



SUPPORTING  
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT  
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

# **Enabling Environment Snapshot**

**Paraguay**

**April 2026**

## Context

Period covered by the report: December 2025 to April 2026.

Paraguay is classified among the upper-middle-income countries in the region. Nevertheless, the 2025 Human Development Report ([HDR](#)) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) [found](#) that high levels of inequality prevent the population from achieving the necessary levels of well-being. Social demands persist despite restrictions on the freedoms of association, expression and assembly. Given the decline in tax and non-tax revenue, the Ministry of Economy and Finance [announced](#) a ‘war economy’ in March putting the major production trade unions on alert. The sector issued a [statement](#) rejecting cronyism and the possibility of tax increases, without any improvement in the efficiency of the state. The debate on fiscal deficit projections is oscillating between proposals to [raise the fiscal deficit ceiling](#) (1.5%, [Law No. 5098](#)) and to introduce [new measures](#) regarding corporate reserves. At the same time, on the eve of the tripartite negotiations on the minimum wage, scheduled for May, the [trade union confederations are criticising](#) the so-called “war economy phase”, denouncing growing impoverishment, the lack of social protection, high levels of informal employment and the [formula used](#) for wage adjustments.

Against this backdrop, characterised by the population’s socio-economic deprivation alongside a deficit in basic public services and a weak democratic system, different sectoral groups express their demands. Political rights and civil liberties throughout 2025 remain in the “partially free” category (63/100), as measured by Freedom House’s [2026 Freedom in the World Report](#), and therefore the same as in 2024. According to the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) (updated in December 2025), the country continued in 2025 with a “restricted” civic space (52/100). Furthermore, the 2026 [BTI Political Transformation Index](#) classifies the country as a “flawed democracy” (6.5/10), where the rule of law and political and social integration receive the lowest scores. At the same time, the Political Incorporation Index presented in the UNDP’s [Human Development Report 2025](#) shows that Paraguay has low substantive incorporation, referring to the capacity to articulate citizens’ demands with political representation – a score that is lower than that of other Mercosur countries. Furthermore, the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) has reported on Paraguay’s regression in freedom of expression and the press, according to the Chapultepec Index, with a decline from 56.80/100 [in 2024](#) to 51.09/100 [for 2025](#) and the country remaining in the “restricted” category. The measurement of [the World Justice Project’s](#) 2025 Rule of Law Index gives Paraguay a score of 0.45/1 with a slight decline from 2024. The indicators showing the greatest deterioration in the [Index](#) relate to judicial oversight of the executive and undue influence of the executive in criminal and civil processes. The latest [Annual Report](#) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) similarly warns of persistent challenges in the areas of corruption, impunity, judicial independence and civic space.

Such institutional weaknesses breed impunity, infringe on rights and undermine the credibility of channels of communication between public bodies and civil society. These figures thus highlight the importance of promoting measures that strengthen democratic spaces and lay more solid foundations for the transition from growth to comprehensive development.

## 1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

The [Roundtable](#) for the Safety of Journalists in Paraguay highlights the contradictory developments regarding freedom of expression in the country. On the one hand, 2025 was the second consecutive year where no murders of journalists were recorded. Additionally,

there have been important advances in terms of accountability for attacks against journalists. In April 2026, the Court of Criminal Appeal [upheld](#) a 2025 ruling in favour of female journalists who had reported sexual harassment and workplace abuse. The ruling had sentenced the defendant to 10 years' imprisonment, and [orders](#) for victims' reparations were issued subsequently. Similarly, in the case of journalist [C.B.](#), who was attacked in September 2025, those responsible have been charged and are currently in [prison](#), with their detention confirmed in April 2026.

On the other hand, incidents of intimidation against media workers continue. On 4 March 2026, [J.A.](#), a media professional, reported a violent physical assault by a local mayor. Furthermore, [according to a report by the public prosecutor](#), journalists reported threats from a company under investigation for irregularities.

At the same time, the widespread delays in judicial investigations encourage impunity. While waiting for progress from the public prosecutor's office for a previous attack that occurred in September 2025, [F.C.](#), a municipal press officer, once again received new death threats in March 2026. Similarly, the investigations into death threats against [A.G.C](#) stalled, with the hearing to swear in an expert witness, tasked with analysing two mobile phones allegedly used to send the messages, suspended due to his absence. In February 2026, six years after the murder of [journalist LV](#), the case was [brought before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights \(IACHR\)](#), given the lack of due diligence in the administration of justice in Paraguay. Digital harassment against women in the media also continues, as evidenced in the report ["La palabra en disputa"](#) published by the Network of Women Journalists and Communicators of Paraguay (RMCPY) in February 2026.

