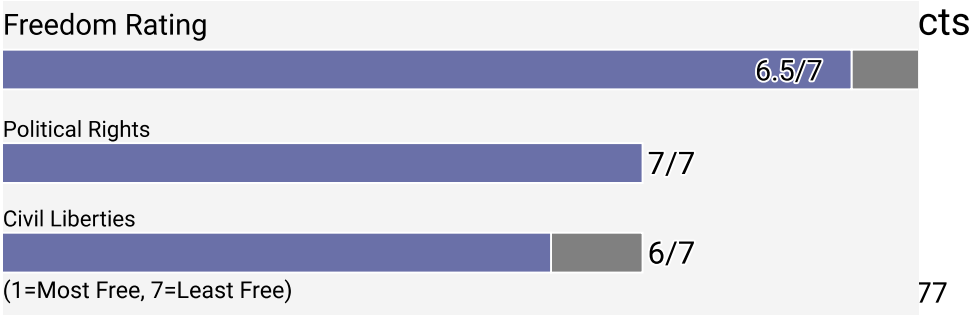
# Freedom in the World 2018

# Chad *Profile*

FREEDOM STATUS: NOT FREE

## Freedom in the World Scores




Aggregate Score: 18/100 (0=Least Free, 100=Most Free)

Press Freedom Status: Not Free

# 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 opposition activists risk arrest and severe mistreatment while in detention. The state typically represses antigovernment protests.

# Key Developments in 2017:

- In April, security forces arrested two organizers of a gathering in protest of state corruption. After a time in detention, they each received six-month suspended sentences. They said they experienced severe abuse at the hands of security forces while detained.

Chad's second largest city, from office and imprisoned him for allegedly embezzling public funds.

- Public sector workers continued to face unpaid or late compensation, despite an April agreement between unions and the government to form an arbitration committee.
- Attacks by Boko Haram around Lake Chad led to increased internal displacement.

# Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

# POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40

## A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12

**A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4**

The president is directly elected to a five-year term. Incumbent 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 took just under 60 percent of the vote, defeating opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo, who took 13 percent. The opposition rejected the result, citing a variety of electoral irregularities. A 2005 constitutional amendment abolished presidential term limits.

**A2. Were the current national legislative representatives**

The unicameral National Assembly consists of 188 members elected for four-year terms. Legislative elections are routinely delayed. Parliamentary elections set for 2015 had still not been held at the end of 2017.

**A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4**

While there is an Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), its leadership is appointed by the country's entrenched political leadership, prompting deep skepticism of its impartiality.[1] Despite its perceived subordination to Déby, who effectively controls most government bodies through patronage, political divisions within CENI have prevented it from adjudicating many electoral disputes.

## B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16

**B1. 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 Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS). The MPS enjoys significant influence and has held a majority since the first legislative elections under the current constitution took place in 1997.

**B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to**

While the political opposition is given legal recognition, opposition leaders who publicly criticize the government risk harassment and arrest on trumped-up or fictitious charges. In July 2017, authorities imprisoned Laokein Médard, opposition leader and mayor of Moundou, the country's second largest city, for allegedly embezzling public funds. In September, an audit assigned to investigate the charges by a judge cleared Médard of any wrongdoing. He remained in prison until November.

**B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4**

Members of Déby's northeastern Zaghawa ethnic group, and other northern ethnic groups, control Chad's political and economic systems, causing resentment among the country's more than 200 other ethnic groups. The extensive and complicated kinship networks tied to the president and his family have resulted in a concentration of power.

**B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4**

Although they comprise roughly 44 percent of the population, Christians in the south have largely been excluded from political power for more than 30 years. While some southerners hold positions in the current government, their representation and voice are limited to a few token ministerial positions.

Despite some government efforts to encourage their political

from local governance bodies. The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community is severely marginalized, and this impacts the ability of LGBT people to engage in political processes and advocate for their interests.

## C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

### C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Déby enjoys unlimited discretionary power over the composition of the government, and reshuffled the cabinet several times in 2017. The power of the president to reshuffle the government without justification impedes the ability of the prime minister, as head of government, and the National Assembly to steer national policies.

### C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption, bribery, and nepotism are endemic in Chad and prevail at all levels of government, from the presidential cabinet to the police force and local bureaucracies. High-profile journalists, labor leaders, and religious figures have faced harsh reprisals for speaking out about corruption, including arrest, prosecution, and expulsion from the country. Corruption investigations and cases 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.

In November 2017, US authorities charged a former Senegalese foreign minister for transferring to Déby a $2 million bribe from a

corrupt and would never be corrupt."

