

Civil Society as a Fundamental Partner in Environmental Governance

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Abstract---In light of the state's declining role and its inability to meet individual needs or to effectively manage social domains that have undergone a profound transformation from mediation and reconciliation to structured institutional partnership and cooperation, civil society has emerged as a new actor uniquely capable of filling these gaps. Having long confined its engagement to addressing issues of acute contention between the state and citizens, particularly in matters related to rights and social concerns, civil society organisations have transcended their traditional role as a complementary sector to the state. They now stand as indispensable social partners in both the formulation and implementation of public policies, operating with autonomy from other active stakeholders.

Keywords---partnership, structured institutional cooperation, social partner.

Introduction

No modern progress or human development can be realised without granting society its full role in participation and activating it constructively. This underscores the critical importance of civil society organisations in the process of comprehensive development, which cannot be achieved in an unhealthy environment. Civil society institutions have become a defining feature of advanced societies, reflecting positive initiatives and voluntary efforts dedicated to contribution and innovation. Their role complements that of the state in advancing societal conditions, preserving community environments, and elevating citizens' standards of living and culture.

As the international community has increasingly affirmed that environmental protection is a shared responsibility, most notably since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, civil society, in its various organisational forms, particularly environmental

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associations, has been recognised as a key actor in environmental protection. It has been called upon to actively address environmental issues and has been acknowledged as an essential stakeholder in supporting environmentally sustainable development.

The legal entrenchment of civil society's participation in enhancing environmental awareness to protect the environment is relatively recent in Algeria. This development is reflected in various constitutional texts, including the 1989 Algerian constitutional reform. Paragraph 8 of the preamble states, "The Algerian people have always struggled for freedom and democracy and intend, through this Constitution, to establish constitutional institutions on the basis of the participation of every Algerian man and woman in the management of public affairs, the capacity to achieve social justice and equality, and the guarantee of freedom for every individual."¹

This role was further strengthened through the 1996 Algerian constitutional reform in Article 33, which stipulates the following:

"The defence, whether individually or through an association, of the fundamental human rights and of individual and collective freedoms is guaranteed."²

Accordingly, to attain a more precise understanding of this concept, it is necessary first to define the meaning of civil society (Section One), then to examine the sources of funding for environmental associations (Section Two), followed by an exploration of their role in consolidating the concept of environmental citizenship (Section Three), and, finally, to address the challenges that limit the effectiveness of civil society in disseminating and strengthening environmental awareness (Section Four).

Section One: Meaning of Civil Society

Given the practical role of civil society as an active and essential actor in achieving economic and social development and political stability in contemporary societies, state interest in this sector has grown considerably.³ This increased attention has directly influenced the foundations and regulatory frameworks governing their relationship, which has undergone a profound transformation from mediation and conciliation to structured institutional partnership and cooperation.

As a result, civil society organisations have transcended their traditional function as a supplementary sector to the state, instead emerging as key actors in the formulation and implementation of public policies and operating autonomously from other stakeholders. This shift has led some scholars to adopt the term "third sector" to highlight the distinct and independent nature of civil society vis-à-vis both the government and the private sector.

Accordingly, it is necessary first to establish a definition of civil society (Subsection One), followed by an examination of its essential components and pillars (Subsection Two).

Subsection One: Definition of Civil Society

The accumulated body of philosophical and theoretical knowledge on civil society, developed over successive stages of its conceptual and practical evolution, has led to a marked diversity of scholarly perspectives on a comprehensive, unified definition of the term. The inherent complexity of the concept arising from its multifaceted political, social, and legal dimensions, as well as the intersection of its practical applications with numerous related terms that share conceptual and theoretical proximity, combined with the expansion of its contemporary influence from local communities to the global sphere, has made it difficult to reach a complete consensus on its precise meaning and foundations.

