

# Bitcoin as a Nonviolent Tool Against State Financial Censorship

Master's Thesis in

Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research

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## Abstract

**Aim:** This study investigates the use of bitcoin by nonviolent resistance campaigns to counter state financial censorship, a topic underrepresented in academic literature.

**Method:** This study is designed as descriptive basic research with its methodological approach as case studies. The study presents a global dataset of 93 financial censorship events by government authorities from 1981 to 2023, encompassing the first global dataset of nonviolent campaigns that have employed bitcoin. Two nonviolent campaigns that utilised bitcoin are examined in detail: the Feminist Coalition's EndSARS protest and the Freedom Convoy's Covid-19 mandate protest. Additionally, the study explores the Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice's use of bitcoin despite not facing financial censorship.

**Results:** Both the Feminist Coalition and the Freedom Convoy adopted bitcoin immediately following financial censorship events, allowing them to add significant contributions to their funds. Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice experienced limited impact from using bitcoin. The results suggest that bitcoin has supported nonviolent campaigns, particularly in response to financial censorship.

**Conclusion:** This study shows how (a) nonviolent campaigns have used bitcoin against financial censorship, for private donations, and for alternative means for funding; (b) bitcoin is a nonviolent tool with many features and functions similar to previous nonviolent tools and tactics involving money; (c) bitcoin can be of great interest for human rights activists and NGOs, illustrating how misconceptions regarding its association with illegal activities should be reconsidered. On the contrary, this study illustrates how bitcoin enhances personal autonomy and serves as a form of resistance against financial censorship by enabling borderless, censorship-resistant, and permissionless transactions.

*Key words:* Bitcoin, Cryptoasset, Financial Censorship, Nonviolent Action, Nonviolence, Feminist Coalition, Freedom Convoy, Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice, Protest.

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## 1. Introduction

Numerous advancements such as the Internet, instant messaging and other technologies have changed the way people interact and have eventually shaped old and new methods and tactics of nonviolent action. Bitcoin is poised to do the same. Compared to the over 5 billion people living under authoritarian regimes, those who reside in relatively open societies, such as Finland, can engage in secure financial transactions without concerns of financial censorship and repression (Boese et al., 2022; Human Rights Foundation, 2022). This can make us overlook the significance of bitcoin's potential impact elsewhere. In such circumstances, bitcoin offers an alternative for opting out of systems that perpetuate financial censorship and repression.

Various human rights activists, non-profit organisations (NGOs), and government critics worldwide face a pattern of repression through economic and legal means (Appendix A; Table 1). The pattern is commonly as follows. First, states restrict and hinder financial and administrative capabilities of individuals and groups by obligating them to provide sensitive information regarding their activities, contributions, and beneficiaries. They also label and demonise them when receiving even small amounts of funding from abroad and engage in what authorities consider as "political activity". Under the guise of broad and vague "legal" restrictions, such anti-extremism, money laundering, and anti-terrorism legislation, states make funding deliberately difficult. Indeed, a study by Naimark-Rowse (2022) indicates that bank transfer difficulties and legal restrictions are among the most cumbersome obstacles for donors.

It should also be noted that foreign support may have negative effects, such as undermining a movement's legitimacy, decreasing participation levels, and increasing repression risks (Chenoweth & Stephan 2011). Naimark-Rowse (2022) found that some donors may prefer supporting traditional NGOs employing less provocative tactics to minimise risks to grantees and their foundations. Still, restrictive controls in countries like India and Russia require donors to prepare for accusations of partisanship and authoritarian responses, regardless of the type of social change method they support (p. 40).

Second, states justify arrests and prosecution of human rights activists, NGOs, and government critics under the pretext of these laws, and then freeze bank accounts and confiscate assets, among other repressive measures. It can be reasonably assumed that financial censorship has a severe long-lasting impact, including losing work opportunities and income, and a serious impact on mental health due to the uncertainty of when restrictions will end. Travel bans and asset freezes further discourage

the public from criticising the authorities. These actions often result in the suspension or cessation of organisations' operations and the deprivation of individuals' legal rights.

Human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists and minority groups are particularly vulnerable to such measures, which may lead to forced migration, discrimination or silencing in addition to beatings, imprisonment or death, amongst other forms of repression. Moreover, these actions often impede the provision of aid, support, and advocacy for marginalised communities. Notwithstanding the regional and contextual differences, the essence of this process involves the suppression of civil society and human rights activism through economic, legal, and bureaucratic means.

With bitcoin, individuals and groups can resist state financial repression and censorship. For example, in the Oslo Freedom Forum (2022), the head of the Anti-Corruption Foundation (ACF), Leonid Volkov, explained that ACF used bitcoin as a backup crowdfunding channel to protect against potential government financial censorship. ACF investigates, exposes, and fights corruption among Russian high-ranking government officials and powerful businessmen. After being labelled as an extremist organisation in April 2021, the ACF was forced to relocate abroad, and bitcoin became crucial for safely supporting their colleagues in Russia without exposing them to the risks associated with direct financial transactions from a group considered equivalent to terrorist organisations like Al Qaeda and ISIS. Bitcoin donations made up around 10% of total donations, totalling 675 bitcoin as of May 2022<sup>1</sup>. Volkov emphasised that bitcoin was not a part of any specific philosophy but rather a reliable and useful payment tool for the organisation.

However, thus far academics have predominantly published studies on the applications of bitcoin (as well as other cryptoassets) for illicit finance, such as terrorism financing, money laundering, malware, child abuse material, scams, ransomware, and darknet markets. Furthermore, concerns about cryptoassets' applications circle not only around crime but also around regulations, technical issues, and environmental concerns. So described, this has the potential to distort analytical assessments and negatively impact the overall perception of the nascent technology.

In other words, there is a huge knowledge gap in understanding bitcoin within the context of financial censorship and nonviolent resistance. In fact, no single academic study on this topic has been found by the time this study was submitted. Hence the aim of this study is to examine the use of bitcoin

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<sup>1</sup> Bitcoin address *3QzYvaRFY6bakFBW4YBRrzmwzTnfZcaA6E*

as a tool by nonviolent resistance campaigns against state financial censorship. Therefore, this research question necessitates basic research.

Moreover, the following cases of nonviolent campaigns using bitcoin are heterogeneous and rare, and one is not able to manipulate causal factors, and as such warrants a case-level analysis. Consequently, the qualitative observations cannot be generalised, and causality cannot be inferred, and by extension, policy cannot be recommended (Gerring, 2017). So described, this study is designed as descriptive basic research with its methodological approach as case studies from both financial censorship against groups and individuals, as well as against nonviolent campaigns that used bitcoin, specifically.

The remainder of the study is organised as follows. Section 2 establishes the assumptions, context, and definitions related to financial censorship, bitcoin, nonviolent action, power, and the backfire effect. By comparing the functions of previous nonviolent strategies and tools involving money, the study argues that bitcoin serves as a nonviolent tool, incorporating many of their functions. Section 3 presents a global dataset of 93 instances of state financial censorship against individuals and groups from 1981 to 2023 (Appendix A; Table 1) and explores the use of bitcoin in three nonviolent campaigns: Feminist Coalition's EndSARS protest, the Freedom Convoy's Covid-19 mandate protest, and the Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice.

Section 4 delves into how groups may intentionally adopt bitcoin to counter state financial censorship, either proactively or in response to a censorship event, or as an alternative funding method for their campaign. This section also addresses the significance of privacy for nonviolent resistance, notes limitations, and proposes that NGOs offer guidance and tutorials on bitcoin usage.

Finally, section 5 concludes that (a) nonviolent campaigns have used bitcoin against financial censorship, for private donations, and for alternative means for funding; (b) bitcoin is a nonviolent tool with many features and functions similar to previous nonviolent tools and tactics involving money; (c) and that bitcoin is not only for terrorists, but for human rights activists and organisations, and nonviolent resistance as well: bitcoin enhances personal autonomy and serves as a form of resistance against financial censorship by enabling borderless, censorship-resistant, and permissionless transactions.

## 2. Theory and Relevant Literature

After bitcoin emerged in 2008 (Nakamoto, 2009), many other cryptocurrencies followed soon thereafter. According to CoinGecko (2023), there are now over 10,000 cryptocurrencies and increasing. However, most of these cryptocurrencies are illegitimate, insignificant, or inactive, and only a handful of legitimate projects exist in addition to bitcoin. Therefore, for the sake of simplicity, we discuss exclusively bitcoin and mention other cryptocurrencies where appropriate. In addition, the majority of the nonviolent campaigns and other advocacy groups have mostly used bitcoin, although findings can be relevant to other cryptocurrencies that share the same fundamental properties of a decentralised cryptocurrency.

Regarding the term ‘cryptocurrency’, which has stuck in public consciousness and academic discourse, the ‘currency’ part can elicit confusion: not all of them are designed as such. Thus, henceforth the term ‘cryptoassets’ is used instead of cryptocurrency, currency or otherwise. From a definitional standpoint, cryptoasset encompasses cryptocurrency. It is defined as a cryptographically-secure digital representation of value or contractual rights that is based on distributed ledger technology, where transferring, storing, and trading happens electronically (UK Government, 2023; see also Pieters, 2017). It can refer to cryptocurrency, utility token, stablecoin and non-fungible token, to name just a few.

Bitcoin has had a distinct development of new users and usage: cypherpunks using it as magic internet money among themselves, illicit financiers exchanging it as darknet money for goods, banks offering cryptoasset services, and then nation-states contemplating on adopting it as a legal tender. In 2022 there were roughly over 400 million people who owned a cryptoasset (Statista, 2023). Of these people, a growing number are located in emerging economies like Vietnam, Philippines, and Pakistan (Arcane Research, 2020; Chainalysis, 2021, 2022). They send and receive remittances and preserve savings in times of fiat currency (e.g., rupee, bolivar, peso) volatility and inflation (Gemini, 2022). Bitcoin offers some degree of protection against geopolitical risks, local economic crises, and worldwide uncertainty (Bouri, Gupta & Vo, 2022; Selmi, Bouoiyour & Wohar, 2022; Zhao, 2022).

Notwithstanding the significance of illicit finance, legitimate use of cryptoassets far outpaces the growth of criminal use. From 2017 to 2022, the illicit share of all cryptoasset transaction volume has steadily decreased (Chainalysis, 2023). Even though the majority of illicit finance is not related to bitcoin, the negative perception of bitcoin still persists. Even less understood is how bitcoin can serve as a tool to resist financial censorship by repressive states.



## 2.1 Financial Censorship

Theoretically, resisting financial repression and censorship is simpler with bitcoin because it cannot be controlled by the government. If the user possesses the private keys to their bitcoin, then it becomes challenging or even impossible for governments to seize bitcoin, freeze bitcoin “accounts”, or block bitcoin transactions.

While this study does not address the many ways in which bitcoin could be used to resist financial repression, some brief notes are necessary. Financial repression refers to a collection of rules, laws, and other non-market limitations that government’s implement in order to restrict the financial intermediaries of a given economy from operating to their maximum potential (McKinnon, 1973; Shaw, 1973). Fundamentally, these measures disadvantage savers and prevent individuals or groups from transacting normally. For example, the rupee note demonetisation in India, the Cypriot bailout, monetary colonialism in previously French-colonised West-African countries and in Palestine by Israel, and hyperinflation in Venezuela, Lebanon and Zimbabwe (Albanesi, 2007; Dana, 2021; Delpuech et al., 1996; Haidari et al., 2022; Hanke, 2023; Luther & Salter, 2017; Sylla, 2021; Zhu et al., 2018).

In fact, the inventor of bitcoin, Satoshi Nakamoto, wrote a message in the first block ever created that initialised the network, ‘the genesis block’, arguing against the debasement of fiat currencies (Champagne, 2014), or in other words, financial repression. Nakamoto suggested that the power to create money as well as the trust in central authority should not lie in the state but on technology that relies on maths and cryptography.

