

# WORLD WATCH LIST 2026

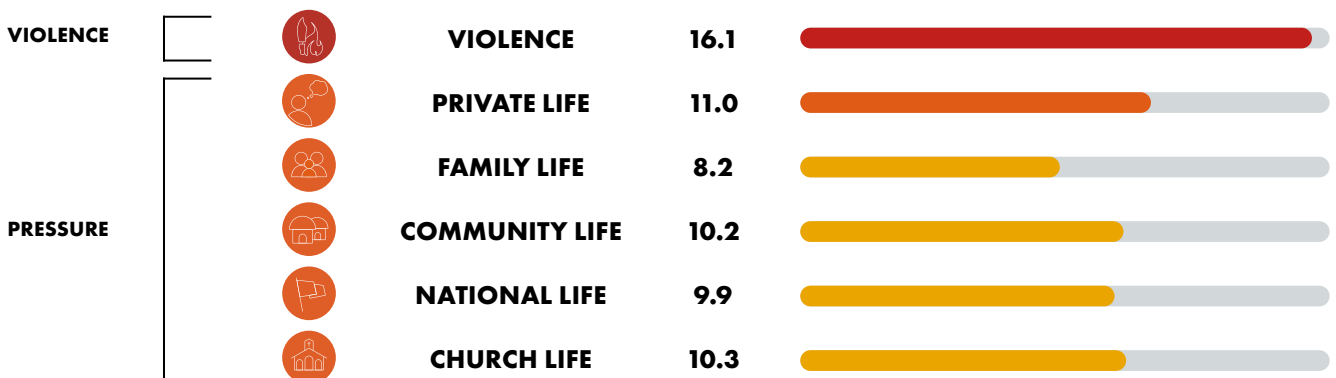
## SITUATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHRISTIANS

### CHAD

WORLD WATCH LIST NO.  
**48**



#### 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 Chad's unstable and increasingly authoritarian context, Christians, especially converts and minorities, face layered forms of persecution. Often perceived as aligned with foreign influence or political dissent, Christians are subject to surveillance, harassment and arbitrary repression. Conflict in the southwest has intensified intercommunal tensions, with violence between Christian and non-Christian communities resulting in displacement, property destruction, and cycles of retaliation. Jihadist groups like Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) remain active around the Lake Chad Basin. They continue to attack Christian villages, burn churches, and abduct believers, particularly in rural zones with limited state protection. These actions contribute to insecurity and religious polarization. Despite a constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, official barriers remain. Christian converts in Muslim-majority regions face threats, beatings, and forced concealment. Wahhabi influence is rising, and even private worship can trigger punishment. Authorities reject conversions and use registration laws to control churches. Together, these dynamics sustain a climate of fear and exclusion for Christians across Chad.

## Quick facts

### LEADER

President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno

### POPULATION

19,426,000

### NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS

5,998,000<sup>1</sup>

### MAIN RELIGION

Islam

### GOVERNMENT

Presidential Republic



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## Context

Religious context	Number of adherents	% of adherents in country
Christians	5,998,000	30.9
Muslims	11,893,000	61.2
Ethnic religionists	1,273,000	6.6
Others	262,000	1.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source<sup>2</sup>

Chad's legal and political environment remains highly repressive, marked by hostility to dissent, restrictions on free expression and assembly, and widespread nepotism. Poverty is acute—over 42% of the population lives below the national poverty line ([WFP, accessed July 2025](#))—and the country remains highly vulnerable to natural disasters and regional instability.

Following the death of President Idriss Déby in 2021, his son Mahamat Déby assumed power, initially pledging an 18-month transition to civilian rule. However, violent crackdowns on protesters, resulting in over 100 deaths, delayed the process. Elections were eventually held in May 2024, resulting in Mahamat Déby's victory. While this brought some political continuity, it reinforced concerns about authoritarianism. The killing of opposition leader Yaya Dillo by security forces in February 2024 further undermined trust in democratic transition.

Chad is surrounded by instability, with conflict spilling over from neighboring countries. The collapse of governance in Sudan, Niger's ongoing fragility, and

jihadi insurgencies across the Lake Chad Basin have undermined national security. Wahhabi influence continues to grow despite government bans, and foreign fighters are reportedly active in the southwest.

Although Chad is constitutionally secular, Islam is the dominant religion and permeates social and political life. Christians, often viewed as outsiders or aligned with foreign agendas, face hostility. Ethnic divisions overlap with religious identity: groups like the Arab, Kanembu, Bornu, and Buduma are predominantly Muslim and have tense relations with largely Christian groups such as the Wadai Bulala, Kobe, Tama, and Barma. Indigenous religions also persist, sometimes blending with Islam or Christianity.

