

Civic Freedom Monitor: Kyrgyz Republic

Last updated: **March 11, 2026**

Recent Developments

On February 5, 2026, the Digital Code entered into force, establishing a comprehensive framework regulating the digital sphere, including personal data protection, telecommunications, artificial intelligence, digital services, and e-governance.

In addition, on February 4, 2026, the Ministry of Justice published for public discussion a draft Regulation on the Procedure for State Registration of Mass Media that could extend registration requirements to online platforms due to the broad definition of “mass media.”

One month earlier, on January 6, 2026, a revised draft Law on Non-commercial Nongovernmental Organizations was circulated within a government–civil society working group, proposing expanded state oversight, additional reporting obligations, and stricter requirements for establishing CSOs.

Please see the Pending Regulatory Initiatives section below in this report for additional details.

While we aim to maintain information that is as current as possible, we realize that situations can rapidly change. If you are aware of any additional information or inaccuracies on this page, please keep us informed; write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org.

Introduction

The civil society sector in the Kyrgyz Republic is one of the strongest in Central Asia. Over 21,000 civil society organizations (CSOs) are registered in the country, although estimates indicate that only around one-third of them are operational. These organizations work across a wide range of areas, including human rights, support for vulnerable groups, culture and the arts, health, environmental protection, youth and sports, education, and advocacy.

CSOs register as noncommercial organizations (NCOs) under a civil law framework with roots in the Soviet system, though many laws have been modernized since the late 1990s. The most common legal forms include public associations, foundations, institutions, associations of legal entities, and community-based organizations.

Although the law broadly guarantees freedom of association, the sustainability and effectiveness of Kyrgyzstan’s civil society remain under pressure. The sector is heavily dependent on international funding, while local philanthropy is limited and tax incentives for charitable giving are weak. Recent legal and regulatory changes—including the elimination of public councils, increased reporting requirements, and new rules for organizations receiving foreign funding—have further constrained the space for NCO operations and public participation. Likewise, the freedoms of assembly and expression, though legally protected, are increasingly curtailed by restrictive regulations, censorship measures, and bans on certain gatherings.

This Civic Freedom Monitor (CFM) country note was made possible through the research conducted by ICNL and the ICNL, LLC Legal Advisor based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Civic Freedoms at a Glance

Organizational Forms	Noncommercial Organizations and Community-Based Organizations
Registration Body	Noncommercial Organizations: Ministry of Justice Community-Based Organizations: Local governments
Approximate Number	Noncommercial Organizations: 23,707 (about 1/3 operational) Community-Based Organizations: No data available
Barriers to Formation	Noncommercial Organizations: No legal barriers Community-Based Organizations: Ten founding members required
Barriers to Operations	Noncommercial Organizations: A charitable organization cannot conduct economic activities unless the activities “correspond” to its statutory goals. NCOs are subject to dissolution if they conduct an activity that violates the law, including engaging in an activity without a license where a license is required, or failing to submit reports to the tax authority within one year. State authorities may interfere in an organization’s internal affairs; force NCOs that receive foreign funding and engage in “political activity” to complete a special “foreign representative” registration; and require INGOs to work in Kyrgyzstan through a registered branch/representative office. Community-Based Organizations: No legal barriers
Barriers to Resources	A charitable organization cannot conduct economic activities unless the activities “correspond” to its statutory goals.
Barriers to Expression	Individuals have the right to demand the removal of online content about themselves that they believe to be false. If the website owner who hosts the allegedly false information does not comply within 24 hours, they risk having their webpage suspended for up to two months (or indefinitely if the content is still not removed), and they may also be liable for damages in court. Media outlets, including websites, blogs, and other online platforms, are required to register with the Ministry of Justice. Unregistered media are prohibited from carrying out journalistic activities. The law also limits foreign ownership in media organizations to 35 percent and restricts the status of “journalist” to individuals working for registered media outlets, excluding bloggers, freelancers, and independent reporters from legal protections. In addition, the law prohibits the dissemination of broadly defined content that may “incite hatred” or “undermine national dignity,” without clearly defining these terms, creating risks of arbitrary enforcement and restrictions on public debate.
Barriers to Assembly	Prohibitions on blocking roads or traffic and on assemblies near certain public institutions. Peaceful assemblies in central Bishkek remain subject to court-ordered restrictions that limit protests in key public locations. During this period, protests are permitted only in Maxim Gorky Park.

Legal Overview

This section provides a brief overview of the Kyrgyz Republic's legal framework for the promotion and protection of civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Key International Agreements	Ratification*
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	1994
Optional Protocol to ICCPR (ICCPR-OP1)	1994
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1994
Optional Protocol to ICESCR (Op-ICESCR)	No
Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (ILO No. 87)	1992
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	1997
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	1997
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	2002
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1994
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW)	2003
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	2019

Key Regional Agreements	Ratification
European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	No

* Category includes ratification, accession, or succession to the treaty

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The current Constitution of Kyrgyz Republic was adopted by referendum on April 11, 2021. Several provisions relate to civic freedoms:

Article 6. The Constitution possesses supreme legal power, and its norms have direct application in the Kyrgyz Republic. Constitutional laws, laws and other normative and legal acts are adopted in compliance with the Constitution. The generally recognized principles and norms of international law, as well as international treaties that have entered into force in accordance with the legislation of the Kyrgyz

Republic, are an integral part of the legal system of the Kyrgyz Republic. The procedure and conditions for the application of international treaties and generally recognized principles and norms of international law are determined by law. The official publication of laws and other normative legal acts is a prerequisite for their entry into force. A law or other normative legal act establishing new obligations or aggravating liability shall not have retroactive effect.