Notwithstanding, the movements that have advocated the use of bitcoin or other cryptoassets to address financial repression (see Lawrence & Mudge, 2019, for anti-state movement; Dallyn & Frenzel, 2021, for anti-capitalist movement) extend beyond the scope of this study. As such, this thesis narrows the topic to financial censorship.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (2023) defines financial censorship as a method that aims to suppress freedom of expression through financial means. Indeed, money is a form of speech that communicates and expresses value (Rueckert, 2019). This type of censorship affects basic human rights, such as the freedom of speech, movement, and religion because they are often contingent on the ability to transact (McMahon & Vasquez, 2021). It happens when governments are deliberately colluding with or pressuring financial institutions and payment intermediaries to suppress dissenters and disfavoured speech. Financial censorship can take various forms, such as denying opening a bank account, blocking access to certain payment methods or bank accounts, freezing assets, and/or

imposing sanctions on individuals or groups. This study excludes sanctions. Bitcoin is considered censorship-resistant, however, there are few caveats that will be discussed later.

WikiLeaks was the first NGO that began accepting bitcoin donations in 2011 as a result of financial censorship. The US pressured banks and payment intermediaries to close WikiLeaks' bank accounts after they had leaked various controversial documents (WikiLeaks, 2011). In 2010 Nakamoto advised WikiLeaks not to use bitcoin, stating that:

The project needs to grow gradually so the software can be strengthened along the way. I make this appeal to WikiLeaks not to try to use bitcoin. Bitcoin is a small beta community in its infancy. You would not stand to get more than pocket change, and the heat you would bring would likely destroy us at this stage. (Champagne, 2014, p. 312)

In the end, bitcoin donations helped the organisation to continue releasing subsequent whistleblower documents, raising over 4000 bitcoin over the years<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.2 Bitcoin

### 2.2.1 Preliminaries

What follows are three preliminaries before bitcoin is properly explained. One, uppercase and lowercase bitcoin mean different things. Uppercase Bitcoin refers to the ecosystem, and more specifically to the payment network and protocol, upon which one can build applications. Lowercase bitcoin refers to bitcoin being used as a currency (e.g., “I have 10 bitcoin”, c.f. “I have 10 euros”). However, this study will use lowercase bitcoin for the sake of simplicity.

Two, it is not argued here whether bitcoin is money or not, for that discussion can be found elsewhere (e.g., Bjerg, 2016; Butler, 2022; Grossman, 2019; Hazlett & Luther, 2020). For this study, it is irrelevant if and which criteria bitcoin fulfils as money, and which characteristics of money it does or does not embody. Ultimately, nobody can dictate anyone not to use and perceive bitcoin as money. This is addressed because this study implicitly assumes and perceives bitcoin as money.

Three, it is important to understand how bitcoin works in order to understand its impact in other domains, such as nonviolent resistance. However, for social scientists it is not necessary to understand the technological intricacies behind bitcoin (e.g., proof of work, public-key cryptography, peer-to-peer networking), for that would be analogous to understanding the Internet protocol or artificial intelligence

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<sup>2</sup> Bitcoin address *1HB5XMLmzFVj8ALj6mfBsbifRoD4miY36v* and *36EEHh9ME3kU7AZ3rUxBCyKR5FhR3RbqVo*

in depth before arguing its impact on society. Though, there are a few technological caveats that need to be addressed, especially regarding the tool's particular features for censorship-resistance. Therefore, what follows is a simplistic explanation of bitcoin using analogies and anachronisms.

### *2.2.2 Bitcoin Explained*

Bitcoin is the first truly decentralised money that does not depend upon a central authority. Before that countless electronic payment systems were proposed but they all failed because of central authority (Narayanan, 2016). Then, Satoshi Nakamoto, the presumed pseudonymous name of the person or group who initially developed bitcoin, constructed the cryptoasset based on previous technical components from the 1980s and 90s (Narayanan & Clark, 2017).

Now there are over 15 thousand computers worldwide, or nodes, that operate on the bitcoin network peer to peer, making it decentralised, much like the Internet today (Bitnodes, 2023). As such, bitcoin transactions are not bound by nation-state borders or jurisdictions. Regular users, miners, services, exchanges, additional protocols (e.g., the Lightning Network; see section 4.1.3), and developers participate in the bitcoin ecosystem. That is, anyone can participate in the network without registration, identification, or special permission, and running one's own node ensures accurate financial information (Rosenbaum, 2019). So described, bitcoin is censorship-resistant, public, neutral, open, and borderless (Antonopolous, 2017).

To illustrate how a bitcoin transaction works, suppose Aino sends one satoshi, the smallest unit of bitcoin, to Antti. To do this, they need a bitcoin wallet to interact with the network. Wallets manage their private keys and generate as many bitcoin addresses as desired. Then, Aino initiates the transaction by providing Antti's bitcoin address, the amount, and a digital signature made with her private key, which is like a password (Rosenbaum, 2019). Private key is a randomly generated string of numbers and letters, though the user typically generates a human-friendly 12 or 24-word backup phrase that encodes the same information. If Antti or Aino loses or forgets their private key, then they will lose access to their bitcoin indefinitely.

Next, Aino's wallet application sends the transaction to one or more nodes in the network, which verifies its validity by checking if she has bitcoin and if her digital signature is valid. Once the transaction passes these checks, the node relays it to other nodes in the network. The transaction then enters the memory pool (mempool), where unconfirmed transactions are stored. Miner nodes select transactions from the mempool to include in a new block, which they attempt to add to the blockchain.

Once a miner successfully adds the block containing the transaction, the other nodes update their copies of the blockchain, and the transaction is considered confirmed.

Blockchain is a chain of blocks, and each block contains transactions. A miner node competes to solve a puzzle to determine the transaction order in a block, thus creating new bitcoin and maintaining the system's security. Miners validate and record new transactions in blocks and receive rewards in the form of new coins and transaction fees. The amount of newly mined bitcoin will halve approximately every four years until there are 21 million bitcoin in existence. Finally, once the nodes update their ledger copies, Antti's wallet is notified when his transaction is added to the ledger (Rosenbaum, 2019). However, if a miner is pressured to not include a transaction in a block and blacklists a bitcoin address, it is called censorship.

### *2.2.3 Protocol- and Custodial-level Censorship*

While censorship is possible within the traditional financial systems, it is not entirely impossible within the bitcoin ecosystem. Censorship can potentially occur at the protocol-level and at the custodial-level. At the protocol-level, miners can exclude transactions in their blocks. At the custodial-level, third-party services who require registration and identification to send and receive bitcoin (e.g., centralised exchanges, payment processors) can deny their services without notice. Custodial-level censorship is significantly easier to accomplish by the state as the custodian resides inside the state jurisdiction, compared to a miner that can be located in Antarctica.

If censorship happens at the protocol-level, then it is due to miners excluding the transaction in the block and blacklisting the specific bitcoin address. By default, miners prioritise transactions that pay a larger fee. That is, if Aino pays enough a large fee, there is a much higher chance that the transaction will be included in the block. Suppose, a miner, for whatever reason, decided to exclude Aino's transactions. She then must pay a higher fee. This gives other miners the incentive to include her transaction in the next block that they potentially mine later. That is, when there is a premium placed on transactions that fail to confirm due to censorship, other miners have a greater incentive to confirm those transactions (Voskuil, 2020; 6102bitcoin, 2023).

Even though bitcoin addresses can be and are blacklisted, there are  $2^{160}$  bitcoin addresses that Aino can generate. As such, blacklisting bitcoin addresses is futile. Still, sending bitcoin from the blacklisted address directly to another one will make both addresses blacklisted. However, Aino can

prevent this by applying additional privacy tools. The significance of privacy is discussed in section 4.1.3.

In any case, miners that decide to exclude transactions, for whatever reason, creates a dangerous precedent for the likelihood of censorship becoming more and more the norm than exception as miners blacklist addresses and block transactions. Bednar (2020) argues that this can become a real threat in the future if financial regulators force miners to accede to their rules and regulations. While this is a slippery slope argument, there are miners (e.g., Blockseer) that have already decided to exclude transactions and blacklisted bitcoin addresses that are deemed undesirable by authorities. Moreover, some validators in the Ethereum network, too, censor blocks based on blacklisted addresses as defined by the authorities in the United States (Yang et al., 2022).

There is yet another type of attack that can happen to bitcoin, called the 51% attack, or majority attack. That is, if a miner or a group of miners were to acquire more than half of the total computing power, their chances of modifying the ledger, censoring, and double-spending, among other attacks, has increased significantly (Aponte-Novoa et al., 2021). However, the likelihood of such an occurrence happening in bitcoin is negligible since the benefits outweigh the substantial costs, including the loss of network credibility and bitcoin value (Crypto51, 2023). While it is futile to attack bitcoin, some cryptoassets have not been as lucky (Saad et al., 2019).

If censorship happens at the custodial-level, then it is due to bitcoin businesses denying their services to users. Custodial services require users to register and verify their identities, and they typically do not let users own their private keys. Agreeing on their terms and conditions grants them the right to decline, suspend, or close the accounts, and hence the ability to censor transactions.

So described, to prevent financial censorship on protocol- and custodial-level, one should prioritise privacy as a fundamental feature, boycott custodial services, hold and secure their own private keys, and promote the use of decentralised exchanges, cash machines, and local in-person trade communities (Bednar, 2020). This is what nonviolence is all about: decentralisation, using boycott among other nonviolent tactics, and deriving strength from local communities.

## 2.3 Nonviolence

### 2.3.1 *Nonviolent Action*

Individuals and organisations who are confronted with injustice and repression have the option of either doing nothing or taking action. They may use a range of tactics, from conventional political

means to nonviolent tactics and even violent means. Suppose the oppressed formed a nonviolent resistance against the oppressor. The theory of nonviolence by Sharp (1973, 1990) can offer a critical, explanatory, and pragmatic perspective on how ordinary citizens can resist state repression. In other words, the theory describes how sustained use of nonviolent action en masse in the face of state repression can shift the power relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor.

According to some theorists and practitioners, including in the Gandhian and Kingian movements, nonviolent action is preferred over violence because it follows deontological principles, which emphasise the morality of an action based on the action itself, rather than its consequences (Atack, 2022). This approach aligns with nonviolent values of non-harm and respect for others, regardless of the outcomes these actions may bring. Gandhi argued against the consequentialist notion of “ends justifying the means,” stating that while it is challenging to predict and account for all consequences, individuals can control their means (Mantena, 2012). This makes nonviolent action a more ethically sound choice. But often nonviolence is chosen as a means of struggle not on moral grounds but because it is more readily available or is perceived more effective than violence (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008).

Nonviolent action refers to a strategy of using sustained political, social, psychological, or economic actions that does not depend upon violence or threat thereof (Sharp, 1973; see also Albert Einstein Institution, 2023). The list of nonviolent tactics has risen over the decades from the original 198 tactics listed by Sharp (1973) to at least 346 nonviolent tactics (Beer, 2021), with internet technologies playing an important role in the development of new types of tactics. While the most recent lists do not explicitly mention the use of cryptoassets as a nonviolent tactic, Beer does mention internet applications that allow people to evade government censorship.

People employing nonviolent action have succeeded across different political contexts—democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian systems—in countering repression. They have been successful more than half the time, while violent resistance has succeeded significantly less often in the period from 1900 to 2006 (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). Though, overall, the success rate has decreased since 2001 for a number of reasons, including increased state awareness of tactics to deal with nonviolent movements (Chenoweth & Shay, 2022). Nonviolent resistance is perceived as dissent by the state and their reaction is always more repression, commonly referred to the ‘law of coercive responsiveness’ (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Davenport, 2007). As such, the law suggests two things. First, nonviolent action serves as strong proof that it poses a genuine threat to the existing power

structure (Sharp, 1990). And second, this would suggest that it would make sense for nonviolent resistance movements to start using bitcoin pre-emptively given that repression, financial censorship, is likely to happen.

Moreover, the scope and intensity of repression is dependent on regime type, that is, democratic polities are less likely to commit routine human rights abuses (Chenoweth, Perkoski & Kang, 2017). Notwithstanding the low likelihood, preventive repression, including mass surveillance and (financial) censorship is not all that uncommon in democratic polities (Dragu & Lupu, 2021).

As such, the success and adaptability of nonviolent action in various political contexts demonstrates its potential to influence power relationships and challenge oppressive systems, and sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the relationship between nonviolent resistance and power in the following sections.

