

Jordan

Country Focus Report

2025



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A) An Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

SIX ENABLING PRINCIPLES

-  **Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms**
-  **Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework**
-  **Accessible and Sustainable Resources**
-  **Open and Responsive State**
-  **Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society**
-  **Access to a Secure Digital Environment**

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the 6 principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

Brief Overview of the Country Context

In 1989, martial law in Jordan was finally lifted by King Hussein, prompting a flourishing of civil society after two decades of severely constrained political and civic expression. This era of political liberalisation, kickstarted by the [spring 1989 protests over IMF-spurred subsidy cuts](#), marked a turning point. People flocked to the opportunity to establish independent institutions — political parties, civil society organisations (CSOs), news outlets, and the like — that had been barred from forming for so long. In the 1989 election, Muslim-Brotherhood-affiliated candidates made [impressive gains](#), securing roughly 22 of the 80 seats. Following the legalisation of political parties in 1992, the Muslim Brotherhood established the Islamic Action Front as its political party. CSOs registered themselves in different sectors like service provision, aid, and advocacy; today, around 6,000 CSOs are registered in Jordan.

But the celebrated early-90s promise of liberalising reforms turned out not to extend much beyond the moment. Steadily since the close of the 90s, the Jordanian government has developed tools for managing popular mobilisation and discontent to keep critical and oppositional voices from civil society in check. Subsequent electoral amendments, particularly a [1993 reform](#) removing multiple balloting, limited the prospects of opposition groups taking a majority. A slate of amendments, such as [1997 amendments to the Press and Publications Law](#), narrowed the scope of newfound freedoms. Then, the early 2000s saw the regime turn to focus on neoliberal economic reforms such as WTO ascension and market liberalisation; the political modernisation promised by 1989 was put on hold.

In Jordan's Arab Spring, a new type of civil society actor emerged alongside established civil society actors. With the *hirak* tribal youth as [prime example](#), these new actors were decentralised, existed outside of the registered civil society system, and came from historic strongholds of royal support, thereby exercising new pressure on the state to strategically respond. Such groups were joined in protests by long-standing groups, such as the urban-concentrated Muslim Brotherhood. The state responded with a series of concessions to protesters — dismissal of the incumbent government, promises of political changes, the recognition of a powerful, independent teachers' union — while in the longer interim incrementalising initiatives such as [electoral reform](#) and decentralisation, and thoroughly [cracking down](#) on prominent *hirak* leaders in the ensuing years.

The state response to the Arab Spring is emblematic of its ['soft security' strategy](#) steadily developed throughout the rest of the 2010s. In this model, dissent and protests that stay

within the regime's established red lines are allowed as a pressure valve release, state action is taken to make subsequent mobilisations more difficult, and selective clear repression tactics are concentrated on arrests and detention of the loudest critics to make examples of them. Now, legal frameworks constraining freedoms of expression (most recently, the [2023 cybercrime law](#)) have evolved to a contemporary situation wherein a wide range of civic activities can be criminalised under broadly defined provisions, and bureaucratic requirements for registration and assembly allow ample room for authorities to intervene. At moments of stress, this is particularly convenient for the state.

These aforementioned tools were used by the state to address the [2018 protests on fuel price hikes](#) and the [2020 crackdown on the teachers union](#); in the former, the protests were permitted in the face of widespread public anger while [public spaces allowing for encampments were slowly obstructed](#); in the latter, the teachers' union was permitted until it coordinated [nationwide labour activity in 2019](#), at which point [the state intervened](#) to harass and dismantle union members until finally dissolving the union. The [solidarity protests with Palestine following 7 October 2023](#) again demonstrate the state's strategic combination of acts of tolerance and repression, wherein authorities allowed large street protests in the immediate months after, while [increasingly applying the cybercrime law](#) to squash expression that critiqued Jordan and the monarch's policies towards Israel (a typical 'red line').

Since July 2024, several developments have overlapped to make the operational space for civil society in Jordan more constrained than at any point in the 2020s. First, the ongoing global decline in development aid — including from the United States, Jordan's largest donor — has placed the financial sustainability of Jordanian CSOs in serious jeopardy. One analyst put succinctly the pertinent danger of this shift: by hollowing out Jordan's civil society in Jordan, the state loses one of its largest ['shock absorbers.'](#) Second, in 2025, Jordan intensified its repression of pro-Palestine activists and of criticism directed at Jordan-Israel relations; this has occurred alongside potential foreign policy shifts, particularly following the inauguration of the second Trump administration in January 2025. Third, in April 2025, the state [banned](#) Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood — an Islamist organisation with a [long and shifting relationship](#) with the monarchy, a leading organiser of pro-Palestine demonstrations, and historically the country's most prominent opposition group. Its political party, the Islamic Action Party, remains active, but the crackdown on such a prominent and popular actor has generated significant uncertainty and produced a chilling effect across the broader landscape of Jordanian civil society, regardless of ideology.

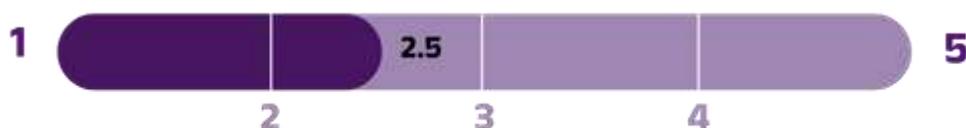
This report evaluates the current enabling environment for civil society in Jordan, with a focus on developments from July 2024 to July 2025.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: ¹



In the Jordanian Constitution, fundamental freedoms like free association, assembly, and expression are framed as conditional rights, guaranteed only to Jordanian citizens and expressly granted only ‘within the limits of the law’ ([Articles 15 and 16](#)). In practice, these constitutional guarantees have long been superseded by a wider body of legislation that enables broad state discretion on the application of the law: the Penal Code; Crime Prevention Law, which allows officials to put any person in ‘administrative detention’ without judicial charge or due process; and more recently the 2023 Cybercrime Law, which all provide legal pathways for restricting civic activity and for ad-hoc detention of individuals. The state maintains a developed coercive apparatus, composed of the military, secret intelligence (*‘mukhabarat’*), and the police. This robust security framework is deployed to keep a tight grip on domestic opposition and dissent that strays from what is deemed acceptable.

Over the past decade, these tools have been utilised along cyclical waves of constraint and partial opening. Following the Arab Spring, limited space re-emerged following promises of reforms, only to contract again after further legal constraints over civic and political activity and [sustained mobilisations](#) in 2018–19 triggered by fuel price increases. Since late 2024, the civic environment has entered another restrictive phase, marked by intensified enforcement against Palestine-related demonstrations and online expression, culminating in 2025 with additional civic space pressures following the [Muslim Brotherhood ban](#). Together,

¹This is a rebased score derived from the CIVICUS Monitor rating published in December 2024. The country is rated as Repressed in the Monitor, with a score of 39/100, which has been converted to fit our 1–5 scale

these dynamics underscore that fundamental freedoms in Jordan remain legally contingent and highly sensitive to shifts in political context, creating an unstable foundation for civil society's operation.

Freedom of Association

Freedom of association in Jordan faces a weak legal framework. The freedom of association in the Constitution is only specified for Jordanian citizens forming 'societies' (a specific legal type of CSO) and political parties that are in line with domestic regulations ([Article 16](#)). For trade unions, the Constitution uses the passive voice ("trade unions shall be formed within the limits of law") and is nested under the proposition that the state is responsible for protecting and enacting such matters ([Article 23](#)). As Principle 2 further elaborates, the legal scope of action allowed to these groups is also constrained.

In practice, the freedom of association is not a guaranteed premise for Jordanian civil society, a gap that is especially problematic for independent actors and social movements. The absence of government approval — whether tacit or explicit — often becomes grounds for authorities to shut down both formal and informal groups. This includes cases in which burdensome administrative requirements are not fully met (see Principle 2 for legal requirements for formal CSOs and media organisations), such as the [May 2024 raid on the offices of Al-Yarmouk Television](#), a Brotherhood-affiliated channel. Freedom of association has also been undermined through the discretionary dissolutions of several political parties, a practice that [Jordanian courts upheld in 2024](#) despite the [electoral law reforms enacted in 2022](#).

