



A N N U A L
PLAN
NARRATIVE

JULY 2023 – JUNE 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS



ANNUAL PLAN CONTEXTS



PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS



IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR OBJECTIVES



MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING



INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS & CHANGES



KEY MILESTONES 2023 - 2024

INTERNAL CONTEXT

This is the second year of CIVICUS's 2022 – 2027 Strategic Plan. Under this plan, CIVICUS has one overarching goal statement: "to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Action for Expanded Civic and Democratic Space."

"to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Action for Expanded Civic and Democratic Space."

The goal reflects our emphasis on actions that are not just defending but also improving civic and democratic freedoms through a combination of influencing, organising and solidarity interventions.

CIVICUS's strategic plan has an explicit focus on working with and for groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination.

This requires greater solidarity and alliance building across all levels of our work, including within the membership, and the stronger representation of issues of civic and democratic freedoms from a social justice lens.

In the context of pressures on civic space and major global challenges, civil society is growing, diversifying and widening its repertoire of tactics.



Activists march for the rights of women and LGBTQI+ people on International Women's Day 2022 in Guatemala City, Guatemala.
Photo by Visibles/Facebook

CONTENTS

CONTEXTS

HIGHLIGHTS

WORK WE DO

MONITORING

INSTITUTIONAL

MILESTONES

EXTERNAL CONTEXT

In the context of pressures on civic space and major global challenges, civil society is growing, diversifying and widening its repertoire of tactics. Drawing on its special strengths of diversity, adaptability and creativity, civil society continues to evolve. In many of today's mass mobilisations, young – sometimes very young – people are at the forefront, acting on issues that directly affect them – such as the lack of economic opportunities, the climate crisis that threatens to rob them of their futures and the denial of the rights of excluded groups to which they belong or stand as allies of.

As observed in our annual State of Civil Society reports, much of civil society's radical energy is coming from outside the non-governmental organisations' universe: from small, informal grassroots groups, often formed and led by women, young people and Indigenous people.

Many new groups organise horizontally, adopt participatory approaches and cultivate distributed leadership. They're often more intersectional than their more established counterparts and peers, striving to make connections across society's traditional fault lines, including of class, race and faith. This was seen in many of this year's protests, for example in Sri Lanka, as economic shocks with far-reaching impacts brought diverse groups of people together across deep-seated divides.

On the other hand, restrictions on civil society continue to rise across contexts. Our analyses from the CIVICUS Monitor indicate that two billion people comprising 28 percent of the global population are now living in 27 countries and territories where there is absolutely no civic space and where mere expressions of democratic dissent can get one imprisoned for long periods, killed or forced into exile.