### *2.3.2 Power*

Machiavellian literature has influenced structural realism, the dominant theory in international relations, leading to a narrow, ahistorical understanding of power that prioritises force over ethics, justifies ends over means, and assumes violence as necessary and an inevitability in interstate relationships (Walker, 1993). Structural realism defines power as quantifiable, expressed through military assets, wealth, and population and territory size. Cox (1986) calls this as “realist fetishism of power”, which aligns largely with Sharp’s (1973) “monolithic view of power”. Sharp argues that intrastate power relationships have been understood similarly falsely, where the rulers at the top have the power and the ruled are dependent on them.

Instead, Sharp has a feminist approach to power. Feminist inquiries into gender hierarchies and subordination begin at the individual level, similar to nonviolence theory, which emphasises individual empowerment through the withdrawal of consent and realisation of potential and agency under repression (de La Boétie & Bonnefon, 1577/2007). Feminists concentrate on household-level power relationships, adopting a bottom-up perspective, while realists focus on nation-state power dynamics, taking a top-down approach. As it happens, violence is regarded as a masculine endeavour, as evidenced by men as the most likely to be violent in intimate relationships and most likely to engage in criminal acts than are women (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2016; Gartner, 2011), while nonviolence is perceived as a feminist endeavour.

So described, multiple perspectives exist in the power literature. Defining power is challenging due to its intricate and multifaceted nature. This study follows the consent-based definition of power (Guinote & Vescio, 2010) as articulated by Sharp (1990). Albeit, for this study, determining an exact definition is less crucial than recognizing that power can stem from various sources. Following Dowding (2022), this study does not propose a specific definition of power fitting the nonviolence theory, but rather examines where power empirically resides, namely, power bases. Dowding suggests that the definition of power can remain vague and undefined, provided that there is a general agreement on the cases being discussed when referring to power. Dowding advocates for a focus on resources, which are considered the components of power. He asserts that this approach allows for an understanding of power without getting entangled in ongoing disputes about its meaning (Pansardi, 2021). While this may be reductionism, the definition of power is not the fundamental aspect of this study, *per se*.

Accordingly, money can change others' incentive structures (Dowding, 2021), which Sharp (1973) refers to as 'material power' and French and Raven (1959, 1965) as 'reward power.' Repressive countries can reward rule followers and punish dissenters. In addition, central banks have the ability to create money, which grants them power. In bitcoin, this "monetary policy" is embedded in the protocol, shifting the power away from the state into the computer program (Butler, 2022).

However, within the context of financial censorship and nonviolent resistance, it is not so much about the reward power or the ability to create money as it is about legitimate authority (control) over one's money. By eliminating the need for an intermediary, bitcoin protects individuals from centralised authority abuse. This loss of authority and legitimacy is already evident in political discourse, with state central banks and financial organisations expressing concerns about bitcoin and other cryptoassets' potential threats to traditional financial systems and monetary sovereignty (Carstens, 2018; Nabilou & Prum, 2019).

Notwithstanding, while bitcoin grants authority over money, it does not guarantee power. Power depends on the intention to use the money, and the ability to do so (Dowding, 2021; Nye, 2021). Thus, simply because a nonviolent resistance owns all the necessary money and the control of it does not guarantee that the outcomes are going to be achieved. Furthermore, with all this debate about money and power, it is important to recognize that change must come from within and focus on empowering individuals to help themselves (Gregg & Tully, 1934/2018). Money is not a substitute for volunteer activist work, but it can support a cause to an extent. Research emphasises that foreign



support is neither necessary nor sufficient for movement success and is always of secondary importance to domestic support (Chenoweth & Stephan 2021; Dudouet & Klandermans, 2015).

### *2.3.3 Backfire Model*

In order to understand specifically how power transitions from the oppressor to the oppressed, Martin's (2012) backfire model offers a valuable framework to analyse this phenomenon. Inspired by Gandhi's nonviolent struggle for Indian independence against the British Empire, Gregg (1934/2018) introduced the concept of 'moral jiu-jitsu,' a strategy that creates a moral dilemma for oppressors by emphasising the injustice of their actions. Sharp (1973, 1990) expanded on this idea by developing 'political jiu-jitsu,' which focuses on the strategic and political aspects of nonviolence, undermining the oppressor's political power by exposing their oppressive actions and turning their strength against them. Martin (2012) later introduced the backfire model, a broader approach that examines various necessary conditions leading to negative consequences for oppressors who use repression or violence against nonviolent resistance. In the short-term, repression thwarts the momentum but in the long-term the movement regains power and momentum, hence the "backfire".

For backfire to occur, three conditions must be met: first, civil resisters must maintain nonviolent discipline; second, state repression and attacks must be documented and communicated to relevant audiences; and third, the audiences witnessing the repression must be influential enough to force authorities to respond. Indeed, nonviolent movements with mass participation from diverse backgrounds are more likely to succeed and cause backfire (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). States often respond to dissent by obfuscating, distorting, and manipulating information (Martin, 2012), and morally disengaging (Bandura, 2016). Although the backfire model is specific in certain aspects, it does not account for the impact of factors such as method selection, timing, local knowledge, culture, values, or long-term change parameters.

As mentioned before, bitcoin grants authority over money. That is, the power to control money shifts from the state to the individual or community when they start to use bitcoin. Therefore, in theory, while financial censorship can be detrimental in the short-term, those who start to use bitcoin after the censorship event should potentially see the benefits in the long-term.

### *2.3.4 Bitcoin as a Nonviolent Tool*

Historically, there have been only a handful of nonviolent tools and methods that involve the use of money that has not been part of a traditional financial institution: scrip money (e.g., Wara), local exchange trading schemes (LETS), deliberately fake money (e.g., zero-rupee note), politically counterfeited money, and alternative economic institutions (Beer, 2021; Fisher, Cohrssen & Fisher, 1933; Martin, 2001; Nanto, 2009; Randle, 2002; Sharp, 1973). In addition, there are also nonviolent methods such as civil disobedience of “illegitimate” laws (which would include, for example, using bitcoin in countries where it is illegal), refusal of a government’s money, and withdrawal of bank deposits that are worth mentioning. Refusal to pay fees, dues, and assessments, refusal to pay debts or interest, coin hoarding, seizure of assets is not applicable here (Beer, 2021, pp. 91-92, p. 100). What follows is a description of how bitcoin emulates and relates with the purposes of each of these tools and methods (Table 2).

Table 2

*Purposes of Nonviolent Tools and Methods Involving Money Compared to Bitcoin*

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Method, Tool	Purpose
<i>Scrip money</i>	The purpose of scrip money is to provide an alternative currency during times of economic hardship, currency shortages, or to encourage local spending. Scrip money stimulates local economies by facilitating transactions within a specific community or region, helping to keep money circulating within the local area. It supports local businesses and promotes self-sufficiency during periods when the national currency may be scarce or devalued. This is what Bitcoin and other alternative cryptoassets are already doing globally (Arcane Research, 2020; Chainalysis, 2021, 2022; Gemini, 2022).
<i>Local exchange trading schemes</i>	The purpose of LETS is to enable the exchange of goods and services within a community using a local currency or credit system. LETS aim to foster social cohesion, promote sustainability, and build local economic resilience through mutual support. By allowing members to trade skills, products, or services without relying on the national currency, LETS encourages community-based resource sharing, skill development, and cooperation, enhancing the overall well-being of the community. Bitcoin can be used in a similar way to LETS, including its local currency and credit systems (see also Balaguer Rasillo, 2021; Dallyn & Frenzel, 2021). However, unlike LETS, bitcoin does not require users to trust a centralised entity, which can leave LETS vulnerable to potential security breaches.

<i>Deliberately fake money</i>	The purpose of deliberately fake money is to spread awareness about an issue, for example corruption and censorship. The Indian zero-rupee note is one such concrete example that aimed to bring awareness about political corruption, bribery. Bitcoin itself can be thought of as an informal movement to raise awareness about financial censorship and repression, as evidenced by the messages written in the blocks, and the communities born around bitcoin. In addition to the message in the genesis block, the 629,999th block had a corresponding message written by F2Pool: “NYTimes 09/Apr/2020 With \$2.3T Injection, Fed’s Plan Far Exceeds 2008 Rescue” (Blockchair, 2023). Therefore, while fake bitcoin cannot be created inside the protocol as per rules, bitcoin enables the function of deliberate fake money - bring awareness about an issue - for example through including messages in the blocks.
<i>Politically counterfeit money</i>	The purpose of politically counterfeited money is to distribute counterfeit money to upset the economy. For example, North Korea may be counterfeiting the US dollar, and as such they “might undermine confidence in the U.S. dollar and, if done extensively enough, potentially damage the U.S. economy” (Nanto, 2009, p. 8). This is what bitcoin can in theory do when people start to use it en masse. The mass adoption of bitcoin could potentially disrupt traditional economies, but currently, there are not enough users to cause a significant impact. So, while bitcoin has the potential to replace this function, it has not done so yet.
<i>Alternative economic institution</i>	The purpose of an alternative economic institution is to challenge and potentially replace an opponent’s institutions, implementing the principles or programs of the activists, and enhancing the effectiveness of other nonviolent methods, thereby providing a substitute institution that disrupts the opponent’s dominance. Bitcoin can be seen as an alternative financial institution (Hayes, 2019) because it challenges traditional financial systems.
<i>Civil disobedience of “illegitimate” laws</i>	The purpose of civil disobedience of “illegitimate” laws is to openly violate the unjust laws. People who use bitcoin in countries where it is banned can use it as a form of civil disobedience against that state law (see Law Library of Congress, 2021).
<i>Refusal of government’s money</i>	The purpose of refusal of government’s money is to simply refuse a particular currency. By only sending and receiving bitcoin, one inherently refuses government money. As more people adopt bitcoin, it can challenge the dominance of fiat currencies.

Bitcoin can serve as a method across an array of potential nonviolent actions: protest and persuasion, non-cooperation and intervention. That is, immutable messages written in bitcoin blocks can be used as a form of protest and persuasion against government banks’ control over money; it can serve as a tool for economic non-cooperation with the government-controlled financial systems; and it can be a nonviolent intervention given that it can take the shape of an alternative economic institution and serve as a method for civil disobedience of “illegitimate” laws.

However, nonviolent action is not a guaranteed solution in every conflict due to the risks involved, and it may not always be successful. Consequently, bitcoin may not work in all situations and times, especially if private keys are held within a custodial service. Then again, temporary failure need not imply the entire failure of the whole campaign or discredit bitcoin's effectiveness.

### 3. Case Studies

#### 3.1 State Financial Censorship against Individuals and Groups

First, a dataset of 93 events of financial censorship by government authorities from 1981 to 2023 (Appendix A; Table 1) has been developed for this dissertation with the purpose of examining how bitcoin could potentially address such forms of repression. The dataset indicates the censoring country, the censored target, the year, a description, and source and its title. Most of the censoring countries are or were authoritarian or totalitarian at the time of the event. These government authorities have denied opening a bank account, or frozen or closed bank accounts of both individuals and groups alike, namely government critics, human rights activists, journalists, ordinary citizens, people identifying as LGBT, disabled people, NGOs, humanitarian groups, nonviolent campaigns, academics, foreign migrant workers, people without identification, refugees and asylum seekers, radio broadcasters, and independent newspapers. However, the dataset excludes interstate financial censorship, or sanctions. Sources used to elaborate this include the International Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and others.

#### 3.2 Nonviolent Campaigns

Secondly, this dissertation has assembled the first global dataset of nonviolent campaigns that have used bitcoin, documenting a number of case studies. Given that the cases of nonviolent campaigns using bitcoin are heterogeneous and relatively rare, excluding the possibility of addressing causal factors, a case-level analysis of nonviolent campaigns is presented.

