

# Civic Freedom Monitor: Malawi

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## Recent Developments

Malawi's civic space is currently being shaped by three principal developments: regulatory enforcement pressures on CSOs; reports of intimidation and threats against human rights defenders; and constitutional controversy concerning the management and control of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). In December 2025, the NGO Regulatory Authority (NGORA) also reported that only 61 percent of registered NGOs were compliant with statutory reporting requirements and fewer than 60 percent held valid licenses. These figures indicate persistent compliance challenges within the sector and reflect a regulatory environment characterized by increased oversight and enforcement.

*While we aim to maintain information that is as current as possible, we realize that situations can rapidly change. If you are aware of any additional information or inaccuracies on this page, please keep us informed; write to ICNL at [ngomonitor@icnl.org](mailto:ngomonitor@icnl.org).*

## Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, trade unions, and other groups have existed in Malawi for decades. However, NGOs engaged in human rights and advocacy only emerged at the dawn of multiparty democracy in 1994. Since then, these organizations have played an important role in furthering democracy and human rights, social and economic development, and nation-building.

The Constitution of Malawi guarantees fundamental rights, including freedom of expression (Section 35), freedom of association (Section 32), and freedom of assembly (Section 38). However, these rights are subject to limitations under laws such as the Penal Code and the Police Act, which contain vague and broad provisions that grant authorities significant discretion to restrict civic space. Malawi's legal system is based on common law.

Malawi maintains an active civil society sector that plays a central role in governance, accountability, and human rights advocacy. CSOs, coalitions, and networks continue to participate in policy processes and public discourse, particularly on issues relating to civic space, constitutional governance, and regulatory oversight. However, in practice, CSOs face significant barriers, such as restrictive regulations, excessive government oversight, and financial pressures that limit their operational autonomy. Incidents of arbitrary arrests, demonization of critical voices, and the use of excessive force during protests further undermine civic freedoms. Altogether, these factors demonstrate that Malawi's civic space remains legally protected but practically constrained.

***This Civic Freedom Monitor (CFM) country note is the result of research and periodic review by Benedicto Kondowe, a dedicated human rights defender, lawyer, and Chairperson of the National Advocacy Platform in Malawi.***

## Civic Freedoms at a Glance

<b>Organizational Forms</b>	Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), and Non-governmental Organizations (NGO).
<b>Registration Body</b>	CBOs are registered by the Ministry of Gender, Women and Child Development, through the Social Welfare Department; NGOs may be registered by the Registrar General under either under the Trustees Incorporation Act or Companies Act. But for them to be fully recognized as “NGOs”, they must proceed to also register with the Council for Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGOMA) as well as with the NGO Board of Malawi under the NGO Act.
<b>Approximate Number</b>	260 NGOs registered with the NGO Board; 510 registered NGOs across all the sectors of development; thousands of CBOs.
<b>Barriers to Formation</b>	Laws prohibit unregistered groups, “agreements” and MoUs required for activities, and excessive fees.
<b>Barriers to Operations</b>	Any activity deemed by the NGO Board as against “public interest” is a basis for deregistration or restrictions. The police have also failed to protect NGOs from threats.
<b>Barriers to Resources</b>	No significant legal barriers.
<b>Barriers to Expression</b>	The Penal Code has a number of offences that impose undue censorship of speech, such as “sedition.”
<b>Barriers to Assembly</b>	Vague language in regulations, at least 48 hours advance notification requirement, excessive liabilities on organizers and participants, police use excessive force to break up protests.

## Legal Overview

This section provides a brief overview of Malawi's legal framework for the promotion and protection of civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

## RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

<b>Key International Agreements</b>	<b>Ratification*</b>
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	1993
Optional Protocol to ICCPR (ICCPR-OP1)	1996
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1993
Optional Protocol to ICESCR (Op-ICESCR)	No
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	1996
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	1987

Key International Agreements	Ratification*
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	2000
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1991
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW)	2022
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	2009

Regional Treaties	Ratification
African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)	1990
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	1999

\* Category includes ratification, accession, or succession to the treaty

## CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The constitutional framework guiding civil society, including the freedom of association, expression and assembly, is the Republic of Malawi [Constitution](#). Chapter III, Section 12 of the Constitution provides the following as some of its core principles:

1. All legal and political authority of the State derives from the people of Malawi and shall be exercised in accordance with this Constitution solely to serve and protect their interests (S12 (i))
2. The inherent dignity and worth of each human being requires that the State and all persons shall recognize and protect fundamental human rights and afford the fullest protection to the rights and views of all individuals, groups and minorities whether or not they are entitled to vote (S12 (iv)).
3. As all persons have equal status before the law, the only justifiable limitations to lawful rights are those necessary to ensure peaceful human interaction in an open and democratic society (S12 (v)).
4. All institutions and persons shall observe and uphold the Constitution and the rule of law and no institution or person shall stand above the law (S12 (vi)).

**Chapter IV of the Constitution** contains a Bill of Human Rights. For example:

- **Freedom of association** (section 32): "(1) Every person shall have the right to freedom of association, which shall include the freedom to form associations; and (2) no person may be compelled to belong to an association."
- **Freedom of conscience** (section 33): "Every person has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, belief and thought, and to academic freedom."
- **Freedom of opinion** (section 34): "Every person shall have the right to freedom of opinion, including the right to hold opinions without interference to hold, receive and impart opinions."

- **Freedom of expression** (section 35): “Every person shall have the right to freedom of expression.”
- **Freedom of the press** (section 36): “The press shall have the right to report and publish freely, within Malawi and abroad, and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information.”
- **Access to information** (section 37): “Subject to any Act of Parliament, every person shall have the right of access to all information held by the State or any of its organs at any level of Government in so far as such information is required for the exercise of his rights.”
- **Freedom of assembly** (section 38): “Every person shall have the right to assemble and demonstrate with others peacefully and unarmed.”

## **NATIONAL LAWS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS**

There are several laws and regulations that affect the operations of civil society:

### **Trustees Incorporation Act of 1962**

The [Trustees Incorporation Act](#) governs the operations of civil society, foundations, and charitable organizations that operate as trusts. This law, in principle, guides the operations of all entities that are not-for-profit.

