

CECC Annual Report 2021

KEY FINDINGS

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- To the extent that citizens rely on courts to protect their rights against state encroachment, political pressure on the court system undermines their ability to access justice. The Chinese Communist Party goes beyond mere influence and expressly requires absolute loyalty and obedience from the courts.
- Five years after the nationwide, coordinated crackdown on human rights lawyers and advocates, authorities continued to persecute them by such means as imprisonment, detention, and revocation of law licenses.
- The Supreme People's Court required judges and candidates for judicial positions to undergo training that emphasizes political ideology and loyalty. Requiring that Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's ideology "penetrate every lesson," the training goes beyond legal skills, to include areas such as public opinion manipulation and strategies to mobilize the masses.
- Central authorities' proposal to further expand legal aid services will not necessarily increase citizens' ability to access justice. For example, citizens from Wuhan municipality, Hubei province, faced harassment, and the court rejected their filings alleging the government mishandled the COVID-19 outbreak.

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Recommendations

Members of the U.S. Congress and Administration officials are encouraged to:

- Highlight and discuss with Chinese officials the report in which the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found human rights lawyers **Li Yuhan** and **Yu Wensheng** to have been arbitrarily detained. Call attention to the arbitrary detention of other rights lawyers such as **Chang Weiping, Chen Wuquan, Ding Jiayi, Xia Lin, Chen Jiahong, Qin Yongpei, Zhang Zhan, and Hao Jinsong**. Urge the Chinese government to unconditionally exonerate the above-named lawyers and other similarly situated lawyers.
- Highlight and discuss with Chinese officials cases of human rights lawyers such as **Xu Zhiyong, Yang Bin, Peng Yonghe, Wang Yu, and Xie Yang**, whose law licenses were revoked or whose ability to practice law was otherwise restricted because of their legal representation and advocacy in cases that Chinese authorities deem politically sensitive.
- Continue to designate and impose sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22 U.S.C. 2656 note) on Chinese officials responsible for arbitrarily detaining or otherwise persecuting petitioners, human rights lawyers, and advocates.
- Urge the Chinese government to protect the fundamental civil and professional rights of China's lawyers, investigate all allegations of abuse against them, and ensure that those responsible for such abuse are brought to justice. Urge the Chi-

nese government to end all forms of harassment or persecution of family members of human rights lawyers and advocates, including surveillance and restrictions on their freedom of movement.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Introduction

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which China signed and expressed its intention to ratify,¹ provides that all persons are equal before the courts; it also obligates a State Party to ensure that people have enforceable legal remedies for any violation of the rights and freedoms recognized in the convention, even if the violation has been committed by an official.² While China's Constitution recognizes certain universal human rights,³ citizens do not have any legal channel through which to assert or protect them.⁴ Moreover, the Chinese government and Party's political control over the judiciary and the legal profession, and their ongoing persecution of human rights lawyers, which the Commission observed during the 2021 reporting year, are inconsistent with the relevant ICCPR provisions.

Political Control Over the Judiciary

China's judiciary remained part of a network of institutions designed to maintain the social and political order for perpetuating the Chinese Communist Party's political primacy.⁵ Reinforcing this structure, the Party strengthened centralized control in part by requiring judges to undergo ideological training and by minimizing local officials' influence on the judiciary.

NEW REQUIREMENT FOR IDEOLOGICAL TRAINING

The Supreme People's Court (SPC) required judges and candidates for judicial positions to undergo training that emphasizes political ideology and loyalty to Party leadership. In August 2020, the SPC issued the Regulations on the Education and Training of Judges, which focuses on three areas: political ability, professional ethics, and judicial ability.⁶ Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's ideology and "socialism with Chinese characteristics" are listed as required fields of study for the first two areas.⁷ In addition, the training for judicial character goes beyond legal skills to cover topics such as risk management, tactics for steering public opinion, and mass line strategy (a Maoist method for organizing and mobilizing the people).⁸ Candidates for judicial positions must undergo one year of training, and incumbent judges must undergo continuing education.⁹ To this end, in April 2021 the SPC issued the Implementing Measures for Training Judges for Promotion to the Senior Ranks, emphasizing that Xi Jinping's ideology must "be the first training lesson, be the guiding principle for every lesson, and penetrate every lesson."¹⁰

PREVENTING CASE INTERFERENCE WHILE MAINTAINING PARTY LEADERSHIP

The Party reasserted its centralized control by attempting to effectively minimize local officials' influence over the judiciary. In January 2021, the Supreme People's Court Party Branch issued an opinion reiterating rules previously laid out in three documents, with the stated purpose of correcting ineffective implementation.¹¹ While the full text of the opinion was not available at the time of

this writing, a summary of the opinion published on the SPC website states that court personnel are required to record and report case interference to the Party committee and the Party political-legal committee at the same administrative level, and to the court above.¹² The opinion is applicable to personnel both inside and outside the court system, encompassing conduct such as requesting to alter case handling and receiving gifts or commissions from a lawyer.¹³ In reference to one set of rules covered by the opinion, a Chinese judge said that the effectiveness of implementation would depend in part on whether the court is administratively and financially independent from the body exerting influence;¹⁴ said independence, however, would call for an institutional restructuring not reflected in the opinion's summary.¹⁵

In another example illustrating political control, the SPC Party Branch issued a report in November 2020 detailing the progress of implementing suggestions given by the No. 4 Central Inspection Tour Team, which is tasked with ensuring court officials' compliance with political directives.¹⁶ The report emphasized that the court must use examinations and inspections to screen court officials for political character and must unwaveringly uphold the Party's absolute leadership over the judiciary,¹⁷ a theme repeatedly echoed by SPC President Zhou Qiang.¹⁸

Persecution of Human Rights Lawyers and Advocates

July 2020 marked the fifth anniversary of the July 2015 nationwide crackdown on human rights lawyers and rights defenders (also known as the "709 Crackdown").¹⁹ An expert in Chinese law observed that although the crackdown had not intensified since then, it "has now [become] a permanent, ongoing process," probably because the original crackdown had not completely wiped out its targets.²⁰ This past year, Chinese authorities continued this process by arbitrarily detaining the following human rights lawyers and advocates or by undermining their ability to render legal help:

- **Zhou Shifeng, Hu Shigen, and Wu Gan**, whom authorities detained during the 709 Crackdown, continued to serve their sentences ranging from seven to eight years on state security charges.²¹
- As authorities continued to hold **Li Yuhan** in prolonged pre-trial detention despite significant health issues, **Yu Wensheng** was sentenced to four years in prison following a closed trial.²² Both Li and Yu had worked on rights defense cases and represented individuals detained in the July 2015 crackdown.²³
- Other legal professionals whom authorities arbitrarily detained for their rights advocacy include **Chang Weiping, Chen Wuquan, Ding Jiayi, Xia Lin, Chen Jiahong, Qin Yongpei, Zhang Zhan, and Hao Jinsong**.²⁴
- In addition, authorities used license revocation as a means to suppress rights defense work performed by lawyers, including **Yang Bin, Peng Yonghe, Wang Yu, and Xie Yang**.²⁵ **Liu Xiaoyuan**, a lawyer affected by this practice, explained that despite applicable legal provisions, local justice bureau officials would set up roadblocks to make it practically impossible for rights lawyers to reinstate their law licenses after rev-

ocation.²⁶ Liu additionally observed an upward trend in the number of rights lawyers whose licenses were revoked.²⁷

Citizen Petitioning

The petitioning system (*xinfang*), also known as the “letters and visits system,” is a popular mechanism outside of the formal legal system for citizens to present their grievances to authorities, either in writing or in person.²⁸ The petitioning system is accessible in terms of the low financial cost to use it,²⁹ but it can be inefficient due to staff shortages and the large number of petitions.³⁰ Additionally, a structural conflict of interest exists wherein local governments have police power over petitioners who bring claims against them and have used such power to prevent petitioners from asserting their rights.³¹

This past year, the Commission continued to observe examples of petitioners being subjected to different kinds of control and mistreatment by local authorities, such as criminal prosecution and commitment to psychiatric hospitals.³² “Stability maintenance” efforts intensified during commemorative events such as National Day on October 1, 2020, and during meetings of the National People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference held in March 2021, when authorities systematically detained petitioners in Beijing municipality for airing their grievances or prevented them from traveling there to do so.³³

