

Enabling Environment Snapshot Mexico 25 April 2025

Abstract

In 2025, the enabling environment for civil society in Mexico has deteriorated across almost all principles since the publication of the Panorama baseline snapshot report in February of this year. Threats and violence towards journalists and human rights defenders persist, and mechanisms put in place to protect them are ineffective. Furthermore, key institutions designed to ensure government accountability have been disbanded, such as the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Personal Data Protection (INAI), to be absorbed by other government institutions, depriving them of autonomy. The new laws and reforms passed, work in the opposite direction, centralising personal data and expanding government surveillance capabilities. Civil society and victims' groups are increasingly excluded from decision-making and investigations concerning, for example, enforced disappearances and human rights. Regarding the regulatory framework for resources for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), January 2025 saw the introduction of new tax obligations for tax-deductible donations, increasing red tape for both donors and recipients. Government financing continues to be intermittent, compounded by a drastic drop in international financial support due to the pause in US foreign aid.

Context

For the first time in history, on 1 June 2025, voting will be carried out [to elect 881](#) judges, ministers and magistrates who will be responsible for pursuing justice in the coming years, as well as establishing the guidelines for Mexico's new justice system. CSOs have warned about the potential implications of the popular vote. For example, there is a risk of nominations from political parties that respond to particular interests. The [work that CSOs](#) are doing to disseminate information on the candidates is therefore key to ensuring informed voting and the future quality of justice in Mexico.

Another significant issue contextually is the recent US policy approach related to migration and the closure of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). According to reports published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), the budgets of 140 shelters throughout Mexico were reduced following the suspension of resources. This will have a negative impact on the attention paid to the basic rights of thousands of migrants, including women, children and the elderly.

In various states around the country, violence continues to permeate society, inhibiting community engagement and affecting the work of [civil society](#). When comparing 2019 to 2025, [CSOs](#) have noted an increase in the incidence of crime, which is one of the leading causes of [internal displacement](#) in Mexico, highlighting the states of Sinaloa, Jalisco and Guanajuato.

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Civil Liberties

Enjoyment of the fundamental civil liberties of expression, association and assembly deteriorated in the initial months of 2025, leading to violence towards and persecution and

censorship of journalists and human rights defenders. This is a trend that reflects the "repressed" rating that the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) assigned to Mexico in 2024.

For example, there were threats to and attacks on freedom of expression in the first months of 2025. The organisations that make up the [Espacio OSC civil society](#) coordination platform have condemned the inefficiency of the [Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists](#). Its failure to guarantee the necessary security measures resulted in the deaths of two people: an environmental activist from Oaxaca and a journalist from Guanajuato. Additionally, the [Article 19](#) human rights organisation issued an alert to demand the urgent protection of 18 journalists from the Mexican state of Chiapas, whose personal data was made public on social media networks, on the grounds of links to organised crime. This case is an example of the intimidation campaigns against freedom of expression in Mexico.

In Quintana Roo, some progress was made regarding the freedom of protest and association. Previously, the Mexican government introduced a [counter-reform to Article 182](#) of the Criminal Code, which made the blockage of public roads during demonstrations a criminal offence punishable by custodial sentence. In the face of social pressure, this punishment was rescinded, representing a step towards guaranteeing the right to protest.

In Oaxaca, approximately 200 people representing six CSOs met to form the new Anti-capitalist Unit of Organised Peoples of Oaxaca (UNAPO), whose purpose is to coordinate native peoples and indigenous communities in the defence of their territories, against the progression of megaprojects. These types of movements are increasingly frequent around the country, due to the lack of response from the authorities to citizen demands.

2. Favourable Legal and Regulatory Framework for Freedom of Association.

As recorded since 2021, the legal frameworks that CSOs must comply with in Mexico continue to present barriers that hinder their development. The resulting additional financial, operational and bureaucratic constraints compound the cutting of public programmes and fiscal reforms.

In this context, January 2025 saw the establishment of a [new obligation](#) for CSOs authorised to issue tax-deductible receipts for donations. According to this provision, organisations that grant donations must comply with the fiscal and administrative obligations of the beneficiary, in addition to formalising a donation agreement for each amount granted or, where appropriate, received. This places an additional administrative burden on both the donor CSO and the recipient.

In addition to the above and following the [transformation](#) of the National Council of Humanities, Sciences and Technologies (CONACYT) into a state secretariat, CSOs dedicated to science and research have reported that this measure has the potential to cause around 121 organisations to face difficulties in renewing their authorisation to receive tax-deductible donations if they cannot comply with the requirements of the tax authority.

Given the significance of this new provision and administrative obstacle, timely monitoring is necessary to measure the impact of relationships between organisations and their financial sustainability.

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Public funding to CSOs has decreased significantly since the previous six-year presidential term, marked by a perceived decrease in support and incentives granted to organisations by the federal government.

This situation has been [exacerbated](#) by the executive order issued by the President of the United States to suspend US foreign development assistance granted to foreign countries, NGOs and international organisations. In 2024, Mexico received around [USD 148 million](#) from US cooperation. Of that, around USD 42 million was allocated directly to CSOs. However, following President Trump's executive order in early 2025, only USD 3.8 million was distributed to CSOs. This will result in a shortfall of USD 38 million needed by CSOs for crucial issues and initiatives in their home country, covering human rights, democracy, governance, justice, peace and security.

