

**Appendix II: Assessment of Civic Space  
in South Asia (online survey)**



## Survey Guidelines

In a democratic society, civil society provides additional checks on the legislative and executive branches of government. As such, it is also expected that any government will have an incentive to establish its own checks and balances over civil society. Such a relationship comprises both confrontation and cooperation, and is also characterised by the ambivalence of governments towards civil society that may range from distrust to full partnership in activities such as civic engagement or development endeavours.

The closing of civic space, however, can result in the weakening of measures that protect civil and political rights, and can create an unfavourable situation for sustainable economic, social and human development. Hence, it is the duty of a conscious society to constantly be on the watch for any shrinking of the space for civil society to operate, and seek or suggest ways to reverse any such trend.

This survey is an attempt to gain a better understanding of the state of civic space in South Asia in general as well in the different countries of the region. It is being undertaken by the South Asia Collective, an informal network of organisations representing the different countries of the region working to highlight the condition of minorities in the region and protect and promote their rights (<http://thesouthasiacollective.org/>) through publications such as the annual 'South Asia State of Minorities Report', accessible at <http://thesouthasiacollective.org/annual-reports/>. This survey will form part of the 2020 report which is focusing on the theme of civil space and minority rights.

Apart from a short preliminary part on personal details, the survey consists of **39 questions** divided into five sections dealing with civil liberty, civil society, freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, and legitimacy of the present government, specifically the central government. These questions have been adapted from the V-Dem Annual Democracy Report 2019, Freedom in the World 2020, and CIVICUS Monitor. All the questions have been

formulated on a Likert Scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Completing the survey will likely take you around **half an hour**.

We emphasise that your response to the survey questions shall remain **confidential**. The data will be available to a select number of analysts, but will be anonymised beforehand in order to protect your identity. Your participation is entirely **voluntary**.

Survey Questions						
SN	Question	Response				
<b>A</b>	<b>Civil Liberty</b>					
	<b>Since the current government assumed power,</b>					
1	All social groups, as distinguished by language, caste, ethnicity, religion, race, or region, enjoy the same level of civil liberties.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2	The poor and the rich both enjoy the same level of civil liberties.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3	Men and women enjoy the same level of civil liberties.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	All gender and sexual minorities enjoy the same level of civil liberties as the rest.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>B</b>	<b>Civil Society</b>					
	<i>In the context of this study, the following set of questions specifically refer to civil society organisations, social movements, groups and individuals that fulfil advocacy and oversight functions.</i>					
	<b>Since the current government assumed power,</b>					
5	All groups have been allowed to form and register associations in order to advance collective interests.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6	No new laws have been introduced, passed, or amendments made to existing ones, to make it more difficult for people to form and operate civil society organisations.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

7	The government has not used its authority to deregister, create issues with registration, or otherwise interfered in the functioning of civil society organisations (CSOs).	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8	The government has allowed religious organisations/groups to function without any hindrance.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9	The state has taken no action to repress, control or unduly influence CSOs and/or human rights defenders.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10	CSOs have been allowed to receive foreign funding without restriction.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11	There has been no discernible increase in the number of attacks (including physical attacks, raids on offices, legal harassment) on civil society organisations, human rights defenders and activists.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12	There have been no instances of some CSOs and human rights defenders (for example, those promoting human rights/democracy/good governance) being particularly targeted.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13	No civil society groups have been specifically targeted because of their activism in support of women, gender and sexual minorities, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, and/or marginalised groups.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
14	Advocacy or activism by GOs/NGOs has supplemented the space for rights advocacy for women, gender and sexual minorities, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, and/or marginalised groups.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
15	Public statements from the government directed at civil society and human rights defenders have shifted from negative to positive.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

16	There have been progressive court judgements related to the Freedom of Association.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>C</b>	<b>Freedom of Expression</b>					
	<b>Since the current government assumed power,</b>					
17	The state has granted media houses, CSOs, academics, human rights defenders or activists full freedom of expression.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
18	The major print and broadcast media represent a wide range of political perspectives.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19	There is no evidence of English media bias against opposition parties or candidates.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
20	There is no evidence of vernacular media bias against opposition parties or candidates.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21	There have been no instances of journalists being harassed (i.e., threatened with libel, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed) by governmental or powerful nongovernmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22	There is no evidence of self-censorship among journalists or civil society when reporting on issues the government considers politically sensitive.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23	Public statements from the government directed at journalists and the media have shifted from negative to positive.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
24	The state has made no attempt to restrict freedom of expression on the internet and social media.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

25	Individuals are free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
26	Excluded or disadvantaged groups have been allowed to express themselves freely.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
27	People have been able to access government information in practice.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
28	There is freedom of religion in practice.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
29	No laws have been introduced or changed (such as those dealing with freedom of information, media regulation/self-regulation, contempt of court, censorship, sedition, etc) by the state to hinder free expression.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
30	There have been progressive court judgements related to the Freedom of Expression.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>D</b>	<b>Freedom of peaceful assembly</b>					
	<b>Since the current government assumed power,</b>					
31	There is freedom of assembly in the country in law.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
32	The state has allowed peaceful protests and demonstrations.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
33	State security forces have not used physical violence against protestors.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
34	State security forces have not made arbitrary or illegal arrests in violation of the right to peaceful assembly.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree



35	There have been progressive court judgements related to the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>E</b>	<b>Legitimacy</b>					
	<b>Since the current government assumed power,</b>					
36	The government has promoted a specific ideology or societal model (an officially codified set of beliefs used to justify a particular set of social, political, and economic relations; for example, socialism, nationalism, religious traditionalism, etc) in order to justify the regime in place.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
37	The Chief Executive of the country has been portrayed as being endowed with extraordinary personal characteristics and/or leadership skills (e.g., as father or mother of the nation, staunch nationalist, exceptionally heroic, moral, pious, or wise, or any other extraordinary attribute valued by the society).	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
38	The government refers to their performance (such as providing economic growth, poverty reduction, effective and non-corrupt governance, and/or providing security) in order to justify the regime in place.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
39	The government refers to legal norms and regulations (as laid out, for instance, in the constitution regarding access to power, e.g. elections, as well as exercise of power, e.g. rule of law) in order to justify the regime in place.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree