THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Our 2018-2019 annual report aims to highlight the progress civil society is making to counter restrictions and expand civic space. The legal environment for civil society around the world remains challenging. There are, however, positive trends. In the last year, with ICNL’s support, 29 initiatives were passed that now better conform to international standards, and 12 restrictive initiatives were defeated.

Over the past year, we have worked with our partners to strengthen their efforts to protect and nurture civic space, despite great challenges. From successful efforts to change restrictive initiatives to progress taking root in challenging places, we have supported our partners’ efforts to navigate an ever-changing legal environment. ICNL is proud to partner with organizations across the world to help protect and, where possible, expand civic space. We’re honored to share a handful of these stories in our annual report.

THANK YOU

Our work would not be possible without the dedication and commitment of ICNL’s staff, partners, Board, Advisory Council, and donors. The impact described in this report is the result of your time, skill, and support. Thank you!

ASSOCIATION & ASSEMBLY IN THE DIGITAL ERA

GLOBALLY

PARTNERSHIPS IN DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENTS

IN ETHIOPIA

COALITIONS FOR CHANGE

IN NEPAL

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

IN PERU

RAPID RESPONSE

IN JORDAN

MONITORING FOR IMPACT

IN CAMBODIA

USING DATA FOR ACTION

IN THE UNITED STATES
International law protects assembly and association rights, whether exercised in person, through technologies of today, or through technologies of the future.

UN Special Rapporteur Clement Voule

ASSOCIATION & ASSEMBLY IN THE DIGITAL ERA

GLOBALLY

Cybercrime laws, internet shutdowns, and social media taxes are a few tactics governments use to restrict fundamental freedoms online. In his June 2019 report, UN Special Rapporteur Clement Voule explains how these practices violate the rights to association and assembly. Technology has become integral to the exercise of these rights: it serves as both a tool for collective action and philanthropy, as well as a space to assemble and associate, especially where groups face severe restrictions to operating in physical places.

ICNL worked closely with the UNSR to explore these issues. We conducted research and facilitated consultations with civil society in Africa and Latin America, deepening the UNSR’s understanding of the sector’s needs. The meetings examined opportunities and challenges around digital civic space.

The report found that states are increasingly restricting digital civic space and that technology companies act as gatekeepers to the exercise of rights online. Activists are at risk of arbitrary content removal and account suspension due to company policies; the increasing use of algorithmic systems to enforce policies compounds challenges.

Fortunately, there is a framework to safeguard digital spaces. As UNSR Voule explains in the report, international law protects these rights, “whether exercised in person, through technologies of today, or through technologies of the future.” Existing norms and principles should dictate state conduct, as well as guide technology companies’ behavior.

ICNL’s research and the conversations with civil society allowed the report to reflect the sector’s experiences, as well as enabled the sector to contribute directly to international standard-setting on emerging trends that impact their work.
PARTNERSHIPS IN DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENTS

IN ETHIOPIA

The adoption of the new Proclamation on civil society organizations in February 2019 marked a major turning point for Ethiopia.

It replaced the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation, which was considered one of the most restrictive civil society laws in the region. The law severely weakened civil society’s ability to function. Many Ethiopian organizations, especially those dedicated to sustainable development, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, were forced to operate with minimal international support or abandon some activities entirely.

Within two years of its passage, the number of registered organizations in Ethiopia fell by nearly 46%.

During this time, ICNL worked with Ethiopian civil society actors, supporting their efforts to navigate the restrictive legal environment and advocate for change. One long-time partner is civil society law expert Mr. Debebe Hailegebriel, who regularly contributed to ICNL publications and academic research on laws affecting Ethiopian civil society, particularly the troublesome 2009 law.

In 2018, a new administration embarked on a series of legal reforms, aiming to build a more enabling environment for civil society.

Hailegebriel was appointed by the government to chair the working group tasked with drafting a new Charities and Societies Proclamation and was able to put his research into action.

ICNL’s long-standing relationships with our partners have contributed to a new Proclamation that will enable Ethiopia’s civil society to start on a new path of growth. If properly implemented, it will create an environment for a flourishing civil society to protect rights and address development challenges.

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

The working group had the tools they needed to write a new, progressive law. They used the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa – a set of ground-breaking standards produced by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights with ICNL’s support – as well as ICNL legal analyses and comments.

The comments also informed local civil society organizations’ advocacy efforts throughout the process, including their submissions to parliament during public hearings on the bill.

By nurturing a long-term relationship with Ethiopian civil society, ICNL was able to supply quick, relevant, and actionable support.
COALITIONS FOR CHANGE

IN NEPAL

In 2018, the Government of Nepal presented a draft National Integrity Policy. The policy, if adopted, would have restricted the functioning, operations, and activities of local and international civil society organizations.

In response, the sector quickly came together and launched an advocacy effort at the domestic and international levels. ICNL supported our partners by producing a rapid-response, non-partisan assessment as well as a more in-depth legal analysis of the policy. Our partners included the largest network of Nepali civil society organizations and a coalition of international organizations working in Nepal. Using ICNL's analysis, these groups worked together for the first time to address the restrictive draft policy.

