



# CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

JUNE 2026

## Report on the PRC's Transnational Repression and Malign Influence in 2025





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## **About the Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China was established by the U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000 (Public Law No. 106–286) as China prepared to enter the World Trade Organization. The Commission is mandated to monitor human rights and the development of the rule of law in China.

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**Report on the PRC’s Transnational Repression and**  
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## Key Findings

- The PRC's transnational repression and malign influence operations pose significant threats to human rights and sovereignty, intimidating and censoring legal residents on U.S. soil and others around the world.
- The PRC targets Hong Kongers, Uyghurs, Tibetans, former Chinese government officials, and others through a global coercive toolkit that includes physical attacks, AI-enabled sexual harassment, threats to family members in China, pressure to return to China, censorship, and lawfare.
- PRC transnational repression aims to silence criticism, isolate victims, shape public narratives, and/or deter others from challenging the CCP's authority, even outside of China.
- PRC malign influence operations use covert and coercive tactics to skew public debate, and influence decision-making in the U.S. and allied democracies, undermining democratic governance, institutional integrity, and effective U.S. responses to autocratic interference.
- The PRC's malign influence and transnational repression operations violate rights protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and may contribute to violations by other governments when those governments assist, enable, tolerate, or fail to prevent PRC-linked coercion within their territory or return victims to places where they face a credible risk of persecution or abuse.

## About This Report

The government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has increasingly sought to make censorship and coercion felt far beyond China's borders. Critics, diaspora communities, universities, cultural institutions, foreign officials, and international organizations have all faced pressure when their words, actions, or advocacy challenge the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s preferred narratives. These efforts are meant not only to silence individual voices, but also to warn others that criticism of the CCP can carry consequences outside of China.

For more than a decade, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (Commission) has tracked this pattern through hearings, public reporting, victim testimony, and bipartisan legislative initiatives. In 2020, in response to this growing awareness of the PRC's extraterritorial human rights abuses, the Commission added a new chapter to its Annual Report titled "Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally." That chapter documented a widening set of tactics and targets, including threats and intimidation directed at critics and diaspora communities; economic coercion against foreign companies; abuses linked to PRC-backed development projects abroad; malign influence efforts in democratic systems; forced repatriation of political dissidents and refugees; and efforts to undermine international human rights bodies.

Since then, public reporting on the scope and tactics of these abuses has increased. What once appeared to be a series of scattered incidents is now understood as a growing global challenge to human rights, democratic freedoms, institutional independence, and the ability of people outside China to speak and act without fear of retaliation.

To address these developments more comprehensively, the Commission will now publish an annual review focused on the PRC's human rights violations beyond China's borders, as well as regular updates in the *China Monitor*. This report marks that transition: from documenting these abuses as one part of a broader annual report to examining them as a distinct and expanding threat that requires sustained public attention and a coordinated policy response.

# Introduction

The cases documented in this report show how the PRC government seeks to extend control abroad through fear, censorship, and coercion. In 2025, PRC authorities and their proxies targeted critics of the CCP, members of diaspora communities, human rights advocates, elected officials, researchers, artists, and civil society organizations outside China. While tactics varied, all cases appeared to be attempts to silence criticism, isolate victims, shape public narratives, and/or deter others from challenging the CCP's authority.

A central focus of this report is “transnational repression,” which the U.S. Department of Justice defines as “tactics that foreign governments employ to reach beyond their borders to harm, intimidate, threaten, harass, or coerce individuals.”<sup>1</sup> In 2026, Freedom House characterized the PRC as the continued leading perpetrator of transnational repression among all countries, responsible for 23 percent of recorded cases since 2014.<sup>2</sup>

Besides targeting individuals through transnational repression, PRC authorities have also sought to target foreign politicians and governments and influence democratic processes abroad through “malign influence,” defined by the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence as “subversive, undeclared, coercive, or criminal activities by foreign governments . . . to affect another nation’s popular or political attitudes, perceptions, or behaviors to advance their interests.”<sup>3</sup> Transnational repression and malign influence from the PRC often go hand in hand, linked by the CCP’s goal of controlling global narratives about the PRC and its policies. The CCP seeks to control public narratives both at home and abroad, with the aim of ensuring the stability of the government and its own political survival.<sup>4</sup>

The CCP’s model of social governance under CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has deepened centralized control over various aspects of society, promoted political and ideological indoctrination, and increased resources to grow the Party’s presence.<sup>5</sup> Established in 1942, the United Front Work Department (UFW) coordinates the PRC’s domestic and overseas influence and propaganda work.<sup>6</sup> On the domestic front, the UFW targets “non-CCP social groups, key individuals, and non-state organizations, such as the eight democratic parties, ethnic minorities, religious groups, intellectuals, and private businesses.”<sup>7</sup> Xi stated in 2023 that the overseas Chinese community serve as the “primary agents” driving united front work abroad.<sup>8</sup> The united front system seeks to “shape narratives about China in foreign media, target Chinese government critics abroad and co-opt influential overseas Chinese figures.”<sup>9</sup> The scope of these operations has moved beyond the Chinese diaspora to target any global voice critical of the PRC.