The [Jordanian Teachers' Syndicate](#) (JTS) offers an illustrative example of the limits of freedom of association in Jordan, particularly for labour. First formed as an independent union, it was legalised as a government concession to Arab Spring-era demands. But the state had long been wary of the JTS, particularly its sizeable representation of Muslim Brotherhood members on its central committee. Having organised labour activity for salary increases in 2019 and subsequent protests against its 2020 shutdown, the JTS has faced a [series of waves of repression in recent years](#), its leaders detained and a two-year closure ordered in 2020. The general public expressed support for the JTS during its 2019 labour actions, and understood its 2020 shutdown and subsequent government repression as politically motivated. In July 2025, the effective last step in outlawing the long-embattled teachers' union had been carried out — the law that Parliament had passed, allowing for the JTS's formation, [had finally been ruled unconstitutional](#). This came a couple months after Jordan [banned the Muslim Brotherhood on charges of weapons manufacturing operations](#). The Jordanian Brotherhood had been the state's largest organised opposition group for decades, and so its ban in April 2025 sent chilling effects across civic activity in Jordan.

This ruling also closed the 'side door' through which the JTS had been legalised. For more than five decades, [no new unions have been formed](#). Instead, workers are constrained to [17 official, state-supervised trade unions](#) under the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions umbrella body. Independent unions, unofficial because of their inability to be legalised, have formed in the past decade, but they face [logistic hurdles and state harassment](#).

Finally, elected representative bodies are also subject to dissolution by the state. This becomes typical practice in months preceding the elections. In July 2025, municipal and

governorate councils were dissolved ahead of their elected term's end. Parliament itself is regularly dissolved by royal decree ahead of parliamentary elections, as it has been in [2024](#), [2020](#), [2016](#), [2012](#), [2009](#), and [2001](#). Dissolving Parliament allows the king to dismiss an existing government in order to signal responsiveness to political dissatisfaction and/or trigger early elections.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Freedom of assembly is only specified in Jordan's [Constitution](#) to the extent of rights for 'meetings' (Article 16i) and 'address[ing] the public authorities' (article 17) that are in accordance with legal regulation. So, such regulations impose a 48-hour notification period for public meetings/marches and their routes (thus making spontaneous demonstrations illegal), prohibitions on specific slogan and imagery, as well as a clause that such assemblies still remain subject to dispersion by authorities, per the Constitution (Article 16i), [Assembly Law No. 7 \(2004\)](#), and [Instructions Regulating Public Assemblies and Demonstrations](#) (2011).

In practice, this means that protests and marches typically occur in Jordan to the extent that they are permitted by the authorities, and often as a calculated release valve for public expression. Some spontaneous protests are indeed allowed, but as they're not registered, they have complete legal basis for dispersion. For example, during the Arab Spring, there was a [noted difference](#) between state tolerance for Islamist-led protests in Jordan's capital city of Amman, which adhered to state redlines and protocol, and state repression of the more radical and subversive protests of the grassroots *hirak* groups — decentralised protest movements that emerged in provincial towns and historic tribal strongholds, largely led by youth. This is not to say that protests cannot wield political pressure, or that protests cannot represent mass interests; but public energy to sustain protests, already operating within limited freedoms of assembly, often disperses after the state makes token concessions, such as the prime minister turnover in the case of the [2018 protests on austerity measures](#).

Following 7 October 2023 and the onset of the Israeli genocide in Gaza, large street pro-Palestine protests broke out on a near weekly basis. Jordan has normalised relations with Israel, including through unpopular economic deals, which the state tries to [shield from scrutiny](#); in this context, the state was notably permissive at the outset of the Israeli genocide towards domestic protests, which generally followed [established scripts of previous pro-Palestine protests](#). But as these protests continued into the spring of 2024, the state crackdown increased to forcibly disperse protests. Violence and detention of peaceful demonstrators have hampered the full exercise of the freedom of assembly. For example, in March 2024, security forces employed [excessive force at protests](#) around Amman's Israeli embassy, including tear gas and beating, as the crowd pressed in — typically, permitted protests in solidarity with Palestine adhere to the implicit boundary of not attempting to reach the embassy. Ultimately, [authorities detained 500 individuals](#).

The state's permissiveness towards protest and peaceful assembly narrowed again in 2025. From March onward, authorities have refused permission in [several cases](#) for solidarity protests with Palestine to take place. This limitation on protests coincided with the onset of the Trump administration and the commencement of negotiations between Jordanian and American counterparts on the shape of their bilateral relationship, suggesting a heightened sensitivity to political signaling during this period. The limited number of protests in 2025 is also due to the chilling effect of the April 2025 Muslim Brotherhood ban, which has also

resulted in self-imposed restrictions by civil society. In wanting to avoid friction with the state, several organisers have reduced planned Palestine solidarity actions, and are instead lying in wait for state signals that they are able to proceed.

Freedom of Expression

According to the [Press and Publication Law of 1998](#), all Jordanian citizens are guaranteed freedom of opinion, including the right of expressing such opinion “freely through speech, writing, photography, drawing, and all other means of expression and information” (Article 3). This represents a step further than the [Constitution](#), wherein freedoms of speech, expression, press, and publications are only allowed “within the limits of the law” (Article 15).

However, several existing laws (see Principle 2) manifestly overturn this freedom of expression. First, media organisations are constrained by registration requirements, and the [Publication Law's 2012 amendments](#) added [further government authorisation constraints](#) for essentially nearly all online sites, bringing them under the mantle of tacit state approval. This has historically been one avenue of justification to harass media organisations over their content, or to block news sites outright. Further, the Penal Code, the Crime Prevention Law, and the Cybercrime Law use broad clauses to allow for essentially discretionary detention, particularly of activists and journalists. The latter is a particularly notable development — near the end of 2023, the contentious [Cybercrime Law No. 17 \(2023\)](#) was passed, replacing an already strict 2015 law (Information Systems and Cyber Crime Law no. 27 of 2015), despite [local](#) and [international](#) pushback. By criminalising vaguely-defined offences such as ‘false news,’ promoting strife,’ and ‘defamation of religion,’ the law allows for broad interpretations to restrict freedom of expression and suppress dissent. Jordan’s coercive apparatus is known for monitoring closely both traditional and social media expression for potential violations. Analysts have noted how regular legal amendments to pertinent laws mentioned above can be [functionally applied](#) to restrict media expression.

[Gag orders](#) are a common mechanism to induce a media blackout on a topic after the government has issued its point of view on a matter. Commonly understood redlines in Jordanian discourse include critique of the monarchy, of Jordan’s key allies, and of state collaboration with Israel. The one domestic outlet that reported on the Pandora Papers, in which the king was found to be using secret offshore accounts to buy foreign property, [received a call from Jordanian security to take down the story](#). It is no wonder that in each and every year from 2014-2023 (except 2019, when the survey was not conducted due to COVID), [over 90% of Jordanian journalists](#) surveyed by the CDFJ have answered ‘yes’ to whether notable self-censorship is practised among the profession.

Despite [renewed civil society calls in 2024](#) to revoke the cybercrime law, and even Jordan's accepting of its 2024 Universal Periodic Review’s [recommendation](#) to reassess the law, there has been no state progress on the matter. Instead, and quite in the opposite direction, civil society experts have noted that 2024 and 2025 have been witness to increased direct use of the 2023 cybercrime law to detain and arrest individuals as retaliation for (mostly online) political expression.

Between August 2023-24, Jordanian authorities charged [hundreds of people](#) under the cybercrime law for social media posts, such as those that criticised Jordan’s policies towards Israel. Throughout 2024, [reporters](#) were [arrested](#) for covering pro-Palestine protests. In June 2024, [Hiba Abu Taha](#) became the first journalist sentenced to prison under the 2023 cybercrime law, followed by [Ahmad Hassan Al-Zoubi](#) in July 2024; the online expression triggering each journalist’s detention had been in connection with Jordan-Israel relations and

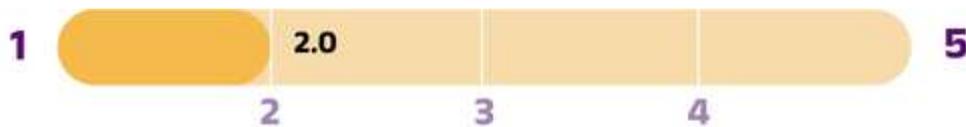
Jordan's repression of labour activity, respectively. The SKeyes Center at the Samir Kassir Foundation logged restrictions on media freedoms in Jordan for opposing Israel's war on Gaza, noting [61 incidents over the 2024 year](#), including 8 detentions, 5 arrests, 7 prison sentences, and 6 lawsuits.