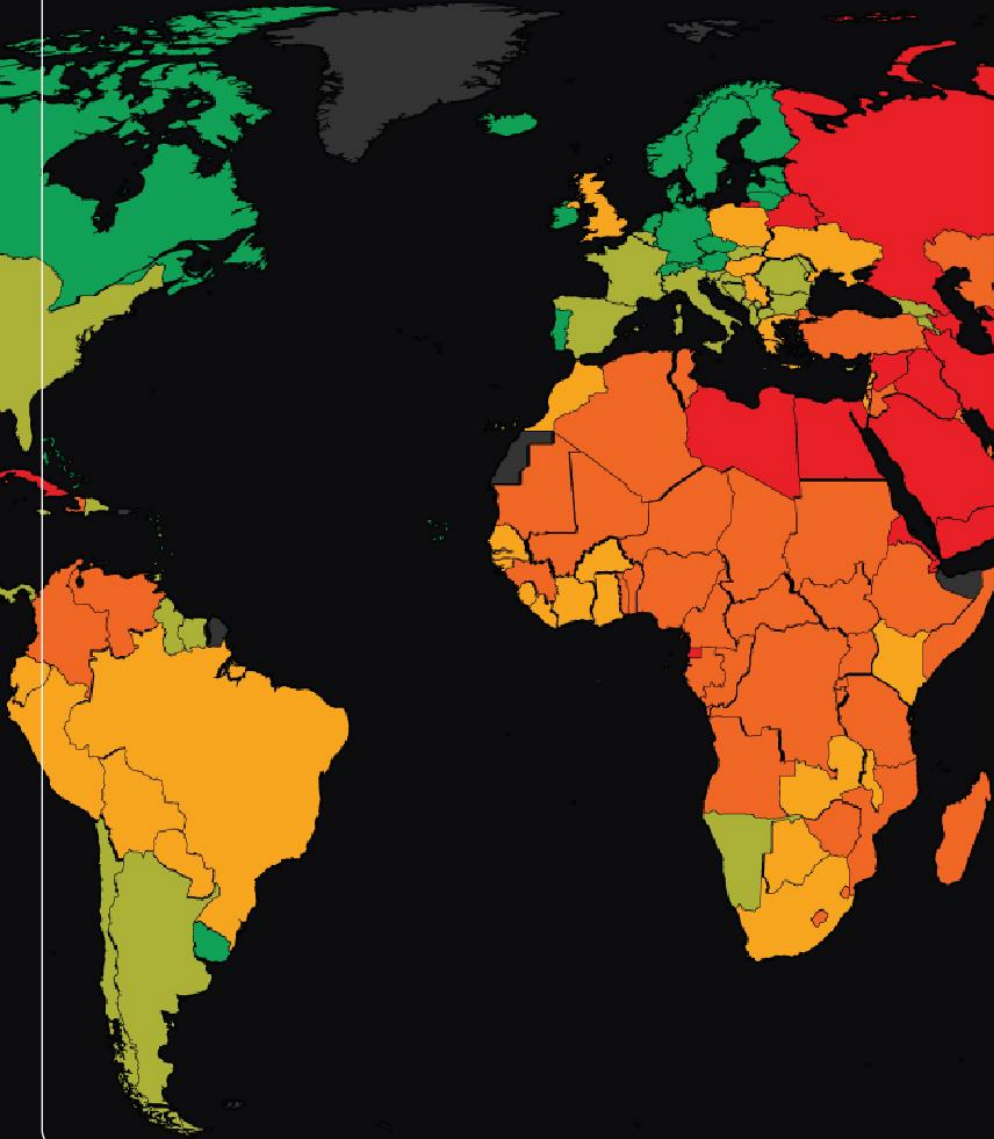
Among the top violations recorded are harassment and intimidation of activists, journalists or civil society organisations with the intention of deterring them from their human rights work; widespread arbitrary detentions of protestors as punishment for speaking out against those in power; and restrictive laws designed to prevent people from mobilising and exercising their fundamental civic freedoms.

OUR REASONING FOR THIS ANNUAL PLAN

Based on our internal and external context for expanded civic and democratic space, the annual plan highlights new areas of work we will undertake in this second year of implementing our strategic plan as well as our continued work, focusing our efforts to improve engagement with and for groups combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination. Both the quality of what and how we do our work will be evaluated by how those most affected engage with us and our work.

MONITOR FUNCTIONALITY

The CIVICUS Monitor will add a new feature that will complement the scores and ratings for a timely assessment of the civic space conditions in each country. Based on quarterly assessments by the Monitor's research partners, a country will show an up arrow if the situation in the country has improved over the past months or a down arrow if the situation has deteriorated. This tool would enable preventive advocacy in countries showing early signs of deterioration to prevent further regression and identify opportunities for additional advocacy where an opening of civic space is being documented.




PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS

LOCAL LEADERSHIP LABS

Local leadership Labs builds on our civil society resourcing work by catalysing inclusive and locally led approaches aimed at strengthening the support ecosystem, especially for most affected groups and communities. Selected civil society groups in the global south will be key drivers of the initiative. They will be responsible for convening inclusive, context-appropriate and transformative spaces at local, national and regional levels, enabling diverse local civil society actors to engage with governments, donors and other key allies. CIVICUS and Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) will serve as catalysts and connectors, brokering relations and direct engagement opportunities with other stakeholders, coordinating with likeminded processes and initiatives, facilitating learning across local leadership labs and with others in the support ecosystem and – where appropriate – amplifying the analysis, asks and solutions to a global audience.