### **Companies Act 2000**

The [Companies Act](#) regulates companies that focus on profit-making. It requires the company to declare profit returns as an accountability mechanism. However, some NGOs operate under this law. During the rule of the late former President, Prof. Bingu wa Mutharika, debate arose around whether NGOs could be registered and operate under the Companies Act, since they are not-for-profit organizations. The general consensus among lawyers is that NGOs are free to register either under the Company Act or Trustees Incorporation Act, provided that they operate within the confines of the law.

### **NGO Act of 2000**

Regardless of whether an organization is registered under the Trustees Incorporation Act or Companies Act, all NGOs must register under the [NGO Act](#) to legally operate in Malawi. Thus, the NGO Act of 2000 seeks to provide for the rights and obligations of NGOs in Malawi; promote the development and values of strong independent civil society; provide for the establishment, functions and powers of the NGO Board of Malawi and the rights of the public to access information with respect to registered organizations; and to provide for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.

### **Police (Amendment) Act of 2010**

The revised Police Act of 2010 gives the police power to conduct searches without a court warrant, potentially leading to violations of the right to privacy, and compromising the security and independence of NGO operations.

### **Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) Act of 1998**

The Malawi Revenue Authority Act regulates the operations of the MRA as the government’s revenue collection agency. The Act further provides exemption from duties up to a given threshold for NGOs with approval from the [Council of NGOs of Malawi](#) (CONGOMA), a membership umbrella organization that represents the interests of NGOs. Under the Act, the Minister of Finance has powers to exempt goods and service from taxation, and NGOs can apply for a waiver. However, in practice, it is difficult for NGOs to be granted a tax waiver since they are usually perceived to be anti-government. This means that, as non-profit making institutions, NGOs face disproportionate taxes that limit their contribution to national

development.

## **Taxation Act**

The Taxation Act regulates taxes in Malawi on goods and services and classifies goods that are exempt from taxes. As a general matter, NGOs are subject to taxation, and those evading tax may be charged under the Taxation Act. An exception is made for charitable organizations, such as churches. In addition, the NGO Act provides for a tax waiver to NGOs through CONGOMA, subject to approval by the Minister of Finance.

## **PENDING REGULATORY INITIATIVES**

1. Amendments to electoral laws are expected to trigger secondary regulations affecting election observers, voter educators, and advocacy groups, although drafting had not commenced as of early 2026. Amendments to electoral laws are expected to trigger secondary regulations affecting election observers, voter educators, and advocacy groups, although drafting had not commenced as of early 2026.
2. On November 21, 2025, Parliament gazetted the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was a Private Member's Bill seeking to entrench Members of Parliament in the management and control of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Notwithstanding sustained opposition from CSOs, local government institutions, and governance experts, Parliament passed the Bill, and it was awaiting Presidential assent. However, President Mutharika, formally withheld assent to the Bill on January 6, 2026 due to concerns that it would undermine the constitutional functions of Members of Parliament in relation to public finance management; contradict the decentralization framework under the Constitution; and circumvent the binding judgment in *Registered Trustees of the Malawi Local Government Association v Attorney General*, while also violating the principle of separation of powers. In addition, the President directed the Ministers of Justice and Finance to develop consultative guidelines to strengthen the management, oversight, and utilization of the CDF, which reinforced a policy shift towards accountability and fiscal discipline. It remains unclear whether the Bill will be reintroduced or substantially revised in line with constitutional requirements.
3. In late 2025, civil society actors and human rights defenders were reporting increasing incidents of intimidation, surveillance, and reputational attacks against them. On December 10, 2025, therefore, the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) highlighted these patterns affecting civic actors and called for the review of laws considered restrictive, especially the Cybersecurity Act, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) Act, and Police Act. It remains unclear if the government will be responsive to their call.

*We are currently unaware of any other pending initiatives. Please help keep us informed; if you are aware of pending initiatives, write to ICNL at [ngomonitor@icnl.org](mailto:ngomonitor@icnl.org).*

## **Legal Analysis**

This section provides an in-depth assessment of Malawi's legal environment for civic freedoms, including the barriers to the exercise of the freedoms of association (formation, operations, resources), expression, and peaceful assembly. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

## **ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS**

Not-for-profit organizations in Malawi may register either as community-based organizations (CBOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

CBOs operate at the local level, typically within a village and its surrounding areas. They are registered and regulated by the Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Gender, Women, and Child Development. Once registered, CBOs can open bank accounts. CBOs can be either faith-based or secular.

Thousands of CBOs are active in villages and communities throughout the country.

NGOs, by contrast, operate on a much larger scale, from community to regional or national levels. They can register with the Registrar General under either the Trustees Incorporation Act or Companies Act. To enjoy the benefits of NGO status, however, they must also register with both the Council for Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA) and the NGO Board of Malawi (now the NGO Regulatory Authority, NGORA) under the NGO Act. An NGO registered under the Trustees Incorporation Act is required to have a Board of Trustees, while an organization registered under the Companies Act must have a Board of Directors. Like CBOs, NGOs may be either religion-based or secular.

According to Section 21(2) of the NGO Act, a certificate of registration serves as proof that an NGO:

1. is a legal entity, separate from its members, with perpetual succession;
2. may engage in public-interest activities and public fundraising across Malawi; and
3. is eligible for fiscal and other benefits accorded to registered NGOs.

CBOs may form informal networks around specific cause(s), while NGOs can establish either informal networks or formal coalitions. Coalitions may register with the Registrar General and seek accreditation from CONGOMA.

As of 2025, only 167 out of 1,115 NGOs had renewed their licenses with the NGO Regulation Authority (NGORA). In publishing a list of non-compliant organizations, NGORA warned that NGOs without valid licenses must regularize their status by the end of September 2025 to continue operating legally.

## **PUBLIC BENEFIT STATUS**

Section 2 of the NGO Act defines “public benefit purposes” as organizational objectives with developmental or charitable aims including but not limited to, education, health, welfare, advocacy, culture, civic, social, recreation, science, and environmental protection. These purposes must benefit the general public, a section of the public, or the organization’s members. Activities related to churches or religious institutions, trade unions, employers’ organizations, or political parties are excluded from this definition.

Section 33 of the NGO Act provides that NGOs registered under the Act, including exempt organizations, may solicit and accept funds, engage in public fundraising, and pursue activities to further their public benefit purposes, provided they comply with the Act’s reporting requirements and other applicable laws.