The debate in Congress on the Bill for the Protection of Journalists and Human Rights Defenders, introduced in 2023 and mandated by a ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), was halted with the introduction of a [second bill by the ruling party](#) at the end of 2025. This delay is primarily based on [objections](#) raised by the ruling party regarding the inclusion of human rights defenders in the coverage of the bill as well as a protection mechanism involving public officials and CSO representatives. Consideration of both bills in plenary was again postponed at the end of April. Civil society warns of the continued "lack of protection" if the second bill, introduced in 2025 is approved, and calls for dialogue to facilitate discussion and agreement.

The legislation imposing severe restrictions on freedom of association, Law No. 7363, is now in force, while protests by various social groups continue. In April 2026, a [mobilisation](#) of indigenous and peasant organisations took place in Asunción and other parts of the country, seeking to bring attention to issues such as structural security concerns, access to land, and the [criminalisation](#) of their protest actions, a situation that also affects protests and activists from other sectors. An emblematic case is that of V.B., an environmental defender, who, following a [hearing before a judge](#), will face trial for allegedly "inciting" demonstrators over [conflicts](#) involving small yerba mate producers and mining pollution. Furthermore, there is evidence of judicial action targeting whistleblowers from social organisations, rather than advancing the [investigation](#) of the abuses they exposed. This results in situations of impunity that exacerbate the violation of rights, as in the case of the attack in April 2026 against [R.I., an engineer with the Social Ministry and](#) a researcher into the environmental impact of these mining operations. In the face of these obstacles and challenges, CSOs remain active in the pursuit of fundamental rights.

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

Following the enactment of the so-called 'Anti-NGO Law', [No. 7363/24](#), which establishes a new legal framework for the registration and operation of non-profit organisations (OSFL) in the country, some 33 civil society organisations (CSOs) filed a [constitutional challenge](#) against

this legislation and its implementing decree, [No. 4806/25](#) at the end of 2025. The constitutional challenge argues that the law infringes upon freedom of association, freedom of expression, political participation and the principle of legality and was joined by other [CSOs](#). While awaiting the outcome of this legal process, the deadline for [mandatory registration](#) in the new official register of all non-profit organisations established before 1 January 2026 expired in early April. Those established after that date must register within 30 days of their creation.

Stakeholders such as the Paraguayan Episcopal Conference (CEP) have raised concerns with the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), the relevant body, regarding the requirements for the new registration in the SIARA (Integrated System for the Administration of Administrative Registers). [A request has been made](#) for the regulations to be reviewed with the involvement of the affected sectors, for the registration deadline to be extended, and for training and technical assistance to be provided on how to use the system. Regarding the latter, the ministry has announced a series of [webinars](#) to be held at the end of April 2026.

Dozens of CSOs have completed their registration by submitting the required documentation, and others already registered have been finalising their details. Several organisations have chosen not to do so due to the high level of bureaucracy involved, a situation which entails the loss of their formal legal status. Civil society organisations that were unable to complete this process, or chose not to do so, now face difficulties regarding their legal status. Registered organisations were already previously required to submit documentation to the existing authorities, such as the National Tax Revenue Directorate, General Directorate of Public Registries – Judiciary, Treasury Legal Service or the Secretariat for the Prevention of Money Laundering, and now have to submit further documentation for registration in the [new register](#). The Regulatory Decree 4806/24 of Law No. 7363/24 adds to the previous procedures and documentation the provision of periodic and detailed information, updated at least every six months and establishing various penalties for both legal and natural persons who fail to comply with them. These requirements particularly present barriers for small organisations.

The ongoing implementation of Law No. 7363 was preceded by a Parliamentary Commission that, between July 2024 and August 2025, investigated NGOs for alleged misuse of foreign funds. The process as well as the report have been [denounced](#) for spreading disinformation and delegitimising narratives against NGOs, [revealing private data](#) from CSOs and for creating an environment of suspicion and intimidation. The investigation by the commission followed a similar rationale and provided the background for parliamentary debates on Law No. 7363. Furthermore, the controversial actions of the commission raise doubts about the government's handling of implementing Law No. 7363.

Regulatory pressures also affect the rights to information and expression of marginalised communities. For indigenous communities, generally located in rural areas, poor access to information and means of communication had been partially alleviated by the installation of community radio stations that use their native languages. However, most of these are currently inactive due to difficulties in complying with the new administrative requirements provided by the National Telecommunications Commission ([CONATEL](#)) in 2024 and which are being applied for new authorisations. In particular, registration in the Single Taxpayer Registry (RUC) involves a great administrative burden for these stations, as [denounced](#) by civil society.

### 3. Accessible and sustainable resources

The new regulations imposed by Law No. 7363 affect CSOs' access to resources by increasing bureaucracy, with requirements that are often generic, whilst at the same time restricting the possibilities for CSOs to formalise their status. As a result, accessing resources has become more difficult for CSOs.

