

# The Assembly and Association Briefing

Newsletter of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

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## UN releases Kiai's next report to the General Assembly: Comparing States' treatment of business and civil society

GENEVA — The United Nations has released Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai's upcoming report to the General Assembly, a study comparing the enabling environments that States and others create for businesses and for associations.

Although businesses and associations are distinct bodies that pursue different motives, the Special Rapporteur felt it was useful to compare them both because of their similarities as non-State actors, and because of the privileged treatment that businesses often receive.

"We live in an era where political discourse often revolves around the economy, jobs and growth," Kiai writes in the report, which was released on Sept. 16. "Businesses, particularly large corporations, exert enormous power over the economy, and consequently have great influence with political leaders."

Despite the similarities between the sectors, Kiai found that States and others often impose more burdensome regulation upon associations, both in law and in practice, with businesses receiving more favorable treatment. The net result is that for businesses the enabling

environment — defined broadly as action or inaction by States and other actors to promote a particular non-State sector — is typically much better than it is for associations.

The Special Rapporteur concludes that States would better promote and protect the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association if they elevated their treatment of associations to similar levels as their treatment of businesses.

"If a business can register as a legal entity in a few hours without significant government interference, as in Rwanda," Kiai writes in the report, his third to the General Assembly. "Why is the procedure significantly different for associations? A similar approach for associations would yield significant economic, social and political dividends."

Examples of differential treatment are plentiful, with good and bad practices cited from more than 50 UN Member States.

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Human rights defender stories from Kazakhstan, Burundi and Azerbaijan



## Kiai's 'sectoral equity' report released (continued)

In Belarus, for example, registration applications filed by associations can take up to one month to be considered for approval, extendable for another month. A businesses' registration, on the other hand, is considered complete the moment the application is filed.

In Honduras, authorities may order the dissolution of an association when it fails to present an annual report within two years or when an agent of the organization commits a crime. No similar provisions exist for business entities.

And numerous countries have recently imposed strict limits on foreign funding of associations, while simultaneously liberalizing their rules for foreign investment in businesses, among them Russia, Ethiopia, India and Egypt.

The report stops short of advocating "identical" treatment across the board for businesses and associations, as there may be legitimate bases for different treatment in certain cases. It instead argues for "sectoral equity" – a fair, transparent and impartial approach in which the regulation of each sector is grounded in domestic and international law, standards and norms, and where regulations are clearly set forth in law, with minimum discretion given to State officials.

The report is scheduled to be presented to the General Assembly in late October 2015. It is [available on our website](#) in all six UN languages. Our factsheet summarizing the report will be available [at this link](#) in late September.

"If a business can register as a legal entity in a few hours without significant government interference ... why is the procedure significantly different for associations? A similar approach for associations would yield significant economic, social and political dividends."

Maina Kiai in his report to the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, released in September 2015

## Mexico: Special Rapporteur weighs in on case challenging constitutionality of protest laws

NAIROBI/MEXICO CITY – Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai has filed an [amicus curiae brief](#) before the Supreme Court of Mexico, arguing that three provisions of Mexico City's Mobility Law impose impermissible restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

The brief, which was submitted on Aug. 21, 2015, is the second official court filing in the UN expert's [project](#) to advance the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association through the use of litigation in national and regional courts. The [first brief](#) was filed in the Constitutional Court in Bolivia in May; a decision in that case is expected soon.

The Special Rapporteur's Mexico brief was filed in a case challenging the constitutionality of Articles 212, 213 and 214 of the Mexico City Mobility law. Kiai concludes all three provisions fail to comply with "the obligations of the State and the conditions for legitimate restrictions to the right to freedom of peaceful assembly under international law, standards and principles."

Article 212, for example, requires that the organizers notify authorities 48 hours in advance of a planned public assembly and indicate the "perfectly legitimate objective" of the event. Although the 48-hour notification rule is acceptable under international law, requiring organizers to state a "legitimate objective" is not, as it may allow for discretionary interpretation by authorities.

"It is considered best practice that assemblies are presumed to be legitimate and peaceful," Kiai wrote in the brief. "Demanding explicit mention of the 'perfectly legitimate objective' in the notification therefore creates confusion."

The full amicus brief is available to the public both in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). A decision in the case is expected later this year.

