IPHR International Partnership for Human Rights

EU SEE SUPPORTING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Tajikistan

Country Focus Report

2025



Credit: Kirill Talalaev

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EU SEE SUPPORTING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

A) An Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:



In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the six principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

Brief Overview of the Country Context

Tajikistan is facing an ongoing narrowing of civic space marked by growing restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly. Human rights defenders (HRDs), journalists, and independent activists face intimidation, surveillance, arbitrary prosecution, and long prison sentences on politically motivated charges. Despite international pressure, many prominent HRDs and journalists remain imprisoned. Media freedom is heavily constrained through legal pressure, censorship, and security service interference, while online expression is closely monitored through centralised internet control and vague “extremism” legislation.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) face shrinking operational space due to restrictive legislation, arbitrary registration practices, frequent inspections and growing administrative barriers. The number of registered public associations has dropped sharply, with hundreds having been forced to close following the 2021-2022 protests in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO). Draft laws on non-commercial organisations and proposals to double registration fees threaten to further restrict civic activity. CSOs working on sensitive issues, such as human rights, gender equality, the protection of the rights of some minorities and civic participation, are particularly targeted through legal pressure, official inspections, and in many cases forced closures.

Financial sustainability presents a serious challenge for civil society. Sharp reductions in international donor funding, including the suspension of U.S. assistance in 2025, have further destabilised this sector. Many organisations struggle to meet even basic legal requirements such as maintaining office registration. Complex donor compliance rules and limited access to new funding for young organisations further weaken civil society. As a result, many CSOs are downsizing, suspending programmes, shifting to volunteer-based work or facing liquidation.

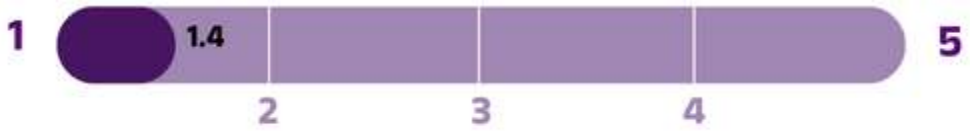
Despite formal constitutional guarantees and Tajikistan’s commitments under international human rights treaties, meaningful participation of civil society in decision-making remains limited. While CSOs are occasionally invited into working groups or consultations, transparency is weak and their input does not often influence outcomes. Authorities sometimes portray CSOs as “foreign agents”, which further fosters public distrust. Activists, especially women, frequently face online harassment, and discrimination remains widespread, particularly against LGBTIQ+ people. Overall, repression, financial pressure, digital surveillance, and structural barriers undermine the ability of civil society to operate freely and effectively in Tajikistan.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: [1]



With growing restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly, CSOs and HRDs in Tajikistan face serious ongoing challenges. Many activists have been forced to leave the country in recent years due to intensified government pressure, including interference in their activities, harassment, intimidation, and threats of retaliation that have also targeted their family members.

In practice, the right to peaceful assembly is severely restricted. Public protests and demonstrations require prior authorisation from local authorities, which is rarely granted for assemblies which are perceived as potentially being critical of government policies. The few peaceful gatherings that take place are frequently dispersed by security forces, and participants are subjected to detention, fines and intimidation. In recent years, individuals attempting to exercise their right to peaceful assembly, particularly in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), have faced particularly harsh reprisals, including criminal charges under extremism-related provisions. The fear of retaliation, including pressure on family members, has created a strong chilling effect, preventing people from exercising their right to protest.

The practice of imposing lengthy prison sentences on HRDs and those who criticise or who are perceived to criticise the authorities continues. Despite ongoing international calls for their immediate release, HRDs, lawyers and journalists who speak out against egregious human rights violations, including ***Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov***, ***Daler Imomali, Abdullo Ghurbati, Zavkibek Saidamini*** and ***Abdusattor Pirmuhammadzoda***, and ***Ulfatkhonim***

[1] *This is a rebased score derived from the CIVICUS Monitor rating published in December 2024.*

Mamadshoeva remain behind bars after having been sentenced to long prison terms in court trials which did not meet international standards of fairness.