The year 2025 saw the continued use of the 2023 cybercrime law, notably in arresting a BDS Jordan coordinator, [Hamza Khader](#), over a call for a boycott of Israel; an Instagram activist, [Ayman Abli](#), likely over critique of domestic insensitivity over the genocide in Gaza; and a publisher, [Omar Al Zayoud](#), following [a complaint](#) about how a former PM was reported on in his news site. [Ayman Sanduqa's](#) criticism of Jordan's relations with Israel in 2023 also came to a head in July 2025, where he earned a felony conviction of inciting against the political regime under the Penal Code and a prison sentence of 5 years. It is important to stress that the cybercrime law has been used to silence political commentary across the spectrum, including those critical of the Muslim Brotherhood ban. In 2025, the law was also used to arrest parliamentarian [Yanal Freihat](#) for criticising government allegations regarding the Muslim Brotherhood, political analyst [Ahmed Abu Ghnima](#), and Youtuber Ali Tarawneh.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



This principle examines the extent to which the legal and regulatory framework in Jordan allows for the freedom of association. In addition to requiring prior approval, the wide set of bureaucratic requirements for registration can later be basis for unnecessary interventions for authorities, such as the blocking of a news website until it fixes an administrative error. The [2008 Societies Law \(amended in 2009\)](#) governs the vast majority of Jordan’s CSOs, placing limits on scope of work (prohibiting ‘political or religious goals’) and introducing a wide set. In recent years, some interest by authorities has arisen in reforming the Societies Law, but no legal steps have been taken to date.

Registration

Here, we will review the registration process for ‘societies’ (most common legal form for NGOs), trade unions, and media organisations. Each category is governed by different laws. The process to establish and register CSOs in Jordan remains largely subject to government approval and discretion. For most legal forms of CSOs, prior government approval is required, with appeal mechanisms existing for denials, and only Jordanian nationals are able to establish them. As new trade unions require approval as well, this has functionally discouraged new trade unions from attempting to register as the state intends its existing official trade unions to contain all labour activity.

The vast majority of Jordanian registered organisations ([5,913 organisations as of 21 October 2025](#)) are registered as ‘societies,’ which also include the ‘private society’ and ‘closed society’ subclassifications. These societies are registered by the Ministry of Social

Development (specifically, the Board of Directors of the Register of Societies).² Societies are regulated by the [Societies Law No. 51 \(2008, amended in 2009\)](#). Among other requirements, a society must submit its bylaws, financial statements, founding members - who must consist of only Jordanian nationals - and commit to not having “political or religious goals.” After an application is submitted, the Board has 60 days to issue a decision on registration, with a non-answer entailing an approval. If an application is missing requirements, the prospective society has six months to correct them and continue the application. Although denials require justification, the specific kind of justification is unspecified in the law and makes appeal processes difficult. Denials to formation can be appealed before the Supreme Administrative Court—but denials may not necessarily include explanations, making denials difficult to appeal in practice. Denials of CSO registration are rare, although this is partially because CSO applications unlikely to be successful are typically not made in the first place.

Establishing a local Jordanian branch of regional/international organisations faces increased prerequisites. Branches of foreign CSOs (e.g., INGOs) can indeed be registered in Jordan as a society—but not only does the Jordan branch have to adhere to the requirements of a society (e.g., not work towards political/religious goals), but the umbrella organisation itself has to as well. Functionally, this results in those trying to establish local branches of organisations considered by the state to have ‘political’ interests or agendas to look for administrative workarounds, in order for the local branch to be considered separate from the host organisation in question. These ‘branches of foreign societies’ are also unable to receive local funding (including through donations) except with special permission. They’re also subject to the same constraints on foreign funding for regular societies elaborated in Principle 3, including in receiving money from their host organisations.

Trade unions and employers’ unions in Jordan are governed under different legal frameworks. Trade unions fall under the [Labour Law No. 8 \(1996, last amended 2023\)](#), require prior government approval, and can only be founded by Jordanian citizens. In practice, no new trade unions have been approved by the Tripartite Commission for nearly five decades. There are 17 official trade unions, all members of the state-controlled General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), which provide the only legally recognised means of conducting labour activity.

By contrast, *employers’ unions* (such as those for doctors, engineers, lawyers, and pharmacists) are established under their own sector-specific laws and regulate licensing, ethics, and professional standards. They are not governed by the Labour Law and operate outside the GFTU framework.

The Jordanian Teachers’ Syndicate (JTS) was neither a professional association nor a standard trade union. It was created as a special case in 2011 [through its own law](#) (Law No. 14 of 2011), passed by Parliament as a concession to the Arab Spring protests. This made it unique, a union-like body outside the Law framework. In July 2025, [the higher courts ruled the JTS law unconstitutional](#), setting a precedent that prevents Parliament from legalising any future syndicates or unions outside the official trade unions outlined in the Labour Law.

The most visible labour campaigns in the last two decades — by the Teachers’ Syndicate, Aqaba Port industrial workers, and public sector day-wage labourers — operated outside legalised unions and were able to gain concessions from the state. However, the upsurge in

² The former classification of non-profit companies, which were registered at the Ministry of Industry and Trade and among other requirements included a small CSO membership between 3-20 members, has now been absorbed into the private societies classification.

labour activity from the late 2000s on to the Arab Spring was quelled in the late 2010s amidst state repression, concession rollbacks, and the ensuing COVID-era crackdown on civil society activity. As a result of strictures on labour organisation, several independent unions, including those with a large migrant worker membership, formed during the last decade — generally under the umbrella of the General Federation of *Independent* Trade Unions (italicised by author) — are not recognised by the state. They face several challenges with their lack of formalisation, including the inability to collect dues from members.

The [Press and Publications Law of 1998](#) governs media organisations in Jordan which, as of a 2012 amendment, included news sites. Founders must be Jordanian nationals. All media organisations must be registered with the government and obtain a licence, which requires an approval process. The law merely specifies that denials of a licence should be ‘justified.’ Chief editors of a publication, who are legally responsible for its content, must be Jordanian and registered as an official ‘journalist’ under the Jordan Press Association.

Operational Environment

The operational autonomy legally sanctioned for CSOs is constrained.

This begins at the point of registration, in the restrictions on operational freedom present in the [Societies Law](#), which covers the overwhelming majority of CSOs. Importantly, societies agree to not have “political or religious goals”, which are not further defined in the legislation. This legal restriction limits civil society organisations’ ability to operate freely, effectively barring them from engaging in activities related to governance, democracy, or any form of political advocacy.

Then, there are several mechanisms entailing state oversight of CSO operations. Authorities must be informed of the CSO’s annual internal meetings two weeks in advance, and must be able to attend, and plans must be submitted to the government in advance. Relevant government ministries should also be informed of non-internal events 48 hours in advance. Historically, this has added to the burden of CSOs, though streamlining has occurred since the end of 2023.

Most funding-related activities for CSOs are notably restricted. As specified in the [Societies Law](#) (Article 17), CSOs are required to store all their funds in Jordanian bank accounts. Receiving foreign funds requires prior approval from the Council of Ministers, which can sometimes entail interference in project components, and raising donations from Jordan’s fledgling fundraising scene faces bureaucratic requirements as well (both elaborated more in Principle 3).

As all legally recognised trade unions need to be under the umbrella of the state-financed and controlled General Federation of Trade Unions, political autonomy of labour activity within formal organisations is very constrained.

Licences for media organisations are issued on a specific scope of work, and the media organisation must operate within these. The [Press and Publications Law](#) includes a commitment not to conflict with “values of the Arab and Islamic nation” and not to publish material that could “incite violence or discord among citizens” (Article 5 and 7, respectively). Printing presses are explicitly forbidden to publish content that falls under wide-ranging provisions, such as that which “harms national unity, incites crime, provokes grudges, or

sows the seeds of hate”, is unauthorized information on the military, and disparages the monarchy.

Protection from Interference

Most CSOs can be dissolved by relevant authorities without judicial oversight. For example, the Minister of Social Development ([Societies Law, Article 19](#)) possesses significant authority to dissolve or suspend societies, and the Minister of Labour ([Labour Law, Article 116](#)) has similar powers over labour unions and business associations (although this has not been exercised in the past four decades). While it is possible to appeal orders of dissolution here to the Supreme Administrative Court, it is rare for appeals to prevent the closure of targeted organisations.

For societies, the conditions/processes for suspension or dissolution of organisations by the MoSD’s Societies Registry is outlined in the Societies Law (2008, amended 2009). In addition to conditions such as if the society violates the Societies Law or its own bylaws, if it has ceased performing its work for a year, submitted false/forced statements, dissolution is also allowed on the vaguely-defined act of "harming public order" or "engaging in unauthorised political activity." This allows some legal room for the state to dissolve CSOs with discretion, particularly based on shifts in the political environment. Generally, dissolving a CSO directly is rare, so these provisions are seldomly drawn upon. However 2025 marks a distinction: after the Muslim Brotherhood ban in April, [several charities and other organisations](#) associated with the Brotherhood were dissolved or dissolved themselves on this basis.

