

Freedom in the World 2022 - Chad

Not Free

15

/ 100

[Political Rights](#) 1 / 40

[Civil Liberties](#) 14 / 60

Last Year's Score & Status

17 / 100 Not Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)

Overview

Chad has been ruled by a military government since April 2021, when a group of senior officers seized power in a coup d'état following the death of longtime president Idriss Déby Itno. The military regime, led by the former president's son, announced that it would oversee an 18-month transition period, which can be renewed once, followed by elections. Elections in Chad have historically been characterized by a high degree of repression, and legislative elections in Chad have been routinely delayed. Opposition activists risk arrest and severe mistreatment while in detention. The state faces multiple insurgencies led by rebel militants in the north and Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin.

Key Developments in 2021

- In April, incumbent president Idriss Déby Itno was reelected to a sixth term in office in an election marred by a government crackdown on political dissent. Later that month, Déby was killed by rebel forces while visiting Chadian soldiers fighting in the north of the country.
- Following Déby's death, a transitional military council (TMC) comprised of senior military officers and headed by his son took control of the country in an April coup d'état. The TMC announced that it would oversee an 18-month transition period, which can be renewed once, followed by "free and fair" elections.
- In September, the ruling TMC appointed a 93-member National Transitional Council (NTC) to serve as an interim legislature for the transitional government. In October, the former president of the National Assembly, Haroun Kabadi, was appointed president of the NTC.
- In December, the NTC approved two laws granting amnesty to approximately 300 members of armed rebel groups for crimes ranging from terrorism to the recruitment of child soldiers. Civil society organizations criticized the amnesty for only applying to a small sub-set of rebels.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through 0 / 4 free and fair elections?

The president is normally directly elected to a five-year term. President Idriss Déby Itno took power in 1990 during a rebellion, and overwhelmingly won reelection in 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016. Déby was reelected to a sixth term in April 2021 with 79.3 percent of the vote. The election, which was not credible or free, took place amid a government crackdown on political dissent and was boycotted by the country's main opposition figures.

Less than two weeks after the election, President Déby was killed by rebel forces while visiting Chadian soldiers fighting in the north of the country. Following Déby's death, a transitional military council (TMC) comprised of senior military officers and headed by his son—General Mahamat Idriss

Déby Itno—took control of the country in a coup d'état. The TMC announced that it would oversee an 18-month transition period, which can be renewed once, followed by “free and fair” elections. In July, the TMC announced a planned timeline for the transition, calling for an “inclusive national dialogue” to be held in November and December 2021, followed by elections between June and September 2022. In December, the transitional government announced that the national dialogue had been postponed, and would not be held until February 2022.

In April, the TMC named Albert Pahimi Padacké as prime minister of the transitional government. Padacké previously served as prime minister under former president Déby; opposition politicians criticized the choice, saying the military lacked the authority to appoint a prime minister.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because the military seized power in a coup after the incumbent president was killed in April.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Prior to the April 2021 military coup, the unicameral National Assembly consisted of 188 members elected to four-year terms. The ruling political party, former president Déby's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS), and allied parties controlled 117 seats. Elections have not been organized since 2011, with legislative elections due in 2015 having been repeatedly postponed. At the time of the coup, legislators were performing their functions despite the expiration of their electoral mandates.

Following the April 2021 coup d'état, the TMC dissolved the National Assembly and assumed its functions. Later that month, the TMC authorized the National Assembly to resume functioning; the final meeting of the National Assembly took place at the end of June. In September, the TMC appointed a 93-member National Transitional Council (NTC) to perform the functions of the National Assembly under the transitional government. While some opposition members were named to the NTC, members of a prominent opposition coalition that denounced the coup were excluded. In October, the former president of the National Assembly, Haroun Kabadi, was appointed president of the NTC.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

Before the April 2021 coup, elections were managed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI); the CENI's leadership was appointed by the country's entrenched political class through the National Framework for Political Dialogue (CNDP), and civil society was excluded from the process. In 2019, the CNDP adopted a revised electoral code, reducing the number of lower-house members from 188 to 161 in the next legislature, over the objection of opposition members.

The 2021 installation of the military government—which suspended the constitution upon taking power in April—violated constitutional provisions requiring that power be passed to the president of the National Assembly in the event that the head of state dies in office.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

There are more than 130 registered political parties in Chad, though most have historically been aligned with the government.