In February 2025, journalist ***Rukhshona Khakimova*** was sentenced to eight years in prison after being found guilty of high treason in a case that also involved well-known public figures and former security officers. The charges against her were reportedly linked to her research into China's influence in Tajikistan. When sentencing her, the Supreme Court failed to consider her personal circumstances, including the fact that she has two young children, one of them a nine-month-old baby. The Supreme Court also reportedly ordered the seizure of her property, and in August 2025, a Supreme Court representative confirmed that Khakimova's bank savings had been confiscated by the state.

Media freedom is heavily constrained. Despite the removal of criminal liability for social media "likes" in May 2025, authorities continue to exert heavy control over the media, including broadcast and online platforms. That same month, the second international conference of women journalists of Central Asia was abruptly cancelled in Dushanbe on World Press Freedom Day after pressure from security services. Members of the Coalition of Women Journalists in Tajikistan reported being followed and targeted with attempted hacks following the event, reinforcing a climate of fear amid ongoing persecution of media actors. Journalists remain at risk of prosecution and imprisonment under vague charges such as "inciting hatred" or "spreading false information."

Many CSOs report that they are subjected to various forms of pressure by security forces. These interactions can take the form of seemingly informal phone calls framed as "normal conversations," yet containing intimidating elements, such as references to personal details or family members (including children), signalling close surveillance. In other cases, CSO representatives are formally summoned by security services for interrogations, during which they are questioned about their activities and accused of "speaking negatively about the country." Importantly, these practices affect a broad range of civil society actors, including CSOs working in so-called "non-sensitive" fields, such as the social sector. Such measures contribute to self-censorship, intimidation, and the creation of a wider climate of fear, significantly constraining independent civil society activity.

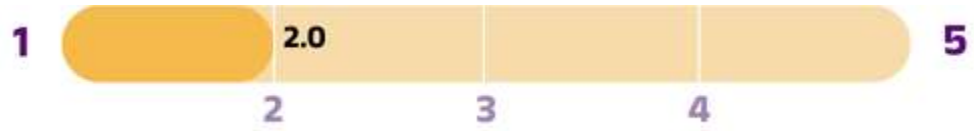
This is part of a broader trend where hundreds of CSOs have been forced to shut down in recent years, leading to a sharp decline in the sector, particularly following the mass protests of 2021 and 2022 in GBAO. CSO leaders in this region have reportedly been summoned and coerced into shutting down their organisations under threat of serious repercussions, while courts have ordered the closure of some organisations based on unfounded and politically-motivated grounds.

Restrictions on expression and association are further reinforced by the authorities' extensive use of lists of banned organisations and materials as well as the broad application of extremism-related legislation. In May 2024, the Supreme Court published a list of 29 organisations, movements and groups designated as terrorist or extremist and prohibited in Tajikistan. These include Pamir Daily News (Pamir Inside), the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), Group 24, and New Tajikistan-2. A similar list of prohibited organisations is available on the website of the National Bank of Tajikistan. Officials warn that any form of online engagement with such organisations, including liking, sharing, or commenting on their content, may be treated as illegal activity. According to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Ramazon Rahimzoda, in 2024 alone 1,750 crimes related to extremism were registered, and 365 individuals were detained for alleged links with banned organisations.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



Tajikistan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees fundamental freedoms, and the Constitution includes guarantees for freedoms of assembly, association and expression. These guarantees are reflected in the national legal framework: the Constitution of Tajikistan formally protects these fundamental freedoms, and the National Strategy on Human Rights (NSHR) adopted in 2023 explicitly affirms the protection of basic rights and freedoms, including freedom of association.

Despite these formal commitments, civil society organisations (CSOs) in Tajikistan face significant restrictions in practice, which often amount to state interference in their lawful activities. Domestic legislation creates multiple structural barriers to CSO operations, particularly with regard to registration procedures, reporting requirements, and access to funding. Rather than functioning as neutral regulatory mechanisms, these provisions enable extensive state oversight and discretionary enforcement, leaving CSOs vulnerable to pressure and sanction.

The operating space for civil society in Tajikistan continues to shrink. The ability of CSOs to effectively serve their communities and uphold fundamental rights is increasingly under threat. As of mid-2025, 1,726 public organisations remain officially registered in the country. According to the Ministry of Justice, in the first six months of 2025 138 applications for the registration of new associations and for the accreditation of branches and representative offices were received, compared to 158 applications in the same period in 2024. Of these, 29 applications were rejected on the grounds of alleged non-compliance with national legislation, including provisions of the Law “On Public Associations”. Authorities have also arbitrarily rejected or delayed applications for the registration of new CSOs, particularly in GBAO. CSOs frequently report that the registration process is unpredictable, inconsistent, and vulnerable to political influence, creating a chilling effect on civil society initiatives.

Intrusive monitoring by state authorities is a persistent feature of the operating environment. CSOs, especially those working on issues considered politically or socially sensitive, such as human rights, governance, gender equality, or minority rights, are frequently subjected to intimidation through additional tax inspections, fire safety checks, and other forms of administrative scrutiny. These measures are often disproportionate and selective, contributing to a chilling effect on civil society activity. In practice, there are few effective safeguards to protect CSOs from arbitrary or excessive interference by state bodies.

Evidence from a 2025 study conducted by a civil society organisation[2] illustrates the scale and frequency of such interference. According to the study, CSOs in Tajikistan are regularly subjected to inspections by multiple state institutions, including the Ministry of Justice, the Tax Committee, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Approximately 65 percent of respondents reported that their organisation had undergone at least one inspection. Nearly half cited inspections by the Ministry of Justice, while 42 percent reported checks by tax authorities. In many cases, inspections were carried out by several agencies simultaneously and were broad in scope, placing considerable administrative and financial strain on organisations.

The study also found that 21 CSOs experienced repeated inspections, suggesting a pattern of sustained pressure rather than routine oversight. Fifteen percent of respondents reported being fined for "formal violations", most commonly related to accounting or reporting requirements. Notably, eight percent of organisations stated that they never received official inspection results, leaving them in a state of prolonged legal uncertainty and increasing their vulnerability to future sanctions. This lack of transparency further undermines any meaningful protection against interference.

In addition to existing pressures, several recent and proposed legislative initiatives threaten to further shrink civic space. Draft legislation on non-commercial organisations[3], currently under consideration by the Ministry of Justice, would introduce additional bureaucratic requirements and compel existing public foundations to liquidate and re-register, without any guarantee of approval. This process carries a high risk of selective denial of re-registration and could result in the forced closure of established organisations, particularly those engaged in human rights advocacy. Although some CSO representatives were invited to discuss the draft law with government officials in August 2025, it remains unclear whether their input will meaningfully influence final legislation.

Further restrictions on CSO activities were proposed in May 2025, when the government submitted draft legislation to parliament to significantly increase state registration fees for non-commercial entities. As of 1 October 2025, registration fees for political parties doubled from 3,750 to 7,500 Somoni (approximately 750 USD). Fees for registering international organisations or their representative offices increased from 7,500 to 15,000 Somoni (approximately 1,500 USD), while registration costs for public associations were also doubled. These increases create additional financial barriers to entry and sustainability, particularly for smaller or regional CSOs, and further undermine the enabling environment for civil society.

Overall, while Tajikistan maintains formal legal and policy commitments to freedom of association, the absence of effective protection against state interference, combined with restrictive legislation, intrusive oversight, and rising administrative and financial burdens,

[2] *The study is not publicly available*

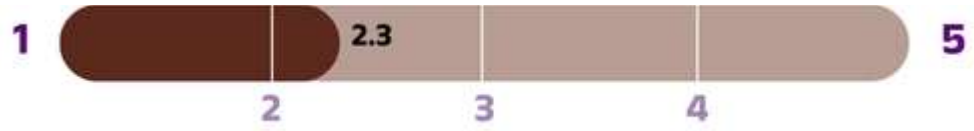
[3] *Information about the status of the new draft law on Non-Commercial Organisations remains unavailable at the time of writing*

severely constrains the ability of CSOs to operate independently and safely. This gap between legal guarantees and practice remains a central challenge for civil society in the country.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



The already restrictive environment for civil society in Tajikistan is further exacerbated by growing financial pressures. Sharp reductions in international donor funding have left many CSOs without the resources needed to sustain their work. Organisations without grants struggle to meet basic legal obligations, such as maintaining an official office address. When CSOs cannot afford rent, they lose their legal address, creating grounds for authorities to pressure them into “voluntary” closure.