At the end of 2024, the Governor of Guanajuato terminated the [Fideicomiso trust structure](#) – which protects voluntary contributions from entrepreneurs to finance social development projects, public security and provide support to CSOs working on these issues – on the grounds of alleged irregularities. This year saw the reactivation, [by order of a judge](#), of the technical committee, which will discuss the new guidelines to allow the revival of the Fideicomiso trust.

The community foundation [Fondo Potosino](#) also warned about non-compliance with funding commitments and irregularities on the part of the Mexican Agency for Integral Family Development (DIF), the government institution in charge of social assistance and child protection. The lack of a united front among CSOs in denouncing the facts makes it difficult to measure the impact of this situation, which is estimated to affect over half of the CSOs in the state.

4. An Open and Responsive State

The State of Mexico [has suffered setbacks](#) in terms of transparency, participation and accountability. Key independent bodies have been weakened, oversight has decreased and perceptions of corruption have increased. Institutionalised community engagement is limited, affecting the government's ability to respond effectively to social demands with openness and democratic accountability.

The first quarter of 2025 saw the approval of the new [Law of Acquisitions, Leases and Services of the Public Sector](#), which provides for the creation of a Digital Public Procurement Platform to replace the current system. This change has caused concern among CSOs like [Transparencia Mexicana](#), which warned of possible risks to transparency, especially in relation to strategic projects. It has pointed out that the new legislation gives the government powers to reserve information, which could hinder citizen access to critical data on the use of public resources.

This is in addition to [the previously reported disbandment of INAI](#), the concern of more than [80 CSOs](#) about the effects of the [reform](#) of the Law on Transparency and Protection of Personal Data, and the [legal actions](#) promoted by citizens and CSOs, in view of the uncertainty surrounding the future of transparency and access to public information in Mexico.

A further issue of note concerns the complaints of organisations and associations of the relatives of disappeared persons, whose right of access to information and participation was violated by being [excluded](#) from the investigation processes following the discovery of [mass graves in Teuchitlán](#), Jalisco. The government's lack of transparency is further highlighted by the crisis of the enforced disappearance of over [127,000 people](#). The government has not sufficiently addressed the needs and demands of the search for truth and justice, despite the activation of [Article 34 of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances](#) (CED). For this reason, over 70 groups called for the [Second National Day of Humanitarian Search](#), which was held in 23 states of the country.

In brief, this snapshot demonstrates a progressive deterioration in the mechanisms of access to information, transparency and accountability, elements that are vital for citizens in demanding accountability and for reporting on any corruption.

5. Political Culture and Discourse in Support of Civil Society

Today, compared to the last presidential election, Mexico's [political culture](#) is marked by greater electoral participation and gains on the basis of the principle of gender parity in the legislature. However, low institutional confidence, the exclusion of minority groups and polarisation within civil society persist.

In recent months, the frequency of negative comments made by the President concerning the government's discourse on civil society has decreased. However, a negative perception remains about the external funding given to CSOs. A prime example is the statement issued by the President following the announcement of the [closure of USAID operations](#) in Mexico, questioning the transparency of the agency and accusing it of financing organisations and research projects that are critical of the government. This position reflects the government's perspective on the work of civil society, as well as the role played by USAID in Mexico.

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Since the previous six-year presidential term and throughout the current administration, Mexico's digital environment has undergone a transformation process driven by legislative reforms under the pretext of prioritising national security. However, these laws walk a fine line between citizen protection and state surveillance.

Several CSOs warn that these initiatives could diminish the right to privacy and digital freedoms. In this context, it is evident how the regulatory framework and technological capabilities of the new administration may lead to a more restrictive and opaque digital environment.

Mexico's [reform initiatives](#) and new laws endanger people's identity and privacy. The first is the [General Law on National Public Security System](#); the second is the [General Law for the National System of Public Security](#).

Groups of organisations such as [R3D](#) and [Social TIC](#) have warned about the potential risks posed by these laws, which include: the centralisation of information, the denial of the citizens' right to choose what information is shared, the government's ability to guarantee the privacy of information, and the possibility of information being compromised. They also call for the formation of a united front to monitor the development and use of this technological platform.

Challenges and Opportunities

The speed at which legislative changes are being introduced in different areas makes it difficult for civil society to respond quickly and function as an effective counterweight to a majority government. This situation has reduced the possibility of actively participating in structural public decision-making.

In addition, the sudden decrease in resources derived from international cooperation, particularly from USAID, has highlighted key issues concerning the development of democracy in Mexico, relating to: human rights, governance, justice, peace and security. In tandem, these actions are hindering the creation of a fully enabling environment.

Social movements are organising themselves in response to the resulting need to express their demands, such as a halt to the construction of megaprojects, including: the [Interoceanic Train](#), the [Saguaro natural gas](#) project and the construction of a military complex in [Bacalar Lagoon](#).

EU SEE

SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY



Funded by
the European Union



DEMOCRACY
REPORTING
INTERNATIONAL



European
Partnership for
Democracy



forus

CONNECT
SUPPORT
INFLUENCE



TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
the global coalition