Citizens’ Access to the Court System

As Chinese citizens attempted to use the court system to resolve disputes, including those involving contemporary social issues,³⁴ many were denied access to court. For example, families in Wuhan municipality, Hubei province, filed at least five lawsuits with the Wuhan Municipal Intermediate People’s Court against the provincial government on grounds that their relatives had died as a result of the authorities’ concealing and mishandling of the COVID-19 outbreak.³⁵ The court rejected the lawsuits, informing the families via telephone.³⁶ Agence France-Presse reported that “dozens of others face pressure from authorities not to file, and lawyers are being warned against helping them”³⁷

Legal Aid

Central authorities proposed legislation to further expand the legal aid system, but its actual benefits would depend on whether authorities observe the law. In January 2021, the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee deliberated on the draft PRC Legal Aid Law.³⁸ An NPC official explained that legislation was necessary since the existing Legal Aid Regulations issued in 2003 by the State Council could no longer adequately address the demand for legal aid given the increased scope and diversity of disputes that people face.³⁹ For civil matters, the draft legislation expands legal aid to cover claims such as food safety or medical incidents, spousal support, child support, workers’ compensation, and wage arrears.⁴⁰ For criminal matters, the draft law proposes to provide individuals with legal aid when seeking judicial review of

a death sentence, thereby clarifying a legal uncertainty in the existing legal regime.⁴¹

Expanded legal aid programs, however, may present funding difficulties for local governments.⁴² Legal aid lawyers are paid by the government in the form of subsidies, which are lower than regular lawyer fees on average, according to a legal aid office director in Jiangsu province.⁴³ An NPC Standing Committee delegate said that other forms of compensation should be provided in addition to subsidies, and another NPC official opted to defer to the State Council to address the specific funding needs of local governments after the law's passage.⁴⁴ A Chinese legal scholar acknowledged the law's potential benefits to people at the grassroots level, but he cautioned that expanded legal aid services would have limited impact unless the Chinese Communist Party and government themselves observe the law.⁴⁵

Promulgation and Implications of the New Civil Code

The promulgation of the new PRC Civil Code was a positive legal development, but an independent judiciary is required to impartially and freely apply the law to promote justice. After its passage in May 2020 by the National People's Congress, the PRC Civil Code went into effect on January 1, 2021.⁴⁶ As described by a state-funded news outlet, the PRC Civil Code is "a collection of laws related to civil affairs, including property, marriage, family, personal rights, and inheritance," and is "aimed at better protecting individuals' personal information and property, making it easier to sue for divorce or sexual harassment, and delineating a clearer boundary between markets and the government."⁴⁷ The SPC, fulfilling a political directive of Xi Jinping, published a series of documents covering procedural and substantive issues with the goal of facilitating the transition to the new legal regime and harmonizing existing judicial interpretations affected by the Civil Code.⁴⁸ Official media touted the Civil Code as a milestone in China's rule-of-law development, while some legal experts opined that the law's impact would depend on enforcement and on courts' "capacity to test the power of the code in practice."⁴⁹

Some other observers expressed concerns that state interests would trump contractual and other private rights under the Civil Code.⁵⁰ As an example, several entertainers terminated contracts with their sponsor companies after the companies boycotted products containing cotton produced in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.⁵¹ Under the PRC Civil Code, "parties to a civil legal relationship must not exercise their civil rights abusively so as to harm state interests, social and public interests, or the legal rights and interests of other people."⁵² These observers conjectured that the sponsor companies likely would not prevail in an action against the entertainers for breach of contract, since courts would broadly interpret the term "state interests" to align their decisions with the political stance of the government, which condemned the boycotting companies.⁵³

Judicial Transparency

Online judicial disclosure platforms continued to operate this past year, although some documents were concealed either by law or by the actions of officials, thereby undermining the goals of the platforms. In 2013, the SPC began to publicize judicial information relating to court proceedings, judgments, and enforcement through three online platforms, with the stated goal of improving judicial transparency and encouraging public oversight.⁵⁴ This past year, one of the three platforms, China Judgements Online continued to release a large number of court documents; beginning in September 2020, however, it required registration using a mobile phone number.⁵⁵ The U.S.-based Dui Hua Foundation noticed an improvement in the system's performance when using the database, surmising that the new requirement had reduced the volume of bot crawler activities.⁵⁶ But the requirement also prompted concerns about government surveillance, causing a chilling effect on users who, for example, are preparing for lawsuits against the government or are researching human rights abuses in China.⁵⁷ The Dui Hua Foundation also noted that cases involving state security are exempt from disclosure, and that some cases are withdrawn from publication without any stated reason, undermining the usefulness of the database.⁵⁸