The impact of these financial challenges is reflected in a 2025 survey[4] of more than 50 CSOs across Tajikistan, where all respondents reported facing difficulties in securing funding. The main reasons cited were the reduction of grant opportunities, shifts in donor priorities, and increasingly complex funding procedures. The consequences include reductions of programmes (including cuts in international grants), downsizing of staff, a decrease in the scope of activities, and even the closure of some organisations, all of which directly affect the lives of the most vulnerable people in Tajikistan who rely on CSOs for essential support and services. Around 25 percent of surveyed CSOs reported taking no action to seek alternative funding sources, which puts them at risk of liquidation.

Alongside financial pressures, CSOs also face burdensome and complicated reporting requirements, particularly regarding their funding. Authorities frequently use even minor administrative mistakes as pretexts to silence or pressure CSOs. Many groups have recently undergone intrusive inspections by the Tax Committee, National Security Service, Ministry of Justice and other state bodies. Regulations concerning foreign funding remain a powerful tool for state pressure, as CSOs are required to report all foreign grants to the government.

At the same time, accessing donor funding can be difficult for many CSOs, particularly when it comes to meeting complex eligibility or compliance criteria, especially with EU-funded programmes. In addition, some donors work primarily with pre-selected CSOs, making it

[4] *The survey is not publicly available*

nearly impossible for other organisations to obtain funding from them. Donor organisations also contribute to the difficult environment, as they sometimes fail to take into account the experience or registration period of newly established CSOs. The requirement of some international donors for CSOs to have been active for more than two years further burdens the already challenging situation of newly established organisations, limiting their access to funding.

The situation regarding funding and donor requirements is particularly challenging in GBAO. Many CSOs operating in the region report that donor projects and funding are largely directed toward other regions, leaving very few opportunities for initiatives in GBAO. Organisations that manage to secure foreign grants often face delays in approvals and risks of increased surveillance and interference by state authorities when declaring these grants to the Ministry of Justice, as required by law. Additionally, organisations face unreliable internet connections, loss of office space, and the absence of secure funding channels, limiting their ability to participate in online capacity-building events or maintain regular communication with partners. These difficulties are particularly hard for organisations working on issues perceived as sensitive by the government, including HIV prevention, women's rights, and civic participation. The isolation of CSOs in GBAO has been further worsened by the withdrawal of international donors, leaving them with little to no core support to reestablish operations.

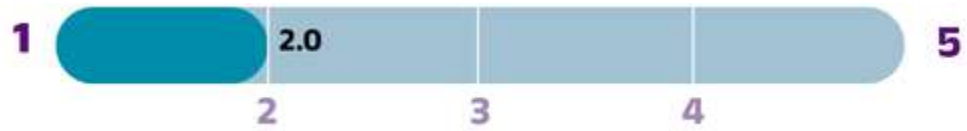
External developments have also weakened the prospects for sustainability of civil society. The overhaul of U.S. government assistance programmes and the January 2025 decree suspending all U.S. external aid to Tajikistan had a significant negative impact, cutting off a vital source of financial support for many local organisations. This sudden withdrawal of assistance has not only destabilised ongoing initiatives, but has also encouraged regional policymakers to escalate negative rhetoric toward foreign-funded CSOs and propose additional restrictions on their activities.

In response to the growing financial challenges, some organisations are exploring alternative approaches such as social entrepreneurship, which could generate income and reduce reliance on external donors. Other organisations are optimising expenses, shifting to volunteer-based operations, seeking local funding sources, or reducing project activities. However, this transition is slow and challenging, and financial resources for civic initiatives remain extremely limited.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



Public access to official information remains limited. A 2005 Presidential Decree required state agencies to hold quarterly press conferences to promote transparency. However, a 2011 amendment reduced this to biannually, and state press conferences now often involve the provision of untransparent and superficial data, state refusals to elaborate on details, and sometimes refusals to allow follow-up questions from journalists.

