessed mass mobilisation related to corruption, inequality and access to education. Much like Poland, relatively strong scores for respect for fundamental freedoms are undermined by a perception that the state is in dereliction of its duty to protect civil society. Almost 90% of South African Civic Pulse respondents feel that the state's efforts to investigate abuses against the sector are between average and very poor. This element drags down South Africa's overall Civic Pulse score for this quarter, which stands at just 34.3.

Civic Space Indicators



Of the four countries polled, civil society indicates that South Africa is most likely to witness transformative citizen action over the year ahead. Since June 2015, when the Civic Pulse was first run in South Africa, scores for the likelihood of transformative citizen action have remained consistently high. In this quarter, 83.33% of respondents to the Civic Pulse rate the likelihood of transformative citizen action between “somewhat likely and extremely likely”.

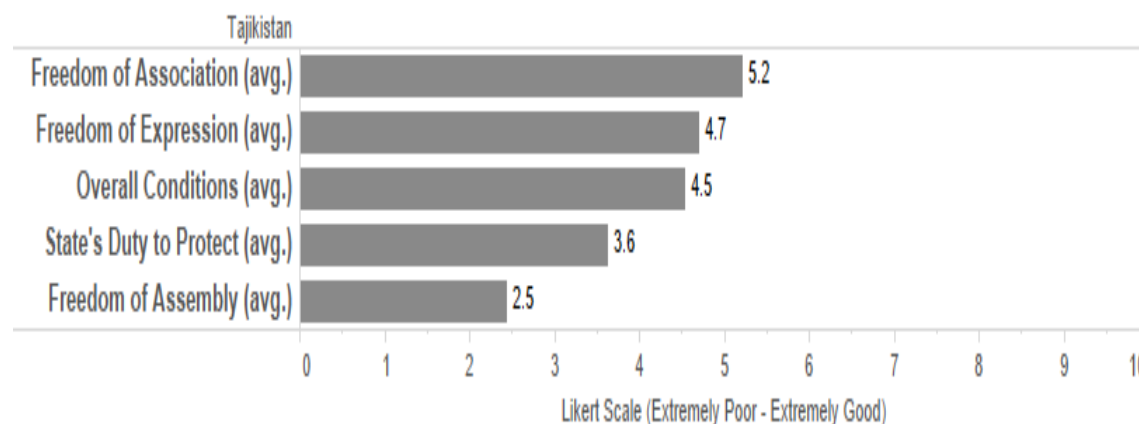
TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan ranks worst of the four countries, with an overall Civic Pulse score of just 28.3. Tajik respondents report that, while overall conditions for civil society in Tajikistan are below average, respect for the freedom of peaceful assembly is under particular pressure. Almost half (or 45.16%) of respondents rate the ability to gather peacefully in public as very poor. This perception is a cause for serious concern and will be tracked closely in the next round of Civic Pulse surveys in early 2016.

Of the main components of civic space, Tajik Civil Society leaders believe that only the freedom of association is respected to an above-average degree. Like all other countries included in this survey, civil society leaders in Tajikistan also do not feel protected by the state. Over 80% of Tajik Civic Pulse panelists believe that the performance of the state in the exercise of its duty to protect is between average and very poor.

Despite the evident fragility of civic space in Tajikistan, civil society leaders do not foresee a strong possibility of mass mobilisation over the next 12 months. In fact, only 34% of respondents to the survey felt that transformative citizen action was “somewhat likely” over the next 12 months. Respondents in Jordan, Poland and South Africa all see a much higher possibility of transformative citizen action over the next year, perhaps pointing to a situation in which constrained space for activism in Tajikistan is impeding the possibility for national-scale organising.

Civic Space Indicators



BACKGROUND NOTE

Context

In a globalised world driven by an unprecedented ability to share information, the reality of closing civic space is hard to hide. In order to provide a complete and current description of a constantly shifting terrain, we need robust tools that allow us to collect, curate and communicate the many strands of information about closing civic space. Of course, annually-updated indexes of democracy do exist, the media is filled with stories about disrupted protests and imprisoned journalists and local civil society organisations do a great job of calling attention to abuse in their own countries. Yet these sources of information are not triangulated, the voices of local groups are often missing from prominent international indexes and information can be months, if not years, out of date. Civil society advocacy at the global level is thus less effective than it should be.

What is Civic Space?

Civic Space refers to the basic conditions necessary for citizens and civil society organisations to play a full part in the democratic life of their countries. It is underpinned by respect for three basic freedoms: the freedom to form organisations or ‘associate’; the freedom of peacefully assemble through marches, demonstrations and other peaceful activities in public; and the freedom to express ideas and options and receive and impart information without interference. While laws may protect these freedoms in practice, their exercise in practice is underpinned by the duty of the state to protect civil society space in practice. This means ensuring laws protecting civil society are upheld and that those violating these rules are investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned.

What is the Civic Pulse?

The Civic Pulse is a quarterly survey deployed to carefully selected “key leaders” in civil society. In conjunction with country partners, CIVICUS identifies between 300 and 500 prominent civil society leaders, and ask them to share their opinions through an online survey distributed every three months. The results presented in this paper are based on initial samples from surveys deployed between November the 6th - 27th 2015 in four pilot countries. CIVICUS intends to grow those samples over time, as panels come to reflect the diversity of civil society in each country. This round of surveys was made possible through close collaboration with

civil society partners in pilot countries. In particular, CIVICUS wishes to thank the following organisations: Partners Jordan, Ognólnopolska Federacja Organizacja Pozarządowych (OFOP) and Tajikistan National Association for NGOs.

Civic Space Monitor

The Civic Pulse is one participatory component that will be integrated into the forthcoming Civic Space Monitor (CSM). The CSM is an [online platform](#) that aggregates a variety of data sources to analyse civic space and present a final rating for each country. Civic space conditions in each country are described through the combination of eight discrete data elements. Each data element contributes both to the narrative information drafted by CIVICUS that accompanies each country page, as well as the CSM rating.

Note on Methodology - how are the Civic Pulse scores calculated?

The methodology views four main questions as key components of civic space (overall conditions, freedom of association, assembly & expression) that are underpinned by the State's duty to protect civil society. The Civic Pulse Score is calculated by scores for the core elements of civic space and the state's duty to protect the sector. The following example shows how the score is calculated:

1st Tier	Raw Survey Average/10	Rebased Average/100
Overall Conditions	5.9	59
Association	6	60
Expression	6.1	61
Assembly	5.4	54
1 st Tier Average		58.5

2nd Tier (Balance)	Raw Average	Rebased Average +/-50
State's Duty to Protect	4.2	-8

Final Civic Pulse Score	Score
1st Tier Average	58.5
Balance	-8
Final Civic Pulse Score	50.5

For more information on the Civic Pulse, please email civicpulse@civicus.org.



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