Article 8. Political parties, trade unions and other public associations can be created in the Kyrgyz Republic to exercise and protect the rights, freedoms and interests of a person and a citizen. Political parties, trade unions and other public associations ensure the transparency of their financial and operating activities.

Article 10. The mass media shall be guaranteed the right to receive information from state and local self-government bodies and disseminate it, and the right to freedom of expression. Censorship is not allowed in the Kyrgyz Republic. The mass media are free and shall carry out their activities in accordance with the law. Information security in the Kyrgyz Republic is ensured by the state. In order to protect the younger generation, activities that contradict moral and ethical values and public conscience of the people of the Kyrgyz Republic may be restricted by law. A list of activities to be restricted and information to be restricted in access and dissemination shall be established by law.

Article 23. Human rights and freedoms are inalienable and belong to everyone from birth. They are recognized as absolute, inalienable and protected by law and court from encroachment on the part of anyone. Human rights and freedoms are among the highest values of the Kyrgyz Republic. They act directly, determine the meaning and content of the activities of all state bodies, local self-government bodies and their officials. Human and civil rights and freedoms may be limited by the Constitution and laws in order to protect national security, public order, health and morality of the population, and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Such restrictions can also be introduced taking into account the specifics of military or other public service. Restrictions must be proportionate to the stated objectives. The government cannot adopt subordinate normative legal acts restricting human and civil rights and freedoms. The law may not establish restrictions on human rights and freedoms for other purposes and to a greater extent than provided for by the Constitution. Human rights and freedoms established by the Constitution are not subject to any restrictions. The guarantees of prohibition established by the Constitution are not subject to any restrictions.

Article 32. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought and opinion. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. No one may be compelled to express or refuse to express their opinion. Propaganda of national, racial, religious hatred, gender and other social superiority, calling for discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited.

Article 33. Everyone shall have the right to freely seek, receive, store, use and disseminate information orally, in writing, or by other means. Everyone shall have the right to familiarize with information about themselves held by national and local governmental bodies, institutions, and organizations. Everyone shall have the right to receive information about the activities of national governmental bodies, local self-government bodies and their officials, legal entities with the participation of the national and local governmental bodies, as well as organizations financed from the state and local budgets. Everyone shall be guaranteed access to information held by national and local governmental bodies and their officials. The procedure for providing information shall be determined by law.

Article 36. Every person has a right to freedom of association.

Article 37. Citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic shall have the right to elect and be elected to national and local governmental bodies, as well as to participate in referenda. Citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic shall have the right to participate in the management of public and state affairs both directly and through their representatives. Citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic shall have equal rights and opportunities when entering the state and municipal service and promotion in the manner prescribed by law. Citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic have the right to participate in the discussion and adoption of laws and decisions of the national and local importance. Everyone shall have the right to appeal to bodies of state power, bodies of

local self-government and their officials, who shall be obliged to provide a substantiated response within a period prescribed by law. Citizens shall have the right to participate in the formation of the state and local budgets, as well as to receive information about the funds actually spent from the budget.

Article 39. Every person has a right to freedom of peaceful assemblies. No one can be forced to participate in the assembly. In order to ensure the holding of a peaceful assembly, everyone has the right to submit a notification to state bodies or local self-government bodies. Organizers and participants of peaceful assemblies are not responsible for the lack of notification of a peaceful assembly, failure to comply with the form of notification, its content and deadlines for submission. The organization and procedure for holding peaceful assemblies are determined by law.

Article 44. [...] The state encourages voluntary social insurance, the creation of additional forms of social security and charitable activities. [...]

Article 55. In the Kyrgyz Republic, fundamental human and civil rights and freedoms are recognized and guaranteed in accordance with universally recognized principles and norms of international law, as well as international treaties that have entered into force in the manner prescribed by law, to which the Kyrgyz Republic is a party.

Article 62. The state guarantees the publication of laws and other normative legal acts concerning human rights, freedoms and obligations, which is a prerequisite for their application. The rights and freedoms set forth in the Constitution are not exhaustive and shall not be construed to deny or diminish other universally recognized human and civil rights and freedoms.

Article 63. Laws restricting freedom of speech, press and media shall be prohibited. Everyone is guaranteed protection of personal data. Access to and receipt of citizens' personal data is carried out only in cases provided for by law.