WE RISE! CAMPAIGN

The WE RISE! Campaign builds on the ecosystem analysis carried out as part of our work on the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (FoPA) this past year. It embraces a radical collaboration approach where we'll work together with 20 CIVICUS members to co-design local campaigns relevant to their own contexts under the umbrella of CIVICUS's global campaign for expanded civic space and FoPA. This work aligns with the Ford Foundations' Weaving Resilience initiative to counter misrepresentation and present new, creative and proactive strategies for change. The campaign will capture and share strategies for sustainable protests, tactics for overcoming challenges and recommendations around FoPA.



People gather around Little Amal, a 3.5-metre-tall puppet of a young Syrian refugee girl, during a 8,000 km tour across Europe from Turkey to the UK, to raise awareness of the plight of young refugees, Stuttgart, Germany, 1 October 2021.
Photo by Lukas Barth/Reuters via GalloImage



People demonstrate to raise awareness to violence against Amhara people in Ethiopia's Oromia Region. Washington DC, USA, 30 June 2022.
Photo by J. Countess/Getty Images

CONTENTS

CONTEXTS

HIGHLIGHTS

WORK WE DO

MONITORING

INSTITUTIONAL

MILESTONES

DIGITAL DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

This programme has emerged from work to iterate a digital strategy for the CIVICUS alliance that supports diverse civil society actors in the global south to safely harness digital technologies in pursuit of greater civic and democratic freedoms on their own terms. It is one half of the new Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI) funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union that commenced in April 2023. CIVICUS, in collaboration with Global Focus, will strengthen the financial and non-financial resourcing infrastructure to enable local civil society to utilise digital technology to amplify agendas promoting inclusive democratic space online and offline. The second interlinked DDI project (led by Access Now and Digital Defenders Partnership) will work to defend and protect civil society utilising digital technology to promote democracy.

TRANSITIONING NETWORKS: INCUBATION TO INDEPENDENCE

CIVICUS will support both I4C and CHARM through the end of their incubation phase as they transition to independently functioning networks. The I4C programme was initiated in 2015, and our formal role as global host ends in June 2023. As agreed in transition meetings held across 2022, the network will function independently thereafter. CHARM was initiated in 2020, and CIVICUS agreed to host this project during its initial phase on the request of regional partners. This phase concludes June 2023; the project will thereafter transition to the consortium partner Defend Defenders.



Security forces detain a protester demonstrating against President Vladimir Putin's announcement of partial mobilisation of reservists to fight in Ukraine. Moscow, Russia, 21 September 2022
Photo by Alexander Nemenov/AFP via Getty Images



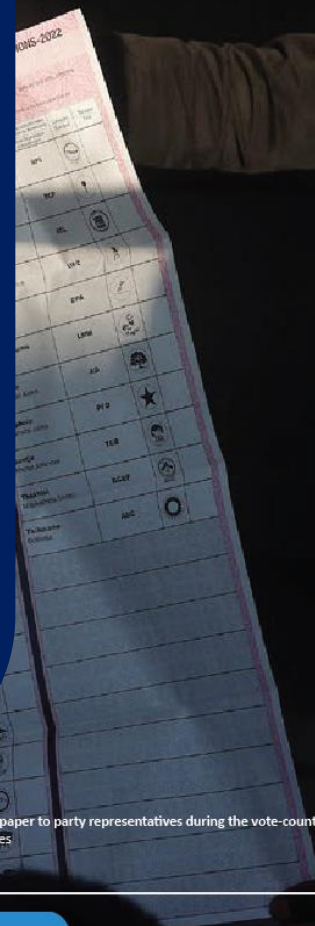
People demonstrate to raise awareness to violence against Amhara people in Ethiopia's Oromia Region. Washington DC, USA, 30 June 2022
Photo by J. Countess/Getty Images

IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

CIVICUS's five strategic objectives (represented by the icons below) work together and reinforce each other to achieve our singular goal. In this year's plan, we have chosen to focus on the impact we will achieve by building between the five strategic objectives that are outlined in the 2022-27 Strategic Plan.

Our work is accordingly organised into the three intersections within the strategy that we want to shine a light on, rather than five distinct objectives.

If you would like more detail on our work mentioned below, please see our [Annual Report 2021/2022](#).



An electoral officer shows a ballot paper to party representatives during the vote-counting process at Hoooho Primary School in Maseru, Lesotho on 7 October 2022. Photo by Phill Magakoe/Gallo Images

WORK WE DO



GENERATE TIMELY KNOWLEDGE AND ANALYSES ON CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS IN RELATION TO CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE



STRENGTHEN PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON CIVIC SPACE AND REINFORCE CIVIL SOCIETY NARRATIVES

We will increase media engagement capacity will allow us to strengthen our media partnerships for influencing discourse with our research:

THE CIVICUS MONITOR

Providing a trusted source of civic space ratings and data including country ratings, an annual People Power Under Attack Report, quarterly Civic Space Watchlist as well as country and thematic publications for civil society advocacy.

CIVICUS LENS

Providing analysis and commentary for ongoing and current events through interviews and other forms of consultation with members and partners to understand the quality of civic space.

THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY REPORT

Extracting major trends from the CIVICUS Lens, an annual report reviewing civil society action in every area from the local to the global showing how contemporary events and trends impact civil society and how civil society responds.

IMPROVED PUBLIC DISCOURSE THAT REFLECTS GREATER VALUE FOR CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE



Christian Smalls, head of the Amazon Labor Union, takes part in a pro-union protest in New York, USA - September 2022
Photo by Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images

WHY?

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

We expect that our research combined with media outreach will contribute to our long-term outcome of improved public discourse reflecting calling for a more robust civic and democratic space and social and environmental justice.

We will measure our progress towards this long-term outcome both quantitatively and qualitatively:

QUANTITATIVE INDICATOR WITH TARGET

10% increase in the number of publications referencing and using our work from the previous year.

QUALITATIVE INDICATOR

We will assess the relevance and quality of our work by asking networks and movements of young people, women, workers, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous and/or environmental groups and broader social justice movements to answer our learning question below.

LEARNING QUESTION

In what ways is our research supporting groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination to create change in local contexts?

WORK WE DO



CONTINUE OUR **TARGETED ADVOCACY** TO DEFEND AND EXPAND CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE



CIVICUS'S ADVOCACY PROVIDES THE PLATFORM TO BUILD COUNTER POWER WITH THE MOST AFFECTED GROUPS

We will influence, create solidarity and foster policy change through:

AGENDA SETTING

Engaging with global governance institutions and processes, focusing on ensuring greater civil society participation and actions by member states of the United Nations (UN) to protect civic space and address civic space violations.

This includes the 'We the Peoples' campaign and engaging with the Human Rights Council (HRC) and HRC net, diplomatic missions, special procedures, and other relevant UN bodies and processes.

DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Responding to civic space emergencies as they arise and coordinating ongoing campaign and engagement initiatives such as #StandAsMyWitness and the Diplomat and Defender Dialogues.

COORDINATING MEMBERS

Bringing together networks enabling the leadership of CIVICUS members on issues of civic and democratic space including the Affinity Group of National Associations and the CIVICUS Member Online Community.

INCREASED AND MORE EFFECTIVE ACTION MOVES DECISION MAKERS TO SAFEGUARD AND EXPAND CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS



WHY?

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

We expect that our advocacy to build counter power will allow us to reach our long-term outcome of improved accountability by decision makers to uphold the fundamental civic freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression. We anticipate that increased, and more effective civil society action moves decision makers to safeguard and expand civic and democratic space.

We will measure our progress towards this long-term outcome both quantitatively and qualitatively:

QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS WITH TARGETS

- One validated contribution towards policy change towards defending or expanding civic space
- Four validated incidents of influencing at national, regional or international levels towards defending or expanding civic space
- Ten solidarity actions at national, regional or international levels led by members or partners for defending or expanding civic space
- Ten solidarity actions at the international bodies level led by CIVICUS for defending or expanding civic space

QUALITATIVE INDICATORS

We will assess the relevance and quality of our work by asking networks and movements of young people, women, workers, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous and/or environmental groups and broader social justice movements to answer our learning question below.

LEARNING QUESTION

In what ways is our work supporting more sustainable advocacy for groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination?

WORK WE DO



CIVICUS CONTRIBUTES
TOWARDS STRONGER
EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINED
SUPPORT ECOSYSTEMS FOR
ACTIVISTS AND
ORGANISATIONS AT RISK

WHY?

BECAUSE SMALLER, LESS
FORMAL GROUPS IN THE
GLOBAL SOUTH ARE ON THE
FRONTLINES OF SOCIAL
TRANSFORMATION

We will support eco-system strengthening through:

WORKING WITH PEERS AND PARTNERS

Fostering intersectional networks that amplify and expand civil society's relevance and impact. Our current engagements include Innovation for Change (I4C), Consortium for Human Rights and Media Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (CHARM), Vuka! Coalition for Civic Action and the Dynamic Accountability Community of Practice.

COORDINATING MECHANISMS

Providing solidarity funding and support to activists and organisations at risk through the CIVICUS Solidarity Fund and Crisis Response Fund.

TESTING AND DEFINING NEW WAYS TO SHIFT POWER

Building local leadership with youth and civil society on the frontlines of change through initiatives such as CIVICUS Youth and Strengthening 21st Century Citizen Action.

IMPROVED ABILITY OF EXCLUDED GROUPS TO CHALLENGE OPPRESSIVE POWER AND TRANSFORM POLICY MAKING



WHY?

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

We expect that our advocacy to build counter power will allow us to reach our long-term outcome of improved ability of excluded groups to challenge oppressive power and transform policy making.

We will measure our progress towards this long-term outcome both quantitatively and qualitatively:

QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS WITH TARGETS

- 1 validated incident of influencing at national, regional or international level improving the ecosystems for smaller, less formal groups
- 5 solidarity actions at national, regional or international level led by members and partners improving the ecosystems for smaller, less formal groups

QUALITATIVE INDICATORS

We will assess the relevance and quality of our work by asking networks and movements of young people, women, workers, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous and/or environmental groups and broader social justice movements to answer our learning question below.

LEARNING QUESTION

In what ways is our work supporting the ecosystem for activists and organisations at risk?

MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & LEARNING

We will measure our progress against these targets:

- Ten percent increase in the number of publications referencing and using our work from the previous year
- One validated contribution towards change towards defending or expanding civic space
- Five validated incidents of influencing at regional or international levels
- Support 25+ solidarity actions at regional or international levels

Protesters demand a halt to the planned demolition of the hamlet of Luetzerath, on the edge of the expanding Garzweiler II open-cast coalmine near Erkelenz, Germany on 23 April 2022.

Photo by Sean Gallup/Getty Images

CONTENTS

CONTEXTS

HIGHLIGHTS

WORK WE DO

MONITORING

INSTITUTIONAL

MILESTONES

MONITORING

CIVICUS's strategic plan has an explicit focus on working with and for groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination. Therefore, we will assess the relevance and quality of our work by asking networks and movements of young people, women, workers, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous, environmental groups and/or broader social justice movements to assist us in answering our learning question: In what ways is our work supporting those groups affected by the combined impact of civic space restrictions and structural forms of discrimination?

OUR FIVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



LONG-TERM OUTCOMES FOR OUR WORK

Improved ability of excluded groups to **challenge oppressive power** and transform policy making.



Improved public discourse that reflects **greater value for civic and democratic space.**



Increased and more effective action **moves decision makers** to safeguard and expand civic and democratic freedoms.



Improved **accountability** by decision makers to uphold the **fundamental civic freedoms.**



INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS

Our external commitment to those most affected must also be reflected in CIVICUS's internal systems and processes. Therefore, CIVICUS will continue the following institutional strengthening and accountability practices:

RESILIENT SYSTEMS

Actively manage and further integrate risk, continue automation of processes and stronger data and digital security protocols and processes, strengthen our programme quality and innovation and address recent SIDA audit recommendations.

RESILIENT FINANCES

Update the resourcing and sustainability strategy and coordinate a costed plan for the ambitions outlined in the CIVICUS strategic plan. Continue our targeted donor outreach and related activities to grow and diversify our supporter base.

RESILIENT PEOPLE

Increase our people power by implementing the learning and development framework, which incorporates concepts and leadership practices to foster a culture of a commonly shared identity and enhance collaboration and cohesion across teams. It will include examining our mental models to promote greater diversity, equity and inclusion and will connect to our ongoing commitments to racial justice. We will also clarify the roles and responsibilities for implementing performance management across all levels in CIVICUS, which in turn will drive individual and team accountability and advance the practice of distributed leadership.

