



# Freedom in the World 2018

## Central African Republic

### Profile

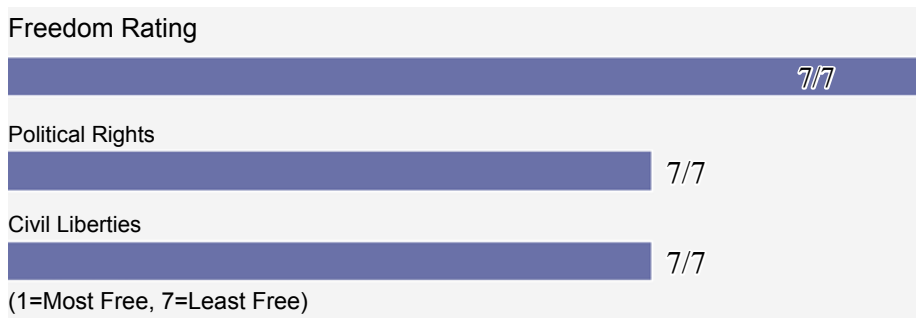
**FREEDOM STATUS:**  
**NOT FREE**



Freedom in the World

Scores

Quick Facts



Aggregate Score: 9/100 (0=Least Free, 100=Most Free)

## Overview:

The Central African Republic suffers from pervasive insecurity and an absence of state authority in much of the country. Efforts to reach a negotiated settlement between the government and various armed groups have not yet achieved political reconciliation. The country faces a humanitarian crisis, and violent attacks against civilians, including sexual violence, are an acute risk in many areas.

# Key Developments in 2017:





- The government remained unable to restore the authority of the state beyond the capital city, despite the initiation of several mediation efforts aimed at reaching a ceasefire and national reconciliation.
- Intercommunal violence and targeted attacks on civilians by armed militias escalated during the year.
- A special prosecutor was named in February to the Special Criminal Court, which has jurisdiction to investigate human rights violations committed since 2003. However, at year's end the court was not yet operational.

## Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

### POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40

#### A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

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

The president is chief of state and is directly elected to up to two five-year terms. President Faustin-Archange Touadéra was elected in February 2016. The elections were monitored by the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM), and were regarded as generally successful and a step towards peace and stabilization. Fears about widespread electoral violence were not realized, but there were many reports of serious irregularities at the polls. Moreover, many voters were unable to participate because insecurity prevented voter registration, or because they had fled to other countries as refugees and the state was unable to set up effective absentee voting procedures.

**A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?** 1 / 4

Members of parliament are directly elected to five-year terms. The current parliament was elected in February 2016, followed by a second round of by-elections that March. The polls were generally regarded as successful, but like the presidential polls, were plagued by irregularities and the disenfranchisement of voters unable to access the polls due to security concerns or refugee status. Moreover, a first round had to be nullified following a slew of allegations of fraud and other misconduct, by actors ranging from armed groups to political candidates to the National Electoral Authority.

A new constitution adopted in 2015 stipulated the creation of a Senate, but this institution is not yet active.



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

The electoral laws of the Central African Republic permit multiparty competition, and adult citizens enjoy universal and equal suffrage. However, the broader electoral framework of the country remains challenged by a weak judicial system, inadequate funding and training for election officials, and a lack of transparency in the composition of national election authorities.

## **B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 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**

While political parties are legally able to form and operate, party members conducting political activities are at risk of intimidation and violence in areas controlled by irregular armed groups.

**B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4**

Several opposition parties exist in the parliament. However politicians are at risk of intimidation, harassment, or violence in areas controlled by armed groups, and opposition parties are limited in their ability to garner support in those areas. Current national-level negotiations envision the insertion of armed group leaders into positions of local administration, but these positions have not yet been filled.



**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**

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

**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**

Enduring insecurity and an accompanying lack of access to political processes precludes many minority groups from achieving political representation. Sectarian violence affecting Muslims has decreased their ability to participate in politics. Women are underrepresented in politics, and just 11 sit in the 140-seat parliament. Societal and legal discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people prevent them from working to see their interests represented in the political sphere.

## C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT:

### 0 / 12

#### **C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

Presidential and parliamentary elections held in early 2016 led to a peaceful transfer of power from the National Transitional Council to an elected government. However, while the elected representatives can determine the policies of the government, the weak authority of the state in many areas severely limits the government's ability to implement policy decisions.

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

Corruption and nepotism have long been pervasive in all branches of government, and addressing public-sector corruption is difficult given capacity limitations. In March 2017, the president appointed members of the independent High Authority for Good Governance, which is charged, among other things, with ensuring the equitable distribution of natural resource revenues.