Synthesizing open-source information with individual interviews, this report documents the reality of the CCP’s transnational repression and malign influence operations. While not exhaustive, this report illustrates the PRC’s attempts, reported during 2025, to exert control outside of China. The report is organized by the various tactics used by PRC authorities, though certain cases reveal the convergence of multiple tactics. Similarly, some cases blur the line between “transnational repression” and “malign influence”—but all cases reveal an infringement on the rights of individuals abroad, including violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

# 2025 in Review: The PRC's Transnational Repression and Malign Influence

## WHAT IS IT?



### Transnational Repression:

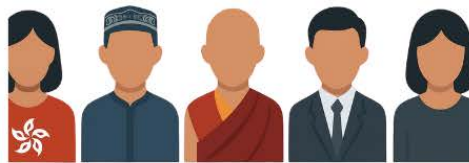
“Tactics that foreign governments employ to reach beyond their borders to harm, intimidate, threaten, harass, or coerce individuals.” (U.S. Department of Justice)

### Malign Influence:

“Subversive, undeclared, coercive, or criminal activities by foreign governments . . . to affect another nation’s popular or political attitudes, perceptions, or behaviors to advance their interests.” (U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence)

## WHO IS TARGETED?

Hong Kongers  
Uyghurs  
Tibetans  
Former Chinese government officials  
Others



## TACTICS

- Physical Violence
- AI-Enabled Sexual Harassment
- Coercion by Proxy
- Coercion to Return
- Forced Censorship
- Lawfare
- Political Interference
- Subverting International Organizations

Images created by CECC using Canva AI

## Physical Violence

Perhaps the clearest form of transnational repression is that of physical violence against dissidents abroad. Such obvious acts of repression by the PRC government are infrequently reported, though they do take place, even in the United States. During the November 2023 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in San Francisco, Chinese diplomats and pro-CCP diaspora groups in the U.S. harassed and physically attacked individuals protesting Xi Jinping's visit.<sup>10</sup> While advocacy groups and pro-democracy activists assembled outside the summit during Xi's visit to protest human rights abuses perpetrated by the PRC government,<sup>11</sup> some were physically attacked and harassed by coordinated pro-CCP demonstrators. Attacks included beatings with metal rods and flag poles, stealing advocacy groups' banners, and seizing activists' phones and tossing them into nearby water.<sup>12</sup> Anti-CCP protesters sustained injuries such as broken bones and head trauma, with two protesters taken to the hospital by ambulance. A detailed *Washington Post* investigation revealed a coordinated campaign by the PRC consulate in Los Angeles to pay for counterprotesters' hotels and meals, as well as the hiring of at least 60 security guards to "protect" those counterprotesters during the clashes.

Despite the clear documentation of such egregious physical attacks, U.S. official responses to the APEC Summit violence have been mixed. The San Francisco Police Department repeatedly deferred requests for public arrest records linked to the incident. Immediately following the Summit, the Commission wrote a letter to then-U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland in December 2023 requesting an investigation into the violence committed by counterprotesters.<sup>13</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice said in a reply that the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) takes such allegations "very seriously" but would not disclose the existence or status of any pending investigations.<sup>14</sup> The *Washington Post* later reported that the FBI, as of December 2024, was investigating the violence. In April 2025, news broke that Serbian law enforcement authorities, at the request of the U.S., arrested Cui Guanghai of China and John Miller of the United Kingdom for allegedly coordinating the harassment and intimidation of a U.S.-based protester at the Summit.<sup>15</sup> In September 2025, reports indicated that the two had escaped from house arrest in Serbia and, as of April 2026, have yet to be found.<sup>16</sup>

## AI-Enabled Sexual Harassment

Gender-based harassment is another tactic of transnational repression, and can take various forms, including the use of AI-generated deepfake technology to intimidate dissidents. Carmen Lau Ka-man and Ted Hui Chi-fung, two prominent exiled pro-democracy politicians on the Hong Kong police's bounty list for alleged national security offenses, were targeted in such campaigns in 2025.<sup>17</sup> In a letter sent from Macau and distributed to the neighbors of Carmen Lau in the United Kingdom, unknown actors used deepfake images to falsely portray Lau as a sex worker.<sup>18</sup> In 2025 in Australia, several people, including a co-worker of Ted Hui, received materials depicting Hui's wife as a "Hong Kong lonely housewife," accompanied by a fabricated "menu of sexual services."<sup>19</sup> Hui believes "Beijing loyalist groups organized or acquiesced (sic) by the Hong Kong regime" were responsible, and said that Australian police had told him the emails could be traced to a Hong Kong IP address.<sup>20</sup> Lau told the Commission that this AI-generated harassment is "definitely gender-based."<sup>21</sup> She noted that in the case involving Hui, the target was his wife "instead of Ted," adding that these operations targeting women have also occurred in Tibetan and Uyghur communities, reflecting a Chinese cultural stereotype that "women going (in)to politics have always been dirty." Lau has

adopted security measures she describes in part as an effort to make herself “invisible,” but this does not completely mitigate risk.

