

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Findings

- 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 expressly requires absolute loyalty and obedience from the courts.
- Central authorities issued rules subjecting judges to performance evaluation, but such a system may be incompatible with judges' duty of administering justice. Morality, listed as the first evaluation criterion, is primarily described as a political quality, referring to the judge's political alignment and rejection of "Western" notions of constitutional democracy, judicial independence, and separation of powers. Requiring judges to preserve People's Republic of China (PRC) leader Xi Jinping's core leader position can be problematic because judges "should uphold the laws, not a given leader."
- Judicial transparency in China took a step backward when court judgments were removed from a database maintained by the government. Over a three-month period in early 2021, court officials removed from the site at least 11 million cases that were primarily criminal and administrative cases involving politically sensitive subject matter or where government agencies were named as defendants.
- The quasi-governmental agency All China Lawyers Association issued provisional regulations that prohibit lawyers from "hyping up" cases, thereby violating their right to free speech and undermining government accountability, which may lead to wrongful convictions. The regulations additionally require lawyers to speak in line with official policies and are therefore in conflict with the duty of loyalty lawyers owe their clients, particularly in administrative litigation where government actions are in dispute.
- This past year, Chinese authorities continued to undermine rights lawyers' ability to render legal help, by means including criminal prosecution, license revocation, and physical attack.

Recommendations

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

- Call attention to the arbitrary detention of rights lawyers or advocates such as **Chang Weiping, Zhou Xiaoyun, Nie Min, Li Yuhan, Chen Jiahong, Qin Yongpei, Xie Yang, Hao Jinsong, Hu Shigen, and Wu Gan**, and urge the Chinese government to unconditionally exonerate them and other similarly situated lawyers.
- Highlight and discuss with Chinese officials cases of human rights lawyers such as **Liang Xiaojun, Xu Zhiyong, Lin Qilei, Xie Yang, Lu Siwei, Ren Quanniu, and Xi Xiangdong**, whose law licenses were revoked or whose ability to practice law was otherwise restricted because of their legal

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representation and advocacy in cases that Chinese authorities deemed 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 abuse are brought to justice. Urge the Chinese government to end all forms of harassment or persecution against the family members of human rights lawyers and advocates, including surveillance and restrictions on their freedom of movement.

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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, political control over the judiciary and the legal profession and the ongoing persecution of human rights lawyers that the Commission observed during the 2022 reporting year are inconsistent with the relevant ICCPR provisions.

Lack of Judicial Independence

According to an index assessing judicial independence across 198 countries, the PRC's judicial system is ranked as the third-most susceptible to political interference, where judges are "expected to align with and submit to the [Chinese Communist] Party's dictates."⁵ Consistent with this finding, the work reports published by the Supreme People's Court (SPC) and the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) in March 2022 reiterated the importance of political alignment with the absolute leadership of the Party and General Secretary Xi Jinping.⁶ To instill Xi's ideology and extend the "red bloodline," the two bodies conducted rectification education concerning the Party's history for personnel in the political-legal system.⁷ While matters germane to court operations (such as holding virtual hearings and using blockchain to preserve evidence) are discussed in the SPC report, it prioritizes political building and describes the court system as being part of various policy initiatives such as pandemic control, food safety, and advancing socialist values.⁸

Measures on Court Operations

This past year, central authorities made efforts to further promote consistency in court rulings. For example, the Supreme People's Court issued a set of measures requiring judges to conduct a search for prior decisions when dealing with certain types of cases, such as sensitive cases or cases that may affect social stability.⁹ The SPC established a platform and a database dedicated to the uniform application of the law and designated a court office to plan and coordinate related duties.¹⁰ In a separate document, the SPC required that a similar but narrower set of cases be flagged for supervision by court leaders, who are evaluated in part on ensuring consistent application of the law.¹¹

Another set of rules tasks court leaders with evaluating the performance of judges working under them, but such a system may be incompatible with judges' obligation to justice. Effective in January 2022, the rules set forth five criteria for evaluating judicial performance, to be used as a basis for promotion, termination, and al-