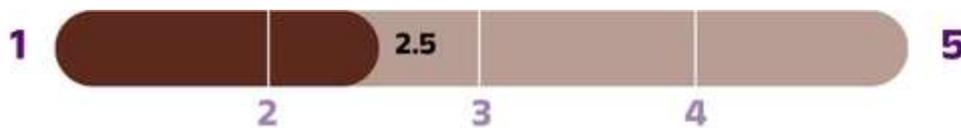
The Societies Law allows for other cases of interference from authorities. If funding received does not follow the correct process through the Council of Ministers, the Council is able to seize the funds (Article 17). A CSO’s board of directors may be replaced with a temporary board by authorities given violations of the Societies Law’s requirements, such as not disclosing all funding (Article 19).

Under the [Press and Publications Law of 1998](#), publication licences for media organisations can be cancelled under several provisions, including not meeting stated minimum frequencies of publishing content, and if it’s considered to have violated the terms of its licensing (such as operating outside the field of specialisation it indicated in its application). The chief editor can be subject to lawsuits for several violations.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



Civil society in Jordan faces a challenging resources environment, framed by a contradiction: the historic dependence of Jordan on external aid, and its limited trickle to civil society, which must operate within constraints of project-based funding and rigid donor priorities. Within this macro context are challenges in accessing funding on the procedural level — longstanding oversight by state authorities for organisations to receive foreign funding, for which they must receive pre-approval, and the recent shrinking of the global donor landscape.

Accessibility

What are the options for a local Jordanian CSO to access resources? The funding available through the government — specifically the Ministry of Social Development’s Society Support Fund, whose procedures are often in flux — is extremely limited. If the CSO turns to domestic donations, it finds that Jordan faces a weak philanthropic sector, with [increasing legal constraints on fundraising](#). Individual donations are [typically limited to one-time transfers](#), and CSOs face a series of hoops, including proving themselves as a charity, extensive prior documentation requirements, and a limit of two campaigns a year for a given activity. Tax incentives for local donations remain weak or nonexistent.

Then, there is foreign funding. [According to a ICNL study from 2018](#), half of surveyed CSOs in Jordan received foreign funding. To access foreign funding, Jordanian organisations must obtain prior approval from the Council of Ministers, which can take over a month. This time-intensive process often results in delays, discretionary application, and occasional denials. The vast majority of foreign funding requests are ultimately approved, but the process remains lengthy and burdensome, with frequent administrative delays and political scrutiny. Formerly, after 30 days had passed with no response from the Council after submitting a foreign funding request, the request would automatically be approved; this clause was

[removed in December 2023](#). Before granting approval, authorities sometimes interfere in the design, objectives, and components of proposed projects.

Denials of funding requests are rare, but not unheard of. Typically, they occur in challenges to the independence of CSOs, where organisations are asked to make some changes to project activities. Organisations must also then exert considerable effort to secure approval for projects through mediation and the use of one's personal connections to secure services and benefits ('*wasta*'). The COVID-19 period witnessed a [conspicuous upsurge](#) in denials, with the Council deciding a misalignment of project priorities, or even instances of foreign funds being indirectly rechanneled to the state via pressure. The complex legal framework regarding registration can be basis for rejection as well. In 2017, a newspaper registered as a *not-for-profit company* received a memo from the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supplies' Companies Control Department (CCD) [which argued that its legal status as a not-for-profit company prohibited it from receiving foreign funds](#).

In addition to state hindrances, CS actors must navigate a competitive and extensive process to apply for bids. Established CSOs in the capital, particularly royal and national organisations, with a history of relationships with donors/partners and professionalised familiarity with how to write a 'good proposal', fare much better in the bidding process than small, local grassroots organisations outside the centre without such institutional resources. To be best advantaged in this process, small CSOs must devote already limited staff to proposal writing in order to stay financially afloat.

These challenges on the process of accessing resources, exist against the backdrop of shrinking foreign aid, a worldwide phenomenon but especially prevalent in the aid state of Jordan. Fears of funding shortfalls in Jordan's CSO sector were elaborately realised in 2025, where shifts in the international donor landscape, particularly after the January 2025 US presidential change, but coupled with shifts from other bilateral partners, resulted in a significant disruption to resource flows to Jordan's CS sector, for example, USAID projects in areas not deemed critical, such as in [health and gender-targeted programmes](#). Funding that was resumed after early 2025 diplomatic manoeuvres seem to be mostly in direct and military aid, [and a small handful of former USAID areas of work, such as the water sector](#). This leaves CSOs that have slowly built up expertise in areas such as governance, advocacy, and research, suddenly in the lurch.

Finally, civil society actors also face financial access challenges in Jordan's private sector. A lack of clear signals from financial regulators means that bank treatment of CSOs is not uniform. For example, uneven de-risking measures, associated with anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing initiatives, can complicate basic financial transactions.

Effectiveness

Civil society actors in Jordan, particularly local, grassroots, and smaller CSOs, face constraints on their ability to perform in respect of their goals as effectively as preferred. Many donors set priorities and thematic focuses that do not always align with local agendas or strategic goals of CSOs, particularly in politically sensitive areas. CSOs must devote resources, including personnel, to fulfill donor reporting requirements, which can be sometimes inefficient. The space for CSOs to negotiate or adapt funding conditions remains limited, and flexibility in program design or emergency response is often constrained. Government institutions also maintain influence over how external funds are used, not only

during the approval process but also in terms of implementation oversight. This includes interventions in project content, objectives, and partner selection, reducing operational independence.

Jordan relies heavily on foreign aid, primarily in the form of grants or concessional loans. The United States, World Bank, Germany, and the EU figure as [top donors](#). In the 2010s, an influx of humanitarian aid and donor funding swarmed into Jordan, in parallel with a number of international organisations moving their regional headquarters to Amman. From 2013-2020, Jordan received at least US\$500 million in yearly humanitarian aid (with over US\$900 million yearly from 2013-2016) as [reported to](#) the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Theoretically, this increased availability for funding for Jordanian CSOs, either from international donors directly or Jordanian branches of international CSOs (more popularly referred to as INGOs). Yet despite outside aid inflows, the amount of humanitarian aid that reaches local civil society actors, after first being trickled down through international NGOs, is unclear. No statistics exist to capture how much of Jordan's humanitarian aid is received by local and national organisations.

Instead, questions remain as to the degree to which 'localisation' has succeeded in Jordan. Most international funding flows first to local offices of international development agencies and INGOs. [This dynamic considers local CSOs \(including community-based organisations\) as "implementation partners"](#); in many cases, 'sub-contractor' more descriptively captures the relationship. Reliance on foreign donors also entails being subject to their rapid shifts in focus. In Jordan, the [Syrian refugee crisis](#) and [COVID-19 pandemic](#) are both examples of this effect, wherein donor hyper-fixation on a new crisis concentrates funding on a response, which either leaves CSOs whose programming does not *directly* address said crisis in the lurch, or 'distorts' how CSOs orient their programming in order to retain donor funding despite their missions and organisational strengths.

Donor reliance of CSOs also compromises their operational independence, as CSOs must prioritise donor-set agendas rather than autonomously addressing local needs and aspirations. International donors typically emphasise short-term projects and allocate funding accordingly, and their hesitance to cover operational expenses or invest in long-term capacity building ultimately restricts CSOs' ability to enhance their governance structures and develop their staff.

The political conditions of aid, too, came to the fore in 2024 as [donors pressured local CSOs to remain 'neutral' on the Israeli assault on Gaza](#). In some cases since May 2024, the existing funding for CS actors has become more politically conditioned by donors on politically unacceptable stances towards Israeli occupation and Palestinian resistance, as noted in an internal 2025 brief by the HIMAM Coordination Committee for Civil Society Organisations. After 7 October 2023, some CSOs in Jordan have faced friction with donors or have decided to sever ties.

Historically, the CSO sector in Jordan has been marked by intra-sector competitiveness, particularly in relation to winning contracts from donors. However, the last decade has also seen efforts at establishing civil society coalitions and networks, such as [HIMAM](#), to share resources and coordinate knowledge-sharing, particularly on topics like internal CSO governance measures and challenges. Such coalitions have also provided opportunities to

issue collective reflections on the state of the CSO sector, such as examining the [stilted form of 'localisation' in Jordan](#).

Sustainability

Most available funding (aka. foreign funding) for Jordan's CS sector remains inconsistent and entrenches donor-reliance. The 'sub-contractor' description of relationships between local CSOs and large INGOs rings even more true when considering the nature of donor programming. Foreign donor funding received by Jordanian CSOs is often scoped to activity or project deliverables, rather than supporting CSO core operations or real capacities. As a result, such funding often strengthens a Jordanian CSO's dependence on such international relief agencies, while limiting their ability to sustainably grow their mandates and capabilities beyond service-delivery. And, at the same time, INGOs and international donors pass down increased compliance costs with each project.