Chinese Canadian activist Yao Zhang was similarly targeted by AI-generated sexually explicit deepfakes and experienced online harassment and “doxing.”<sup>22</sup> In Zhang’s case, the repression also incorporated another tactic—often referred to as coercion by proxy—wherein Chinese authorities reportedly pressured her aunt and grandmother in China in an attempt to silence Zhang following her 2024 trip in support of Taiwan’s independence. In a statement, Global Affairs Canada attributed a new “Spamouflage” campaign—including the use of bots and sexually explicit deepfake images—to the PRC “with high confidence,” and Zhang said Canadian authorities informed her that she was the first documented case associated with this campaign.<sup>23</sup>

## Coercion by Proxy

“Coercion by proxy” is a tactic of transnational repression wherein a government punishes, harasses, or otherwise intimidates relatives of dissidents living abroad to silence diaspora activists.<sup>24</sup> PRC authorities commonly use this strategy, as seen through several examples this year.

### *Punishment of Family Members in Hong Kong*



*Anna Kwok at a press conference on Capitol Hill*

In February 2026, a Hong Kong court sentenced Kwok Yin-sang, the father of activist Anna Kwok, to eight months in prison after he attempted to cancel an insurance policy associated with his daughter.<sup>25</sup> This case marked the first known instance in which a family member of an overseas activist was convicted for actions related to the alleged financial assets of an “absconder” under Hong Kong’s *National Security Law*.<sup>26</sup> Anna Kwok warned that this prosecution reflects a pattern of “hostage-taking” and transnational repression.<sup>27</sup> The Commission’s Chair, Senator Dan Sullivan, and Senate Ranking Member, Senator Jeff Merkley, emphasized that Ms. Kwok’s case underscores the need for awareness and action.<sup>28</sup> They argued that China’s coercion of individuals abroad constitutes “an attack on our sovereignty and our freedoms” and must not be allowed to operate in the shadows.

### *Convergence of Tactics: The IndieChina Film Festival*

The cancellation of the inaugural IndieChina Film Festival in New York City in November 2025 illustrates the use of multiple transnational repression tactics, notably online harassment and coercion by proxy. The independent festival was to have featured Chinese documentaries and short films addressing topics such as COVID-19 lockdowns in China, the 2019 Hong Kong protests, and the anti-rightist movement of the late 1950s, a political campaign to purge dissidents within the CCP.<sup>29</sup>

The Commission identified that the intimidation began with a coordinated digital operation on social media. Numerous suspicious accounts targeted the festival’s Instagram platform to delegitimize the event.<sup>30</sup> These suspicious Instagram accounts were created in October 2025, around the same time the festival announced its lineup.<sup>31</sup> Under the festival’s posts, these accounts posted personal attacks against participants, circulated unsubstantiated allegations of financial impropriety, and questioned the professional qualifications of participating directors.<sup>32</sup> For example, the username “ondonantu697,” one of the suspicious accounts, repeatedly commented under multiple posts that “the title of independent films shouldn’t become a front for individual promotion” and that “this sort of ‘director’ is only capable of making one type of film: hoax documentaries.” Meanwhile, other accounts questioned whether independent films serve as a tool for raising funds. The timing of the accounts’ creation and the similarity in messaging patterns suggest a coordinated effort to discredit the festival and its organizers.



After these online attacks, the festival curator, Zhu Rikun, and several participating directors reported pressure conveyed through family members in China.<sup>33</sup> Zhu described a turning point when he received an early morning phone call from his father in China warning him “never to do anything that harms the country.” Although Zhu’s father denied acting under duress, other festival participants reported that Chinese police had contacted their relatives, urging them to withdraw their films from the festival.<sup>34</sup> On November 6, two days before the festival’s scheduled opening, Zhu issued a statement canceling the festival, stating that he hoped the decision would “stop certain unknown forces from harassing all directors, guests, former staff, and volunteers.”<sup>35</sup>

## Coercion to Return: Operations Fox Hunt & Sky Net

The PRC government also seeks to coerce individuals to return to China, allowing authorities to prosecute and exert more control over them at home. Two large-scale operations, “Operation Fox Hunt” and “Operation Sky Net,”<sup>36</sup> were launched in 2014 and 2015, respectively, as part of the PRC’s broader campaign of using extrajudicial mechanisms to pressure individuals they deemed to be “fugitives” to return to China. Safeguard Defenders, a non-profit organization that monitors human rights in Asia, estimated in early 2025 that these two operations have returned almost 14,000 individuals from over 120 countries and regions to China from 2014 to 2024.<sup>37</sup>

In early 2025, three men from the first U.S. trial addressing “Operation Fox Hunt” were sentenced for their efforts to intimidate and pressure a former PRC government official to return to China.<sup>38</sup> The target of the operation, Xu Jin, previously served as an official in Wuhan municipality, and faces bribery accusations in China which he denies. Xu and his wife claim that they were targeted due to internal PRC politics. The perpetrators, Zhu Yong, Zheng Congying, and retired New York City police sergeant Michael McMahan,<sup>39</sup> harassed Xu at his home in New Jersey and left threatening notes on his door. Meanwhile, PRC authorities flew Xu’s elderly father to meet him in the U.S. and implore him to return.