In one example, in March 2021, the judgment in a case involving misconduct by public security officials disappeared from China Judgements Online after a lawyer had reposted it on social media.⁵⁹ Local government officials reportedly contacted the lawyer within minutes after the posting and demanded that he delete it from his account.⁶⁰ The judgment had been published on the official database but was later taken down; according to an article covering the incident, however, the case did not fall under any of the legal exceptions to the general rule requiring disclosure.⁶¹ The article also highlighted another corruption case originating from the same locality where the judgment was taken down from China Judgements Online after it had been published.⁶²

Renewed Emphasis on Mediation

In a report published in February 2021, the Supreme People's Court emphasized the development of a mediation system in China, noting such a system's roots in the Maoist principle that requires "all local governments to mobilize and rely on the masses to resolve disputes on the spot so that no conflicts are passed on to the higher authorities."⁶³ According to a Supreme People's Court official, as of the end of 2020, over 13.6 million cases had been settled through online mediation within the 3-year period after the platform began to operate.⁶⁴ The platform is slated to further expand to villages and communities and is part of the social governance goal of reducing and eventually eliminating litigation.⁶⁵ This policy is similar to the "political rectification of the Chinese judiciary" that, as one Chinese law expert observed, began in 2003 when Chinese authorities revived earlier mediation practices that maintain social stability by "addressing cases that attract significant social attention or that generate petitions by disgruntled parties."⁶⁶

Notes to Section III—Access to Justice

¹United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter IV, Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, accessed July 8, 2019; State Council Information Office, “Guojia Renquan Xingdong Jihua (2016–2020 nian)” [National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2016–2020)], September 29, 2016, sec. 5.

²International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, arts. 2(3), 14.

³*PRC Constitution*, passed and effective December 4, 1982 (amended March 22, 2018), arts. 33–48.

⁴Luoyang Municipal Intermediate People’s Court, Henan province, Xingzheng Caidingshu [Administrative order], (2018) Yu 03 Xing Zhong No. 368, November 28, 2018, reprinted in *China Judgements Online*, January 14, 2019; Thomas E. Kellogg, “Arguing Chinese Constitutionalism: The 2013 Constitutional Debate and the ‘Urgency’ of Political Reform,” *University of Pennsylvania Asian Law Review* 11, no. 3 (2015–2016): 349.

⁵Donald C. Clarke, “Order and Law in China,” GWU Legal Studies Research Paper No. 2020–52, GWU Law School Public Law Research Paper No. 2020–52, August 25, 2020, 17.

⁶Supreme People’s Court, *Faguan Jiaoyu Peixun Gongzuo Tiaoli* [Regulations on the Education and Training of Judges], issued August 21, 2020, effective September 1, 2020, art. 11.

⁷Supreme People’s Court, *Faguan Jiaoyu Peixun Gongzuo Tiaoli* [Regulations on the Education and Training of Judges], issued August 21, 2020, effective September 1, 2020, arts. 12–13.

⁸Supreme People’s Court, *Faguan Jiaoyu Peixun Gongzuo Tiaoli* [Regulations on the Education and Training of Judges], issued August 21, 2020, effective September 1, 2020, art. 15.

⁹Supreme People’s Court, *Faguan Jiaoyu Peixun Gongzuo Tiaoli* [Regulations on the Education and Training of Judges], issued August 21, 2020, effective September 1, 2020, arts. 17–20.

¹⁰“Zuigaofa Zhengzhibu yinfa ‘Jinsheng Gaoji Faguan Peixun Shishi Banfa’” [SPC Political Office issues “Implementing Measures for Training Judges for Promotion to the Senior Ranks”], *People’s Court Daily*, April 2, 2021.

¹¹Sun Hang, Supreme People’s Court Weixin Public Account, “Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Dangzu yinfa yijian jinyibu qianghua richang jiandu guanli yange zhixing fangzhi ganyu sifa ‘sange guiding’” [Supreme People’s Court Party Branch issues opinion, further strengthening daily supervision administration and strictly enforcing the “three regulations” to prevent interference in judicial activities], reprinted in Supreme People’s Court website, January 20, 2021.