The full story is available via our website in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

For more on the project, please see our [litigation hub page](#).

English

Read the amicus brief


Español

Leer el amicus curiae

MÁS IDEAS,  
MENOS BALAS.

A scene from a 2010 protest in Mexico City. The sign reads "more ideas, less bullets" (photo: [Eneas de Troya/Flickr](#))





Afghan citizens vote in presidential and provincial council elections in August 2009 (photo: [United Nations Photo/Flickr](#))

“There is a growing disconnect between elected officials and the people ... manifested in the recent surge of large protest movements throughout the world.”

## ‘Stop the erosion of democracy’ – UN experts urge Governments across the world

GENEVA – Speaking ahead of the International Day of Democracy on Sept. 15, the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, [Alfred de Zayas](#), and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, [deplored the increasing erosion of democracy](#) as a result of repressive policies in some countries, but also by virtue of the increasing influence of vested interests at the expense of the public will:

“This year’s theme for the International Day of Democracy is space for civil society. The United Nations and all Special Procedures mandate holders endorse this necessary and achievable goal. But democracy today has become an over-used word, invoked even by tyrants. A country does not become democratic simply by holding elections.

“What matters most is [what happens between those elections](#): Can people speak out, engage and influence the leaders they have elected? Is there a correlation between the needs and will of the people and the policies that affect them? Can people peacefully assemble when other ways of expressing their grievances fail? Is peaceful dissent tolerated and encouraged to flourish, so that the marketplace of

ideas is not monopolized by one group?

“On International Day of Democracy 2015, we call on States to recognize that civil society space is the vehicle that allows this to happen. Indeed, it is essential for a true democracy.

“Unfortunately, space for civil society is shrinking rapidly today, both in countries with no democratic tradition and in ostensibly democratic countries. There is a growing disconnect between elected officials and the people. We see this disconnect manifested in the recent surge of large protest movements throughout the world. People perceive a failure of governance and democracy, and protest is often their last resort in making themselves heard. Increasingly, governments are responding to this type of dissent with more repression, distorting the concept of democracy beyond recognition.

“Civil society must reclaim its rightful place by demanding genuine participation in governance, including decisions on peace initiatives, environmental protection and trade and investment agreements.” The full statement is [available here](#).

## Protest project: Asia and Africa meetings

PRETORIA, South Africa/ISTANBUL, Turkey – Special Rapporteurs Maina Kiai and Christof Heyns held two expert consultations in August as part of their joint project to develop practical recommendations for the proper management of assemblies, as requested by the Human Rights Council in resolution 25/38.

The first was held in Pretoria on Aug. 7, and brought together 25 experts from Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East. The meeting was hosted by Christof Heyns, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, with Maina Kiai, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, represented by his research team. The second was hosted jointly by the Rapporteurs, and was held on Aug. 28 in Istanbul, Turkey, which co-sponsored resolution 25/38. It was attended by 23 experts from across the Asia-Pacific region.

For more details on the consultations, [see the full story here](#). For more on the project, check out our [peaceful protest project hub page](#).





## Ecuador: UN and IACHR experts condemn moves to dissolve prominent organization

GENEVA / WASHINGTON, DC – A group of rapporteurs from the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), including Maina Kiai, [expressed grave concern](#) on Sept. 17 over the Government of Ecuador's recent moves to dissolve Fundamedios, a prominent civil society organization dedicated to the promotion of freedom of expression and media freedom in that country.

"Members of associations, particularly those dedicated to defending human rights, should fully enjoy the right to freedom of expression, in particular, the freedom to be openly critical of governmental policy and practice," the experts stressed.

The National Secretariat of Communications of Ecuador (SECOM) notified Fundamedios of the dissolution proceedings on Sept. 8, 2015, on the grounds that it allegedly disseminates messages with "political overtones". The Government's order provided a period of ten days during which the organization could present arguments for defense. On Sept. 14, 2015, Fundamedios requested guarantees of due process, proofs of the alleged activities, and –according to the Constitution, article 98, declared its right to resist 'deeds or omissions by the public sector' that undermine their constitutional rights.

"Individuals who form an association have the right to hold opinions and disseminate information of all kinds, including of a political nature, without interference by the

State," said the experts. "Speech cannot be suppressed simply because it may be interpreted as 'being political'."

