Shrinking Spaces in the Middle East and North Africa: Supporting Civil Society Resilience

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Summary

Civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) face mounting challenges, especially in authoritarian states, where they encounter closures, persecution and smear campaigns. Consequently, their crucial work in advancing human rights, good governance and inclusive human development is increasingly stifled and criminalised. Activists and professionals linked to CSOs also endure surveillance and persecution. This should worry European policy-makers since a vibrant and free civil society in MENA is in their interest, as it is key for human development. This policy brief proposes seven ways for development cooperation to protect CSOs in authoritarian regimes in the MENA and beyond.

European foreign and development policies in the MENA region have led to governmental partnerships that often sustain authoritarian regimes at the expense of citizens' rights, for instance on migration (Francavilla, 2023; Grimm & Roll, 2023). Although substantial humanitarian aid reaches conflict zones, one of the root causes of the continuing political violence and conflicts – absence of accountable democratic governments – remains inadequately addressed (Barakat & Fakih, 2021). To avoid further empowering authoritarian rule in the region, European policymakers should reassess their multi- and bilateral governmental cooperation. The prevalent assumption amongst many policymakers that the incumbent authoritarian regimes in MENA can provide political stability needs to be discarded. The stability paradigm guiding European relations with the Arab World should instead be replaced with a do-no-harm approach. Although "do no harm" is a core principle of European development cooperation policy,

it often is ignored in practice or trumped by other interests (Leininger, 2023). Development cooperation benefitting citizens must prioritise inclusive human development through cooperation with a wide range of actors, including elected state bodies, independent media and watchdog CSOs (Rutzen, 2015).

This policy brief develops seven recommendations for European policymakers in development cooperation. The first step is to overcome the prevalent stability-through-cooperation paradigm to prevent further negative effects on human rights, democracy and civil society. Therefore, it is important that European policymakers recognise these authoritarian regimes' unwillingness to implement reforms that would reduce their control over political institutions.

Second, it remains crucial that policymakers acknowledge the increasingly shrinking space for critical voices in civil society. Third, governments and regional organisations should give CSOs a voice at international summits and in international organisations to increase the visibility of their demands and show support for oppressed voices. Fourth, European development cooperation professionals should establish flexible crisis funding lines for at-risk CSOs and their staff. Fifth, at-risk journalists, activists or human rights defenders (HRDs) need access to fast-track visa programmes to ensure they can continue their work from abroad when the authorities want to silence them. Sixth, European development cooperation professionals should continue to support marginalised voices and groups and push for more inclusive governance. Lastly, European governments should limit arms exports to authoritarian regimes.

Shrinking space and authoritarian rule

A lost decade

More than a decade after the 2011 Arab Uprisings, the anticipated widespread democratic transition in the Arab World remains elusive. Despite successful regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen (2011), and more recently in Algeria (2018) and Sudan (2020), authoritarian rule persists across the region. The majority of the population in MENA still lacks both democracy and social protection, with the region maintaining its status as the world's most authoritarian according to global democracy indices. Additionally, poverty rates and inequality have risen since 2011. Even in the few flawed democracies like Iraq, Lebanon and Israel, CSOs have faced shrinking space due to attacks from law enforcement, religious actors, rising populism and authoritarian legislation restricting freedom of association and expression. Illustrating the global trends below, at least four types of repression are experienced by CSOs and their staff in the MENA region: online surveillance, restrictions of the right to peaceful assembly, limitations to the freedom of association, and persecution of and reprisals against CSOs and their staff.

Reassessing the authoritarian stability paradigm

European foreign, security and development policies towards the MENA region have predominantly focussed on bolstering executive institutions, particularly enhancing their capacity to provide public services and control their borders. Since 2014, German development cooperation has concentrated on migration control, renewable energy transition and addressing youth unemployment. Due to the heightened securitisation of migration policies, European policymakers have – by and large – chosen more cooperative policies towards the authoritarian regimes in the region. This approach is regularly justified by citing the need for cooperation on security issues, such as terrorism and irregular migration. Unfortunately, such cooperation can perpetuate authoritarian rule and fails to prioritise democratic and accountable governance.

