

# WORLD WATCH LIST 2025

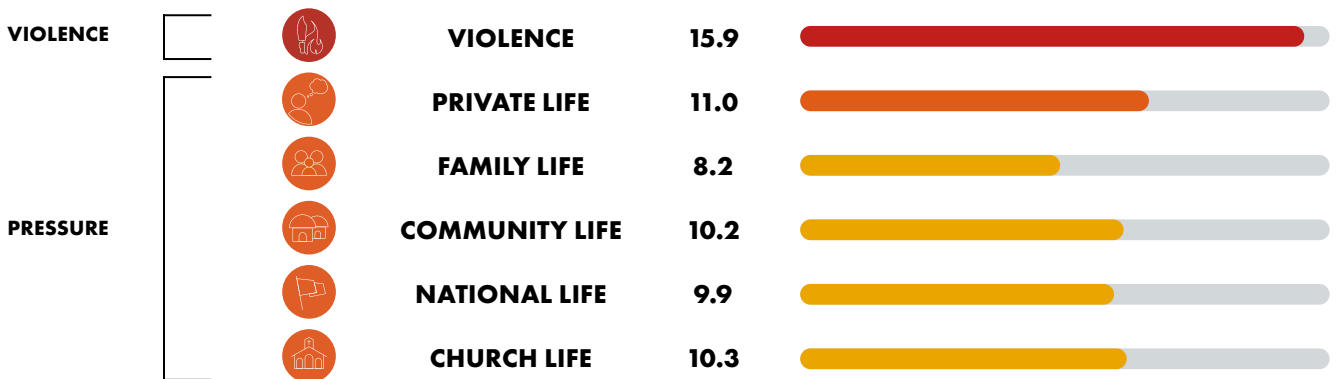
SITUATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHRISTIANS

WORLD WATCH LIST NO.  
**49**

## CHAD



### LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND PRESSURE



Each of the six categories is scored out of a maximum of 16.7 points. The categories added together total 100 points (6 x 16.7 = 100).

## Key findings

In a context of violence and coups, Christians are often seen as allies to the 'other side' and as 'foreign agents'. The activities of armed groups (such as Boko Haram) in the southwest of the country have intensified. Christians are being displaced, and their properties are being destroyed and burned. Wahhabism is gaining traction despite being banned by the government. In regions dominated by Islam, individuals who convert to Christianity are especially vulnerable, often forced to practice their faith in secret to avoid violent backlash from their families or communities. Although the Constitution promises religious freedom, local authorities frequently refuse to recognize Muslim-to-Christian conversions, and mandatory church registration adds another layer of difficulty.

## Quick facts

### LEADER

President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno

### POPULATION

18,847,000

### NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS

6,003,000<sup>1</sup>

### MAIN RELIGION

Islam

### GOVERNMENT

Presidential Republic



## Context

Religious Context	Number of adherents	Percentage
Christians	6,003,000	31.9
Muslims	11,339,000	60.2
Ethno-religionists	1,258,000	6.7
Bahais	213,000	1.1

Source<sup>2</sup>

Chad's legal and political environment is characterized by [hostility towards dissent](#), limited freedom of expression and assembly, a lack of free and fair elections, and rampant nepotism. [Poverty and vulnerability to natural disasters are pervasive](#) in Chad, with 42.3% of the population living below the national poverty line.

In 2021, President Idriss Déby, who had served five terms since seizing power in a 1990 coup, was killed in a military coup. His son Mahamat Déby took over, initially for an 18-month period until [free and fair elections](#) could take place, but a security force crackdown leading to over 100 deaths delayed the transition to civilian rule. Elections eventually took place in May 2024 and Mahamat Déby won the presidency. On one hand, this has brought a measure of stability to Chad, but on the other hand, it signals a continuation of authoritarianism. The situation was further complicated by the killing of Chad's main opposition leader and potential presidential

candidate, Yaya Dillo, by Chadian security forces on 28 February 2024.

Located in a region fraught with insecurity and conflict, Chad faces immense challenges due to its proximity to countries struggling with violent jihadist groups. This precarious position deeply influences the country's internal stability, with a conservative society that is often gripped by fear of the growing influence of extremist ideologies.

Although Chad is a secular republic, Islam is the majority religion and pervades the whole of society causing some Chadians to show hostility and intolerance towards Christians whom they regard as 'infidels'. The Arab, Kanembu, Bornu and Buduma ethnic groups are mostly Muslim and have an antagonistic relationship with the Wadai Bulala, Kobe, Tama, Barma and Mesmedje ethnic groups, who are mostly Christian. Indigenous religions are often practiced to some degree along with Islam and Christianity. Most Protestants are [evangelical Christians](#).

