



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot

Mali

July 2026

Context

Reporting period: December 2025-July 2026

Mali is undergoing a [protracted political transition](#) under a military regime, against a backdrop characterised by a combination of security, institutional, socio-economic and diplomatic challenges. Since 2020, the [transitional authorities](#) have undertaken a series of reforms aimed at rebuilding the state's institutional framework, notably through the adoption of the [Constitution of 22 July 2023](#) and the revision of several legal frameworks relating to [associations](#). However, these changes are taking place against a backdrop of increased centralisation of executive power and [a gradual reduction in opportunities](#) for political and civic participation.

In terms of security, [the situation remains unstable](#) in several regions of the country, where armed attacks, military operations and inter-communal tensions persist. This [structural insecurity](#) continues to be cited as the main justification for the strengthening of administrative and security control mechanisms, particularly with regard to civil liberties, the media and civil society organisations. Consequently, civic space is [gradually shrinking](#), characterised by restrictions on the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as by an intensification of surveillance and regulatory mechanisms.

At the same time, the country is facing a [growing diplomatic crisis](#) with several international partners, characterised by a significant reduction in bilateral and multilateral relations. This trend has led to the [closure](#) and [suspension](#) of several Western diplomatic missions, as well as a partial withdrawal of certain technical and financial partners. [The recent closure of the Belgian embassy](#) in Mali illustrates a hardening of diplomatic tensions and a redefinition of international cooperation relations. This development forms part of a broader context of Mali's redefinition of its alliances, notably through its repositioning within [the Alliance of Sahel States \(AES\)](#) and its [withdrawal from ECOWAS](#). This diplomatic crisis has direct consequences for the civil society environment, in that it leads to a [reduction in international funding](#), a narrowing of [spaces for political dialogue](#) and a reorientation of support programmes for local organisations.

Against this general backdrop, Mali's civic space is described as 'repressed' by the [CIVICUS Monitor](#), reflecting structural restrictions on fundamental freedoms. [Civil society organisations](#) operate in an environment where opportunities for expression and mobilisation are increasingly restricted. Public demonstrations are regularly subject to prior authorisation and, in several cases, [banned](#) when they concern issues deemed sensitive.

In terms of rights and freedoms, the monitoring period was also marked by a resurgence in [arrests and legal proceedings](#) targeting media and civil society actors. [Journalists](#) are particularly affected by the broad application of provisions relating to cybercrime, and offences linked to the dissemination of information online. The cases [of the journalists](#) placed in pre-trial detention in June 2026 illustrate this trend, against a backdrop in which several media professionals are facing similar proceedings due to their journalistic activities. These developments are contributing to a general climate of self-censorship and caution within the media sector. Events such as the unexplained disappearance of a [human rights defender](#) and his [son](#) in May 2026 are fuelling a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability in the public sphere, against a backdrop where mechanisms for transparency and institutional communication

remain limited. Meanwhile, in June 2026, [the media regulatory authority](#) continued to implement measures [to suspend](#) and restrict public affairs programmes, including an interactive programme allowing direct public participation.

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

The situation regarding civil liberties in Mali in 2026 is characterised by a [continuing deterioration](#), despite the existence of formal legal safeguards enshrined in the [2023 Constitution](#). [Freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association](#), whilst recognised, are increasingly subject to restrictive administrative and security practices that limit their effective exercise. This situation is confirmed by the CIVICUS Monitor's assessments, which classify the country as having a '[repressed civic space](#)', with a score of 21 out of 100 compared with 30 out of 100 in 2025, reflecting persistent and structural restrictions.

In practice, the transitional authorities frequently resort to measures such [as banning public demonstrations, dissolving or suspending](#) civil society organisations and political parties, and bringing legal proceedings against critical voices. The public sphere is thus severely restricted, particularly for those engaged in activities criticising public policies.

[Freedom of expression](#) is one of the areas most affected within Mali's enabling environment. In 2026, restrictions targeting the media and journalists intensified through [legal proceedings based in particular on legislation relating to cybercrime](#), as well as the arrest and detention of media professionals. In early May 2026, the lawyer and opposition figure [Mountaga Tall](#) was abducted from his home by armed, hooded men, in connection with his critical views and his role as a defence lawyer for officers and politicians being prosecuted by the authorities. His son, [Cheick Mamadou Tall](#), in turn went missing on 16 May 2026 after answering a phone call. The African Commission on Human and People's Rights has expressed its [concern](#) over these abductions.

As regards the press, the journalist [Youssouf Sissoko](#) of the newspaper L'Alternance was arrested in February 2026 and subsequently sentenced on 23 March 2026 to two years' imprisonment by the National Cybercrime Unit for an article critical of the President of Niger. In June 2026, the [journalists Chahana Takiou](#) of the newspaper 22 Septembre and [Abderhamane Keïta](#) of the newspaper Le Témoign were detained by the National Cybercrime Unit; the former for criticising the use of this law against the press, and the latter for comments made on television regarding the presence of the armed group [JNIM](#) in [Kidal](#).