Mohammed Abed al-Jabri defines civil society as "a society in which relations among individuals are organised on the basis of democracy."⁴

Amani Kandil defines civil society as "the sum of voluntary, noninherited, and nongovernmental social organisations that support the individual and enhance their capacity to participate in public life. Civil society institutions occupy an intermediate space between state institutions and traditional institutions."⁵

The United Nations Development Programme defines civil society in its modern sense, which does not apply to the structures of the state and society prior to the formation of the modern state. It identifies a sphere distinct from state authority and its institutions, as well as from inherited traditional structures.

This definition refers to organised relations grounded in the principles of citizenship, voluntary participation, and association on the basis of intellectual, collective, and professional choices.⁶

Similarly, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) defines civil society as “a set of free, voluntary organisations that fill the public space between the family and the state in order to achieve the interests of their members or broader social benefits, while adhering to the values and standards of respect, consent, tolerance, and the peaceful management of diversity and difference.”⁷

From the above, arriving at a single, universally accepted definition of civil society is far from straightforward. As the concept belongs to the domain of the human and social sciences, it is inherently characterised by relativity and the absence of absolutes in the formulation of judgements and definitions. Consequently, the notion of civil society is marked by significant conceptual ambiguity and indeterminacy.

Subsection Two: Pillars of Civil Society

The various perspectives that have attempted to define civil society have likewise sought to establish a set of fundamental elements and principles that distinguish its activities and functions from those of other organisational structures. Most scholars agree that the characteristics and essential components of civil society fall into two main categories: material and moral foundations.

I. Material Foundations

These foundations, which define the structural and organisational dimensions of the civil sector, are what grant it material and operational distinctiveness in relation to other forms of social action. According to the literature, the material foundations of civil society are centred on two key principles: the institutional nature of its organisation and the independence of its financing and resources.

A. The Institutional Organisation of Civil Society

The concept of civil society rests on the establishment of independent and autonomous organisations capable of making their own decisions and managing their own activities, all within the legal framework that governs their operations (such as laws on associations and political parties). Importantly, a fully constituted civil society cannot exist without institutionalisation. Institutional structures provide the necessary framework for organising the diverse components of civil society across their various forms and areas of engagement.⁸

By “institution,” one refers to an organised collective structure designed to unify the efforts of individuals who share similar orientations and viewpoints concerning issues of common interest, allowing them to carry out their functions freely and independently.

In contemporary practice, institutionalisation is embodied in a wide array of organisations. Among the most influential are political parties, labour and professional unions, and associations of various forms and purposes.

B. Financial Independence and Self-Sustained Resources

This characteristic is a crucial guarantee for strengthening civil society's material position by ensuring its complete independence from financial dependence on other entities, particularly governmental institutions. Such independence shields it from external pressures, given that logistical and financial support form the backbone of civil society activity. This autonomy allows civil society to remain unaffected by external influence and to stay true to its advocacy goals.

In practice, it is frequently observed that specific environmental associations, in particular, suspend their protective functions as soon as government funding ceases or accept donations and gifts intended to neutralise their efforts to exert pressure and mobilise the public. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as *buying loyalties*.

The second principal source of funding for civil society institutions and organisations typically derives from member subscriptions, private grants, and donations. These resources enable them to maintain financial independence, thereby strengthening their operational autonomy and material distinctiveness from other sectors within civil society.

II. Moral foundations

The conceptualisation of civil society as a distinct sector with its own identity and functions is fundamentally tied to a set of moral values and defining characteristics. Scholars have identified several key elements that shape its ethical and operational identity.

A. Administrative and structural independence

Civil society institutions and organisations must remain entirely independent from other sectors, especially governmental bodies. This independence constitutes the cornerstone enabling civil society actors to perform their activities and fulfil their missions, particularly those related to defending the public interest. Consequently, governments and administrations must refrain from interfering with the work, structure, or activities of civil society organisations at all levels of their legal and administrative standing.

Neither the state nor any other external entities unrelated to civil society may intervene in directing its activities or managing its internal affairs except in accordance with what is legally permitted and within the framework of general principles that guarantee freedom and justice within society.⁹

B. Voluntary Work

One of the most significant factors reinforcing and guaranteeing the independence of civil society and consolidating its distinctive identity is its reliance on voluntary work, which is grounded in individuals' free will to cooperate and support one another in pursuit of shared objectives. Legal scholars regard this as a fundamental pillar of civil society's autonomous existence.

Voluntary work entails unpaid activities aimed at improving the community in which individuals live. It is often inseparable from moral values and ethical principles.¹⁰ In Algeria, for instance, voluntary and solidarity-based action is deeply rooted in specific cultural traditions, particularly among the Kabyle tribes. In villages and hamlets, such work has become a long-standing customary practice passed down through generations. One of its most prominent expressions in this region is the collective cleaning of neighbourhoods and alleyways, as well as community-led rehabilitation projects, all of which contribute to environmental protection. As a result, the villages of the Kabyle region are among the cleanest and most aesthetically pleasing areas in the country.

C. Peaceful Management of Activities

This principle represents a fundamental commitment for civil society. Given its considerable capacity for rapid mobilisation, mass engagement, and effective influence on public opinion, civil society wields significant power to apply pressure on institutions and governments.

However, the very weight of this power also renders it highly sensitive and potentially destabilising. Therefore, civil society actors must adhere strictly to agreed-upon principles, particularly the commitment to peaceful and civic struggle. They are expected to conduct their activities and defend against collective causes within the framework of respect for the constitution, the rule of law, and public order while entirely rejecting all forms of violence, armed action, or disorder.

Although civil society retains the right to oppose policies and measures that conflict with the public interest, such opposition must be exercised exclusively through legal means aimed at correcting governmental errors and advancing the public good.¹¹

Subsection Three: The Composition of Civil Society

The evolution of civil society, both in its conceptual foundations and in the range of issues it addresses, has led to increasing diversity in its organisational structures. Each institution or organisation within civil society is typically centred on defending a specific cause, which constitutes its primary purpose and the rationale for its establishment.

I. Political Parties

A political party may be defined as an association of citizens who share common ideas and come together to implement a joint political project through democratic and peaceful means, thereby attaining the authority and responsibility to participate in the governance of public affairs.¹²

Political parties play a crucial role in shaping the political will of people across all areas of public life. Their functions include shaping public opinion, fostering a genuine political culture, and encouraging

meaningful citizen participation in public life. They also engage in the preparation and training of elites capable of assuming public responsibilities, nominating candidates for both local and national representative councils, and ensuring the establishment and promotion of sustained neighbourly relations between citizens and state institutions.

Moreover, political parties contributed to the advancement and refinement of political life and the consolidation of Algeria's core values and principles, particularly those associated with the Algerian War of Independence of 1 November 1954, the entrenchment of democratic practice, and the peaceful transfer of power. They also work to promote women's political rights, protect human rights, and strengthen tolerance.¹³

II. Labour and Professional Unions

Like many comparative legal systems, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria legislature has not provided a formal definition of a trade union, leaving its conceptualisation to legal scholarship. In legal doctrine, a trade union is commonly defined as a professional association whose purpose is to protect and promote the profession, defend its interests, and advance its interests in all economic, industrial, and commercial aspects.¹⁴ That is, safeguarding both workers' material and moral interests.¹⁵

While the original and primary function of unions is to defend the rights and interests of the working class and professionals, their role also extends to active participation in broader societal issues such as development, unemployment, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection, including workplace health and safety. This involves ensuring compliance with health and safety standards and industrial security measures during the establishment of industrial complexes.