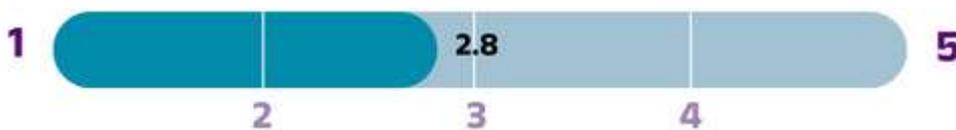
Few mechanisms, both within and outside of foreign funding (such as state support), exist to support income-generating activities — this Principle's earlier section discussed the challenges with relying on donation mechanisms. There is a marked absence of tangible government strategies meant to bolster self-reliance or support civil society resilience. Consequently, this heavy reliance on donor funding makes CSOs vulnerable to external political shifts and funding cycles. At the same time, it hampers the ability of organisations to invest in long-term development, maintain or train experienced staff, or diversify their funding models. Limited core funding means CSOs have difficulty scaling and expanding capacity.

The year 2025, wherein the CS sector's reliance on a limited number of donors (esp. foreign governmental and multilateral institutions) was completely exposed, serves as a good example. The pause or termination of several large-scale programmes—especially those funded by the U.S. and certain EU countries—had a direct impact on staffing, programme continuity, and strategic planning capacities. Even before 2025, delays in donor funding disbursement were common, and when they occur staff salaries can be put on pause. Then in 2025, [hundreds of workers were terminated in the weeks following the 2025 USAID cuts](#). The [April 2025 resumption](#) of critical American programmes in Jordan restored only a partial measure of confidence for the CSO sector on the availability of US-based funds in the future. Within these changes, some in the CSO sector have begun broader conversations on how to promote both vertical and horizontal partnerships, and a solidarity system, in order to chart a more resilient future for the sector.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



The last decade has seen an increase in mechanisms for civil society and the government to formally engage, particularly through the [increase of formal civil society consultations](#) in relation to official policymaking processes or participation in international processes such as the Universal Periodic Review. However, relations should still be considered limited. As noted by civil society experts, government officials frequently perceive CSOs as mere service providers instead of collaborative partners in governance. A small number of civil society members have been able to achieve exalted status in monitoring and contributing to formal decision-making processes. There have been increased channels for formal feedback and oversight mechanisms. The [Economic and Social Council](#) governmental body creates an important link between the government and partners such as civil society, the private sector and labour unions, on economic and social policy issues. The state-affiliated institution [National Centre for Human Rights](#) monitors and provides feedback on various legal implementations, such as that of the Cybercrime Law. Finally, Jordan is a member of the [Open Government Partnership \(OGP\)](#), first launched in 2011. In effect, several aims of the OGP coincide with seeking to advance Principle 4 through promoting state transparency, participation, and accountability.

Transparency

Jordan's legal framework governing transparency has made some strides in the last two decades — its [2007 right-to-information law](#) was the [first of its kind in an Arab country](#). While the right for public access to information was hinted at in Jordan's [constitution](#) (Article 15 and 17), this law directly provided a legal framework within which such a right was governed. Despite a [2024 revision](#), however, several legal gaps problematise the practical use of the

law for civil society actors — such as broad exceptions allowing for discretionary implementation and vagueness about implementing mechanisms.

The [initial 2007 Law of Guarantee of Access to Information](#) provided for the right to obtain government information for citizens, the obligation of officials to disclose, and created a dedicated governmental body (Information Council). Its score of a mere 56/150 in the global [Right to Information Rating](#), however, reflected several [civil society criticisms](#) of the 2007 law: its many exceptions (such as conditioning the right to information under a “legitimate interest” provision), the lack of clarity on how information was categorised (including what information was justifiably “classified”), a clunky and ineffective implementation strategy, and the composition of the dedicated government body. The law included widespread exemptions for non-disclosure, such as ‘information that may harm national defence, state security, or foreign policy’ (Article 12), and furthermore, entirely exempt Jordan’s military, secret intelligence, and civil policing bodies — aka. Jordan’s entire coercive apparatus for regulating domestic dissent and expression — from the law (Article 8).

In April 2024, [the 2007 law was successfully amended](#), and a Bylaw for Assessing the Impact of Legislation was adopted. These reforms form part of Jordan’s commitments to the OGP process, which the country joined in 2011 and which included improving the RTI legislative framework. ([UNESCO](#) has [partially facilitated](#) capacity-building for following these amendments.) Positive changes included opening the composition of the Information Council to include more relevant stakeholders; introducing further requirements for public bodies to proactively and periodically publish essential information; requiring each government department’s appointment of a person specifically responsible for processing information requests, and setting a 15-day deadline for institutions to respond to or reject requests (in most cases). Rejections must state if the requested information is not available, including if it’s been destroyed, though failure of a governmental body to respond to a request in 30 days is automatically considered a refusal (Article 9).

Complaints can be made to the Information Council in cases of rejection or untimely response (Article 16). Further rejection appeals fall under the jurisdiction of the Administrative Court, though this is often a lengthy and unsuccessful process, and the law includes no specifications for the mechanisms for its implementation (Article 16).

At the same time, the 2024 law keeps the right to access information conditioned on ‘legitimate interest or legitimate reason’ (which remains unspecified), continues to allow for broad categories of non-disclosure (including what constitutes ‘classified’ information), and reiterates disclosure requirements for civil society organisations. Notably, amendments were once proposed to remove the ‘legitimate interest’ clause; they were [never passed](#) by Parliament. Finally, there are still no consequences in the law for non-compliance with the RTI, only additional procedural steps.

Many prominent government bodies do now publish documents on their website, such as legislation (laws, regulations, instructions), programme updates (especially on initiatives supported by international partners), and periodic reports (including on budget). Mechanisms to submit an information request have been adopted by several government bodies, such as the [Department of Statistics](#), [Ministry of Interior](#), and [Securities Commission](#), whose websites have streamlined request forms for visitors. But when looking at the data, we come away with a view of uneven adoption of the right-to-information framework across government bodies. In 2023, [only 55 government entities](#) responded to the Information Council’s request to furnish statistics; over 100 government entities exist. As a result, statistics indicating that

[94% of 3,062 submitted information requests](#) were responded to in 2024 should be interpreted with caution. While suggesting a high amount of adoption and compliance across certain government bodies, they almost certainly do not represent the entire scope of requests for access across all bodies.

Furthermore, the data on information requests [raises an interesting observation](#) as it seems to be very rarely used by individuals identifying as journalists. A key question to ask about Jordan's RTI framework is the degree to which they facilitate information access in the public interest. In one famous case, an attempt to use the RTI law to access information about Jordan's 2014 gas deal with Israel was responded to with [a denial on the basis of "sensitive information."](#) Importantly, this denial of information occurred despite the fact that such an agreement could arguably be constituted as a violation of the [Constitution](#), which requires oversight by the National Assembly (Article 33).

Despite the RTI's amendments, it remains subservient to discretion, and does not override other prominent legislation, such as the [Protection of the State's Secrets and Documents Law \(no. 50 of 1971\)](#), which allows for the broad classification of information as classified and restricted (such as that which negatively affects 'public morale'). Accordingly, the 2024 amendments to Jordan's RTI law have been [characterised by some as a missed opportunity](#).

Participation

Generally, the scope of formal consultations, especially those for *government*-led policy processes, has been constrained and perfunctory. There is [no institutionalised framework](#) for requiring civil society input. Participation is still often ad hoc, selective, and often perceived as symbolic rather than influential. For example, participation often solicits recognised CS actors, often CSOs, as opposed to informal groups such as leaders of prominent social movements. Within CSOs, royal NGOs and INGOs are prioritised for government engagements (often depending on pre-existing personal connections), whereas local CSOs, especially those outside of Amman's capital centre, are [marginalised](#). Both the structure and practice of participation are still developing — for example, CSOs need to develop ability to build relationships with decision-makers, present evidence-based positions, and engage strategically with both the government and parliament.

Many of Jordan's international processes do procedurally solicit civil society input, such as the [Universal Periodic Review](#) (under the UN Human Rights Council), the [Nationally Determined Contributions](#) (under the Paris Agreement), and [Voluntary National Review](#) (under the Sustainable Development Goals). In these venues, a handful of CSOs often participate. In particular, the UN UPR process (4th cycle, concluded in 2024) contained joint submissions by several CSOs across Jordan, informing outcomes and recommendations. Participation does generally allow for different modalities — online, in-person, and hybrid.