Authoritarian regimes are unfit partners for stability

Collaboration with authoritarian governments is often driven by the belief that it will improve citizens' lives and address the root causes of migration. However, this cooperation primarily benefits corrupt state apparatuses by granting access to resources and enhancing their legitimacy. Security sector engagement, including providing equipment and training to authoritarian security services, enables suppression of citizens, paradoxically exacerbating irregular migration. Recent examples from Tunisia and Egypt highlight the unintended consequences, as cooperation fuels violence and migration attempts (Tocci, 2023).

Recent instances highlight the consequences of heightened repression on migration across the Mediterranean. In Tunisia, the populist and xenophobic rhetoric of President Said, coupled with actions of Tunisian security forces trained and equipped by Europe, has fuelled violence against black Tunisians and African migrants, leading to the deportation of migrants to the Libyan border, where conditions are inhumane (HRW, 2023). Similarly, Egypt's economic decline under President El-Sisi's military rule (Cook, 2023) has spurred increased attempts by Egyptians to reach Europe via perilous sea routes, despite substantial European investment in enhanced border policing by Egyptian authorities (Lewis, 2022). These examples underscore the flaws in the assumption that cooperation with authoritarian governments aimed at improving citizens' lives and addressing root causes of irregular migration is effective. First, authoritarian regimes prioritise their own survival over citizen welfare. Second, the security forces under these regimes often prompt people to seek better lives by undertaking treacherous Mediterranean crossings.

Policymakers should, therefore, acknowledge that authoritarian regimes are part of the problem as they not only lack accountability, checks and balances, but also engage in corruption and human rights violations. Cooperation that strengthens security forces and executive institutions may yield short-term results but comes at a

high cost (entrenching authoritarianism) and is – in most instances – not sustainable. It empowers repressive security forces, undermines accountability, heightens polarisation and can lead to political violence. Similarly, most development cooperation programmes rely on economic outcomes, ignoring that the process by which this progress is achieved often includes repressive means, such as forced resettlements, further entrenching authoritarian governance. Intensified cooperation with executive institutions can backfire, empowering incumbent elites and their security apparatuses.

Understanding the effects of shrinking space for CSOs

Before developing new approaches to support CSOs in the MENA, it is crucial to understand the operating conditions of independent civil society organisations in the region and at the country level. In the past decade, an alarming trend has emerged across almost all MENA countries: authoritarian governments have increased surveillance of civil society and increasingly use legal and regulatory measures to hinder their essential work (Amnesty International, 2017).

