

Freedom in the World 2014 - Chad

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2014 Scores

Status: Not Free

Freedom Rating (1 = best, 7 = worst): 6.5

Civil Liberties (1 = best, 7 = worst): 6

Political Rights (1 = best, 7 = worst): 7

OVERVIEW

The government of longtime president Idriss Déby appointed a new prime minister – Joseph Djimrangar Dadnadji – in January. However, on November 21, the prime minister tendered his resignation ahead of a planned motion of censure against his government. Dadnadji had ordered five cabinet reshuffles in 10 months, and his government was criticized for demanding arbitrary arrest of deputies and failing to control the high cost of living and chronic instability. The same day, President Déby appointed Kalzeubet Pahimi Deubet, an economist, to lead the new government.

Security forces in Chad claimed to have foiled a coup against the president following two separate clashes on May 1 at a military barracks and in a residential neighborhood in the capital in which several people were killed. In the aftermath of the fighting, two generals and two members of parliament were among those arrested on suspicion of conspiracy. Many observers have stated that these arrests were politically motivated in order to crack down on government critics; some have also questioned whether the coup may have been staged for this purpose. Chad's borders with Libya and Sudan saw an increase in rebel activity throughout the year, contributing to instability even as Chad's military deployments to conflicts elsewhere in the region allowed it to maintain a central role in regional politics. In March, the Union of Forces of Resistance (UFR), a rebel coalition that had ended its armed rebellion against the government in 2010, warned that it could again take up arms, accusing Déby of not following through with his agreement to hold talks with the group. In April, Déby accused the Libyan government of hosting a training camp for Chadian mercenaries and UFR rebels who sought to destabilize the country, a charge that Libya denied.

Early in the year, Chad sent 2,000 troops to Mali to help drive out Islamist fighters as part of an intervention spearheaded by France, Déby's long-term ally. In April, however, Déby announced that he would pull the country's troops out of Mali, saying they had accomplished their mission; the withdrawal began in May. Chad has contributed substantially to the African Union peacekeeping

force in the Central African Republic, but it has also been accused of supporting and training the Séléka rebels who are fighting the government there.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 434,479 refugees reside in Chad – mainly from Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Nigeria – and almost 20,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).

POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Political Rights: 5 / 40

A. Electoral Process: 3 / 12

Chad has never experienced a free and fair transfer of power through elections. Déby, a former military commander, ousted dictator Hissène Habré in 1990, and has won four presidential elections, in 1996, 2001, 2006, and 2011. The president is elected for five-year terms, and a 2005 constitutional amendment abolished term limits. The executive branch dominates the judicial and legislative branches, and the president appoints the prime minister. The unicameral National Assembly consists of 188 members elected for four-year terms.

Legislative elections originally due in 2006 were repeatedly postponed due to insufficient equipment and staffing, as well as delays in voter registration, but finally took place in February 2011. In the National Assembly, Déby's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) party won 117 seats and 14 more went to Déby's allies, securing an absolute majority for the president. The most successful opposition party won only 10 seats.

The European Union praised the peaceful and fair conduct of the elections, despite some logistical problems. However, the opposition claimed that irregularities occurred both before the vote – due to the government's media dominance and the use of state resources to benefit the ruling party – and during the elections, including issues with electoral rolls and voter registration cards. They also pointed to the Independent Electoral Commission's official results page, which showed irregularities. A request by opposition parties to reprint voter registration cards was rejected.

Citing irregularities before and during the parliamentary elections, the three main opposition candidates boycotted the presidential poll in April 2011, which Déby won with 89 percent of the vote.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 1 / 16

More than 70 political parties operate in Chad, although a number of them were created by the government to divide the opposition. Only the ruling MPS has significant influence. Despite rivalries within Déby's northeastern Zaghawa ethnic group, members of that and other northern ethnic groups continue to control Chad's political and economic systems, causing resentment among the country's more than 200 other ethnic groups. Despite comprising 45 percent of the population, Christians in the south of the country have been excluded from political power in Chad for more than 20 years. Déby's strong hold on power and political instabilities in the border regions of the country further exacerbate the obstacles to their political participation.

In May, following the government's claim to have foiled a coup attempt, two members of parliament – opposition member Gali Gata Ngoté and MPS member Routouang Yoma Golom – were arrested and charged with conspiracy; they were provisionally released later in the month. The arrests appeared to violate the immunity legally guaranteed to the country's parliamentarians; only the National Assembly can remove a member's immunity, and it had not done so in these cases.

C. Functioning of Government: 1 / 12

Corruption is rampant within Déby's inner circle. Despite becoming an oil producer in 2003, Chad remains one of the world's poorest nations; according to the UN Development Programme, Chad currently occupies position 184 out of a total of 187 states on the 2013 Human Development Index. Weaknesses in revenue management and oversight facilitate the diversion of oil revenues from national development projects to private interests and growing military expenditures. However, fighting corruption has not been a government priority and criticizing the government for corruption can be dangerous. An anticorruption blogger and writer was arrested on March 22 on defamation charges. Chad was ranked 163 out of 177 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Civil Liberties: 16 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 7 / 16

The constitution provides for freedom of the press and expression. However, both are severely restricted, and self-censorship is common. Broadcast media are controlled by the state. The High Council of Communication (HCC) exerts control over most content on the radio – the most important means of mass communication – and while there are roughly a dozen private stations, they face high licensing fees and the threat of closure for critical coverage. In 2008, the HCC banned reporting on the activities of rebels or any other information that could harm national unity. A small number of private newspapers circulate in the capital, and internet access is not restricted, but the reach of both is limited by poverty, illiteracy, and inadequate infrastructure.