The rapporteurs emphasized that the role of freedom of association is a fundamental tool that makes it possible to fully carry out the work of human rights defenders, who, acting collectively, can achieve a greater impact for members of a group or society in advancing and attaining licit goals.

"The forced dissolution of an association is a truly extreme measure, which can only be justified in the most exceptional cases, under strict compliance with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, and aimed at achieving a pressing need in a democratic society," explained the experts, who have previously voiced their concerns to the Government.

"We urge the Ecuadorian authorities to halt the dissolution process of Fundamedios, and more generally, ensure the realization of the rights to freedom of expression and of association in the country," they stated. "We stand ready to provide technical assistance to the authorities in this regard."

The full press release is [available on our website](#), along with the full list of experts who joined it. The press release is also available in [Spanish here](#).



## Mauritania: UN rights expert urges repeal of NGO Bill that threatens civil society

GENEVA – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, on Aug. 10 [called upon the Mauritanian Parliament](#) to reject the draft law on associations approved by the Council of Ministers last month without public consultations.

"While I support Mauritania's efforts to reform and improve laws that govern the work of civil society, I am concerned that the bill, as it stands, threatens the exercise of fundamental freedoms in the country, in particular the right to freedom of association," Kiai said.

The human rights expert further voiced particular concern about the lack of civil society consultation ahead of the elaboration of the recently amended draft Law on associations, foundations and networks of associations, which is not in line with international standards. "The Mauritanian Government should view civil society as a key partner in the process of reform."

"Legislation that enshrines mandatory procedures for the 'prior authorization' of associations, instead of a simple process of 'prior notification', risks hindering the work of civil society in Mauritania," he said.

Instead, Kiai stated, "a prior notification process that automatically attributes

an association the legal personality to function is in greater conformity with international human rights law and should be adopted by all States, including Mauritania." The expert added, nonetheless, that the right to freedom of association equally protects associations that are not registered.

The Special Rapporteur also warned that, if adopted, "the law would provide strict punishments for vaguely worded provisions and would limit the scope of an association to the field of development work."

Kiai urged Mauritania to align its legislation with the best practices emanating from international human rights norms and standards, ahead of the examination of the country's human rights record by the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council in November 2015.

"I stand ready to offer technical assistance to both the Government and legislators in this endeavor," the expert noted.

Kiai's present appeal has been endorsed by two other independent experts, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [David Kaye](#) and Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, [Michel Forst](#).



# Freedom of association & assembly:

## By the numbers - sectoral equity edition

Estimated number of heads of State who [attended](#) the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting at Davos in 2015

40

Number of heads of State that attended the 2015 editions of the CIVICUS World Assembly and ICNL Global Forum (which are similar high-profile events for civil society), combined

0

Total percentage of funding that [Ethiopian associations](#) are permitted to receive from foreign sources, if they are working on certain human rights issues

10

Percentage increase in [foreign direct business investment](#) in Ethiopia over the past seven years, following the government's liberalization of investment rules

1,500

Minimum number of [NGO employees](#) that the Government of Egypt criminally charged in 2012 for using of foreign funds without prior approval

40

Number of [investment agreements](#) that Egypt has signed which, among other things, protect and encourage foreign commercial investment

115

Maximum amount, in euros, that associations in [Kosovo](#) can disburse to a single source in one day

5,000

Maximum prison sentence, in years, for violating this law, which does not apply to businesses

2

[Total meetings](#) held between European Union officials and various lobbyists between Dec. 2014 and Sept. 2015

4,547

Percentage of these that involved [corporate lobbyists](#)

71

Percentage that involved [NGOs](#)

17

Number of years that the [World Bank has published](#) its annual "Doing Business" report, which tracks "objective measures of business regulations for local firms in 189 economies"

12

Number of similar reports published by multilateral institutions over the same period examining civic space and the ease of operating associations

0

Number of people required to form a business entity in [Honduras](#)

2

Number of board members required to form an association

7

A protester at one of Guatemala's #RenunciaYa protests, which called for President Otto Pérez Molina to step down in the face of a corruption scandal. Molina eventually resigned under pressure from protesters on Sept. 3, 2015 (photo: Rosendo Castillo Azurdia/Flickr)





## Kiai raises alarm as Kazakhstan jails rights defender

GENEVA – United Nations human rights expert Maina Kiai on Sept. 1 [called on the Kazakhstan authorities](#) to immediately release and drop all charges against civil society activist Ermek Narymbaev, and to end what appears to be the criminalization of peaceful protests.