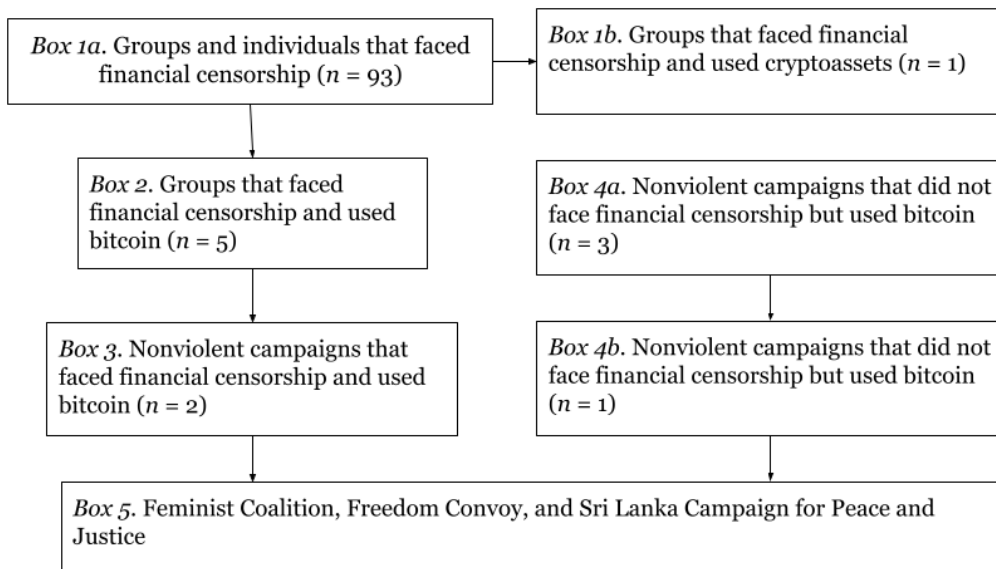
Following a definition by Lakey (2011) a nonviolent campaign is (1) a series of continuous, visible nonviolent actions (2) aimed at achieving a political goal, led by identifiable leaders, (3) distinguished from random riots or unplanned mass acts by having unique names with clear start and

end points, and (4) marked by significant events throughout their course. So described, the points one to three will be mentioned in the tables in each of the selected case studies, to ascertain the validity of the category ‘nonviolent campaign’ as it pertains to the selected case. The fourth point, significant events, are described, especially as they relate to financial censorship and bitcoin.

### 3.2.1 Case Study Selection

Figure 1

*Case Study Selection Procedure*



*Note.* The selected case studies for this study include three nonviolent campaigns that used bitcoin to receive funding, and two of which faced financial censorship during the campaign.

The case selection is as follows. *Box 1a* is the list of 93 financially censored groups and individuals (as discussed in section 3.1). *Box 1b* was initially a nonviolent campaign called the ‘Anti-Coup Protests’ in Myanmar 2021, which was then dragged into a civil war (Egreteau, 2022). The nonviolent resistance declared the stablecoin Tether as their legal tender and currency, and utilised Stellar Lumens network to build their own central-bank digital currency, the digital kyat, so as to resist state financial censorship by the military junta (International Crisis Group, 2022; StellarExpert, 2023). Notwithstanding, the opposition forces have mainly relied on informal remittances such as the hundi

system. Given they did not use bitcoin, the Anti-Coup Protests in Myanmar is excluded from the case studies.

*Box 2* includes five groups that faced financial censorship and used bitcoin, particularly Meduza, WikiLeaks, Freedom Convoy, Anti-Corruption Foundation (ACF), and Feminist Coalition. However, Meduza, WikiLeaks, and ACF are not nonviolent campaigns, and as such are excluded from the study. Thus, *Box 3* includes nonviolent campaigns that faced financial censorship and used bitcoin, namely Freedom Convoy and Feminist Coalition.

*Box 4a* includes nonviolent campaigns that used bitcoin but did not face financial censorship, namely, La Lucha in Congo, Occupy Wall Street in the US, and Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice (La Lucha, 2023; Occupy Wall Street, 2011/2023; Perera, Kambale & Bussy, 2018; SLC, 2023a). As indicated by *Box 4b*, only Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice is included, because they answered email correspondence.

As described in *Box 5*, the final selection of case studies includes the Feminist Coalition, Freedom Convoy, and Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice.

### 3.2.2 Case Study 1: The Feminist Coalition, EndSARS Protest

Table 3

*Campaign Details of the Feminist Coalition, EndSARS Protest*

<i>Observed tactics:</i>	Demonstrations, Protests (Financial support)
<i>Political objective:</i>	End to police brutality; dismantle the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)
<i>Start and end point:</i>	9th Oct to 22nd Oct 2020 (13 days)

The Feminist Coalition is a UK-based NGO that was formed in July 2020. They strive to promote equality for women in Nigerian society through education, financial freedom, and representation in public office. They have organised peaceful protests, fundraised, and used social media to combat injustice in 26 Nigerian states (Feminist Coalition, 2020a, 2021a). In 2020, they protested to end police brutality and establish a fair judicial system, specifically demanding the disbandment of the notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

On October 4, 2020, a viral video showed SARS officers dragging two men from a hotel and shooting one of them, sparking nationwide protests (Amnesty International, 2021; Human Rights

Watch, 2020). Despite the Nigerian government's repeated promises to disband SARS and reform the police, protesters faced excessive force, including live ammunition, beatings, arrests, water cannons, and tear gas.

During the period of October 9th to 22nd, 2020, Feminist Coalition offered resources including food, water, masks, medical aid, legal aid, security, and cleaning supplies to maintain the peaceful demonstrations and safeguard the safety of the protesters as they exercised their civil rights. Without their active participation and, more significantly, financial support, the EndSARS protest would not have had much of an impact on a global scale (Oyosoro, Okafor & Aigbe, 2022).

On October 20, the Nigerian army violently suppressed a peaceful protest at the Lekki toll gate, killing at least 12 people. Since then, Nigerian authorities have attempted to cover up the Lekki Toll Gate Shooting, and fined news agencies that shared videos of the incident. The EndSARS protests continue to date.

To support the protests, Feminist Coalition began receiving donations through a fund set up by Nigerian online payment processing company Flutterwave. Soon their bank account was restricted (Posch, 2020), and the Flutterwave donation link became inoperative on 13th of October and remained so until October 22, when Feminist Coalition announced that it would no longer accept donations. Flutterwave (2020) denied that they restricted donations. In addition to Human Rights Watch (2020), the co-founders of Feminist Coalition, Odufuwa and Aderinokun, confirm that 20 EndSARS protesters' bank accounts were frozen by the Central Bank of Nigeria (Posch, 2020).

Subsequently, Feminist Coalition accepted bitcoin donations on the 13th of October<sup>3</sup> and also set up a BTCPay Server on the 14th (Feminist Coalition, 2020b, 2020c). BTCPay Server is a self-hosted, open-source cryptoasset payment processor. They exchanged the bitcoin to Nigerian naira between November 16th and December 1st, 2020, in two batches, over-the-counter. Overall, the protest raised funds through Flutterwave, Kuda Bank, and bitcoin, totalling 150,062,461 NGN (394,901 USD, assuming 1 USD = 380 NGN in December 2020). Bitcoin amounted to 57,590,000 NGN (Feminist Coalition, 2021a), making it 38.4% of all donations. Feminist Coalition (2021b) spent 134,321,001 NGN, or 90% of the donations, for the EndSARS protests.

### 3.2.3 Case Study 2: Freedom Convoy, the Covid-19 Mandate Protest

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<sup>3</sup> Bitcoin address *1CWdxSTKang1toEv2an1AY3z8cuwiapyno*

Table 4

*Campaign Details of Freedom Convoy, the Covid-19 Mandate Protest*


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<i>Observed tactics:</i>	Nonviolent obstruction, Protests, Demonstrations, Horn-honking, Civil disobedience
<i>Political objective:</i>	The removal of federal and provincial Covid-19 restrictions
<i>Start and end point:</i>	14th Jan to 23rd Feb 2022 (40 days)

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While controversial, the Freedom Convoy was largely nonviolent throughout its activity. The movement started in early 2022 and grew into a campaign in January, protesting against Covid-19 vaccine mandates and restrictions in Canada. Hundreds of vehicles formed convoys and thousands of people joined them as they travelled from different points across several provinces before converging on Ottawa on January 29, 2022, for a rally at Parliament Hill.

The police arrested 191 protesters and 107 people were charged for obstructing police, disobeying a court order, assault, mischief, possessing a weapon and assaulting a police officer, but such incidents appeared to be mostly isolated (Cullinane, 2022).

The underlying motivations and rhetoric of the Freedom Convoy highlights how the movement claimed to be concerned about the Canadian government's perceived authoritarian conduct during the Covid-19 pandemic but was deeply influenced by various conspiratorial rhetoric, which created a sense of victimhood, distrust, and powerlessness among the protesters, leading to paranoid fear (Farokhi, 2022).

On January 14th, Tamara Lich created the Freedom Convoy 2022 Facebook page and co-organised the GoFundMe crowdfunding with Benjamin Dichter (Lawton, 2022). They later registered an NGO named *Freedom 2022 Human Rights and Freedoms*. By January 28th, GoFundMe had released CA\$1 million to the organisers, and by February 2nd, the campaign had raised CA\$10 million.

On January 29th, HodlHodl Honk (2022) started to accept donations through its website and then on February 1st through Tallycoin fundraising website. Both fundraisers were initiated by Nicholas Louis under the pseudonym NobodyCaribou, who helped distribute to truckers envelopes with detailed instructions on how to access the bitcoin that had been divided up for them. Bitcoin's public ledger shows much of this was, in fact, accessed by the truckers as intended. This endeavour was promoted by Benjamin Dichter (Lawton, 2022).



On February 4th, GoFundMe abruptly cancelled their services and access to the rest of the money. As a result, the convoy set up a new campaign on GiveSendGo, which quickly reached more than CA\$10 million in donations again (Villegas & Thebault, 2022).

Bitcoin donations gained stronger momentum after the censorship event as well: Whereas the number of transactions through HodlHodl Honk and Tallycoin bitcoin addresses from January 29th to February 4th had a total of 196 bitcoin transactions, the 5th had 453 transactions and increasing thereafter<sup>4</sup>.

On February 14th, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked the Emergencies Act for the first time since it was enacted in 1988 (Department of Finance Canada, 2022). This gave the government authority, among other means, to freeze financial assets and accounts linked to protestors without a court order or judicial review process.

On February 17th, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (2022) announced its intention to fight the Emergencies Act in court. The same day, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice (2022) ordered nine crypto-trading platforms (a.k.a. cryptocurrency exchanges) to freeze accounts associated with 120 cryptoasset addresses belonging to the campaign.

Ultimately, more than 200 bank accounts, totalling CA\$7.8 million were frozen, though most of these freezes were released following the end of the protest (Zimonjic, 2022). The Freedom Convoy amassed a total amount of CA\$24 million in donations across all platforms, of which bitcoin accounted for roughly CA\$1 million (Fraser, 2022). Lich was able to utilise only CA\$26,000 from the millions of donations she received before her bank account was frozen (Lawton, 2022).

### 3.2.4 Case Study 3: Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice (SLC)

Table 5

#### *Campaign Details of the SLC*

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<i>Observed tactics:</i>	Letters of opposition or support, Declarations by organisations and institutions, Group or mass petitions
<i>Political objective:</i>	Achieve genuine reconciliation based on accountability for violations of international law; Build respect for human rights and the rule of law; Support efforts within Sri Lankan civil society to promote a just and lasting peace

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<sup>4</sup> Bitcoin address *39nhzHByeMdFit6WTq5o5kFQWcja6B8Ps4* and *bc1qlc2gpmzrr9gded07d9a40lt2lq7pp2v7h4c5jx*

*Start and end point:* Not Applicable

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First, SLC has conducted dozens of nonviolent campaigns over the years, primarily using such nonviolent tactics as letters of opposition or support, declarations, and mass petitions. For example, their current campaign is a petition to withdraw the UK government's defence advisor from cooperating with the Sri Lankan armed forces (SLC, 2023b). As such, there is no specific campaign to which a start and end point can be said to have, and particularly in which SLC used bitcoin as one of their means to support their campaigns from 2013 to 2018. Regardless, SLC has organised dozens of campaigns after 2013, and it can be reasonably assumed that bitcoin has been used to support those campaigns (SLC, 2023c). What follows is a description of SLC and their views on bitcoin.