A 2010 media bill eliminated imprisonment as a punishment for libel, slander, or insulting the president, but introduced heavy fines or prison time for inciting racial and ethnic hatred and "condoning violence." In 2013, several journalists faced prosecution related to their work in cases that drew condemnation from international rights organizations, and dozens of government critics were arrested. On August 19, Eric Topona, the secretary general of the Union of Chadian Journalists (UJT), was convicted of defamation and given a three-year suspended prison sentence. Topona had been arrested in May on the charge of "endangering constitutional order." The same day, blogger and writer Jean Laokolé – who covered issues such as corruption for the popular *Blog de Makaila* and had been arrested in March – was convicted of "defamation" and "abortive conspiracy against public order," with a three-year suspended sentence. Later in August, Moussaye Avenir de la Tchiré, managing editor of the news publication *Abba Garde* and the UJT treasurer, was given a two-year suspended sentence and fined after being convicted of "incitement to hatred and a popular uprising." De la Tchiré had also been arrested in May, a month that saw a string of arrests of government critics following the government's claim to have foiled a coup attempt. In October, newspaper editor Samory Ngaradoumbé was arrested for spreading malicious rumors based on an article he published on Chadian peacekeepers defecting in Mali.

Although Chad is a secular state, religion is a divisive force. Muslims, who make up slightly more than half of the population, hold a disproportionately large number of senior government posts, and some policies favor Islam in practice. At the same time, the authorities have banned Muslim groups that are seen as promoting violence. The government does not restrict academic freedom, but funds meant for the education system have reportedly been lost to corruption.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 4 / 12

Despite the constitutional guarantee of free assembly, the authorities ban demonstrations by groups thought to be critical of the government. The arrest of government critics in 2013 made demonstrations even more dangerous. Insecurity has severely hindered the activities of humanitarian organizations in recent years. Although the country has been relatively stable since 2011, recurrent bandit attacks on humanitarian workers make access to the population difficult.

The constitution guarantees the rights to strike and unionize, but a 2007 law imposed new limits on public sector workers' right to strike. Nevertheless, public sector workers did strike for three weeks in the fall of 2011 and in July 2012, demanding promised wage increases. Both protests ended with deals with the government, which also signed an agreement on salaries with union leaders in March.

F. Rule of Law: 2 / 16

The rule of law and the judicial system remain weak, and the political leadership heavily influences the courts. According to Amnesty International, judicial harassment of political opponents had been frequent throughout 2012 and was exacerbated with the arrest of two parliamentarians in May. Civilian leaders do not maintain control of the security forces, which routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. Human rights groups credibly accuse the security forces and rebel groups of killing and torturing with impunity. Prison conditions are inhumane, and many inmates are held for years without charge.

In January, the ruling MPS government proposed changes to two articles of the constitution, generating concern among the opposition. Article 71 of the constitution requires that the president be completely divorced from all professional or business activities not connected to his presidential duties, including the activities of his own party. The MPS contended that the president should be allowed to participate in party events. The second change – and the one that reportedly generated the most opposition – would remove permanent tenure for Supreme Court judges. While the ruling party claims that judicial independence is guaranteed by other constitutional provisions, the opposition argues that eliminating secure tenure would expose judges to political pressure.

In July 2012, the Senegalese government agreed to establish a special court to try former Chadian president Hissène Habré – who has been living in exile in Senegal – for political killings and torture committed during his rule. Senegal's long-awaited decision came after an International Court of Justice ruling earlier that month that it either try Habré or extradite him to Belgium. On February 8, a special tribunal called the Extraordinary Chambers was inaugurated in Dakar, Senegal, to oversee the first crimes-against-humanity trial by one country of a former leader of another. Habré was arrested in Dakar on June 30 and charged July 2 with crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture. In November, the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) rejected Habré's request to suspend the proceedings, clearing the way for the trial to go forward.

Clashes are common between Christian farmers of the various southern ethnic groups and Muslim Arab groups living largely in the north. Turmoil linked to ethnic and religious differences is exacerbated by clan rivalries and external interference along the insecure borders. Communal tensions in eastern Chad have worsened due to the proliferation of small arms and ongoing disputes over the use of land and water resources.

While same-sex sexual activity has never been criminalized in Chad, cultural and legal restrictions mean that same-sex and transgender activities remain secretive. No nongovernmental organizations related to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights function in Chad.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 3 / 16

Although guaranteed in the constitution, the government restricts the movement of citizens within the country and controls the movement of both IDPs and refugees. Government control of the economy, repression of minority rights, and lack of security in certain areas of the country also exacerbate freedom of movement, employment, and education.

Chadian women face widespread discrimination and violence. In the 2011 elections, 24 female members were elected to the National Assembly, or about 13 percent. Female genital mutilation is illegal, but routinely practiced by several ethnic groups. Chad is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking, and the government has not made significant efforts to eliminate the problem. The U.S. State Department again placed Chad on the Tier 2 Watch List in its 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

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