NATIONAL LAWS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Relevant national-level laws and regulations affecting civil society include:

1. [Constitution](#)
2. [Civil Code, Part 1](#)
3. [Civil Code, Part 2](#)
4. [Tax Code](#)
5. [Labor Code](#)
6. [Digital Code](#)
7. [Code on Offences](#)
8. [Criminal Code](#)
9. [Law on Noncommercial Organizations](#)
10. [Decree on Measures to Implement Article 17 of the Law on NCOs](#)
11. [Decree on Measures to Implement the Law on Noncommercial Organizations \("Foreign Representatives"\)](#)

12. [Law on Mass Media](#)
13. [Law on Normative Legal Acts](#)
14. [Law on Access to Information](#)
15. [Law on the Procedure for Considering Citizens' Appeals](#)
16. [Law on Partnership of Owners of Residential and Non-Residential Premises of Apartment Buildings](#)
17. [Regulation on State Registration of Legal Entities, Branch \(Representative\) Offices](#)
18. [Law on Political Parties](#)
19. [Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations](#)
20. [Law on Trade Unions](#)
21. [Law on Association of Employers](#)
22. [Law on Jamaats \(Communities\) and their Associations](#)
23. [Law on Cooperatives](#)
24. [Law on Philanthropy and Charitable Activity](#)
25. [Law on Peaceful Assemblies](#)
26. [Law on State Social Procurement](#)
27. [Regulation on the order of conduct of public benefit projects competition for the implementation of SSP](#)
28. [Regulation on the order of providing social services through social vouchers](#)
29. [Law on Countering Financing of Terrorist Activities and Legalization \(Laundering\) of Criminal Incomes](#)
30. [Law on Protection from False Information](#)
31. [Law on Countering Extremist Activity](#)
32. [Law on Volunteering Activity](#)

PENDING REGULATORY INITIATIVES

Draft Law on Noncommercial Nongovernmental Organizations

On November 2, 2022, the Presidential Administration published [a draft Law on Noncommercial Nongovernmental Organizations](#) for public discussion. The draft law violates the Constitution and Kyrgyzstan's international human rights obligations. The most concerning provisions include restricting citizens' right to association, such as eliminating the provision allowing the creation of unregistered CSOs, introducing new reporting requirements and state control over CSOs' activities, imposing new restrictions on foreign CSOs. Following the public hearings, on February 9, 2023, the president issued a decree

establishing a government-civil society working group tasked with revising the draft law. The mandate of the working group has been extended several times, and the draft law has been revised repeatedly during this period. The working group is currently expected to complete its work by July 2026.

Draft Regulation on the Procedure for State Registration of Mass Media

On February 4, 2026, the Ministry of Justice published for public discussion a [draft Regulation on the Procedure for State Registration of Mass Media](#), developed to implement the [Law on Mass Media](#) signed on August 6, 2025. The draft regulation establishes procedures for the registration, re-registration, and termination of media outlets, as well as rules for maintaining an electronic state register of mass media. Due to the law's broad definition of "mass media," the regulation could potentially extend registration requirements to websites, social media pages, newsletters, and other online platforms, including those operated by CSOs. If adopted in its current form, the regulation may expand the scope of entities subject to media regulation and introduce additional compliance obligations for organizations disseminating information online. As of February 2026, the draft regulation has not yet been adopted.

Legal Analysis

This section provides an in-depth assessment of the Kyrgyz Republic's legal environment for civic freedoms, including the barriers to the exercise of the freedoms of association (formation, operations, resources), expression, and peaceful assembly. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

Kyrgyzstan recognizes at least 15 distinct organizational forms for noncommercial organizations (NCOs), including public associations, foundations, institutions, non-profit cooperatives, and community-based organizations. [The Civil Code](#) and [the Law on Noncommercial Organizations](#) (NCO Law) establish the primary legal framework for NCOs.

Article 2 of the NCO Law defines an NCO as "a voluntary, self-sustained organization created by individuals and (or) legal entities on the basis of community of interests for implementing spiritual and other non-material needs in the interests of its members and (or) the whole society, where the deriving a profit is not a major objective, and the obtained profit is not distributed among members, founders and employees."

The five most common types of NCOs that can be recognized as CSOs are:

Community-Based Organization – A local-level membership organization representing residents of a specific street, block, or other defined territorial unit in a village or city, formed to jointly address issues of local importance.

Public Association – A voluntary membership organization uniting individuals with common interests in meeting spiritual or other non-material needs. Its highest governing body is the general meeting of members, which elects the organization's executive body (such as a governing board or directorate). Public associations may operate in diverse fields, including environmental protection, social support of the disabled, education, national issues, culture, and the arts.

Foundation – Anon-membership organization established by individuals and/or legal entities through voluntary contributions or created via a will or testament. Foundations pursue social, charitable, cultural, educational, or other public benefit goals. In contrast to public associations, foundations have no members; their creation is based on the voluntary transfer of property to achieve stated purposes.

Institution – An organization created by an owner to perform managerial, social, cultural, educational, or other noncommercial functions, and financed fully or partially by its owner. This form is often used for hospitals, clinics, kindergartens, schools, universities, and museums.