NGOs registered with the Registrar General under the Trustees Incorporation Act or Companies Act, and further registered with CONGOMA and the NGORA under the NGO Act, are eligible for public benefit status and the associated privileges set out in Sections 2 and 33, including that they may:

- qualify for tax exemptions on income, imports, and other statutory obligations under relevant tax laws;
- be eligible for government grants, partnerships, and technical support to advance their charitable activities; and
- gain greater legitimacy and legal standing when engaging with government, donors, and communities.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

To institutionalize engagement with the government, NGOs under the National Advocacy Platform (NAP)

developed a Civil Society Dialogue Mechanism and submitted it to the President and Cabinet in July 2021. Building on existing frameworks such as Country Coordination Mechanisms (CCMs), it enhanced government responsiveness to governance and human rights issues and promoted greater citizen participation in policymaking and implementation.

In the lead-up to the September 16, 2025 general elections, CSOs engaged in voter-education initiatives aimed at safeguarding the credibility of the electoral process. However, these efforts were hampered by funding constraints, limiting the reach of CSO programs during a period in which the role of CSOs in strengthening electoral participation and oversight is more critical than ever.

Lastly, Parliament enacted amendments to the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government Elections (Amendment) Act, 2025, which introduce special voting provisions for polling staff, security personnel, and party and candidate monitors. These amendments addressed previous criticisms from observer missions and CSOs regarding how security personnel, election officials, and essential service workers were often deployed away from their constituencies during polling and therefore excluded from voting. However, the amendments do not encompass accredited observers, media staff, prisoners, and students.

## **BARRIERS TO FORMATION**

### **National NGOs**

NGOs operating in Malawi must register under either the Trustees Incorporation Act or the Companies Act. In addition, under the NGO Act, NGOs are required to register with the NGO Regulatory Authority (NGORA), which was formerly known as NGO Board of Malawi, and the Council for Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA). The NGO (Amendment) Act of 2022 introduced mandatory registration for all NGOs (except those exempt under Section 23). Under Article 7(2), NGOs are issued certificates valid for five years from the date of registration.

The registration process remains vulnerable to politicization. For example, under the Trustees Incorporation Act of 1962, the Minister of Justice oversees incorporation. This creates a risk that NGOs perceived as opposing the government's views may be denied registration. In 2013, the then-Minister of Justice [refused to register](#) the Association for Secular Humanism (ASH), citing religious objections. Registration was granted only after a new Minister assumed office.

Section 20(3)(a)(iv) of the NGO Act requires NGOs to sign a memorandum of understanding or other agreement with the Ministry responsible for their sphere of activities. This requirement poses a challenge for NGOs responding to unplanned events, such as advocacy campaigns arising from student demonstrations, which may not be covered by pre-existing agreements.

According to Section 20(3)(a) of the NGO Act, an NGO's registration application should include:

1. A certified copy of the NGO's constitution;
2. Registration fees;
3. The NGO's plan of activities;
4. Approval from the Ministry responsible for the activities to be undertaken in the form of a memorandum of understanding or any other agreement between the Ministry and the NGO;
5. Proof that the NGO is a member of CONGOMA;
6. A statement that the NGO shall not engage in partisan politics including electioneering and politicking; and

7. The source of funding for the NGO.

Section 3(b) additionally stipulates that the application form shall contain the following information:

1. Name of the NGO;
2. Physical and postal address;
3. Telephone, facsimile, and telex numbers, where applicable;
4. Full names, addresses, occupations, and nationalities of all Trustees, Directors and other executive Board members;
5. The name and address of the NGO's auditors;
6. The latest available audited annual financial statements and annual report, for existing NGOs.

NGOs must pay fees to both CONGOMA and NGORA. Local NGOs must pay annual fees of MK 55,000 (USD 130) to CONGOMA and MK 35,000 (USD 88) to NGORA for both registration and annual renewal. International NGOs (INGOs) incur higher fees, including MK 128,000 (approximately USD 320) annually to CONGOMA and MK 120,000 (approximately USD 300) for registration and MK 105,000 (USD 263) for annual renewal to NGORA. These fees apply regardless of an NGO's size, funding, or activities. The amounts are determined by CONGOMA and NGORA, rather than being prescribed in law, and are subject to periodic review.

The dual registration system—requiring NGOs to register with both CONGOMA and NGORA—places a burden on new organizations to raise money to register with both entities. In addition, NGOs must provide audited accounts to NGORA during registration even if they have not yet secured donor funding or implemented any projects. Failure to comply can lead to fines or suspension.

Legal provisions prohibit the formation and operation of “unregistered groups.” Potential sanctions include fines, subject to court determination.

For community-based organizations (CBOs), the Ministry's guidelines stipulate that founders should come from the local community and may include chiefs, community social workers, and ordinary citizens.

According to Section 20(2) of the NGO Act, at least two directors or trustees of an NGO must be Malawian citizens.

## **Foreign NGOs**

The NGO (Amendment) Act of 2022 does not contain special rules or restrictions for the registration or incorporation of foreign NGOs, except that all NGOs registered under the Board must have at least two Malawian trustees or directors. However, as noted above, foreign NGOs have their own category of fees, even though this is not documented in the Act.

## **BARRIERS TO OPERATIONS**

### **Cancellation or Suspension**

Section 23 of the NGO Act empowers the NGO Regulatory Authority (NGORA) to cancel or suspend the registration of an NGO that has ceased operations, failed to comply with the Act or other legal requirements, or engaged in partisan political activities. In addition, Section 23(2) allows the NGO coordinating body—currently CONGOMA—to recommend cancellation or suspension where it has good or valid reasons.

An order to cancel or suspend an NGO's registration cannot be issued without:

1. Providing the NGO at least thirty days' prior written notice; and
2. Affording the NGO an opportunity to respond, either verbally or in writing.

NGOs may appeal such decisions to the High Court, although many lack the capacity or resources to pursue judicial review.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

As described above, NGOs are required to sign an MOU or similar agreement with the Ministry overseeing their area of activity. This requirement may function as a mechanism for advance approval of NGO operations, potentially constraining their ability to respond to unplanned events or emerging needs.