III. Associations

The definitions of associations in legal scholarship are numerous. One widely accepted definition describes associations as “active and organised social formations established on a voluntary, nonprofit basis to pursue common public objectives, governed by principles of good governance within legal frameworks that guarantee transparency and freedom of association.”¹⁶

From a legislative perspective, Algeria, through Law No. 12--06 on Associations, provides the following in Article 2:

“An association, within the meaning of this law, is a grouping of natural or legal persons on the basis of a contractual agreement for a definite or indefinite duration. These persons voluntarily pool their knowledge and resources for nonprofit purposes to promote activities, particularly in the professional, social, scientific, religious, educational, cultural, sporting, environmental, charitable, and humanitarian fields.”¹⁷

Section Two: Financial Resources of Environmental Associations

Environmental associations enjoy legal and financial autonomy and possess assets comprising both monetary and in-kind resources. Laws No. 12--06 on Associations define their sources of funding, which enable them to pursue the objectives for which they were established. These financial resources are categorised into **internal resources** (Subsection One) and **external resources** (Subsection Two).

Subsection One: Internal Resources

Internal resources refer to the financial means generated by the association itself without reliance on external actors or sources. This form of funding, often referred to as *self-financing*, supports the association's activities and ensures a degree of independence and sustainability.

I. Membership Subscriptions

Membership subscriptions constitute the primary and most essential source of funding for associations. Within the Algerian legal framework, the legislature has not imposed a fixed amount for these subscriptions, leaving their determination to each association's internal rules. These contributions are significant because they are guaranteed and nonrefundable, unlike shares in commercial companies. They also represent a stable and renewable source of funding.

Unlike the Moroccan legislator, who has established a symbolic fee for each new member upon joining an association, the Algerian legislature has opted for a more flexible approach, granting associations the freedom to set their own subscription rates.¹⁸

II. Revenues from Activities and Assets

In addition to membership subscriptions, financial resources may also be derived from the association's activities and assets.¹⁹ The legislature permits associations to engage in activities and utilise their property to generate profits and income, provided that such activities do not contravene their statutes, laws, or regulations in force. All generated revenues must be used exclusively to advance the association's statutory objectives.²⁰

In this context, associations may issue newsletters and magazines for sale, provide consultancy services, conduct studies and offer expertise in return for fees, and dispose of their movable and immovable assets through sales or leases. They may also invest the proceeds from endowed properties allocated to them. Through these activities, associations can generate sufficient financial resources to shift from being financially dependent entities to becoming financially productive actors. This, in turn, enhances their autonomy from external funding sources and strengthens their operational independence.

Subsection Two: External Sources of Funding for Charitable Associations

External financial resources refer to funds received from actors outside the association's internal structure. These resources primarily include donations, bequests, fundraising revenues, and grants from state and local authorities.

I. Donations and Bequests

For associations legally authorised to receive such resources, donations and bequests constitute a significant source of funding, particularly in contexts where government support is limited. However, the legislature has established specific conditions governing the acceptance of donations and bequests.

Associations are prohibited from accepting donations or bequests that impose burdensome conditions or obligations. Conversely, they are permitted to accept donations and bequests.²¹ That comply with their statutes and the legal framework in force.²²

For donations or bequests originating from foreign associations or entities, Algerian legislation requires prior approval from competent authorities. This authorisation is contingent upon verifying the legitimacy of the source and its compatibility with the association's objectives and activities, thereby ensuring transparency and safeguarding national interests.

II. Revenues from Fundraising Activities

Among the external financial resources recognised by Laws No. 12--06 on Associations as legitimate funding sources for charitable associations are revenues from public fundraising campaigns.²³ Associations may help the general public collect monetary contributions within the framework of legally authorised fundraising initiatives.

Such fundraising activities may involve both natural and legal persons, provided that the association obtains prior authorisation from competent authorities and complies with the legal and regulatory provisions governing this domain.²⁴

III. State and Local Government Subsidies

An examination of the provisions of Law No. 12--06 on Associations, particularly Article 34,²⁵ reveals that charitable associations may obtain financial support from the state and local authorities. This possibility is contingent upon the association pursuing objectives of recognised public benefit.

The granting of subsidies is subject to the conclusion of an agreement between the state, the wilaya (province), or municipality and the association concerned. This agreement specifies the activity to be undertaken, the modalities for monitoring and evaluating that activity, and the mechanisms for implementing its terms.

