

CHAD

CIVICUS MONITOR WATCHLIST

OVERVIEW OF RECENT RESTRICTIONS
TO CIVIC FREEDOMS





INTRODUCTION

On 20th April 2021, just days after the official announcement of President Idriss Déby Itno's victory in the April 2021 presidential elections, Chad's military [announced](#) that President Déby had died and that a Transitional Military Council, led by the late President's son, General Mahamat Idriss Déby, was installed. The Constitution was suspended and the National Assembly and the government were dissolved. Elections are to be held after an 18-month long transitional period.

Prior to the presidential elections on 11th April 2021, authorities [cracked down](#) on protests against a potential sixth term for the former president. Military authorities [continued](#) the repression of peaceful protests after the military takeover on 20th April 2021, with protests organised by the movement Wakit Tama (It is time in Chadian Arabic), a coalition of civil society actors and opposition, being the main object of repression. Protests have been banned and security forces have used excessive and lethal force against protesters while protesters, protest organisers and supporters of Wakit Tama have been arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted.

There are regular civic space violations in Chad besides the alarming number of violations of the right to peaceful assembly, internet restrictions, suspension of media outlets and arbitrary arrests of and threats against human right defenders and journalists.

RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Authorities routinely ban protests, particularly protests organised by civil society and the opposition. For example, a blanket ban on all protests on 20th May 2022 was [issued](#) in response to calls on social media to protest the detention of six Wakit Tama members and supporters in relation to a mass protest on 14th May 2022. The six, including Wakit Tama spokesperson Max Loalngar and trade union leaders Gounoung Vaima Ganfare and Youssouf Korom, were arrested between 14th and 17th May 2022 and were charged with gathering to cause public disturbance, damage to property and physical assault. On 6th June 2022, the six were [sentenced](#) to a suspended prison sentence of one year, a fine of 50,000 CFA francs (82 USD) and 10 million CFA francs (16,300 USD) in damages, to be paid jointly.

Security forces have repeatedly used excessive force, including tear gas and live ammunition, to disperse peaceful protesters, killing dozens of people. At least 20 people were [killed](#), 152 people injured and 849 arrested during protests against a possible sixth term for President Déby prior to his demise and against the military takeover after April 2021, according to a report by pro-democracy movement Tournons la Page. Additionally, cases of torture and ill-treatment of those who have been detained have been documented. At least 11 people were [killed](#) and 80 people injured when security forces, including military officers, used live ammunition against protesters in Abéché, province of Ouaddaï in eastern Chad on 24th and 25th January 2022. Protests erupted in Abéché over the nomination of a traditional chief in a newly created canton, which protesters say violates customary rules.

Despite announcements of investigations into the killing of protesters, to date no one has been held accountable for the killings. In Chad, abuses by security forces during protests are met with impunity.

ABOUT THE CIVICUS MONITOR

The [CIVICUS Monitor](#), an online platform that tracks threats to civil society in countries across the globe, rates civic space – the space for civil society – in Chad as “**Repressed**”.

The data provides the basis for civic space ratings, which are based on up-to-date information and indicators on the state of freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Countries can be rated as:

CLOSED

REPRESSED

OBSTRUCTED

NARROWED

OPEN



In violation of international norms, authorisation for protests is required under regulations of the military authorities, outlining that protest organisers need to submit a request at least five days before a planned protest. In practice, authorities often only notify protest organisers of their decision on the eve of the planned protests, which has led to cancellations of protests.

ARBITRARY ARREST, JUDICIAL HARASSMENT OF AND THREATS AGAINST HRDS

Human rights defenders (HRDs) are routinely subjected to threats and judicial harassment. Six members and supporters of the Wakit Tama movement, including activist Max Loalngar and trade unionist leaders Gounoung Vaima Ganfare and Youssouf Korom, were arrested between 14th and 17th May 2022 in relation to a protest and face charges of gathering to cause public disturbance, damage to property and physical assault. On 11th October 2021, Wakit Tama leaders Barka Michel, Sitack Yombatinan Béni and Félix Marting were [detained](#) and charged with gathering to cause a disturbance to public order, attack on bodily integrity and destruction of property in relation to the coalition's protest on 2nd October 2021. On that day, security forces used excessive force, including tear gas, against protesters, leading to at least 40 people being injured. The three activists were released under conditions on 12th October 2021.

On 2nd February 2022, good governance activist and coordinator of the CSO Collectif des Associations et Mouvements des Jeunes du Tchad (CAMOJET, Collective of Youth Associations and Movements in Chad) Ahmat Haroun Larry was [arrested](#) following a defamation complaint by the Mayor of N'Djamena, Ali Haroun. The defamation complaint stems from a series of videos Haroun Larry posted on his Facebook page, denouncing a double standard in evictions and accusing the mayor of bad governance. Haroun Larry spent a month in pre-trial detention before he was acquitted on 3rd March 2022.

HRDs, especially those working on good governance and democracy, are regularly subjected to threats. Co-ordinator for the Chadian chapter of pro-democracy movement Tournons la Page (TLP), Jacques Saham Ngarassal, [received](#) threats in a series of anonymous phone calls on 6th March 2022. The threats followed days after the HRD was interviewed on radio station Liberté FM regarding the human rights situation in Chad, as TLP had published a report documenting violations in pro-democracy protests.

ATTACKS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: INTERNET RESTRICTIONS, SUSPENSION OF MEDIA OUTLETS, ARREST OF JOURNALISTS

Authorities in Chad regularly resort to internet restrictions. Access to internet and social media has been [disrupted](#) over 900 days between the last presidential elections in 2016 and 2021, according to Amnesty International.

In the past few years, several journalists have been arrested and prosecuted. On 20th April 2022, journalist for radio station Radio Oxygène, Olivier Memnguidé, was [arrested](#) when he was reporting on clashes between protesters, who demanded the release of a young man accused of having false papers for his motorcycle, and security forces in Donia, province of Logone Occidental. The journalist was taken to the nearby city of Moundou, where he was held for five days on accusations of rebellion. He was released after the deputy prosecutor ordered his release as the court did not have the jurisdiction to prosecute Memnguidé.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To the government of Chad:

- Guarantee the respect for freedom of expression and assembly at all times in line with Chad's domestic and international human rights obligations
- Guarantee that the rule of law is universally applied and hold accountable members of the security forces and representatives of government who target protesters, journalists and human rights defenders and address the high levels of impunity they enjoy
- Drop charges against human rights defenders, political opponents and journalists and take legal measures to ensure their protection
- Refrain from disrupting access to the internet and social media
- Guarantee that under all circumstances, human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment, harassment and intimidation

- **To the African Union:**

- Ensure that Chad is held responsible for its unlawful treatment of human rights defenders, journalists and peaceful protesters and ensure that it complies with its regional human rights obligations including those enshrined in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights

- To the international community:

- Urge Chad to abide by its international human rights obligations and to fulfil its voluntary commitments and pledges, including by scheduling visits of Special Procedures and refraining from threats and attacks against them
- Take proactive measures to protect HRDs and journalists at risk, including through diplomatic intervention, public statements and trial monitoring.
- Raise civic space concerns on Chad in public fora, including at the UN Human Rights Council in relevant thematic debates.
- Clarify the details of the transitional period and fully include civil society and the political opposition during the transitional period.