HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE U.S. AND GLOBALLY

Findings

- The People's Republic of China (PRC) continued a multifaceted campaign of transnational repression against members of the Chinese diaspora and critics of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to intimidate individuals and stifle dissent. The Commission observed the use of tactics ranging from verbal and online harassment to lawfare, as well as physical intimidation such as through overseas police "service stations." Cases of transnational repression this reporting year include the issuance of HK\$1,000,000 (US\$129,000) bounties on six overseas activists, passport cancellations for activists with existing bounties, threats against Uyghurs attending an international conference, and harassment of Falun Gong practitioners.
- U.S. federal authorities prosecuted various perpetrators of PRC-led transnational repression, including two prominent leaders in U.S.-based pro-democracy groups, as well as 12 Chinese nationals responsible for a vast cyber-hacking campaign targeting critics of the CCP. Outcomes varied, with three individuals sentenced for acting as illegal agents of the PRC, while a separate jury acquitted a man accused of spying on Chinese diaspora members.
- Despite advocacy groups and governments calling for their protection, Thailand deported 40 Uyghur refugees back to China in February 2025. The repatriated men faced possible torture and long-term imprisonment upon their return, according to U.N. officials. The Thai government later claimed that their decision to deport was due to potential retaliation from the PRC.
- The PRC continued to exert malign influence abroad by attempting to target foreign politicians and governments, influence democratic processes abroad, and shape public opinion about the CCP and PRC government. Notable examples include the use of Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices to spread propaganda and promote CCP policies, covertly gaining access to high-level figures in the U.K. government, spreading disinformation among voters about the U.S. elections, and influencing sub-national politics in the U.S. through political aides.
- PRC authorities continued to make efforts to subvert processes and procedures within the U.N. system in order to deny China's human rights abuse, challenge the universality of international human rights norms, and obfuscate obligations made in international treaties and covenants the PRC signed and ratified. Reports this past year revealed "an extensive campaign to subvert the work of the U.N. Human Rights Council" through groups linked to the PRC government. Additionally, despite official calls from governments in the Universal Periodic Review process and elsewhere for the PRC to improve its record on human rights, PRC diplomats rejected many such recommendations, warning against "political forces aiming at containing and vilifying China."

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE U.S. AND GLOBALLY

Introduction

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the People's Republic of China (PRC) continued to expand its repressive policies and tactics beyond its borders, targeting individuals, groups, governments, and international organizations. Such actions violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, directly or indirectly infringing on the individual rights of those abroad, including many who fled China due to persecution or who peacefully express dissent with PRC policies and domestic human rights abuse.¹

Transnational Repression

The PRC continued a multifaceted campaign of transnational repression to intimidate and maintain control over diaspora communities and critics abroad.² "Transnational repression" refers to "tactics that foreign governments employ to reach beyond their borders to harm, intimidate, threaten, harass, or coerce individuals." Freedom House characterizes the PRC as "the most prolific perpetrator" of transnational repression, responsible for 22 percent of recorded cases over the last 10 years.⁴

Much reporting has covered the PRC's direct physical tactics of transnational repression, including assaults and abductions,⁵ but the Commission also observed reports of intangible methods this past year. One such tactic is "lawfare," or what one scholar describes as the use of "frivolous lawsuits in [foreign] courts to impose financial and psychological costs on dissidents."6 According to an investigative report by Radio Free Asia this reporting year, a Chinese state-owned enterprise pursued legal action against U.S.-based activist Ma Ju in a New York court, allegedly over a business dispute, although Ma, legal experts, and other activists claim the case is designed to punish Ma for his outspoken criticism of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).⁷ In a more wide-reaching case, the U.S. Department of Justice highlighted the PRC's digital transnational repression tactics, with indictments against 12 Chinese nationals in March 2025 for targeting both U.S.- and foreign-based human rights advocates and critics of the PRC via a widespread cyber-hacking campaign.8

