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First UA: 69/2024 AMR 45/8361/2024 Paraguay of July 30, 2024

PARAGUAY WITHDRAW ANTI CIVIL SOCIETY BILL

The Chamber of Deputies will discuss a bill that threatens human rights work in Paraguay. This proposed law contains vague language that could increase control over civil society organizations. It may lead to arbitrary restrictions, including dissolving these groups. The Chamber's President and the Presidents of relevant commissions must act now to stop and withdraw this bill. This is essential to uphold and protect the right to freedom of association and to defend human rights in Paraguay.

Write to the deputies urging them to:

- Immediately withdraw this bill and promote an enabling environment for all Paraguayans to fulfil their human rights.

Write to:

Mr. Raúl Latorre,
President of the Chamber of Deputies
Email: raul_latorre@diputados.gov.py

Mr. Roberto González Segovia,
President of the Commission on constitutional matters.
Email: cconstitucionales@diputados.gov.py

Mr. Jorge Ramón Ávalos Mariño,
President of the Commission on legislation and codification.
Email: legislacion_codificacion@diputados.gov.py

Salutation: Dear Deputies,

And copy:

His Excellency Raul Antonio MONTIEL GASTO
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Paraguay
130 Albert Street, Suite 418
Ottawa, ON K1P 1B1
Tel: (613) 567-1283 / 1005
Email: embaparcanada@mre.gov.py

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Without any hearing or public consultation, the Paraguayan Senate approved a bill on July 8, 2024. This bill aims to control, ensure transparency, and hold non-profit organizations accountable. The text is now under review by the Chamber of Deputies. After their analysis, it will be sent to the President of the Republic, who can either enact or veto the law. If passed, Paraguay will impose highly restrictive conditions on civil society organizations. The Senate's legislative proposal contradicts international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights. These treaties guarantee freedom of association, expression, privacy, and participation in public affairs.

The bill lacks precision and clarity in its scope and implementation. It treats all organizations that receive funds, whether public or private, the same, requiring them to meet identical registration and state control requirements. The bill ignores the existing national regulations that already ensure transparency and accountability for non-profit organizations. The vague provisions include detailed reporting obligations on the use and destination of resources, which threaten the independence and privacy of civil society organizations and their members.

The bill also imposes sanctions for non-compliance on both legal entities and individuals managing these organizations. These sanctions include hefty fines and potentially shutting down activities without clear guidelines on their application. This lack of clarity and due process violates the principle of legality and the rights to freedom of association and expression. In summary, this bill poses a serious threat to civic space in Paraguay. If implemented, it would have a chilling effect, inhibiting people from freely exercising their rights to association and expression.

Please take action as soon as possible until August 22, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.