Thus, SLC (SLC, 2023a) is a UK-based NGO that advocates for accountability regarding mass atrocity crimes and human rights violations in Sri Lanka. SLC believes in holding individuals accountable for lasting peace and reconciliation. As a global non-partisan movement, SLC supports genuine reconciliation, human rights, the rule of law, and efforts to promote a just and lasting peace within Sri Lankan civil society.

Despite UN investigations revealing mass atrocity crimes during Sri Lanka's civil war, there has been little accountability. Allegations against both government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam remain unaddressed. The end of the war led to increased authoritarianism and the suppression of dissent. Some improvements in human rights occurred after the 2015 elections, but the situation worsened after the 2019 election of Gotabaya Rajapaksa as President. The environment for human rights defenders and journalists has become increasingly hostile, with intensified surveillance, harassment, and intimidation. The international community has failed to respond effectively to the deteriorating human rights situation, and there is no clear vision for achieving truth and justice (Human Rights Watch, 2022; SLC, 2023a).

In 2013, SLC started to accept bitcoin donations, because its former campaign director, Fred Carver, recognized bitcoin as a potential solution for individual donors who faced interference from banks when transferring funds (Shubber, 2013). While he did not expect a significant demand for Bitcoin donations, he acknowledged that offering a more anonymous donation method was essential. Consequently, this allowed tech-savvy donors from Sri Lanka to contribute without fear of retaliation from government forces.

SLC received its first bitcoin donation in November 2013 and the last one in May 2016 at a specific bitcoin address. Another address received its first donation in March 2017 and the last one in January 2018, after which they stopped accepting bitcoin donations on their website.<sup>5</sup>

SLC's current campaign director, Benjamin Kumar Morris answered questions through email (personal communication, January 19, 2023). According to Morris, SLC received less than £1,000 worth of bitcoin donations, which did not significantly affect their operational continuity.

However, SLC experienced difficulties with their Cryptopay account that managed their bitcoin. Cryptopay decided to close their account in 2021 and refused to open a new one. As a result, they had to withdraw the rest of their bitcoin donations in GBP. SLC has no plans to resume bitcoin donations due to concerns about its volatility and reputation.

SLC did not experience any financial censorship from the state because they are based in the UK and not in Sri Lanka, and therefore do not have to route funds through the central bank (personal communication, April 19, 2023). However, some activists in Sri Lanka have faced difficulties due to financial censorship, and they had to use roundabout ways to access vital funding (such as via colleagues in other countries). Part of that is due to the precarious position of Sri Lankan banking and the rupee since 2022, but financial censorship plays a role as well.

Finally, Morris acknowledged that it may be tempting for small organisations like SLC to promote their cause and encourage international donations through cryptoassets. However, Morris stated that his personal view is that human rights organisations probably should not use bitcoin due to its extremely high carbon footprint.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Summary of Findings

#### 4.1.1 Case studies

This study aimed to explore the prevalence of financial censorship and collected 93 events from 1981 to 2023. It focused on two nonviolent campaigns from diverse backgrounds that faced financial censorship and turned to bitcoin: the Covid-19 mandate protest by Freedom Convoy in Canada, and the EndSARS protests by Feminist Coalition in Nigeria. The study also inquired of the Sri Lanka

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<sup>5</sup> Bitcoin address *1MaUURRXnWtPaRC4wSuBfEMBsBGUw64Thp* and *3MPMRxf9t8PK3yN2KBzN6AAKUyYcaD9mXb*

Campaign for Peace and Justice (SLC) about their reasons for accepting bitcoin donations between 2013 and 2018, despite not experiencing financial censorship.

Specifically, both Freedom Convoy and Feminist Coalition encountered problems with traditional financial channels: Feminist Coalition's bank account was restricted, and their Flutterwave donation link became inoperative; Freedom Convoy's GoFundMe campaign was shut down, followed by GoSendMe, and crypto-trading platforms blacklisted addresses. As a result, both groups turned to bitcoin for donations, which is evident from the chronological order of events.

While SLC has not faced financial censorship from the Sri Lankan state, such censorship is common in the country, forcing people to find alternative ways to fund their causes. However, SLC stopped accepting bitcoin donations due to its reputation and volatility. In contrast, the Anti-Corruption Foundation and WikiLeaks view bitcoin differently, as described in the introduction.

So described, groups may adopt bitcoin intentionally to counter state financial censorship, either prior to or following a censorship incident, or with an implicit intention, simply as an alternative funding method for the campaign—not necessarily for its censorship-resistant properties, but for its private, borderless, or convenient transactions. Nevertheless, employing bitcoin as a nonviolent tool should be a pre-emptive and proactive approach, rather than a reactive action. More to the point, the 'law of coercive responsiveness' would imply that it would make sense to start using bitcoin pre-emptively because repression, financial censorship, is likely to happen.

Moreover, while bitcoin provides control over money, it does not necessarily ensure power. Power depends on the intention to use the money, and the ability to do so (Dowding, 2021; Nye, 2021). Having all the money and control does not guarantee success for nonviolent resistance. This was exemplified by Freedom Convoy that accumulated CA\$ 1 million worth of bitcoin but could only utilise a fraction of it due to their failure to exchange bitcoin to fiat. This is one of the factors that impede bitcoin's effectiveness.

#### *4.1.2 Bitcoin's Effectiveness*

Sharp (1973, p. 115) discusses the effectiveness of methods based on ten factors: cultural compatibility, participants' knowledge and experience, the socio-political context, repression levels, the opponent's objectives, resources, and ruthlessness, their dependence on the opposition, participation and public support, activist and leader quality, the nature of grievances, and the specific situational factors such as infrastructure and accessibility.

As the study shows, only a handful of NGOs utilised bitcoin. That is, their knowledge and experience of bitcoin is most likely one of the shortcomings for using it. Gemini (2022) suggests that the reasons why people avoid using cryptoassets are concerns about trust, volatility, and security, as well as a lack of understanding on how to buy and store cryptoassets. It can be reasonably assumed that nonviolent activists and organisations have similar experiences, if not the same. Kumar from SLC reported similar concerns with bitcoin.

The case studies also demonstrate that the lack of widespread bitcoin acceptance results in reliance on fiat currency. In other words, the contemporary way of using bitcoin typically involves exchanging it back to fiat currency through either over-the-counter desks or crypto-trading platforms. SLC exchanged bitcoin for British pounds, Feminist Coalition for Nigerian naira, and Freedom Convoy for Canadian dollars. This represents a major chokepoint and weakness of using bitcoin as money, particularly as a medium of exchange. If societies accepted bitcoin more as a medium of exchange or even as a unit of account, then bitcoin could be directly traded for the goods and services required by the campaign.

Converting bitcoin to fiat currency presents risks. Not using bitcoin as a medium of exchange but instead converting it back to fiat currency on centralised crypto-trading exchanges, where liquidity is higher compared to decentralised exchanges, increases the risk of bitcoin getting frozen. This occurred with the Freedom Convoy. In theory, this risk can be mitigated by enhancing privacy, leading to the third point: privacy, and in specific, the fungibility of money.

#### *4.1.3 Privacy*

Privacy is a complicated topic that extends beyond the scope of this study. It suffices to say that privacy is a continuum that involves different security models, adversaries, and various assumptions. Briefly, without privacy, state and corporate surveillance can produce conformist and superficial individuals, hindering societal progress (Cohen, 2013; Rogaway, 2015). Continuous monitoring prevents personal exploration and challenging societal norms, restricting genuine freedom. Privacy is essential for upholding human liberties, dignity, and autonomy, allowing individuals control over their information. Furthermore, it safeguards freedom of thought, speech, and association by protecting against censorship and self-censorship driven by fear of authority surveillance. In terms of cryptoassets, privacy is essential for maintaining censorship resistance and autonomy in financial transactions (Brito, 2019).

Contrary to popular belief, bitcoin is not anonymous. Bitcoin lacks private transactions, which undermines its fungibility, increasing the likelihood of censorship. Bitcoin is considered fungible when one bitcoin is worth one bitcoin, regardless of its transaction history. However, this may not always hold true, leading to reduced utility as services can deny withdrawals and deposits, resulting in censorship (Back, 2016).

Thus, one can increase privacy by using alternative privacy-oriented cryptoassets like Monero, bitcoin layer-two technologies such as the Lightning Network (LN), or additional bitcoin privacy tools such as CoinJoin. Each of these tools have their own benefits and challenges. However, all these options require extra steps and knowledge that activists might struggle with, not to mention understanding the cryptoasset itself.

Monero has great potential, but most new users begin with bitcoin, the bitcoin ecosystem grows faster, and bitcoin privacy is sufficient for most people if they can separate their identities from their bitcoin activities.

LN is a trustless second layer built on top of bitcoin that addresses scalability while maintaining decentralisation and providing improved security and privacy. LN offers some privacy improvements over traditional bitcoin transactions, but it also has features that could make other privacy attacks easier (Antonopoulos, Osuntokun & Pickhardt, 2022).

Additional privacy tools are a great way to make transactions more private if needed. However, privacy should be built into the protocol, so users do not need a separate intention to conceal their transaction histories or need extra technical expertise to use additional privacy tools. Moreover, the responsibility shifts to the user rather than the protocol, painting the user as a bad actor. This is ultimately why "cash is king" because it is simple to use and understand, and anonymous.

Regarding the case studies, SLC highlighted the need for anonymous donation methods to protect donors who might face retaliation from government forces or other entities if their identities are exposed. Feminist Coalition concealed their BTCPay bitcoin address to protect donors that wanted anonymity. And the Canadian government blacklisted all bitcoin addresses linked to Freedom Convoy. They all highlight the need for private donations.

However, privacy can be both beneficial and detrimental. Anonymous transactions can be advantageous when donors risk retaliation from governments tracking the open ledger, particularly in highly oppressive and technologically adept states. Conversely, increased privacy can be harmful to

nonviolent campaigns, as openness, transparency, and truthfulness are essential values in nonviolent action (War Resisters' International, 2014).

Yet, these two aspects are not mutually exclusive. While auditing a hypothetical NGO's budget who uses privacy-focused cryptoassets like Monero is not possible, as it is with open ledgers, it can still be done if the NGO is transparent and cooperative in the auditing process. However, this approach relies on the organisation's trust and accurate record-keeping instead of direct blockchain verification.

#### *4.1.4 Practical Recommendations*

Policymakers and media outlets should be cautious about overemphasising the connection between cryptoassets and crime. Instead, they should advocate for a balanced approach that recognizes both risks and benefits to avoid authoritarian policies. In other words, security concerns should be weighed against personal freedom, considering the legitimate uses of cryptoassets (Goold, 2010; Schulp et al., 2023).

In addition, human rights organisations, particularly those planning nonviolent campaigns or carrying out their activities in repressive contexts, should develop self-defence guides and tutorials to help activists and NGOs protect their money, potentially using bitcoin as a 'backup plan' against state financial censorship. For example, Electronic Frontier Foundation and Front Line Defenders have not provided such guides or tutorials online. Self-defence guides and tutorials should be non-technical and provide necessary privacy information and include different security models.

## 4.2 Limitations

The dataset of 93 financial censorship cases has several limitations. First, it focuses only on government-perpetrated censorship, which may not encompass all actors involved. Second, it excludes interstate sanctions, potentially limiting the understanding of how bitcoin can address such repression (see Silic, 2022, for Afghanistan; NBC News, 2022, for Cuba). Third, the dataset relies on human rights organisations and similar sources, which may introduce biases or blind spots. Fourth, selection bias might lead to underreporting smaller events due to less news coverage. Lastly, the dataset lacks context or detail for a comprehensive understanding of each case, the motivations, and the strategies employed by both censors and targets. These limitations underscore the need for further research on the subject.

The limitations of the three nonviolent campaign case studies are as follows. First, the heterogeneity of cases, making it difficult to draw overarching conclusions or identify common patterns, despite a specific pattern of bitcoin acceptance after financial censorship. Third, the exclusion of other cryptoassets, as some campaigns also used alternatives like Tether or created their own. And finally, the case-level analysis approach, which limits the examination of causal factors or relationships and does not allow for isolating the impact of bitcoin usage on campaign outcomes. The precise effectiveness of bitcoin as a nonviolent tool remains unknown, and the extent to which it influenced the campaigns' momentum is unclear. This, again, calls for more detailed analysis of other instances of use of cryptoassets by nonviolent campaigns.