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

Government operations are largely nontransparent, and civil society groups and others have limited opportunity to comment upon or influence impending policy decisions.

## ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION



**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 another group? –1 / 0**

Targeted violence against civilians by armed groups such as the Muslim-dominated Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central Africa (FPRC) as well as Christian anti-Balaka militias escalated in 2017, particularly in the northern and eastern regions of the country. Hundreds of thousands of civilians remain internally displaced or confined to ethnic and sectarian enclaves.

## CIVIL LIBERTIES: 5 / 60 (–1)

### D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 4 / 16

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

While direct state censorship of media is uncommon, reporters face restricted access to many areas of the country due to insecurity. Few residents outside Bangui enjoy access to national or international media sources or the internet. Since the onset of conflict in 2013, many community radio stations

have been shuttered. However, some independently run stations continue to operate and host robust debates, with active participation from callers-in.



**D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4**

Officially Central African Republic is a secular state, but religious and sectarian cleavages often overlap with the country's political divisions. In 2017, sectarian clashes between Christian and Muslim populations continued to threaten the free practice of religion.

**D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4**

While the educational system is generally free of extensive political indoctrination, many schools and universities remain closed, or operate without adequate resources.

**D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4**

Public discussion and political debates are generally free from surveillance by state authorities. However, a sense of political instability and the risk of violent retaliation for challenging the presence of armed groups or expressing opinions on other sensitive topics inhibits free expression.



## E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12



### **E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

Although freedom of assembly and the right to political protest is guaranteed under the constitution, in practice these liberties continued to be curtailed in 2017 due to widespread insecurity.

### **E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? 0 / 4**

While the government does not restrict nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and frequently cooperates with them, their operations in practice are severely restricted by poor security conditions.

### **E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4**

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: 0 / 16

### **F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

Courts are inefficient and politicized. Judicial salaries have often gone unpaid, and there is a shortage of judges.

**F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4**

Arbitrary detention and lengthy pretrial detention are commonplace in Central African Republic, and the state justice system has limited presence beyond Bangui. Impunity for violence, economic crimes, and human rights violations remained widespread in 2017. A special prosecutor, Toussaint Muntazini Mukimapa, was named in February 2017 to the Special Criminal Court (SCC) which has jurisdiction to investigate human rights violations perpetrated since 2003, but the court is not yet operational and suffers from a lack of human and financial resources.

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

Armed nonstate actors—many of which are successors to the Muslim Séléka rebels and Christian anti-Balaka militias involved in violent atrocities since the onset of the country's current crisis in 2013—continue to operate with impunity in the eastern, northern, and northwestern regions of the country. These groups were responsible for violent attacks against civilians, often on the basis of ethnic and religious identity, as well as attacks against international peacekeeping forces and humanitarian aid workers. Violent competition among larger insurgent groups for control of territory and natural resources has internally displaced nearly 600,000 people. Armed groups and state security forces and police reportedly engaged in torture.

In response to the escalating crisis, 2017 saw a raft of new mediation efforts—including by the African Union (AU), neighboring states, and the Roman Catholic group Sant Egidio—to reach a ceasefire and national reconciliation. However, these negotiations appear to have had little effect on the behavior of armed groups on the ground.



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

Same-sex sexual acts are illegal, and punishable by fines and imprisonment. While enforcement of these laws is uncommon, societal discrimination against LGBT people remains acute. Discrimination continues against the nomadic pastoralist Mbororo minority, as well as the forest-dwelling Ba'aka.

The independent High Authority for Good Governance, whose members were appointed in March 2017, is tasked with protecting the rights of minorities and the handicapped, though its efficacy has yet to be proven.

## **G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 0 / 16 (–1)**

#### **G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4**

Free movement by citizens is inhibited by the lack of security and targeted violence in 2017. Transportation routes are threatened by banditry and theft in many areas.

**G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 0 / 4**



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

**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 (-1)**

Domestic abuse, rape, and sexual slavery against women by armed groups threaten the security of women and girls, and sexual violence is increasingly used as a deliberate tool of warfare, and attackers enjoy broad impunity. Constitutional guarantees for women's rights are rarely enforced, especially in rural areas. Sexual abuses by UN peacekeeping forces have been documented, but many instances have not been investigated or prosecuted.

**Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the magnitude of sexual violence by armed groups as well as peacekeepers during the conflict, which has worsened and has been met with impunity.**

**G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4**

Economic opportunity is heavily restricted by the presence of armed groups in many areas of the country. Approximately one in two Central Africans depend on access to humanitarian assistance for survival. Many armed groups exploit gold and diamond mines, and forced labor and child recruitment for soldiering are common practices.

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

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