



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot

Jordan

March 2026

Context

This Snapshot focuses on changes in Jordan’s enabling environment for civil society from July 2025 to March 2026. This period was particularly marked by continued persecution of individual expression, the [2023 cybercrime law](#) remaining a common cudgel. Critiques of Jordan’s foreign policy positions and/or expressions of solidarity with Palestine and Gaza remain [targets](#) for repression; a moratorium by authorities since spring 2025 on all protests continues to constrain organising in the public sphere. Elections for local and municipal councils, scheduled for 7 January 2026, were [postponed another 6 months](#); this followed the government [dissolving of the councils](#) in July 2025 on the basis of preparing for reforms to the local administration laws.

In this period, Jordan also completed its final steps in rooting out Muslim Brotherhood influence; completing investigations into Brotherhood financial irregularities; [arresting parliamentarian Yanal Freihah](#) in July 2025 for questioning the state’s ban of the Brotherhood; final ruling of the long-embattled Jordanian Teachers’ Syndicate (previously targeted by the state as a political challenger following its 2019 strike, and attacked as merely Brotherhood-affiliated) as unconstitutional in July 2025; [in October 2025 sentencing those arrested](#) for manufacturing missiles (the arrests had been drawn upon as pretext for the state ban); and in early 2026 applying additional pressure on IAF to further distance itself from the Brotherhood. All this was underscored by the US administration’s [January 2026 designation of the Jordanian Brotherhood](#) as a terrorist organisation.

Beginning in the fall of 2025, the government announced intentions to amend the Social Security Law, which governs Jordan’s social security system. Notably, the draft amendments would increase the contribution requirements for retirement and raise the retirement age. Opposition to these amendments has been a basis for civil society activity as well as general public concern, to which the state has responded by announcing an [expanded dialogue process](#).

Finally, the US-Israel war on Iran began on 28 February 2026, in which Jordan has intercepted Iranian missiles within its borders, some of which were targeted towards US air bases in the country, which has spurred wider discussion of Jordan’s foreign policy orientation. [Arrests of individuals](#) and [political activists](#) for critique on this basis have also produced another recent chilling effect.

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

The Constitution frames the fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association as conditional rights, guaranteed only to Jordanian citizens and expressly granted only ‘within the limits of the law’ ([Articles 15 and 16](#)). Civic space has remained constrained following [spring 2025’s repression of activists and dissidents](#). The period from July 2025 to March 2026 represents little change in this regard. Intelligence services continue to crack down on activists and political expression, particularly those that question Jordan’s foreign policy.

State repression of activists and personal political expression, carried out by Jordan’s intelligence services, has proceeded at a steady pace, justified by the state’s long-standing suite of laws allowing for essentially ad-hoc detention — 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 has received calls for withdrawal ever since its inception, and has continued to be used to detain and arrest individuals for expressing a range of opinions, whether [raising instances of government corruption](#), [critique over apathy towards the Palestinian cause](#), or [support for the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood](#). Self-censorship by a broad range of civic actors has persisted through this period. Following the US-Israel war on Iran beginning 28 February 2026, Jordan arrested several individuals for critiquing Jordan's interception of Iranian missiles as well as the stationing of US bases inside Jordan, notably journalist [Hiba Abu Taha](#) and [members of the Jordanian Communist Party](#). In March 2026, shortly after the beginning of the war, a [gag order was issued](#) on publishing any information related to Jordanian defence and security operations.

Following 7 October 2023, large-scale protests had broken out in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. But since March 2025, and continuing through the July 2025-March 2026 period, [no protests or demonstrations](#) have been permitted by authorities amid mounting critique over Jordan's foreign policy and relations with Israel. Some sit-ins (اعتصام) — a different concept in the Jordanian context,¹ describing a small, private gathering to register specific complaints/demands to particular government actors — took place during the period to express civil society viewpoints on specific policies, such as [opposition to closing shelters for disabled persons](#) in January 2026, and [calls for a general amnesty](#) in November 2025, both in front of the House of Representatives, which have been taken up by some Parliamentarians. However, sit-ins are not a blank pass — one prominent activist was [arrested](#) in January 2026 for organising a sit-in over unemployment.

