



SUPPORTING  
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT  
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

# **Enabling Environment Snapshot**

**Ivory Coast**

**September 2026**

## Context

**Reporting period:** The period covered by this report is June to September 2026

The year 2026 sees a continuation of the tensions observed in 2025, marked by a tense post-presidential electoral climate. [Freedom House](#) highlights an erosion of political rights and civil liberties, noting that conditions deteriorated in 2025, when the outgoing president, Alassane Ouattara, won a fourth term after the authorities had excluded the main opposition candidates, and the crackdown on protests intensified.

In 2026, the government implemented the civil society reform initiated in 2024 by adopting, [on 5 August, six decrees](#) implementing Order [No. 2024-368 of 12 June 2024](#). These texts aim to modernise the functioning of CSOs, establish a State–Civil Society Consultation Committee, and impose stricter regulations on their financial governance and transparency. Whilst the government presents this reform as an opportunity to strengthen dialogue and the credibility of CSOs, it raises concerns about an increase in administrative burdens and greater scrutiny, as mentioned in the [initial report](#).

At the same time, public debate has been dominated by a proposal to reinstate the death penalty, put forward by a [Member of Parliament](#), to which human rights organisations such as [the APDH](#) have strongly opposed, arguing for a strengthening of the criminal justice system rather than a return to capital punishment.

## 1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

The principle of protecting fundamental freedoms continued to be put to the test in 2026. The crackdown on [the strike by Maritime Affairs officers in June 2026](#) illustrates this tension. On 8 June, officers demonstrated to demand compensation; around 34 of them were arrested. On 23 June, 31 officers were sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment without parole for 'disturbing public order'. This case, which follows similar incidents in 2025, demonstrates a trend towards the criminalisation of social demands and the use of prison sentences to deter the expression of legitimate dissent.

The observation of the parliamentary by-elections in Toumodi in February 2026 enabled the Consortium of Civil Society Organisations for Elections in Côte d'Ivoire ([COSCEL-CI](#)) to deploy observers and to describe the poll as 'credible' and 'peaceful'. However, the socio-political context remained 'polarised', with isolated incidents and allegations of fraud.

It should be recalled that the by-election in Toumodi followed the Constitutional Council's [annulment of the results of the December 2025 parliamentary elections](#), a decision which was already indicative of the electoral disputes in Côte d'Ivoire. According to the COSCEL-CI consortium, this election [took place against a backdrop of tension](#), with the after-effects of the 2020 political and electoral crisis still fresh in people's minds. Mistrust between local political actors, exacerbated by communal divisions, was palpable. Everyone feared an escalation of violence during the electoral process.

## 2. Supportive legal and regulatory framework

Civil society is governed by [Order No. 2024-338](#) of 12 June 2024 on the organisation of civil society. Despite [the reservations expressed](#), the proposals for amendments and withdrawal put forward by civil society organisations were not adopted, and this Order was passed by the Ivorian Parliament. Several provisions restrict fundamental freedoms enshrined primarily in Articles 19 and 20 of the 2016 Constitution, notably freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, religious belief or worship, and the freedoms of association, assembly and peaceful demonstration, as well as international instruments to which Côte d'Ivoire is a party, such as Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7 of the African Charter on the Right to a Remedy, Article 10 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa.

Article 22 of this order has been described as “extremely dangerous” in an analysis by civil society organisations, in that it provides for the dissolution of organisations whose activities “constitute a threat to public order and security, the integrity of the national territory and the republican form of government, or which are likely to undermine social cohesion, stir up hatred between ethnic or religious groups, cause political unrest, bring political institutions or their functioning into disrepute, incite citizens to break the law, and harm the country's general interest”, with no possibility of appealing against such a dissolution.

In the same vein, the key development concerning the legal framework supporting the work of civil society actors during the period under review is [the adoption of the six \(6\) decrees implementing the same 2024 order](#). Indeed, the Ivorian government has taken a further step in reforming the regulatory framework for civil society by adopting, during a Council of Ministers meeting, six decrees implementing the Order of 12 June 2024, which has now become law. These texts aim to modernise the functioning of civil society organisations, enhance their transparency and structure their collaboration with the public authorities. The six decrees concern the establishment of the Consultative Committee between the State and civil society: (i) the establishment of the Higher Consultative Council for Religions and Beliefs (CSCRC), (ii) the cost and payment arrangements for filing fees relating to applications for the establishment or recognition of CSOs, as well as the costs associated with character checks, (iii) the minimum initial endowment required for foundations recognised as being of public utility, in order to ensure their financial viability from the outset, (iv) the regulation of public appeals for donations by foundations, setting out the rules applicable to fundraising intended to finance their activities, (v) the procedures for CSOs to receive donations and bequests, the regulation of benefits that may be granted to them, as well as (vi) the strengthening of obligations relating to the preparation of their financial statements.