Also in early 2025, in another “Operation Fox Hunt” case, An Quanzhong, a prominent Chinese businessman, was sentenced in New York for pressuring a different “fugitive” from China to return. An also served as a member of the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese and led the New York Shandong Association, closely tethering him to the PRC government and CCP.<sup>40</sup> For more than five years, An repeatedly threatened U.S. permanent resident Liu Shenxiang, who was declared one of the 100 “most wanted economic fugitives” by PRC authorities in 2015 for allegedly misappropriating over \$285,000 from a state-owned company. Liu denied such claims and left the PRC in 2000 to settle in the United States. From 2017 until the time of his arrest in 2022, An assisted PRC authorities in pressuring Liu to return to China by arranging for Liu’s nephew to visit him in the U.S. along with a PRC government official, and warning Liu of threats to his family members back in China should he stay in the United States.<sup>41</sup> In March 2025, a federal judge sentenced An to 20 months in prison for acting as an illegal agent of the PRC and for his coercion of Liu to return to China.

## Forced Censorship

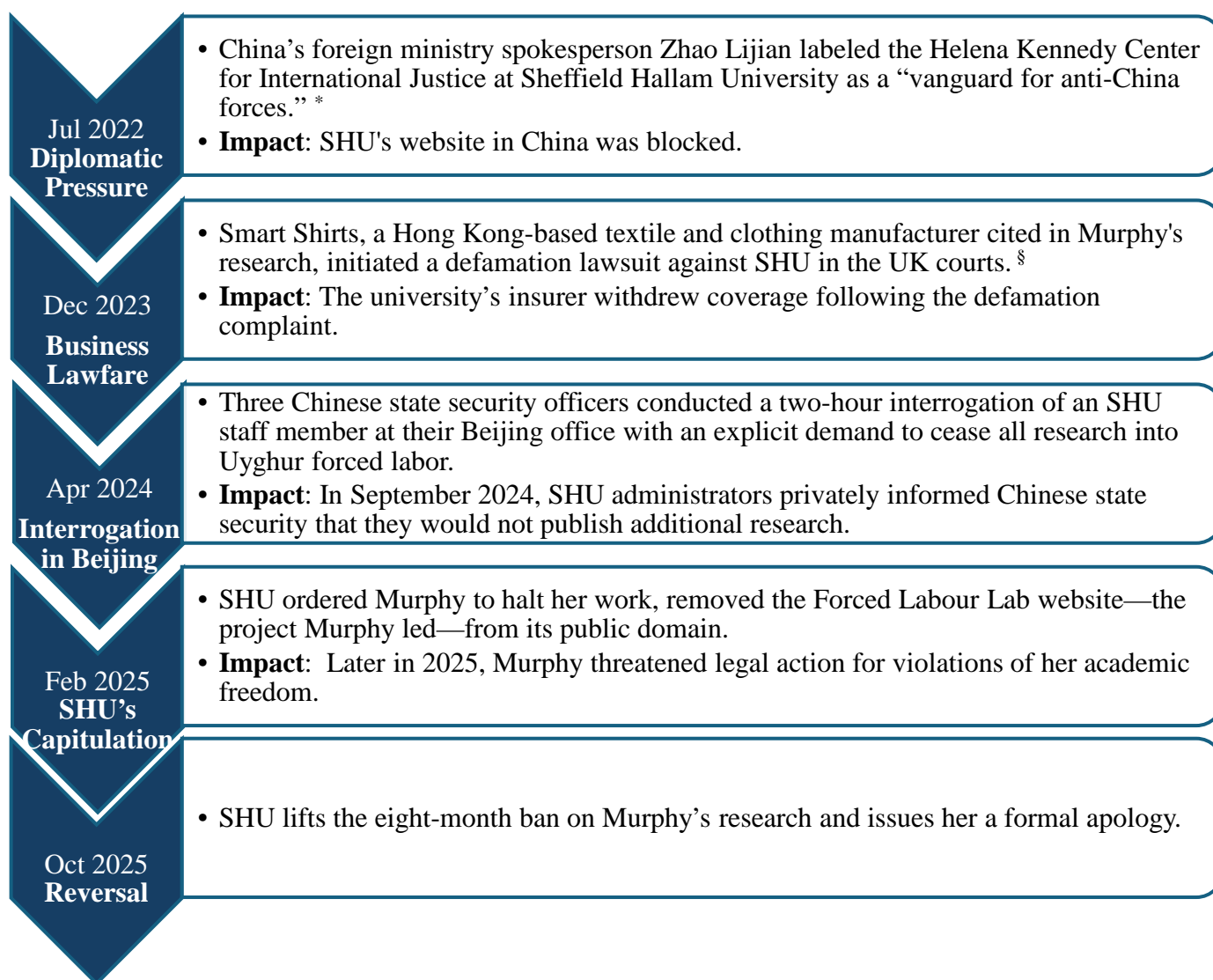
### *Academic Censorship: Sheffield Hallam University*