In this climate, Christians, especially converts from Islam, are subject to increasing pressure. Converts face social ostracism, threats, or physical attacks. Churches experience tight surveillance, and evangelical communities face barriers to registration. In the southwest, tensions between Christian and Muslim communities have escalated into violence, contributing to broader insecurity and deepening mistrust.

<sup>1</sup> Gina A. Zurlo, ed., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2025

<sup>2</sup> Other refers to all the rest to make up 100%: Gina A. Zurlo, ed., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2025

## How the situation varies by region

In Chad's southern border regions (western and south-western) of Kanem, Salamat, Lac, and Sila, jihadist groups, including Boko Haram, continue to operate, with foreign fighters expanding their reach. Wahhabi influence is growing in Wadai, Bagirmi, and Fitri, increasing pressure on Christian communities. In the south-west, Christian farmers face targeted violence, land disputes, and growing hostility from neighboring populations. In central Chad, churches encounter opposition from followers of African Traditional Religion, who often resist Christian outreach. The south and south-east of the country also have serious problems, as armed groups attack Christian farmers and their property. In eastern Chad, the insecurity is caused by Sudanese and local rebel groups.

## Who is affected?

### COMMUNITIES OF EXPATRIATE CHRISTIANS

This category is not included in the WWL scoring and analysis.

### HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches are the main denominations in this category. In Ouaddaï and Salamat Catholic institutions have been denied access to land intended for building churches and hospitals. Protestant groups like Methodists face restrictions on outreach.

### CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY

Muslim-background converts in eastern and northern Chad must worship in secret to avoid persecution and rejection by their family. Converts from traditional African religions in the south face significant pressure to participate in non-Christian rituals.

### NON-TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Pentecostal and charismatic churches are present across Chad, but are often dismissed as "sects" and members are subject to community pressure and verbal abuse.

## Main sources of persecution and discrimination

### ISLAMIC OPPRESSION

Islamic oppression is most pronounced in Chad's southwest, near the Sudanese border, and in the northern regions where jihadist ideology has deeply rooted itself. Though no centralized movement exists to Islamize the state, radical Islamic influence is spreading through Wahhabi-backed mosques, schools, and institutions that promote extremist teachings. This infrastructure fosters an increasingly hostile environment for Christians, particularly converts from Islam. In these regions, Christians endure threats, violence, surveillance, and exclusion. Jihadist groups like Boko Haram, aided by foreign fighters, have increased insecurity, making Islamic oppression a dominant and expanding persecution engine.

### DICTATORIAL PARANOIA

Chad's authoritarian governance fosters systemic suspicion toward dissenting voices, including Christians. After President Idriss Déby's death in 2021, his son Mahamat seized power outside constitutional norms. Civil liberties remain restricted. Freedom of worship, speech, and assembly are heavily monitored. Christians critical of the regime or seen as aligned with foreign ideologies are at particular risk of harassment or state intimidation.

### ORGANIZED CORRUPTION AND CRIME

Chad ranks among the world's most corrupt states, scoring 21/100 on Transparency International's 2024 index. Criminal networks operate across its borders, undermining the rule of law. For Christians, corruption manifests in extortion, land grabbing, and arbitrary detention. Justice systems are inaccessible, especially in conflict zones, where militant and criminal groups exploit lawlessness to target churches and believers.

### CLAN OPPRESSION

In north-eastern regions like Ennedi, Christians face ethnic-based persecution. In the south, Christians are pressured by community leaders to engage in traditional rituals, facing coercion and social exclusion when they resist.



## How are men and women differently affected?

### WOMEN

Despite some progress, gender-based violence and harmful social norms remain widespread in Chad. Christian women and girls are particularly vulnerable: Boko Haram and other violent groups have kidnapped, raped, and forced them into marriage, especially in rural areas and IDP camps. Converts from Islam face pressure to recant, often enduring forced marriage, forced divorce, loss of child custody, and violence. Many women are placed under house arrest by their families, restricting access to the Christian community. Trauma, social ostracism, and poverty compound their vulnerability.

#### Female typical pressure points:

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

### MEN

Christian men and boys in Chad face severe risks, including abduction, forced conversion, and recruitment into Boko Haram and other militant groups. Such losses cripple families economically, as men are usually the providers. Those who remain face workplace harassment, denial of promotion, and economic exclusion, especially in government and military roles dominated by Muslims. In the south, boys may be subjected to harmful initiation rituals involving floggings, burnings, sexual humiliation and violation, drugging and mock burials. Converts risk expulsion, disinheritance, and abuse, leaving them vulnerable to poverty and social isolation.