¹²Sun Hang, Supreme People’s Court Weixin Public Account, “Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Dangzu yinfa yijian jinyibu qianghua richang jiandu guanli yange zhixing fangzhi ganyu sifa ‘sange guiding’” [Supreme People’s Court Party Branch issues opinion, further strengthening daily supervision administration and strictly enforcing the “three regulations” to prevent interference in judicial activities], reprinted in Supreme People’s Court website, January 20, 2021.

¹³Sun Hang, Supreme People’s Court Weixin Public Account, “Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Dangzu yinfa yijian jinyibu qianghua richang jiandu guanli yange zhixing fangzhi ganyu sifa ‘sange guiding’” [Supreme People’s Court Party Branch issues opinion, further strengthening daily supervision administration and strictly enforcing the “three regulations” to prevent interference in judicial activities], reprinted in Supreme People’s Court website, January 20, 2021.

¹⁴Susan Finder, “Official Interference or Leadership?,” *Supreme People’s Court Monitor* (blog), September 6, 2015.

¹⁵Sun Hang, Supreme People’s Court Weixin Public Account, “Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Dangzu yinfa yijian jinyibu qianghua richang jiandu guanli yange zhixing fangzhi ganyu sifa ‘sange guiding’” [Supreme People’s Court Party Branch issues opinion, further strengthening daily supervision administration and strictly enforcing the “three regulations” to prevent interference in judicial activities], reprinted in Supreme People’s Court website, January 20, 2021.

¹⁶“Zhonggong Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Dangzu guanyu shijiu jie zhongyang disilun xunshi zhenggai jinzhan qingkuang de tongbao” [Progress report of the fourth central rectification inspection of the 19th [Party Central Committee] by the Chinese Communist Party Supreme People’s Court Party Branch], Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and State Supervision Commission, November 5, 2020; “Zhongyang Disi Xunshi Zu xunshi Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Dangzu gongzuo dongyuanhui zhaokai” [Mobilization meeting convenes for work related to the inspection of Supreme People’s Court Party Branch by No. 4 Central Inspection Tour Team], Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and State Supervision Commission, September 10, 2019; Susan Finder, “Central Inspection Group Inspecting the Supreme People’s Court (Again),” *Supreme People’s Court Monitor* (blog), September 11, 2019. See also Susan Finder, “Official Interference or Leadership?,” *Supreme People’s Court Monitor* (blog), September 6, 2015.

¹⁷“Zhonggong Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Dangzu guanyu shijiu jie zhongyang disilun xunshi zhenggai jinzhan qingkuang de tongbao” [Progress report of the fourth central rectification inspection of the 19th [Party Central Committee] by the Chinese Communist Party Supreme People’s Court Party Branch], Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and State Supervision Commission, November 5, 2020.

¹⁸See, e.g., Wang Yuqing, “Renzhen guanche luoshi xin shidai dang de zuzhi luxian tuijin renmin fayuan de jianshe buduan qude xin chengxiao” [Earnestly and thoroughly implement the Party’s organization line for the new era, pushing Party building in people’s courts and continuously attaining new success], *China Court*, July 1, 2020; Sun Hang, “Zhou Qiang zhuchi zhaokai Zuigaofa sifa gaige lingdao xiaozu huiyi qiangdiao jianchi yi Xi Jinping fazhi sixiang zhidao tuidong sifa gaige buduan qude xin chengxiao” [Zhou Qiang convenes and presides over Supreme People’s Court judicial reform leading small group, emphasizing the principles of unwaveringly using Xi Jinping rule-based ideology as a guide and pushing judicial reform to continuously attain new success], *Supreme People’s Court*, December 28, 2020.

¹⁹Chinese Human Rights Defenders, “Wu Gan,” accessed March 16, 2020; Chinese Human Rights Defenders, “Hu Shigen,” accessed March 16, 2020; Chinese Human Rights Defenders, “Zhou Shifeng,” accessed March 16, 2020.

²⁰William Yang, “The ‘709 Crackdown’ Has Become a Permanent and Ongoing Process,” *Medium*, July 9, 2020.

²¹Rights Defense Network, “Zhongguo dalu 1117 ming zaiya zhengzhi fan, liangxin fan mingdan suoyin (2021 nian 3 yue 31 ri) (di 66 qi)” [Name index for 1117 political prisoners and prisoners of conscience currently detained in mainland China (March 31, 2021) (Issue no. 66)], March 31, 2021; Chinese Human Rights Defenders, “Wu Gan,” accessed March 16, 2020; Chinese Human Rights Defenders, “Hu Shigen,” accessed March 16, 2020; Chinese Human Rights Defenders, “Zhou Shifeng,” accessed March 16, 2020.