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) [has warned](#) of the chilling effect of arrests and legal proceedings against journalists under cybercrime legislation, arguing that these practices undermine independent journalism and the expression of critical views in Mali.

2. Supportive legal and regulatory framework

The legal framework governing civil society organisations in Mali has undergone a profound transformation since 2024, with a gradual tightening of the administrative and financial control mechanisms exercised by the State. The 2004 Law on Associations, amended by [the 2024 Ordinance](#), introduced stricter rules governing the registration and operation of organisations, making their legal existence subject to prior administrative authorisation issued by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation.

Article 3 of [Law No. 04-038 of 5 August 2004](#) originally permitted the creation of an association by simple declaration, without authorisation. Articles 6, 30, 32 and 33 already provided a framework for the declaration to the State representative and the authorisation of foreign associations, the refusal of which results in automatic nullity and the liquidation of assets. [Ordinance No. 2024-008/PT-RM of 28 March 2024](#), [ratified](#) in June 2024 by the [National Transitional Council](#), now stipulates, in Article 3, a combined procedure of authorisation and prior declaration issued by the [Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation](#), a tightening of the rules presented by the authorities as intended to preserve public order.

This trend accelerated in 2026, with the adoption of a series of key regulatory texts. [Decree No. 0152 of 13 March 2026](#) introduced a [compulsory 10 per cent levy](#) on the funding of associations and foundations, intended to finance the mechanisms for monitoring and controlling these organisations. This measure was supplemented by [decrees](#) reorganising the bodies responsible for funding local authorities, notably the National Agency for Local Authority Investment ([ANICT](#)), thereby strengthening the administrative framework governing CSOs. A [decision dated 7 May 2026](#) implemented this framework by defining the procedures for the technical and financial oversight of organisations, as well as the mechanisms for the prior approval of their activities.

This new framework considerably expands the role of the administrative authorities by establishing several levels of oversight, involving, in particular, representatives of the State, the [Directorate-General for Territorial Administration \(DGAT\)](#) and local spatial planning bodies. Organisations must now demonstrate that their interventions are fully in line with local development plans, which introduces a form of programmatic conditionality on their activities. The framework also provides for a system of progressive sanctions ranging from formal notices to a total ban on carrying out their activities, thereby reinforcing the coercive nature of the legal framework.

These developments are giving rise to [serious concerns](#) within civil society, which sees them as a restriction on its legal and operational autonomy.

The 10 per cent contribution is seen as a significant [financial burden](#) likely to reduce organisations' capacity to carry out citizen monitoring and advocacy activities. The proliferation of administrative control mechanisms is also [interpreted](#) as a form of increased state surveillance, likely to limit the independence of civil society actors and their capacity for autonomous action.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

Access to financial resources for civil society organisations in Mali remains structurally [limited and is becoming increasingly restricted](#). The heavy reliance on international funding by a large proportion of civil society organisations comes against a backdrop of a shift in cooperation priorities and a gradual reduction in certain forms of external aid. Furthermore, the adoption in 2026 of [Decree No. 2026-0152/PT-RM](#), which introduces, amongst other things, a [compulsory levy](#) of 10 per cent on the resources of associations and foundations, as well as strengthened administrative control mechanisms, raises concerns regarding the financial and operational capacity of civil society organisations.

These [new financial control requirements](#) – notably the mandatory levy on the resources of associations and foundations, stricter obligations to account for expenditure, and administrative monitoring procedures – increase the administrative burden on CSOs. These

constraints risk reducing their operational agility and affecting their ability to respond rapidly to the needs of local communities, particularly in humanitarian and development contexts.

Finally, the political and diplomatic context – marked in particular by [Mali's withdrawal from ECOWAS](#) and the redefinition of relations with several international partners – has contributed to creating an environment less conducive to the [mobilisation of resources](#) for civil society organisations.

4. Open and responsive state

In Mali, the [Forum of International NGOs in Mali \(FONGIM\)](#), the [Network of National Organisations Active in Humanitarian Aid \(PONAH\)](#), the [National Council of Civil Society \(CNSC\)](#) and the [Forum of National NGO Collectives \(FECONG\)](#) are the main platforms for dialogue between the state and civil society actors. These civil society umbrella organisations are formally involved in government consultations, but these frameworks have not prevented major unilateral decisions such as [Decree No. 0152 of 13 March 2026](#), which introduced a [levy](#) of 10 per cent on the funding of associations, despite the consultations and advocacy efforts undertaken. They have expressed their [concerns](#) regarding the consequences of this decision and have continued to engage in discreet advocacy with the transitional authorities to minimise its impact on civil society organisations and beneficiary communities.

Mali does not have a single law on access to information. Whilst Article 15 of the [2023 Constitution](#) recognises the right of access to information, the legal framework remains fragmented across [Law No. 98-012](#) on relations between the administration and the public, [Law No. 2013-015](#) on data protection, and [Law No. 2017-062](#) on the information society, with no independent [redress mechanism](#) in the event of a refusal of access. [Freedom House](#) confirms, in its 2026 report, a low level of government openness and transparency.