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location of bonuses.¹² The rules require judges to undergo annual Party-led evaluations, which rank them from excellent to incompetent, in four categories.¹³ “Morality,” listed as the first criterion, is primarily described as a political quality, referring to the judge’s political alignment and rejection of “Western” notions of constitutional democracy, judicial independence, and separation of powers.¹⁴ Other evaluation criteria include the quantity of case completion and the quality of case handling, defined mainly as the frequency with which decisions are remanded on appeal.¹⁵ Making decisions that generate negative public opinion is considered an indicator of incompetence.¹⁶ A scholar observed, however, that “the logic that works for an administrative bureaucracy is not always a good fit for the judiciary,” as judges must exercise discretion in administering justice, which may not fit into bureaucratic standards of efficiency and uniformity.¹⁷ He further found it problematic to require that judges preserve Xi’s core leader position as an evaluation criterion because judges “should uphold the laws, not a given leader.”¹⁸

Judicial Transparency

According to a study published in February 2022, “[j]udicial transparency in China has taken a significant step backward in recent months” due to the removal of court judgments from the official database called China Judgments Online.¹⁹ Created as part of a broader judicial reform initiative that began in 2013, the database is a centralized platform that publishes documents issued by courts of different levels across China, and is reported to have published over 100 million cases as of August 2020.²⁰ The study noted, however, that “court officials removed at least 11 million cases from the site over a three-month period in early 2021.”²¹ An official notice acknowledged the removal of judgments but did not specify the underlying reason, saying only that it was part of a “migration” process.²² Cases known to have been removed were primarily criminal and administrative cases, which included convictions for state security crimes and “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” an offense often used by authorities to suppress political speech.²³ Another type of judgment being removed involved controversial cases “that have been the subject of public scrutiny in ways that reflect badly on either the Party itself or on Chinese society as a whole.”²⁴ A Beijing municipality-based lawyer stressed the importance of transparency in safeguarding justice, pointing out another concerning development in which some video recordings of court proceedings had been removed from another official platform.²⁵

New Restrictions on Lawyers

This past year, lawyers faced additional restrictions that are inconsistent with their ethical duty to loyally advance their clients’ interests.²⁶ In October 2021, the quasi-governmental agency All China Lawyers Association issued provisional regulations with the stated goal of strengthening professional ethics.²⁷ Without providing a definition, the regulations prohibit lawyers from “hyping up” cases by means including publishing open letters, organizing

online gatherings, and generating public opinion to affect case handling.²⁸ Some observers said that the regulations violate lawyers' right to free speech and undermine government accountability, which may lead to wrongful convictions.²⁹ The regulations further prohibit lawyers from denying the Party's leadership, criticizing national policies, or instigating discontent toward the Party and the government.³⁰ Provisions requiring lawyers to speak in line with official policies are in conflict with the duty of loyalty that lawyers owe their clients,³¹ particularly in administrative litigation where government actions are in dispute.

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.³² While the financial cost to use the petitioning system is low,³³ the system can be inefficient because of staff shortages and the large number of petitions.³⁴ Additionally, a structural conflict of interest exists whereby local governments have police power over petitioners who bring claims against them and have used such power to prevent petitioners from asserting their rights.³⁵

The Commission continued to observe instances of petitioners being subjected to different kinds of control and mistreatment by local authorities, such as criminal prosecution and commitment to psychiatric hospitals.³⁶ "Stability maintenance" efforts intensified during events such as the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games and the annual meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, at which authorities systematically detained petitioners in Beijing municipality and prevented them from traveling into the city to air their grievances.³⁷

Persecution of Human Rights Lawyers and Advocates

This past year, Chinese authorities continued to persecute rights advocates and lawyers and undermine lawyers' ability to render legal help, by means including criminal prosecution, license revocation, and physical attack.