Despite the restrictive environment, some opportunities for government-civil society cooperation exist. For example, CSOs provided input into the drafting of the Law on Non-Discrimination and the NSHR. In 2025, the Working Group drafting the new Law on Commercial Organisations includes at least two CSOs, though scepticism remains about whether their input will influence the outcome. A Working Group on drafting amendments to the Criminal Code was also set up several years ago and CSO representatives were only allowed to attend Working Group sessions, providing feedback, but the drafts have not been transparently and fully shared with CSOs and input has been restricted. CSOs were also included in the Interagency Working Group on the draft Unified Media Law and related public discussions.

However, government engagement with civil society remains inconsistent and is often superficial. In September 2024, the authorities halted work on the draft Unified Law on Mass Media, developed in 2023 by a joint state-civil society expert group. Authorities criticised the draft for neglecting state security, territorial integrity and tradition. The Ministry of Culture and Information was subsequently charged with revising the draft law. It is currently not clear to what extent civil society representatives will be consulted in this process, although some initial consultations have been held in summer 2025. The Working Group was set up under the National Action Plan (NAP) for 2023-2025 for implementing the NSHR.

On a positive note, Tajikistan continues to cooperate with UN human rights institutions. The NSHR outlines a roadmap addressing UN treaty body recommendations and includes

commitments on fundamental freedoms, fair trial guarantees, non-discrimination and disability rights. A NAP for 2023-2025 sets specific indicators and timelines for implementation.

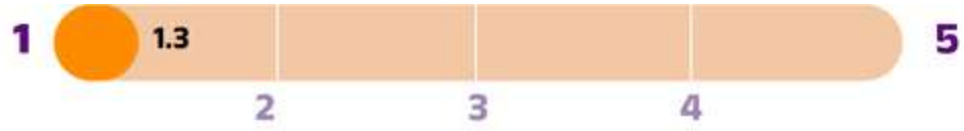
In May 2025, high-level national consultations on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United Nations Human Rights Council were launched. Representatives of key state bodies, including the Human Rights Guarantees Department, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Justice and the Executive Office of the President of Tajikistan, sat together with civil society representatives. Similarly, in June 2025, a conference on the financial sustainability of CSOs gathered over 60 participants from ministries and government agencies, international and civil society organisations and the media to explore new funding approaches amid declining donor support.

Nevertheless, in practice, engagement with state institutions often remains limited to official events, and engagement outside the capital is weak. Authorities rarely provide civil society representatives with access to draft legislation on human rights issues, preventing local organisations from influencing decisions or holding the government accountable.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



Public perception of civil society actors in Tajikistan is shaped by state rhetoric, media narratives, historical experience, and broader socio-political constraints. As a result, CSOs operate in an environment marked by suspicion, limited public trust and social pressure. Public officials and state-controlled media play a central role in framing how civil society is viewed. By consistently portraying CSOs - particularly independent human rights groups, women's rights organisations, and LGBTIQ+ advocates - as "agents of foreign influence", officials reinforce the idea that these actors serve external agendas rather than domestic needs. This narrative resonates with broader nationalist discourse that emphasizes sovereignty, stability, and the protection of "traditional values", positioning civil society work as something foreign, disruptive, or even threatening to national identity.

These portrayals have tangible effects on public attitudes, as some then associate civil society with political opposition, social instability, or moral decline, rather than with service provision, community support and protection of the most vulnerable. In a context where political dissent is controlled tightly, being labelled as "foreign-funded" can carry serious stigma, leading ordinary people to distance themselves from CSOs.

The public has little exposure to positive examples of civil society engagement or success stories that might counter official narratives. Independent media voices that could offer alternative perspectives face legal, financial, and political constraints, restricting their reach and influence. For the reasons stated above, civic engagement and activism are not very popular amongst young people, as they perceive it as risky and not worth it.