The six decrees adopted serve to put the ordinance into practice; they specify its technical details (cost, funding, accounting rules) and establish the consultative bodies provided for in the text. However, they do not address the fundamental concerns raised

by civil society regarding arbitrary dissolution without recourse, the lack of safeguards against criminal sanctions, the vague grounds authorising dissolution, or the tendency to subordinate civil society to the administration.

As CSOs had emphasised prior to ratification, the ordinance “may be deemed satisfactory from the State’s perspective, but it raises numerous issues for civil society organisations”, and the implementing decrees merely clarify the procedures for implementation, without rectifying any of the controversial provisions.

### 3. Accessible and sustainable resources

The adoption on 5 August 2026 of the six implementing decrees for the 2024 Order introduces major structural and financial barriers that directly undermine the sustainability of CSOs. These texts, notably by setting the cost of registration fees at 50,000 FCFA and character reference fees at 50,000 FCFA, or by imposing a minimum endowment of 200,000,000 FCFA (approximately 300,000 euros) on foundations recognised as being of public utility (with a registration fee of 500,000 CFA francs for their recognition (approximately 760,000 euros)), considerably increase the administrative and financial burdens on these organisations. Even more restrictive, the sixth decree (Decree No. 2026-526) imposes a strict obligation of accounting transparency and regulates the receipt of donations and bequests, turning vital resources into a procedure involving high administrative risk. These requirements, presented as guarantees of credibility, create a crowding-out effect: by making access to funding conditional on prior administrative checks and rigorous accounting obligations, they penalise, first and foremost, CSOs that rely on foreign funding and lack the human and technical resources to comply with these new standards.

Added to this domestic regulatory pressure is the equally onerous burden of the FATF’s requirements. Côte d’Ivoire’s inclusion on the grey list since October 2024 has led to a tightening of AML/CFT measures (measures to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism), resulting in increased monitoring of financial flows and heightened vigilance on the part of correspondent banks. This situation has a direct impact on CSOs, whose donations are now regarded as a potential source of illicit financing, justifying additional bank checks and ever-stricter compliance obligations. International donors, faced with a financial environment perceived as riskier and with higher transaction costs, may be deterred from funding local organisations, thereby exacerbating the scarcity of available resources. Ultimately, the combined effect of these two factors – namely, the administrative burden of the decrees and the pressure from the FATF – creates an environment in which access to resources is gradually diminishing, threatening the autonomy and sustainability of Ivorian CSOs.

### 4. Open and responsive state

The State formalised its commitment to dialogue with civil society by establishing the Consultative Committee by decree in August 2026. This institutionalisation could represent a step forward, although its effectiveness and its ability to take CSO recommendations into account remain to be seen.

Civil society's participation in the drafting of the 2026–2030 National Development Plan (NDP) is a second indicator of this openness on the part of the state. The PND, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 4 February 2026, is presented by the government as "the result of a broad participatory process involving the 31 regions, local authorities, the private sector, civil society, as well as technical and financial partners". Regional consultations were held from 23 to 30 April 2025 across the country, involving local elected representatives, traditional and religious authorities, community leaders, economic operators, representatives of rural communities, the local private sector, civil society and [technical and financial partners, notably](#) the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group, the World Bank Group, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the European Commission and the United Nations. The consultative process covered 31 regions, 110 departments, 188 municipalities and 505 sub-prefectures, involving over 2,000 participants, and the following priorities were identified: infrastructure, drinking water, health, education, agriculture and security. These priorities guided the Plan's investment choices.

