

Democracy at risk – threatening the right to organise

Reports are coming in on an increase in the phenomenon known as “shrinking democratic space”. In many cases, governments are passing restrictive legislation that limits operations in civil society organisations. The pressure on civil society is increasing, and opportunities for having genuine impact on one’s own society are shrinking. Marginalised groups including young people, women, LGBT+ persons and indigenous peoples are especially vulnerable and are, in many cases, deliberately excluded from political decision-making processes. This naturally results in power and resources becoming concentrated in few hands, which has a direct impact on democracy.

Developments have been moving in the wrong direction for far too long, and the pressure on civil society is now so comprehensive worldwide that steps must be taken at international political level. Norwegian People’s Aid works tirelessly to defend the right to organise, to reinforce our partner organisations, and to turn the spotlight on the threats they encounter. The issue of shrinking democratic space gives grounds for concern, and Norwegian People’s Aid is working actively with this problem.

Freedom of expression, the right to organise and the right of assembly are fundamental to democratic development in any society. In many countries, young people, journalists and others who choose to organise or to challenge or voice criticism of the authorities are being harassed, criminalised and gagged. Norwegian People’s Aid believes that free and independent media constitute a cornerstone in a living democracy. Wherever journalists and unionised workers are subject to pressure and threats, self-censorship increases and democracy suffers. For every journalist who is killed, many other journalists are pressured to remain silent. Norwegian People’s Aid is therefore committed to shining a light on this trend so as to combat the problem of shrinking democratic space.

Norwegian People’s Aid demands:

- As a subsidy provider, Norway increases its focus on reinforcing the freedom of expression, the right to organise and the freedom of the press in our partner countries.
- That the Norwegian government increase its financial support for civil society organisations that operate in areas especially vulnerable to censorship.
- That Norway exert direct pressure on leaders who abuse their power to silence free expression.