

Chad 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Chad during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflict by nonstate armed groups; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists and censorship; trafficking in persons, including forced labor; and significant presence of any of the worst forms of child labor.

The government did not take credible steps to identify or punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province were reported to have killed numerous civilians and military personnel. Authorities investigated some incidents but initiated no prosecutions during the year.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary and unlawful killings during the year. After the announcement of provisional presidential election results on May 9, both local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported members of the security forces or government supporters engaged in celebratory gunfire, a common yet dangerous cultural practice often occurring during weddings or other moments of celebration. The postelection celebratory gunfire resulted in killings.

Local media reported residents living in neighborhoods associated with the opposition were particularly victimized, leaving at least seven dead and hundreds injured. The Ministry of Health subsequently sent a letter to all hospitals in the country stating that it was “strictly forbidden” to release any statistics relating to deaths or injuries from these incidents. The Ministry of Justice and the National Commission on Human Rights inconsistently investigated allegations of security force killings such as this.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

Section 2. Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The constitution provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, but the government restricted this right by intimidating journalists.

The law prohibited “inciting racial, ethnic, or religious hatred,” which was punishable by up to two years in prison and fines. The government conducted no prosecutions under this law during the year. Space for open and free private discussion existed but was subject to self-censorship due to fear of reprisal from the state.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

Local media reported journalists were victims of threats, harassment, and intimidation. According to Amnesty International, the independent news outlet *Tchadinfos* was suspended for multiple days in July following a complaint from a former advisor to the president, demanding the removal of all articles concerning him, which Tchadinfos.com refused. In July, the former advisor also obtained a temporary suspension of the *Le N’Djam Post* website for similar reasons, according to local media.

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police

Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

Independent media were active and attempted to express a variety of views, but authorities placed some restrictions on them. The government subsidized *Le Progres*, the only daily newspaper, and owned the biweekly newspaper *L'Info*. Some journalists and publishers practiced self-censorship due to concerns regarding intimidation and arrest. The government restricted and penalized those who published reports on politically sensitive topics, sometimes by closing media outlets. The government also restricted press freedom during the presidential election campaign in May.

On October 9, Abderamane Barka, president of the High Authority for Media and Audiovisual, ordered the suspension or revocation of licenses of private newspapers that broadcasted audiovisual content online instead of written articles and of private outlets that broadcasted content on Facebook that was not first distributed via their traditional newspaper, radio, or television channels.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right of workers to form and join independent unions of their choice. Authorities required all unions to be authorized by the Ministry of Public Security and Immigration, which could order the

dissolution of a union that did not comply with the law as determined by the ministry. The law provided for the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. While there were no restrictions on collective bargaining, the law authorized the government to intervene under certain circumstances.

The law recognized the right to strike but restricted the right of civil servants and employees of state enterprises to do so. The law required a 72-hour notification before a strike. By law civil servants and employees of state enterprises were required to have completed a mediation process before initiating a strike, but there was no specified timeline for this process. The law authorized imprisonment with hard labor as punishment for participation in an illegal strike. Civil servants in the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs went on strike during the year.

There were no reports during the year of restrictions on collective bargaining or punishment of workers for participating in illegal strikes. More than 90 percent of employees in the formal sector belonged to unions. In the informal sector, which employed the vast majority of workers, most workers were self-employed and nonunionized, predominately working as farmers or herders. State-owned enterprises dominated many sectors of the formal economy, and the government remained the largest employer. Unions were officially independent of both the government and political parties, although some unions were unofficially linked through members' affiliation with political parties.

The government did not effectively enforce laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the rights to strike for workers, primarily due to administrative difficulties in convening key officials for negotiations.

The law prohibited antiunion discrimination and explicitly covered all workers, including foreign and irregular workers. The law required reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. Union members reported these protections were not always respected. Penalties for violations of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights were commensurate with those for comparable offenses. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The law provided for a national minimum wage for all sectors of the economy, and the minimum wage was greater than the World Bank poverty rate. The law limited most employment to 39 hours per week, with overtime paid for additional hours. Agricultural work was limited to 2,400

hours per year, an average of 46 hours per week. All workers were entitled to uninterrupted rest periods of between 24 and 48 hours per week.

Salary arrears remained a problem for some employees, most often in the education and health-care sectors that saw multiple strikes throughout the year. Workers did not always avail themselves of their rights concerning workhour limits, largely because they preferred the additional pay.

Occupational Safety and Health

The law mandated occupational safety and health (OSH) standards that were up to date and appropriate for main industries. Workers had the right to remove themselves from dangerous working conditions without jeopardy to their employment, but they generally did not do so. The law provided inspectors the authority to enforce the law and explicitly covered all workers, including foreign and informal workers. The government did not consistently or proactively identify unsafe conditions or respond to workers' OSH complaints.

Multinational companies generally met the government's OSH standards. The civil service and local private companies occasionally disregarded OSH standards, while artisanal mining in the north remained a sector with scant enforcement of labor protections for juveniles and other vulnerable workers drawn to the region by the prospect of financial gain. Governors and relevant ministries sent delegations in the wake of such incidents to

encourage compliance with OSH regulations but failed to spur meaningful institutional reform. Local private companies and public offices often had substandard conditions, including a lack of ventilation, fire protection, and OSH protection.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The government did not effectively enforce minimum wage, overtime, and OSH laws. Penalties for wage, hour, and OSH violations were not commensurate with those for violations of similar laws. The government did not apply penalties against violators. The Directorate of Labor Inspection of the Ministry of Labor had responsibility for the enforcement of the wage, hour, and OSH regulations. Labor inspectors could refer cases to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights for prosecution and had the authority to make unannounced inspections but lacked authority to assess penalties. The government did not provide adequate staffing or training, which, together with corruption, impeded effective enforcement. The number of labor inspectors was insufficient to enforce labor laws.