Figure 1: CSO repression amongst world regions
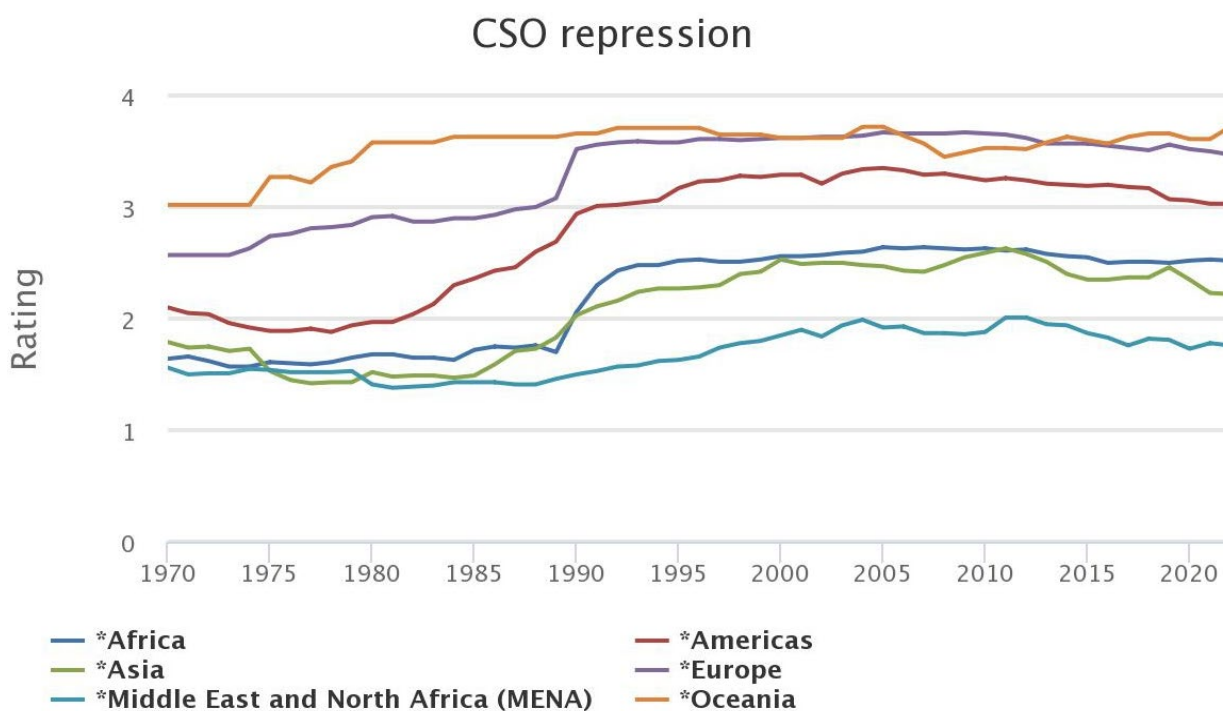
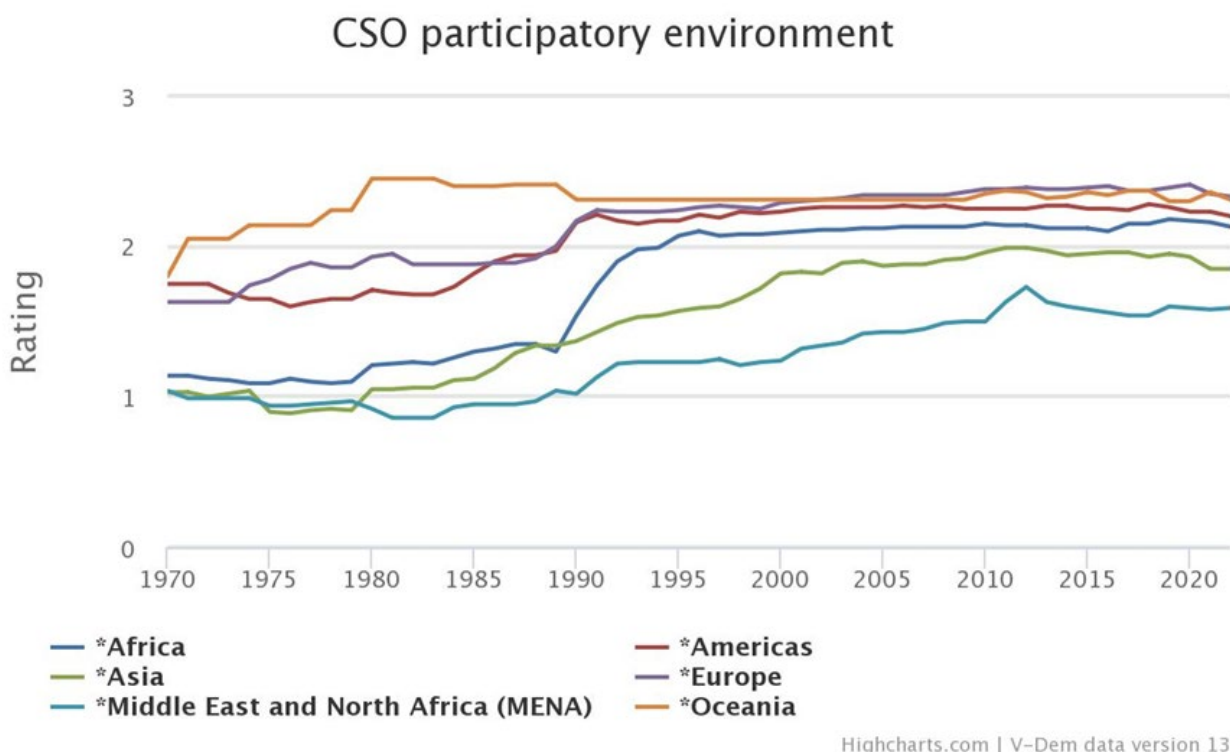Note: Figure created with V-Dem online graphing tool.

