

Niger- Human Rights Scorecard ¹

Since Niger's independence from France in 1960, it has undergone many drastic political changes, with 5 constitutions and three periods of military rule. Following the military coup of 2010, Niger became democracy with a multi-party system. Niger holds one of the world's fastest growth rates, with a population of already 19.8 million, the large majority of which are Muslim (80%). It is also one of the poorest countries and has the lowest reported HDI. The south-eastern region of Diffa has been under state of emergency since 2015 due to the attacks carried out by Boko Haram.

Official language: French

Ethnic groups: Hausa 53.1%, Zarma/Singhai 21.2%, Tuareg 11%, Fulani 6.5%, Kanuri 5.9%, Gurma 0.8%, Arab 0.4%, Tubu 0.4%

Government: Semi-presidential republic

- President: Mahamadou Issoufou

- Prime Minister: Brigi Rafini

Death penalty: Abolitionist in practice (hasn't executed for at least 10 years)

Population: 19.8 million

Life expectancy: 55.5 years

Under-5 mortality: 82.8 per 1000

Adult literacy: 19.1 percent



Section 1: Overall Development

The overall development of a country – considering education, health, income, and other factors – is a strong indicator of whether average citizens have a reasonable chance to enjoy social and economic well-being and mobility.

Human Development (UNDP Human Development Index (HDI)) ²



0.348 – Low Human Development ³

Nigeriens have gross national income per capita of \$908, and could expect to have on average 5.4 years of schooling. Despite having the 2nd lowest HDI in the world, compared to other countries with comparable GNIs, Niger's wealth is used effectively to develop the country's people.

Section 2: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Largely disrespected ⁴

There has been reporting that government security forces arbitrarily or unlawfully killed civilians.

Freedom from disappearance



Respected ⁵

There are no reports of disappearances for political causes in Niger.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Largely disrespected ⁶

There have been reports of security forces beating and abusing civilians. They have also used torture in order to gain more information from detainees. Detention conditions are deemed to be life threatening due largely to overcrowding and food shortages.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Largely disrespected ⁷

Police impunity is a widespread phenomenon; they often detain suspects without warrants.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Largely disrespected⁸

There are many cases of executive interference within the judiciary branch. Judges are prone to be involved in corruption due to their low salaries and lack of training and those who try to assert their independence are often dismissed to lower positions.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Largely disrespected⁹

The Diffa Region is under state-of-emergency provisions and so house searches without warrants can often occur. This also occurs in other regions when police holds strong suspicions.

Section 3: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)¹⁰



Score: 24.62, Rank: 52 / 179 – Mostly free, diverse and independent¹¹

Journalists practice self-censorship, but the constitution provides for the protection of free speech and press. The government however, has sometimes intimidated and arrested journalists due to their reporting.

Freedom from academic censorship



Respected¹²

There are no government restrictions on academic freedom.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Largely disrespected¹³

Police forces are known to forcibly disperse protestors and the government banned the opposition's political rallies. Freedom of association is generally respected.

Freedom of religion



Partly Free¹⁴

Niger practices separation of state and religion, while guaranteeing freedom of religion and criminalizing religious discrimination. These laws are generally respected. Full-face veils such as burkas have been banned in Diffa because they are often used to conceal explosives.

Freedom of movement



Respected¹⁵

The government respects this right, however security forces at checkpoints sometimes demanded bribes.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Respected¹⁶

Due to the amount of refugees in the country, the state has added a system for providing protection to refugees and has granted temporary protection to many individuals who did not qualify under the Refugee Convention.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{17 18}



5 / 7 – Partly free¹⁹

Some activists were detained because they voiced criticism of the government on the internet.

Section 4: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc.

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)²⁰



4 / 7 – Partly free²¹

The 2015 elections were deemed to be competitive and free. However, due to the internal displacements the Boko Haram insurgency created, hundreds of thousands of citizens were unable to vote.

Section 5: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)²²



Score: 35%, Rank: 101 / 176 – Highly corrupt²³

Corruption is a severe problem in Niger and officials who are involved in these practices are not punished.