²²Rights Defense Network, “Zhongguo dalu zaiya zhengzhi fan, liangxin fan yuedu baogao (2021 nian 3 yue 31 ri) di 66 qi (gong 1117 ren) (si)” [Monthly report of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience currently detained in mainland China (March 31, 2021) Issue no. 66 (1117 persons in total (4))], March 31, 2021; Rights Defense Network, “Zhongguo dalu zaiya zhengzhi fan, liangxin fan yuedu baogao (2021 nian 3 yue 31 ri) di 66 qi (gong 1117 ren) (qi)” [Monthly report of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience currently detained in mainland China (March 31, 2021) Issue no. 66 (1117 persons in total (7))], March 31, 2021.

²³Rights Defense Network, “Zhongguo dalu zaiya zhengzhi fan, liangxin fan yuedu baogao (2021 nian 3 yue 31 ri) di 66 qi (gong 1117 ren) (si)” [Monthly report of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience currently detained in mainland China (March 31, 2021) Issue no. 66 (1117 persons in total (4))], March 31, 2021; Rights Defense Network, “Zhongguo dalu zaiya zhengzhi fan, liangxin fan yuedu baogao (2021 nian 3 yue 31 ri) di 66 qi (gong 1117 ren) (qi)” [Monthly report of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience currently detained in mainland China (March 31, 2021) Issue no. 66 (1117 persons in total (7))], March 31, 2021.

²⁴“Zhongguo renquan lushi tuan fabu ‘709 da zhuabu shijian’ wu zhounian shengming: jianxing xianfa quanli buhui fangqi” [China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group issues statement concerning the fifth anniversary of the “709 mass arrest incident”: never stop exercising constitutional rights], *Radio Free Asia*, July 9, 2020; “Shaanxi lushi Chang Weiping zao kuxing fumu yi ‘dazibao’ kangyi” [Lawyer Chang Weiping of Shaanxi suffers torture, parents protest with large print banner], *Radio Free Asia*, December 15, 2020; “Beibu jin ban nian jinjian lushi Xu Zhiyong Ding Jiayi kanshou suo renjian zhengfa” [Denied counsel visit nearly half a year into detention; Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiayi disappeared in public security detention center], *Radio Free Asia*, July 9, 2020.

²⁵China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group, “Annual Inspection on Chinese Legal Practitioner Legal Profession Facing Stricter Controls (5 September 2020),” September 5, 2020; Rights Defense Network, “Li’an nan, lushi Yang Bin fayuan menqian baitan weiquan” [Opening a case is difficult, lawyer Yang Bin sets up a street stall to defend her rights], February 26, 2021; “Wuren pinyong weiyu bei zhuxiao zhizhao lushi Peng Yonghe yu dangju shouhui chengming” [Unemployment being alleged to support license revocation; lawyer Peng Yonghe asks the government to retract its decision], *Radio Free Asia*, February 3, 2021; Rights Defense Network, “Beijing sifaju zhuxiaole renquan lushi Wang Yu de lushi zhiye zhengshu” [Justice bureau in Beijing revokes rights lawyer Wang Yu’s law license], December 5, 2020.

²⁶“Liu Xiaoyuan: Bei zhuxiao lushi zhiye zheng de Cheng Hai, chongxin shenqing zhiye wuwang you tousu Beijing shi sifaju” [Liu Xiaoyuan: Cheng Hai, who had law license revoked, files complaint against justice bureau in Beijing after reinstatement of license proves impossible], *Rights Defense Network*, February 4, 2021.

²⁷“Liu Xiaoyuan: Bei zhuxiao lushi zhiye zheng de Cheng Hai, chongxin shenqing zhiye wuwang you tousu Beijing shi sifaju” [Liu Xiaoyuan: Cheng Hai, who had law license revoked, files complaint against justice bureau in Beijing after reinstatement of license proves impossible], *Rights Defense Network*, February 4, 2021.