### 4.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could explore the following two suggestions. One, the potential for the backfire effect in financially censored nonviolent campaigns adopting bitcoin, examining whether it contributes to increased support or attention and affected financial resilience and operational continuity. And two, investigating the factors that lead NGOs and human rights activists to use bitcoin, aiming to understand under which conditions bitcoin usage can be confidently generalised when facing financial censorship.

## 5. Conclusion

This study is the first to provide a global dataset of 93 events of financial censorship by government authorities from 1981 to 2023 (Appendix A; Table 1). Furthermore, the study assembled the first global dataset of nonviolent campaigns that used bitcoin and faced financial censorship. The two case studies that experienced financial censorship, reveal that bitcoin was employed immediately after the censoring event. All cases show that private donations were desired and necessary.

This study is also the first to argue that bitcoin is a nonviolent tool, encompassing many features and functions of previously nonviolent tools and tactics that involve money. Indeed, bitcoin allows users to securely send, receive and store value without reliance on any third party, and without violence, enhances personal autonomy and serves as a form of resistance to financial censorship. So described, this study demonstrated that bitcoin has great potential for human rights activists and organisations, and nonviolent resistance campaigns. This also challenges widely held stereotypes that associate bitcoin with terrorist or other illegal activities.



In the light of this, the exact effectiveness of bitcoin for financial resilience and operational continuity should be further investigated. Future studies could also explore to what extent cashless societies and central bank digital currencies increase the probability of financial censorship.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Table 1

*Cases of State Financial Censorship, 1981 - 2022*

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Event Description</i>	<i>Target(s)</i>	<i>Source Title</i>	<i>Source</i>
Afghanistan	2021	LGBT individuals in Afghanistan face economic challenges as a result of the Taliban takeover, preventing them from earning a living, buying essentials, and accessing their bank accounts along with other Afghans.	LGBT individuals	“Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You”: LGBT People in Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2p9yjjcu">https://tinyurl.com/2p9yjjcu</a>
Algeria	2012	Authorities have not provided the Algerian League for Human Rights, Youth Action Rally, and the Algerian section of Amnesty International with a receipt certifying their legal existence under Law 12-06, hindering their administrative and financial capabilities such as opening bank accounts.	The Algerian League for Human Rights, Youth Action Rally, and the Algerian section of Amnesty International	Algeria: Bouteflika Resignation and Opening for Rights	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/5n8dnpnn">https://tinyurl.com/5n8dnpnn</a>
Angola	2015	The Angolan government suspended human rights groups' accessing their bank accounts.	Human rights groups	Angola, Events of 2017	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3h669jym">https://tinyurl.com/3h669jym</a>
Argentina	1989, 2002	Argentines had their bank accounts frozen during the bank run.	Citizens	Ghosts of 2002 ‘corralito’ spur Argentines to shun banks, stash cash at home	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/523uax94">https://tinyurl.com/523uax94</a>

Azerbaijan	2017	Authorities froze the bank accounts of Turan News Agency, leading to the suspension of its operations.	Turan News Agency	Submission for the Universal Periodic Review of Azerbaijan	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/ruvh45sv">https://tinyurl.com/ruvh45sv</a>
Azerbaijan	2017	NGOs working on human rights and government accountability had their bank accounts frozen by authorities, causing the groups to either suspend their work or operate in exile.	Human rights groups	Azerbaijan, Events of 2017; Azerbaijan: Sustained Crackdown	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mwkv9yah">https://tinyurl.com/mwkv9yah</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/4drpp5aj">https://tinyurl.com/4drpp5aj</a>
Azerbaijan	2014	Leyla Yunus, the director of the Institute of Peace and Democracy, faces up to 11 years in jail and her husband Arif Yunus faces up to nine years in prison, after their home was raided and bank accounts frozen.	NGO and activists	'Azerbaijan is turning into a dictatorship – we shouldn't fall for its caviar diplomacy'	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3h669jym">https://tinyurl.com/3h669jym</a>
Azerbaijan	2010	The Azerbaijani government refused to register the Human Rights Club prevented Mr. Jafarov from opening a bank account on behalf of his organisation.	Human Rights Club	If you can't beat them, jail them: the case of human rights defender Rasul Jafarov	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4d7ptshh">https://tinyurl.com/4d7ptshh</a>
Bahrain	2011	The Ministry of Social Development froze the bank account of Bahrain Legal Society (BLS) and cancelled the board election results, reinstating the previous board and president to manage the society's affairs.	Bahrain Lawyers' Society	Restraints on Freedom of Association in Bahrain	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yejr33jt">https://tinyurl.com/yejr33jt</a>
Bahrain	2010	The Bahraini government froze the bank accounts of the Islamic Action Society (Amal) in without any notice or explanation, as part of the government's ban on opposition group publications ahead of the Chamber of Deputies elections.	Islamic Action Society	Restraints on Freedom of Association in Bahrain	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yejr33jt">https://tinyurl.com/yejr33jt</a>

Bahrain	2008	The Bahrain Nursing Society (BNS) assets frozen, otherwise also very hard to fundraise	Bahrain Nursing Society	Restraints on Freedom of Association in Bahrain	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/veyr33jt">https://tinyurl.com/veyr33jt</a>
Bangladesh	2014	The NGO bureau froze all bank accounts of Odhikar, a local human rights group.	Odhikar	Rights at stake in Bangladesh on Human Rights Day	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mry54sk">https://tinyurl.com/mry54sk</a>
Bangladesh	2010	Several protesters and union leaders, including those from BCWS, were arrested and faced criminal charges, while Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity had its non-governmental license cancelled, depriving it of its legal right to operate in Bangladesh and resulting in the closure of its bank account.	Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity	Deep concern about the harassment of union leaders members of BCWS	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4an8uenh">https://tinyurl.com/4an8uenh</a>
Belarus	2021	Belarus frozen the bank account belonging to human rights defender Nasta Loika.	Nasta Loika	Belarus: Arbitrary detention and subsequent release of Nasta Loika	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mtu23cs8">https://tinyurl.com/mtu23cs8</a>
Belarus	2003	Belarusian Human Rights Centre Viasna was not able to open bank accounts in Belarus after it was deregistered, and therefore were forced to set up bank accounts abroad.	Belarusian Human Rights Centre Viasna	Belarus scores own goal as activists held ahead of Ice Hockey World Championship	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3m4y4d59">https://tinyurl.com/3m4y4d59</a>
Bolivia	2017	Bolivian Documentation and Information Centre's (CEDIB) bank accounts were frozen by a judicial order	Bolivian Documentation and Information Centre	Bolivia: Further information: Bolivian NGO and staff under financial threat	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/bdewhvf">https://tinyurl.com/bdewhvf</a>

Burundi	2016	Five major Burundian NGOs filed a complaint to the EACJ in December 2016 after the Burundian government arbitrarily shut down their organizations and froze their bank accounts.	NGOs	FIDH, KHRC and FHRI apply to intervene before the East African Court of Justice to support Burundian civil society organizations; Ban of the ITEKA League: Another blow to Burundian civil society	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3dj5f37x">https://tinyurl.com/3dj5f37x</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/6ke8evy4">https://tinyurl.com/6ke8evy4</a>
Canada	2022	Freedom Convoy, a cohort of Canadian truckers protested for the end of COVID-related mandates, received millions in donations until the government authorities invoked the Emergency Act and froze their bank accounts.	Freedom Convoy protestors	Most bank accounts frozen under the Emergencies Act are being released, committee hears	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yc4dcjxe">https://tinyurl.com/yc4dcjxe</a>
China	2021	The Xinjiang government confiscated \$84.8 million in assets from 21 jailed Uyghurs, dispossessing them of their property, which was then auctioned online.	21 jailed Uyghurs	Human Rights Watch World Report 2022	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/n3evv6dr">https://tinyurl.com/n3evv6dr</a>
China	2008	Gao Zhisheng's family's bank accounts were frozen, among other forms of harassment, after he wrote a series of "Open letters for Justice" and advocated for human rights in China.	Gao Zhisheng's family	Human rights activists face persecution in China	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yckwu5xa">https://tinyurl.com/yckwu5xa</a>
Croatia	2002	Croatia blocked the Feral Tribune's bank account, which was based on judicial sentences condemning the journal and imposing a heavy fine for publishing critical articles, thus violating the freedom of expression and the freedom of the media.	Feral Tribune	Open Letter to STJEPAN MESIC President of the Republic of Croatia	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/473e836f">https://tinyurl.com/473e836f</a>

Dominican Republic	2015 "Karina" is unable to renew her identification card, causing her to have limited access to her bank account and credit card, making it difficult for her to pay outstanding bills and continue her studies.	Ordinary citizen "Karina"	Arbitrary Deprivation of Nationality in the Dominican Republic	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/b3p382u6">https://tinyurl.com/b3p382u6</a>
Egypt	2020 Mohamed El-Baqer, head of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, had his bank accounts have been frozen and his assets seized.	Mohamed El-Baqer	EGYPT: International rights organisations call for the release of rights defender Mohamed El-Baqer	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m63xb26f">https://tinyurl.com/m63xb26f</a>
Egypt	2016 A Cairo court has ordered the freezing of assets of five human rights activists and three human rights organizations, raising concerns that the Egyptian government is intensifying its efforts to silence criticism and suppress challenges from the civil society sector.	Hossam Bahgat, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights; Gamal Eid, Arab Network for Human Rights Information; Bahey el Din Hassan, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies; Mostafa al-Hassan, Hisham Mubarak Law Centre; Abdel Hafiz el-Tayel, Egyptian Center on the Right to Education	Egypt: Asset freeze is a shameless ploy to silence human rights activism	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2t9tmahv">https://tinyurl.com/2t9tmahv</a>
Egypt	2016 The Egyptian authorities have frozen the bank account of El Nadeem Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, a clinic providing counselling and legal assistance to hundreds of victims of torture and enforced disappearances	El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence	Egypt: Freeze of torture rehabilitation centre's financial assets	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2mjvhwc4">https://tinyurl.com/2mjvhwc4</a>



			a cruel blow to human rights	
Egypt	2014 State-controlled media launched a prolonged defamation campaign against human rights defenders and organizations branding them as foreign agents and threats to national security, the police raided the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights arresting six members, and in January 2014 the government announced the freezing of bank accounts of 1,055 charities and NGOs they alleged were affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.	Charities and Non-governmental organisations	Silence is not an Option	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2p9rbavj">https://tinyurl.com/2p9rbavj</a>
Egypt	2011 Of the 15 people interviewed, six also faced asset freezes that have locked them out of the banking system entirely.	Azza Soliman, Esraa Abdelfattah, Negad El Bor'ei, Hossam Ali and Magdy Abdelhamid, and others	Egypt: Arbitrary Travel Bans Throttle Civil Society; Egypt: Chance to end seven-year sham case against brave NGOs	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yzu2z6wd">https://tinyurl.com/yzu2z6wd</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/n7y48xdw">https://tinyurl.com/n7y48xdw</a>
El Salvador	2022 LGBT individuals face homophobic and transphobic violence, often leading to forced migration, while transgender people continue to experience discrimination in healthcare, employment, voting, and banking due to the lack of an established procedure for name changes on identity documents.	LGBT individuals	Human Rights Watch World Report 2023	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/58pxd6xu">https://tinyurl.com/58pxd6xu</a>
Ethiopia	1991- 1998, register as an NGO since 1991 and its bank accounts were frozen 2010 after it filed an appeal against this decision in May 1995, with the appeal being adjourned multiple times until 1998.	Ethiopian Human Rights Council	“One Hundred Ways of Putting Pressure”: Violations of Freedom of Expression and Association in	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/5cy2kzke">https://tinyurl.com/5cy2kzke</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2y6rpsk">https://tinyurl.com/2y6rpsk</a>