The joint effort led to success: the government withdrew the policy within weeks of its release. ICNL provided our partners with the tools they needed to prevent restrictions on the rights to freedom of association and expression. This shows how quick, coordinated efforts from a broad coalition of organizations can defeat restrictive legislation.

In Nepal, ICNL provided our partners the tools they needed to prevent restrictions on the rights to freedom of association and expression.
In 2015, Peru introduced a new registration renewal process for organizations that received international funding. The process was burdensome and unclear, resulting in delays that blocked civil society organizations from delivering critical services to people in need.

In 2017, the Peruvian umbrella organization, Asociacion Nacional de Centros (ANC), reached out to ICNL to help address this restrictive rule. We worked with ANC and their network of more than 80 civil society organizations. ICNL provided training on international standards on freedom of association; provided research to show how the rule harmed vulnerable populations; and gathered data demonstrating how the rule went against Peru’s international obligations. We also worked with our partners to build a more collaborative relationship with the government by supporting effective, data-lead dialogue.

As a result of civil society’s efforts, in December 2018, the government withdrew the rule and introduced a new registration process. They not only eliminated the burdensome requirements but also established simplified measures for oversight and registration. The new measures were a result of a months-long collaboration between civil society and the government.

Throughout this process, local civil society demonstrated they could be an effective partner, working with the government to address shared challenges and improve people’s lives.

The government’s regulatory entity is now more willing to collaborate with the sector. ANC and its network are currently planning to convene government agencies to address other challenging regulations that impact the legal enabling environment for civil society.
Under Jordan’s new law, activities like ‘spreading rumors’ and posting ‘offensive content’ were deemed illegal but lacked clear definitions.

In October 2018, the Government of Jordan proposed restrictive amendments to their already draconian cybercrimes law. The amendments criminalized almost any use of the internet to connect with other people. Activities like ‘spreading rumors’ and posting ‘offensive content’ were deemed illegal but lacked clear definitions. Being accused of sharing broadly defined content like ‘hate speech’ or ‘fake news,’ even via a private message, could be cause for pretrial detainment. Activists and opposition leaders feared being targeted, and possibly detained, based on vague charges that required little proof.

ICNL quickly shared non-partisan research and analysis with civil society organizations, government officials, and the international community. Our analysis highlighted how the draft amendments violated international law, as well as the negative practical impact on Jordanian citizens: detention for baseless accusations, the violation of privacy, and chilling the freedom of expression.

Our partners used this analysis to speak out against the proposed amendments, launching a campaign to raise awareness of the negative impact they would have. Furthermore, ICNL participated in a hearing with the international community and members of parliament that brought global attention to the severity of these amendments.

The quick reaction proved successful. First, the government withdrew the draft in December 2018 and submitted a new, albeit still problematic, version to Parliament. Second, the updated draft amendments were rejected by the lower house of Parliament and tabled by the upper house.
MONITORING FOR IMPACT

IN CAMBODIA

In October of 2017, months before Cambodia’s national elections, the government released a new rule requiring prior permission from any civil society or nonprofit organization wishing to hold a public event.

The new rule effectively allowed authorities to prohibit an event without any justification or avenue to appeal. As a result, the government was able to limit the freedom of association significantly. Authorities used the new rule to prevent communities and civil society organizations from holding meetings, conducting training on political participation, and organizing voter registration drives.

The Fundamental Freedom Monitoring Project (FFMP) is a multi-year project that examines the extent to which the freedoms of association, expression, and assembly are exercised in Cambodia. Its main goals are to report on fundamental freedoms in the country and strengthen local advocacy efforts with compelling data.

In September of 2018, the FFMP published its Second Annual Report. The report systematically and objectively documented events that were prohibited or shut down based on the new rule. Local organizations used this data to push back at the local, national, and international levels.

In October 2018, these efforts succeeded. The Cambodian government repealed the prior-permission requirement. With this rule no longer in effect, organizations are better able to do their work without undue interference. The FFMP has proven to be a key tool for Cambodian civil society, giving them data to strengthen their work towards an improved legal environment.

The report provided an evidence base which strengthened our efforts to repeal Cambodia’s rule requiring prior permission for assemblies...The findings formed the basis of our advocacy. Other Cambodian civil society organizations and international stakeholders also used the data to advocate for the repeal of this rule.

Ms. Chak Sopheap, Executive Director of the Cambodia Center for Human Rights, the main FFMP implementing partner
By providing timely information to the public and building strong alliances, ICNL is helping to ensure that Americans continue to enjoy the right to peaceful assembly.

USING DATA FOR ACTION

IN THE UNITED STATES

ICNL started the U.S. Protest Law Tracker in 2017 to monitor a wave of anti-protest legislation that undermines people’s freedom of assembly.

For example, several bills introduced in the wake of street protests by the Black Lives Matter movement impose harsh penalties on protesters who block traffic. Other bills introduced after the Dakota Access Pipeline protests create severe new criminal sanctions for activists who trespass during a protest around oil and gas pipelines or for activists who plan protests where such trespass occurs.