Association or Union of Legal Entities - An organization formed to coordinate the activities of member organizations and to represent and protect their common interests.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATUS

According to [the Tax Code](#), a “charitable organization” is an NCO that:

- Is created and carries out charitable activity in compliance with relevant Kyrgyz legislation;
- Does not engage in the production or sale of excise goods, or in gambling; and
- Does not support political parties or election campaigns.

While charitable organizations and their donors are entitled to significant tax benefits, no organizations in Kyrgyzstan currently qualify for this status. A key barrier is Article 9 of [the Charity Law](#), which requires charitable organizations to spend at least 98 percent of their income on charitable purposes and no more than 2 percent on general overhead expenses. This strict limitation is widely viewed as impractical, deterring organizations from seeking charitable status even when they otherwise meet the criteria.

Another obstacle arises from Article 7 of the Charity Law, which allows a charitable organization to engage in economic activity only if it directly serves and aligns with the organization’s stated goals. By contrast, Article 12 of the NCO Law permits NCOs to conduct any economic activity that does not contradict their goals and tasks, offering a much broader scope for income-generating activities.

A [new Tax Code](#) took effect in January 2022. Most provisions affecting CSOs remained unchanged. Positively, the new Code reduced the immovable property tax rate for CSOs and expanded property tax exemptions for charitable organizations. However, it also introduced some less favorable changes, including the requirement for CSOs to pay and report income tax on a monthly basis instead of quarterly and the elimination of the sales tax exemption for charitable organizations.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Laws on Public Participation

National laws formally protect and institutionalize civic participation through measures such as public discussions and hearings on draft laws and regulations; CSO-government working groups; and citizen involvement in shaping state and local budgets. The following laws and policies contain provisions on public participation:

- [Constitution](#)
- [Budget Code](#)
- [Law on Normative Legal Acts](#)
- [Law on Parliamentary Procedures](#)
- [Law on Local State Administrations and Local Self-Government Bodies](#)
- [Law on State Social Procurement](#)
- [Decree on the Official Publication of Normative Legal Acts of the Kyrgyz Republic](#)

Under the Constitution and the Law on Normative Legal Acts, laws and other normative legal acts must be officially published before taking effect. A government decree requires publication in official print sources

and websites, and the government maintains a [Centralized Database of Legal Information](#).

Kyrgyzstan made notable strides in expanding public participation in the past decade:

- In May 2014, Kyrgyzstan adopted the [Law on Public Councils of the State Bodies](#), which guaranteed the establishment of citizen advisory bodies in all government agencies.
- In 2017, [the country joined the Open Government Partnership \(OGP\)](#) and developed an ambitious National Action Plan (NAP) with commitments related to transparency, participatory lawmaking, participatory budgeting and auditing, freedom of information, and civic space.
- In 2020, the government launched [a public discussion portal](#), with Article 22 of the Law on Normative Legal Acts requiring executive bodies to post legal initiatives through the portal.

However, this progress ground to a halt in 2021. The current government is not supportive of civil society and its engagement in government decision making. In January 2024, the government adopted a law terminating the Law on Public Councils of State Bodies, formally abolishing public councils under state bodies and thus removing a key institutionalized mechanism for civil society participation in government decision making. After failing to submit a new NAP since 2019, Kyrgyzstan's membership in the OGP was declared inactive in May 2024 and withdrawn in May 2025.

However, at the local level some open government initiatives remain in place. In 2020, [Bishkek City](#) joined the OGP Local initiative, committing to implement reforms related to transparency, public participation, and accountable governance. In 2024, [Osh City](#) also joined the OGP Local program. Despite the suspension of Kyrgyzstan's national membership in the OGP, the participation of Bishkek and Osh in the OGP Local initiative remains valid.

Public Access to Participation Opportunities

While CSOs continue to use existing engagement mechanisms—such as budget hearings, which are popular in the regions—these opportunities are also shrinking. For example, on August 5, 2022, [amendments to the Law on State Social Procurement](#) (SSP) removed most civic engagement mechanisms from the law's previous version.

Amendments to the [Law on Normative Legal Acts](#) (March 7, 2025) reduced the standard period for public consultations on draft laws from 30 to 15 days, and in some cases to just 10. They also allow consultations to be skipped entirely if the President declares an issue urgent. Moreover, the President can now introduce temporary regulations without any legal basis for up to one year to “test” new forms of social relations. Using this authority, on July 28, 2025, he adopted a Decree establishing a one-year state monopoly over international internet traffic.

A positive development is the mandatory requirement for the Cabinet of Ministers to use the [public discussion portal](#), which may enhance transparency. Yet, while the mandatory use of the public portal is a step toward openness, it does little to counterbalance the overall weakening of civic engagement and oversight.

Restrictions on Specific Groups

While Kyrgyz law formally guarantees equal rights to all individuals, restrictions in practice disproportionately affect human rights defenders, investigative journalists, bloggers, and activists who publicly criticize government policies. In recent years, authorities have increasingly used legal mechanisms to target journalists, media outlets, activists, and bloggers.