### **Reporting Requirements**

Section 22(1) of the NGO Act mandates that registered NGOs submit specific information to the Registrar's office annually, including:

- Audited financial statements;
- An annual activity report;
- Details of its trustees, directors, office bearers, auditors, and other information; and
- Its source of funding.

Additionally, NGOs must provide:

- Certified copies of any amendments to their constitution or government instruments within 60 days of adoption; and
- Any further information about officers and activities as requested by the Board.

According to NGORA, many local and international NGOs fail to comply with the legal requirement to submit annual audited financial reports. In January 2025, NGORA introduced revised requirements mandating all NGOs to conduct annual financial audits and provide detailed reports on their funding sources and expenditures. While NGORA maintained that these measures are intended to promote transparency and accountability in the sector, CSOs expressed concerns that the new requirements impose excessive bureaucratic burdens and risk enabling government overreach. In early 2026, the principal barrier to civil society operations remained regulatory compliance. NGORA's December 2025 data indicated that a significant proportion of NGOs were non-compliant with statutory requirements or lacked valid licenses, which exposed them to administrative sanctions

### **Threats of De-registration**

Although the NGO Board has not formally de-registered any organizations, it has repeatedly threatened to close NGOs that fail to comply with registration requirements. In 2013 and 2014, the Board warned it would invoke legal powers under Section 18 of the NGO Act to discipline and shut down non-compliant NGOs but did not follow through.

Successive governments have also used threats of de-registration to pressure civil society, with officials citing accountability concerns as justification. In November 2020, the government threatened to close

some NGOs for not being sufficiently accountable with the resources they received from donors. In some cases, authorities, including the Malawi Revenue Authority, have targeted NGOs with tax inquiries and public warnings—actions often perceived as attempts to intimidate. In 2021, the NGO Board barred the United Mission Foundation from operating for failing to register, while local officials in Chikwawa District criticized NGOs for not disclosing project budgets.

In September 2025, the Non-Governmental Organisations Regulatory Authority (NGORA) indicated there would be increased scrutiny of NGOs and that NGOs unable to fulfill reporting and licensing requirements would face deregistration. This would especially affect smaller NGOs that lack the capacity to comply with such requirements. As of September 2025, only 167 out of 1,115 NGOs had renewed their licenses with NGORA. NGORA published a list of non-compliant NGOs and issued warnings that those without valid licenses must regularize their registration by month-end to continue operating legally. This public notice caused anxiety among smaller CBO that lacked funds to complete audits or pay renewal fees.

### **Targeting NGOs that are Critical of the Government**

The government has repeatedly failed to protect NGO representatives critical of its policies. During and after the July 2011 protests over poor governance and corruption, NGO leaders faced arson attacks, destruction of property, and death threats, forcing some into hiding while police took no action against perpetrators.

This pattern has persisted. In 2016, human rights activists were falsely accused of treason for allegedly plotting regime change with foreign diplomats. The NGO Board's claims that "90% of NGOs lack accountability" have often been viewed as attempts to justify crackdowns on dissenting organizations.

In 2019, after NGOs demanded investigations into the killing of Lule Buleya in police custody, the NGO Board accused the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) of being unregistered and therefore operating illegally. The Board threatened legal action, while CEDEP argued that it had complied with other registration laws and was protected by the constitutional right to association.

Physical attacks and legal harassment also continue. For example, in 2020, prominent activists Gift Trapence and Macdonald Sembereka faced prosecution over the alleged misuse of donor funds, which was seen as retaliation for their monitoring of government operations. In another incident, HRDC's Billy Mayaya was attacked in front of police with no consequences for the assailants.

### **Fee Hikes on NGOs**

The government secretly introduced steep fee increases for NGOs in early 2018, raising annual and registration fees from MK 50,000 (USD 69) to between MK 1 million and MK 2 million (USD 1,388–2,776) without consultation. The government justified the hikes as necessary for "[transparency and accountability](#)," but CONGOMA denounced them as illegal and urged NGOs not to pay, calling the move a deliberate attempt to restrict NGO operations.

In response to NGO opposition, the government held a roundtable discussion about the issue. Following the roundtable, the government announced that it would slightly reduce fees for local organizations, while maintaining the higher fees for international NGOs. On April 9, 2018, CONGOMA obtained a temporary court injunction blocking the hikes.

Despite this, in 2021, the NGO Board issued new fee regulations and instructed NGOs to resume payments, again without consulting stakeholders. These excessive fees pose a serious threat to smaller, donor-dependent NGOs.

### **Other Issues**

The state has at times sought to undermine independent NGOs through subversion and infiltration, including by placing state agents within organizations. There have also been instances of financial or political support for government-affiliated and other NGOs and cases where activists or their

organizations have aligned with political parties to advance partisan agendas.

While the government does not typically establish its own NGOs, there is a long-standing tradition in Malawi of presidents and first ladies founding charities. These charities, often perceived as government-run NGOs, have raised accountability concerns due to their close association with the presidency.

In addition, persistent funding and logistical constraints, particularly during the 2025 election cycle, underscored the vulnerability of civil society and the need for predictable and transparent regulatory processes.

## **BARRIERS TO RESOURCES**

In recent years, the operational landscape for NGOs in Malawi has experienced significant regulatory changes that impact their access to resources, including:

1. **Mandatory Conversion of Foreign Exchange:** In December 2024, the Malawian government implemented the [Exchange Control \(Holding Foreign Currency Denominated Accounts and Mandatory Conversion of Foreign Currency Receipts\) Regulations, 2024](#). These regulations require NGOs to convert 70 percent of their foreign currency receipts into local currency within a specified period.
2. **Coordination of Disaster Assistance:** During the devastating floods of early 2015, the NGO Board of Malawi directed all NGOs providing services to flood victims to operate through government structures. The Board also appealed to donors to support only registered NGOs, citing concerns over the proliferation of unscrupulous organizations in disaster assistance.
3. **Regulatory Oversight and Compliance:** In light of the country's ongoing food insecurity, the NGO Regulatory Authority (NGORA), formerly known as the NGO Board, continues to emphasize that NGOs must operate within established government frameworks to ensure coordination and prevent unregistered organizations from diverting aid.

While these measures aim to enhance transparency, accountability, and the efficiency of aid distribution, they also present challenges for NGOs in terms of financial management and operational autonomy. The mandatory foreign currency conversion, in particular, restricts NGOs' ability to manage funds effectively, potentially hindering their capacity to deliver essential services, while measures designed to increase the efficiency of aid distributions could impede NGOs' ability to receive support promptly during critical times.