The allocation of public funds for activities by non-profit organisations continues without open calls for proposals, except for the specific guidelines set out for the preparation of the General National Expenditure Budget (PGN). For example, the allocation of [funds](#) to NGOs from the

binational Itaipú hydroelectric plant for the execution of road works, without a public call for proposals or disclosure of information, was met with criticism due to its lack of transparency. Such calls show that there is a lack of openness by the public sector to effective competition among CSOs. In the field of culture, specific initiatives stand out in that they do provide open calls for proposals, such as calls from the National Fund for Culture and the Arts ([FONDEC](#)) and the National Secretariat of Culture [Fund](#).

Furthermore, various initiatives by social organisations are undertaken with the support of external cooperation, with a key challenge being temporal predictability and public inquiry into these organisations as so-called “external agents”, particularly when it comes to rights-based programme lines. Another challenge remains the exploration of new working methods for generating local resources or optimising them, in line with the core activities of CSOs.

## 4. State openness and responsiveness

Several spaces that had been created for transparency and civil society participation remain inactive. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative, which Paraguay joined in 2011, remains inactive at the local level and the [most recent Action Plan](#) (2022–2024) has not yet been updated. Despite the alignment of the [National Development Plan](#) with the SDGs, which is mandatory for the public sector and indicative for the private sector, the *Paraguay 2030 SDG Commission*, a space established in 2020 (Decree 3581) for collaboration between ministries, CSOs, and other stakeholder to fulfil the country’s international SDG commitments, [remains inactive](#). The paralysis of these spaces for participation and monitoring hinders the promotion of an active civil society, as set out in the vision, strategic pillars and guidelines of the country’s roadmap, which has been formally adopted.

Various draft laws discussed with social organisations in parliamentary committees or at public hearings generally proceed to be approved and enacted without effective consideration of the contributions and debates that have taken place. For the Bill on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, extensive debate and prior consultations took place. However, these are now seen as mere formalities, given that the ruling party’s parliamentary group has tabled a second bill that did not undergo any debate or consultation, highlighting significant limitations on CSO participation. Similarly, the government’s proposal to reform the Public Pension Fund, relating to pensions and retirement benefits for public sector workers, created a highly contentious situation in [February](#) 2026. Its submission to Congress in December 2025 and its rapid processing, scheduled for early 2026, lacked consultation and adequate public awareness, despite its impact on the affected population. Widespread mobilisation by trade unions, particularly in the education sector, enabled the approval of amendments in both chambers of parliament and subsequent [enactment](#). Certain [cooperation initiatives](#) between [CSOs and public bodies](#), such as cultural and training activities promoted in a coordinated manner between both sectors, also continued during the reporting period, presenting some opportunities for engagement with the state.

In terms of transparency, Transparency International’s 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index ([CPI](#)), updated in February 2026, indicates that Paraguay’s score has remained unchanged from 2024, remaining at a low score of [24/100](#). The [Law on Access to Public Information](#), in force for over ten years, constitutes an important instrument aimed at strengthening accountability, although access to information remains restricted in practice. Complaints regarding the lack of disclosure of information by municipal councillors in [March](#) and [April](#) 2026 add to public mistrust and the deterioration of democratic mechanisms and cooperation at the local level.

In the context of the rolling out of the voting machines to be used in the upcoming political primaries scheduled for June 2026 prior to the general municipal elections in October 2026, the opposition [continued to call](#) for greater oversight given that [civil society concerns](#) raised during the tender process were disregarded.

## 5. Political culture and public discourses on civil society

High levels of inequality continue to hamper equal participation of all sectors of society. Additionally, civil society efforts to reduce inequality have become politicised in the context of the upcoming elections, undermining their effectiveness in working towards access to participation for marginalised groups. For example, the women representing soup kitchens from the [Articulación Pykui](#) have [reported](#) reduced provision of supplies and responsiveness from the Ministry of Development (MDS). The solidarity initiative had been created during the COVID-19 pandemic and succeeded at institutionalising support through the enactment of [Law 6.945](#) on the Programme for Soup Kitchens and Community Centres, administered by the MDS. Reports of ministry officials urging soup kitchen staff to sever ties with CSOs and apply for supplies on an individual basis highlight the politicisation of assistance to marginalised groups. The women leading these kitchens have [pointed out](#) that without adequate public will and support, the units may cease to operate, thereby perpetuating the marginalisation and inequality that hinders the full participation of affected groups.

