

## GLOBAL CIVIC ACTIVISM IN FLUX

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Civil society around the world is in flux. New forms of civic activism have taken shape, ranging from protest movements to community-level forums and online campaigns by individual activists. Debate is growing over how much these new, dynamic forms of civic activism are displacing the influence wielded by traditional, professional, advocacy-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

### Changes in Civil Society

This analysis charts how civic activism is evolving across eight countries:

- In Brazil, civic activism has taken on a range of innovative organizational forms, with many new initiatives focusing on local issues while others are caught up in the country's deepening political polarization.
- In Egypt, the government's assault on civil society has prompted a move away from traditional NGOs as activists seek less visible forms of volunteerism and civic organization.
- In India, new types of community-based activism have added dynamism to campaigns against economic inequalities, social injustice, and the illiberal policies of the current government.
- In Kenya, activism increasingly combines informal networks and formal organizations to some effect, and these activists have in general distanced themselves from the political opposition.
- In Thailand, civil society is divided between two competing political camps, while new types of creative activism are emerging in opposition to the country's military regime.
- In Tunisia, civic activism has helped maintain the momentum of political reform; new types of more contentious activism have emerged to counter traditional NGOs' alignment with the country's relatively consensus-based and now faltering transition.
- In Turkey, the 2013 Gezi protests led to the creation of new community organizations as alternatives to formal NGOs; the government's current assault on civil society is a serious challenge that compounds the shift toward nonpolitical and local forms of activism.
- In Ukraine, a new spirit of volunteerism has grown since the 2014 Euromaidan revolt, while many prominent new activists have moved toward cooperating with the government.

### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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## Overarching Issues

These case studies reveal crosscutting themes relevant to the future of civil society support:

- While there is a global wave of new protests and innovative citizen movements, many civic struggles are increasingly rooted in specific national issues.
- New and older forms of civic activism coexist and intertwine in a variety of ways.
- Some new activism is highly political and confrontational; some is very practical and pragmatic about trying to circumvent the shortcomings of mainstream politics.
- New civic activism includes groups espousing an increasingly wide range of ideological positions.
- While the new activism has been effective on some specific issues, it is mostly struggling to hold at bay resurgent authoritarian and illiberal government responses.

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