Chad's constitution allows for freedom of expression, but authorities have routinely used threats and legal provisions to censor critical reporting. A 2008 press law, Decree No. 5, increased the maximum penalty for false news and defamation to three years in prison, and the maximum penalty for insulting the president to five years. Also 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. Law No. 17 of 2010 removed Decree No. 5's prison sentences, but introduced sentences of six months to a year in prison and fines for inciting racial or ethnic hatred and "condoning violence." Defendants bear the burden of proof in defamation cases and face a prejudiced judicial process. The previous two years' lull in the legal harassment of the press and a slight shift away from draconian legal penalties continued in 2011. However, officials periodically threatened to shut down newspapers or fine journalists for "irresponsible" reporting.

Newspapers criticized the government during 2011 without incurring violence against their journalists. However, reporters and publishers risked harassment, especially from the authorities, when publishing critical articles, and many practiced self-censorship to avoid reprisals. Impunity remains the norm for perpetrators of harassment against journalists. The ruling and opposition parties agreed on a requirement that radio stations provide equal coverage for all candidates during the legislative and presidential elections in 2011, but the stations lacked the will or capacity to implement it in practice.

While private newspapers circulate freely in the capital, they have little impact on the largely rural and illiterate population. The state-run Chad Press Agency is the only news service in the country. Permission from the prosecutor's office, the HCC, and the Ministry of Commerce is required to establish a newspaper. The only television station is state owned, but the government does not interfere with the reception of foreign channels. Radio is the primary means of mass communication, and licenses are granted by the HCC, which is considered to be greatly influenced by the government. The licensing fee for commercial radio stations remains prohibitively high at five million CFA francs ($11,000) per year. The HCC is also said to monitor and control radio content. There are over a dozen private and community-run stations on the air, many of which are owned by religious organizations. Internews recently built three community radio stations in the eastern region of the country, which has been flooded by Darfuri refugees and displaced Chadians, in order to address vital or taboo topics such as gender-based violence, security, water distribution, and food rations. Advertising is scarce, but it is the main source of revenue for media outlets, as government subsidies and other alternatives are even less reliable.

In 2011, 1.9 percent of Chadians accessed the internet. There are no reports that the government restricts internet access, but the internet infrastructure remains government owned.