

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL:

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RULE OF LAW CONTINUES NEGATIVE SLIDE WORLDWIDE

For Second Year, More Countries Declined Than Improved in WJP Rule of Law Index

Steepest Decline Seen in "Constraints on Government Powers," Suggesting Rising Authoritarianism

WASHINGTON, DC (28 February 2019) – The World Justice Project (WJP) today released the *WJP Rule of Law Index*[®] 2019, an evaluation of rule of law adherence worldwide based on more than 120,000 household and 3,800 expert surveys in 126 countries. Featuring current, original data, the *WJP Rule of Law Index* measures countries' rule of law performance across eight factors: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice.

The new *WJP Rule of Law Index* scores show that more countries declined than improved in overall rule of law performance for the second year in a row, continuing a negative slide toward weaker rule of law around the world.

In a sign suggesting rising authoritarianism, the factor score for "Constraints on Government Powers" declined in more countries than any other factor worldwide over the last year (61 countries declined, 23 stayed the same, 29 improved). This factor measures the extent to which, in practice, those who govern are bound by governmental and non-governmental checks such as an independent judiciary, a free press, the ability of legislatures to apply oversight, and more. Over the past four years, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia have lost the most ground in this dimension of the rule of law.

"This slide in rule of law in general and checks on government powers in particular is deeply concerning," commented Elizabeth Andersen, executive director of the World Justice Project. "There is a crucial difference between "rule by law" and "rule of law." In too many countries, laws and legal institutions are being manipulated to undermine rather than uphold the rule of law, even as governments wrap their actions in "rule of law" rhetoric."

The second largest decline over last year was seen in the area of "Criminal Justice," followed by "Open Government" and "Fundamental Rights." On a positive note, more countries improved in "Absence of Corruption" than declined for the second year in a row.

The top three overall performers in the 2019 *WJP Rule of Law Index* were Denmark (1), Norway (2), and Finland (3); the bottom three were the Democratic Republic of the Congo (124), Cambodia (125), and Venezuela (126).

Countries leading their regions in overall rule of law scores included: Nepal (South Asia), Georgia (Eastern Europe and Central Asia); Namibia (Sub-Saharan Africa); Uruguay (Latin America and the

Caribbean); United Arab Emirates (Middle East and North Africa); New Zealand (East Asia and Pacific), and Denmark (Western Europe and North America, defined as EU + EFTA + North America).

The *WJP Rule of Law Index*[®] is the world's leading source for original data on the rule of law. The Index relies on more than 120,000 household and 3,800 expert surveys to measure how the rule of law is experienced and perceived in practical, everyday situations by the general public worldwide. Performance is measured using 44 indicators across eight primary rule of law factors, each of which is scored and ranked globally and against regional and income peers: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice.

“Effective rule of law is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace,” said William H. Neukom, WJP founder and CEO. “No country has achieved a perfect realization of the rule of law. The *WJP Rule of Law Index* is intended to be a first step in setting benchmarks, informing reforms, stimulating programs, and deepening appreciation and understanding for the foundational importance of the rule of law.”

The complete 2019 report—including country profiles, data visualizations, methodology, and download options—is available on February 28 at: www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index

ABOUT THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT:

The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to advance the rule of law worldwide. Effective rule of law reduces corruption, combats poverty and disease, and protects people from injustices large and small. It is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace—underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights. Learn more at: www.worldjusticeproject.org

MEDIA CONTACT & INTERVIEW REQUESTS:

press@worldjusticeproject.org

(206) 792-7676