CRIMINAL PROSECUTION

- **Chang Weiping**, detained since October 2020 under the charge of "inciting subversion of state power," told his lawyer that he suffered torture while being held incommunicado for over five months in Baoji municipality, Shaanxi province.³⁸ National security protection officials subjected Chang to prolonged interrogation and ordered him to sit on an interrogation chair continuously for six days, depriving him of sleep and sufficient food.³⁹ Chang's most recent detention took place after he posted on social media his experience of being tortured during a previous incommunicado detention.⁴⁰
- Around August 2021, police from Panjin municipality, Liaoning province, took **Zhou Xiaoyun** and **Nie Min** into custody in Guangdong province and Beijing, respectively.⁴¹ Police

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held them at undisclosed locations under incommunicado detention on the charge of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.”⁴² Before their detentions, Zhou and Nie were representing a criminal defendant in Panjin who allegedly bribed judicial officers in connection with a court case.⁴³ In the course of the proceedings, a procurator made a comment defending judicial officers who accepted the bribes; Zhou posted a video recording of that comment on social media earlier in July 2021.⁴⁴ In September, the procuratorate decided not to formally arrest Zhou and Nie.⁴⁵

- **Li Yuhan** remained in criminal detention as of April 2022 on charges of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” and “fraud,” over four years after her disappearance in October 2017.⁴⁶ The Heping District People’s Court in Shenyang municipality, Liaoning province, reportedly tried Li in October 2021, excluding people who asked to observe the proceeding, including lawyers Wang Yu and Xie Yang and diplomats from at least six countries.⁴⁷ Wang Yu said that authorities were retaliating against Li for having filed lawsuits against the local government and for having represented Wang in the 709 Crackdown (a nationwide and coordinated crackdown on human rights lawyers and rights defenders that began around July 9, 2015).⁴⁸

- Other rights lawyers likewise faced criminal prosecution in part for representing or showing support for colleagues who were targeted by the government. For example, **Yu Wensheng** in March 2022 completed a four-year sentence for the state security offense “inciting subversion of state power.”⁴⁹ Yu had represented lawyer **Wang Quanzhang**, who was detained during the 709 Crackdown.⁵⁰ Yu’s lawyer, **Chen Jiahong**, in turn was sentenced to three years in prison in December 2021 on the same charge.⁵¹ **Qin Yongpei**, who worked in the same law firm as Chen and represented him, was tried on the same charge in December.⁵²

- **Xie Yang** disappeared in January 2022 after he showed support for a pregnant teacher who was reportedly detained for her speech.⁵³ In February 2022, authorities in Changsha municipality, Hunan province, formally arrested Xie on the charge of “inciting subversion of state power” and repeatedly denied him counsel visits.⁵⁴

- In November 2021, the Dingxiang County People’s Court in Xinzhou municipality, Shanxi province, tried **Hao Jinsong** on the charges of “defamation,” “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” and “fraud,”⁵⁵ but had not sentenced Hao as of April 2022.⁵⁶ Radio Free Asia reported that the criminal case could be related to a pollution complaint that Hao filed with the local ecology and environment bureau.⁵⁷ Legally trained but not licensed, Hao had previously handled public interest cases in which several government agencies were named as the defendant.⁵⁸ Hao’s defense lawyer explained that Chinese law permits non-lawyers to provide legal services.⁵⁹

- As of April 2022, **Zhou Shifeng**, **Hu Shigen**, and **Wu Gan**, whom authorities detained during the 709 Crackdown, contin-

ued to serve their sentences ranging from seven to eight years on state security charges.⁶⁰

LICENSE REVOCATION

- In December 2021, the Beijing Municipal Justice Bureau revoked **Liang Xiaojun**'s law license, alleging that he said on social media that Falun Gong was not an evil cult, contrary to the official designation.⁶¹ Radio Free Asia reported that the revocation also might be related to his representation of **Xu Zhiyong**, whom authorities criminally charged with “subversion of state power” for his promotion of constitutionalism through the movement he initiated, the China Citizens Movement (formerly known as New Citizens’ Movement).⁶²
- The Beijing Municipal Justice Bureau also revoked the law license of **Lin Qilei**, using a different approach.⁶³ In January 2021, the justice bureau canceled his law firm’s registration and later revoked his license, invoking the regulation requiring that a lawyer’s license be revoked if he or she has not been hired by a law firm for over six months.⁶⁴ Lin reported that a court in Beijing refused to accept the papers that he filed seeking review of his firm’s deregistration.⁶⁵ The justice bureau also refused to accept an employment contract as evidence for his employment by another law firm.⁶⁶ Lin tried to provide legal representation for some of a group of 12 Hong Kong protesters who tried to flee from Hong Kong to Taiwan.⁶⁷ Two other lawyers who were involved in that case—**Lu Siwei** and **Ren Quanniu**—likewise had their licenses revoked earlier in 2021.⁶⁸ Lin believed that the revocation was related to this and other sensitive cases that he had handled over the years.⁶⁹
- **Xi Xiangdong** wrote in August 2021 that the court and administrative bodies ignored his submissions seeking review of the Shandong Province Justice Department’s decision to revoke his law license.⁷⁰ Xi said he was afraid to follow up with the court because another lawyer who tried to do so was beaten by court police.⁷¹ The revocation of Xi’s license was reportedly related to his having published on social media details of mistreatment experienced by one of his clients.⁷²