Importantly, state and local subsidies are not a legal obligation but rather a discretionary option, which is dependent on the association's public-benefit status and the relevance of the proposed activity to public policy objectives. The state provides such support as part of its broader efforts to promote sustainable development and advance comprehensive national development goals.²⁶

Section Three: Role of Associations in Consolidating the Concept of Environmental Citizenship

Given the preventive orientation of environmental protection legislation, the legal framework has established the foundations for a contractual approach to implementing environmental measures. It has also initiated the establishment of partnership mechanisms with environmental protection associations, recognising them as key partners in environmental governance for activating environmental policy. This stems from the understanding that the future of the environment depends fundamentally on citizen engagement.²⁷

In line with this paradigm shift, acknowledging the role of associations as partners of the administration in achieving national strategic objectives for environmental protection, Law No. 10-03 on Environmental Protection has dedicated a specific chapter to associations.

Beyond the right to participate, consult, and be consulted in administrative decision-making related to environmental objectives, associations are also entitled to take legal action. This constitutes a fundamental guarantee for strengthening social oversight to ensure respect for environmental regulations. The legislature has explicitly granted associations the right to bring legal proceedings to defend collective interests and the individual interests of their members, including the right to claim compensation for material and moral damage.

Subsection One: Environmental Awareness and Citizen Engagement in Voluntary Action

Raising environmental awareness and encouraging citizen participation in voluntary activities are among the principal functions of environmental associations. This is particularly significant given that environmental protection remains a relatively recent policy concern and is still perceived by some as a secondary or “luxury” issue. In addition, new concepts such as sustainable development, which call for the adoption of low-impact production mechanisms and the integration of environmental considerations into state and individual economic policies, have expanded the scope of environmental action.²⁸

From a developmental perspective, the role of associations in reinforcing environmental citizenship has become an urgent human necessity that states and international organisations actively seek to promote. This emphasis is reflected in major international environmental conferences, most notably the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit) of 1992, which underscored the essential operational role of environmental associations in environmental governance and sustainable development.

Subsection Two: Information Gathering Task

Environmental protection associations are entrusted with a dual mission under the broader function of information gathering.

I. Access to Information

The right to information for associations has historically been constrained by a legacy of administrative opacity, rooted in the concentration of political power and unilateral state management. This was underpinned by a political conviction that prioritised the establishment of a strong and stable state, which led to the adoption of a centralised planning system with predetermined objectives.

This approach endows administrative authorities with broad and ambiguous discretionary powers, resulting, according to Professor Ossokin, in the obstruction of democratic processes, which are fundamentally anchored in freedom and the right to access information.

In contrast, environmental protection associations actively seek to acquire comprehensive knowledge of environmental challenges by collecting information on projects that may pose environmental risks. To this end, they approach relevant administrative bodies, such as the Directorate of Environment, the Directorate of Urban Planning and Development, and the Directorate of Industry and Mines. They aim to conduct thorough investigations and gather accurate data on industrial activities and their environmental impacts.²⁹

Given this mandate, administrative authorities are required to allow associations to exercise their right to access information and to facilitate their mission of gathering environmental data.

II. Dissemination of Information

Administrative bodies must also permit environmental associations to communicate the findings of their investigations publicly through all legally available media channels, provided that such dissemination complies with relevant legal frameworks. This ensures transparency and enhances public awareness of environmental issues.

Subsection Three: Guiding the Administration Toward Environmentally Sound Decision-Making (Advisory Role)

Participation in local development governance is closely linked to an open and democratic society. This implies that “citizens have a role and a voice in making decisions that affect their lives, whether directly or through legitimate intermediary institutions representing their interests.”³⁰

In the environmental sphere, this principle was firmly established by Principle 10 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Declaration, 1992), which affirms that the most effective way to address environmental issues is to ensure the participation of all citizens in decision-making and to guarantee access to environmental information held by public authorities, including information related to hazardous materials and activities.