			Ethiopia; Ethiopia, The Curtailement of Rights	
Ethiopia	2020,2	The Ethiopian government repeatedly imposed restrictions on access and services in the Tigray region between November 2020 and late June 2021, including closing roads, shutting down telecommunications, electricity, and banking, affecting the ability of humanitarian organizations and national service providers to receive and spend funds.		“I Always Remember That Day”: Access to Services for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region <a href="https://tinyurl.com/5e6z4tpw">https://tinyurl.com/5e6z4tpw</a>
Ethiopia	2012	Human Rights Council's (HRCO) bank accounts were frozen due to the introduction of the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO law), which prohibits human rights organizations in Ethiopia from receiving more than 10 percent of their funding from foreign sources, and HRCO has been forced to close nine of its twelve offices and cut 85 per cent of its staff;	Human Rights Council	Ethiopia: Future of last remaining human rights monitoring NGO in the balance <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2p92jnp6">https://tinyurl.com/2p92jnp6</a>
Ethiopia	1998	The Ethiopian government began arresting and deporting people of Eritrean origin who were prominent in business, politics, or community organizations in 1998, and froze the assets of thousands of individuals of Eritrean origin, including bank accounts, with no avenue for appeal or reversal.	People of Eritrean origin	The Horn of Africa War: Mass Expulsions and the Nationality Issue <a href="https://tinyurl.com/ymc4a5nb">https://tinyurl.com/ymc4a5nb</a>
Ethiopia	1997	The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia had its bank account frozen, and its meetings obstructed in April 1997.	The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia	Ethiopia, The Curtailement of Rights <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2y6rpsck">https://tinyurl.com/2y6rpsck</a>

Ethiopia	1993	The government blocked the bank account of the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA) and registered a new group loyal to the ruling party under the ETA name in March 1993, after the ETA criticized the new government's educational policy, called for increased salaries and benefits, and threatened a strike.	Ethiopian Teachers Association	“One Hundred Ways of Putting Pressure”: Violations of Freedom of Expression and Association in Ethiopia; Ethiopia, The Curtailment of Rights	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/5cy2kzke">https://tinyurl.com/m/5cy2kzke</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/2y6rpsck">https://tinyurl.com/m/2y6rpsck</a>
Guatemala	2022	Guatemalan government seized the bank accounts of journalist José Rubén Zamora's newspaper, el Periódico.	el Periódico newspaper	Guatemala: One more step towards the elimination of freedom of expression	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/mtb4v5hd">https://tinyurl.com/m/mtb4v5hd</a>
Hong Kong	2021	The 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, supporting Hong Kong's anti-government movement, will close in October after distributing over HK\$243 million to protesters, as it becomes impossible for the fund to maintain a bank account under the current political environment.	612 Humanitarian Relief Fund	Hong Kong protests: fund distributing HK\$243 million to demonstrators announces disbandment	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/24bcybtc">https://tinyurl.com/m/24bcybtc</a>
Hong Kong	2021	The Good Neighbour North District Church, whose leadership and members were active in peaceful, pro-democracy demonstrations, had its bank accounts frozen.	The Good Neighbour North District Church	Leveraging Targeted Sanctions in Defense of Religious Freedom	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/2ctst2j4">https://tinyurl.com/m/2ctst2j4</a>
Hong Kong	2020	Ted Hui Chi-fung is a Hong Kong politician who due to fears of prosecution by the Government of Hong Kong, he announced his self-exile in Denmark and withdrew from the Democratic Party. He applied for political asylum and allegedly used false pretences to secure permission to travel to Denmark. As a result, at least five of	Ted Hui Chi-fung	Hong Kong police freeze bank accounts of fugitive ex-lawmaker Ted Hui's family, accusing him of	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/3njs8373">https://tinyurl.com/m/3njs8373</a>

his bank and credit card accounts belonging to him, his wife, and parents in Hong Kong were frozen.

embezzlement,  
possible security law  
violations

India	2018, The Indian government froze the bank account of Amnesty International India and Greenpeace India	Amnesty International India, Greenpeace India	Protect our human rights work in India; India: Counter-terror raids on civil society groups signal escalating crackdown on dissent; India: NGOs in India at risk of shut down	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mpv47btc">https://tinyurl.com/mpv47btc</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2tf2mp9z">https://tinyurl.com/2tf2mp9z</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/kt5y884j">https://tinyurl.com/kt5y884j</a>
India	2021 Indian authorities froze journalist Rana Ayyub's bank account for the second time in six months as part of an investigation into whether she mishandled money raised for COVID-19 victims, which she denies.	Rana Ayyub	Indian journalist Rana Ayyub on facing death threats and a money laundering probe	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/32wa69uy">https://tinyurl.com/32wa69uy</a>
India	2016 The Indian government has been repressing civil society, using laws such as sedition and terrorism, and revoking, suspending, or refusing to renew FCRA licenses of hundreds of civil society groups, freezing their bank accounts, and accusing them of evading the law since 2016, with vulnerable populations such as Dalits, religious minorities, and Adivasis being especially at risk.	Indian Social Action Forum, Lawyers Collective, Sabrang Trust, Navsarjan Trust, Anhad, Oxfam India, Greenpeace and Amnesty International India	India Should Stop Using Abusive Foreign Funding Law	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/226jb4zn">https://tinyurl.com/226jb4zn</a>

Indonesia	2016	A gay activist in Medan reported that his NGO's bank account was forced to close because the registration included "LGBT".	NGO advocating Gay Rights	Indonesia's LGBT Community Under Threat	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2p82b9km">https://tinyurl.com/2p82b9km</a>
Iran	2023	The Iranian government formed a secret committee to punish celebrities supporting anti-government protests by investigating their tax returns and imposing economic sanctions, travel bans, or detentions, with at least 2 out of 141 well-known people having their bank accounts blocked.	Well-known Iranians	Iran protests: Secret committee 'punished celebrities over dissent'	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4kboxumxj">https://tinyurl.com/4kboxumxj</a>
Iran	2020	Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer currently detained in Tehran's Evin prison, went on a hunger strike to protest the arbitrary detention of all human rights defenders and political prisoners during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to her daughter's arrest and a subsequent deterioration of her own health; in addition, her bank account was frozen by the Iranian authorities.	Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh	Iran: Deterioration of Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh's health while in detention, and arbitrary arrest of her daughter	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mr3tdmyb">https://tinyurl.com/mr3tdmyb</a>
Iran	2012	The government has blocked bank accounts set up by non-governmental groups to aid the victims of an earthquake and deployed the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps to confiscate privately collected supplies and disrupt the flow of aid to victims, while social workers and psychologists have been forced to leave due to threats from security and intelligence departments.	NGOs	Stop using means of suppression; pave the way for NGO aid to quake victims in Iran!	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4j3ty8af">https://tinyurl.com/4j3ty8af</a>
Iran	1981	Iran authorities frozen the bank account of Abdol-Karim Lahidji, attacked his home, arrested his son, and prohibited Abdol-Karim Lahidji from selling his possessions, including his house.	Abdol-Karim Lahidji	Abdol-Karim Lahidji: President of FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/kmpwtjyz">https://tinyurl.com/kmpwtjyz</a>

Jordan	2012	The Jordanian government blocked the application of Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights, a registered NGO, for US\$350,000 of foreign funding.	Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights	Jordan: UPR Submission September 2013	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/58murubt">https://tinyurl.com/m/58murubt</a>
Kazakhstan	2019	The government's list of "terrorists" in Kazakhstan has resulted in people being unable to access basic services, such as notary services, banks, or travel, leading to financial struggles and silencing dissent.	135 people, e.g., Zhazira Demeuova	Kazakhstan: Crackdown on Government Critics	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/yc4rsrfb">https://tinyurl.com/m/yc4rsrfb</a>
Kenya	2015	Authorities froze the bank accounts of Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) and Haki Africa	Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) and Haki Africa	Abuses Against Environmental Activists at Kenya's Coast Region: Kenya: Government must unfreeze assets for NGOs after Court ruling	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/bde2tus6">https://tinyurl.com/m/bde2tus6</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/mvsekhs2">https://tinyurl.com/m/mvsekhs2</a>
Kyrgyzstan	2014, 2016, 2017	"Umar" 's bank account, containing US\$17,500, was frozen on orders of the State Financial Intelligence Service, which he had borrowed from acquaintances and family members to apply for a visa for South Korea; "Muzaffar", who completed a seven-year sentence in 2017 for possession of one Hizb ut-Tahir book, is unable to conduct any banking transactions, as the authorities have not allowed him to open a bank account, send or receive money, or even receive a pension due to being blacklisted; After being convicted in 2014 for owning a book of Hizb ut-Tahrir writings, "Jafar" had his pension payments frozen.	Citizens "Umar", "Muzzafar" and "Jaffar"	Possession of Extremist Material in Kyrgyzstan	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/3wc5x8nd">https://tinyurl.com/m/3wc5x8nd</a>

Kyrgyzstan	2017	Authorities in Kyrgyzstan froze the bank accounts of Narynbek Idinov and Cholpon Djakupova, along with seizing their property, as collateral, after the prosecutor general brought five defamation lawsuits against media outlet Zanoza, its founder, and editor, and Radio Azattyk, accusing them of discrediting the president's honour and dignity and spreading false information.	Narynbek Idinov, Dina Maslova, Cholpon Djakupova	Kyrgyzstan, Events of 2017	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3jsdhhj3">https://tinyurl.com/3jsdhhj3</a>
Lebanon	2007	Lebanese Ministry of Interior's delayed the registration of the Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (CLDH), which has hindered its ability to open a bank account and carry out its activities.	Lebanese Centre for Human Rights	Open Letter to Mr. Hassan Akif Sabeh, Minister of Interior and Municipalities	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/y6pfmttr">https://tinyurl.com/y6pfmttr</a>
Maldives	2020	Maldives government dissolved the Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN), a leading human rights organization, and then seized MDN's funds after freezing its bank accounts without notice.	Maldivian Democracy Network	Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mr3tu2t3">https://tinyurl.com/mr3tu2t3</a>
Malta	2017	A court in Malta ordered anti-corruption activist Daphne Caruana Galizia's bank accounts frozen; she died in car bombing in 2017.	Daphne Caruana Galizia	Court freezes Maltese blogger's bank accounts on libel accusations	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/jxmfhns5">https://tinyurl.com/jxmfhns5</a>
Morocco	2021	The Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) reported that authorities have refused to process administrative formalities for 84 of its 99 local branches, impeding their ability to open bank accounts or rent space, and this obstruction continued despite administrative court's ruling in favour of the AMDH.	The Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH)	Morocco and Western Sahara	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/bdf767xp">https://tinyurl.com/bdf767xp</a>
Morocco	2009	Authorities froze the bank account of Akhbar al-Youm after it published a cartoon about a cousin of King Mohammed VI, leading to the shutdown of its editorial offices; a court then ordered its	Akhbar al-Youm	Morocco / Western Sahara, Events of 2009	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2xfnsx4m">https://tinyurl.com/2xfnsx4m</a>

closure and sentenced its director and cartoonist to fines and suspended prison terms.