Beginning in 2021, Professor Laura Murphy, Ph.D. of Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) in the United Kingdom conducted research documenting links between various global supply chains and forced labor related to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.<sup>42</sup> Her findings, as well as the research of her team at SHU's Forced Labour Lab, have been cited in parliamentary and policy discussions in the UK, Canada, and Australia, and have informed legislative efforts such as the enforcement of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in the United States.<sup>43</sup>

Murphy took a career break from Sheffield Hallam University between November 2023 and early 2025 to serve as a senior policy adviser at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.<sup>44</sup> During this period, pressure from China targeting her research intensified, including the blocking of SHU's website in China and a defamation lawsuit against SHU by a Hong Kong-based textile and clothing manufacturer. In response to this pressure, as well as risks of being unable to retain access to the Chinese student market, SHU ultimately halted Murphy's research. After Murphy threatened legal action for violations of academic freedom, the university issued a formal apology to Murphy and allowed her research to continue in October 2025. However, its earlier decision not to publish a report and to return the funding to Global Rights Compliance, a Hague-based non-profit, raised concerns that such actions—seen as censorship on behalf of a foreign government—could undermine freedom of speech and academic freedom protected under the UK's Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.<sup>45</sup>

Murphy's experience illustrates how transnational repression curtails academic research projects through diplomatic pressure, weaponized litigation, and covert intimidation, at times forcing censorship and withdrawal of independent research.<sup>46</sup> The sequence of events is outlined in the timeline below.

## Timeline of Sheffield Hallam University Academic Censorship



\*“2022年7月29日外交部发言人赵立坚主持例行记者会” [Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian Presided over the Regular Press Conference on July 29, 2022], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, July 29, 2022.

§Smart Shirts Limited v Sheffield Hallam University, [2024] EWHC 3276 (KB),” *Royal Courts of Justice, the UK*, December 17, 2024; David McCabe and Tripp Mickle, “Chinese Companies’ New Tactic to Stop Damaging Research: Legal Threats,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2025.

## *Censorship of the Arts*

Such forced censorship of politically sensitive topics in China is not limited to academia. In Thailand, the Bangkok Arts and Cultural Centre removed artwork three days after the July 2025 opening of the exhibition, “Constellation of Complicity: Visualizing the Global Machinery of Authoritarian Solidarity,” following a visit by Chinese embassy officials in Bangkok who requested the removal of certain content.<sup>47</sup> The censored artwork included a multimedia installation by a Tibetan, while other pieces with the words “Hong Kong,” and “Uyghur” had been altered and redacted. The Centre reportedly acknowledged that the pressure was conveyed through Thailand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, its primary sponsors, stating it had “no choice” but to make the adjustments, including obscuring artists’ identities. The exhibition’s co-curator, Sai—a Myanmar artist—claimed that he left the country after Thai police sought to locate him. He said the incident was a “chilling signal” to exiled artists and activists in the region.

## **Lawfare**

Lawfare, or what one legal expert describes as “frivolous lawsuits in [foreign] courts to impose financial and psychological costs on dissidents,” has emerged as a growing trend of transnational repression, with the PRC being one of the most prolific perpetrators.<sup>48</sup> PRC authorities and their proxies can use civil suits, criminal accusations, INTERPOL notices or other quasi-legal mechanisms to target dissidents and diaspora critics outside China, exploiting the openness of foreign legal systems. A few such tactics were observed this reporting year:

### *Ma Ju: A Chinese Lawsuit in a U.S. Court*

One case showing how a commercial lawsuit can become a tool of transnational repression when a PRC-linked judgment follows a dissident into a U.S. court is that of Ma Ju, a Hui Muslim who came to the U.S. in 2019 seeking asylum from the PRC’s growing campaign against Muslims.<sup>49</sup> A state-owned enterprise in China, Tianzhu Coal Company Ltd., under Yaojie Coal and Electricity Group, sued Ma in a U.S. court in December 2023, claiming he owed nearly \$12.5 million. Because this lawsuit came after over a decade of Ma speaking out against the CCP’s policies targeting ethnic minorities in China, Ma claims it is based on “fabricated facts,” and is likely more an attempt to silence him and deplete his finances than an attempt to seek justice.<sup>50</sup> In 2023 specifically, Ma had expanded his public advocacy through U.N. reporting, a Congressional briefing, and protests over the demolition and alteration of mosques in China.