Mechanisms for civil society input have also increasingly been established at the national level. For the last several years, the Cabinet has published draft laws and regulations on the Prime Minister's website (the Bureau of Opinion and Legislation), asking stakeholders to submit comments within two weeks. This practice has helped formalise and regularise the policy consultation process. CSOs that focus on policy have established ways to communicate with government officials, both at the ministerial level and below. The willingness to engage with CS actors typically varies across government bodies. Particular ones — for example, the [Ministry of Environment](#) — are known for more openness to CSO feedback and participation. In addition, CSOs often channel their input through specialised councils and commissions that act as intermediaries between civil society and the state.

Examples include the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCD), and the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA). These bodies provide structured entry points for CSOs to influence policy in specific thematic areas such as gender, disability rights, and family affairs.

Parliament can invite CSOs to specialised committees and solicit their input. Notably, experts have observed that the new government, which was appointed in September 2024, is more open to CS involvement and feedback. For several government processes, particularly those on economic issues, independent CSOs are now being invited for consultation, both formal and personal, and including through parliamentary committees. In previous years, participation here would have been limited to government-affiliated NGOs. This government's outreach to CSOs seems to be soliciting open discussion more than usual — for example, on the government's forthcoming economic plan, and state plans on financing for development. Experts have also noted that new ministers have reached out to several prominent CS actors for feedback on topics like the current Societies Law.

Accountability

The Jordanian government's feedback on the impact and outcomes of CS consultations, and CS engagement generally speaking, is limited. Although consultations with the current government have grown more frequent in past months, feedback loops between civil society engagement, and their outcomes, are weak. The 2023 cybercrime law, for example, has faced widespread criticism from civil society, and was even [singled out for need of revision in Jordan's 2024 UPR](#). Nevertheless, the law remains.

While there is sometimes documentation of civil society consultation in government processes, particularly when processes formally require consultation (e.g., Jordan's Nationally Determined Contributions process), there is no systematic approach to documenting how it was used or, even more importantly, why certain inputs are accepted or rejected. This limits the ability of CSOs to follow up or contest. Legal appeals to government decisions — for example, for countering rejections of access to information requests through a suit at the Administrative Court — often result in protracted, and likely unsuccessful cases.

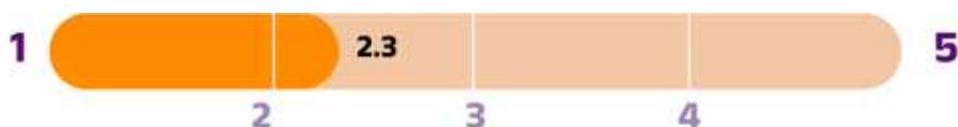
Overall, while civil society actors have been increasingly engaged in formal consultation processes, state accountability mechanisms toward civil society remain underdeveloped, with little effective formal mechanisms for contestation. Again, as several consultation processes are still conducted on the personal level, formal mechanisms are simply not available in those circumstances. The reliance of the state on certain prominent, state-connected CSOs for civil society consultation can lead to a tokenistic engagement with those CSOs at the expense of accountable participatory engagement with more critical actors. Instances where CSOs have successfully pushed for transparency/policy change are isolated, rather than outcomes of an institutionalised accountability process.



PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



Civil society actors in Jordan face different public perceptions depending on the type of actor involved, but across the spectrum, discourse has become more polarised amid a rise in nationalist and security-focused narratives. Formal CSOs continue to grapple with longstanding scepticism about their legitimacy and independence, even as they have gained greater visibility through consultations and more attention to their development and humanitarian importance. At the same time, political actors—including journalists, activists, and issue-based movements—operate in a more conspicuously contentious environment, where public debates are sharper, red lines more visible, and state responses more punitive. These dynamics shape a public culture in which civic engagement persists, but the space for pluralistic and rights-oriented dialogue remains fragile.

Public Discourse and Constructive Dialogue on Civil Society

Within public discourse, civil society in Jordan has historically faced a mixed reception, often sidelined as either inefficacious or merely fronts for Western interests. However, in recent years, CSOs have enjoyed an elevation in importance, particularly in formal decision-making processes, as they have been brought more into the fold [through consultations](#). Rhetorically, government discourse towards civil society currently describes it as a [partner and complement](#). Increasingly, government officials and institutions [acknowledge the role of CSOs](#) in delivering social and development services, and in charitable work. At the same time, CSOs working on governance, human rights, and more overtly political topics face heightened scrutiny. Politically active CS actors, such as journalists and social movements, are often portrayed as disruptive or misaligned with national interests.

As observed by civil society experts during the panel, the holistic concept of ‘civil society’ has low visibility beyond NGOs. This couples with two popular perceptions: First, that CSOs

are at high risk of [corruption and money-laundering](#). Second, that they function merely as political vessels for foreign (Western) agents, as evidenced by their funding flows. Public suspicion of CSOs casts doubt on their capabilities of independent and critical action. The formal civil society sector is also often perceived as being on the sidelines of political reform and processes, such as during the Arab Spring period, where the main civil society actors were grassroots movements, rather than formalised organisations.

Media coverage of CSOs remains limited and [heavily monopolised by royal NGOs](#), who enjoy higher visibility and better public perceptions of their efficacy. National press does [increasingly cover](#) a wider range of CSO activities, and the formation of coalitions and alliances within the CSO sector has contributed to this development. Some independent print and digital media outlets have shown a relative willingness to publish content on civil and political rights and broader human rights issues.

However, the escalation of [right-wing nativist discourses in recent years](#) and regional tensions (e.g. Israeli threats to expand settlements in the West Bank, rhetoric about transferring Palestinians to Jordan and Egypt, refugee issues) has made public dialogue more polarised and less inclusive. A mainstreaming of security-focused and nationalist narratives has made it increasingly difficult for civil society actors promoting pluralism or refugee rights to find space for constructive engagement. After the [April 2025 Muslim Brotherhood ban](#), many CS actors have navigated carefully, issuing general statements supporting the importance of national security, with very little public criticism of the ban and very little naming of the Brotherhood.

In the last two years, several journalists have been detained under the 2023 cybercrime law for questioning Jordan's foreign policy entanglements with Israel. For example, Abu Taha's 2024 investigation into the 'land bridge' of Jordanian companies transporting goods through Jordanian territory to Israel and government denial earned her [a year in prison](#). Ayman Sanduqa was arrested in 2023 and sentenced to [5 years](#) for a critical post to the king questioning Jordan's diplomatic relations with Israel. Both actors have received domestic support throughout these trials.

Perception of Civil Society and Civic Engagement

Citizens widely believe they have limited ability to influence political decisions, with generally low levels of trust in state institutions. It is important to note that the only national governmental body subject to elections is the lower house of Parliament (Representatives). Among the public, there is consistent scepticism or even outright disdain about the abilities of Parliament to act as an effective or representative body. In 2023/2024, there was a [24% trust](#) in Parliament—low, certainly, but which represents gains from a low of 14% in 2018. This is reflected, too, in voting turnout rates. The September 2024 parliamentary elections saw a turnout of [29%](#). Voting mechanisms at local levels have gradually expanded through the last decade, but enthusiasm remains low; the 2022 local election's turnout was also [29%](#).

In contrast, engagement mechanisms outside of formal political processes are much more popular, though they tend to undulate in reaching critical mass. Following 7 October 2023, Jordan saw the largest protests since the Arab Spring, with [massive gatherings](#) in support of the Palestinian cause. Immediately, and especially in the first six months, street protests were held on a near-weekly basis, largely concentrated around the Israeli and American

embassies in Amman. In spring 2024, a vast majority – [83.1%](#) – of Jordanians surveyed by NAMA Strategic Intelligence Solutions reported participating in brand boycotts due to Israel's assault on Gaza.

Formal civil society falls somewhere in between these two poles. [Trust in civil society organisations](#) was at 45% in 2023/2024, according to Arab Barometer — larger than that of many government institutions, but relatively unchanging over time. The grassroots mobilisation of formal CSOs remains weak, primarily due to limited engagement with local communities and public scepticism. Over the past year, the civil society sector has seen some [mobilisations](#) in support of the Palestinian cause, and in October 2023, prominent civil society organisations in Jordan issued a [unified condemnation](#) of the Israeli genocide in Gaza and of Western support, and have continued their advocacy for the Palestinian cause throughout their 2024 [engagement](#) with international organisations.

At its height before its 2020 dissolutions, the independent Jordanian Teachers' Syndicate represented over 100,000 teachers in the country and gained widespread public support. Labour activity in the public sector generally enjoys more public attention and favour; private sector organisation, for example by migrant workers in Jordan's Qualified Industrial Zone economic outskirts, is more difficult due to more stringent regulations, but also due to [limited ability](#) in building a domestic base of support.