Meaningful public discussions about CSOs are largely absent. While authorities publicly claim that CSOs play an "increasingly active role in national development", public discourse continues to focus primarily on issues of national stability and sovereignty, with little attention given to the challenges faced by CSOs.

At the same time, regional and Tajikistani independent media outlets regularly share information about CSO work and their essential role in supporting the most vulnerable groups of the population, including women, children, people with disabilities, and victims of torture, ill-treatment and domestic violence. This information is also frequently reflected in the annual reports of the Ombudsperson's office. While certain CSOs are able to engage in dialogue with the government, political participation in general remains low, especially in rural areas. Although formal education provides basic information on rights and laws, and CSOs conduct trainings on human rights and civic awareness, political engagement is largely limited to participation in formal elections.

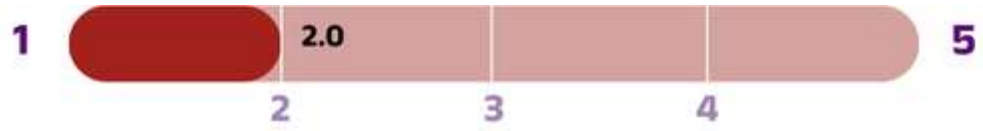
Some progress has been made in the legal sphere. A Law on Non-Discrimination was adopted in 2022, and CSOs representing diverse groups - including women living with HIV, women and persons with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, as well as organisations working with stateless persons and Afghan refugees - are able to participate in government-organised events where they can express their opinions. The annual Disability Forum, jointly organised by the state and CSOs, provides an additional platform for dialogue. While certain forms of representation are in place, these groups still have limited influence on decision-making. Nonetheless, discussions continue, and some gradual changes are taking place.

However, some minority groups remain excluded from decision making and participatory processes. There is ongoing and severe discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons in all spheres of life, in addition to frequent cases of police abuse, arbitrary detention and extortion. While Tajikistan has integrated many recommendations from UN treaty bodies on other human rights concerns into its NSHR and relevant national action plans and programmes, not one of the LGBTIQ+-related recommendations has been incorporated. Tajikistan's anti-discrimination legislation, adopted in July 2022, does not explicitly mention "gender identity" and "sexual orientation" as constituting prohibited grounds for discrimination. CSOs that defend the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people continue to be at risk of persecution by the authorities. As a result, there are no groups in Tajikistan that publicly promote LGBTIQ+ rights. Very few lawyers are prepared to defend LGBTIQ+ people for fear of being stigmatised as LGBTIQ+-friendly or suspected of being LGBTIQ+ themselves.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



The digital environment remains highly restrictive, undermining the ability of CSOs, journalists and HRDs to operate securely and freely. Those who publicly criticise government policies, expose abuses, or advocate for justice face persecution, including arrest, politically motivated imprisonment, and unfair trials under overly broad provisions of the Criminal Code, including Article 307, which criminalises “public calls for the violent change of the constitutional order of the Republic of Tajikistan.”

Online freedoms remain tightly controlled by the state. All internet traffic routes through a single national communications hub, allowing authorities to monitor and restrict access, including through politically motivated shutdowns and blocking of content without public accountability. The continued absence of legislative safeguards for digital rights, combined with pervasive surveillance, has created an environment of fear and self-censorship for journalists, activists and CSOs.

Civil society activists, particularly women and independent journalists, are frequently targeted by online harassment campaigns aimed at discrediting them and discouraging public support for them. Pro-government “troll factories” (also known in Tajikistan as “factory of responses”) flood online platforms, social networks, and the comment sections of internet media with personal attacks, slander and ridicule. Trolls frequently weaponise personal information or spread rumours to damage their reputations and intimidate them into silence.

Independent media outlets remain subject to state pressure, while new initiatives, such as the Ministry of Culture's proposal to amend the Law “On the Press and Other Mass Media” to regulate the activities of bloggers, threaten to further restrict online expression.

In recent years, increasing numbers of people have been imprisoned for alleged promotion of “extremism” and “terrorism,” - in some cases merely for liking or sharing posts on social media. In 2024, Deputy Prosecutor General Umed Karimzoda stated that more than 1,500 people were serving prison terms for online comments, likes, and reactions deemed to contain

extremist content. For several years, Tajikistan's Criminal Code equated even minimal online activity, such as "likes" or reposts, with "public justification of terrorism or extremism," punishable by 10 to 15 years' imprisonment. This practice was widely criticised both domestically and by international human rights organisations.