Narratives disparaging CSOs have intensified in certain media outlets, both in the commercial press and in some sections of the digital press. This trend was recently reinforced by anti-CSO narratives related to the [presence of indigenous leaders in Italy](#), who denounced [illegal deforestation](#) in their territory related to the production of luxury leathers, often exported to Italy. Rather than providing further information on the underlying issues of the deforestation—such as violations of [environmental regulations](#) and indigenous people’s rights—the reports published by the media focused on the [support provided by foreign and Paraguayan CSOs to the indigenous peoples](#) and referred to their engagement as a “disinformation campaign”. No voices from the affected people were heard in the reporting. Additionally, these [narratives](#) blamed the CSOs for the subsequent closure of business and loss of jobs in the region and requested the government to look into their registration, transparency and possible suspension for non-compliance with Law 7363. In response, one of the affected CSOs clarified in a [statement](#) that indigenous organisations resorted to international bodies in exercise of their rights and should not be held accountable for business decisions made as a consequence of enforcement of international environmental and human rights standards. The CSO also called for an informed and responsible public debate that avoids stigmatisation. The case illustrates how information is presented in a misleading way to create opaque narratives delegitimising CSOs, especially rights-based organisations, without addressing the underlying complexities of the situation.

At the same time, there have been individual instances of public recognition of the role of civil society. During the opening of the 66th Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the 40th meeting of IDB Invest, held in March 2026 in Asunción, the IDB president [emphasised](#) the contributions of CSOs, not only in country strategy consultations but also in the implementation and monitoring of projects as well as in the incorporation of local perspectives and improvements to the effectiveness of initiatives. During the meeting, Paraguay, represented by its Minister of Economy and Finance, assumed the 2026-2027 presidency of the IDB Group Assemblies, with the Ministry [echoing](#) the recognition of civil society contributions through its website.

There are conflicting narratives regarding the role of civil society and its organisations, where the greatest discredit arises in response to actions aimed at reducing corruption, increasing public transparency or making progress in the implementation of rights, thereby promoting fear and citizen self-censorship.

## 6. Access to a secure digital environment

While some regulatory advances have been made, significant challenges in the area of digital regulation persist that affect the platforms of social organisations, activists and human rights defenders, with [reported evidence](#) of hacking, identity theft, arbitrary removal of content, smear campaigns and digital violence.

The country already has a National Cybersecurity Strategy ([CERT, 2025–2028](#)), and two draft cybersecurity bills are currently under consideration in Congress ([Chamber](#) of [Deputies](#)). Recent [academic debates](#) thus point to progress in this area, albeit at a slow pace. Pending challenges include the [consequences of a massive cyberattack](#) on various public institutions that took place in mid-2025, the extent of which remains to be seen. A journalistic investigation, published in April 2026, further highlighted the existence of [digital ‘smear campaigns’](#) directed against journalists and government critics since 2025, with alleged government involvement given that the website in question has also published advertisements [promoting official programmes](#). The corresponding [investigation](#) by the Attorney General’s Office is awaited.

The approval of the [Personal Data Protection Act](#) in November 2025 has been welcomed by some [CSOs](#) as a positive step towards more robust data protection. However, it also raised concerns, given that the current approved version has excluded the initially suggested creation of an independent data protection authority. Additionally, CSOs [warn](#) that its Article 24 on public officials’ salaries conflicts with the right of access to public information. The regulatory process is under way, and it has been [reported](#) that the law will come into force at the end of 2027.

Additionally, there are two bills under consideration to regulate the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), one in the Chamber of [Deputies](#) and the other in the [Senate](#). The development of these laws provides an important opportunity to address pending concerns with the usage of AI in Paraguay, which has been assessed by the [Latin American Artificial Intelligence Index](#) (ILIA) as an ‘explorer’ country with nascent ecosystems and limited capacity for AI deployment. ILIA’s assessment revealed significant shortcomings in the governance of AI development in Paraguay, with weak or absent involvement of Paraguayan society, both in terms of citizen participation and multi-stakeholder participation.

In this digital transformation process, there is [a need](#) to build trust through clear regulatory frameworks for responsible data management and governance as well as the bridging of gaps and capacity building, so that the incorporation of technology translates into development. The current process of designing the regulatory framework thus points to the need for civil society participation to contribute to the effective exercise of rights, which is also linked to the reduction of [gaps](#) in internet access and digital literacy, conditions that affect the capacity for participation and the improved performance of CSOs in the country.

## Challenges and Opportunities

The ongoing regulatory restrictions on civil society organisations, as well as the persistence of disinformation campaigns and disparaging narratives directed against them, pose significant challenges. The premise that maximising state control over CSOs facilitates transparency turns out, in practice, to work in reverse. It eventually creates obstacles to government transparency through citizen monitoring and oversight. The creation of spaces for tolerant dialogue between public and civil society actors is a necessary condition for generating responses to sectoral demands, proposals for which currently remain unaddressed. The accumulation of shortcomings in these spaces, or their limited openness towards sectors that are habitually excluded, leads to setbacks in democracy. The current process continues to require the strengthening of CSO capacities and sustained attention from external partners, particularly for initiatives based on human rights and effectively geared towards sustainable development. Opportunities remain in the building of alliances and the coordination of actions.

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