Since November 2016, we have tracked over 100 restrictive bills introduced at the local and federal level—40 of them introduced in the first half of 2019 alone.

The tracker has become a key source of timely information for activists and journalists. ICNL has been widely cited in the media, from the St. Louis Dispatch to NPR and Politico. Local advocates have called the Tracker a valuable resource in their efforts to protect the right to protest.

ICNL also works with a broad coalition of partner organizations to educate the public and policymakers about specific anti-protest bills. As a result of these efforts, many bills have been stopped or slowed.

In early 2019 the coalition worked with a group of local civic leaders in Illinois to challenge a bill that would have made it a felony, punishable by three years in jail, to trespass during a protest near oil and gas pipelines. Equipped with ICNL’s analysis, the local groups convinced lawmakers to table the bill.

By providing timely information to the public and building strong alliances, ICNL is helping to ensure that Americans continue to enjoy the right to peaceful assembly.
This year ICNL launched Civic Space 2040, a futurist initiative to craft a positive vision for civic space and map strategies to make it a reality. The meeting gathered thought leaders, experts, and activists from around the world in the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center in Italy. The group explored trends that will radically transform the future, such as digital technology and climate change, and discussed ways in which these will affect civic space. Participants identified the following priorities:

**PARTICIPATION IN TECH GOVERNANCE**
Civil society must play a part in shaping the future of digital technologies, including standard-setting for AI, the governance of cryptocurrencies, and the accountability of tech companies.

**ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CLIMATE AND YOUTH MOVEMENTS**
The climate change emergency will be a source of mobilization but also of authoritarian clampdown. Policy and activism on climate change are central to civic space, and youth movements are at the heart of this activism.

**RENEW COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**
In the face of major shifts in geopolitics – the rise of authoritarianism, increasing populism, and a simultaneous decline of multilateralism – protecting civic space must remain a priority.

**INCREASE CIVIL SOCIETY EFFICIENCY AND RESILIENCE**
Participants emphasized the need for strategies against disinformation campaigns, online trolling, and harassment. Civil society organizations could use open source technology to more efficiently share learning and coordinate action.

ICNL is working with our partners to address these priorities in 2020, including a Digital Tech Camp for civic space defenders in collaboration with Stanford University.
# Our 2018 Finances

## Public Support & Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Without Donor Restrictions</th>
<th>With Donor Restrictions</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>U.S. and other government grants</td>
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<td>$12,606,699</td>
<td>$12,606,699</td>
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<td>Foundation and corporation grants</td>
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<td>Contracts</td>
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<td>Interest and dividend income</td>
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<td>Other revenue</td>
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## Expenses

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<td>Program services</td>
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<td>General and administrative</td>
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<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
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## Change in Net Assets

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## Net Assets

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For more information on ICNL’s finances, please see our 2018 IRS Form 990 [here](#).

# ICNL’s Leadership

## Board of Directors
- **Emile van der Does de Willebois**
  - Chair
  - Netherlands
- **Barbara Ibrahim**
  - Vice-Chair
  - Egypt
- **Suneeta Kaimal**
  - Secretary/treasurer
  - USA
- **Mary Beth Goodman**
  - USA
- **Ruth Madrigal**
  - USA
- **Myles McGregor-Lowndes**
  - Australia
- **Feliciano Reyna Ganteaume**
  - Venezuela
- **Bindu Sharma**
  - Singapore/India
- **W. Aubrey Webson**
  - Antigua and Barbuda
- **Douglas Rutzen**
  - Ex-Officio
  - USA

## Advisory Council
- **Ireri Ablanedo**
  - Mexico
- **Betsy Buchalter Adler**
  - USA
- **Diana Avt**
  - USA
- **Murray Baird**
  - Australia
- **Netsanet Belay**
  - Ethiopia
- **Filiz Bilkmen**
  - Turkey
- **Ligia Bolivar**
  - Venezuela
- **Oonagh Breen**
  - Ireland
- **Donnie Edwards Cabez**
  - Antigua
- **Guillermo Canova**
  - Argentina
- **Thomas Carothers**
  - USA
- **Noshir Dadrawala**
  - India
- **Harvey Dale**
  - USA
- **Philippe-Henri Dutheil**
  - France
- **T. Başak Ersen**
  - Turkey
- **Nancy Fashho**
  - Jordan
- **Luke Fletcher**
  - United Kingdom
- **Hannah Forster**
  - Gambia
- **Will Fitzpatrick**
  - USA
- **Florian Imfinger**
  - UK
- **Muhtar Khaydarova**
  - Tajikistan
- **Natalia Gaber-Damjanovska**
  - Macedonia
- **Faith Kisinga Gitonga**
  - Kenya
- **Waruguru Kagwango**
  - Kenya
- **Adam Kolker**
  - USA
- **Caroline McCarthy**
  - USA
- **Guadalupe Mendoza**
  - Mexico
- **Usma Menon**
  - Singapore
- **Ingrid Mittermaier**
  - USA
- **Alice Mogwe**
  - Botswana

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