Source: Coppedge et al. (2023)

Reports from human rights and international organisations consistently show that the MENA region, along with Asia, experiences the highest levels of repression against CSOs, as also indicated by the V-Dem CSO repression indicator (see Figure 1). The graph shows the level of CSO repression in six world regions since 1970 from 4 (least repressive) to 0 (most repressive).

Simultaneously, MENA governments rank lowest in CSO participation, reflecting the extent to which

CSOs influence policy-making processes and engage in participatory governance. This underscores the severity of the situation, highlighting the limited opportunities for CSOs to participate meaningfully (see Figure 2). The graph shows the level of participation in CSOs in six world regions since 1970 from 3 (diverse CSO landscape and high voluntary participation) to 0 (mostly state sponsored CSOs and low voluntary participation).

Figure 2: Participatory CSO environment by world region

CSO participatory environment

Note: Figure created with V-Dem online graphing tool.

Source: Coppedge et al. (2023)

Increasing CSO repression in MENA since 2011

Online surveillance

Authoritarian regimes in MENA increasingly rely on online surveillance and censorship to control debates and identify critics, with a significant rise over the past decade. Independent CSOs and their staff, operating under authoritarian govern-ments, are subjected to online surveillance and defamation campaigns on social media (*The Pegasus Project*, 2022). The reliance on such tech-nological repression by Arab security forces has grown, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Allouche, 2022). Investigations by Amnesty Inter-national revealed governments like Morocco, the UAE and Israel targeting citizens' smartphones and computers with spy software, which was later used to justify the persecution of these critics (Kirchgaessner, 2021). It is concerning that European-developed spyware has been misused by MENA autocrats, highlighting a strong link between digital and physical repression (Frantz, Kendall-Taylor, & Wright, 2020).

Limitations on peaceful assembly

Since the 2011 Arab Uprisings, governments have restricted the right to protest, regularly, unlawfully and violently dispersing peaceful protests such as strikes, processions, rallies and sit-ins (Amnesty International, 2017). Most autocrats responded to the Uprisings with restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly, using excessive force, surveil-lance, arbitrary detention, torture and restrictive legislation to hinder large crowds from gathering. For instance, during the 2022 Iran protests, authorities escalated repression, including the use of the death penalty against protesters (CIVICUS, 2023). In Egypt, the regime banned protests after the 2013 military coup, brutally enforcing this ban even against small assemblies (Grimm & Harders, 2018). In Morocco, the 2018 protests were violently dispersed, with protest leaders arrested on trumped-up charges. Even in Iraq the security

forces relied on violence to sweep protesters off the streets (HRW, 2019). Especially in authoritarian regimes, where there are few institutional pathways for citizens to voice their grievances and few possibilities to formulate their demands, the banning of peaceful protests robs them of one of their only non-violent means to demand accountability from those in power.