A U.S. judge found the Chinese court documents to be valid and ruled in August 2024 that Ma did owe the \$12.5 million, noting insufficient evidence that “China’s judicial system, as a whole, lacks impartiality or lacks compliance with the requirements of due process.”<sup>51</sup> As of March 2025, Ma and his legal team were working to get the order vacated, and planning to appeal. Ma’s case illustrates the PRC’s extraterritorial abuse of U.S. courts to burden dissidents with financial penalties, as well as U.S. courts’ current lack of ability to counter such threats.



*Ma Ju testified at the CECC hearing, “China’s War on Religion: The Threat to Religious Freedom and Why it Matters to the United States,” on November 20, 2025.*

### *Puma Shen: Targeting Taiwan Through Lawfare*

The PRC has also increasingly integrated lawfare into its broader strategy against Taiwan.<sup>52</sup> A prominent case involves Taiwanese legislator Puma Shen, who was added to a PRC sanctions list in 2024 and subsequently placed under official criminal investigation by the Chongqing Public Security Bureau in October 2025 as a so-called “diehard Taiwan independence separatist.” This is the first instance of a Taiwanese lawmaker being targeted after Chinese judicial authorities issued the document, *Opinion on Lawfully Punishing Obstinate “Taiwan Independence” Offenders for Committing or Inciting Separatism*.<sup>53</sup> A Chinese professor at Renmin University Law School told CCTV, China’s state media, that China can leverage international mechanisms—such as INTERPOL red notices—or pursue criminal justice cooperation with other countries to carry out cross-border actions and apprehend Shen.<sup>54</sup> Chinese authorities are escalating from administrative sanctions to extraterritorial criminal prosecution—exemplified by the Shen case—reflecting the PRC narrative that Taiwan is a part of China.<sup>55</sup> Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the idea that the PRC could arrest Shen anywhere in the world and labeled it an example of China’s “long-arm jurisdiction” and transnational repression.<sup>56</sup>

## Political Interference

Just as PRC authorities harass and silence particular individuals beyond China’s borders, they also seek to gain support from foreign government officials and spread disinformation as part of a narrative-shaping strategy. Samantha Custer, former director of AidData’s Policy Analysis Unit at William & Mary’s Global Research Institute, stated in January 2025 that “China seeks synergies between public diplomacy, information, influence, and economic cooperation as a force multiplier to amplify the reach and impact of its narratives.”<sup>57</sup> The PRC government has leveraged a variety of different means to expand its influence among foreign government officials and thereby advance policies aligned with the CCP’s objectives; Noteworthy recent examples include the following:

### *Hometown Associations*

In August 2025, the *New York Times* discussed how “hometown associations,” Chinese diaspora groups composed of members who share a similar regional background, many of which are classified as tax-exempt non-profit organizations, are being used as “tools of China’s consulate in Midtown Manhattan.”<sup>58</sup> A *Times* investigation uncovered that, in the previous five years, at least 53 organizations linked to the PRC pushed for their members to endorse or provide funding for New York political candidates. At least 19 of the 53 organizations were registered charities that ignored federal tax law prohibiting their endorsement of political candidates. The *New York Times* found videos from 2016 onwards of 35 ceremonies spearheaded by PRC consular officials who led group leaders through different oaths that included pledging support for the PRC’s stance on Taiwan, the “great rejuvenation” of the motherland, and other CCP-aligned positions. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in December 2025 that Linda Sun, a previous aide to former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, and later Governor Kathy Hochul, had maintained connections with members of hometown associations, joining a protest organized by some of the groups against former Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen’s visit to the United States, as well as traveling to Beijing to celebrate the CCP’s 70 years of rule.<sup>59</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice charged Linda Sun with 10 criminal counts in September 2024, including violating and conspiring to violate the Foreign Agents Registration Act, and added more charges in June 2025, though a federal judge in New York declared a mistrial in December 2025 after jurors failed to reach a verdict.<sup>60</sup>



*Source: Website of the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in New York*

### *Online Propaganda*

“Spamouflage,” a PRC state-linked influence operation, has used thousands of social media accounts across dozens of websites since at least 2017 to push pro-PRC narratives and target critics of the PRC, including human rights groups.<sup>61</sup> The network has also sought to influence political discourse in foreign countries and at times has sought to promote narratives critical of foreign governments and political figures.<sup>62</sup> Meta has linked the operation to individuals associated with PRC law enforcement.<sup>63</sup> Spamouflage’s observed engagement and impact have generally remained limited.<sup>64</sup>

In January 2025, Graphika, a company that conducts social media analysis, published a report finding that Spamouflage had created “content impersonating the Madrid-based human rights organization Safeguard Defenders across multiple mainstream and alternative platforms, leveraging deadly floods in Valencia to suggest that the Spanish government should be overthrown.”<sup>65</sup> This marked one of Graphika’s first observations of the network promoting the overthrow of a foreign government.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the government of Canada published a report in January 2025 noting that Rapid Response Mechanism Canada detected Spamouflage generating between 100 and 200 posts a day on X, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube.<sup>67</sup> Canadian officials said that the campaign involved “sharing doctored videos—or deepfakes—in the comments section of X and Facebook accounts belonging to various government entities and Canadian media outlets.”

