

URGENT ACTION

VETO ANTI CIVIL SOCIETY BILL

On October 9, 2024, the Congress approved the so-called #LeyGarrote that endangers the work for human rights in Paraguay. The bill includes overly broad and ambiguous wordings that increases the control over the work of civil society organizations and results in arbitrary restrictions. We call the President of Paraguay to immediately veto this bill in order to uphold and protect the rights to freedom of association and to defend human rights.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 69.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Mr Santiago Peña,
President of Paraguay
Email: correspondencia@presidencia.gov.py

CC: Paraguayan Embassy in the United States
Ambassador José Antonio Dos Santos
2209 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Email: gabineteembaparusa@mre.gov.py

Dear president,

I am deeply concerned by the recently approved bill “that establishes control, transparency and accountability of nonprofit organizations”. After all the progress on human rights, the work of defenders and social movements, it is alarming that your government might be associated with such a grave step back.

Under the international human rights treaties to which Paraguay is a state party, you have the legal obligation to uphold and ensure respect to the right to freedom of association, which is also part of the Paraguayan Constitution.

This bill contains ambiguous provisions that could lead to arbitrary restrictions to civil society work, while the unjustified increase on control over their operation and imposition of sanctions without due process of law, are completely contrary to the obligation to respect the right to defend rights.

I call on you to immediately veto this bill and promote an enabling environment for all Paraguayans to fulfil their human rights.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Without convening sufficient public consultation and ignoring the international and national cry of human rights defenders and organisms, the Paraguayan Congress approved on October 9, 2024, the bill “that establishes the control, transparency and accountability of non-profit organizations”. It has been sent to the President of the Republic, who may enact or veto the bill. If passed, Paraguay will endorse highly restrictive conditions for civil society organizations in the country.

The bill approved by the Congress is in many respects contrary to the international human rights treaties to which Paraguay is a state party, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights which guarantee the rights to freedom of association, expression, privacy, and participate in public affairs.

One of the main points of concern about the adopted text is the lack of precision and clarity about its scope and implementation. It treats organizations that receive public or private funds without distinction, subjecting them to the same registration and state control requirements. Furthermore, without justifying the need to introduce these new restrictions, the bill ignores the existing broad national regulatory framework that currently allows the Paraguayan state to guarantee the transparency and accountability necessary for non-profit organizations to operate.

The broad scope and vagueness of the provisions contained in the bill, including detailed reporting obligations on the use and destination of resources received, also threatens the independence necessary for civil society organizations to operate, and compromises the privacy, intimacy, and security of their members and the people whose rights they seek to defend.

Finally, the bill establishes sanctions for non-compliance not only for legal entities but also for natural persons in charge of the management and administration of the organizations without clearly specifying in which cases each sanction would be applied. The imposition of these sanctions without the necessary clarity and due process violates the principle of legality and the rights to freedom of association and expression, which should under no circumstances be subject to restrictions that are disproportionate or so onerous as to jeopardize the right itself.

To sum up, the bill poses a serious threat to the civic space in Paraguay. This regulatory framework, if applied in practice, would have a chilling effect that would inhibit people from freely exercising their human rights including the rights to association and expression.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: October 21, 2024

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: They/them

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent-actions/urgent-action-paraguay-withdraw-anti-civil-society-bill-paraguay-69-24/>