In a welcome development, in May 2025, the President of Tajikistan signed a law rescinding criminal liability for social media "likes". However, during a press conference on 7 August 2025, senior judicial officials clarified that while cases involving only likes and reposts could, in theory, be reconsidered under current legislation, most cases involving social media activity also include other charges, meaning that past convictions are unlikely to be overturned. For example, journalist and editor of the regional newspaper "Paik" Ahmad Ibrohim was convicted under Article 307(1) for extremist-related social media activity and was additionally charged with bribery under Article 320 of the Criminal Code, which prevents his case from being reconsidered. This demonstrates that extremism-related charges continue to be used as a tool to silence dissent.

Since Tajikistan ratified a cooperation agreement with the Russian Federation in February 2024 aimed at facilitating cooperation on combatting threats to national security in the online space, there has been serious concern that transnational repression will increase as states use it to detain and extradite persons expressing their opinions or exercising their rights to peaceful assembly on the Internet. This is because one area of activity considered as a particular threat is the "dissemination of information harmful to the socio-political and socio-economic systems, spiritual, moral and cultural environments" of the two states.

Broader online censorship and digital surveillance continue, and CSO actors have their online activities monitored and accounts flagged, and they risk being targeted under vague extremism or disinformation laws. These risks further discourage open communication and collective action.

Beyond repression, structural barriers also limit digital engagement. Low levels of internet access, particularly in remote and rural areas, significantly hinder CSOs' ability to operate online. Internet connections are often unstable or unavailable, and many communities lack the infrastructure needed for consistent access. In addition, insufficient ICT skills among the population challenge CSOs, which struggle to recruit staff with adequate digital competencies. Limited digital literacy among the general public also reduces their ability to engage with CSO content or adapt to new technologies, including AI, thereby restricting meaningful online participation for both civil society actors and their audiences.

C) Recommendations

For Donors and the International Community:

- Use every opportunity to express concern over the persecution, growing intimidation and harassment of civil society activists, HRDs, journalists, bloggers, and other government critics in Tajikistan;
- Raise individual cases of concern, including those of ***Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov, Rukhshona Khakimova, Daler Imomali, Abdullo Ghurbati, Zavkibek Saidamini, Abdusattor Pirmuhammadzoda,*** and ***Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva*** through both public and private channels; advocate for justice and urge Tajikistani authorities to ensure that individuals are treated in accordance with international standards and protected from abuse while in detention; and in the case of ***Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov*** advocate for the implementation of the opinion of the UN Working group on arbitrary detentions and call for his immediate and unconditional release;
- Provide flexible, long-term and accessible funding to CSOs in Tajikistan, including for newly established organisations and those operating in remote regions such as GBAO;
- Adapt donor requirements, including eligibility criteria, to the local context, taking into account registration timelines, shrinking civic space and the challenges faced by organisations working on sensitive issues.

For the Government of Tajikistan:

- Ensure that journalists, bloggers and media professionals can operate freely, without censorship, intimidation or interference by security services;
- Guarantee public access to information by holding meaningful, substantive and regular press conferences that allow follow-up questions;
- Refrain from politically motivated internet shutdowns and arbitrary blocking of websites and social platforms; ensure the right of freedom of expression and cease persecuting people for expressing their opinions online;
- Make the CSO regulatory environment transparent, predictable and enabling by halting the adoption of draft laws introducing additional bureaucratic barriers, forced liquidation, or re-registration requirements; simplifying the CSO registration procedure and ensuring decisions are free from political influence; amending the recently adopted increases in registration fees for CSOs; and easing administrative burdens related to foreign funding;
- Publish draft laws and policies affecting civil society and ensure inclusive, meaningful consultations with CSOs throughout all stages of the drafting process.

D) Research Process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members; the consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the CIVICUS Monitor. However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year. This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as V-Dem, the Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index, the RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy, and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

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