## **BARRIERS TO EXPRESSION**

While Section 35 of Malawi's Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the Penal Code contains provisions that undermine this right. Sections 50 and 51 on sedition are particularly problematic, as they criminalize any act, speech, or publication deemed to "bring into hatred or contempt" the President or government, to "raise discontent" among citizens, or to promote "ill-will and hostility" between different classes of the population. Offenses carry penalties of fines of £400 and up to five year's imprisonment (or seven for repeat offenses), and seditious publications are subject to forfeiture. Although the law exempts criticism aimed at lawful reform, its broad and vague definitions allow for misuse and censorship.

Beyond these legal barriers, several practices have restricted the freedom of expression in recent years:

- **State media bias:** The state broadcaster, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), has been criticized for favoring the ruling party in its coverage and limiting access for opposition parties and NGOs with differing views. This bias is particularly evident during election periods, undermining freedom of expression and equitable advocacy opportunities. (see [publicmediaalliance.org](https://publicmediaalliance.org))
- **Demonization of critical NGOs:** Government officials have publicly disparaged NGOs that challenge governmental actions or policies. For instance, NGOs demanding accountability in corruption cases,

such as those involving businessperson Zuneth Sattar, have faced significant criticism and legal threats, potentially deterring them from exercising their right to free speech. (see [nyasatimes.com](https://www.nyasatimes.com)) Groups campaigning against public funds being funneled to charities linked to the First Lady and political groups have also been targeted.

- Repression of minority rights advocates: NGOs promoting minority rights, including LGBTQI+ rights, have been denied registration, accused of endorsing illegal activities, and subjected to inflammatory rhetoric by politicians, including incitement to violence. (see [state.gov](https://www.state.gov))
- Restrictions on media freedom: In September 2019, the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) imposed a ban on live phone-in programs, citing concerns over potential violence from live reporting of demonstrations. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi Chapter successfully challenged this ban in court, with the ruling affirming that MACRA's actions violated constitutional freedoms of the press and access to information. (see [state.gov](https://www.state.gov))
- Limitation on industrial actions: The Labour Relations (Amendment) Act of 2021 limits employees' right to strike to a maximum of three days per year, with wages withheld beyond this period, thereby curbing workers' ability to advocate for their rights.
- Crackdown on anti-corruption advocates: The arrest of Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Director General Martha Chizuma in early 2023, following the leaked audio where she discussed corruption within government entities, exemplifies attempts to silence watchdogs. Although charges were dropped after public outcry, the incident raised concerns about the government's commitment to combatting corruption.

In late 2025, several prominent human rights defenders also reported death threats and social media harassment campaigns against them largely in response to their governance, accountability, and human-rights work. Among them were Benedicto Kondowe, a leading civil society activist. These threats form part of a broader pattern of intimidation directed at outspoken critics of government conduct and highlight the ongoing restrictions to freedom of speech and advocacy in Malawi.

## **BARRIERS TO ASSEMBLY**

### **Legal Protections and Accessibility**

Although Malawi does not have specific legislation governing assemblies or public gatherings, the Police Act 2009 contains provisions regulating public order in relation to public assemblies, processions, demonstrations, and football matches. However, the law is not easily accessible to the public. It is not available online or in other public places such as libraries, and even the official website for the Malawi Parliament, which lists some enacted laws, omits the Police Act. This lack of accessibility limits public understanding of the legal framework and contributes to widespread misconceptions about the regulation of public assemblies and gatherings.

### **Vague Provisions**

The Act contains broad and ambiguous language that grants excessive discretion to law enforcement. For example, Section 107(2) states that "a person shall be deemed to be acting in lawful authority if he is acting in his capacity as a police officer or a member of the Defense Force of Malawi deployed to assist the police in the particular instance or as a member of a fire brigade."

This sweeping provision risks abuse of authority, particularly in the context of protests and demonstrations, as it fails to define what constitutes a "lawful act."

### **Advance Notification**

Section 96(1) of the Police Act requires organizers of assemblies or demonstrations to notify the District

Commissioner in writing between 48 hours and 14 days in advance, with a copy sent to the relevant police station. If notice is given less than 48 hours in advance, the convener must justify the delay. Section 96(2) obliges the District Commissioner to acknowledge receipt by stamping the notice and recording the date and time.

Upon receiving a notice, the District Commissioner is required to consult with the police officer in-charge. However, the Act does not specify how quickly the District Commissioner must consult police authorities or notify organizers.

The law does not provide an exception for spontaneous demonstrations. As for counter-demonstrations, Section 99(1) of the Police Act allows the District Commissioner, on reasonable grounds, to refuse a request or impose conditions to maintain separation between opposing groups.

### **Obligations on Organizers**

Section 106(1) of the Police Act stipulates that if any riot damage occurs as a result of an assembly or a demonstration, the organization, convener, and individual participants can all be held jointly responsible, even if the damage was caused by others acting unlawfully.

### **Time, Place, Manner Restrictions**

Section 103 prohibits assemblies and demonstrations within 100 meters of sites being used as Parliament, State Residences, and courts unless explicitly authorized by the Speaker, President, or Chief Justice.

### **Excessive Force**

The police have used excessive force to disperse demonstrations, including those organized by university students, vendors, and even primary school pupils. Despite some improvements in recent years, police often fail to provide sufficient protection to organizers and participants, particularly during politically charged protests. For example:

- In July 2025, CSOs under the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) and allied organizations planned vigils in Lilongwe and Blantyre to demand the release of detained activists and improvements in election management. Police not only denied permission for marches due to “security concerns” but also later dispersed small gatherings with tear gas and arrests.
- In August 2025, youth movements, including the Youth Decide Campaign and the Centre for Democracy and Economic Development Initiatives (CDEDI), attempted to hold peaceful demonstrations over access to state media and equitable campaign coverage. However, the organizers reported police intimidation, confiscation of their materials, and the brief detention of volunteers.
- In September 2025, protestors alleging election irregularities and calling for accountability in vote-counting were attacked by unidentified assailants reportedly operating alongside security forces.

