

Central African Republic



header1 Overview

The Central African Republic (RCA) suffers from pervasive insecurity and an absence of state authority in much of the country. A series of peace deals between the government and various armed groups have been repeatedly breached. Violent attacks against civilians, including sexual violence, are an acute risk in many areas. Independent journalists enjoy little support, and workers with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), particularly aid workers, operate at great personal risk.

header2 Key Developments in 2022

- In March, Chadian authorities arrested Maxime Mokom Gawaka and handed him to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Mokom, a leader of the antibalaka (“Invincible”) group of fighters who targeted Central African Muslims in the early 2010s, was accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- In August, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra announced a constitutional referendum as part of his efforts to seek a third term. In September, the Constitutional Court ruled that the creation of a drafting committee was unconstitutional; Touadéra dismissed court chief Danièle Darlan by decree in October.
- In September, the ICC opened the trial of Mahamat Said Abdel Kani for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Said had led the Séléka (“Alliance”) rebel coalition, which overthrew the government of François Bozizé in 2013.

PR Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	0.000 4.004
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The president is chief of state and is directly elected to up to two five-year terms. Faustin-Archange Touadéra was reelected in December 2020 with 53.1 percent of the vote. In January 2021, the Constitutional Court rejected appeals presented by the opposition and confirmed the election's legality, despite significant electoral flaws.

The election was characterized by delays and voter-registration irregularities, and was held following more than a week of intense fighting outside Bangui. While the government and its international partners described the election as credible and legitimate, opposition parties denounced the polls as marred by widespread ballot-box stuffing and vote buying. Many citizens were prevented from voting due to threats and attacks perpetrated by a rebel coalition. There were no international independent observers outside of Bangui.

The prime minister is the head of government and is appointed by the president. In February 2022, Touadéra appointed then economy minister Félix Moloua as prime minister, after the resignation of Henri-Marie Dondra.

A2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	1.001 4.004
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Members of Parliament (MPs) are directly elected to five-year terms in the 140-seat National Assembly. The constitution adopted in 2015 stipulated the creation of a Senate, which has not been established.

The first round of legislative elections took place in December 2020 alongside the presidential election, and was plagued by insecurity, voter intimidation, and allegations of fraud. In January 2021, the Constitutional Court nullified some first-round results, citing electoral irregularities, violence, and intimidation. Another three rounds were held to fill the lower house's seats.

The ruling United Hearts Movement (MCU) ultimately won 61 seats. No other party won more than 10. The MCU's parliamentary group expanded to 86 by September 2021 as MPs defected to its banner. According to UN reports, that year's polls were flawed but turnout was high and the elections were largely peaceful.

Repeatedly postponed, local elections are now scheduled for July 2023.

A3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	1.001 4.004
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Electoral laws permit multiparty competition, and adult citizens enjoy universal and equal suffrage. However, electoral authorities operate opaquely. A 2020 law regulating the National Elections Authority (ANE) introduced mechanisms to enhance its independence. However, the ruling MCU still controls the ANE's board.

The MCU and its allies made several attempts to amend the constitution during 2022 so that Touadéra could seek a third term. In August, Touadéra notably announced a constitutional referendum and created a committee to draft a new document. In September, the Constitutional Court ruled that the committee's formation was unconstitutional; in response, Touadéra dismissed court chief Danièle Darlan by decree in October.

A government-organized reconciliation initiative made little progress in 2022, with major opposition parties and rebel groups boycotting it in March.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 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?

1.001
4.004

While political parties are legally able to form and operate, party members conducting political activities risk intimidation and violence by the national police and progovernment militias in Bangui, and by armed groups and security forces outside the capital.

Threats against Touadéra's political opponents increased in 2022 in parallel with initiatives to amend the constitution. Progovernment movements called on supporters to use violence against political opponents.

B2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

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

1.001
4.004

Several opposition parties hold seats in the National Assembly. However, most of the candidates in the 2020–21 elections were unable to campaign outside Bangui due to widespread violence and direct threats and aggression by armed rebel groups.

After the elections, administrative and judicial authorities severely restricted the rights of several prominent opposition leaders, who were prevented from leaving the country and threatened with the loss of their parliamentary immunity. Others have chosen voluntary exile in France for fear of arrest. The government has reportedly considered banning dual nationals from serving as president or as an MP, a move that would affect two prominent opposition figures.

B3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 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?

0.000
4.004

Citizens are vulnerable to pressure and intimidation from national police and nonstate armed groups. Due to enduring insecurity, voters outside Bangui are largely unable to participate in political processes.