Limitations on freedom of association

The right to association through CSOs, political parties, or interest groups has been severely restricted in the MENA region over the past decade. Authorities across the region have targeted unwanted CSOs through legal means and smear campaigns to undermine their legitimacy and capacity to gather popular support (Amnesty International, 2017). CSOs often face complex registration processes or abusive fiscal procedures, leading some to close or restrict their work in order to comply with new regulations and others to move their work underground and focus on informal or less political activities. Some CSOs in the region indeed register as clinics, businesses, or research institutes to avoid excessive NGO laws and regulations. Restrictions on (foreign) funding pose a financial threat, forcing CSOs to close, move underground or register abroad. This trend is not exclusive to the authoritarian regimes, as excessive regulatory frameworks hinder the work of critical CSOs even in democracies like Israel (Amnesty International, 2017). In Egypt, the authorities have rounded up critical CSOs in criminal investigations related to issues of foreign funding. This has led to at least 17 travel bans against individuals and asset freezes for seven CSOs. Such lengthy court proceedings severely hamper the ability of CSOs to operate and continue their work.

Reprisals against CSOs and their staff

Authoritarian regimes employ reprisals against CSO staff to silence them, persecuting them on unrelated charges to avoid recognition as political prisoners. This tactic has been practiced in Egypt, Algeria and Morocco amongst others. For example, Morocco imprisoned independent journalist Omar Radi on fabricated charges of sexual misconduct and rape allegations (HRW, 2021). In Egypt, authorities froze the assets of individuals working for CSOs and intimidated staff through interrogations (Heydemann, 2020). Such targeted persecution on false charges has increased risks for CSO staff, leading many to drop their commitment to their cause. This has further diminished the ability of CSOs in MENA countries to effectively organise and professionalise as they have trouble recruiting young talent and must invest their resources in risk mitigation measures and legal proceedings.

The crucial role of CSOs under authoritarian rule

CSOs in MENA countries have had to adapt to shrinking civic space and urgently need support in terms of resources, visibility, and access to influence decisions. The counter-revolutionary trend since the 2011 Uprisings has further entrenched authoritarianism in an already autocratic region, leading to a reduction in CSOs' space. This trend should be extremely worrying to European policymakers in development and foreign policy; a vibrant and free civil society in MENA is in their interest, as it holds regimes accountable, exposes human rights violations, and, thereby, paves the way for inclusive societal change. Even if institutionalised mechanisms of checks and balances are not present or effective, a strong civil society can hold authoritarian regimes to account for mismanagement, oppression and corruption. Supporting CSOs aligns with European development cooperation objectives, providing a counterbalance to the primarily government-centric activities in the region. CSOs also serve as a springboard for political activism, allowing grassroots movements to enter political institutions, as demonstrated by the electoral success of the Change Party in Lebanon in 2022, founded by the 2019 Protest Movement.

Shifting from executive-focussed cooperation to context-sensitive support for change agents

None of the causes of the Arab Uprisings are resolved or even improving. The deep societal and political tensions, economic inequalities and injustices have worsened for most citizens in the MENA region over the past 12 years. As a result, we can expect more mass protests to erupt in the coming years and more repressive responses by the authoritarian governments in power. This also means that there are likely to be windows of opportunity for political and economic change in some states in the medium term. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that European policymakers support change agents.

> **Box 1: Change agents**
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> In the context of development cooperation, a "change agent" refers to individuals, organisations or entities that actively work to bring about positive change in political, economic, social or environmental development. Change agents can be individuals or entities from civil society, academia, regional or international organisations, government agencies or the private sector.

To this end, civil society support remains a central tool of development cooperation in fostering inclusive growth, more just and resilient societies, and more accountable governments. In times of increasing authoritarian cooperation and shrinking space for CSOs, donor countries need to double their efforts to support independent CSOs working on crucial social, political, and human rights issues in authoritarian contexts in order for them to adjust their work and survive attacks by the authorities. If European policymakers want to avoid strengthening the region's autocrats, and instead support actors who push for more democratic and accountable governance in the region, they should shift their focus and address the issue of shrinking space head on.