Consequently, the existing mechanisms for dialogue do not systematically result in the effective consideration of civil society's contributions, whilst the responsiveness of institutions to the concerns expressed by organisations remains [limited](#), particularly on sensitive issues relating to human rights, governance and civic space.

5. Supportive public culture and discourses on civil society

In 2026, the official Malian narrative presents a mixed picture of civil society. On the one hand, the Government recognises its role as a partner in development and awareness-raising. Thus, at the signing of the [2026–2035 Sustainability Pact](#) in the water, sanitation, health and education sectors, civil society is explicitly entrusted with a role in advocacy and accountability, alongside local authorities, the private sector and technical and financial partners.

Similarly, the authorities promote citizen-led initiatives through the [School of Citizenship](#), presented as a tool for civic development and national renewal, even though civil society organisations do not play a central role in it.

As regards public perception, we have not identified, during the reference period, any opinion poll providing a specific and up-to-date measure of Malians' trust in civil society organisations. The only publication available on related topics, an [Afrobarometer report](#) published on 3 February 2026 on [access to justice](#), merely notes that Malian citizens continue to show strong

attachment to local institutions and actors. The survey highlights, in particular, an improvement in trust in the courts, whilst revealing that numerous barriers to access to justice remain.

The results published on [women's rights](#) also show that citizens expect public institutions to take more action to protect fundamental rights, suggesting there is significant scope for civil society organisations working in the fields of legal aid, awareness-raising and citizen monitoring.

6. Access to a secure digital environment

The digital environment in Mali is undergoing a transformation characterised by the gradual strengthening of legal and institutional mechanisms designed to combat cybercrime, disinformation and threats to public security. [Law No. 2019-056 on the suppression of cybercrime](#) constitutes the main legal framework applicable in this area. It defines several offences relating to digital activities and provides for investigation and prosecution mechanisms enabling the judicial authorities to take action against content published online.

[Several provisions of this Act](#) raise concerns regarding the safeguards afforded to fundamental rights. Articles 74 to 78 authorise searches and the seizure of computer data without providing sufficiently precise guidelines on the procedures for storing, using and deleting the data collected. Articles 83 to 86 provide for the interception of communications by service providers, whilst Articles 20 and 21 criminalise 'threats' and 'insults' committed via an information system, with penalties ranging from six months to ten years' imprisonment, without clearly defining these concepts. Furthermore, [Article 54](#) provides that press offences committed electronically, with the exception of those relating to the online press, are prosecuted under ordinary law. This provision creates uncertainty as to the applicable legal framework, between the [Press Act](#), the [Cybercrime Act](#) and ordinary law.

However, the implementation of these measures raises [concerns](#) regarding their potential impact on fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of expression, the right to privacy and the protection of personal data. International human rights organisations [have warned](#) against the risk that legislation on cybersecurity and the fight against disinformation could be used disproportionately to stifle critical speech or restrict the digital civic space.

Consequently, civil society organisations, human rights defenders and journalists operate in a digital environment characterised by increased pressure on critical expression. [Legal proceedings](#) have been brought against journalists [Youssouf Sissoko](#) of the newspaper L'Alternance, who was convicted on 23 March 2026, [Chahana Takiou](#) of the newspaper 22 Septembre and [Abderhamane Keïta](#) of the newspaper Le Témoign, both of whom were remanded in custody in early June 2026, for content published online. These cases are helping to create a climate of self-censorship and may limit the use of digital media as tools for citizen mobilisation, advocacy and monitoring of public action.

Furthermore, Article 4 of the [Telecommunications Act](#) authorises the government to requisition or suspend networks on grounds of public security. This same legal framework remained available to the authorities during the period under review but was not utilised.

Internet accessibility remains a significant challenge in Mali, with limited internet penetration and low levels of internet use hindering widespread digital inclusion. According to [DataReportal](#), [Mali](#) had 8.91 million internet users at the end of 2025, representing a penetration rate of 35.1 per cent, with 2.40 million social media users (9.5 per cent of the

population) and 23.2 million active mobile connections (91.6 per cent of the population). This significant gap between mobile coverage and the actual use of the internet and social media suggests a digital divide linked in particular to the cost of devices and data, which affects rural areas and low-income groups in particular.

Challenges and Opportunities

Over the next six months, Malian civil society will face a number of major challenges. The continuing restrictions on civic space – notably limitations on freedom of expression, pressure on the independent media, and the administrative and financial constraints imposed on civil society organisations – could reduce their ability to carry out advocacy work, mobilise citizens and monitor public policy. Increased financial and administrative requirements, as well as uncertainty surrounding the mobilisation of external funding, also constitute significant obstacles to the continuity of CSOs' work.

However, opportunities do indeed exist. Strengthening frameworks for dialogue between the state and civil society, the effective implementation of Mali's international commitments on human rights and governance, and the growing recognition of the role of CSOs in the provision of social services and social cohesion can all contribute to improving the enabling environment.

To address these challenges and capitalise on these opportunities, civil society requires a protective legal and institutional framework that guarantees the freedoms of association, expression and assembly; equitable access to financial resources; an inclusive dialogue with the authorities; and the strengthening of organisational capacity, particularly in the areas of internal governance, digital security and strategic advocacy.

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