Section 6: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Partially respected²⁴

Many domestic and international human rights group can work in Niger. However, the government is not always keen to collaborate.

Section 7: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Endangered Minorities (*Peoples Under Threat – Minority Rights Group International*)²⁵



Listed – Djerema-sonhai, Hausa, Tuaregs at risk²⁶

According to Minorities Rights Group International, these ethnic groups are at risk and they are often involved in forced labour practices. Furthermore, castes are still present in these groups, with people born in the lower ones often working without pay.

Rights of women (*World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index*)²⁷



Score: NA Rank: NA

Information not available.

Rights of Children (*KidsRights Index Overall Score*)²⁸



Score: 41.4%, Rank: 153 / 165 – Highly vulnerable²⁹

Births in remote rural areas and nomadic communities often go un-registered. Violence and abuse of children is very common, in addition to early marriages.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Partially respected³⁰

The laws in place are generally enforced but social discrimination persists. Accessibility is an issue as there is a lack of government regulations.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Largely disrespected³¹

The Buduma and Bororo Fulani minority ethnic groups are discriminated against due to the perception that they are involved in illicit activities with Boko Haram.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected^{32 33}

Same-sex activity under the age of 21 is punishable by law. Societal discrimination against the LGBTI community is widespread.

Section 8: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Partially respected³⁴

Employees from the public sector for "essential services" are not allowed to strike or exercise their right to collective bargaining. However, in other sectors the law protects those rights and is efficiently enforced.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Largely disrespected³⁵

The government did not effectively enforce the laws against forced labour, and the penalties were too low to deter such practices. Therefore, forced labour is still a rampant problem.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Largely disrespected³⁶

Child labour is prevalent throughout the country as 50% of children from the age of 5 to 17 are working. The laws in place are not enforced and do not protect the children efficiently.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Largely disrespected³⁷

Conditions of work are far from exemplary for mineworkers and other informal sector workers. Laws were hardly enforced in these sectors.

Right to employment



4.95% - Reasonable unemployment³⁸

The unemployment rate has been very stable for the past 10 years at 5%, there has been a slight drop of 0.5%.

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² The UN Development Program HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. The HDI can also be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts can stimulate debate about government policy priorities. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>

³ "Table 1: Human Development Index and its components, Niger" UNDP, based on 2016 or the most recent year available. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>.

⁴ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 Niger." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017 <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapperr>.

- ⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a “disappearance” is different than simple arbitrary detention because a “disappearance” is considered permanent.
- ⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.
- ⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.
- ⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.
- ⁹ Ibid. U.S Department of State.
- ¹⁰ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.
- ¹¹ "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.
- ¹² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Niger." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.
- ¹³ "Niger." World Report 2016: Niger. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/niger>.
- ¹⁴ "Niger." International Religious Freedom Report for 2016. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.
- ¹⁵ "Niger." World Report 2016: Niger. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/niger>.
- ¹⁶ "Niger." World Report 2016: Niger. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/niger>.
- ¹⁷ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).
- ¹⁸ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed March 10, 2017 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>
- ¹⁹ "Niger." Freedom in the World 2016: Niger. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/niger-0#.VIHLzGG9e8>.
- ²⁰ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed March 10, 2017 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>
- ²¹ "Niger." Freedom in the World 2016: Niger. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/niger-0#.VIHLzGG9e8>.
- ²² Transparency International (TI) publishes a “Corruption Perceptions Index” annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt
- ²³ "Niger." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <https://www.transparency.org/country/NER>.
- ²⁴ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Niger." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.
- ²⁵ The Peoples under Threat assessment by Minority Rights Group International highlights countries most at risk of genocide and mass killing. The ranking is created by compiling data on the known antecedents to genocide or mass political killing. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.
- ²⁶ "Niger." Peoples under Threat, Minority Rights Group International. 2016, or most recent data. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.
- ²⁷ This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights
- ²⁸ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable
- ²⁹ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>
- ³⁰ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 Niger." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.
- ³¹ Ibid. U.S Department of State.
- ³² "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.
- ³³ ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.
- ³⁴ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 Niger." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.
- ³⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁸ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2016. Accessed December 7, 2014. http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm.