## Civic Space Brief

## Civic Space and Counter-Terrorism

Global Counter Terrorism Strategy:

> Encourages Member States and the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities to continue engagement with civil society in accordance with their mandates, to support the role of civil society actors in the design, implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, and encourages Member States to create and maintain an enabling environment for civil society, including a legal framework that protects and promotes human rights, in accordance with international human rights law.

Through their participation as part of the democratic process, civil society actors make vital contributions to efforts, at all levels, from local to global, to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law provide for meaningful, inclusive, and safe civil society participation in public affairs, freedoms of opinion and expression, of association and peaceful assembly, and privacy.

COUNTER-TERRORISM
MEASURES HAVE
NEGATIVELY IMPACTED
CIVIC SPACE ONLINE AND
OFFLINE. THEY:

- Wrongfully label and criminalize civil society as "terrorists", "extremists", "foreign agents", "sympathizers of terrorist groups" or "associated with terrorism".
- Impose burdensome registration requirements, restrictions on funding, travel bans, revocation of citizenship, deportation and sanctions.
- Lead to undue interference based on allegedly "terrorism-related" content.
- Unduly invade privacy, including through targeted surveillance.
- Restrict peaceful assemblies and criminalize peaceful protesters.
- Lead to harassment, physical attacks, arrests and killings of civil society actors.
- Are used to cover up **reprisals** and intimidation for cooperation with regional and international organizations, including the UN.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS
AND HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS CONTRIBUTE
TO PREVENTING AND
COUNTERING
TERRORISM ONLINE
AND OFFLINE. THEY:

- Channel grievances from grassroots levels and help identify priorities for policy making.
- Provide expertise and lead initiatives to address the drivers of terrorism and violent extremism.
- Enhance dialogue and act as bridge between authorities and different communities, including those that are historically divided, to build trust and promote mutual respect.
- Promote accountability for human rights violations and assist with access to justice for victims of terrorism, including victims of sexual and gender-based violence.









## COUNTER-TERRORISM WILL BE EFFECTIVE IF BASED ON HUMAN RIGHTS

- Maximize access of civil society to UN forums and discussions as well as to human rights mechanisms, and refrain from acts of intimidation and reprisals against civil society for their cooperation with the UN and other bodies.
- Adopt precise and narrow definitions of terrorism and related crimes to avoid illegal prosecution and criminalization of civil society.
- Create an enabling environment online and offline for civil society that guarantees freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and privacy.

Involve civil society
when assessing
the effectiveness of
counter-terrorism
strategies, and
provide timely,
accurate
and
accessible
information on
possible adverse
impacts of

proposed measures on civil society. TO ENSURE CIVIL SOCIETY
CAN EFFECTIVELY AND
SAFELY CONTRIBUTE TO
COUNTERING TERRORISM,
STATES MUST:



Ensure that the use of new and emerging technologies in counter-terrorism does not negatively impact civil society and fully comply with international human rights law.





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Ensure meaningful, inclusive, and safe participation of civil society, including women and youth, in shaping counterterrorism laws, policies, strategies at all levels, from local to global. Ensure that national emergency and other measures are strictly limited, in accordance with the law, necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory.