Opposition parties are subject to government harassment and arrest. In February 2021, the Chadian military killed multiple people when they stormed the home of a prominent opposition politician after he allegedly failed to respond to a judicial summons. In May, the leader of the opposition Reform Party (PR) was arrested and tortured by the police after participating in an anti-TMC protest march.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The mandate of the National Assembly, which was dissolved and temporarily reinstated following the April coup d'état, expired in 2015. Parliamentary elections, originally planned for 2015, were repeatedly postponed, leaving the opposition unable to increase its support or gain power through elections. The political opposition is legally recognized, but opposition leaders who publicly criticize

the government risk harassment and arrest. Opposition leaders have disappeared after entering state custody. Some opposition parties called for a boycott of the 2021 presidential elections following a deadly raid on an opposition leader's home by state security forces in February.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means? 0 / 4

Before the April 2021 coup d'état, extensive kinship networks tied to former president Déby had resulted in a concentration of political and economic power. The former government was not accountable to voters in practice, and voters had few effective means of influencing politics. After Déby's death in April, the military took control of the government, violating the constitution and furthering a historic pattern of outsized military influence in Chadian politics.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

The military government has continued a longstanding pattern of appointing members of the Beri ethnic group to prominent positions within the government, causing resentment among the country's other ethnic groups. Christians in the south are largely excluded from political power; though some Christians have held government positions, their voice was limited.

Women have historically held few senior positions in government, and face discrimination in employment and inheritance practices. LGBT+ people are severely marginalized, impacting their ability to engage in political processes and advocate for their interests.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Prior to his death in April 2021, former president Déby enjoyed unlimited discretionary power over the composition of government and had concentrated power within the executive branch. Presidential elections, including the election held in April, were not credible and were characterized by significant political repression. Members of the National Assembly, last elected in 2011, acted on expired mandates from 2015 until 2021. The April 2021 coup d'état replaced the country's executive and legislative institutions with an unelected military government, which remained in power at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because the April military coup left the country under the control of unelected leaders.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption, bribery, and nepotism are endemic in Chad. Journalists, labor leaders, and religious figures have faced harsh reprisals for speaking out about corruption, including arrest, prosecution, and expulsion from the country. Corruption charges against high-level officials that do go forward are widely viewed as selective prosecutions meant to discredit those who pose a threat to the government or its allies.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Chad has no law establishing the right to access official information. Since seizing power in April 2021, the TMC has largely ruled by decree, offering no meaningful opportunity for civil society to comment on government operations or obtain basic information about government functions.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The TMC's transitional charter provides for freedom of the press, but press freedom is restricted in practice. Newspaper editors are legally required to have completed at least three years of higher education; outlets employing editors who do not meet this condition face suspension, constraining

the media environment. Although criticism of the government is generally permitted within certain boundaries, reporters and editors commonly self-censor to avoid reprisals. Journalists can face arrest, detention, and imprisonment on charges including defamation.

In March 2021, the government banned interactive political broadcasts in all media during the runup to April's presidential election.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The state imposes a number of religious restrictions, primarily against certain Muslim sects. Several sects deemed to promote violence are banned, despite limited evidence of such activity. Imams are subject to governance by the semipublic High Council for Islamic Affairs, which is led by a group of imams belonging to the Tijanyya Sufi order. Wearing burqas is banned by ministerial decree, and the government detains individuals who wear them in public.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom, but funds meant for the education system, as well as government-funded stipends, are regularly in arrears.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Space for open and free private discussion exists but tends to be self-censored due to fears of reprisal from the state. The government throttled internet connectivity speeds across the country multiple times during 2021 in an attempt to limit media coverage of antigovernment demonstrations and the arrest of an opposition politician. In October, police arrested a political activist for making pro-opposition social media posts.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The right of free assembly is not upheld by the military government, and the TMC routinely bans gatherings. In April 2021, protests against the military coup were met with state violence, resulting in the deaths of at least five people. Nonetheless, some protests denouncing a lack of political transparency and inclusivity were authorized by transition authorities during the year, and were allowed to proceed peacefully.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must receive government approval to operate legally, but few such applications are approved. Some NGOs, many of which focus on issues such as human trafficking and humanitarian relief, operate in the country.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Though the TMC's transitional charter protects the rights to strike and unionize, other laws limit public sector workers' right to strike. Despite such restrictions, some public unions, including teachers' unions, organized strikes in 2021.

Following the April coup d'état, some unions released statements denouncing the military takeover.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The rule of law and the judicial system remain weak because the political leadership heavily influences the courts. Instances of political interference in trials were reported in 2021.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Security forces routinely ignore legal guidelines regarding search, seizure, and detention. Detained persons are often denied access to lawyers, especially those detained in connection with their involvement in antigovernment protests or activities. Many people suspected of committing crimes are held for lengthy periods without charge. Instances of arbitrary detention and forced disappearances by security forces were reported throughout 2021.

In December, the NTC approved two laws granting amnesty to approximately 300 members of armed rebel groups for crimes ranging from terrorism to the recruitment of child soldiers. Civil society organizations criticized the amnesty for only applying to a small sub-set of rebels.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Political leaders do not maintain control of the security forces, who stand accused of killing and torturing with impunity. In addition, tensions amongst ethnic groups have been known to escalate into violent conflict. In August 2021, 22 civilians were killed when members of two communities clashed over land being used by both groups.

Beginning in April, rebels belonging a group known as the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) crossed into Chad from Libyan territory, attacking Chadian military positions and attempting to depose the government. The fighting resulted in the April death of Chadian President Déby. In May, the Chadian military claimed victory over the rebel group. Chadian human rights groups reported that members of certain ethnic groups were targeted for arbitrary arrest and forcibly disappeared by security forces due to perceived complicity with FACT rebels.

The Boko Haram militant group, including a faction known as the Islamic State’s West Africa Province (IS-WA), operates near Lake Chad, and was active throughout 2021. In August, IS-WA militants attacked a Chadian military position in the Lake Chad region, killing 26 soldiers.

Prison conditions often do not conform to international standards. In July, prisoner of war and former opposition politician Ngariel Modeste died under unclear circumstances while in the custody of Chad’s military intelligence service.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Due to cultural stigmatization, LGBT+ citizens are forced to conceal their sexual orientation and gender identity. The current penal code criminalizes same-sex sexual activity. Women face pervasive discrimination, and girls have limited access to education.

Ethnic disparities in the justice system have been reported, with officials refraining from enforcing court orders against people who share the same ethnic identity. Arbitrary arrests and detentions based on ethnic identity have also been reported.

While discrimination against people living with disabilities is legally prohibited, NGOs claim that these provisions go unenforced.

The government struggles to provide services to internally displaced persons (IDPs). In September 2021, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs counted 402,000 IDPs, along with over 481,000 refugees from other countries residing in Chad.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Although legal guarantees for the freedom of movement exist, in practice militant activity and government restrictions have limited movement. Following the April 2021 coup, the TMC closed national borders and imposed a curfew; these measures were lifted in April and May, respectively. In some areas of Chad, militants have erected roadblocks, limiting citizens’ freedom of movement.

Public resource constraints restrict citizens’ ability to pursue employment or educational opportunities outside of their local areas. The delivery of administrative documents is often slowed by bureaucratic constraints, limiting access to official documentation.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Laws establishing land and property rights are nominally in force, but are functionally irrelevant to the majority of the country's population owing to the state's minimal presence in rural areas; customary law governs land ownership and use rights in practice. Laws protecting the right of women to inherit land are not enforced.

Establishing and operating a business in Chad is extremely difficult, due in part to corruption.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

0 / 4

Violence against women is common. Female genital mutilation is illegal but widely practiced.

The penal code bans child marriage, setting the legal age of marriage at 18, but the courts rarely hold those who practice it accountable.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

1 / 4

Chad has adopted minimum wage and occupational safety laws, but they are not well enforced. Many workers are unaware of or lack access to formal channels through which they may seek redress for mistreatment; corruption also impedes workers from obtaining such redress. Unpaid wages are a problem in many sectors.

Chad is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking. NGOs in Chad have reported that a large percentage of human trafficking in Chad is related to the operation of illegal gold mines in the country's south.

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on political rights and civil liberties in 2021



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