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## Chad

**Country:**

[Chad](#)

**Year:**

2015

**Press Freedom Status:**

NF

**PFS Score:**

74

**Legal Environment:**

22

**Political Environment:**

30

**Economic Environment:**

22

### Legal Environment

Chad's constitution allows for freedom of expression and of the press, but authorities routinely use threats and legal prosecutions to curb critical reporting. In 2008, the High Council of Communication (HCC), Chad's media regulatory body, banned reporting on the activities of rebels and any other information that could harm national unity. While a 2010 media law abolished jail time for defamation, judges have continued to hand down prison sentences for such offenses. In April 2014, the publisher of the Arabic newspaper *N'Djamena al-Djadida* was arrested on defamation charges in connection with a series of articles that accused the country's grand imam of being a foreign spy. He was released the next day, but the case remained pending at year's end. The 2010 media law also introduced sentences of one to two years in prison and fines from \$2,000 to \$6,000 for inciting racial, ethnic, or religious hatred, and for "condoning violence."

Chad has no law establishing the right to access official information, and access remains difficult in practice.

Permission from the prosecutor's office, the HCC, and the Ministry of Commerce is required to establish a newspaper. Radio licenses are granted by the HCC, which is considered to be subject to strong influence by the government and also reportedly monitors and controls radio content. The licensing fee for commercial radio stations

remains prohibitively high, at a reported \$5,000 per year. Private radio stations' transmitters are also limited to a strength of 1,000 watts or less, making them incapable of broadcasting nationally, and thus leaving them unable to challenge state-owned outlets.

Officials periodically threaten to shut down media outlets or fine journalists for "irresponsible" reporting. In October 2014, the private radio station FM Liberté was reprimanded by the HCC and warned against further transgression after it publicized a call from local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for popular protests against fuel shortages. Also in October, HCC President Moustafa Ali Alifei, in a meeting with several journalists, warned them that they could face severe sanctions for failing to operate in an ethical and professional manner.

## Political Environment

Although criticism of the government is generally permitted within certain boundaries, some reporters and editors practice self-censorship to avoid reprisals. 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.

Journalists risk harassment and physical violence as a result of their reporting. In November 2014, a reporter with the private radio station Dja FM was arrested in N'Djamena while conducting interviews on the street; he was reportedly beaten by police before being released later in the day.

## Economic Environment

The state-run Chad Press Agency is country's only news agency. The government subsidizes the daily newspaper *Le Progrès* in exchange for its support, and owns the biweekly *L'Info*. While private periodicals—including the opposition-oriented *N'Djamena Bi-Hebdo* and *Abba Garde*—have an established readership in the capital, their impact is minimal in the largely illiterate rural interior. Some newspapers use printing facilities outside the country for financial reasons, and distribution is difficult due to poor infrastructure. There are three television stations operating in Chad: the state-owned TeleTchad, the private Al-Nassour, and the private Electron TV. The government does not interfere with the reception of popular foreign channels, such as Al-Jazeera and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Arabic. Radio is the primary means of mass communication, and apart from the state-owned Radiodiffusion Nationale Tchadienne, which operates several stations, there are over a dozen private and community-run stations on the air, many of which are owned by religious organizations.

Advertising is scarce, but it is the main source of revenue for media outlets, as government subsidies and other alternatives are even less reliable. Mobile phone access is low compared to other countries, with official estimates at 40 percent penetration. Internet penetration remains low, at just under 3 percent in 2014. There are no reports that the government restricts access. Though the internet infrastructure remains state-owned, the government announced in February 2014 that it would attempt to privatize 80 percent

of the state-owned telecommunications company, the Société des Télécommunications du Tchad.

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