²⁸State Council, *Xinfang Tiaoli* [Regulations on Letters and Visits], issued January 5, 2005, effective May 1, 2005; Benjamin L. Liebman, “A Populist Threat to China’s Courts?” in *Chinese Justice: Civil Dispute Resolution in Contemporary China*, eds. Margaret Y.K. Woo and Mary E. Gallagher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 269–313; National Bureau of Letters and Visits, “Guojia Xinfang ju Ju Guan Gan Yinfa Xinfang Shixiang Neirong Fenlei (2020 Nian Xiuding) de Tongzhi” [National Bureau of Letters and Visits Issue a Notice on ‘Classification of Letters and Visits’ (2020 Revisions)], September 15, 2020. Main categories include rural agriculture, natural resources, urban and rural construction, labor and social security, sanitation and health, education, economic management, and market supervision.

²⁹Lu Dewen, “‘Jie ju’ nu jiaoshi juebi xin shijian: yi tiao guiyi de shangfang zhi lu” [“Solution” female teacher’s last letter incident: a strange road of petitioning], *People’s Daily*, August 6, 2019.

³⁰See, e.g., Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch, “Fangmin lianshu xu xinfang ‘qingcang jian di’” [Petitioners jointly call on letters and visits [bureaus] to “cleanup”], December 28, 2020; “Sanbai yu ren lianshu cu jinkuai chutai ‘Zhengfu Fa’ xiang guanyuan wenze” [Over 300 people jointly sign letter to urge the promulgation of a “Government Law” as soon as possible to hold officials accountable], *Radio Free Asia*, February 19, 2021; “Shu shi Menggu zu nong mumin lianshu gongkai xin xiang Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang deng gaoguan qingyuan” [Dozens of Mongol farmers and herdsmen jointly sign an open letter to petition Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang and other senior officials], *Radio Free Asia*, January 5, 2021.

³¹Gao Feng, “Shu shi fangmin lianshu jubao Wuxi Lianghui feifa weiwen” [Dozens of petitioners report Wuxi Two Sessions for illegally maintaining stability], *Radio Free Asia*, March 1, 2021; “Jilin fangmin Zheng Shulan shenqing zai Jing youxing shiwei bei juliu” [Jilin petitioner Zheng Shulan applies for demonstration in Beijing and is detained], *Radio Free Asia*, December 1, 2020.

³²See, e.g., Xue Xiaoshan, “You you fangmin ‘bei jingshenbing’ [Another petitioner “has been [designated as] mentally ill”], *Radio Free Asia*, October 19, 2020; He Ping, “Hubei fangmin Li

Xiaoyan shangfang bei qiu jingshenbing yuan Weiquan Wang: renquan pohai yi cheng shehui wenti” [Hubei petitioner Li Xiaoyan petitions, is imprisoned in mental hospital. Rights Defense Network: Human rights persecution has become a social problem], *Radio Free Asia*, October 14, 2020; Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch, “Shanghai Sun Hongqin xingju qiman chuyu” Shanghai’s Sun Hongqin released from prison after expiration of criminal sentence], January 16, 2021.

³³See, e.g., Jingdezhen City Office of Natural Resources and Planning Bureau, “Guanyu renzhen zuohao 2020 nian Guoqing, Zhongqiu shuangjie qijian wending xinfang gongzuo de tongzhi” [Notice on conscientiously doing a good job in stabilizing petition work during the National Day and Mid-Autumn Festival in 2020], September 25, 2020; “Beijing qidong Lianghui anbao yanfang waisheng fangmin jin Jing [Beijing launches Two Sessions security to strictly prevent petitioners from other provinces from entering Beijing], *Radio Free Asia*, February 24, 2021; “Lianghui’ weiwen shengji Wuxi fangmin zai Renda huichang qian jiti heying zao jianshi juzhu” [“Two Sessions” [of National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference] upgrade stability maintenance efforts, Wuxi petitioners who gathered for a group photo in front of the People’s Congress under residential surveillance], *Radio Free Asia*, February 25, 2021.

³⁴See, e.g., Guo Rui and Phoebe Zhang, “Chinese #MeToo Pioneer’s Harassment Case against TV Host Reaches Court,” *South China Morning Post*, December 2, 2020; “Chinese Activist Loses Legal Battle over Homophobic Textbooks,” Agence France-Presse, reprinted in *Hong Kong Free Press*, September 3, 2020.

³⁵“I Can Never Be Happy Again’: Grieving Wuhan Families Say China Is Blocking Coronavirus Lawsuits,” Agence France-Presse, reprinted in *South China Morning Post*, September 17, 2020.

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