### **Criminal and Financial Penalties**

Section 107(1) of the Police Act makes it a criminal offense to carry any weapon during an assembly or demonstration—lawful or otherwise—without proper authority. Offenders may be arrested without a warrant and face penalties of up to MK 100,000 (approximately USD 60) and two years’ imprisonment.

## **Additional Resources**

This section contains links to external reports and news reports relevant to civic freedoms. Click a

subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

## GLOBAL INDEX RANKINGS

Ranking Body	Rank	Ranking Scale (best - worst possible)
<a href="#">UN Human Development Index</a>	172 (2023)	1 - 193
<a href="#">World Justice Project Rule of Law Index</a>	71 (2025)	1 - 142
<a href="#">Fund for Peace Fragile States Index</a>	52 (2024)	179 - 1
<a href="#">Transparency International</a>	107 (2024)	1 - 180
<a href="#">Freedom House: Freedom in the World</a>	Status: Partly Free Political Rights: 28 Civil Liberties: 37 (2025)	Free/Partly Free/Not Free 40 - 0 60 - 0

## REPORTS

UN Universal Periodic Review Reports	<a href="#">Malawi UPR page</a>
UNU-WIDER	<a href="#">Desk study on aid and democracy Malawi (2024)</a>
UN Human Rights Reports	<a href="#">Malawi</a>
U.S. State Department	<a href="#">2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Malawi</a>
Fund for Peace Fragile States Index Reports	<a href="#">Malawi</a>
Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Malawi	<a href="#">EU Election Observation Mission to Malawi 2025- Preliminary Statement</a>
IMF Country Reports	<a href="#">Malawi and the IMF</a>
International Commission of Jurists	<a href="#">Malawi archives</a>
ICNL Online Library	<a href="#">Malawi</a>

## NEWS

### [Death threats against a human rights defender](#) (March 2026)

Mr. Benedicto Kondowe, as Chairperson of the National Advocacy Platform, has been speaking out about these issues, including in October and November 2025, when the organization released statements condemning the remarks made by high-level politicians such as the current President of Malawi and a former member of the Parliament. In their remarks, they reportedly accused civil society of attempting to destabilize the government through protests and threatened to repress public demonstrations, in some cases also naming some individual civil society actors, thus exposing them to risk. Following these comments, similar narratives reportedly spread on social media. Since November 13, 2025, Mr. Kondowe has been receiving death threats from unknown individuals, who reportedly sent him messages using

South African phone numbers.

### **[Rights activists call for review of restrictive laws](#)** (December 2025)

Human rights defenders (HRDs) have called for a review of restrictive laws that shrink the civic space, including the Cybersecurity Act, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) Act and Police Act. Speaking during the commemoration of the International Human Rights Defenders Day in Mzuzu, Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) chairperson Michael Kaiyatsa asked the government to move beyond rhetoric and deliver measurable reforms that expand civic freedoms and protect HRDs. He said that in recent years, Malawi has witnessed a rise in the use of laws to restrict civic freedoms; hence, calling for amendment of the Cybersecurity Act to ensure that it protects digital rights. Kaiyatsa further demanded the revision of the NGO Act and impartial enforcement of the Police Act to guarantee freedoms of association, assembly and expression.

### **[MHRC, others bemoan shrinking civic space](#)** (December 2025)

State-funded Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) and civil society groups have bemoaned poor levels of access to justice and shrinking civic space for human rights defenders in the country in recent years. MHRC and other stakeholders raised the concerns on in a solidarity statement delivered during the International Human Rights Defenders Day awards dinner in Mzuzu and Human Rights Day commemoration in Nkhata Bay. MHRC Commissioner Boniface Massah said human rights defenders (HRDs) face intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests, digital surveillance and smear campaigns designed to discredit their work and silence their voices.

### **[HRDC Denies Party Ties, Launches Defender Protection Program](#)** (November 2025)

The Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) denied allegations of political alignment and launched a program to protect activists facing security threats. Chairperson Michael Kaiyatsa rejected claims that the coalition favors the Malawi Congress Party, stressing the organization remains independent and nonpartisan. The coalition dismissed social media rumors that it is preparing demonstrations against the new government, calling the claims malicious and fake.

### **[Benedicto Kondowe Hits Back – “I Will Not Be Silenced by Political Lies”](#)** (November 2025)

Civil society leader Benedicto Kondowe has come out swinging against what he calls a calculated smear campaign, vehemently denying allegations that he received MK80 million from the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) to tarnish the image of former President Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika and his administration. The allegations, which exploded across WhatsApp groups under the sensational banner “#Exposed! Truth Finally Out!”, accuse Kondowe — who chairs both the National Advocacy Platform (NAP) and the Civil Society Elections Integrity Forum (CSEIF) — of working with MCP insiders to discredit the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government through fabricated reports to the United Nations. But Kondowe, long regarded as one of Malawi’s most principled and policy-driven civic voices, has dismissed the claims as “malicious propaganda, designed to assassinate character and weaken the moral standing of civil society.”

### **[Elections offer an opportunity to end human rights violations](#)** (September 2025)

Malawi’s presidential and parliamentary candidates must ensure the promotion and protection of human rights before, during and after elections, Amnesty International said ahead of the country’s general elections on September 16. The organization has published a human rights manifesto ahead of the elections, setting out what it considers to be eight key human rights priorities for the incoming president and parliament. These include the right to food, women’s rights, the rights to freedom of association and expression, and the rights of persons with disabilities including persons with albinism.

### **[Landmark ruling against defamation a pivotal moment for media freedom in Malawi](#)** (July 2025)

A landmark victory for freedom of expression has been celebrated, with the High Court of Malawi (sitting as a Constitutional Court) declaring Section 200 of the Malawi Penal Code, which criminalized defamation, unconstitutional. The court’s decision stems from the case of Joshua Chisa Mbele v The Director of Public Prosecutions & The Attorney General in which Mbele challenged the constitutionality of the now void section. The challenge was made amidst pending criminal proceedings against him for alleged defamatory statements concerning a public official.

### [\*\*Parliament passes mental health bill\*\*](#) (April 2025)

Parliament has passed Bill No. 17 of 2025, Mental Health, which replaces the outdated Mental Treatment Act of 1948. The Bill shifts the focus from a medical-based approach to a human rights-based approach, prioritizing the dignity and well-being of individuals with mental health conditions. It also establishes the Mental Health Board to regulate the management, treatment, and rehabilitation of people with mental health issues and promote their human rights and freedoms. Speaking in parliament, Minister of Health Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda said the bill introduces new ways of treating, caring for, and supporting persons with mental health issues.