“Public dissent is a hallmark of a democracy and a confident state,” the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association said, expressing concern at the arrest and detention – for the second time this year – of lawyer and human rights defender Ermek Narymbaev for his role in convening a peaceful assembly and denouncing corruption cases.

“Civil society actors are key players in securing sustainable human rights protection. It is essential that they can operate freely, online as well as offline, Kiai said.

During both of his trials in June and August 2015, Narymbaev was found guilty of ‘organizing an unauthorized public event’ in violation of the New Code on Administrative Offenses that

regulates peaceful assemblies, rallies, marches, pickets and demonstrations.

“I am also seriously concerned about Narymbaev’s health condition and whether he is receiving adequate medical treatment,” the expert said, noting that he has received information that the activist’s health has rapidly deteriorated during his detention in a special facility for individuals sentenced to administrative arrest.

“As stated in my report on Kazakhstan presented to the Human Rights Council in June this year, “there is a tangible difference between rule of law and the rule by law,” Kiai said. “Laws are meant to serve the people; not vice versa, and any other interpretation is likely to erode its essential meaning.”

Kiai’s appeal was endorsed Special Rapporteurs David Kaye, Michel Forst and Seong-Phil Hong. [See here](#) for the full story, and [here for a link](#) to the Special Rapporteur’s report on Kazakhstan, which he presented to the Human Rights Council in June 2015.

## Burundi: UN expert calls for protection of all rights defenders

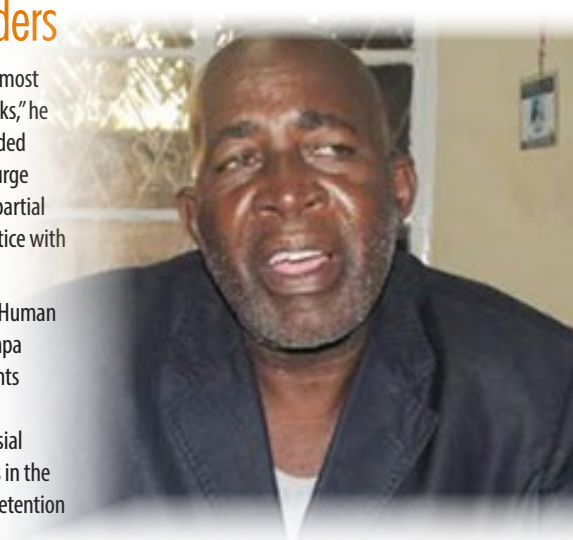
GENEVA – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, on Aug. 7 [urged the Government of Burundi](#) to protect all rights activists after a brutal attack and assassination attempt on Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, one of the country’s top rights defender. His call was endorsed by Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai.

“The attempted killing of such a highly respected activist as Mbonimpa sends a very chilling message to all members of civil society and also the entire population,” Forst warned. “During this period of turmoil and insecurity in the country, I am gravely concerned for the safety of all persons advocating for human rights in Burundi and call for an immediate end to violence.”

“The Burundian authorities should make it clear that such

heinous attacks will not be tolerated and do their utmost to protect human rights defenders from future attacks,” he stressed. “I call for immediate protection to be provided to Mbonimpa during his recovery in hospital. I also urge that the attack is subject to an independent and impartial investigation so that perpetrators are brought to justice with due regard to fair trial standards.”

As President of the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Incarcerated Persons (APRODH), Mbonimpa has a long-standing record of advocating for the rights of prisoners and fighting against torture in Burundi. Mbonimpa has spoken out publicly about controversial issues, including on the recent presidential elections in the country, which has led to his arrest and prolonged detention in 2014 and again in April 2015.



## Experts condemn latest sentencing of HRDs in Azerbaijan

GENEVA – A group of United Nations human rights experts, including Maina Kiai, on Aug. 20 [condemned](#) the prison sentencing of prominent Azerbaijani human rights activists Leyla and Arif Yunus as “manifestly politically motivated and representative of the continuing repression of independent civil society in Azerbaijan.”

On Aug. 13, 2015, the Baku Grave Crimes Court sentenced Ms. and Mr. Yunus to eight and a half and seven years’ imprisonment respectively on charges of fraud, tax evasion, and illegal entrepreneurship. They also face charges of treason.