## How the situation varies by region

*Islamic oppression* is particularly evident in the Kanem, Salamat, Lac and Sila regions. The influence of radical Islam is also notable in the sultanates of

<sup>1</sup> Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

<sup>2</sup> Data source: Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

Wadai, Bagirmi, and Fitri. Religion partly reflects the regional (north vs. south) political fault lines and division in the country. In central Chad, churches face a lot of pressure from African Traditional Religion.

## Who is affected?

### COMMUNITIES OF EXPATRIATE CHRISTIANS

Expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated in Chad and so are not counted as a separate WWL category.

### HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The Roman Catholic Church and Greek Orthodox Church are the main denominations in this category. In the Ouaddai and Salamat regions, the Catholic Church was denied access to land acquired for the purposes of building a church and hospital. There are also Protestant denominations – such as Methodists

- facing restrictions on their evangelistic activities and outreach projects.

### CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY

In eastern and northern Chad, Christians of Muslim background are forced to worship in secret and hide their faith for fear of persecution and being disowned by family members. In the southern part of the country, there is also a sizable number of converts from African indigenous religions. Their level of persecution is not as severe as that experienced by converts from Islam, but they still face pressure to take part in non-Christian religious rites.

### NON-TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Pentecostal and charismatic churches are active in some parts of Chad. These churches are generally viewed as being ‘sects’ and members face pressure and insults from the community.

## Main sources of persecution and discrimination

### ISLAMIC OPPRESSION

While there is no centralized organization striving to Islamize Chad, the influence of Islamic extremism is quite pervasive. Numerous schools, universities and mosques are being established to disseminate radical Islamic ideologies. This has catalyzed the radicalization of specific segments of the population, creating an increasingly hostile environment for Christians. The presence and activities of extremist groups like Boko Haram in the region further amplify this Islamic oppression, making it a predominant mechanism of persecution in Chad.

### DICTATORIAL PARANOIA

Former President Idriss Déby manipulated religious and ethnic sentiments to consolidate power and marginalize opposition. His authoritarian regime was characterized by the repression of dissenting voices and the quelling of political freedoms. Mahamat Déby seized power in what effectively amounted to a coup d'état, circumventing the constitutional process after the death of his father, Idriss Déby, in April 2021. Under his rule, civil liberties are severely

constrained, including freedom of expression, assembly, religion, and even the right to seek judicial remedies.

### ORGANIZED CORRUPTION AND CRIME

Chad's low score of 20/100 on Transparency International's 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI 2023 Chad) highlights rampant corruption and the absence of the rule of law. This lawlessness provides fertile ground for jihadist and organized criminal activities which seriously affect religious freedom.

### CLAN OPPRESSION

Particularly in northeastern Chad, notably in the Ennedi region which is the homeland of the Zaghawa-born Débys, persecution based on ethnic differences is a frequent experience for Christians. In the south, where indigenous African religions are dominant, Christians often face coercion to participate in traditional rituals. They also confront intra-ethnic pressures, as leaders within their own ethnic communities exert influence to conform to traditional practices.

# How are men and women differently affected?

## WOMEN

Despite some progress, gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices and disadvantageous social norms facing women and girls persist. Reports indicate that Christian women have been kidnapped, raped and forced into marriage by violent Jihadi groups such as Boko Haram. Incidents have commonly occurred in rural areas and internally displaced people’s camps. Christians from a Muslim background face strong pressure from their family and local community, risking forced marriage, forced divorce and being denied custody of their children. Women and girls may also find it difficult to access the Christian community, as they can easily be subjected to house arrest by their family.

### Female typical pressure points:

- Abduction
- Denied access to social community/networks
- Denied custody of children
- Denied inheritance or possessions
- Forced divorce
- Forced marriage
- Incarceration by family/house arrest
- Violence – physical
- Violence – psychological
- Violence – sexual
- Violence – verbal

## MEN

Men and boys risk being physically harmed, kidnapped or killed during attacks. Islamic militant groups such as Boko Haram have abducted Christian men and boys, forced them to convert to Islam, and forcibly recruited them into their ranks to serve as fighters. The loss of Christian men and boys can economically cripple Christian families. The remaining men typically also face economic pressures, experiencing harassment in the workplace and being denied progression opportunities. Initiation rituals in the southern regions of the country also remain a cause for concern for young boys, reportedly including floggings, sexual indignities, drugging and mock burials.