PHYSICAL ATTACK

- In January 2022, a group of about four court police officers physically attacked **Wang Yu** and her husband **Bao Longjun**, causing injuries that required Wang to seek medical attention.⁷³ The assault took place at the Gusu District People’s Court in Suzhou municipality, Jiangsu province, after Wang’s client contested the records prepared by court staff on grounds that the records did not reflect the fact that the judge read out the client’s pleadings and answered questions on her behalf without her consent.⁷⁴ Wang was providing legal services as a non-lawyer representative after her law license was revoked in December 2020 in connection with the 709 Crackdown.⁷⁵

Notes to Section IV—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.

³PRC 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 (2016): 349.

⁵Capucine May, “Judicial Independence Under Attack in 45 Countries,” *Human Rights Outlook 2021*, Verisk Maplecroft, November 18, 2021, 3–4.

⁶“Zuigao Renmin Fayuan gongzuo baogao” [Supreme People’s Court work report], March 8, 2022; “Zuigao Renmin Jianchayuan gongzuo baogao” [Supreme People’s Procuratorate work report], March 8, 2022.

⁷“Zuigao Renmin Fayuan gongzuo baogao” [Supreme People’s Court work report], March 8, 2022; “Zuigao Renmin Jianchayuan gongzuo baogao” [Supreme People’s Procuratorate work report], March 8, 2022.

⁸“Zuigao Renmin Fayuan gongzuo baogao” [Supreme People’s Court work report], March 8, 2022. The term “political building” is one aspect of “Party building,” which refers to the multifaceted efforts by the Chinese Communist Party to strengthen its governance capacity through approaches including improving its organizational flexibility, and enforcing discipline and ideological obedience among Party members. Shao Chunbao, “Lun jian Dang yu Dang jian” [Discussion on the founding of the Party and Party building], *Xinhua*, June 7, 2021; Liu Shaoqi, “On the Party,” May 14, 1945, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed August 29, 2022.

⁹*Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Tongyi Shiyong Gongzuo Shishi Banfa* [Supreme People’s Court’s Implementation Measures for the Uniform Application of the Law], effective December 1, 2021, art. 6.

¹⁰*Zuigao Renmin Fayuan Tongyi Shiyong Gongzuo Shishi Banfa* [Supreme People’s Court’s Implementation Measures for the Uniform Application of the Law], effective December 1, 2021, arts. 2, 6, 15.

¹¹Supreme People’s Court, *Guanyu Jinyibu Wanshan ‘Silei Anjian’ Jiandu Guanli Gongzuo Jizhi de Zhidao Yijian* [Guiding Opinion on Further Improving the System for Supervising and Managing “Four Types of Cases”], issued November 4, 2021, effective November 5, 2021, secs. 2, 7, 14.

¹²Supreme People’s Court, *Guanyu Jiaqiang he Wanshan Faguan Kaohe Gongzuo de Zhidao Yijian* [Guiding Opinion on Strengthening and Improving the Evaluation of Judges], issued October 12, 2021, effective January 1, 2022, secs. 5(34), 6(40).

¹³Supreme People’s Court, *Guanyu Jiaqiang he Wanshan Faguan Kaohe Gongzuo de Zhidao Yijian* [Guiding Opinion on Strengthening and Improving the Evaluation of Judges], issued October 12, 2021, effective January 1, 2022, secs. 1(4), 3(16).