In December 2025, the Ministry of Interior described a trend showing a [decrease in the number of daily administrative detainees](#). Finally, a January 2026 [draft regulation](#) for a Digital Media Regulation System would introduce broadly defined content prohibitions for digital professionals (including content creators), and so the final law when released should be scrutinised in the context of freedoms of expression, opinion, and media.

During this period, labour activity remained sparse, with less than 10 events of labour protest recorded by Jordan Labour Watch. In January 2026, Jordan's Independent Electoral Commission issued requests to several political parties to comply with the Political Parties Law, including a [request to the Islamic Action Front to change its name and amend its governance](#).

2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

The [2008 Societies Law](#) governs the vast majority of Jordan's civil society organisations (CSOs), placing limits on their scope of work. The government has long stated its intention to revise this law, but progress has been slow. The period from July 2025-March 2026 shows some development in this respect. In November 2025, [a technical committee](#) at the Ministry of Social Development was formed to produce a draft law amending the Societies Law. In February 2026, the Ministry announced that they are [working on a matrix to classify CSOs](#) as

¹ See Ababneh 2016, '[Troubling the Political: Women in the Jordanian Day-Waged Labor Movement](#)', p. 42, for further explanation of this distinction.

part of preparing an amendment. No information is yet available on the content of the draft law, including how restrictions may change.

In January 2026, the government issued a [draft regulation](#) for a Digital Media Regulation System. Despite [assurances](#) by the Media Authority that such a system would not impact personal freedoms, the draft as it stands would introduce a regulatory expansion, introducing a compulsory licensing system for digital professionals (including content creators) which contain broadly defined content prohibitions.

Finally, some aspects of the legal framework brought to public attention during this period include the legality of administrative detention (as raised in a [parliamentary question](#) to the Minister of Interior in February 2026), and the need for laws that are sensitive to the [needs of different kinds of press organisations](#). In October 2025, the government spokesperson stated that it was [too early](#) to discuss amending the laws governing political parties and elections.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

The funding environment for civil society in Jordan remains challenging. CSOs in Jordan are highly reliant on foreign funding, which must be approved by state authorities, and operate largely within constraints of project-based funding and rigid donor priorities. At the same time, [declines in funding available from US and European donors](#) have steadily persisted since the beginning of 2025, forcing shutdowns in key services and projects targeted at refugees, health, and development, with over 30,000 full or partial jobs losses. This development has left civil society in the lurch, facing a shrinking pie of funding to compete over. The July 2025-March 2026 period has presented no changes in this regard. A [civil society forum held in October 2025](#) by the HIMAM coalition of civil society organisations underscored the importance of sustainable funding for Jordan’s civil society, particularly funding that is [public and un-politicised](#).

In fall 2025, the Journalist Press Association, under which all media organisations including news sites must be registered, [levied annual fees of 1000 dinars](#) on news site publishers. Over 100 news site publishers were included in this levy, and retroactive annual fees were to be paid by September 2025 — resulting in its rejection by 85 news publishers as unjust and untenable given the financially precarious situation of news sites in Jordan.

4. State openness and responsiveness

The current government under Prime Minister Hassan, appointed in 2024, has demonstrated slightly more receptiveness to civil society, and the July 2025-March 2026 period was marked by some meetings by the government with civil society actors, such as [workshops preparing for a public sector modernisation process](#). However, although several policy processes formally consult civil society, state engagement remains generally limited and perfunctory. Civil society engagement is often a backstop for implementing unpopular policy measures. In August, a research centre observed that journalists not affiliated with the official Journalist Press Association [face difficulties in accessing official information](#).

The government announced its intention to amend the social security law in fall 2025. Particularly since the December 2025 [finalisation of the actuarial study](#) on which draft amendments were based, widespread opposition to the amendments has increased, including from the [public](#) (particularly on social media), [trade unions](#), and [civil society organisations](#).

Notably, calls were also raised for further government transparency, to [publish the full text of the actuarial study](#) and [earlier publication of the full draft amendments](#) prior to them being sent to the House. Throughout this period, [calls for real and participatory dialogue](#) to frame the development of the amendments have been raised. Prior to the draft being approved by the Council of Ministers and sent to Parliament, a procedural dialogue process with stakeholders had already occurred at the Economic and Social Council amid [public dissatisfaction](#), including [concern that the outputs of this dialogue were not reflected in the draft amendments](#). In response to [sustained outcry](#) and [calls for withdrawal](#), the government made partial amendments to the draft, [including staying the implementation of the law until 2030](#), and in March 2026 gave Parliament the go-ahead to engage in an [expanded national dialogue process](#), including an [online platform](#) to receive comment. This process has just commenced.

