



CENTRE FOR LAW
AND DEMOCRACY

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[Launch of Regional Report Series on Law and Policy Environment for Civic Space: Asia Pacific](#)

Civil society can only flourish if a country has put in place an enabling legal environment that supports organisations' right to organise, communicate, research, advocate and fundraise freely. In recent years, global observers have expressed increasing alarm at the growing number of legal burdens and restrictions that governments are imposing on civil society. A closed legal environment prevents civil society from fulfilling crucial roles such as raising awareness on matters of public interest, holding governments to account and advocating for particular approaches to social issues.

Last year, Transparency International commissioned CLD to conduct a review of laws and policies governing the environment for civic space in countries in five regions: Asia Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. We are now launching publicly the results of this review as a series of five reports.

The first of these reports, released today, covers the Asia Pacific region, focuses on the legal and policy environment for civic space in 15 countries. Some of the trends in the region highlighted in the report which are of concern include:

- Stricter administrative requirements which make it challenging to register organisations, increase the discretion of authorities to dissolve organisations and restrict access to foreign funding.
- Insufficient protections for freedom of expression due, among other things, to criminal defamation laws, overbroad content restrictions and a lack of independence among media regulatory bodies.
- New restrictions on digital communications, sometimes with harsh penalties.
- Broad secrecy laws and poor implementation of access to information laws, both of which limit public access to information.
- An absence of enabling rules such as whistleblower protection laws or clear procedures for registering civil society organisations.

The Asia Pacific regional report is available at: https://www.law-democracy.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Asia-Pacific.FINAL_.pdf.

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