Several independent media organizations have faced closure or designation as extremist. In 2024, the investigative outlet Kloop Media was liquidated by court order and was later declared an “extremist organization” in October 2025. In late 2025, the media project Temirov Live was also designated extremist. Its founder, journalist Bolot Temirov, had previously been deported from the country, while the

project's director, Makhabat Tazhibek kyzy, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in 2024. In July 2025, the television channel April TV was ordered to cease operations following a court decision related to its coverage of government activities. Authorities have also initiated criminal investigations against individuals for social media posts criticizing government policies. Such cases are often brought under broadly worded provisions of the Criminal Code, including "inciting mass riots" or "incitement of hatred." Fear of prosecution has led to widespread self-censorship, with [77% of surveyed CSOs](#) reporting they avoid sensitive "political" topics to minimize risk.

BARRIERS TO FORMATION

There are no legal barriers to forming an NCO in Kyrgyzstan, and NCOs may operate without registration. However, unregistered organizations lack legal entity status and therefore cannot perform certain activities in their own name, such as opening a bank account, ordering a seal, or filing a lawsuit.

Registration is quick and easy under the "single window" system and generally takes five days. Three founders are required for a public association. There are no restrictions on who may be a founder of an NGO: citizens, foreigners, other individuals, and legal entities are all eligible. There is no minimum asset requirements for any NCO.

The registration process consists of 3 steps:

1. Drafting incorporation documents and forming governing bodies;
2. Apply through the Ministry of Justice's "single window" system, which simultaneously notifies tax authorities, statistical bodies, and other government agencies, and obtains necessary registration numbers; and
3. Opening a bank account and ordering a stamp if the organization plans to carry out significant activities in its own name.

The Ministry reviews applications and incorporation documents for compliance with the Civil Code, [the Regulation on State Registration of Legal Entities, Branch \(Representative\) Offices](#), and other relevant laws. If no issues are found within five days, a Certificate of State Registration is issued, officially registering the NCO with the Ministry of Justice, Tax Service, and Social Fund.

Generally, the following documents must be submitted with the application:

- Organizational charter
- Minutes of the founding meeting
- List of members of governing bodies
- List of founders.

The registration fee ranges from KGS 1,119 to KGS 5,500 (USD 13-63 as of August 2025), depending on the processing time, which varies from three hours to three working days. The Ministry can deny registration if the information provided is incorrect or contradicts the law. Applicants may appeal denials to the Ministry and, if necessary, to a court.

Community-based organizations must register with local self-government bodies and have at least ten founding members, who must represent at least ten different households (Articles 5(3) and 6(1) of [the Law on Jamaats \(Communities\) and Their Associations](#)).

BARRIERS TO OPERATIONS

In general, an NCO may carry out any activity not forbidden in its charter. However, charitable organizations and public associations may engage in economic activity only if it directly aligns with their statutory goals. The law prohibits government interference in the internal governance of an NCO, and prior approval is not required for project activities.

NCOs have the same rights and obligations as other legal entities with respect to inspections and audits conducted by government agencies.

NCOs are subject to dissolution if they conduct an activity that violates the law (such as engaging in an activity without a license where a license is required) or failing to submit reports to the tax authority within one year. These dissolution grounds are applicable to all legal entities, whether commercial or noncommercial.

Financial Reporting Requirements

NCO reporting requirements were the same as those for other legal entities until June 26, 2021, when amendments to the Law on NCOs were adopted. The amendments require all NCOs to publish a new annual financial disclosure report on the State Tax Service (STS) [website](#). On March 22, 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a [Decree](#) approving the new disclosure form and submission procedure.

By April 1 each year, NCOs must publish the completed form for the previous year on the STS website. The form contains:

- Cumulative information on income sources (disaggregated by membership fees, donations, grants from local and foreign sources, and others); expenditures (including business trips, salaries, procurements, conferences/seminars, expenditures for charter purposes, and others); and movable property and vehicles.
- Detailed source data for all income, including the name, country code, and tax identification number of each income source.

Law on Foreign Representatives

On April 2, 2024, President Japarov signed the Law on Amending the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Noncommercial Organizations (Law on Foreign Representatives), which:

- Provides state authorities with the right to interfere in an organization's internal affairs;
- Requires NCOs that receive foreign funding and engage in broadly defined "political activity" to complete a special "foreign representative" registration; and
- Requires international NGOs (INGOs) to work in Kyrgyzstan through a registered branch/representative office, potentially prohibiting NCOs from receiving grants from unregistered INGOs.

An [analysis](#) by ICNL analyzes the Law's compliance with Kyrgyzstan's international obligations and international best practices and analyzes the possible consequences of its adoption.

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

Nearly all CSOs in Kyrgyzstan rely on international grant funding. Domestic philanthropy remains limited, largely due to economic conditions and the absence of tax incentives for charitable giving.

Social Procurement

To strengthen CSO financial sustainability and involve civil society in improving the quality of state social services, the government enacted the Law on State Social Procurement (SSP) in 2017. The law provides three forms of social procurement: social procurement, financing of CSOs' public benefit projects, and social vouchers.