Overseas PRC "service stations," or extraterritorial Chinese police stations linked to transnational repression efforts, remained a concern as well. In December 2024, Chen Jinping, a man who helped to open an undeclared service station in New York City, was accused of acting as an agent of a foreign government and pleaded guilty in a federal court in the first case of its kind. In addition, tensions erupted in the United Kingdom this reporting year over the PRC's proposed new "super-embassy" in London. In Rights groups argued it could facilitate increased repression of diaspora and pro-democracy activists in the U.K., while the local council reviewing plans for the project warned of the complex's potential negative impact on public safety and policing. Although the council rejected plans for the "super-embassy" in 2022 and 2024, it changed its position in early

2025, announcing that it would not oppose the project at a government hearing on the topic.¹³

The Commission observed reports of PRC-led transnational repression against members of the Chinese diaspora and critics in various countries this reporting year, including in Canada, ¹⁴ Kazakhstan, ¹⁵ Japan, ¹⁶ Sweden, ¹⁷ and Switzerland. ¹⁸ Select other examples include the following:

- Hong Kong activists. On December 24, 2024, Hong Kong's national security police issued arrest warrants and bounties of HK\$1,000,000 (US\$129,000) on six activists living overseas: Chloe Cheung, Tony Chung, Victor Ho, Chung Kim-wah, Carmen Lau, and Joseph Tay. 19 On the same day, Hong Kong authorities took measures against seven activists with prior bounties from 2023, including canceling their passports, prohibiting them from accessing funds in Hong Kong, and suspending professional licenses,²⁰ similar to measures taken against six other activists in June 2024.²¹ As of May 2025, the Hong Kong government has issued bounties and arrest warrants on 19 overseas activists of Hong Kong origin.²² Hong Kong authorities took in for questioning the relatives of several wanted activists, 23 and for the first time in such a case, arrested Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Anna Kwok's father and brother for allegedly assisting with her finances.²⁴ In some cases, neighbors and colleagues of the wanted individuals received anonymous letters from Hong Kong with photos and personal information of the activists, with instructions to contact Hong Kong police with information.²⁵ Pamphlets sent to mosques in Australia falsely characterized wanted exile Ted Hui as seeking to "wage war against . . . Islamic terrorism," in a reported attempt to intimidate Hui and "stir conflict . . . among ethnic communities." ²⁶ In the Canadian political sphere, a PRC-linked Chinese-language social media operation sought to discredit and suppress campaign information about Conservative Party candidate and wanted activist Joseph Tay.²⁷ Federal police advised Tay to cease canvassing because of safety concerns.²⁸ International governments and nongovernmental organizations spoke out in support of the targeted activists, highlighting that bounties and other measures aim to "silence Hong Kong people" and "extend the reach of authoritarian control beyond Hong Kong's borders."²⁹ [For more information about Hong Kong, see Chapter 16—Hong Kong and Macau.]
- Tibetans. Rights groups spoke out this reporting year about the death of Tibetan Buddhist leader Tulku Hungkar Dorje in Vietnam in March 2025 following eight months of disappearance, claiming that local police and PRC authorities colluded in arresting and transferring him into the PRC's custody shortly before his mysterious death.³⁰ Tulku Hungkar Dorje had reportedly been in hiding in Vietnam since September 2024 due to pressure from the PRC government.³¹ The Tibetan government-in-exile called for an independent investigation into his death, citing specific concerns of transnational repression.³² [For more information on the PRC government's repression of Tibetans, see Chapter 14—Tibet.]