5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

Public discourse and civic culture sensitive to the importance of civil society remains limited. However, civil society's role remains acknowledged by official governmental discourse — for example, at civic forums in October and November 2025, representatives from the government [discussed the mediating role of community media](#) between the public and the government, and the [importance of independent civil society](#), respectively. Notably, a government spokesperson framed the necessity of media in [supporting 'national security' in the interest of state stability](#). With the state crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in 2025, and now the US-led war, this trend of government framing civil society, and the use of free expression, as an important tool of consolidating national unity is expected to continue.

Responses by both Parliament and state actors to popular outcry over the draft social security amendments have continually [described the importance of engaging stakeholders, including civil society](#), in dialogue. From late 2025 up to March 2026, civic actors produced interventions and commentary on the draft social security amendments, spanning [CSOs, experts, independent trade unions](#) and [women's rights advocates](#). In addition to an 'expanded national' dialogue process announced by the House in March 2026, a 'dialogue process' engaging civil society and sector representatives had been held at the Economic and Social Council in early 2026 — the earlier dialogue had been critiqued by some as [ineffectual](#).

In regard to civic culture during this period, [one poll by the Independent Electoral Commission](#) indicated increased confidence in parliamentary elections. Another found the [same among students](#), including positive assessments of the political modernisation process, although more than 90% had never participated in political party activity. One report found that internal tribal elections for parliamentary election candidates [often excluded women](#). Some online media coverage discussed digital violence towards women, particularly [journalists](#), and [digital electoral violence](#). Finally, the Jordanian National Commission for Women, a semi-governmental organisation, proposed [quotas for women in local governance structures](#).

6. Access to a secure digital environment

The digital environment for civil society remains chiefly governed by the unpopular [2023 cybercrime law](#), whose articles allow broad state discretion for criminalising online expression,

and which continues to be used to target individuals for their online activity. For example, the content creator [Ayman Abli](#) was detained under the 2023 cybercrime law, as was the activist [Kamil Al-Zoubi](#), who was sentenced to a year in prison.

A [January 2026 report by Citizen Lab](#) revealed the use by Jordanian authorities of the Israeli technology company Cellebrite's products on civil society, elaborating case studies from late 2023 to the latest in mid-2025 on political activists and a human rights defender. In the report, Citizen Lab indicates it knows of 'dozens of other cases.' Reports from previous years have indicated frequent use of [Pegasus spyware on civic actors](#). However, this is the first report revealing the use of Cellebrite tools, indicating additional capabilities of Jordan's security apparatus to extract digital data from devices seized during detention and arrests, including potentially bypassing device passcodes — this current practice dates back to at least 2020. In four of the seven described cases, the 2023 cybercrime law was invoked in the individual's detention.

The [February 2026 formation](#) of a National Committee for Digital Safety will focus on internet risks to [young people](#). It's not yet clear what measures will be proposed by the Committee, but a few days before this, a House of Representatives speaker [submitted a proposal to the Prime Minister](#) to regulate social media use for children under the age of 16. A [draft regulation](#) was also introduced for a compulsory licensing system for 'digital professionals', including content creators.

Finally, some discussion has recently surfaced on the increased proliferation of online misinformation, particularly with the use of AI tools, particularly in relation to its [confusion of the digital environment](#) and [the risk of overreliance on AI by media outlets](#). One expert noted the potential for false reporting and online misinformation being disseminated with regard to events such as the [2026 Iran war](#); another warned of [coordinated online disinformation campaigns against Jordan by the Muslim Brotherhood](#).

Challenges and Opportunities

In the coming months, Jordan's civil society will likely face continued attempts to limit civic expression, especially a critique of Jordan's foreign policy, under the framing of national security. Developments in the Iran war, as well as in Jordan-Israel relations, should be monitored in relation to any corollary civic activity and changes in the civic space. Civil society should seize the state's rhetorical commitments to 'expanded dialogue' on the draft social security law amendments for sustained and deepened engagement. Updates on the draft media regulation system, as well as any developments in the civil society law reform process, should also be carefully watched regarding their potential effects on fundamental freedoms of expression.

This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



EU SEE

SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY



Funded by
the European Union