European development actors should, therefore, refocus their engagement to systematically support domestic agents of change advocating for inclu-

sive development, accountability, democracy, and human rights. Democracy and good governance promotion remain central pillars of European Foreign Policies towards the MENA region. For instance, Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) recently adopted a Feminist Development Policy (BMZ, 2023a), emphasising support for women and marginalised groups as agents of change. The BMZ's Africa Strategy (BMZ, 2023b) also highlights support for non-state actors like political foundations, civil society groups and religious organisations, particularly in authoritarian contexts and in the realm of human rights. In order to identify change agents in dynamic authoritarian or transitory political contexts, development cooperation needs professionals in the field to cultivate local networks and develop sound knowledge of the changing political contexts.

This raises a difficult dilemma. While the authoritarian governments in the MENA are not the right partners if European governments seek a prosperous, stable and resilient neighbourhood to the south, development cooperation policymakers must cooperate with incumbent regimes to implement projects in the countries they rule. However, reviewing the existing cooperation portfolios, particularly those with the more authoritarian and repressive cooperation partners in the region, is essential to recognise risks and thoroughly implement a do-no-harm approach. As a first step, opting out of or phasing out of bi- or multilateral cooperation projects in which the cooperation is particularly likely to benefit regime elites rather than their citizens (e.g., security or military cooperation) should be looked at. Furthermore, specifying red lines, such as gross human rights violations like violence against peaceful protesters, or targeted oppression against journalists or HRDs, should trigger previously internally agreed upon political responses.

Consequently, European foreign, development and security policymakers need to reconsider their bilateral cooperation agreements with corrupt and oppressive executive institutions, focussing instead on empowering agents of change ad-

vocating for democracy, accountability and human rights. This shift could encompass investing more into supporting change agents in elected institutions, political parties, CSOs, scientists and the media. Inclusion and support for change agents in line with a do-no-harm approach should be integrated across all relevant sectors, much like the integration of gender mainstreaming in development programmes (Cheeseman & Desrosiers, 2023).

Box 2: Do-no-harm approach

The do-no-harm approach seeks to ensure that development cooperation does not unintentionally have negative consequences, for example, by empowering institutions responsible for rights violations, corruption or mismanagement. While cooperation with state entities in authoritarian regimes may not inherently be problematic, the potential consequences and risks of cooperation should be regularly critically evaluated, particularly in terms of their domestic political ramifications.

If European policymakers are willing to increase their support for CSOs in the mostly authoritarian states of the MENA region, knowledge about local change agents and the domestic contexts they operate in is crucial so that the support can be tailored towards the needs of the CSOs in their respective environments. Very repressive contexts may allow only defensive support to CSOs, for example, in the form of protection of their staff through special visa and fellowship programmes. Some authoritarian regimes in the region have gone as far as co-opting usually independent critical non-state actors such as trade unions, religious organisations and human rights organisations. In such cases these organisations can no longer be considered independent, as they need to make deals with authoritarian regimes to avoid being the victim of more brutal forms of repression or being shut down altogether. In such extremely repressive contexts, local knowledge of the CSO landscape and the role of state co-optation and repression is crucial in order to identify change agents and avoid funding co-opted organisations. Ergo, comprehensive local knowledge, strong and diverse networks with civil society actors

(domestic and in exile or abroad), scholars (domestic and abroad) and independent journalists are key to identifying change actors.

In more permissive states, donor countries can adopt more ambitious support strategies aimed at increasing the resilience of CSOs by providing flexible funding schemes, for example, through funding sister organisations and exiled HRDs and journalists abroad to avoid foreign funding restrictions in the country, or empowering their voices by referencing their reports and demands and giving them the opportunity to take the stage at summits or diplomatic gatherings.

For such a contextual approach to be successful, donors need to develop context-sensitive funding programmes and allow for more flexibility, such as through designated CSO crisis funds that have low barrier application processes and more flexible reporting standards in case the context changes rapidly. In sum, while there is a worrying trend towards shrinking space for CSOs in the region, they are facing different challenges and risks depending on their domestic context(s). While networks between CSOs in the region play a vital role in strategizing on campaigns or advocacy efforts, dialogue on how to adapt to the growing restrictions and repression amongst CSOs is rare. Given the precarious situation of civil society in many MENA countries, there are at least seven ways by which European policymakers in development cooperation can support CSO resilience and support their ability to influence positive change in the region.

