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Exercising the Right to Associate: A Thorn in the Side of Politicians and Employers

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The right to freedom of assembly is understood through liberal, social democratic and revolutionary understandings, each of which contributes to freedom of assembly in different ways.

the **liberal** understanding sees freedom of assembly as a right in the catalogue of individual rights that must be regulated and delimited by the state authorities.

The **social democratic** understanding sees freedom of assembly as a precondition for the establishment of trade unions, and thus as a precondition as well as a form of action that creates protective institutions within capitalism.

The **revolutionary** understanding sees freedom of assembly as a potentially revolutionary form of action capable of destabilizing existing regimes and introducing new political constitutions.



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Data for desk research



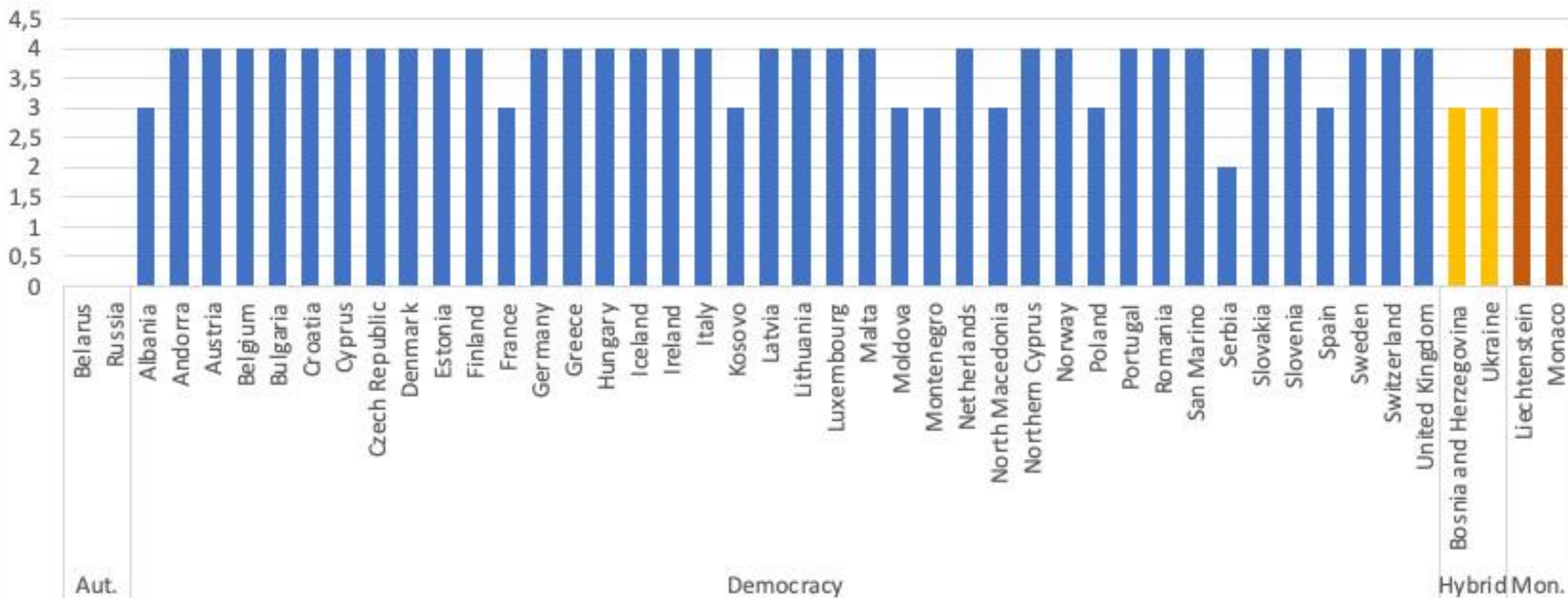
Freedom in the world index

The question E., more precisely, E1: **Is there freedom of assembly?** of each country was explored, and the points given by the authors of the report were extracted.

