



European Center for
Not-for-Profit Law

**Oral statement
UN Human Rights Council – 45th Session
Item 3: General Debate
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Delivered by Lisa Majumdar on behalf of CIVICUS, ICNL, ECNL, Article 19 and the World Movement for Democracy

Thank you, Madame President.

On behalf of the Civic Space Initiative, we draw attention to the enduring restrictions for civil society and civic freedoms stemming from security measures to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Such unwarranted limitations to civic space hamper efforts to counter terrorism, as civil society is essential in addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism.

The High Commissioner's report on Terrorism and Human Rights emphasizes the harmful effects of excessive security and counter-terrorism measures on rights and freedoms in general.

However, the report does not address the detrimental impact of these measures on civil society and civic space. This is particularly relevant, pursuant to the 2019 Report¹ on how the Measures to Address Terrorism and Violent Extremism impact Closing Civic Space, where the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism examined restrictive and repressive aspects of the security and counter-terrorism framework:

- Repressive measures against lawful, non-violent civil society activities and targeting "undesirable" individuals.
- Regulation restricting freedom of expression and opinion, association, and assembly.
- Limiting civil society access to financial services.
- Vaguely labelling civil society as "terrorists," or "threats to national security".

These measures create a chilling effect on civic space. Given civil society's essential role in countering terrorism, measures undermining its ability to operate undercut our collective counter-terrorism response.

We remind states of their obligation to ensure counter-terrorism measures comply with international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law. Criminalization and repression of civil society must be urgently addressed as a misuse of law and an abuse of power. Any effective counter-terrorism policy must engage with and strengthen, not weaken, civil society.

¹ UN Special Rapporteur 2019 Report on the Role of Measures to Address Terrorism and Violent Extremism on Closing Civic Space