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Chad

Country:

[Chad](#)

Year:

2016

Freedom Status:

Not Free

Political Rights:

7

Civil Liberties:

6

Aggregate Score:

20

Freedom Rating:

6.5

Overview:

Terrorist attacks increased throughout the country during 2015, particularly in the capital, N'Djamena, and the Lake Chad region. In one of the worst attacks, 38 people were killed in twin suicide bombings in N'Djamena in June. In response, President Idriss Déby Itno allocated Chadian military troops to the fight against the militant Islamist group Boko Haram, which claimed responsibility for many of the attacks. In May, N'Djamena was designated as the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force military operation to fight Boko Haram in the region.

In February 2015, the government acknowledged that legislative elections scheduled for early 2015 would need to be postponed, after the electoral commission failed to organize a timely biometric electoral census. Subsequently, the National Assembly in a special session extended the mandate of the legislature and its deputies until elections could be held. A presidential election is scheduled for 2016.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 4 / 40 (-1) [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 2 / 12 (-1)

Chad has never experienced a free and fair transfer of power through elections. Déby took power in 1990 during a rebellion, and then overwhelmingly won elections in 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011.

Chad's president is elected for five-year terms, and a 2005 constitutional amendment abolished term limits. The executive branch dominates the judicial and legislative branches, and the president appoints the prime minister.

The unicameral National Assembly consists of 188 members elected for four-year terms. After being postponed nearly five years, legislative elections occurred in February 2011. Déby's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) party won 117 seats and 14 more went to MPS allies, leading to an absolute majority for the president. The most successful opposition party won only 10 seats. The European Union praised the peaceful and fair conduct of the elections, despite some logistical problems. However, the opposition claimed that irregularities occurred both before the vote—due to the government's media dominance and the use of state resources to benefit the ruling party—and during the elections, including issues with electoral rolls and voter registration cards. Citing these irregularities, the three main opposition candidates boycotted the presidential poll in April 2011, which Déby won with 89 percent of the vote.

Legislative elections were scheduled to take place in early 2015, but similar to the previous polls, they have been postponed until a biometric electoral census can be organized throughout the country. The biometric census was promised after Déby's reelection in 2011 and scheduled for 2013, but the census stalled due to a lack of funds and equipment. It was finally launched in October 2015.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 1 / 16

There are more than 70 registered political parties in Chad, though a number of them were created by the government to divide the opposition. The ruling MPS enjoys significant influence and has held a majority since the first legislative elections under the current constitution took place in 1997. The 2015 extension of the legislature's mandate guarantees the continued political dominance of the ruling MPS.

The political opposition is given legal recognition and allowed to publicly criticize the government, but in the past opposition political leaders have faced arrest and harassment. Opposition leaders have expressed fears that Déby will use the threat posed by Boko Haram to further increase his executive powers and extend his rule.

In June 2015, an appeal was submitted in the National Assembly to repeal the parliamentary immunity of Saleh Kebzabo, the leader of the largest opposition party, the National Union for Democracy and Renewal (UNDR). All deputies receive parliamentary immunity unless it is revoked by a vote in the National Assembly. Kebzabo accused the government of harassment and defamation in advance of the 2016 presidential election.

Members of Déby's northeastern Zaghawa ethnic group and other northern ethnic groups continue to control Chad's political and economic systems, causing resentment among the country's more than 200 other ethnic groups. Although they comprise roughly 35 percent of the population, Christians in the south have been excluded from political power for more than 20 years.

C. Functioning of Government: 1 / 12

Déby enjoys unlimited discretionary power over the composition of the government, allowing him to dole out political patronage in the form of government positions. 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 without undue influence from the executive.

According to international monitors, corruption is endemic in Chad and prevails at all levels of government, from the presidential cabinet to the police force and local bureaucracy. Despite being an oil-producing country since 2003, Chad remains one of the world's poorest nations; Chad ranked 185 out of 188 states on the 2015 Human Development Index. Poor revenue management and oversight enable the diversion of oil revenues from national development projects to private interests and growing military expenditures, while fighting corruption continues to be unaddressed by the government. Chad was ranked 147 out of 168 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index.

High-profile journalists, labor leaders, and religious figures have faced harsh reprisal for speaking out about corruption, including arrest, prosecution, and expulsion from the country. In one such instance in 2015, the president of the Chadian Students' Union, Nadjo Kaina, was arrested and detained for more than three weeks.

Civil Liberties: 16 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 7 / 16

The constitution formally provides for freedom of the press and expression. However, in practice both are restricted. Broadcast media are controlled by the state. The High Council of Communication (HCC) exerts control over most content on the radio—the most important means of mass communication—and while there are roughly a dozen private stations, they face high licensing fees and the threat of closure for critical coverage. Reporting on rebel activity or any other sensitive security information has been banned since 2008. A 2010 media bill eliminated imprisonment as a punishment for libel, slander, or insulting the president, but introduced heavy fines or prison time for inciting racial and/or ethnic hatred and “condoning violence.”

Journalists frequently face persecution as a result of publishing critical views. In July 2015, the publisher of the privately owned newspaper *Abba Garde*, Moussaye Avenir de la Tchiré, avoided arrest by the National Security Agency and fled to Cameroon after the HCC ordered the closure of the newspaper and seizure of its most recent issue. The HCC's decision came at the request of the president's office, following the publication of an article entitled “Idriss Déby, the Hitler of Modern Times.” In June and October, authorities arrested and interrogated the publisher of the newspaper *Haut Parleur*, Stéphane Mbaïrabé Ouaye, in connection with an article accusing the president's brother, Saleh Déby, the director general of customs, of corruption.

Although Chad is a secular state, Muslims, who comprise slightly more than half of the population, hold a disproportionately large number of senior government posts. At the same time, the authorities have banned certain Muslim groups believed to promote violence. Due to the 2015 suicide bombings in the capital—in which the perpetrators used burqas as a form of camouflage prior to the attacks—the government also banned the religious dress known as the burqa, which covers the face and entire body of adherents. In October, police arrested and fined

dozens of women wearing burqas in the streets.

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

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 5 / 12 (+1)

Despite the constitutional guarantee of free assembly, the authorities at times ban demonstrations by groups thought to be critical of the government. For example, in March 2015 student protests were violently repressed, resulting in three deaths. Schools throughout the country were closed in an effort to prevent further protests on campuses. In August, the authorities arrested some 30 student union leaders for holding an unauthorized meeting to discuss their grievances over delayed government stipends.

Nevertheless, in 2015 there were an increased number of public events that allowed for critical views to be expressed. For example, throughout the year the civil society organization Comité de Suivi de l'Appel à la Paix et à la Réconciliation held several public political dialogues between leaders of civil society, the political opposition, and the presidential majority.

The constitution guarantees the rights to strike and unionize, but a 2007 law imposed limits on public sector workers' rights to strike. Nevertheless, strikes do take place; the main coalition of public sector unions held a strike in July 2015, and other public sector strikes occurred during the year.

F. Rule of Law: 1 / 16 (-1)

The rule of law and judicial system remain weak because the political leadership, especially the executive, heavily influences the courts. Civilian leaders do not maintain control of the security forces, which routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure and detention. Human rights groups credibly accuse security forces and rebel groups of killing and torturing with impunity. Prison conditions are severe, and many inmates are held for lengthy periods without charge.

In 2012, the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, called for the arrest of former Chadian president Hissène Habré, and he was arrested in 2013 in Senegal. His trial began in Senegal in July 2015, and while this process will likely render justice to Chadians who suffered during his rule—from 1982 until 1990—the contemporary Chadian judicial branch has played little to no role in the process.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that there are more than 370,000 refugees who recently fled conflicts in neighboring Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Nigeria currently in Chad, and that this figure is likely to rise. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) also rose during 2015, notably those fleeing conflict between the Chadian military and elements of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region. Figures vary, but some reports claim the number of IDPs in Chad from the Lake Chad region alone to be as high

as 75,000.

In July, the National Assembly voted to reinstate the death penalty, previously repealed in 2014, for crimes of terrorism. The following month, 10 Boko Haram members were found guilty of organizing the June suicide bombings in N'Djamena, and were executed by firing squad.

In September 2014, the cabinet approved a new penal code that criminalized same-sex relations and imposed heavy fines or prison terms on those convicted. Parliament had yet to ratify the penal code by the end of 2015. Due to cultural and legal restrictions, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) citizens are forced to conceal their sexual orientation and gender identity. No nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) related to LGBT rights function in Chad.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 3 / 16

Although constitutional guarantees for the freedom of movement exist, the government restricts the movement of citizens and controls the movement of both IDPs and refugees. Already limited by government control of the economy and repression of minority rights, increased insecurity from terrorist activities exacerbated the freedom of movement, employment, and education throughout the country.

Formal 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. Due to high levels of corruption, establishing and operating a business in Chad is extremely difficult. The World Bank's 2016 *Ease of Doing Business* report ranked Chad 183 out of 189 countries.

Chadian women face widespread discrimination and violence. In the 2011 elections, 24 female members were elected to the National Assembly, or about 13 percent. Female genital mutilation is illegal but commonly practiced. Chad is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking, and the government has made minimal efforts to eliminate the problem.

Children are often forced into labor in both the agricultural and informal sectors. Young girls travel to look for work and often end up either forced into prostitution or abusive domestic servitude. According to the U.S. State Department 2015 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Chad does not meet the minimum requirements for effectively addressing the child trafficking problem within its borders. Though the Chadian government has attempted to bring awareness to child trafficking and has provided NGOs and international organizations with information on how to identify potential victims of trafficking, the number of convictions against traffickers in 2015 remains the same as the previous year and there are no services available specifically for victims of trafficking.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

Full Methodology

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