Similarly, Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change imposes on State Parties an obligation to adopt measures that enable public participation and access to information on climate change.³¹

At the national level, to enhance democratic governance, Law No. 03--10 on Environmental Protection (Article 35) recognises the right of legally accredited environmental associations to assist, provide opinions, and participate in the work of public bodies on environmental matters.³²

Subsection Four: Litigation in Defence of the Environment

Litigation constitutes a crucial mechanism through which environmental associations respond when other means of preventing environmental degradation have failed. The judicial pathway may serve a preventive function by halting environmentally harmful activities before they occur or a remedial function by stopping ongoing violations, sanctioning offenders, and compelling them to provide financial compensation for the environmental damage they cause.

This right has been recognised in several international legal instruments. Article 23 of the World Charter for Nature (1982) states that “... means of redress must be available to all persons to whom environmental damage or degradation has occurred.” Likewise, Principle 10 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Declaration, 1992) affirms that individuals and groups must have effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings in environmental matters.

At the national level, the Algerian legislature has enshrined this right in several legal provisions. Article 17, paragraph 2, of Law No. 12--06 on Associations³³ grants associations the right to take legal action and to act as civil parties in defence of collective interests. Similarly, Article 37 of Law No. 03--10 on Environmental Protection³⁴ Authorises legally accredited associations to exercise the rights of a civil party concerning acts that cause direct or indirect harm to the collective interests they are mandated to protect.

These acts include violations of legislative provisions on environmental protection; improvements to the legal framework; safeguarding of water, air, soil, subsoil, natural spaces, and urban environments; and fighting against pollution.

Furthermore, Article 38 of the same law allows natural persons who have suffered individual environmental harm caused by another party to authorise a legally accredited association, even in cases involving its regular members, to file a compensation claim on their behalf before ordinary courts.³⁵

Moreover, the scope of environmental associations’ authority to initiate civil compensation actions extends beyond ordinary courts to criminal courts, as explicitly confirmed by Article 38 of Law No. 03--10 on Environmental Protection.³⁶

Section Four: Challenges limiting the effectiveness of civil society in promoting and strengthening environmental awareness

Despite the quantitative growth of civil society organisations in Algeria, including associations and leagues in professional fields (such as unions and professional federations), charitable and environmental sectors, and groups working to promote specific social categories (such as women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities), their work continues to face numerous obstacles that restrict their ability to exercise their traditional role fully.

Civil society is meant to act as a mediating social institution, linking citizens' concerns and interests with the state as a political entity. Any imbalance in this relationship risks creating a fracture or even a disconnect between the state and its citizens, thereby undermining economic, social, and political stability.

These obstacles can be broadly grouped into three main categories:

1. Lack of awareness regarding the true nature and purpose of associative work.
2. Weaknesses in the democratic organisation of civil society itself.
3. Limited independence and freedom of civil society vis-à-vis the state.

Subsection One: Lack of Awareness of Associative Work

The ease with which associations can be established, coupled with the opportunism of specific individuals, has opened the door to several abuses by actors who have neither a genuine connection to nor a proper understanding of associative work and social participation. Their primary motivation is often to benefit from available financial or real estate resources. Once these resources are depleted, the association's activities are paralyzed, and their existence becomes merely formal.

Moreover, some associations are controlled by charismatic individuals, and once these figures withdraw, the associations quickly dissolve. This phenomenon highlights the fragility³⁷ of associative engagement³⁸ and the superficial level of activism within parts of civil society.

The associative movement in Algeria also suffers from low levels of citizen participation and volunteerism, commonly referred to as "a weak associative culture." This lack of engagement is due primarily to citizens' distrust of associations and their activities.

The country's security crisis of the 1990s further deepened this detachment, leading to long-lasting scepticism and reduced civic participation. In addition, many associations have become disconnected from the everyday concerns and priorities of ordinary citizens, leading to their marginalisation and diminished relevance in the public eye.

Subsection Two: Democratic Organisation of Civil Society

Civil society organisations in Algeria face serious internal challenges related to their democratic functioning. These challenges manifest in areas such as leadership rotation and the freedom to express differing opinions on adopted policies and positions. Such deficiencies often lead to internal conflicts and splits, with factions emerging that represent competing visions.