Between 2014 and 2017, social procurement programs received an average annual allocation of KGS 22.5 million (USD 257,475 as of August 2025) each year. By 2021, government funding for social contracts awarded to CSOs had grown to KGS 42 million (USD 480,620), with social procurement programs implemented by the Ministry of Labor, Social Development and Migration, the State Agency on Youth Affairs, Physical Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Healthcare.

On August 5, 2022, [amendments to the Law on SSP](#) were adopted that removed nearly all civic engagement and transparency mechanisms previously included in the law.

Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Terrorist Financing

Civil society in Kyrgyzstan is actively involved in efforts to reduce terrorist financing risks in the noncommercial sector in line with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Following the 2018 FATF Eurasian Group (EAG) mutual [evaluation](#), Kyrgyzstan was rated non-compliant with Recommendation 8, which addresses NCOs. According to the EAG report, this rating was due to the government's lack of engagement with the NCO sector in combating terrorist financing; the absence of an oversight, monitoring, and sanctioning system to prevent terrorist financing in the sector; and a lack of regular reviews of the NCO sector for terrorist financing risks.

In response, the State Financial Intelligence Service (SFIS)—the government body responsible for FATF compliance reporting—established a CSO-government working group to develop a methodology for conducting risk assessments (RAs) of the Kyrgyz NCO sector. The working group produced a draft methodology to assess sector risks and guide the RA process. Between 2019 and 2021, it carried out the NCO sector RA and submitted the report to the SFIS in March 2021.

In November 2022, the EAG [reviewed](#) Kyrgyzstan's FATF compliance progress report and upgraded its rating on Recommendation from "non-compliant" to "partially compliant." The EAG identified the absence of an authorized state body to oversee the NCO sector as the sole remaining deficiency.

BARRIERS TO EXPRESSION

The international non-governmental organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) assesses freedom of speech and media freedom in 180 countries in its annual [World Press Freedom Index](#). Before 2023, the country was already classified as "problematic" for press freedom, ranking 72nd globally in 2022. In 2023, amid high-profile criminal cases and persecution of journalists, Kyrgyzstan fell 50 places to 122nd; by 2025 the country dropped dramatically to 144th. Once considered an exception in Central Asia for its relative media freedom, Kyrgyzstan is now experiencing a severe press freedom crisis. Independent outlets face harassment, raids, and prosecution under restrictive laws. Journalists are increasingly silenced through arrests, exile, and smear campaigns, pushing the country into the category of "very serious" concern for freedom of expression.

Over the past few years, a series of laws and amendments have severely curtailed freedom of speech and press freedom in Kyrgyzstan.

[Law on Protection from False Information](#) (2021). The law grants individuals the right to demand the removal of online content about themselves that they believe to be false. Website owners must comply within 24 hours or risk having their site or page suspended for up to two months—or indefinitely if the content is not removed—and may also face liability for damages in court. The law fails to strike a balance between protecting the rights and reputations of others and safeguarding the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

[Law on Mass Media](#) (2025). The law imposes compulsory registration for all media outlets, including

online platforms, under procedures controlled by the Cabinet of Ministers. It abolishes the status of independent journalists and restricts foreign ownership in media. Mandatory registration controlled by the executive risks arbitrary exclusion of critical outlets, while eliminating the category of independent journalists undermines media pluralism and public access to diverse sources of information.

[Criminalization of Disinformation \(Article 109-3\) and Defamation and Insult \(Article 107-1\)](#) (2025). Amendments to the Code on Offenses introduced administrative liability for disseminating “inaccurate or misleading information,” as well as for libel and insult in the media and on social networks. The penalties include fines of about \$220 for individuals and \$740 for legal entities. Because the terms are vaguely defined, these provisions create broad opportunities for arbitrary enforcement against journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens who criticize officials or address sensitive issues.

BARRIERS TO ASSEMBLY

The Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. This right is further regulated by the Law on Peaceful Assemblies. Organizers are entitled (but not required) to submit advance notice so authorities help facilitate assemblies. Permits are not legally required. By law, gatherings cannot be held within 100 meters of elementary and high schools, hospitals, or penal institutions.

In April 2022, the Bishkek Pervomaisky district court imposed and repeatedly extended a blanket ban on all meetings in front of the Russian Embassy and other political buildings without the required legal analysis to justify such a broad measure. The most recent extension prolonged the restriction until March 31, 2026. During this period, protests are permitted only in Maxim Gorky Park, outside the city center, while official state and municipal events may continue to take place in Ala-Too Square.