“The authorities of Azerbaijan must put an end immediately to all forms of persecution against human rights activists in the country,” the experts said. “Leyla and Arif Yunus are two of many activists in Azerbaijan, which include Anar Mammadli, Rasul Jafarov and Intigam Aliyev, who have been targeted because of their legitimate human rights work.”

“Criminalization of those working for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country is deeply disconcerting,” the experts said, reiterating a call on the authorities they made one year ago “to reverse the trend of repression, criminalization and prosecution of human rights work in the country.”

“Silencing these prominent voices is having a devastating impact on the Azerbaijani civil society as a whole,” the experts warned.

They expressed further concern about the serious deterioration of the health of the two human rights activists during their extended period in pre-trial detention, as well as throughout the course of their trial.

“We call on the Azerbaijani authorities to immediately provide them with adequate medical care,” they said. For the full story and the complete list of experts, [please see our website](#).







## Special Rapporteur news in brief: August - September 2015

Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai meets with Belorussian human rights defender Ales Bialiatski during Human Rights House Networks' 20th anniversary event in Oslo, Norway (photo: [Human Rights House Network](#))

### Special Rapporteur on official visit to Chile Sept. 21-30

Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai will begin an official visit to Chile on Sept. 21, his first such visit to the Latin American region. The visit will conclude on Sept. 30, with a press conference where Kiai will present his preliminary findings. The Special Rapporteur is expected to visit Santiago, as well as the Araucanía and Atacama regions. Keep an eye on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages for updates throughout the visit.

### Asia regional dialogue on access to resources set for Korea in November

The fourth regional dialogue in the Special Rapporteur's [joint project on civic space](#) with the [Community of Democracies](#) will take place in Seoul, South Korea, on Nov. 5. Started in 2014, the project has been bringing together members of local and regional civil society in a series of consultations to discuss their challenges, particularly regarding access to resources. Consultations have already been convened in [Africa](#), [Latin America](#) and the [OSCE region](#). The November dialogue aims to bring together some 20 civil society representatives from throughout Asia. A companion consultation with Asian governments is expected to take place in early 2016.

### Kiai joins Human Rights House for 20th anniversary in Norway

Maina Kiai traveled to Oslo, Norway, in September to take part in [Human Rights House Network's](#) 20th anniversary celebration. The Network is a community of human rights defenders working for more than 100 independent organizations operating in 16 Human Rights Houses in 13 countries. Kiai participated in a panel discussion on Sept. 9 titled "the way forward for human rights," which explored how human rights defenders will confront the realities of an increasingly hostile political environment. Video of the panel is [available here via YouTube](#).

### Follow-up visit to Kazakhstan

The Special Rapporteur made a brief follow-up to Kazakhstan in late-August, to [attend a meeting](#) of the "Dialogue Platform on Human Dimension," a consultative advisory body that brings together civil society and the government. The meeting focused in part on the

recommendations Kiai made to Kazakhstan in his report to the UN Human Rights Council during its 29th session in June.

### Upcoming

#### • [Managing peaceful assemblies project](#) - Europe consultation & advisory panel meeting:

Special Rapporteurs Maina Kiai and Christof Heyns will convene a regional consultation in Geneva, Switzerland, in late October as part of their joint project to develop practical recommendations for the proper management of assemblies. The meeting will be followed by a meeting of the project's expert advisory panel, to help finalize the recommendations. The recommendations will be presented to the Human Rights Council at its 31st session in March 2016, pursuant to [HRC resolution 25/38](#).

• **United Nations General Assembly:** Maina Kiai's next report to the General Assembly will be presented in late October 2015. The report is available at [this link](#) (for more, see full story on the front page)

• **WMD World Assembly:** The Special Rapporteur will be in Seoul, South Korea, in early November to take part in the World Movement for Democracy's Eighth World Assembly. The event, whose theme is "Empowering Civil Society for Democracy and Its Renewal," will take place Nov. 1-4. Some 450 democracy activists, practitioners, scholars, and donors from more than 100 countries are expected to attend and take part in practical workshops, panel discussions and more. More information is available on the [WMD website](#). Kiai is currently a member of WMD's steering committee.