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies reported in February 2026 that over 330 fake social media accounts in a likely PRC-connected network whose tactics mirrored earlier Spamouflage campaigns made “false assertions to audiences in the United States and in U.S. partner nations” between December 2025 and February 2026 across five online platforms.<sup>68</sup> The accounts attempted to discredit Uyghur activists, claimed that the National Endowment for Democracy and the International Republican Institute were responsible for facilitating “Taiwan-U.S. collusion” schemes against the PRC, denied human rights violations across Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Tibet, and disseminated false claims about other topics.

## Subverting International Organizations

### *Targeting IPAC Members*

The Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) is a global network of legislators established in 2020 to coordinate democratic responses to the policies and conduct of the PRC government.<sup>69</sup> Founded by 18 legislators from nine countries, IPAC has since expanded to nearly 300 lawmakers across more than 40 legislatures worldwide.<sup>70</sup> It is also one of the few international organizations in which Taiwan participates as a member, represented under the name “Republic of China (Taiwan)” in contrast to its designation in the World Trade Organization as the “Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu.”<sup>71</sup> This visibility is in part why IPAC is a target of PRC efforts aimed at undermining and destabilizing its operations through repression of foreign politicians.<sup>72</sup>



*Image: IPAC, photo taken by Octavian Carare*

In a January 2026 interview with the Commission, IPAC Executive Director Luke de Pulford detailed PRC tactics to obstruct the 2025 IPAC Summit, held at the European Parliament in November, which featured an address by Taiwan Vice President Bi-khim Hsiao.<sup>73</sup> According to de Pulford, only 2 of 12 invited African delegates ultimately attended. He speculated that the reason was interference

from Chinese authorities. In one instance, direct intervention by the PRC caused the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to revoke the lawmakers’ permission to travel, only 24 hours ahead of departure. de Pulford further noted that PRC pressure contributed to the resignation of one of Zambia’s co-chairs following the Summit, which would necessitate Zambia leaving IPAC completely, as membership requires at least two legislators from each country. Such targeted actions have hindered IPAC’s expansion in parts of Africa, with Zambia’s case reflecting earlier withdrawals by legislators from Malawi and The Gambia.<sup>74</sup>

## *Misuse of International Mechanisms*

Since 2018, China has expanded the tactic of using government-organized nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs) within the UN Human Rights Council and other UN bodies.<sup>75</sup> These GONGOs not only promote pro-PRC narratives and crowd out independent voices but also, according to the nongovernmental organization International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), serve as “additional eyes and ears” for the PRC government to monitor, intimidate, or disrupt independent civil society actors. Uyghur and Tibetan activists have reported being confronted, photographed, and surveilled at UN venues, and some believe family members in China were pressured by authorities to urge them to stop participating in UN conferences or events.

Individuals and organizations should be able to engage freely with international human rights mechanisms without fear of intimidation or reprisals, a principle reflected in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and other international standards.<sup>76</sup> China ranks among the leading perpetrators of such reprisals, with at least 41 documented cases between 2010 and 2024, placing fourth globally, according to an ISHR compilation of the UN Secretary-General’s annual reports on reprisals.<sup>77</sup> According to ISHR, all the cases they documented remain unresolved, which reflects the continued absence of accountability or remedy for “alleged grave violations of international law . . .”<sup>78</sup>

In April 2025, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) published a report documenting the Chinese government’s misuse of the red notice system of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to pursue individuals abroad, including dissidents and business figures.<sup>79</sup> In the report, ICIJ noted refusals by several national courts to grant these extraditions to the PRC, with two courts explicitly finding the requests to be political in nature.

In 2016, INTERPOL introduced reforms to the red notice system, setting up a task force to review the notices before publishing them in INTERPOL’s databases. However, the new process does not require an independent assessment of the underlying merits of a case and largely depends on the good faith of the requesting party. These constraints create vulnerabilities that continue to allow politically motivated red notices to be issued.<sup>80</sup> The United States has responded through the Transnational Repression Accountability and Prevention (TRAP) provisions included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022.<sup>81</sup> The TRAP provisions require the Attorney General and Secretary of State to report to Congress on INTERPOL abuse, and bans the U.S. government from extraditing someone based solely on a red notice or diffusion. While the U.S. Departments of Justice and State have reported that the U.S. does not arrest or detain people based on red notices or diffusions, challenges remain for both the U.S. and other countries to minimize further risk of abuse.<sup>82</sup>

## Conclusion: Policy Recommendations

By targeting specific individuals through intimidation, spreading disinformation about foreign governments and politicians, and subverting international organizations and mechanisms, the PRC continues to extend its repressive “long arm” beyond its borders. These actions underscore the need for enhanced diplomatic and law enforcement efforts by the United States and its partners. The recommendations below were included in the CECC’s 2025 Annual Report.

