



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Chad: Genocide Warning July 2021

On April 20, 2021, Chadian President, Idriss Déby Itno, died in battle after ruling for 31 years. Déby left behind a legacy of violence, ethnic polarization and abuses, including [genocidal massacres](#) against southerners during the 1990s. His Zaghawa ethnic group has occupied the country's positions of power since 1990. In the south, the division between northern Muslims and southern Christians and animists has increasingly resulted in ethnic conflict. Historically oppressed and excluded southerners express [mounting grievances](#) against the Muslim government and repression by its security forces.

Following Déby's death, the country entered a transitional period under Déby's son, Mahamat Idriss Déby, under a self-declared military government. In April and May, protesters took to the streets of N'Djamena and Moundou to demand a civilian government and a democratic transition. Security forces [violently suppressed](#) protesters, killing several civilians and arresting and torturing hundreds of others.

Over the last two years, territorial conflicts along ethnic lines have intensified in eastern and southern Chad. Between January and April 2021, conflicts between Arab herders migrating from the north and local farmers resulted in [over 130 deaths](#) in the southern Salamat Province. Clashes between farmers of the Ouaddai and Sila regions and northern Arab and Zaghawa herders [killed hundreds](#). The herders looted and burned villages, and [destroyed cultural sites](#) and property.

The government deployed security forces and launched disarmament efforts against farmers. Locals have reported [widespread abuses](#) and rights violations by these troops. Farmers resent discrimination by state authorities and the [impunity of herders](#), who largely belong to the politically dominant Zaghawa minority. Government officials and security forces are often from herder groups, increasing ethnic polarization. Former President Déby exploited ethnic cleavages to [weaken and divide rebel groups](#) in eastern Chad.

Boko Haram and The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) have targeted civilian populations in the Lake Chad basin. They launched over [15 terrorist attacks](#) between 2019 and 2020, killing and kidnapping dozens of civilians and destroying villages. The Lake Chad basin had an [increase in internally displaced persons](#) from 180,000 in 2020 to over 400,000 in 2021. The Chadian army's anti-terrorist operations have included rape, torture, and extra-judicial killings against local populations.

Genocide Watch considers Chad to be at **Stage 5: Organization**. Opposing ethnic groups in the Ouaddai, Sila and Salamat regions [are organizing ethnic militias](#). Herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria and Darfur have spilled over into Chad. Genocide Watch also considers Chad to be at **Stage 6: Polarization**.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- Government officials should establish a registry of farmland rights with corridors for herders.
- The Chadian government should involve the UN and NGOs in disarmament and demobilization.
- The Chadian government should appoint officials from all ethnic communities, and with NGOs it should support initiatives to build trust between communities.
- The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should appoint an independent fact-finding team to investigate abuses by Chadian security forces during anti-terrorist operations in the Lake Chad Basin and in repression of popular protests.
- The United States and European Union should impose Global Magnitsky sanctions on officials of the Chadian government who commit crimes against humanity.