#### 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



## WWL 5 year trend

WWL Year	Position on Open Doors World Watch List	Persecution rounded score out of 100
2026	48	66
2025	49	65
2024	56	61
2023	60	58
2022	63	55

Chad scored 66 points in WWL 2026, one point higher than WWL 2025. The small rise reflects a slight increase in the violence block. Christians in Chad face pressure from several directions: weak institutions, inconsistent local administration and the expanding presence of armed Islamist militants in the Lake Chad Basin. Churches encounter closures, land disputes, and arbitrary regulatory decisions that hinder their activities. In the southwest and other rural zones, armed pastoralist groups frequently target Christian farmers, leading to land seizures, crop destruction, and periodic clashes that push communities into displacement. These combined threats create an environment where Christian life requires constant caution and resilience.

## Examples of violence in the reporting period

- According to local researchers, several young Christians engaged in street evangelism in N'Djamena were arrested in June 2025 and accused of espionage. They were detained until August 2025, when legal advocates secured their release.
- In May 2025, violent clashes erupted in Logone Occidental Province between Muslim herders and predominantly Christian farming communities. According to local field reports and security updates, at least 35 people were killed, most of them Christian farmers, deliberately targeted during attacks on villages.
- Security sources confirm that at least five Christians were abducted by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region in the first half of 2025. Survivors report that Christian households are deliberately profiled during night raids, with captives often transported to Nigeria and Niger for ransom or indoctrination.



WWL Year	Christians abducted	Christian killed	Churches or Christian buildings attacked or closed	Christians internally displaced
2026	10*	47	10*	1,000*
2025	18	11	10*	1,000*

*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 of Chad dominated by Islam, particularly the northern and eastern parts of the country, converts to Christianity are often compelled to live in secrecy. Openly professing Christian faith or possessing religious materials such as a Bible can result in verbal threats, violence, or expulsion from the family home. Converts risk being disinherited, cut off from financial support, or subjected to physical assault by their own relatives. Fear of exposure forces many to avoid Christian gatherings, rely on coded language when communicating with other believers, and limit their devotional practices to private settings. In some cases, even neighbors report converts to local authorities or religious leaders, exposing them to further danger.

### FAMILY LIFE

In many Muslim-majority households, particularly in the north-east and eastern provinces, Christian converts must conceal their beliefs to avoid intense familial pressure, emotional abuse, or forced re-Islamization. Women are especially vulnerable, often coerced into marriage or forced to remain in marriages where their Christian faith is forbidden. Children born to converts may be prevented from practicing Christianity or even learning about it. Family members can use threats of disinheritance, divorce, or child custody loss as tools to control converts and suppress religious change.

### COMMUNITY LIFE

In Chad's south-west, violence and targeted destruction of Christian properties by armed groups have led to

the displacement of entire communities. Young Islamic clerics, especially in urban mosques, have reportedly encouraged community surveillance and intimidation of Christians. In the north, local Islamic leaders influence public resource allocation, often denying Christians access to education, water, or healthcare. Converts are viewed with suspicion and excluded from village meetings, social gatherings, and economic activities.

### NATIONAL LIFE

Although Chad's constitution upholds religious freedom, its implementation remains weak. Muslim-to-Christian converts frequently encounter bureaucratic resistance when attempting to change their names or religious identification on official documents. Christians are underrepresented in state employment, especially in the civil service, due to informal requirements for oaths aligned with Islamic practice.

### CHURCH LIFE

Church registration is mandatory, yet difficult to obtain—especially for independent or evangelical groups. In rural and insecure regions, church buildings are scarce, and Christian gatherings are vulnerable to harassment or attack. Fear of surveillance and reprisals keeps many Christians—especially converts—from attending services, severely limiting their communal religious life.



## 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 Chadian Christians' fundamental rights (ICCPR Art. 2)
- Christians are murdered in indiscriminate attacks (ICCPR Art. 6)
- Christian 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 2024](#):

"The state imposes a number of religious restrictions, primarily against certain Muslim sects. Imams are subject to governance by the semipublic High Council for Islamic Affairs, which is led by a group of imams belonging to the Tijanyya Sufi order. Wearing burqas is banned by ministerial decree, and the government detains individuals who wear them in public."





## Open Doors in Chad

Open Doors has been involved in Chad through the local Church intermittently from 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 discipled members; gives Christians a biblical perspective on economics and the skills to make use of opportunities ; and provides new believers with the necessary spiritual and practical support.

Our programs, implemented in partnership with the local church include:

- Persecution preparedness
- Economic empowerment





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## ABOUT THIS DOSSIER

- The content of this Country Dossier is based on detailed analysis carried out by World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. This dossier may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © 2026 Open Doors International.
- All 50 Country Dossiers – along with the latest update of WWL Methodology – can be accessed [here](#).
- The WWL 2026 reporting period was 01 October 2024 - 30 September 2025.

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