• **Uyghurs.** The World Uyghur Congress (WUC), a Germany-based rights group, faced harassment it described as "unprecedented" from PRC authorities for months leading up to their general assembly in October 2024 in Bosnia.³³ The Chinese embassy in Sarajevo reportedly encouraged local police to arrest former WUC President Dolkun Isa, while other Chinese authorities pressured delegates around the globe not to attend by threatening their family members in the Xinjiang Uvghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).³⁴ In March 2025, a cyber campaign targeted senior members of the WUC via Uyghur-language software. 35 While the attacks have not been definitively linked to the PRC government, Google identified emails from the campaign as "malicious emails sent by state-sponsored attackers," and The Citizen Lab, the research organization responsible for the report detailing these attacks, characterized them as "[aligning] closely with the activities of the Chinese government."36 [For more information about the PRC's persecution of Uyghurs, see Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]

• Falun Gong. Shen Yun Performing Arts, a classical dance company founded by Falun Gong practitioners known for depicting "China before communism," ³⁷ received dozens of bomb threats against shows across the U.S. and globally. ³⁸ Falun Gong supporters claim these threats came from the CCP. ³⁹ Also, the U.S. Department of Justice sentenced one man, Chen Jun, in November 2024 for acting as an unregistered agent of the PRC and bribing an Internal Revenue Service agent in connection with a plot to target U.S.-based practitioners of Falun Gong. ⁴⁰ [For more information on the PRC's repression of Falun Gong and other religious groups,

see Chapter 3—Freedom of Religion.]

• U.S. residents. The Commission observed developments in U.S. courts this past year involving individuals accused of working for the PRC to surveil, harass, and intimidate U.S.-based critics of the CCP. Two cases involved leaders in Chinese prodemocracy diaspora organizations in the United States accused of using connections from those groups to collect and send information about fellow dissidents to PRC authorities.⁴¹ A federal jury convicted Wang Shujun in August 2024 on four charges, while Tang Yuanjun was arrested and charged two weeks later for "acting and conspiring to act in the United States as an unregistered agent of the [PRC] and making materially false statements to the FBI."42 News of both cases sparked concern and distrust among overseas Chinese dissidents as to who in their communities may be reporting to PRC authorities.⁴³ Also, at the request of the United States, Serbian authorities arrested two foreign nationals, Cui Guanghai and John Miller, in April 2025 for allegedly coordinating the harassment and intimidation of, and threats against, a U.S.-based protester at the November 2023 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Los Angeles.44 Cui and Miller targeted the victim due to his previous public comments critical of PRC leader Xi Jinping.⁴⁵ In January and April 2025, three men from the first U.S. trial addressing the PRC's attempts to harass its citizens

abroad were officially sentenced for their efforts to intimidate and pressure a former PRC government official to return to China to face bribery allegations he denies. 46 In March 2025, in a separate case, a federal judge sentenced An Quanzhong, a New York businessman, to 20 months in prison on similar charges for his harassment aimed at pushing a U.S. resident to return to China. 47 Separately, in February, a jury in Boston acquitted a man of allegations that he had spied on pro-democracy protesters in the U.S. and reported them to PRC authorities. 48 Several advocacy groups and activists voiced concern with the acquittal. 49

Extraditions to China

The PRC continued its campaign of extrajudicial repatriation this reporting year.⁵⁰ The main avenues for such efforts, "Operation Fox Hunt" and "Operation Sky Net," launched by the PRC government in 2014 and 2015, respectively, seek to track down "fugitives" and return them to China, either through international cooperation mechanisms or "voluntary" returns.⁵¹ Safeguard Defenders estimates that these operations have forcibly returned almost 14,000 individuals from at least 120 countries and territories between 2014 and 2024.⁵²

The Commission observed developments in several prominent cases of extradition to China this reporting year, including the following:

- Lu Siwei. The Chenghua District Court in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province, sentenced disbarred human rights lawyer Lu Siwei to 11 months in prison in April 2025.⁵³ Lu traveled to Laos in July 2023 en route to the United States to reunite with his family.⁵⁴ Despite advocacy by international rights groups,⁵⁵ Lao officials repatriated Lu to China in 2023, where the PRC authorities immediately detained him under suspicion of "illegally crossing a border." ⁵⁶ Lu's wife announced that Lu plans to appeal his sentence.⁵⁷
- Idris Hasan. In February 2025, Moroccan authorities released Idris Hasan, a Uyghur sought by the PRC government for extradition on "terrorism" charges.⁵⁸ Idris Hasan previously worked to document human rights violations in the XUAR while living in Türkiye, and upon seeking asylum in Morocco in July 2021, was instead arrested in response to an INTERPOL Red Notice requested by the PRC.⁵⁹ While INTERPOL canceled the Red Notice in August 2021, Moroccan authorities continued to detain Idris Hasan for 42 months.⁶⁰ International rights groups and foreign government officials advocated for him for years and celebrated his eventual release.⁶¹

Uyghurs in Thailand Forcibly Returned to China

One case of forcible return to China garnered much international attention this past year, when Thai officials deported at least 40 Uyghur asylum seekers to China in February 2025.62 Initially detained in Thailand in 2014 as part of a larger group of approximately 350 Uyghurs fleeing repression in the XUAR, many of the Uyghurs reportedly suffered from severe health conditions while in detention over the past decade.⁶³ Members of the international community had raised concerns about the plight of the detained Uyghurs for years,64 especially following the deportation of 109 of the refugees to China in 2015.65 In January 2025, upon hearing of the potential deportation, international rights groups, lawmakers, and media outlets again urged Thai authorities to provide asylum and humanitarian assistance to the detained men.66 Despite these concerns and resettlement offers from other countries, 67 Thai authorities repatriated at least 40 Uvghurs to the PRC on February 27. 2025 in what appeared to be a secretive operation.⁶⁸ United Nations officials and other activists warned that, upon their return, the Uyghurs possibly would face torture and long-term imprisonment.⁶⁹ Various countries, as well as the U.N., immediately condemned the return, 70 while PRC authorities claimed that such rebukes were "nothing but despicable political manipulation."⁷¹ One day after repatriating the Uyghurs, Thai government officials said that they "should be commended for managing this problem," and that their government "acted in accordance with human rights" in repatriating the men. 72 Less than a week later on March 6, 2025, Thailand's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs claimed that the decision was made to avoid retaliation from the PRC.⁷³ Following weeks of international criticism, Thailand Deputy Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai and journalists traveled to the XUAR to check on the Uyghur men's well-being, reporting afterwards that the group appeared to be "living a normal and happy life." 74 However, one Thai journalist from the delegation reported that PRC authorities tightly controlled the trip by vetting and escorting journalists and demanding to see photos before they were published.⁷⁵ Rights groups and government officials around the globe continued to voice opposition to the Thai government's decision to deport the men and distrust of Chinese authorities' plans for the group.⁷⁶ For more information on the PRC government's repression of Uyghurs, see Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]

Malign Influence

The Commission continued to observe reports of the PRC's attempts to target foreign politicians and governments, influence democratic processes abroad, and shape public opinion about the CCP and government.⁷⁷ These efforts illustrate 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."⁷⁸ Malign influence activities of the PRC government violate various articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the PRC has signed but not ratified.⁷⁹ Selected examples from this reporting year include:

