



CENTRE FOR LAW
AND DEMOCRACY

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Regional Report Series on Law and Policy Environment for Civic Space: Middle East and North Africa

CLD has released its regional report on the legal environment for civil society in the Middle East and North Africa. The report, the fourth in our global series, highlights laws and policies in the region which prevent civil society from organising, meeting, fundraising, advocating, researching, expressing their opinions and otherwise operating. The report highlights more problematical laws, as a means of encouraging reform and openness in the region.

This series represents the public launch of law and policy reviews commissioned by Transparency International last year covering five regions: Asia Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Three prior reports have already been launched, including Asia Pacific ([available here](#)), Europe and Central Asia ([available here](#)) and Latin America ([available here](#)).

The report identifies the following general trends across the region:

- States in the region, particularly in the Gulf, have extensive powers over civil society organisations, including the ability to deny them recognition, dissolve them, require changes to their internal structures or mandate government attendance at meetings.
- Both press laws and criminal codes contain numerous content restrictions which are vague and do not accord with international human rights standards.
- Media regulators are not independent and journalists, newspapers and news websites are typically required to obtain a licence from the State to operate.
- National security and anti-terrorism laws contain provisions which are often abused against peaceful civil society actors.
- Some countries restrict public meetings as well as demonstrations while, more generally, authorities have significant discretion to ban assemblies.
- Most countries do not have right to information laws and, instead, have broad secrecy rules.

The Middle East and North Africa regional report is available at: <https://www.law-democracy.org/live/regional-report-series-on-law-and-policy-environment-for-civic-space-middle-east-and-north-africa/>.

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