



# **Current trends on closing Civic Space and Impacts on UPR**



# A matter of urgency

- Amnesty – devastating year for those standing up for human rights
- HRW – Arab Spring has given way to conflict and repression
- Frontline Defenders – 130 HRDs killed in first 10 months of 2014
- ICNL – Legislation proposed in 90 countries to restrict civil society work



# CIVICUS Civil Society Watch Report

*Substantial threats to freedoms of expression, association and assembly  
in 96 countries in 2014*

- Democracies and non-democracies
- Threats from both state and non-state actors
- Four key drivers



# Global Democratic Deficit

- Freedom House – ninth consecutive year of decline
- Authoritarian states hardening control
- Democratic states busy creating a surveillance society

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# Obsession with security

- Post 9/11 lowering of standards and scrutiny of funding
- Fear of the people's uprisings post Arab Spring
- 'Gloves off' conflict response affecting humanitarian CSOs



# Political and economic elite overlap

- Symptom of rising inequality
- Market fundamentalism as the dominant economic discourse
- Anti-corruption, environmental, land, indigenous rights activists at risk

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# Rise in fundamentalism

- Occasioned by a failure of global governance
- Major challenge in politically fragile environments but also a worry elsewhere
- Affecting women's, LGBTI and minority rights activists

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# Recommendations

- Avoid a narrative of disempowerment
- Develop ways to track and measure civic space
- Focus on developing progressive norms
- Research to expose corrupt connections
- Solidarity at all levels crucial
- Horizontal coalitions between CSOs, lawyers, media and bloggers
- Resourcing for rapid response