- **HKETOs.** A report published by the non-profit Hong Kong Democracy Council this year revealed the key role played by Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (HKETOs) in spreading propaganda and promoting CCP policy priorities in the United States. ⁸⁰ HKETOs serve as the Hong Kong government's foreign representative offices, with quasi-diplomatic privileges, exemptions, and immunities in host countries. ⁸¹ The report alleges that the three HKETOs in the U.S., in New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., abuse these privileges and financially support "astroturf" groups and U.S. political consultants to boost rhetoric and policy in line with CCP priorities. ⁸³
- United Kingdom. Yang Tengbo, a Chinese businessman, developed personal and business links to Prince Andrew of the British royal family, the younger brother of King Charles, while also gaining access to significant British political and business leaders, such as former prime ministers Theresa May and David Cameron. At The British government rejected an appeal by Yang to re-enter the country this reporting year on national security grounds, alleging that he had attempted to exert influence over Prince Andrew to promote the interests of the CCP in the U.K. MI5, the U.K. domestic spy agency, claimed that Yang worked for the CCP's United Front Work Department, a group tasked with gathering intelligence and promoting Chinese influence abroad. At the British political and business and promoting Chinese influence abroad.
- U.S. elections. News outlets and intelligence officials reported increasingly aggressive Chinese state-linked influence operations targeting the 2024 U.S. elections.⁸⁷ Spamouflage, one of the world's largest covert online influence operations and run by Chinese state actors, attempted to influence U.S. voters ahead of the 2024 elections by impersonating voters and spreading divisive rhetoric on social media.⁸⁸ The influence operations did not appear to favor one presidential candidate, but sought to undermine confidence in the overall democratic election system.⁸⁹ Spamouflage also appeared to have increasingly targeted down-ballot races in the 2024 election cycle, likely to "cultivate a political ecosystem more favorable to [the CCP's] overall policies," and to attract less public attention.⁹⁰

MALIGN INFLUENCE IN SUB-NATIONAL U.S. POLITICS

The Commission observed reports this past year of PRC malign influence at the sub-national level as well. Some individuals faced legal charges this year due to their alleged involvement with influence operations in local governments. Federal authorities arrested Sun Yaoning for allegedly acting as an illegal agent for the PRC while serving as the campaign manager for a Southern California city council member in 2022. Sun allegedly conspired with Chen Jun, 4 requesting \$80,000 from PRC officials to fund pro-PRC activities in the United States. In another case, the Department of Justice charged Linda Sun (no relation to Sun Yaoning), a former aide to New York Governor Kathy Hochul and former Governor Andrew Cuomo, with 10 criminal counts, including violating and conspiring to violate the Foreign Agents Registration Act, having reportedly used her positions to advance PRC policy in exchange

for financial benefits. 96 According to the charges against her, Sun blocked Taiwanese government representatives from accessing the governor's office and shaped the office's messaging to align with the PRC's policy agenda, while receiving significant benefits from the PRC Consulate in New York, including gourmet food, travel, event tickets, and business promotions. 97

Efforts to Influence International Human Rights Bodies

PRC authorities continued to try to subvert processes and procedures within the U.N. system in order to deny China's human rights abuse. 98 Such efforts align with the CCP's resolve to challenge the universality of international human rights norms, as laid out in the Party's 2013 document "Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere," and undermine the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the U.N. system as a whole.99 Reports this past year revealed "an extensive campaign to subvert the work of the U.N. Human Rights Council" by groups with ties to the PRC government.¹⁰⁰ These groups reportedly attend U.N. sessions on human rights to speak positively about China's record, disrupt or drown out nongovernmental organizations' testimony concerning repressed groups, and surveil and intimidate individuals to coerce them not to speak out about PRC human rights abuses at the U.N.¹⁰¹ Michele Taylor, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Council, described these practices as "subversive" and threatening to the U.N.'s human rights mission. 102

This year, the PRC also rejected multiple recommendations offered through U.N. processes to improve human rights protections in China. 103 Following the January 2024 Universal Periodic Review, a review of China's human rights record that takes place once every five years, PRC diplomats rejected about 30 percent of the recommendations for human rights reform in China, including calls to allow for more freedom in Hong Kong and the XUAR.104 PRC authorities insisted that they rejected recommendations that were "politically motivated [and] based on disinformation." ¹⁰⁵ In August and September 2024, respectively, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk and 10 Western nations' ambassadors to the U.N. Human Rights Council renewed calls for the PRC to bolster protection of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the XUAR, echoing a report released in 2022 by the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 106 When asked to comment on Türk's appeal, PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian denied claims of human rights abuse in the XUAR and warned against "political forces aiming at containing and vilifying China."107

Notes to Chapter 17—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally

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