Judge Miatta Maria Samba enters the courtroom for the trial of Mahamat Said Abdel Kani at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, 26 September 2022
Photo by Sean Gallup/Getty Images

CONTENTS

CONTEXTS

HIGHLIGHTS

WORK WE DO

MONITORING

INSTITUTIONAL

MILESTONES

HIGHLIGHTED INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The completed ways of working analysis provided insights on strategic alignment and ways of working following the launch of the Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027. Based on this work, we are deepening our programmatic focus through three workstreams: Evidence & Engagement, Advocacy & Solidarity Action and Innovation & Sustainability. Each thread will be led by a Chief Officer. Several new leadership hires and realignment of the current senior leadership team will ensure greater collaboration towards our one common goal.

Some teams will transition to better align to these new workstreams.

Proposals include:

- Creation of a programme quality and innovation (PQI) cluster to continue its work contributing to broader program quality, co-design and incubation processes within CIVICUS.
- Iterating our civil society resourcing work stream, to better deliver our eco-system strengthening strategic objective.

Additional capacity in this financial year will take the form of:

- A dedicated team for resourcing and partnerships to drive our resourcing and sustainability strategy.
- A media advisor to advance strategy-related public engagement objectives.



KEY MILESTONES 2023-2024

**JUL
2023**

Human Rights Council
Geneva: Jun 19 - Jul 14

High Level Political Forum
New York: Jul 10 - 19

WE RISE! Campaign
Inception Convening

Local Leadership Labs
Launch Event

**AUG
2023**

Monitor Watchlist

UN Hub, Geneva
Special Sessions

CIVICUS Youth
Youth Int'l Day: Aug 12

Right to Protest Toolkit
Launch

Defenders and Diplomats Dialogues
Malawi

**SEP
2023**

Human Rights Council
Geneva: Sept 11 - Oct 6

UN General Assembly
New York: Sept 5 - 19

Strengthening 21st Century Citizen Action
Final Webinar

Local Leadership Labs
Partner Selection

Digital Action Lab
Launch

Digital Democracy Initiative
Regional Co-designs

**OCT
2023**

UN Hub, Geneva
Bi-lateral Events

Global Resource Hub Convening
Solutions Evaluation

**NOV
2023**

CIVICUS Annual Report

Universal Periodic Review
Geneva: Nov 6 - 17

Membership Engagement Month

UN Climate Change Conference
Nov 30 - Dec 12

**DEC
2023**

People Power Under Attack Report

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 75th Anniversary

CIVICUS Annual General Meeting
Guatemala

WE RISE! Campaign
Global Action

CONTENTS

CONTEXTS

HIGHLIGHTS

WORK WE DO

MONITORING

INSTITUTIONAL

MILESTONES

KEY MILESTONES 2023-2024

**JAN
2024**

**FEB
2024**

**MAR
2024**

**APR
2024**

**MAY
2024**

**JUN
2024**

**Universal Period
Review**
Geneva: Jan/Feb

**State of Civil Society
Report**

Monitor Watchlist

#StandAsMyWitness
Anniversary: Feb 23

**Human Rights
Council**
Geneva: Mar/Apr

**UN: Commission on
Status of Women**
New York: March

**Global Resource Hub
Convening**
Future Planning

**Digital Democracy
Initiative**
Resourcing
Mechanism Opens

**We the Peoples
Campaign**
Geneva

**Universal Period
Review**
Geneva: Apr/May

Monitor Watchlist
**Human Rights
Council**
Geneva: Jun/July

WE RISE! Campaign
Public Event

Rights Con

CONTENTS

CONTEXTS

HIGHLIGHTS

WORK WE DO

MONITORING

INSTITUTIONAL

MILESTONES



Connect with us:

 civicus.org

 info@civicus.org

 [/CIVICUS](https://www.facebook.com/CIVICUS)

 [@CIVICUSalliance](https://twitter.com/CIVICUSalliance)

HEADQUARTERS

25 Owl Street, 6th Floor
Johannesburg, 2092
South Africa
Tel: +27 (0)11 833 5959
Fax: +27 (0)11 833 7997

UN HUB: NEW YORK

25 E 42nd St, 17th Floor
New York, NY, 10017
United States

UN HUB: GENEVA

11 Avenue de la Paix
Geneva, CH-1202
Switzerland
Tel: +41 (0)22 733 3435