Civic Equality and Inclusion

Most civic processes, such as voting, are legally governed by principles of equal access for all Jordanian citizens. In 2024, Jordan's 'equal treatment and the absence of discrimination' was rated a 0.61 / 1.0 by the [World Justice Project](#), ranking it globally 52/142 and 1st in the region. Women have both the right to vote and to run for office. It is common for CSOs to be led by women. Nevertheless, practical realities — such as economic marginalisation, social norms, limited avenues for representative political engagement, and political exclusion of non-citizens — continue to persist as barriers to a more holistic vision of civic inclusion.

Take the electoral process, which is procedurally open to all citizens. The lower house of Jordan's bicameral legislative body, the House of Representatives, is subject to elections every four years. Jordanian citizens over the age of 18 can vote, and over the age of 25 are eligible to run as candidates for the House; both rights are [exempted](#) on certain bases, such as for members of certain government institutions (such as the military and intelligence), and bankrupt individuals. Women exercise their right to vote in almost equal percentages as men. [48%](#) of the voters in 2024's parliamentary election were women. The women's voter turnout rate (29.18%) was slightly lower than men's (35.69%).

The House relies on a quota system to maintain minimum representation of women, Christians, and Circassians/Chechens. For women, quotas have played a key role in boosting initial representation, but progress beyond those granted by quotas has been slower in the last decade. In the September 2024 parliamentary elections, [27 of the 138 seats](#) were gained by women. The quota granted 18 seats, which means that 9 seats were won by women on top of the quota.

Yet the significance of these quota-based gains, and of suffrage, must be understood within the broader question of what kind of civic participation the House actually enables. The lower house of Parliament is the only avenue for popular civic participation within the state apparatus, and is able to convene discussion and hearings. Despite recent attempts at

political reform, Parliament is still widely viewed by citizens as a mere formality for government measures to be rubber-stamped, unable to mount substantial opposition to government policies or hold other institutions to account.

In addition to voting, several avenues of civic participation are only legally open to Jordanian nationals, yet [almost a third of Jordan's population does not hold citizenship](#). Refugees or stateless persons do not have access to formal political rights, which in the [constitution](#) are only granted to Jordanian nationals. Non-Jordanians require special permission to form CSOs, as per the [Societies Law](#). Although non-Jordanian nationals can join official trade unions, they cannot vote to elect executive committees or nominate themselves to join under the [Labour Law](#); this precludes the many migrant workers in Jordan from leadership in labour activity. Foreigners are not allowed by law to be members of professional associations. Under the [Press and Publications Law](#), ownership of news sites must be 100% owned by Jordanian citizens; this has been an occasional basis to administratively harass independent media.

This prerequisite is especially important to note, since [almost a third of Jordan's population](#) does not hold Jordanian citizenship. Syrians, at [13.3% of the population](#), hold the largest non-Jordanian citizenship. Jordan holds the second-largest number of [registered refugees per capita](#) in the world. As per Jordan's nationality law, only Jordanian fathers transfer their Jordanian nationality to their children upon their birth; in most cases, Jordanian mothers cannot do the same.

Finally, a [socially significant distinction](#) continues to exist between 'Jordanians' (descendants of Transjordan's inhabitants under the British Mandate) and [Jordanians of Palestinian origin](#). Historically and to the present day, Jordanians of Transjordanian origin, including the Circassian minority, have maintained a stronger presence in public sector roles, particularly those of a security nature such as the armed forces, public security, and intelligence services. In contrast, Jordanians of Palestinian origin are commonly found across the private sector and the civil public sector (such as Ministries of Health and Education). This distribution reflects longstanding social patterns and negotiations between the two communities, conspicuously resulting in a [limited presence of Jordanians of Palestinian origin](#) within high-level governmental decision-making bodies.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



Despite widespread internet availability, the digital environment that civil society actors in Jordan must navigate is framed by the fact of state surveillance and the threat of legal or administrative repercussions over online speech, particularly that which touches Jordan's 'red lines.' In previous years, evidence has surfaced suggesting state involvement in [misinformation](#) and [spyware attacks](#). 2025 has seen persistent application of the [2023 cybercrime law](#), which allows for the criminalisation of different kinds of online expression; this has led to arrests and imprisonment for journalists and activists over online posts. Taken together, these factors contribute to a cautious, self-censoring online environment, especially around politically sensitive topics.

Digital Rights and Freedoms

There were no internet service shutdowns by the government in the period covered by the report from July 2024 to July 2025. Mostly deployed during periods of unrest, internet shutdowns in Jordan are [not uncommon](#). There are [some indications](#) that the government has turned instead to more circumspect methods of restricting access, like [throttling to constrain Facebook Live access during 2019 anti-austerity protests](#). Social media access has often been reported being disrupted during protest activity. The [2022 protests over fuel prices](#) were a prime example of the state employing both internet shutdown and social media blocking. In 2023, [TikTok deleted over 300,000 domestic videos](#) at the government's behest in an attempt to restore access. TikTok is currently banned; Clubhouse, which gained traction during the 'royal coup' affair in 2021, was similarly blocked by [Jordanian internet service providers](#) after its use for political discussion.

Surveillance and censorship further condition how civil society actors operate online. In practice, several laws—including the 2023 Cybercrime Law and provisions of the Penal Code—grant broad latitude to monitor or penalize online expression. Telecommunications companies routinely provide information to authorities upon request, and online content is understood to be monitored for violations of established “red lines”, including criticism of the monarch and, to a lesser degree, criticism of foreign policy. Some of these constraints are institutionalised in the Penal Code, while others are enforced through more informal expectations. A disinformation campaign linked to military-affiliated individuals circulated [leaked Clubhouse recordings](#), further illustrating the depth of monitoring and infiltration of online spaces.

Legal liability for online content has expanded significantly, particularly under the [2023 cybercrime law](#), which has allowed for persecution based on online posts deemed offensive or harmful to public order. The law has been used repeatedly to detain individuals for political expression online, including cases such as [Hiba Abu Taha](#), [Ahmad Hassan Al-Zoubi](#), and [Ahmed Abu Ghnaima](#). In fact, several of the detentions and crackdowns described in this report under Principle 1—including those of [Ayman Abli](#), [Yanal Freihat](#), Abu Ghnaima, and [Hamza Khader](#)—were also tied to the Cybercrime Law. This pattern, which accelerated after the October 2023 protests, reinforces the perception that online expression carries substantial risk. The case of [Ayman Sanduqa](#), prosecuted under the Penal Code for online content, further underscores the potential for criminal charges in politically sensitive cases.

Another illustrative example of the monitoring of online media activity is the revelations of the Pandora Papers, in which the king was implicated. The one domestic outlet that reported on this event [received a call from Jordanian security to take down the story](#).

Authorities are also able to block access to domestic and foreign-based media sites. In May 2025, [authorities blocked access to 10 foreign-based digital news websites](#) due to their content, drawing criticism from civil society organisations. This came directly after Middle East Eye, one of the subsequently banned sites, published an investigation into Jordan profiting from Gaza aid drops.

The episode fits a longstanding pattern. Jordan has at times blocked large volumes of sites, including [300 sites and services in 2023](#) (primarily for not meeting registration or bureaucratic requirements). The Press and Publications Law requires domestic outlets to register, and mandates that editors-in-chief be “journalists” recognised under the official Jordan Press Association; this requirement for registration has become a basis for takedown of domestic sites. Some sites—such as My Kali, a Jordanian LGBT online magazine—have remained inaccessible for nearly a decade.

Although VPNs are widely used to circumvent these restrictions, access to popular VPN services is itself occasionally limited during politically sensitive periods. Under the [2023 Cybercrime Law](#), the use of VPNs is actually banned (Article 12).

Media blackouts are a parallel mechanism through which authorities constrain the digital space. Politically salient events, particularly involving legal cases, are regularly treated with gag orders, as in the case of [the Prince Hamzah affair](#) and [forced closure of the Teachers’ Syndicate](#). In 2025, gag orders were applied both to the [allegations of a plot involving the Muslim Brotherhood](#) as well as a [methanol poisoning case](#) involving a factory producing toxic alcohol. Penalties for violating gag orders [were also increased in 2025](#).

Beyond state constraints, panel discussion with civil society actors evidenced that social media moderation policies contribute to limiting authentic political expression online, particularly for journalists, commentators, and CSO actors in Jordan, where opposition to Israeli occupation is widely held. For example, Meta's [moderation policies](#) constrain anti-Zionist content.

Digital Security and Privacy

Although there have been no recorded incidents of cyberattacks or coordinated, systematic online activity (e.g. bots/social media accounts) targeting civil society actors post-May 2024, previous years' evidence shows prior state-linked use of such tools.