The Russian regime maintains significant influence over the RCA's political affairs. President Touadéra assigned his security to the Wagner Group, a Russian security company with links to Russian president Vladimir Putin. Wagner mercenaries have supported military operations and directly fought armed rebel groups, reportedly winning them public support.

In March 2022, Russian diplomat Yevgeny Migunov told then Constitutional Court chief Darlan that the presidential term limit must be changed. Diplomats from Western countries later claimed that Moscow had called for the constitutional referendum announced in August.

In 2021, the European Union sanctioned the Wagner Group, citing serious human rights abuses and destabilizing activities in the RCA. In March 2022, Michelle Bachelet Jeria, then the UN high

commissioner for human rights, accused security forces and the Wagner Group of engaging in human rights violations.

B4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	0.000 4.004
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Members of many ethnic, religious, and other minority groups are prevented from achieving political representation due to discrimination and an accompanying lack of access to the political process. Sectarian violence against Muslims affects their ability to participate in public space.

Women are underrepresented in politics, with only 18 women sitting in the 140-seat National Assembly, though the electoral law passed in 2019 requires that 35 percent of candidates be women. Societal and legal discrimination against LGBT+ people prevents them from advocating for their interests via the political process.

Due to the long-lasting tribalization of politics, the country's public institutions and army are dominated by the Gbaya ethnic majority, to which former president Bozizé belongs. President Touadéra has promoted members of his group, the Mbaka-Mandja, to key positions and to the presidential guard.

C Functioning of Government

C1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	0.000 4.004
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While elected representatives can determine the policies of the government, their ability to implement policy is severely affected by poor governance and a lack of authority outside Bangui. Local decision-making is also impacted by Russian influence.

C2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	0.000 4.004
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Corruption and nepotism have long been pervasive in government. Political will to address public-sector corruption is lacking.

C3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	0.000 4.004
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Government operations are largely nontransparent, and civil society groups and others have limited opportunity to influence impending policy decisions. Citizens outside of Bangui have limited access to their MPs. Touadéra and his inner circle pursued constitutional reform without consulting MPs or the wider public.

Add Q

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of	-1.00- 1
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another group?

Targeted religious- and ethnic-based violence perpetrated by the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) and Russian mercenaries increased after the 2020–21 elections in the east and northwest. Hundreds of thousands of civilians remain internally displaced or confined to ethnic and sectarian enclaves.

CL Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? | 1.001 4.004

There is little support for independent media. In Bangui, outlets are increasingly aligned with national politicians and foreign governments, especially Moscow. Media outlets and social media channels often carry material meant to incite hate, discrimination, or violence, mainly against minority groups and opposition leaders. Although the High Commission of Communication plays an active role in media regulation, the situation has not improved.

Security and progovernment militia forces regularly threaten journalists. The government prevents international media workers from traveling outside Bangui. Incidents of harassment and intimidation by government forces often go unreported for fear of reprisals.

In February 2022, journalist Jean Saint-Clair Maka Gbossokotto died after meeting an individual affiliated with the RCA government and the Wagner Group; friends feared Gbossokotto was poisoned. In September, Communications Minister Serge Ghislain Djorie threatened to close Radio Ndékéluka if it continued to discuss Touadéra's efforts to amend the constitution.

D2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? | 0.000 4.004

While the RCA is officially secular, ethnic and religious cleavages often overlap with the country's political divisions. Muslims and Christians in Bangui remain partially segregated in separate enclaves, and fears of identity-based or sectarian violence by armed actors impede free religious expression. Muslims living in the northwest and east are targeted by FACA and Russian mercenary forces.

D3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? | 2.002 4.004

Although extremely dysfunctional, the educational system is generally free of extensive political indoctrination. However, clientelism and corruption are widespread in many schools and universities. Russian-language studies were expanded at the university level in 2021, as Moscow continued to exert influence in the RCA. In June 2022, Moscow issued scholarships to provide Russian-language training to Central African professors.

Outside the capital, the school year is often disrupted, including by a lack of available teachers and the occupation of school buildings by a variety of armed actors.

D4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

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

0.000
4.004

State authorities surveil public discussion and political debates. Political instability and the growing risk of violent retaliation for discussing sensitive topics—including widespread abuses perpetrated by progovernment militias, FACA forces, and Russian mercenaries—inhibit free expression.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 0.000 4.004

Although freedom of assembly and the right to political protest are constitutionally guaranteed, these liberties are curtailed due to government repression of the opposition in Bangui, and threats posed by armed groups, FACA forces, and Russian mercenaries elsewhere.

