

Freedom House

Freedom in the World 2021 - Chad

NOT FREE

17

/ 100

[Political Rights](#) 3 / 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 held regular presidential elections since 1996, but no election has ever produced a change in power. Legislative elections are routinely delayed, and have not been held since 2011. 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 2020

- In late March, militant fighters affiliated with Boko Haram killed 98 soldiers while attacking the village of Boma. In response, the government launched a counteroffensive in the Lake Chad Basin, and claimed to have killed 1,000 militant fighters during the operation.
- In July, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced a delay to legislative elections, which are now scheduled for October 2021. The next presidential election, meanwhile, is due that April.
- In December, the National Assembly voted to approve constitutional amendments creating an indirectly elected Senate, allowing the president to name a vice president, and lowering the age of eligibility for presidential candidates from 45 years to 40, among other provisions. President Idriss Déby Itno promulgated the amendments later that month.
- President Déby issued a COVID-19-related state of emergency in April, which included restrictions on movement; some were loosened in June, though others remained in force in parts of Chad through year's end. Authorities also used pandemic-related measures to limit assemblies and target political opponents.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through 1 / free and fair elections? 4

The president is directly elected to a five-year term. President Idriss Déby Itno took power in 1990 during a rebellion, and then overwhelmingly won elections in 1996, 2001, 2006, and 2011. In the 2016 poll, he received just under 60 percent of the vote, defeating opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo, who took 13 percent. The opposition rejected the result, citing electoral irregularities.

In July 2020, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced that the next presidential election would be held in April 2021.

The position of prime minister was abolished by the 2018 constitution. In December 2020, legislators approved constitutional amendments allowing the president to appoint a vice president, among other provisions. The amendments were promulgated by Déby later that month.

A2 0-4 pts

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

The unicameral National Assembly currently consists of 188 members elected to four-year terms. The ruling political party, Déby's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS), and allied parties control 117 seats. Elections have not been organized since 2011, with legislative elections due in 2015 having been repeatedly postponed. In July 2020, CENI announced another delay, this time to October 2021.

Constitutional reforms promulgated in December 2020 provide for the creation of an indirectly elected Senate, with members serving staggered six-year terms. No senators were seated at year's end, with its envisioned powers remaining with the lower house.

A3 0-4 pts

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

The CENI's leadership is appointed by the country's entrenched political class through the National Framework for Political Dialogue (CNDP), and civil society is excluded from the process. In 2019, the CNDP adopted a revised electoral code that will reduce the number of lower-house members from 188 to 161 in the next legislature, over the objection of opposition members.

In December 2020, the National Assembly—whose mandate had long expired—approved constitutional reforms that, among other changes, reduced the age of eligibility for presidential candidates to from 45 years to 40. Opposition politicians denounced the adoption of the reform package by a legislative body with expired mandates and the lack of a popular referendum on the proposals.

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 of them are aligned with the ruling party. The MPS enjoys significant influence, and has held a majority in the National Assembly since 1997.

Opposition parties are subject to government harassment. For several days in late October and early November 2020, after opposition politicians and civil society members criticized a government-led forum on political reform, the headquarters of several parties and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were surrounded by police.

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 current legislature expired in 2015 and elections have been repeatedly postponed, leaving the opposition no avenue to increase 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.

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

Extensive kinship networks tied to the president and his family have resulted in a concentration of political and economic power. The government is not accountable to voters in practice, and voters have few effective means of influencing or participating in politics.

The military also wields considerable influence, and President Déby has closely affiliated himself with the armed forces to hold political power. In August 2020, as Chad celebrated 60 years of independence from France, the MPS-controlled legislature awarded Déby the title of marshal.

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

Members of the Beri ethnic group control Chad's political, economic, and military spheres, causing resentment among the country's other ethnic groups. Christians in the south are largely excluded from political power; some Christians hold government positions, but their voice is limited. Cabinet

members and some officials were previously required to be sworn in on a Bible or Quran, but that requirement was eliminated by constitutional amendments promulgated in December 2020.

Women hold few senior positions in government and political parties and are largely excluded from local governance bodies in rural areas. 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 1 / determine the policies of the government? 4

Déby enjoys unlimited discretionary power over the composition of the government and routinely reshuffles the cabinet. Déby did so in July 2020, expanding its size from 31 members to 35. The elimination of the prime minister's office in 2018 further concentrated power in the presidency. The influence of the presidential office impedes the National Assembly from steering national policies.

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 Déby or his allies.

Chadian officials are also known to facilitate regional drug trafficking, using the profits to influence members of the security services and the judiciary. In July 2020, 10 officials, including three military officers and a National Security Agency (ANS) official, received prison terms and fines for their involvement in that trade, after a shipment of medication bound for Libya was seized in January.

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. Déby, his family, and his associates dominate government and have little incentive to share basic information about government operations with the public.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of the press, but press freedom is restricted in practice. Although criticism of the government is generally permitted within certain boundaries, reporters and editors self-censor to avoid reprisals. Journalists can face arrest, detention, and imprisonment on charges including defamation.

In January 2020, a court in Mongo handed radio journalist Ali Hamata Achène a six-month prison term for charges including defamation over a 2019 social media post criticizing the length of pretrial detentions in that city. In May, Mbainaissem Gedeon Mbeibaroum, a correspondent for news site Alwihda Info, was arrested and briefly detained while attempting to cover intercommunal violence in Hadjer-Lamis Region. After his arrest, a local official claimed that journalists working for private outlets were not allowed to cover events in their district.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public 1 / and private? 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 2 / indoctrination? 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 2 / without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4

Space for open and free private discussion exists but tends to be self-censored due to fears of reprisal from the state. Between July and October 2020, the government throttled internet speeds and limited access to some social media platforms after a video of a soldier purportedly shooting two mechanics was disseminated online.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of free assembly are not upheld by authorities, who routinely ban gatherings and persecute organizers. In February 2020, authorities used tear gas to disperse a N'Djamena rally held by university students, injuring at least 11 demonstrators. In August, authorities banned an opposition march calling on the government to address insecurity in southern Chad.

The authorities also sought to limit assemblies using COVID-19-related restrictions. In late November 2020, authorities used those measures to arrest organizers and participants of a civil society-led forum on political reform.

E2 0-4 pts

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

NGOs must receive government approval to operate legally, but few such applications are approved. Government regulations stipulate that 1 percent of foreign NGOs' project budgets must be paid to a body consisting of government authorities and other NGO representatives, which assesses the organizations' in-country activities. In March 2020, Economy Minister Issa Doubragne warned that NGOs that did not comply with government regulations would be prohibited from operating in Chad.

In August 2020, the N'Djamena High Court suspended the secretary general of the Chadian Convention for the Defense of Human Rights (CTDDH), Mahamat Nour Ahmat Ibédou, from his post. Civil society observers considered the suspension to be politically motivated, noting Ibédou's previous criticism of the Déby government.

E3 0-4 pts

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

The constitution guarantees the rights to strike and unionize, but a 2007 law imposed limits on public sector workers' right to strike. In January 2020, the government and public-sector unions signed a pact to address labor disagreements, though the unions claimed the government was not fulfilling its obligations within the pact in September.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The rule of law and judicial system remain weak because the political leadership, especially the executive, heavily influences the courts. The executive is known to suspend magistrates by decree.

F2 0-4 pts

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

Security forces routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. Detained persons may be denied access to lawyers, notably 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.

F3 0-4 pts

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

Civilian 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.

The Boko Haram militant group, which operates near Lake Chad, was active in 2020. In late March, militants launched an attack in the village of Boma, killing 98 soldiers. Later that month, the army launched a counteroffensive, which was personally supervised by President Déby. The government claimed that over 1,000 militant fighters were killed during the operation, which ended in April.

The military previously blockaded the northern town of Miski, which was controlled by self-defense militias, following a local uprising. A preliminary agreement to end the blockade was reached in November 2019. In September 2020, the Miski self-defense committee withdrew from the agreement, claiming the Déby government was aiming to exploit the region's gold reserves.

Prison conditions often do not conform to international standards. In April 2020, the government announced that 44 Boko Haram fighters died by suicide in a N'Djamena prison. However, in August, the National Human Rights Commission concluded that the dead were arbitrarily arrested civilians who died in overcrowded cells without adequate provisions. In November, the CTTDH reported the existence of prisons operated by the ANS, in which prisoners are reportedly mistreated.

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. 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.

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 December 2020, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees counted 336,000 IDPs, along with over 478,000 refugees from other countries residing in Chad. That same month, the government adopted legislation extending protections to refugees and asylum-seekers.

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 constitutional guarantees for the freedom of movement exist, in practice militant activity and government restrictions have limited movement. In January 2020, authorities lifted a state of emergency that was instituted in the provinces of Ouaddaï, Sila, and Tibesti in August 2019 following intercommunal violence there.

In April 2020, President Déby instituted a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which included strict restrictions on movement. While some restrictions were loosened in June, others remained in force in some areas through year's end.

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 redress. Unpaid wages are a problem in many sectors.

Chad is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking. Chad has made efforts to counter human trafficking, such as initiating judicial proceedings against suspected traffickers, but criminal proceedings that return verdicts are rare.

ecoi.net summary: 
Annual report on political
rights and civil liberties in 2020

Country:
Chad

Source:
[Freedom House](#)

Document type:
Periodical Report

Language:
English

Published:
3 March 2021

Document ID:
2048583

Austrian Red Cross Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)	Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583 F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589 info@ecoi.net	Contact Imprint & Disclaimer F.A.Q. Data Protection Notice
--	--	---

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