Seven policy recommendations

Overcoming the stability-through-cooperation paradigm

Jointly, the European Commission and the five largest European states contributed EUR 7.6 billion in development cooperation and humanitarian aid on average per year to the region's developing countries, only topped by the contributions of the United States. In addition, the European Investment Bank and other European national development banks provide more than

EUR 4 billion in loans per year to the region and foreign direct investment into the UAE and Egypt is soaring (ECFR, 2019). European foreign, development cooperation and economy policymakers could, therefore, seek to use this leverage to support change agents in the region that push the governments to reform and improve governance. Development cooperation, foreign and security policymakers in ministries across the EU, the UK, Switzerland, Norway and North America must acknowledge the authoritarian reality in the majority of MENA states and adapt their policies to the increasingly repressive and unstable authoritarian region. The predominant paradigm that has guided European relations and cooperation with authoritarian regimes in the Arab World should be replaced by a do-no-harm approach that puts inclusive development, climate adaptation and good governance by investing in change actors pushing for democracy and human rights at the centre of European development, economic, climate, foreign and security policy towards the region. At the same time, the door for reform-willing governments should be kept open to intensify cooperation if feasible. To achieve that, support for CSOs should be mainstreamed across all relevant sectors and ministries in Europe (development cooperation, foreign policy, interior, economy and climate). According to a recent evaluation of the implementation of the human-rights-based approach to development cooperation, this approach has only partially found its way into policymaking and programming (Polak, Smidt, & Taube, 2021).

Acknowledging the increasingly shrinking space for critical voices in civil society

It is crucial for European development actors to take the increasingly repressive environment for CSOs in the MENA region into account. When negotiating bi- or multilateral cooperation agreements and drawing up programmes with implementing partners, it is important to contribute to enabling and enhancing the resilience of CSOs in authoritarian contexts through flexible mechanisms in the form of financial and political support. It is also important to establish clearly articulated red lines, especially during campaigns against CSOs from the authorities. Furthermore, fostering the creation of south-south cooperation networks between CSOs, to share best practices and tactics on how to strengthen organisational and staff resilience, provides an important opportunity for development actors to strengthen CSOs facing increasing restrictions, surveillance and repression by authorities. Funding a regional network conference and necessary software infrastructure between CSOs affected by restrictions and repression as a result of shrinking space can contribute to enhancing resilience through sharing of best practices on risk analyses and mitigation strategies.

Giving CSOs a voice in international organisations and at international summits

Giving CSOs the opportunity to raise their voice is crucial to signal support and empower voices beyond the mainly authoritarian governments. Especially in rather repressive and restricted authoritarian contexts where CSOs cannot establish a dialogue with the authorities, providing them with opportunities to speak at political summits or co-hosting side events at international organisations with at-risk CSOs should be established as part of a human-rights-based approach to development cooperation and diplomacy. A good example of how the German Federal Foreign Office has pursued such an approach was during the last Conference of the Parties in Egypt, where it hosted a panel dedicated to political prisoners and provided CSOs and activists with the opportunity to speak truth to power and the media present at the conference. The caveat of course is the need to protect human rights defenders that dare to speak about violations in the presence of an international public. It is, therefore, paramount to discuss the risks associated with such an appearance beforehand with the participants. In most countries however, the HRDs who dare to speak on such occasions know the risks all too well. The designated visa programmes discussed below help at-risk HRDs get to safety and provide them with opportunities to continue their work abroad.