However, this participation remains structured and limited in scope. Civil society is consulted on the Plan's broad directions, but it has no say in its final content. The government retains control over the agenda, methodology and prioritisation, with CSO contributions being incorporated only marginally into a document whose six strategic pillars (peace and stability, agriculture and agro-industry, private sector development and industrialisation, human capital, strategic infrastructure and good governance) had already been largely defined in advance. Furthermore, CSOs participating in these consultations often do so within a framework constrained by the new legal regime set out in the 2024 Ordinance and its implementing decrees, which strictly regulate their governance and funding. In fact, Articles 17 and 18 of Decree No. 2026-526 stipulate that CSOs must prepare annual financial statements in accordance with the Uniform Act on the Accounting System for Non-Profit Organisations and submit them to the Directorate-General for Territorial Administration (DGAT) or to the prefectural authority within six months of the end of their financial year. Failing this, a two-month formal notice may be issued, and the benefits provided for in Chapter IV (support for training, access to state media, technical assistance) may be suspended until the matter is rectified. This clearly falls within the scope of internal governance (the obligation to produce accounts and to submit to administrative scrutiny). Decree No. 2026-525 (Articles 4 and 7) stipulates that foundations wishing to make a public appeal for donations must submit a prior declaration to the DGAT and draw up an annual statement of expenditure for the funds raised where the amount exceeds 30 million CFA francs (approximately 45,000 euros). These obligations enhance financial transparency and the accountability of governing bodies.

As analyses by civil society organisations have emphasised since the adoption of the ordinance, 'participation does not guarantee influence': the openness displayed by the State coexists with increased control and a growing subordination of CSOs to the administration.

A third area of reform illustrates this selective responsiveness on the part of the state. This is the ongoing reform of the electoral management body. [On 6 May 2026, the government dissolved the Independent Electoral Commission \(CEI\) by Order No. 2026-265](#), a decision justified by the need to 'provide lasting reassurance' to political actors and citizens. [On 22 June 2026, Prime Minister Robert Beugré Mambé](#) unveiled, during a meeting with political parties and civil society organisations, the structure of

the future system, which will be based on three distinct bodies: one responsible for the logistical organisation of elections, a second for the counting of votes, and a third for the supervision and monitoring of the entire process. This new mechanism, the founding documents for which are expected to be adopted in the form of a bill, is set to permanently replace the CEI.

Civil society organisations have welcomed this reform with cautious support. On 29 June 2026, a coalition of 13 organisations, including LIDHO, WANEP-CI and the POECI Platform, welcomed a mechanism that ‘addressed all their long-standing recommendations’ regarding democratic consolidation, whilst stating that they were ‘available’ for future technical discussions on the operationalisation of these new institutions. However, the method and timetable for this reform have drawn criticism. A collective led by Simone Ehivet Gbagbo has denounced a unilateral approach: according to its members, the reform’s guidelines had already been decided in advance, with the meeting on 22 June having been “merely an information session rather than a genuine forum for consultation”. This group is calling for the creation of a fully independent High Electoral Council (HCE), excluding from its membership ‘any government representative or member of a political party’ – a condition deemed essential to guarantee its credibility and impartiality.

Furthermore, the delay in establishing this new body is holding up the process of revising the electoral roll. The government spokesperson, Amadou Coulibaly, stated on 9 September 2026 that the next annual revision of the electoral roll would take place after the structures intended to replace the CEI had been put in place, adding that ‘discussions are ongoing’ and that ‘once these are complete, we will know exactly which body will carry out this operation’. This situation creates institutional uncertainty for CSOs involved in election monitoring and civic awareness-raising, and illustrates how the ongoing reforms, although presented as participatory, leave civil society in a position of waiting and reacting rather than co-shaping public policy.

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

The year 2026 was marked in Côte d’Ivoire by a resurgence of public debate on the reinstatement of the death penalty, the abolition of which was enshrined in the 2000 Constitution and confirmed by the 2016 Constitution. This debate, reignited by a tense security situation, illustrates the tensions between the security aspirations of a section of the population and the country’s international and constitutional commitments regarding human rights.

Indeed, on 16 July 2026, the MP and mayor of Gohitafla, Naya Jarvis Zamblé, sent shockwaves through Ivorian public life by calling for a national debate on the reinstatement of the death penalty for the most heinous crimes. This stance follows the circulation on social media of a video showing the particularly brutal murder of a young delivery driver in Cocody, a tragedy that has deeply shaken the national conscience.

In her message, the MP stated that “it is time to have the courage to open a national debate, without complacency or taboos, on strengthening our criminal justice policy”. She proposed that this issue be discussed democratically in Parliament when

parliamentary sessions resume in October 2026, focusing specifically on the rape of minors and certain murders of exceptional gravity. The MP justified her position by arguing that “Africa has its own realities, Europe has its own” and that laws must respond to the expectations of the people and the challenges facing societies.