Authorities did not always respect legal protections for foreign and irregular workers. Many persons were paid less than the minimum wage, especially in the informal sector. The Ministry of Public Works employed an insufficient number of labor inspectors to enforce the law, especially in the large artisanal gold mining sector in the north. Despite penalties existing for violation of OSH laws, enforcement often depended on the personal

connections and financial resources of parties involved.

The World Bank reported almost 96 percent of workers were in the informal sector. Informal workers who obtained work contracts from their employers were protected by the government's labor code, minimum wage law, and social security. The vast majority, however, who were self-employed and thus worked without a contract, did not benefit from wage, hour, and OSH laws and inspections. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Labor, through its Directorate of Labor Inspection, investigated claims of possible legal violations in both the formal and informal sectors. While the Ministry of Labor could not prosecute, it could refer cases for prosecution to the labor division of the Ministry of Justice.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were reports of enforced disappearances by government authorities. Authorities, including those reportedly from the intelligence services, arrested Robert Gam, secretary general of the opposition Socialist Party Without Borders on September 20. According to both his party and an international NGO, his whereabouts remained unknown as of December, and he had not been in contact with his family or with a lawyer.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The constitution and law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention, but the government did not always observe these prohibitions. The law did not provide for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court.

Although the law required a judge to sign and issue arrest warrants before arrests, this did not always occur. By law, detainees had to be charged within 48 hours or released, unless the *procureur* (investigating magistrate) authorized an extension of detention for investigative purposes, but authorities often did not make judicial determinations promptly. The law allowed for bail, but there were cases in which authorities did not provide it. While the law provided for legal counsel for indigent defendants and prompt access to family members, this rarely occurred, according to legal observers. Authorities occasionally held detainees incommunicado.

According to local media, security forces, including the National Security Agency (ANS), police, and gendarmerie, arbitrarily arrested journalists, demonstrators, critics of the government, and other individuals. The World Organization against Torture reported a “resurgence in arbitrary arrests and secret detentions” during the year. Freedom House reported, “Security forces routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. Detained persons may be denied access to lawyers, notably those detained in connection with their involvement in antigovernment

protests or activities. Many persons suspected of committing crimes were held for lengthy periods without charge.”

Local NGOs reported that Ismael Ngakoutou, the former deputy general manager of Commercial Bank Chad, was arrested and detained in July by the ANS without charges or a judicial warrant. His place of detention was not released, and he was denied access to his family. He was released in November after four months of detention.

Lengthy pretrial detention remained a problem. According to a Ministry of Justice official, judicial authorities sometimes held detainees without charge for years, particularly for felonies allegedly committed in the provinces because the court system only had the capacity to try criminal cases in the capital. The length of detention sometimes equaled or exceeded the possible sentence for the alleged crime. Lengthy pretrial detention was exacerbated by an overworked judiciary susceptible to corruption. There were reports officials held detainees in police cells or in secret detention facilities.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State’s annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Section 3. Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution prohibited torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, but human rights groups, civil society activists, opposition political parties, and local lawyers credibly accused security forces of engaging in these practices.

In its *Freedom in the World 2024* report, Freedom House stated, "Security forces have been accused of killing and torturing civilians with impunity," which remained the case during the year.

Impunity was a significant problem in the security forces, including the ANS and police, due to corruption, poor discipline, and wrongdoers' ability to leverage political connections. According to numerous human rights reports, the forces implicated in impunity included the ANS, police, and gendarmerie.

Impunity in cases of intercommunal violence was widespread,

predominantly in the country's central and southern regions.

The law prohibited female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) for girls and women, but the practice remained widespread, particularly in rural areas. By law, FGM/C could be prosecuted as a form of assault, but a lack of specific penalties hindered prosecution. According to Freedom House's 2024 report, approximately a third of women aged 15 to 49 experienced FGM/C.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/>.

Child Soldiers

Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province recruited or used child soldiers in the country, as part of their conflict against the government.

Child Marriage

The law established the minimum age for marriage at 18 for men and women. According to UNICEF's 2019 data, approximately 24 percent of women ages 20 to 24 were married or in a union before age 15 and nearly 61 percent were married or in a union before age 18. The law precluded

invoking the consent of the child spouse to justify child marriage and prescribed sentences of five to 10 years' imprisonment and fines for persons perpetrating child marriage. The practice, however, was widespread, especially in northern areas where there were minimal government efforts to enforce the law and resistance from local religious leaders who condoned the practice. According to the Chadian Women Lawyers' Association, girls sold or forced into child marriages were often forced by their husbands or their husbands' families into domestic servitude and agricultural labor.

c. Protection to Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

Provision of First Asylum

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, but the government did not have a system for providing protection to refugees. Implementation of the country's first asylum law adopted in 2020 continued, and refugees were reportedly able to access identification documents and work permits, albeit often with delays.

Resettlement

The government supported refugee integration, and where appropriate, refugee repatriation, and assisted securing resettlement for limited numbers of refugees to third countries.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

There was no known Jewish community in the country, and there were no known reports of antisemitic incidents.