

**African Pillar members and Chair and Secretariat CSPillar virtual event proposal:
Democracy in Africa, Regional Trends and Impact on Women
Virtual event**

Date: 30th March 2023

Time: 15 hrs Uganda time. 90 minutes

Format: virtual

Objectives:

- Create a scenario for dialogue between members of the CSPillar in Africa, to reflect on democracy on the continent, highlighting regional trends, and giving space for national analyzes of the countries represented in the Community of Democracies.
- Activate the CSPillar members of the African continent using the Summit of Democracies as a window of opportunity.

Africa has seen a weakening of democracies in recent years. According to the 2021 Freedom House report, 22 African countries suffered decline in democracy and out of the twelve largest declines globally.

In the meantime, Africa has been also following the global trend of backsliding in civic space. According to Civicus (2021) "Of Africa's 49 countries, six are rated as closed, 24 as repressed and 13 as obstructed. Civic space is open in the island states of Cabo Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe and narrowed in four countries. Since the previous update, civic space ratings have deteriorated in Benin, Botswana, Mali, Mozambique and South Africa". The main [victims](#) of the civic space closing have been journalists and human rights defenders who have faced criminalization, censorship, threats and arbitrary arrests. Between the 1st of October 2021 and the 30th of September 2022, Africa was the second region with more [recording protests](#), with 30, accounting for the 23% of the protest in the world in that period. Denial of protest authorisation in Angola and Kenya; martial law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and military bans to protests in Chad and Guinea; the imposition of high fees for protesters in South Africa; outright bans to prevent protests in Togo, Angola, Cameroon; arrest of protest organizers in Sierra Leone, are some of the obstacles for civil society and citizens to exercise their rights.

Furthermore, according to information from civil society, women's participation in civil society and political spaces are [much lower than](#) that of men. Women human rights defenders (WHRD) face not only the same problems as their male colleagues, but also gender-based violence that seeks [to restrict their autonomy](#) and distance them from the decision-making platforms. According to the Civic Space and Effects of Shrinking Space on WHRD in East Africa [workshop results](#) "when civic space shrinks, most women human rights defenders tend to pull out" and the shrinking of space in most of the cases generates an increase of attacks on WHRDS

The Community of Democracies has only two African countries members, Morocco and Nigeria, but in the past Cape Verde, Mali and South Africa were also part of the Community.

Taking into account the importance of the African continent, Redlad, as Chair and Secretariat of the Civil Society Pillar, and DefendDefenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights

Defenders Project) as member of the International Steering Committee of the Pillar, are partnering to create a scenario for dialogue between members of the CSPillar in Africa, to reflect on democracy on the continent, highlighting regional trends, and giving space for national analyzes of the countries represented in the Community of Democracies, at the margins of the Summit of Democracies.

AGENDA
DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA, REGIONAL TRENDS AND IMPACT ON WOMEN
ON 30TH MARCH AT 3:00 PM KAMPALA TIME
[VIRTUAL EVENT VIA ZOOM](#)

30 March 2023	
3:00-3:05	Opening and welcome remarks: • <i>Chair of the Civil Society Pillar of the Community of the Democracies, Enrique de Obarrio.</i>
3:05-3:20	Presentation of the regional trends: • <i>The Executive Director of Defend Defenders, Hassan Shire.</i>
3:20-4:00	Thematic discussion: Democracy in Africa. National organizations perspectives • Gambia:African Center for Democracy and HHRR, Hannah Forster (Confirmed) • Mali:Accountability Lab, Doussouba Konate (Confirmed) • Nigeria: Nigeria Network of NGOs, Oyebisi B. Oluseyi (Confirmed) <i>Moderation by the Defend Defenders Senior Protection and Security Management Manager, Tabitha Netuwa.</i>
4:00-4:15	Time for questions from the audience
4:15-4:25	Presentation on the impact on women. • <i>Femmes et Droits Humains, Maiga Djingarey. (Confirmed)</i>
4:25- 4:30	Closing remarks and general key messages • <i>The Executive Director of LatinAmerican and Caribbean Network for Democracy (Redlad), Gina Romero.</i>