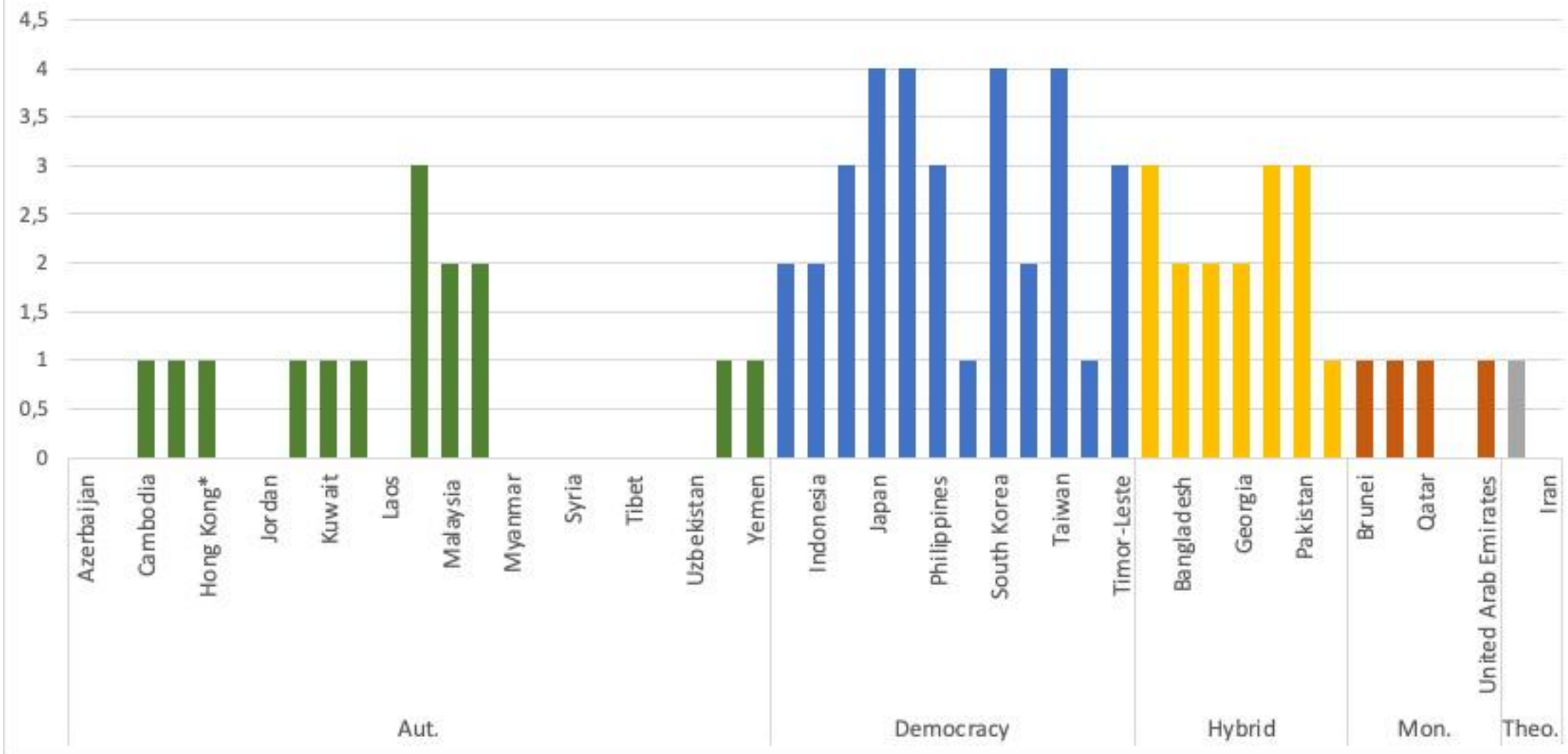
The table with indicators: a country, type of governance, region and points for freedom of assembly given by the report was created, as in the example (see the table below) and charts created for different regions: **Europe, Africa, and Asia.**

A country	Governance	Region	Freedom of assembly
Afganiatan	Theocracy	Asia	1/4
Lithuania	Democracy	Europe	4/4
Belarus	Authoritarian state	Europe	0/4
Russia	Authoritarian state	Europe	0/4