More flexible funding for at-risk CSOs

Funding lines specifically focussed on providing quick and unbureaucratic financial support to CSOs under pressure should be established within the budget lines of the foreign and development cooperation ministries. If CSOs need short-term financial assistance, for instance in cases of legal persecution or closure by the authorities, such funds could, for example, be used to pay legal counsel or fees related to unjust persecution. If CSOs' assets are frozen, they need a way to continue to pay their staff and continue their work. For such cases, a targeted funding line with more flexible possibilities for financial transfers could be set up. Similarly, flexible funds have been made available for humanitarian crises in the past, which could serve as a reference point for establishing such a new emergency CSO grant programme. Such CSO crisis funds could even be set up across European development and foreign ministries and their staff should consequently be encouraged to assist in applying for these funds for HRDs, climate activists or other at-risk change actors. Crucial are significantly simplified application, assessment and fast approval processes for projects funded through these designated crisis schemes. The process of fast-tracked prioritised evaluation should include consultation of the implementation agencies and embassy staff in the country of the applicant if possible. Furthermore, increasing the funding for the work of political foundations, for example, the European Endowment for Democracy, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the German party foundations, or other implementation organisations working with independent CSOs in the states of the region, would greatly assist CSOs. Establishing dedicated funding programmes would also provide opportunities for institutionalised funding for at-risk CSOs.

Establish ad-hoc visa programmes for at-risk HRDs, activists and journalists

Visas for CSO staff who must flee persecution due to their work or activism can save lives and organisations. While European migration policy and cooperation agreements with North African authorities are primarily aimed at halting irregular migration to Europe and allow for few legal visa programmes, at-risk staffers of CSOs in the region should have access to special emergency visas that allow for a quick application and assessment procedure in European embassies. Especially as authorities of MENA states are increasingly using travel restrictions to silence CSOs and HRDs, special visa programmes for at-risk change agents may provide at least some with the possibility to escape repression or political persecution. Ideally, the visa scheme would be supplemented by funded fellowships for short to medium periods that would help escaped individuals independent of their financial means. Existing visa and fellowship programmes for scholars, such as Scholars at Risk or the Philipp Schwartz Initiative, can provide templates and best practices for implementation.

Continue to support marginalised voices and groups

Supporting marginalised groups is particularly relevant since reports by human rights organisations have highlighted the intersecting forms of discrimination against women human rights defenders, LGBT+ defenders, and climate and youth activists. Continued support for marginalised groups, such as (rural) women and girls, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and LGBT+ people, is paramount to ensure that these groups' voices are not silenced, and that CSOs and activists can speak out on their behalf to criticise discriminatory policies and laws. Demand for change in societies is often driven by the most marginalised voices, therefore, it is crucial that these groups receive backing from donors to enable them to make their demands for change heard. In future human rights crises, the significant European contribution to development cooperation through official development assistance, bi- and multilateral development cooperation and humanitarian aid – especially in coordination with other democratic donors such as the US, Norway, Switzerland, and Canada – could be used as leverage when grave human rights abuses are being committed by the partner government.

Limit arms exports and stop training repressive authoritarian regimes

Supplying surveillance software, equipment and training to authoritarian regimes increases regional instability and may fuel political violence. Examples like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Morocco and Egypt demonstrate how this approach can lead to human rights abuses and disregard for international humanitarian law (Bader & Faust, 2014). European politicians have hailed both the Saudi Arabian and the UAE monarchies as beacons of stability in the region to justify extensive arms deliveries and security cooperation (van Hüllen, 2015). The military interventions in Bahrain and Yemen – led by the two Gulf monarchies – demonstrated that the autocratic Gulf states are not the anchor of stability European policymakers assumed. In fact, the naval blockade of Yemen's Hodeida Port showcased the disrespect of the Gulf regimes for human rights and the international rules of warfare. Egypt, another major recipient of European weapons and security training, has used the weapons it received to fight terrorists in the Sinai Peninsula to provide support for Libya's strongman, General Haftar, who is waging a military campaign against the internationally recognised Libyan government that is supported by the EU and the international community. Consequently, the European ministries of foreign affairs and economy, as well as security policymakers in Germany, France, Italy and the UK should put an end to the prevailing European policy of exporting arms – especially surveillance technology – and providing training for law enforcement agencies, security agencies and military personnel responsible for grave human rights abuses in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt.

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