### The UNSR in the news

A piece by Maina Kiai - titled "[a binding international instrument on business & human rights should safeguard civic space](#)" - was featured on the Business and Human Rights Resource Center's blog in September. The Special Rapporteur discusses his June 2015 report to the Human Rights Council and calls on UN Member States to adopt a binding instrument that imposes human rights obligations on businesses.



# World briefing:

## Freedom of assembly and association in the news

A child stands among the flags of the world during Almedalen Week in Visby, Sweden, on June 28, 2015  
(photo: [Joakim Berndes/Flickr](#))

### Guatemala

After months of street protests against a corruption scandal that implicated top officials, Guatemalan president Otto Perez Molina [resigned](#) on Sept. 3. The move followed the parliament's decision to strip Perez Molina of his official immunity on Sept. 1; a judge subsequently charged him with fraud, illicit association and corruption. Perez Molina had said only days before that [he would not resign](#), even as numerous officials were ensnared in the scandal. Protests began in [April](#) when a UN commission formed to help Guatemala prosecute high-impact crimes found that the vice president and others in Pérez Molina's administration had been eliminating customs tariffs in exchange for bribes. The next test for the country's protest movement, says one media outlet, is [improving citizens' lives](#).

### Moldova

Tens of thousands of people [took to the streets](#) in Moldova's capital of Chişinău on Sept. 6, to demand the dissolution of the new government following corruption scandals. Organizers claimed 100,000 people attended the demonstrations, estimated as the largest ever in the former Soviet republic. The state was forced to bail out three banks in 2014 year after [losing](#) US\$1 billion. Protesters also demanded the resignation of President Nicolae Timofti. A [second wave](#) of protests took place on Sept. 13, when clashes reportedly took place between rival groups.

### Japan

In late August, a surprise protest movement was [awakened](#) by the government's move to expand Japan's military role beyond self-defense. The proposed changes in legislation would allow Japanese troops to fight abroad for the first time since World War II. Protests continued through early September, culminating on Sept. 17 when some 13,000 protesters [gathered](#) outside parliament in Tokyo, delaying a key vote. After a physical [altercation](#) broke out on the Diet floor, the bill was ["railroaded"](#) through an upper house panel - the penultimate stage before becoming law.

### Lebanon

Thousands of people rallied in Lebanon's capital of Beirut over the summer, in a series of [protests](#) in response to the government's failure to dispose accumulated waste after the capital's main landfill was closed. Particularly large rallies were held in [late August](#), and organized by an activist group calling itself "You Stink." The movement was a rare instance of Lebanese mobilizing without backing from any political parties and across religious lines. Clashes between protesters and police on Aug. 22 left at least 15 people [injured](#).

### Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur saw [massive protests](#) at the end of August, with demonstrators calling for prime minister Najib Razak to resign in the face of a [corruption](#) scandal. Najib denies the allegations, but [cancelled](#) an appearance at an anti-corruption conference in September. The 34-hour protest, called by the so-called Bersih 4.0 movement, was deemed ["illegal"](#) by the government and websites promoting it were [blocked](#), but it [proceeded nonetheless](#).

### Elsewhere

After an influx of refugees from the Middle East and elsewhere, Hungarian officials blocked international trains carrying refugees to elsewhere in Europe, [prompting protests](#) in Budapest; many refugees [ended up walking](#) • Swiss police [fired rubber bullets](#) during pro-refugee protest in Zurich • Cambodia's long-feared NGO law came into effect on Aug. 13 - one analyst [called it](#) "a profoundly sad day for rights and democracy in Cambodia" • Bolivia [threatened to expel](#) unfriendly NGOs • Spain's "gag law" [claimed](#) its first victim • big protests in [Brazil](#) against President Dilma Rousseff, who some blame for a corruption scandal • Venezuelan opposition leader [Leopoldo López](#) was sentenced to more than 13 years in prison over a protest • what makes for a successful protest? [These researchers](#) have some ideas • military leaders in [Burkina Faso staged a coup](#), less than a year after popular protests led to the fall of long-time president Blaise Compaoré's regime • a US Department of Justice report [skewed](#) the police response to Ferguson protests in 2014 • three prominent Hong Kong student leaders [were charged](#) over their roles in the pro-democracy "Umbrella Movement" of 2014 • worldwide, human rights groups [face global crackdown](#) "not seen in a generation"