Myanmar	2022	The military in Myanmar has frozen the bank accounts of civilians and even sentenced some individuals for donating small amounts through mobile money transfers, as the regime has increased its scrutiny on bank and mobile money transfers, targeting both recipients and donors.	Anti-Junta groups and protestors	Myanmar junta metes out long prison terms for small donations to its opponents	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4wdc7hue">https://tinyurl.com/4wdc7hue</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/edxa5w5d">https://tinyurl.com/edxa5w5d</a>
Nepal	2016	Many people in Nepal, particularly women, children born out of wedlock, or children of a refugee or naturalized parent, are still unable to secure drivers' licenses, passports, bank accounts, voting rights, higher education, and other government welfare schemes, despite promises of reform and the new constitution failing to address their rights.	Four million people residing in Nepal	Nepal, Events of 2016	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4y3sj8x4">https://tinyurl.com/4y3sj8x4</a>
Nigeria	2020	Authorities have targeted financial backers or leaders of the #EndSARS movement, freezing their bank accounts and seizing their passports to prevent them from leaving the country.	Feminist Coalition, EndSARS protestors	Nigeria: Punitive Financial Moves Against Protesters; #EndSARS Movement: From Twitter to Nigerian Streets	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/5ydj3xj8">https://tinyurl.com/5ydj3xj8</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/276zdfs2">https://tinyurl.com/276zdfs2</a>
Nigeria	2019	Nigerian authorities froze the bank account of the news website Sahara Reporters, without advance notice, hindering their operations, while the website was also disabled twice due to allegations of copyright infringement, and staff reported cyberattacks and increased surveillance outside their Lagos office.	Sahara Reporters	US-Nigerian Sahara Reporters website reports assets frozen amid surveillance, censorship	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/bm6km46f">https://tinyurl.com/bm6km46f</a>



Pakistan	2020	Mr. Muhammad Ismail, a prominent and vocal human rights activist and the coordinator of Pakistan NGOs Forum a prominent human rights activist, still faces charges of "cybercrime" and his bank accounts are frozen.	Mr. Muhammad Ismail	Pakistan: Acquittal of Ms. Gulalai Ismail and her parents	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3azyauam">https://tinyurl.com/3azyauam</a>
Panama	2020	The Panamanian civil court froze the assets and bank accounts of Corporación La Prensa, which owns the newspapers La Prensa and Mi Diario.	Newspapers La Prensa and Mi Diario	Panama court freezes La Prensa's assets amid defamation suit by former president	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yndy2zdt">https://tinyurl.com/yndy2zdt</a>
Peru	2012	Banks in Peru may use information from identity cards to exclude individuals with disabilities from exercising basic entitlements, such as opening a bank account, getting married, and making financial or legal decisions, because an identity card may reveal that a person has a disability, which some institutions may use as a basis to make decisions about that person's competence.	People with disabilities	Barriers to Political Participation for People with Disabilities in Peru	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4xeheudv">https://tinyurl.com/4xeheudv</a>
Philippines	2021	Philippine government froze the bank accounts of the Amihan Federation of Peasant Women, based on terrorism financing prevention.	Amihan Federation of Peasant Women	Karapatan calls out AMLC on another arbitrary freezing of women peasant group's bank accounts	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/ka54hfjs">https://tinyurl.com/ka54hfjs</a>
Qatar	2021	Women barred from opening a bank account.	Women	"Everything I Have to Do is Tied to a Man": Women and Qatar's Male Guardianship Rules	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/y2ufzr25">https://tinyurl.com/y2ufzr25</a>

Qatar	2013	Qatari authorities detained al-Mohannadi for criticizing the Interior Ministry's officials on online platforms, and in 2013, they imposed a travel ban on him and froze all his personal and business finances without a court order.	Abdullah al-Mohannadi	Qatar: Arbitrary Travel Bans	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4ah3yz35">https://tinyurl.com/4ah3yz35</a>
Qatar	1996	Qatar government's decision to arbitrarily strip citizenship from the Ghufran clan of the Al Murra tribe starting in 1996 has left some members stateless even 20 years later, depriving them of access to human rights such as work, education, marriage, owning property, and opening bank accounts.	People belonging to the Ghufran clan of the Al Murra tribe	Qatar: Families Arbitrarily Stripped of Citizenship	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mr3mcm43">https://tinyurl.com/mr3mcm43</a>
Russia	2021	Russian authorities froze the bank accounts of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, a broadcaster funded by the U.S. Congress, claiming that they did not pay fines for noncompliance with Russia's foreign agent's law.	Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty	Russia freezes RFE/RL bureau's accounts, designates news website VTimes as 'foreign agent'	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/47bfhjbe">https://tinyurl.com/47bfhjbe</a>
Russia	2021	Russian authorities labelled Meduza as "foreign agents," journalists had to flee the country in the face of criminal prosecution, and they lost income streams, twice.	Meduza	Journalism Saves Lives: Support Meduza	<a href="https://support.meduza.io/en">https://support.meduza.io/en</a>
Russia	2020	A journalist in Russia, Svetlana Prokopyeva, was listed on the government's registry of "terrorists and extremists" a year before being sentenced to a hefty fine on bogus terrorism charges in July 2020 for discussing Russia's repressive policies, leading to her being barred from foreign travel and having her bank accounts and other assets frozen.	Svetlana Prokopyeva	Submission by Human Rights Watch on Russia to the Human Rights Committee	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2cuct5cn">https://tinyurl.com/2cuct5cn</a>

Russia	2019	Komil Odilov, who was imprisoned for two years in June 2018 for possessing the works of Said Nursi and gathering with other followers, was subsequently placed under 'administrative supervision' upon his release in 2019, resulting in significant restrictions on his freedom of movement and a ban from opening bank accounts, creating additional duress.	Komil Odilov	Testimony before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2hucy4xw">https://tinyurl.com/2hucy4xw</a>
Russia	2018	Russian authorities froze Ekozaschita!'s bank accounts.	Ekozaschita!	Russia: Environmentalist Faces Criminal Charges	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/45uc2jec">https://tinyurl.com/45uc2jec</a>
Russia	2018	Several activists suspected of having ties with FBK had their bank accounts blocked and were subjected to en masse house searches by authorities.	Anti-Corruption Foundation activists	Russia, Events of 2019	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/kwbvfe94">https://tinyurl.com/kwbvfe94</a>
Russia	2014	The authorities froze all the bank accounts and sealed the office of the Crimea Foundation, effectively preventing the activities of the organizations.	Crimea Foundation	Rights in Retreat: Abuses in Crimea	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/smbdaptu">https://tinyurl.com/smbdaptu</a>
Russia	2006	The Moscow Court of Arbitration froze the bank account of the Russian branch of International PEN.	International PEN	Court hits PEN with hefty tax bill, freezes its bank account	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/rw4asevf">https://tinyurl.com/rw4asevf</a>
Saudi Arabia	2012	Al-Labbad is currently detained in Mabahith prison in Dammam, and his family has been denied access to his ID and bank cards, which has left them in financial hardship as they cannot access his bank account.	Adel Ali al-Labbad's family	Challenging the Red Lines	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/39768ajw">https://tinyurl.com/39768ajw</a>

Saudi Arabia	2008	Women barred from opening a bank account.	Women	Perpetual Minors: Human Rights Abuses Stemming from Male Guardianship and Sex Segregation in Saudi Arabia	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/ycxebu6k">https://tinyurl.com/ycxebu6k</a>
South Africa	2022	Refugees and asylum seekers faced barriers to accessing online registration systems in mid-2022, resulting in difficulties maintaining or opening bank accounts	Refugees, asylum seekers	Human Rights Watch World Report 2023	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/58pxd6xu">https://tinyurl.com/58pxd6xu</a>
South Sudan	2021	The Bank of South Sudan blocked bank accounts belonging to three civil society organizations, a think tank, four civil society activists and a political activist.	Three civil society organizations, a think tank, four civil society activists and a political activist.	South Sudan: Unfreeze civil society and political activist's bank accounts	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4h7pa9br">https://tinyurl.com/4h7pa9br</a>
South Sudan	2018	The South Sudan's National Security Service (NSS) frequently confiscated the properties of detainees as part of their investigations and sometimes failed to return these even after their release, including seizing vehicles, plots of land, title deeds, freezing bank accounts and financial assets, and taking over business operations, as well as confiscating mobile phones and computers.	Government critics	"What Crime Was I Paying For?": Abuses by South Sudan's National Security Service	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/y6w2r7z9">https://tinyurl.com/y6w2r7z9</a>
Sri Lanka	2021	The Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) of the police has targeted civil society groups and demanded access to their financial records, while the central bank has interfered with international transfers of funds to such groups, using the pretext of "terrorist financing" despite the absence of any evidence.	Civil society groups	Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Sri Lanka	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2zrzby6">https://tinyurl.com/2zrzby6</a>

Sudan	2009	Sudan seized the assets and froze bank accounts of three national human rights NGOs in Sudan.	Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development; Amal Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture; Sudan Development Organisation	NGOs support the ICC	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2p8rhx5j">https://tinyurl.com/2p8rhx5j</a>
Sudan	2009	Suliman, as the director of Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development, faced the closure of the centre and the freezing of its bank accounts.	Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development	Rights groups welcome African Commission's decision to uphold complaint of human rights defenders tortured in Sudan	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2u7aya2e">https://tinyurl.com/2u7aya2e</a>
Tanzania	2020	The authorities froze the bank accounts of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition, causing the organization to suspend its activities.	Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition	Tanzania: Freedoms Threatened Ahead of Elections	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/ytyyu5c4">https://tinyurl.com/ytyyu5c4</a>
Thailand	2010	The Centre for the Resolution of Emergency Situations froze individual and corporate bank accounts of UDD leaders, protesters, and accused sympathizers, among other measures.	United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD)	Descent into Chaos; To Speak Out is Dangerous	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/2bmedw78">https://tinyurl.com/2bmedw78</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3cs4mxbw">https://tinyurl.com/3cs4mxbw</a>
The United Arab Emirates	2008	Several banks were reluctant to participate in the scheme of setting up large numbers of bank accounts for workers where relatively small amounts of money were transferred, which prevented the	Foreign migrant workers	Exploitation of Migrant Workers on Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/39brdu42">https://tinyurl.com/39brdu42</a>

implementation of UAE law requiring employers to set up bank accounts for workers and transfer workers' salaries directly into these accounts, and by January 2008, more than 90 per cent of the 250,000 companies in the UAE had not opened employee bank accounts.

The United States	2010	Bank of America, VISA, MasterCard, PayPal, and Western Union blocked Wikileaks' access to bank accounts and payment networks, as a result of whistleblower document leaks.	Wikileaks	Banking Blockade	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/nhk44k4h">https://tinyurl.com/nhk44k4h</a>
Turkey	2017	The Turkish government under the state of emergency froze bank accounts and confiscated assets without compensation of hundreds of media outlets, associations, foundations, private hospitals, and educational establishments that it shut down by decree, affecting over 110,000 public officials, and those affected had no right to work in public service and their passports were confiscated.	Public officials	Turkey, Events of 2017	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/59n8mbh7">https://tinyurl.com/59n8mbh7</a>
Turkey	2016	The Turkish government has dismissed more than 5,800 academics from public universities since the 2016 coup attempt, and those affected have been unable to challenge their dismissals, with their passports being revoked and bank accounts frozen.	Academics	Turkey: Government Targeting Academics	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yckwpkhn">https://tinyurl.com/yckwpkhn</a>
Turkey	2007	Lambda Istanbul's uncertain legal status, due to unresolved legal situation, will continue to have political effects, economic limitations and interfere with their work with the community, as some members fear to state their views openly, and embassies refuse to fund them, and they can't even have a bank account until the situation is resolved.	LGBT organisation, Lambda Istanbul	Gender, Sexuality, and Human Rights in a Changing Turkey	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3jrbbh3t">https://tinyurl.com/3jrbbh3t</a>

Uganda	2016	Three NGOs' offices were raided by police, and their bank accounts were frozen, after authorities alleged "illicit financial transactions" and "subversive activities."	Three NGOs	Uganda, Events of 2017	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/mssnpj72">https://tinyurl.com/m/mssnpj72</a>
Venezuela	2020	Venezuelan authorities have targeted human rights and humanitarian groups by freezing bank accounts, issuing arrest warrants, and imposing restrictions that limit their ability to operate, while the banking authority required banks to closely monitor the financial operations of non-profits, leading to frozen bank accounts for Alimenta la Solidaridad.	Human rights and humanitarian groups	Venezuela: Humanitarian Groups Under Attack; Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/bd5nya2d">https://tinyurl.com/m/bd5nya2d</a> <a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/2p8pujd9">https://tinyurl.com/m/2p8pujd9</a>
Vietnam	2020	Vietnamese authorities froze the bank account of Nguyen Thuy Hanh upon the end of her house arrest, alleging that the money was going to be used for terrorism, and have requested that both domestic and foreign credit organizations freeze relevant accounts in the interest of the investigation.	Nguyen Thuy Hanh	Viet Nam: Prominent human rights defender Nguyen Thuy Hanh arrested and charged	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/m/2p93ufat">https://tinyurl.com/m/2p93ufat</a>

*Note.* The list only includes financial censorship by government authorities that occurs within a state, and not those that are imposed by governments on other countries (such as sanctions). The financial censorship has been targeted against government critics, human rights activists, journalists, ordinary citizens, NGOs, humanitarian groups, academics, foreign migrant workers, people without identification, refugees and asylum seekers, radio broadcasts, and independent newspapers. The sources for the shortened hyperlinks mainly come from websites, such as the International Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and other.