### *Create a Strategy to Address Transnational Repression*

Congress and the executive branch should work on developing a whole-of-government strategy that equips federal agencies to deal with emerging risks, strengthens international partnerships, and supports diaspora communities.

#### **Congress should—**

- **Pass the Transnational Repression Policy Act (S. 2525 / H.R. 4829)** to expand authorities for U.S. law enforcement and the U.S. State Department to counter acts of transnational repression on U.S. soil.
- **Require a Transnational Repression Threat Report** from the Secretary of State, Attorney General, and other relevant federal agencies to evaluate U.S. efforts to thwart transnational repression. The report should detail the following:
  - Investigations, prosecutions, and civil remedies pursued;
  - Interagency coordination and training initiatives;
  - Engagements with diaspora communities and support for NGOs seeking to shine a light on transnational repression;
  - Public diplomacy campaigns countering foreign propaganda and fear-based influence operations; and
  - Emerging threats and outreach to at-risk diaspora or exile communities.
- **Commission a Gap Analysis Report** from the Department of Justice evaluating whether current U.S. law sufficiently criminalizes and deters transnational repression and recommend any statutory changes necessary to fill legal gaps, particularly around foreign intelligence proxies and digital harassment tools.

#### **The Administration should—**

- **Deepen International Coordination and Intelligence Sharing** by convening biannual multilateral exercises—building on the G7’s transnational repression framework—to exchange real-time intelligence on coercive tactics and identify key actors engaged in cross-border intimidation.
- **Assess and Report on Foreign Digital Platforms Used for Intimidation** by conducting a comprehensive risk assessment report evaluating how platforms such as WeChat, TikTok, and RedNote are employed for censorship, surveillance, disseminating propaganda, election

interference, and the intimidation of U.S. residents. The report should include connections to PRC global propaganda and malign influence operations efforts and prioritize policy and enforcement recommendations.

- **Expand Victim Support and Legal Remedies** through broadening access to psychological counseling, legal services, and other assistance for victims under the *Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act* (Public Law No. 106-87), the *Victims of Crime Act* (34 U.S.C. §§ 20101–20111), and other measures to address the trauma, isolation, and civil rights harms suffered by targets of transnational repression.
- **Advance Global Accountability Mechanisms by—**
  - **Championing the Creation of a U.N. Mandate for Transnational Repression—**a special rapporteur or equivalent—tasked with documenting extraterritorial human rights abuses (e.g., abductions, threats, coercive returns), coordinating civil society input, and issuing annual findings; and
  - **Creating Sanctions and Enforcement Toolkits** and disseminating model sanctions authorities and law enforcement training modules to help allies and partners detect, investigate, and prosecute instances of transnational repression.

## ***Confront Malign PRC Influence Operations***

A unified, bipartisan approach—blending enforcement, transparency, community protection, and capacity building—can address the human rights implications of the CCP’s covert influence networks, uplift vulnerable populations, and reinforce the integrity of U.S. political, academic, and civil society institutions.

### **Congress should—**

- **Pass the SHIELD Against CCP Act (H.R. 708 / S. 1625)** to form a working group at Department of Homeland Security tasked with improving cybersecurity, protecting critical infrastructure, and fighting threats to democratic institutions posed by the CCP.
- **Stand Up an Interagency Influence Hub** by tasking the U.S. State Department to chair a “Global PRC Influence Observatory,” drawing in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Department of Justice, Department of Commerce, and civil society liaisons.

### **The Administration should—**

- **Shut Down CCP Covert Networks** by terminating any U.S. operations of the United Front Work Department, PRC Ministry of Public Security “police stations” (a.k.a. “service stations”), and affiliated entities, by sanctioning those complicit in facilitating these networks, including freezing assets or revoking visas.
- **Elevate Intelligence Sharing** by conducting quarterly briefings for key allies and partners on the Foreign Malign Influence Center’s (FMIC) findings and creating a secure portal to distribute declassified FMIC threat assessments to federal, state, and local agencies.
- **Protect At-Risk Communities** by scaling the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s “Protected Voices” program into a nationwide awareness campaign—webinars, hotlines, and community

workshops—to help journalists, academics, and diaspora groups guard against PRC cyber intrusion, doxxing, and intimidation.

- **Roll Out Updated Intrusion Detection Tools** through the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to individuals, NGOs, faith organizations, and ethnic community centers at highest risk of PRC surveillance and digital intimidation in the United States.

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<sup>81</sup> “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022,” Pub. L. No. 117-81, sec. 6503.

<sup>82</sup> “Assessment of INTERPOL Member Country Abuse of INTERPOL Red Notices, Diffusions, and Other INTERPOL Communications for Political Motives and Other Unlawful Purposes,” *U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of State*, August 2022, p. 5; Ted Bromund, “How the Abuse of Interpol Contributes to Transnational Repression,” *New Lines Policy Institute*, July 2025, p. 12-24.

**Congressional-Executive Commission on China**  
**243 Ford House Office Building**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**202-226-3766**  
**[www.cecc.gov](http://www.cecc.gov)**