With the exception of an opposition rally held in August 2022, only progovernment, pro-Russian, and anti-French gatherings are authorized in Bangui.

E2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

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

0.000
4.004

NGO operations are limited by poor security conditions, and aid workers are particularly vulnerable. The International NGO Safety Organization counted 170 security incidents in 2022 involving relief workers; 21 were injured and 8 were abducted.

E3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1.001 4.004

Trade unions and collective bargaining are permitted, although union organizers are sometimes subject to arbitrary detention or arrest. Small-scale agricultural organizations and cooperatives exist throughout the country, including organizations for women farmers.

F Rule of Law

F1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 0.000 4.004

Courts are generally inefficient and frequently hampered by corruption. The government has limited authority to enforce judicial decisions. Judicial salaries have often gone unpaid. Judicial personnel are often untrained and are reluctant to be deployed outside of the capital.

The Special Criminal Court (CPS), created in 2015, is struggling to fulfill its mandate. The Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, created in 2020, has yet to start its work.

The Constitutional Court was subjected to political interference during 2022. In March, a Russian diplomat called on then chief Danièle Darlan to help secure a third term for President Touadéra. In October, Touadéra dismissed Darlan by decree.

F2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	0.000 4.004
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Arbitrary detention and lengthy pretrial detention are commonplace, and the justice system has limited presence beyond Bangui. Impunity for violence, economic crimes, and human rights violations are widespread.

National and international courts made some steps in trying those accused of violence. In March 2022, Chadian authorities arrested antibalaka leader Maxime Mokom Gawaka, who was accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and handed him to the ICC. In June, a French prosecutor launched a preliminary investigation into whether the France-based Groupe Castel was involved in war crimes in the RCA. In September, the ICC opened the trial of former Séléka leader Mahamat Said Abdel Kani. In October, three rebels who had been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity were found guilty at the CPS.

F3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	0.000 4.004
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In Bangui, the officials of the Central African Office for the Repression of Banditry and progovernment militias are often accused of abuse of power and excessive use of force. Elsewhere, armed nonstate actors operate with impunity. These groups are responsible for violent attacks against civilians, international peacekeeping forces, and humanitarian workers. FACA and Russian mercenary forces have also been accused of human rights violations.

Security forces and insurgent groups compete to control territory and natural resources, causing widespread internal displacement. Conflicts between farmers and nomadic pastoralists have also destabilized the country.

In July 2022, the UN Security Council exempted the RCA's security forces from an ongoing arms embargo.

F4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	0.000 4.004
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Same-sex activity is illegal, and punishable by fines and imprisonment. While enforcement of these laws is uncommon, societal discrimination against LGBT+ people remains acute. In September 2022, the interior minister expelled two Cameroonian nationals for engaging in same-sex activity.

Muslims, nomadic pastoralists, and the Ba'aka minority group face continued discrimination. The Gbaya majority, to which former president Bozizé belongs, is also targeted, while the Mbaka-Mandja are favored by Touadéra.

The independent High Authority for Good Governance is tasked with protecting the rights of members of minority groups and people with disabilities, though its reach is limited.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	0.000
	4.004

Free movement is inhibited by insecurity and targeted violence. Transportation routes are threatened by banditry and theft in many areas.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported there were 518,000 internally displaced persons as of November 30, 2022.

G2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	0.000
	4.004

Businesses and homes are regularly looted or extorted by armed militants, with little prospect for compensation or legal recourse for victims. The agricultural economy—the livelihood of the majority of the population—remains restricted by ongoing violence and insecurity.

The family code does not discriminate against women regarding their inheritance rights. However, in practice, the possibility for women to inherit faces many challenges, including eviction from the family home after the death or disappearance of men during conflict.

G3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	0.000
	4.004

Women and girls are by far the primary victims of sexual violence, but men and boys are also affected. Sexual violence is used as a deliberate tool of warfare; attackers enjoy broad impunity. Such acts that are not related to ethnic conflict are most often perpetrated within communities by family or neighbors. Constitutional guarantees for women's rights are rarely enforced, especially in rural areas. Allegations of sexual abuse committed by UN peacekeeping forces in the country have also been documented.

G4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	0.000
	4.004

Economic opportunity is heavily restricted by widespread corruption and the presence of armed groups. Many armed groups exploit gold and diamond mines, and forced labor and child recruitment for soldiering are common practices.

In its *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, the US State Department reported that Central African authorities did not provide sufficient services for survivors, nor did they finalize antitrafficking legislation. However, prosecutors secured the first trafficking-related conviction in five years.