### Male typical pressure points:

- Abduction
- Economic harassment via work/job/business
- Military/militia conscription/service against conscience
- Violence – death
- Violence – physical
- Violence – psychological
- Violence – verbal

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## WWL 5 year trend

WWL Year	Position on Open Doors World Watch List	Persecution rounded score out of 100
2025	49	65
2024	56	61
2023	60	58
2022	63	55
2021	62	53

Chad’s World Watch List 2025 score rose by 4 points, from 61 to 65, ranking 49. This increase primarily stems from a significant rise in violence, which escalated from 10.6 to 15.9 points. The surge reflects the growing influence of Islamic radicalism and threats from groups such as Boko Haram and armed Fulani herdsmen, leading to heightened discrimination, abductions, and forced displacement of Christians. Over the last five years, Chad’s score has consistently risen by at least two points annually, underscoring a steady decline in conditions for Christians. The situation is especially difficult in regions outside N’Djamena, where Christians often resort to practicing their faith in secrecy due to the influence of radical groups. Chad’s proximity to unstable borders compounds these security issues, especially within IDP camps where hostility toward Christians is increasingly prevalent.



# Examples of violence in the reporting period

- Christians in the Logone Oriental region (southwest area) are under serious threats and attacks, continuing from last year’s violence that resulted in the deaths of over 15 Christians.
- In August and September 2024, at least three Christians were abducted by Boko Haram.

WWL Year	Christians killed	Churches or Christian buildings attacked or closed	Christians abducted	Christians internally displaced
2025	11	10*	18	1000*
2024	7	3	13	100*

*This table includes only a few categories of faith-based violence during the reporting period - for full results see the violence section of the country’s corresponding WWL Persecution Dynamics. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10\*, 100\* or 1000\*) is given which in reality could be significantly higher. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000\*, 100,000\* and 1,000,000\*.*

## PRIVATE LIFE

In regions dominated by Islam, converts to Christianity are often forced to practice their faith in secret. If their conversion becomes known, they could be subject to violence or eviction.

## FAMILY LIFE

In eastern and northern Chad, Christians from a Muslim background hide their faith for fear of harassment or being disowned by radical Islamic family members.

## COMMUNITY LIFE

Christians are being displaced and their properties destroyed and burned by armed groups in the southwest. Fear among converts from Islam is visible as young Imams create an environment of intimidation. In Chad’s northern areas, local Islamic officials are known to discriminate against Christians, restricting access to basic government services for Christians, especially converts. Within Muslim-majority communities, visible Christians and especially converts are commonly ostracized by their neighbors and wider society.

## NATIONAL LIFE

Although the Constitution may promise religious freedom, local authorities frequently refuse to recognize Muslim-to-Christian conversions, for instance, when individuals change their Muslim names to Christian ones. This refusal can create significant challenges, such as preventing the individual from updating official documents to reflect their new religious identity. Christians are hindered from

employment in state offices since they are required to make a public religious oath to attain a position.

## CHURCH LIFE

Mandatory church registration and restrictions on church building limit freedom of assembly. In rural areas, fear often keeps Christians from attending church services.



# International obligations & rights violated

**Chad has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights under the following international treaties:**

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
3. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
5. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

**Chad is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:**

- The state is manifestly failing to protect Nigerian Christians' fundamental rights (ICCPR Art. 2)
- Christians are murdered in indiscriminate attacks (ICCPR Art. 6)
- Christians women are raped, gang raped, and sexually abused (ICCPR Art. 7)
- Christian children are forced to adhere to Islamic religious precepts (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Converts to Christianity suffer from discrimination and violence (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 26)

## Situation of other religious minorities

According to Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2023 (Chad/D2):

*"The state imposes a number of religious restrictions, primarily against certain Muslim sects. Several sects deemed to promote violence are banned, despite limited evidence of such activity. Imams are subject to governance by the semipublic High Council for Islamic Affairs, which is led by a group of imams belonging to the Tijaniyya Sufi order. Wearing a burqa is banned by ministerial decree, and the government detains individuals who wear them in public."*





## Open Doors in Chad

Open Doors has intermittently been involved in Chad through the local Church since the 1990s. Our vision for Chad is a Church where members understand persecution from a Biblical perspective and respond to it in a way that honors Christ, pastors systematically disciple members, Christians have a biblical perspective on economics and have the skills to make use of opportunities and new believers receive the necessary spiritual and practical support.

Our programs include:

- Persecution preparedness
- Discipleship
- Economic empowerment
- Care and support for new believers



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## ABOUT THIS BRIEF

- The content of this document is based on the more detailed WWL Persecution Dynamics per country published annually by World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. It may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © 2025 Open Doors International.
- All brief country profiles can be accessed under 'Advocacy resources' on the research pages of the Open Doors International website, along with the WWL Persecution Dynamics per country, accompanying Background Information per country and the latest update of WWL Methodology. These are also available at the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).
- The WWL 2025 reporting period was 01 October 2023 – 30 September 2024.

*Many photos in this dossier are for illustrative purposes.*