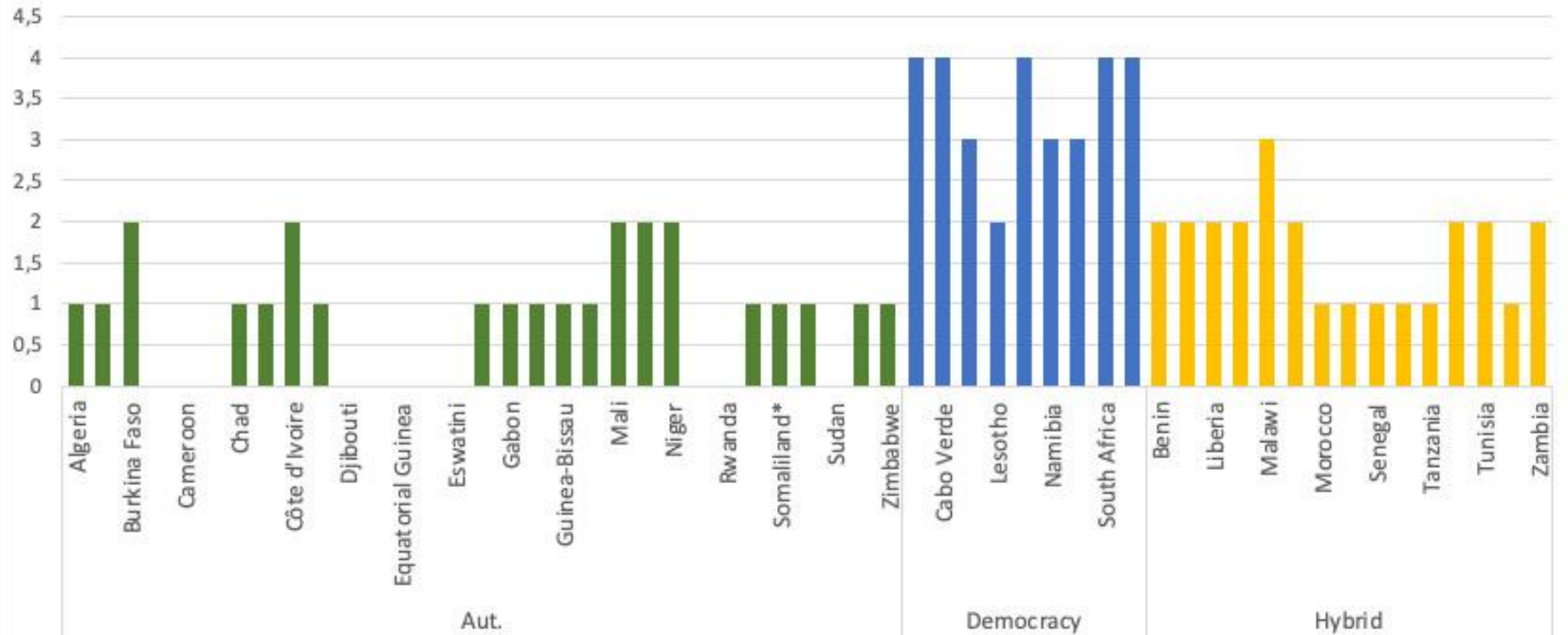
Freedom of assembly index Europe



Freedom of assembly index Asia



Freedom of assembly index Africa





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**Specific problems associated
with exercising the freedom to
assemble in democracies:**

- Regulatory and bureaucratic constraints;**
- Inequality and Exclusion;**
- Corporate and Economic Influences;**
- Digital Surveillance and Control;**
- Political Polarization and Backlash;**
- Globalization and Transnational Issues.**

Democracies and authoritarian regimes have different challenges in terms of freedom of assembly

Aspect	Democracies	Authoritarian Regimes
Legal Protection	Constitutionally protected, often enshrined in law.	Heavily restricted or prohibited, with few legal safeguards.
Government Attitude	Generally supportive or tolerant of peaceful assembly.	Often hostile, viewing assemblies as threats to regime stability.
Public Participation	Encouraged and often widespread.	Severely limited, with fear of repercussions.
Police Response	Typically restrained; focused on maintaining order.	Often aggressive, including arrests, surveillance, and violence.
Consequences for Participants	Usually safe, barring exceptional circumstances.	Risk of arrest, imprisonment, or harm.
Censorship & Surveillance	Limited; subject to legal constraints and public scrutiny.	Widespread and intrusive, used to deter and control assemblies.
Ability to Effect Change	Potentially significant, influencing policy and public opinion.	Limited; assemblies rarely tolerated, let alone influential.
Access to Media and External Support	Often available and accessible.	Restricted; state-controlled media and limited external influence.
Legal Recourse	Possibility to challenge restrictions in court.	Limited or non-existent legal avenues for redress.



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**The content of freedom of
association includes:**

- the right to organise without prior authorisation
- the right of workers and employers to elect representatives;
- to draw up statutes, organise management;
- the right to form federations and confederations;
- the right to assemble and demonstrate ;
- the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike.

Ensuring freedom of association for workers poses different challenges for democracies and authoritarian regimes

Aspect	Democracies	Authoritarian Regimes
Legal Protection of Assembly	Strong protections under law for the right to assemble.	Limited or no legal protection; assembly often restricted.
Unionization Rights	Rights to form and join unions are protected.	Union activities are restricted or state-controlled.
Ability to Strike	Legally protected right to strike.	Strikes are often illegal or severely restricted.
Government Attitude	Generally supportive or tolerant of workers' assemblies.	Hostile or suppressive towards independent workers' movements.
Police Response	Usually restrained; focused on maintaining order.	Often aggressive, with potential for detention and violence against workers.
Consequences for Participants	Protected by law; minimal risk of severe repercussions.	Risk of job loss, arrest, or persecution.
Freedom of Speech	Workers can openly discuss and advocate for rights.	Speech regarding labor rights is often censored or punished.
International Support	Access to international labor organizations and support.	Limited or no access to international labor support; isolation.
Autonomy of Labor Movements	High degree of independence in organizing and protesting.	State or employer interference in labor movements is common.



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Insights (instead of conclusions):

- The data suggests that freedom of assembly faces more challenges in other regimes than democracy;
- The tendency to restrict the right to freedom of assembly is of growing concern in democracies;
- Digital platforms can make it easier to organise meetings, but they also open up opportunities for government surveillance, data gathering, and possible repression and targeting of participants. Gatherings can also lead to a significant backlash from opposing political entities and the state.
- Employers are avoiding the practice of consulting with workers despite legislation designed to ensure workers' freedom of association;



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