Three separate events bear mentioning. First, in 2024, [at least 35 civil society actors in Jordan](#) (including activists, journalists, and lawyers) were found to have been targeted with Pegasus spyware between 2019-2023, and the researchers involved in the investigation believed that the number of targets was higher than the 35 discovered. As the owners of Pegasus spyware, NSO, ["has previously stated it only sells to governments"](#), the Jordanian government is believed to be responsible for this digital surveillance, which facilitates further harassment and persecution of civil society actors. Second, in 2021, [Facebook discovered](#) a Jordanian disinformation network that was coordinated domestically, likely with military affiliations. This network, as the Facebook report revealed, used fake accounts to push pro-military and pro-monarchy narratives, and also critiqued Jordanian activists and dissidents; 634,000 accounts followed these accounts and pages combined. A further investigation by [Stanford Internet Observatory](#) found TikTok and Twitter presences on the network as well. Finally, in 2023, leaked documents revealed that [British intelligence covertly trained](#) a Jordanian security communications unit on pushing [digital media narratives](#) through a covert newsroom.

Such events suggest the extent of government use of cyberattacks and spyware, as well as in producing coordinated online activity. Accordingly, concerns exist by some CS actors over the security and privacy of their digital communications, especially in politically sensitive work. State-linked spyware infrastructure is still present and useable, even if not recently deployed.

There are few redress or accountability mechanisms to protect the digital privacy and safety of CS actors. Jordan's [first data protection law](#) took effect in March 2024, which contains penalties for noncompliance. Measures have been [noted](#) as [inadequate](#), particularly in its exceptions on protecting personal data in the 'national interest', and the lack of independence of the governing body (the Data Protection Authority is populated by government officials and telecommunications industry members). In September 2025, the Regulation on the Rights of Concerned Persons was passed, building upon the Personal Data Protection Law.

Digital Accessibility

In general, the public and civil society actors are served by strong internet infrastructure in Jordan, and (notwithstanding state internet and app shutdown) have easy access to the

internet across the country. Internet plans are relatively affordable. Jordan maintains a high internet penetration rate. [91%](#) of individuals use the internet, and [96%](#) of households have internet at home. Most Jordanians access the internet first through mobile phone, with [86%](#) of individuals owning one. As of 2025, Jordan's 4G network coverage reached [99.7%](#). We should note that mobile broadband penetration presents an area of improvement — in 2023, there were [67.6 active mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants](#), considered lower than the regional average. Under the [UN's ICT Development Index \(IDI\) for 2025](#), Jordan scored 84.7, above the regional average, on the composite score meant to measure both the universality and meaningfulness of a country's connectivity.

Digital accessibility is articulated at the policy level. Jordan's National Digital Transformation Strategy outlines digital inclusion as a core objective, and digital aims were also recently formalised in the [Jordanian Digital Inclusion Policy 2025](#) (which commits the government to expanding connectivity and digital infrastructure, reducing affordability gaps, and strengthening digital skills across different population groups). Plans have also materialised to [expand 5G coverage](#).

Despite these high national averages, disparities in coverage and service quality should be flagged between urban and rural areas. [Internet usage](#) in urban areas is 93.1%, compared to 87.4% for rural. These disparities echo longstanding geographic inequalities in access to public services and infrastructure more broadly. In spring 2025, Jordan launched Starlink, a satellite-based Internet service, aimed at broadening [rural and remote internet access](#).

CSOs in Jordan overwhelmingly rely on digital tools for their daily work, certainly in internal coordination and programme operations. Social media is a regular tool for public and community outreach, but specialised know-how in social media techniques at the CSO level can be lacking. Even without comprehensive data on ICT competencies in Jordan, recent proliferation of AI-generated images, videos, and text on social media indicates a potential challenge that civil society may need to anticipate.

C) Recommendations

Improving the enabling environment for civil society in Jordan requires ceasing state activity that penalises actors for exercising their fundamental freedoms, modifying legal frameworks that allow for selective and discretionary repression of civic activity, encouraging more genuine engagement of civil society in important civic processes, and providing more avenues for funding so that civil society organisations are able to work towards long-term, sustainable visions.

To those ends, we put forward the following, urgent recommendations:

For the Government of Jordan:

First and foremost, the state must **roll back restrictive laws** used to constrain fundamental freedoms — particularly those that unfairly justify detention through vaguely defined offences and discretionary powers. The 2023 Cybercrime Law, frequently deployed in the July 2024-2025 period towards critics of Jordanian foreign and domestic policy, must be overhauled. (Jordan has already accepted an early 2024 recommendation in its [4th Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review](#) to do so, and should follow through on this commitment.) Other laws that allow for restrictions on acceptable expression include the Crime Prevention Law and the Penal Code. The Societies Law and related regulations should also be reformed to include stronger protections for freedom of association, including simplified registration processes and reduced executive oversight requirements.

The state should **reverse the pattern of increasing restrictions on Palestine protests in 2025**, by ceasing excessive security force intervention at public gatherings that deters civic participation. Consistent protections for peaceful assembly should be ensured by the state. Notification and permitting procedures should be applied transparently, ending the practice of ad hoc restrictions on protests. Transparency and due process in cases involving arrests, detentions, and prosecutions of civil society actors must be followed. We recommend the public disclosure of legal justifications, timelines, and procedural guarantees, and limiting the use of gag orders that prevent public scrutiny. This extends to ensuring transparent appeal mechanisms for CSO and media licence denials.

The state should **empower civil society actors to be active accountability partners** in important civic processes. Two proposals are worth mentioning: First, in introducing direct mechanisms for CS engagement in [forming Jordan's general budget](#). Second, in establishing [CSO advisory councils](#) to the government on different policy priorities, such as climate, to form a regular, institutionalised structure that not only engages CSOs but allows them to evaluate state accountability.

Finally, the state should encourage **diversification of financial sources for CSOs** as they face a global funding shortfall. This not only comes in the form of expanding existing state funding mechanisms, such as increasing funding and accessibility to the MoSD's Society Support Fund, and in streamlining approvals for foreign funding requests to reduce delays, but also in encouraging domestic donations and philanthropy through tax incentives. The Central Bank of Jordan must lead active efforts to limit the impacts of 'de-risking' on the access of CSOs to financial services.

For Civil Society Actors

First, civil society actors in Jordan must **build broader and durable coalitions** to organise for domestic visibility and reduce the vulnerability of individual activists or organisations to targeted pressure. Coalitions must be broader horizontally — incorporating different kinds of CS actors, such as both CSOs and grassroots movements — as well as vertically, reaching across country borders to establish regional solidarity. Joint statements and media campaigns are ways such organisations can consolidate the 'perspective of civil society' more concretely to the public. Larger coalitions can also pool resources so that common challenges to the sector, such as navigating the bureaucratic hurdles of registration, can be communally shared. Conducting research on critical civil society issues, such as donor reliance, will also provide opportunities for sector reflection. Finally, we suggest creating rapid-response coordination and legal preparedness initiatives so that civic actors are better positioned to handle common repression techniques, such as cybercrime-related charges.

Civil society actors must also work to **strengthen internal governance measures**, including financial management and digital security, in ways to address persistent public scepticism and enhance both credibility and capacity. This includes a better division of intellectual labour within civil society organisations, such as dedicating staff to build specialisation in proposal writing and social media.

Finally, in concert with the recommendation for the state, civil society actors should **engage more systematically with budget advocacy and public-finance monitoring**, using existing legal and administrative entry points to push for greater fiscal transparency, highlight inequities in allocations, and demonstrate civil society's role in improving accountability and public service outcomes. Rasheed-TI's [paper](#) identifying roles that civil society could play in forming Jordan's general budget is particularly instructive here.

For Donors and the International Community

Interactional actors must **raise concerns about detentions, restrictions on expression, and the use of the 2023 cybercrime law** in engagement with the Government of Jordan. This includes questioning both the legal frameworks themselves as well as how they are being selectively wielded in political crisis periods. International actors should demonstrate responsiveness to more granular events of repression, which demonstrates that how the government is deploying its security apparatus on a daily basis is not going unrecognised. Closely watching measures such as the EU SEE Early Warning Mechanisms is one example.

International actors must commit to ***provide longer-term, more flexible funding*** that allows civil society actors, including smaller community groups and grassroots movements, to develop sustainable programming, strengthen internal systems, and reduce the cycle of project-driven fragmentation. The global funding shortfall of the last two years has both exposed the reliance of Jordan's CS sector on foreign aid, and problematised it. The international community must seize this opportunity to identify and target CS actors that have been made particularly vulnerable under growing legal constraints, such as through core support for newsroom infrastructure, legal defence funds, and digital security resources.

D) Research Process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members; the consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the [CIVICUS Monitor](#). However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year. This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as [V-Dem](#), the [Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index](#), the [RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

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