### [\*\*1,000 NGOs risk legal action\*\*](#) (April 2025)

Ahead of the March 31, 2025 deadline, approximately 1,000 NGOs risked legal action if they failed to obtain 2025 licences. The deadline underscores the Malawi NGO Regulatory Authority (NGORA)'s resolve to bring all organizations into compliance with registration requirements and aims to enhance oversight, financial discipline, and operational transparency within the sector. By late April 2025, NGORA reported stronger compliance, though hundreds remained unlicensed, reflecting ongoing struggles to align all organizations with the new framework and regulations.

### [\*\*RBM forex measures excite financial market dealers\*\*](#) (April 2025)

Financial Market Dealers Association of Malawi (Fimda) president Leslie Fatch has commended the Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM) for amending foreign exchange controls to incentivize exporters and boost foreign exchange reserves. But he said they regard the changes in licensing as administrative for continued oversight by the central bank as a regulator, as such, they will wait to see the effectiveness in the implementation. Fatch said, "We have been advocating for a review of the retention policy for the non-governmental organisation [NGO] receipts, so the changes made will improve the forex liquidity compared to the initial regulations, which were effected in December 2024."

### [\*\*Malawi lowers 2025 growth forecast as inflation spurs protests\*\*](#) (February 2025)

Malawi's government trimmed its economic growth forecast for this year in its annual budget as disgruntled citizens protested in major cities over rising prices. The protesters are mostly street vendors who accuse the government of failing to control double-digit inflation, which they say is putting them out of business. As their demonstrations have spread from the capital Lilongwe to the main commercial city Blantyre, they have been joined on the streets by jobless youths unhappy with President Lazarus Chakwera's government.

### [\*\*NGORA reiterates that registration is to protect NGOs from being involved or targeted by risk activities\*\*](#) (November 2024)

The Non-Governmental Organisation Regulatory Authority (NGORA) has reminded NGOs to observe laws and have themselves registered, saying operating without a registration certificate is illegal. Speaking yesterday at a press briefing at Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe, NGORA Chief Executive Officer Edward Chileka-Banda emphasized that NGOs need to register before starting operations in Malawi. He reiterated that getting registered is meant to protect the NGOs and the community from being involved or targeted by risk activities — hence the need to ensure that NGOs are operating legally in the country. The directive is a follow up to the public notice and several communications that NGORA made and Chileka-Banda said once NGOs are registered, it is required of them to submit annual reports to the Authority.

### [\*\*Government launches K1 Billion NGO Fund\*\*](#) (August 2024)

Government through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare launched a K1 billion non-governmental organization (NGO) Fund. Minister of Gender, Jean Sendeza, who presided over the launch, said the fund signifies governments commitment to improving and sustaining the operations of NGOs in Malawi.

### [\*\*Malawi ruling against same-sex relationships sparks debate\*\*](#) (July 2024)

Conservative church leaders are praising a recent ruling by Malawi's Constitutional Court refusing to decriminalize same-sex relationships, while human rights groups are condemning the move in the southern African nation. In a landmark ruling on June 28, the court dismissed a case brought by two

applicants challenging Malawi's laws criminalizing same-sex relationships, wanting the court to legalize gay relationships in the country. The two applicants, Jan Willem Akster from the Netherlands and a Malawian trans woman, Jana Gonani, were responding to criminal charges in lower courts. Akster had been accused of sexual abuse and sodomy, while Jana faces trial for what Malawian law described as "unnatural behavior."

### [\*\*Activists Differ On the Impending National 'Shut Down' Demonstrations\*\*](#) (June 2024)

Some renowned human rights activist in the country have differed on the impending national wide demonstrations which some concerned citizens led by some human rights activists have organized next month. The demonstrations dubbed 'Malawi shutdown demonstrations' have been scheduled to take place in the country's major cities on July 10 and are meant for the concerned Malawians to voice out their frustrations on the continued high cost of living as well as poor governance in the country. However, reacting to the development, one the renowned human rights activist, Undule Mwakasungula has faulted the timing of the demonstrations saying the country is still mourning for the death of the vice president and eight others who died in a plane crash early this month.

### [\*\*Joint Civil Society Calls for Immediate Action: Finalize and Enact Judicial Reform Swiftly in Malawi\*\*](#) (March 2024)

In collaboration with diverse stakeholders, civil society formally submitted reflections on the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2023, and the Judicial Service Administration Bill, 2023 to the Malawi Law Society (MLS) on December 18, 2023. As a sector, we unequivocally endorse these proposed reforms, recognizing their profound impact on fortifying judicial accountability and expanding access to justice in Malawi. Swift enactment of these Bills is paramount to ensure equitable access to justice for all citizens.

### [\*\*Over 200 Malawian NGOs Risk Closure\*\*](#) (January 2024)

At least 200 NGOs risk closure after March 30 this year for failing to comply with the NGO Act. According to the Chief Executive Officer of the Non-Governmental Organisations Regulatory Authority (NGORA), Edward Chileka-Banda, NGORA has started engaging some local and international organizations on the matter. He has told Capital FM online that NGOs that continue to be non-compliant after March 30 this year will be deregistered while others will pay fines.

### [\*\*Chizuma hails anti-corruption strategy\*\*](#) (August 2023)

Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) director general Martha Chizuma has hailed the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (Nacs II) for improving coordination among various entities in fighting corruption. She said through the strategy several ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) are setting up institutional integrity committees (IICs).

### [\*\*ACB says ICC to help corruption fight\*\*](#) (July 2023)

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has said the Police Independent Complaints Commission (ICC) will help reduce corruption cases among police officers and the police institution. ACB director of corruption prevention Mary Phombeya said this during a meeting with local oversight institutions that was supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

### [\*\*Local firm launches service to combat corruption in procurement\*\*](#) (August 2023)

In a concerted effort to tackle corruption in tendering and procurement processes, Product and Business Services Limited (PBSL), a local firm, has unveiled its anti-corruption website, Tenderite. This innovative digital platform, referred to as the "Corruption Vaccine," aims to reform the way institutions source and assess quotations and bids, mitigating issues such as corruption, fraud, bias, unfairness, and nepotism.

