

# **Chad | Stop the erosion of civil society space and adopt measures to protect human rights defenders**

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**We all possess the fundamental right to express our views, free from repression or attack. States should use Chad's upcoming Universal Periodic Review as an opportunity to call on the government to stop the erosion of civil society space, and create a protective legislative framework for human rights defenders.**



A review of the human rights record of Chad is scheduled to take place on 13 November as part of the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

During its last UPR in 2013, Chad received 119 recommendations- 4 on the protection of human rights defenders and 5 on freedom of expression and protection of the press. However, the government refused to accept any of these recommendations, reflecting the current human rights situation in Chad where human rights defenders and journalists face systematic arbitrary arrest, threats and attacks.

A particularly worrying trend is the large-scale use of ministerial decrees to erode civil society space through bans imposed on peaceful protests and events organised by civil society actors. Between 2015 and 2016, 65 organisations reported being banned from organising events. At a UPR pre-session on Wednesday - a platform for civil society to discuss the human rights situation of States ahead of the UPR- the Chadian League for Human Rights highlighted that a total of 74 protests have been repressed since 2015.

Additionally, Decree no. 008/PR/2017 has enabled agents of the Chadian National Security Agency (ANS) to launch a spate of arbitrary arrests against defenders for reasons related to national security. According to article 6 of the Decree, arrests can be made to 'detect, prevent and anticipate any subversive activity and destabilization directed against the vital interests of the State and Nation'.

Such loose and vague terminology facilitates the arrest of any dissident voice, leaving little to no room for civil society to express fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly and peaceful association.

ISHR submitted a [briefing paper](#) in collaboration with the *Observatoire de suivi des instruments internationaux des droits de l'Homme* (monitoring observatory of international human rights mechanisms), on the situation of human rights defenders in Chad. The submission is intended to assist States and other stakeholders in formulating questions and making recommendations to the Chadian government during the UPR.

Key recommendations that should be made to Chad at the UPR include:

- Ensure that all alleged attacks against defenders are promptly and thoroughly investigated, that perpetrators are held accountable and that victims have access to effective remedies.
- Make strong public statements recognising the legitimate and important role of human rights defenders, including journalists, and take steps to hold public and private actors accountable for stigmatising the legitimate work of defenders.
- Ensure that the legislative framework as well as law enforcement guarantee and protect freedoms of expression and opinion, and refrain from intimidating and arresting journalists for their legitimate work.
- Operationalise and provide the necessary resources to ensure the effective functioning of the new National Human Rights Commission and support its compliance with the Paris Principles.

For further information about the Briefing Paper, please contact ISHR's Adélaïde ETONG: [a.etong@ishr.ch](mailto:a.etong@ishr.ch)

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