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Hearing on The PRC's Threats to Americans: Transnational Repression and State-Level Responses Wednesday, June 3, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.

James P. McGovern
Commissioner, Congressional-Executive Commission on China

As delivered

I want to thank my colleague from New Jersey, Congressman Smith, for his words and for his commitment to human rights, not only in China but all around the world.

Good morning. I join my colleagues in welcoming our witnesses and guests to today's hearing on transnational repression.

Today is June 4. And as Co-Chair Smith pointed out, thirty-seven years ago, the Chinese government directed the military to attack civilians who were exercising their right to freedom of expression to call for economic and political reform.

Let us never forget those who bravely stood for freedom in Tiananmen Square and other cities, the mothers who never knew the fate of their children, and those who continue to tell the stories in the face of a government that seeks to silence them.

And let us not forget that any society whose leaders are willing to use lethal force against peaceful protestors is a society at risk of losing its fundamental liberties.

I am glad that the Commission continues to address transnational repression. In 2020, Co-Chair Marco Rubio and I created a new chapter called Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally in the Annual Report.

And CECC staff have just released a new special report on transnational repression. I always appreciate the dedication of the non-partisan subject matter experts who work for the Commission. This report is absolutely worth reading.

China is the world's worst perpetrator of transnational repression. Freedom House lists the PRC with the most incidents (319) since 2014 – and that only accounts for reported incidents. Who knows how many people have gotten threatening texts or calls that they are too scared to report?

But transnational repression is more than China. Freedom House lists Tajikistan, Rwanda, Russia, Egypt and Belarus among the biggest violators. Last year I chaired a Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing highlighting TNR by India, Pakistan, and Hong Kong. Yesterday afternoon Co-Chair Smith and I convene a hearing on Turkey, listed with 160 TNR incidents.

Hearings are fine. But it really is time for action.

Advocates tell us their #1 goal is to create a standard definition of transnational repression.

I am proud to join with CECC leaders Senators Merkley and Sullivan and Co-Chair Smith in sponsoring Transnational Repression Policy Act. It defines TNR in statute, strengthening efforts to counter it at the federal, state and local level.

This bill was first introduced in the House three years ago. But it has gone nowhere.

In March, Freedom House led a coalition of 35 organizations, including Uyghur, Tibetan, Chinese and Hong Kong human rights groups, in a statement to the chairs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee asking them to mark up the bill.

Foreign Affairs has scheduled four mark-ups since that letter. But the Transnational Repression Policy Act never makes the agenda. I ask Chairman Mast in the House to act.

Our bill is important because it would give the U.S. the tools to lead on TNR. Equally important, we must acknowledge that the tools will only be effective if we avoid double standards. I worry we are falling short:

1. President Biden started and President Trump completed the rehabilitation of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who directed the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey. *We lose credibility when the U.S. government grants impunity for transnational repression.*
2. This Commission characterized the deportation by Thailand of 40 Uyghurs to China as transnational repression. Yet the Trump Administration has deported individuals who have been transnationally repressed in the U.S. by Iran and Russia back to those countries. *We lose credibility to ask other countries to protect TNR victims when the U.S. government refuses to protect TNR victims.*
3. To the extent we label political interference by China in the U.S. as transnational repression, then we must consider Senator Bernie Moreno's meddling in the Colombian election as transnational repression. *We lose credibility when U.S. officials act like CCP officials.*
4. Last year the Trump Administration sanctioned a Brazilian judge who brought insurrectionists to justice, falsely portraying legitimate accountability as transnational repression. *We lose credibility when U.S. officials pervert TNR to help political allies.*

In September, our credibility will again be tested. Xi Jinping will visit Washington at President Trump's invitation. Last time he was in the U.S., thugs associated with the Chinese consulate in San Francisco beat up anti-Xi protestors. We must be prepared to defend the right to protest here.

The question is: will we?

The Trump Administration has deployed security forces to suppress Americans' right to protest. They're doing it now outside the Delaney Hall ICE facility in Newark, New Jersey.

If Xi Jinping asks President Trump to contain or control Chinese, Uyghur and Tibetan protestors, will he do that, or will he be wind behind the backs of those engaged in legitimate dissent?

The Administration has deported people for exercising their free speech rights under the First Amendment and the ICCPR to criticize the Israeli government.

If Xi Jinping asks President Trump to deport people, for whatever reason, back to China, we must make it clear that that is unacceptable, and we will not do that, and we will not stand for that.

Transnational repression is a human rights violation. All human beings are entitled to the same rights, no matter where they live, or how they feel about their government.

I thank the witnesses for being here and I welcome their insight.