

[Menu](#)  

# Niger

[Print](#)

Niger | Freedom of the Press 2016

2016

PRESS FREEDOM STATUS: Partly Free

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 16 / 30 (↓1)

(0=BEST, 30=WORST)

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT: 20 / 40

(↓1)

(0=BEST, 40=WORST)

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT: 17 / 30

(0=BEST, 30=WORST)

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE: 53 / 100 (↓2)

(0=BEST, 100=WORST)

## QUICK FACTS

Population: 18,884,462

Freedom in the World Status: Partly Free

Internet Penetration Rate: 2.2%

## Overview

The media environment in Niger suffers from poor enforcement of legal protections for journalists, who are frequently harassed and arrested in practice. Conditions grew worse in 2015, as attacks by the Islamist militant group Boko Haram in the country's eastern region made newsgathering more difficult.

## Key Developments

- At least 11 journalists were arrested during 2015 for covering a variety of sensitive topics, including the arrest of opposition leader Hama Amadou, the Boko Haram insurgency, and student demonstrations.
- During a spate of protests and communal violence in January, the authorities physically assaulted several journalists in the field, raided media offices, and briefly shut down internet and mobile text-messaging services.

## Legal Environment: 16 / 30 (↓1)

Article 23 of the Nigerien constitution guarantees the freedoms of thought, opinion, and expression. In 2010, a postcoup transitional government decriminalized media offenses and replaced prison sentences with fines as punishments for defamation and publication of false information. In 2011, President Mahamadou Issoufou became the first head of state to sign the Declaration of Table Mountain, an initiative calling for the repeal of criminal defamation and insult laws and for a press environment in Africa that is free from government, political, and economic control.

However, authorities have often failed to uphold these constitutional rights and legal principles in practice, and journalists were arrested in connection with their work on multiple occasions during 2015. In May, civil society activist and blogger Moussa Tchangari was arrested and accused of conspiring with terrorists after issuing a report that was critical of the government's handling of the Boko Haram crisis in the eastern region of Diffa. He was released at the end of the month and charged with undermining national defense. In October, five journalists were arrested while reporting on a student demonstration, and their equipment was confiscated. In November, four journalists were detained while attempting to report on the arrest of opposition leader Hama Amadou upon his return from exile in Paris. They were held for one day at police headquarters, and their equipment and mobile phones were also seized. Souleymane Salha, editor of *Le Courrier*, was separately detained that month for criticizing Amadou's arrest.

In 2011, the transitional government approved the Charter on Access to Public Information and Administrative Documents, which aimed to improve transparency and public access to information. Implementation of the law remains inadequate, and in practice access is somewhat difficult.

The state-run media regulatory body, the High Council on Communication, occasionally issues warnings or suspensions to media outlets for alleged content violations. While it is not considered to be heavily politicized, it has generally been ineffective at protecting the media from abuses by the government and security forces.

### **Political Environment: 20 / 40** (↓1)

Government critics and alternative voices tend to receive little coverage in public media. However, critical reporting can be found in private outlets, and

the media in 2015 covered contentious political issues such as the opposition's calls for an audit of the country's electoral rolls before the 2016 presidential election.

Official censorship is not common, though the High Commission for New Technology and Communication blocks websites associated with terrorist organizations. Self-censorship stems in part from the authorities' use of political pressure or advertising incentives to shape content, and is evident in reporting on sensitive issues such as national security.

The security situation in Diffa deteriorated in 2015 as Boko Haram escalated its attacks, making traveling and reporting considerably more difficult. The government declared a state of emergency in the region in February, giving authorities the power to enforce curfews and impose controls on the media. The north of the country is also considered a hostile environment for journalists due to the activities of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

Security forces continued to intimidate and physically assault media workers during the year. In January, for instance, police attacked several journalists and raided the headquarters of four media outlets during a series of demonstrations against the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. The opposition-aligned station Radio Télévision Ténéré was temporarily forced to stop broadcasting as a result of one raid. In November, on the country's national press freedom day, a number of television and radio stations ceased broadcasting for two hours to protest the police's treatment of journalists during the year.

## **Economic Environment: 17 / 30**

Several dozen private newspapers compete with a state-run daily. Radio remains the most popular and widely accessible news source. The state continues to dominate the broadcasting landscape, though a number of private radio stations and dozens of community radio stations broadcast in French and local languages across the country. Some stations air programming from foreign services, including Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and Radio France Internationale. On television, three private stations operate alongside two state-run stations.

Internet penetration remains limited by cost and poor infrastructure, reaching only 2 percent of the population in 2015. The authorities briefly shut down internet and mobile text-messaging services in January amid the protests and communal violence related to *Charlie Hebdo*.

A heavy tax on private media hinders development of the sector, and public or government-friendly private media receive the bulk of advertising from state-owned companies. In 2013, all eligible private media received financial support from the Fund for the Aid of the Press, with the stated aim of encouraging their public-service and democracy-promotion functions. At the end of 2014, the president announced a 25 percent increase for the fund. Media observers have warned that dependence on state funding and contracts is threatening the private media's editorial autonomy.

Considerable economic uncertainty has contributed to unethical behavior by journalists that can affect the quality and accuracy of reporting, such as accepting payments to attend press conferences.

[Subscribe](#) [Donate](#) [Events](#) [Contact Us](#) [Careers](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

© 2016 Freedom House