### [\*\*Police suspicious of refugees' containers\*\*](#) (August 2023)

The Malawi Police Service has raised suspicion that some of the shipping containers refugees used for business and impounded during their relocation exercise contain several crime-related materials and contraband, including illegal firearms and foreign currency.

### [\*\*Anti-Corruption Bureau drops 70% probed case\*\*](#) (May 2023)

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) threw out 70 percent of already investigated cases for lack of evidence. This is contained in the bureau's 2021-22 annual report, which has been submitted to the Legal Affairs

Committee of Parliament. According to the report, cases which had been completed in terms of investigations were 151 and out of these cases, 36 were recommended for prosecution, representing 24 percent, while 106 cases were closed, representing 70 percent. Nine cases, according to the report, were referred to other institutions for their action, representing six percent.

#### [HRDC worried about corruption fight pace](#) (May 2023)

The Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) has stated it is concerned that there are “many” unresolved corruption cases in the country. HRDC made the observation during a meeting the coalition’s leadership had with President Lazarus Chakwera at Kamuzu Palace in Lilongwe.

#### [Relocated Refugees in Malawi Decry Dehumanizing Conditions](#) (May 2023)

In Malawi, hundreds of people who were forcibly relocated to the country’s only refugee camp are complaining of poor conditions with no food, clean water or shelter. The U.N.’s refugee agency and the World Food Program say they cannot cater to the needs of those at the highly congested camp because of funding shortfalls. Malawi’s government recently started to forcefully relocate about 8,000 refugees or asylum seekers who were residing in areas outside the Dzaleka refugee camp.

#### [Govt withdraws Chizuma’s interdiction letter](#) (February 2023)

The Government has reversed its decision to interdict Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) director general Martha Chizuma and advised her to return to office. Chizuma, however, had already returned to work backed by a High Court order that Malawi Law Society (MLS) obtained when it challenged the interdiction earlier this month and sought a judicial review on government’s decision.

#### [The Anti-Corruption Bureau arrests five over Affordable Inputs Programme \(AIP\)](#) (January 2023)

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested two chiefs and three other individuals in Mponela, Dowa for abuse of office and being found in possession of other people’s national identity cards (IDs). The arrests are in relation to the sale of fertilizer in the on-going controversial Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP).

#### [NGORA orients faith leaders on new NGO Act](#) (January 2023)

NGORA, a state-owned registrar and regulator of all NGOs, engaged general secretaries and religious bodies to orient them on the NGO Amendment Act, 2022. The meeting gave faith leaders the opportunity to provide their input into the regulations NGORA is developing for operationalization of the Act. In her remarks, Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, Patricia Kaliati, commended NGORA for organizing the orientation, saying religious institutions have social arms through which they do charity work and implement various projects like NGOs.

#### [“Fighting corruption is not the easiest task of any government”](#) (July 2022)

The President is acutely aware that Malawians expect and want him to act decisively on the war against corruption cartels and hoped the Anti-Corruption Bureau report would accord him the legitimate basis to crackdown on corruption cartels, which could earn him the principal anti-corruption champion tag. The President was portrayed by ACB as a monumental log in the fight against corruption.

## **ARCHIVED NEWS**

[NGOs boycott meeting about new law](#) (June 2022)

[CSOs say “No” to NGO Amendment Bill](#) (April 2022)

[CSOs in fresh push over NGO Bill](#) (April 2022)

[Anti-Corruption Bureau obtains order against Karim Batatawala](#) (March 2022)

[Growing levels of corruption](#) (February 2022)

[CSOs urge arrest of Minister of Civic Education](#) (December 2021)

[CSOs want same-sex criminal laws annulled](#) (December 2021)

[Beam Trust on Anti-Corruption Bureau Radar](#) (July 2021)

[Ntcheu NGOs Shunning Remote Areas](#) (May 2021)

[NGO calls for greater SRHR awareness among girls](#) (May 2021)

[National Advocacy Platform Against Selective Justice](#) (August 2020)

[Malawi high court sets aside coronavirus lockdown pending review](#) (April 2020)

[Court sides with MCP witness Suleman on network hitches](#) (November 2019)

[Malawi Political Standoff Shows No Sign of Abating](#) (October 2019)

[Malawi Police fire teargas inside Queens Hospital](#) (September 2019)

[ACB banks on chiefs for corrupt free-elections](#) (May 2019)

[Central Region Police boss, 8 others implicated in Buleya's death](#) (May 2019)

[New concern for albino attacks as Malawi elections loom](#) (February 2019)

[Clash on NGO law](#) (November 2018)

[CSOs call for review of Malawi NGO Policy](#) (March 2018)

[Salima CSOs punch holes in draft NGO Policy and amendments Bill](#) (June 2017)

[Parliamentary committee starts 'Maizegate' inquiry today](#) (January 2017)

[Malawi's NGO fight for survival](#) (February 2016)

[Stakeholders speak on new NGO Board Policy](#) (May 2016)

[Parliament to Consider Access to Information Bill](#) (February 2016)

[Pressure to Reject Information Bill](#) (January 2016)

[Kaliati rails at Malawi CSOs for not helping flood victims](#) (January 2015)

[CSOs demand good leadership](#) (January 2015)

[Malawi ranks 16th in African Government Index](#) (October 2014)

[Malawi NGOs urged to be transparent](#) (September 2014)

[President announces NGO Act to be Reviewed](#) (August 2014)

[Voter Education NGOs May Face Backlash from Certain Candidates](#) (May 2014)

[Malawi NGOs told to register by June 30 or else](#) (July 2013)

## **HISTORICAL NOTES**

In 2023, Malawi's NGO Act was amended to address NGO registration and partnerships, complaint-handling mechanisms, and reporting obligations. Subsequently, implementing regulations were drafted, leading to significant opposition from CSOs, particularly due to a provision that prohibits political and election activities by NGOs. CSOs argued that this provision could severely limit the ability of NGOs to engage in advocacy and participate in political discourse, including the participation of marginalized groups in electoral processes. By 2026, the draft regulations had been approved at the Cabinet level and then introduced and approved in Parliament. They are expected to shape the regulatory environment and

to have implications for civil society operations.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER  
FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW

<https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/malawi>