This phenomenon has, in many cases, resulted in the dissolution or fragmentation of organisations into rival factions, frequently under the banner of "corrective movements." These internal disputes weaken organisational structures and diminish their ability to exert meaningful influence within society.

One of the most pressing issues is the lack of leadership rotation within many civil society organisations. In numerous cases, leadership positions remain occupied by the same individuals for prolonged periods. When change does occur, it often takes place through nontransparent or undemocratic means in the absence of genuine competitive elections.

Subsection Three: Limited Independence and Freedom of Civil Society vis-à-vis the State

Despite the generally positive tone of official Algerian discourse towards civil society, reflected in the quantitative expansion of associations and civic organisations, their actual effectiveness remains highly constrained. This is mainly due to the state's ambivalent stance toward civil society, characterised by hesitation and a lack of trust.

While the state formally permits the existence of civil society organisations, it simultaneously imposes legal and administrative restrictions that grant it broad powers of oversight, control, and even dissolution of associations. These constraints effectively limit the operational freedom and independence of civil society, reducing its capacity to function as an autonomous and influential actor in environmental governance and broader public life.³⁹

The legislative framework that establishes and regulates civil society in Algeria has, in various ways, **restricted its freedom of action and movement**.

In the domain of financing, the state has subjected **all donations and foreign financial assistance** received by civil society organisations to **strict governmental oversight**.⁴⁰ This control negatively affects their functioning, as financial resources are crucial to the effectiveness and vitality of associations. Consequently, many civil society organisations are compelled to rely on state funding or financial support from the ruling political party. This dependence makes their positions and decisions **susceptible to external influence**.

State financial aid, therefore, often becomes an **instrument of pressure**: organisations must either align their discourse and policies with those of the authorities to ensure continued support or face marginalisation and funding cuts if they adopt oppositional stances.

Moreover, civil society organisations face **significant administrative and procedural obstacles** that tighten state control over their activities. The legislative framework imposes **multiple layers of restriction**, including registration, accreditation, and mandatory public notification.

Associations are required to obtain **prior authorisation** before beginning their activities and must comply with **ambiguous legal conditions**, such as not violating public order or inciting discord.⁴¹ These vague criteria are often used to block the establishment of associations that the government views with suspicion. In addition, **administrative authorities have been granted the power to dissolve associations** for various reasons.⁴²

The legal framework has also granted **broad supervisory powers to the government** through various ministerial departments, including the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Youth. In practice, these powers have been exercised as a form of **administrative tutelage** over civil society organisations, thereby undermining their **institutional independence**.

State control over associations has produced a **constrained and superficial civic space** where many organisations engage primarily in **symbolic, ceremonial, or elite-driven activities** rather than genuine civic engagement. This dynamic enables the state and the ruling elite to use these organisations as **instruments to achieve political objectives and advance governmental agendas**.

For example, some associations become active only during **electoral campaigns** or when public authorities seek to **mobilise mass support** for a particular project or policy. Their primary function in such contexts is to **legitimise state initiatives** by disseminating official narratives to secure societal endorsement. In parallel, the state actively works to **limit the development of an autonomous civic sphere**, thereby **constraining the exercise of political rights and civil liberties**.

Conclusion

As is commonly recognised in societies, the responsibility for managing state affairs and ensuring the welfare and development of society traditionally lies with the state. However, the new realities imposed by profound socioeconomic transformations have led to the emergence of new actors whose importance rivals that of the state, owing to their proven effectiveness in managing citizens' affairs and responding to their needs. Among these actors, civil society has emerged as a key partner in promoting environmentally sustainable development. This study has therefore sought to clarify the concept and scope of civil society, identify the financial resources available to environmental associations, and highlight their role in consolidating environmental citizenship. Finally, it has examined the structural and institutional challenges that continue to limit civil society's effectiveness in fulfilling this role.

Endnotes:

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