In response to this proposal, Action for the Protection of Human Rights in Côte d’Ivoire (APDH) took a clear stance. In a statement published on 24 July 2026, the organisation reaffirmed its categorical opposition to the reinstatement of the death penalty.

The APDH welcomed the sentencing of those responsible for the delivery driver’s murder to life imprisonment – one of the most severe penalties provided for under Ivorian law – whilst emphasising that a state governed by the rule of law cannot base its criminal policy on emotion.

Finally, the concept of ‘repos’ and the harassment of feminists illustrate how online discourse and practices can delegitimise and endanger civil society actors, particularly feminist activists. Originating from a viral comedy sketch, the concept of ‘rest’ – also referred to as the ‘rest loincloth’ or ‘rest shirt’ – quickly became established in Ivorian online vocabulary, appropriated by brands, public institutions and influencers for the purposes of commercial newsjacking. According to the Ivorian Women’s Rights League, this expression directly refers to mechanisms of coercion, submission and non-consent towards women; in Ivorian slang, ‘let’s go and rest’ is used as a euphemism for demanding sex from a woman invited to dinner. The feminist organisation views this as a serious trivialisation of rape culture and has demanded the immediate withdrawal of all posts and promotional campaigns associated with this concept. This controversy has been exploited by institutional pages, including that of the National Police, triggering a wave of cyberbullying targeting feminist activists on a massive scale. The chair of the NGO Opinion Éclairée was threatened with physical assault by an online activist for speaking out against the trend. This phenomenon reflects an increasingly hostile digital environment for women’s rights defenders, where hate speech and online threats aim to silence dissenting voices and undermine their legitimacy to speak out on social issues.

## 6. Access to a secure digital environment

Ivorian civil society has access to information online and may share it in strict compliance with the regulations in force. The legal framework is based on the following legislation: Law No. 2013-451 of 19 June 2013 on combating cybercrime, as amended by Law No. 2023-593 of 7 June 2023, Law No. 2017-867 of 27 December 2017 on the legal framework for the press, as amended by Law No. 2022-978 of 20 December 2022, and Law No. 2022 – 979 of 20 December 2022 amending Act No. 2017-868 of 27 December 2017 on the legal framework for audiovisual communication. Article 92 of Act No. 2017-867 of 27 December 2017 on the legal framework for the press states: ‘Defamation committed through the press or by any other means of public communication against the Courts or Tribunals, the Armed Forces, constitutional bodies and public administrations is punishable by a fine of between 1,000,000 and 5,000,000 CFA francs’, i.e. approximately 1,500 to 7,600 euros. And Article 93 stipulates that defamation committed through the press or any other means of public communication against one or more members of the Government, one or more

members of the National Assembly, a citizen entrusted with a public office or mandate, a juror by virtue of their office or capacity, or a witness by virtue of their testimony shall be punishable by the penalty provided for in the preceding article. These articles restrict freedom of expression as they limit the possibility of publishing information on ‘the courts, tribunals, armed forces, constituted bodies and public administrations’, contrary to the spirit of good governance advocated by the Constitution. This article renders these categories of persons untouchable.

According to recent public sources, there is no systematic policy of internet shutdowns. However, the digital space is governed by laws and practices that restrict freedom of expression online and expose civil society actors to risks of institutional control or pressure. In this regard, the government has put in place legislation and institutions to govern the digital sphere and cybersecurity (such as a national strategy and agencies like the National Agency for the Security of Information Systems in Côte d’Ivoire – ANSSI-CI). These frameworks are officially intended to protect infrastructure and combat cybercrime, but they also strengthen the capacity for surveillance and control of digital communications. Ivory Coast’s civic space is hampered by legal and administrative mechanisms that can be used against journalists and human rights defenders.

## Challenges and opportunities

- Challenge: Civil society must operate in a climate characterised by a trend towards repression and the criminalisation of social movements, as illustrated by the conviction of maritime workers
- Challenge: CSOs must comply with the 2024 regulations, which impose significant administrative and financial burdens on CSOs, threatening their autonomy and operations.
- Opportunity: The creation of the Consultation Committee provides a formal framework for dialogue between the state and CSOs.

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