Additional Resources

This section contains links to external reports and news reports relevant to civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

GLOBAL INDEX RANKINGS

Ranking Body	Rank	Ranking Scale (best - worst possible)
UN Human Development Index	117 (2023)	1 - 193
World Justice Project Rule of Law Index	104 (2025)	1 - 143
Fund for Peace Fragile States Index	65 (2024)	179 - 1
Transparency International	142 (2025)	1 - 182
Freedom House: Freedom in the World	Status: Not Free Political Rights: 4 Civil Liberties: 22 (2025)	Free/Partly Free/Not Free 40 - 0 60 - 0

REPORTS

UN Universal Periodic Review Reports	Kyrgyz Republic UPR page
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UN Human Rights Reports	Kyrgyz Republic
U.S. State Department	2024 Human Rights Reports: Kyrgyzstan
Fragile States Index Reports	Kyrgyz Republic
IMF Country Reports	Kyrgyz Republic and the IMF
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)	Foreign Influence Registration Laws and Civil Society: An Analysis and Responses (2024)
Human Rights Watch	HRW World Report 2025
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law Online Library	Kyrgyz Republic

NEWS

[Kyrgyzstan declares investigative outlets Kloop and Temirov Live extremist](#) (October 2025)

In October 2025, a court in Kyrgyzstan declared the investigative media outlets Kloop and Temirov Live “extremist organizations,” prohibiting their activities in the country. The decision followed earlier pressure against independent media, including the liquidation of Kloop Media in 2024. As a result of the ruling, the dissemination of materials produced by these outlets may lead to legal liability. Media freedom organizations warned that the decision could further restrict independent journalism and limit access to investigative reporting in Kyrgyzstan.

[Mass Media Law must be improved to protect independent journalism](#) (August 2025)

In August 2025, a new Law on Mass Media was adopted that significantly expands state regulation of the media sector. The law introduces mandatory registration for all media outlets, including websites, blogs, and other online platforms, and limits foreign ownership in media organizations to 35 percent. It also narrows the definition of “journalist” to individuals working for registered media outlets and includes broadly worded restrictions on certain types of content. Media freedom organizations have warned that these provisions may restrict independent journalism, reduce media pluralism, and allow authorities broad discretion in regulating media activities.

[President Sadyr Japarov signs Digital Code](#) (August 2025)

In August 2025, President Sadyr Japarov signed the Digital Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, a comprehensive law establishing a unified legal framework for the country’s digital sector. The Code regulates areas such as personal data protection, digital services, telecommunications networks, artificial intelligence, and electronic governance. It also establishes rules governing interactions between state bodies, businesses, and citizens in the digital environment and aims to modernize the legal framework for the digital economy.

[Politically motivated prosecutions reported amid shrinking civic space](#) (May 2025)

CIVICUS reported increasing politically motivated prosecutions in Kyrgyzstan against journalists, activists, and government critics. Several individuals faced criminal charges linked to public statements, investigative reporting, or online posts criticizing government policies. Observers noted that broadly worded criminal provisions, including those related to incitement of hatred or public disorder, have been used in cases involving civic activists and media representatives. The developments were cited as part of a broader trend of declining media freedom and increasing pressure on civil society and political opposition in the country.

[From free vote to 'foreign agent': Kyrgyzstan's new law hits civil society](#) (January 2025)

In March 2024, Kyrgyzstan introduced a "foreign representatives" law that requires organizations with foreign funding to be registered and audited. Reminiscent of Russia's infamous Foreign Agent Law, it has

awakened strong reactions internationally. Critics believe that the law limits civil society's independence and freedom of expression.

Journalist in Exile Laments Kyrgyzstan Crackdown, Now Extending to His 12-Year-Old Son (November 2024)

Media and civil society freedoms in Kyrgyzstan are under attack with a severity that has intensified under President Sadyr Japarov. Repressive laws allowing for greater control over civil society have enabled targeted attacks on human rights defenders, journalists, and independent news outlets. These actions illustrate broader trends of democratic backsliding, with human rights eroding at an alarming rate. My case is only one example. Due to my work as an anti-corruption investigative journalist, the Kyrgyz government expelled me from my country, imprisoned and tortured my wife, prosecuted my colleagues, and now is taking my son away from me.

Open Society Foundations to Cease Operations in Kyrgyzstan (April 2024)

The Open Society Foundations will close their national foundation in Kyrgyzstan following the passing of a new law which imposes restrictive, broad, and ill-defined regulations on the activities of internationally funded local organizations. According to a statement on February 7 from the OSCE, the new law risks “an overwhelmingly negative impact on civil society, human rights defenders, and the media in Kyrgyzstan.” Open Society launched the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan in 1993, when the country was navigating a complex socioeconomic crisis following its independence from the former Soviet Union.

CSOs call on president to veto the law on “foreign representatives” (March 2024)

The Kyrgyz Parliament adopted the draft law “On Non-Profit Non-Governmental Organisations” in its third parliamentary reading, paving the way for its implementation, which would drastically restrict freedom of association in Kyrgyzstan. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (International Federation for Human Rights-FIDH and World Organisation Against Torture-OMCT), Bir Duino and the Coalition for Equality condemn this dangerous new step towards the curtailing of civic space and urge the President of Kyrgyzstan not to sign the draft law in order to prevent its implementation.

Draft NGO law poses grave threat to thriving civil society (October 2023)

Reacting to the Kyrgyzstani parliament’s adoption in its first reading of amendments to a law that would dangerously restrict freedom of association and the work of NGOs in the country, Maisy Weicherding, Amnesty International’s Central Asia Researcher, said, “We are disappointed that these unnecessarily restrictive amendments to existing NGO legislation were passed at the bill’s first reading.” The proposed amendments include penalties of up to 10 years’ imprisonment for civil society activists who establish, participate in or promote an NGO or an affiliate of a foreign NGO, if the authorities find that the organization is committing what is vaguely defined as ‘inciting citizens to refuse to perform civic duties or to commit other unlawful deeds.’