### C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Chad has no law establishing the right to access official information, and access remains difficult in practice. Déby, his family, and his associates dominate government and have little incentive to share even basic information about government operations with journalists, transparency advocates, or ordinary citizens.

# CIVIL LIBERTIES: 14 / 60

## D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 12

### D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The constitution formally provides for freedom of the press, but press freedom is restricted in practice. Although criticism of the government is generally permitted within certain boundaries, some reporters and editors practice self-censorship to avoid reprisals, including arbitrary detention and other harassment and abuse. Many of Chad's most prominent news outlets are either state-owned or controlled by those with close ties to the government, thus limiting their editorial independence.

In October 2017, Juda Allahondoum, publisher of the newspaper *Le Visionnaire*, was arrested on charges of pretending to be a journalist after releasing an article about a privately owned

### D2. 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. Several Muslim sects deemed to promote violence are banned. Imams are subject to governance by the state High Council for Islamic Affairs (HCIA). Terrorist attacks are considered an acute threat against Muslim and Christian places of worship, and the state provided security to some houses of worship in response to such concerns. The government has engaged in a highly visible campaign to raise awareness of a ban on burqas, though in practice women who choose to wear them rarely face penalties.

### D3. 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. In May 2017, university lecturers at the University of N'djamena went on strike, citing over seven months of unpaid research bonuses. Strikes have resulted in incomplete academic years.

### D4. 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 heavily self-censored due to fears of reprisal from the state's repressive apparatus.

## RIGHTS: 4 / 12

### E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantee of free assembly are not upheld by authorities, who routinely ban opposition gatherings and persecute organizers. A number of demonstrations were banned in 2017, and in April, security forces arrested two organizers of a gathering in protest of state corruption. After a time in detention—during which they alleged that security forces had suffocated them with plastic bags containing hot peppers—they each received six-month suspended sentences.

### E2. 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 explicit approval from the government to operate legally, and few such applications are approved; most legal NGOs operate in the humanitarian and development sectors. Intelligence agents target and intimidate local activists who attempt to address issues related to governance or human rights.

### E3. 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 April 2017, trade unions and the government reached an agreement to form a new tripartite arbitration committee composed of state officials, employers, and union representatives. However, unpaid or late compensation to public sector workers

## F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16

### F1. 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. In March 2017, newly appointed justice minister Ahmat Mahamat Hassan called for the stamping out of corruption in the justice system, but it continued to be an issue throughout the year. He was replaced in a December 2017 cabinet shuffle.

### F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Security forces routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. A state of emergency imposed in the Lake Chad region since 2015 grants security forces increased authority to perform searches. Detained persons may be denied access to lawyers, notably those detained in connection with their involvement in antigovernment protests or other activity challenging the government. Many people suspected of committing crimes are held for lengthy periods without charge.

### F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Civilian leaders do not maintain control of the security forces, who stand accused of killing and torturing with impunity. The militant group Boko Haram operates near Lake Chad, and in 2017 it continued to carry out abductions and killings of civilians, and burned dozens of homes, leading to increased internal displacement. Figures vary, but some reports claim the number of

severe.

### F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

The government struggles to provide services to IDPs and the more than 400,000 refugees in Chad who fled conflicts in neighboring Central African Republic, Sudan, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The government restricts the movement of both IDPs and refugees.

Due to cultural stigmatization, LGBT citizens are forced to conceal their sexual orientation and gender identity. Additionally, in August 2017, Déby approved a revised penal code that criminalized same-sex sexual activity.

Women face pervasive discrimination. Girls have limited access to education.

## G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 3 / 16

### G1. 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 imposed in response to it limit free movement. The state of emergency declared in the Lake Chad region allows local authorities to ban movement as they deem necessary. In January 2017, insecurity from terrorist activities in Libya led to a complete

## G2. 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 they 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.

Due to high levels of corruption, establishing and operating a business in Chad is extremely difficult.

## G3. 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. Revisions to the penal code approved in 2016 increased the legal marriage age from 16 to 18 years old, but the rate of child marriage remains high. A report by the Centre for Studies and Training for Development (CEFOD) released in June 2017 cited early marriage as a key cause of girls dropping out of school.

## G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Chad is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking, and the government has made minimal efforts to

industries. Young girls who travel to look for work often end up either forced into prostitution or abusive domestic servitude.

Restrictions on movement in the Lake Chad region in practice also prevents the movement of food and goods, hampering economic activity and opportunity there.

**Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)**
**X = Score Received**
**Y = Best Possible Score**
**Z = Change from Previous Year**

## Full Methodology

**Sign up for our newsletter**

Type your email address SIGN UP

**Follow us**

Subscribe Donate Events Contact Us Careers Privacy Policy

© 2018 Freedom House