



Oral Statement
Adoption of the UPR report of France
Date
Delivered by ...

Thank you, Mr President.

Mr. President, CIVICUS welcomes the government of France's engagement with the UPR process.

In our UPR Submission, we documented that since its last review, France only partially implemented one of the two recommendations it received relating to civic space. We regret that the recommendations pertaining to the ban on full face veils in public places were not accepted by the government, despite being criticized as a violation of the rights to freedom of expression and religious freedom.

Mr. President, we are deeply concerned by the recent introduction of a new national security and counter terrorism law which effectively makes permanent extraordinary powers given to French security forces since the November 2015 state of emergency was implemented. Through this now-permanent legal regime, French police have expanded powers of arrest, detention and surveillance without adequate judicial oversight or due regard for the proportionality of measures taken to restrict fundamental freedoms.

CIVICUS also notes with concern the police's use of disproportionate force against protestors including during labour protests in 2016; anti-racism demonstrations in 2013; and, most seriously, in October 2014 when ecologist Rémi Fraisse was killed after police threw a flash grenade into a crowd of demonstrators opposing the construction of a dam in Sivens. Mr. President, just two months ago, French police again used disproportionate force, firing thousands of tear gas canisters as part of an operation to forcibly remove a peaceful anti-capitalist community in Notre-Dame-des-Landes.

Finally, in its submission, CIVICUS set out a range of concerns that risk eroding the right to freedom of expression in France, including the use of legal proceedings to compel media to release their sources. In France, losing a libel case against a public official can result in a fine of up to four times the fine for losing a case against a private citizen; this has been criticized for creating a "chilling effect" on the media's scrutiny of government.

Mr. President, CIVICUS calls on the Government of France to take proactive measures to address these concerns and implement recommendations to create and maintain, in law and in practice, an enabling environment for civil society in all circumstances

We thank you.