Civil Society Struggles for Freedom in Central Asia (September 2023)

Kyrgyzstan has the region’s most robust civil society, which activists say is now under direct threat. Several prominent human rights groups issued a joint statement urging lawmakers in Kyrgyzstan to reject a bill introduced by 33 legislators. “This draft law, which draws heavily on corresponding Russian legislation and is primarily aimed at stigmatizing and restricting the activities of foreign-funded organizations, poses a direct and serious threat to Kyrgyzstan’s vibrant civil society, in particular human rights defenders and their organizations,” the statement said.

The President signed the Law on Volunteering Activity (March 2023) (Russian)

The law creates a legal basis for volunteerism that can be expanded and strengthened through relevant amendments to the tax, labor, and other legislation.

A working group has been formed to finalize the draft Law on Noncommercial Nongovernmental Organizations (February 2023) (Russian)

On December 19, President signed a [Decree](#) on February 9 to establish a CSO-government working group tasked with revising the draft law.

Pressure on media, attacks on NGOs, cooperation: Interview with U.S. Ambassador” (February

2023) (English)

[**The public councils of state bodies appealed to the President. They ask not to abolish public councils**](#) (February 2023) (English)

[**OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Urgent interim opinion on the Draft Law “On Non-Profit Nongovernmental Organizations” and draft amendments on “Foreign Representatives”**](#) (December 2022)

The majority of the provisions of the Draft Law are incompatible with international human rights standards.

[**ICNL Analysis of the Kyrgyz Republic Draft Law on Non-Governmental Organizations**](#) (December 2022)

The Analysis shows that the Draft Law, if adopted, will significantly worsen the conditions for the establishment and the legal status of both local and foreign NCOs in the Kyrgyz Republic.

[**MP Narmatova initiated a draft law on “foreign representatives”**](#) (November 2022) (*Russian*)

In 2015, MP Nadira Narmatova together with former parliamentarian Tursanbai Bakir uulu already initiated a similar document, called the draft law on “foreign agents”. However, the majority of deputies in 2016 voted against the document, believing that it would limit the rights of civil society and lead to a reduction in international assistance to Kyrgyzstan.

[**The Presidential Administration has developed a new law on non-profit organizations**](#) (November 2022) (*Russian*)

The General Prosecutor’s Office will monitor and supervise the compliance of NGOs’ activities with the goals stipulated by their founding documents and the legislation of the country.

[**The Law on Protection from False Information. Members of parliament said it aimed to restrict free speech**](#) (September 2022) (*Russian*)

The leader of the parliamentary faction, Adakhan Madumarov, noted that there is open pressure on Internet resources in the country and that the authorities simply shut down the channels they don’t like.

ARCHIVED NEWS

[**New parliamentary regulations: more room to maneuver and less responsibility**](#) (June 2022) (*Russian*)

[**The Ministry of Justice trained legal services of state bodies on the new methodology for drafting laws**](#) (June 2022) (*Russian*)

[**CSOs oppose the draft Regulation on State Small Grants for CSOs**](#) (May 2022) (*Russian*)

[**Lawyers are against the reduction of the period of public discussions**](#) (May 2022) (*Russian*)

[**Kyrgyzstan: Repeal protest ban**](#) (March 2022)

[**Representatives of civil society and government agencies discussed the draft law “On the right to access information”**](#) (December 2021) (*Russian*)

[**Reporters Without Borders call on Sadyr Japarov to abolish fake news law**](#) (August 2021)

[**Devil in the details of Kyrgyzstan’s new-look constitution**](#) (March 2021)

[**Bishkek is now part of the OGP Local partnership**](#) (October 2020) (*Russian*)

[**Kyrgyzstanis will be able to discuss draft laws on a unified portal**](#) (August 2020) (*Russian*)

[**Kyrgyzstan: Volunteers play heroic role in battle against COVID-19**](#) (July 2019)

[**Kyrgyzstan: Law “On Manipulating Information” must be vetoed**](#) (July 2020)

[Kyrgyzstan: Draft bill threatens to drive NGOs against the wall](#) (May 2020)

[A Power Grab in Kyrgyzstan](#) (May 2020)

[UN in Kyrgyzstan: Adoption of amendments to the law on NGOs will undermine Kyrgyzstan's reputation as a democracy](#) (May 2020) (*Russian*)

[President offers olive branch to civil society](#) (July 2018)

Key Events

On July 13, 2023, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan. The resolution urges the Kyrgyz authorities to review and withdraw several laws that are inconsistent with the country's international commitments. Of particular concern are the law on "false information" as well as the draft laws on "foreign representatives," "mass media," and "protecting children from harmful information," or the so-called "LGBTI propaganda law."

INTERNATIONAL CENTER
FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW

<https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/kyrgyz>