



CIVICUS LENS
PERSPECTIVES FOR A CHANGING WORLD

SEPTEMBER 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome to the latest edition of the CIVICUS Lens newsletter, from CIVICUS, the global civil society alliance. This edition showcases a selection of our analysis pieces and interviews with civil society activists and leaders published in September. Many of them sound the alarm about reversals in democratic freedoms and human rights – including Georgia’s anti-LGBTQI+ law, the crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong and repression of democratic demands in Togo. This month we also showcase civil society efforts in the global arena – to try to improve a potentially dangerous Cybercrime Convention, demand a better Human Rights Council and shape a Pact for the Future. We’d love to hear your feedback. Please [visit our website](#) to see our latest stories and contact us at research@civicus.org if you think there’s something we should cover. You’re also welcome to share this newsletter with your contacts and encourage them to [subscribe](#). Thank you!

ARTICLES



● GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

UN CYBERCRIME CONVENTION: A TROUBLING NEW TREATY

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On 9 August, United Nations member states reached agreement on a global Cybercrime Convention. The convention was originally proposed by authoritarian Russia and co-sponsored by some of the world's most repressive states, clearly intent on using it to stifle dissent. Civil society didn't want the treaty, but as the process went on worked hard to try to limit its scope and introduce human rights safeguards. Some of the worst ideas states proposed have been rejected, but the convention could still have negative impacts. Civil society will keep working at every level to try to stop repressive states using cybercrime legislation to restrict human rights.

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● INCLUSION

GEORGIA'S DANGEROUS ANTI-LGBTQI+ LAW

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Georgia's parliament recently approved a law making it virtually impossible for LGBTQI+ people and organisations to take public action. This follows a law it passed earlier this year forcing organisations that receive international funding to declare they are agents of foreign interests. Both laws closely mimic those previously introduced in Russia; Georgia enjoys improving relations with Russia despite claiming it wants to join the European Union. The new laws have been introduced ahead of an election in October, with the ruling party clearly intent on scapegoating LGBTQI+ people and closing the space for scrutiny.

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● FREEDOMS

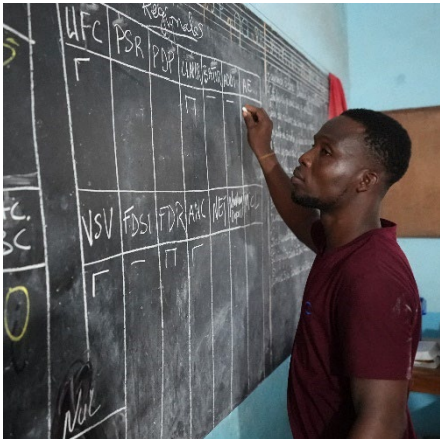
HONG KONG'S CRACKDOWN INTENSIFIES

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Hong Kong's crackdown on what was once a healthy environment for dissent continues. Recent measures include a strengthened national security law to intensify criminalisation of civil society, and a new school curriculum to indoctrinate students into loyalty towards China. Activists have had to choose between jail and exile, but even then they are subject to transnational repression. The growing use of the judicial system to jail dissidents is now putting the spotlight on the role of foreign judges, once a vital check on power but now accused of becoming part of the repressive machinery.

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● DEMOCRACY

TOGO: DEMANDS FOR DEMOCRACY REPPRESSED-AGAIN

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Political tensions in Togo have increased following recent constitutional changes. Under a newly established parliamentary system, a President of the Council of Ministers will be elected by parliament rather than popular vote. The changes will enable Faure Gnassingbé to stay in power. He's ruled Togo as president since 2005, when he took over from his father, who'd seized control in a 1967 coup. The government has banned protests against the constitutional changes, disrupted civil society gatherings, arbitrarily arrested and detained protesters and criminalised journalists for covering the dissent. Regional and international institutions must stop looking the other way.

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● GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

UN SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE: TOO MUCH AT STAKE TO WASTE



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The world is undergoing a cascade of crises, and the upcoming United Nations (UN) Summit of the Future offers a crucial opportunity to address them through increased civil society participation in decision-making. But despite civil society's efforts to push for significant change, the draft Pact for the Future to be adopted at the Summit lacks the ambition needed to drive change and ensure accountability for commitments. The UN's crucial human rights pillar remains underfunded. The UN the world needs - one that puts people and human rights at its centre - will only be achieved if it opens up more spaces for civil society influence and citizen participation.

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INTERVIEWS



Madeleine Sinclair

'We need competitive elections so only truly committed states are elected to the UN Human Rights Council'



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Andreas Kranebitter | AUSTRIA

'Politics should be about changing the conditions that cause racism, not exploiting them'



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Emin Huseynov | AZERBAIJAN

'We first thought hosting COP29 could ease the pressure on local civil society – but we were wrong'

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Juressa Lee | NEW ZEALAND

'We urge governments not to authorise, sponsor or subsidise deep-sea mining'

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ACDD | NICARAGUA

'Civic space is closed and prospects for change are limited, if not non-existent'

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