¹⁴Supreme People’s Court, *Guanyu Jiaqiang he Wanshan Faguan Kaohe Gongzuo de Zhidao Yijian* [Guiding Opinion on Strengthening and Improving the Evaluation of Judges], issued October 12, 2021, effective January 1, 2022, sec. 2(8).

¹⁵Supreme People’s Court, *Guanyu Jiaqiang he Wanshan Faguan Kaohe Gongzuo de Zhidao Yijian* [Guiding Opinion on Strengthening and Improving the Evaluation of Judges], issued October 12, 2021, effective January 1, 2022, secs. 2(11)(1),(2), 2(12)(2).

¹⁶Supreme People’s Court, *Guanyu Jiaqiang he Wanshan Faguan Kaohe Gongzuo de Zhidao Yijian* [Guiding Opinion on Strengthening and Improving the Evaluation of Judges], issued October 12, 2021, effective January 1, 2022, sec. 3(21)(7).

¹⁷Jeremy Daum, “Judging the Judges,” *China Law Translate* (blog), December 12, 2021.

¹⁸Jeremy Daum, “Judging the Judges,” *China Law Translate* (blog), December 12, 2021.

¹⁹Luo Jiajun and Thomas Kellogg, “Verdicts from China’s Courts Used to Be Accessible Online. Now They’re Disappearing,” *ChinaFile*, Asia Society, February 1, 2022.

²⁰Luo Jiajun and Thomas Kellogg, “Verdicts from China’s Courts Used to Be Accessible Online. Now They’re Disappearing,” *ChinaFile*, Asia Society, February 1, 2022.

²¹Luo Jiajun and Thomas Kellogg, “Verdicts from China’s Courts Used to Be Accessible Online. Now They’re Disappearing,” *ChinaFile*, Asia Society, February 1, 2022.

²²Echo Xie, “Millions of Court Rulings Removed from Official Chinese Database,” *South China Morning Post*, June 26, 2021.

²³Luo Jiajun and Thomas Kellogg, “Verdicts from China’s Courts Used to Be Accessible Online. Now They’re Disappearing,” *ChinaFile*, Asia Society, February 1, 2022; Dui Hua Foundation, “China: All State Security Judgments Purged from Supreme Court Site,” *Dui Hua Human Rights Journal*, July 26, 2021.

²⁴Luo Jiajun and Thomas Kellogg, “Verdicts from China’s Courts Used to Be Accessible Online. Now They’re Disappearing,” *ChinaFile*, Asia Society, February 1, 2022.

²⁵Echo Xie, “Millions of Court Rulings Removed from Official Chinese Database,” *South China Morning Post*, June 26, 2021.

²⁶Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, adopted by the eighth UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, Cuba, September 7, 1990, art. 15.

²⁷*Zhonghua Quanguo Lushi Xiehui Guanyu Jinzhi Wegui Chaozuo Anjian de Guize* (*Shixing*) [All China Lawyers Association Regulations on the Prohibition of Unlawfully Hyping Up Cases (Provisional)], passed October 15, 2021, art. 1.

²⁸ *Zhonghua Quanguo Lushi Xiehui Guanyu Jinzhi Wegui Chaozuo Anjian de Guize (Shixing)* [All China Lawyers Association Regulations on the Prohibition of Unlawfully Hyping Up Cases (Provisional)], passed October 15, 2021, art. 4.

²⁹ Mimi Lau, “Chinese Lawyers Banned from Discussing Cases in Public in Latest Move to Tighten Control Over Legal Sector,” *South China Morning Post*, October 23, 2021; Cheng Yangzhi, “Weiquan pinglun: Quanguo Luxie jinzhi ‘weigui chaozuo,’ lushi zaishang jinguzhou!” [Rights defense opinion: All China Lawyers Association bans “unlawfully hyping up cases,” more restrictions on lawyers!], Rights Defense Network, October 26, 2021.

³⁰ *Zhonghua Quanguo Lushi Xiehui Guanyu Jinzhi Wegui Chaozuo Anjian de Guize (Shixing)* [All China Lawyers Association Regulations on the Prohibition of Unlawfully Hyping Up Cases (Provisional)], passed October 15, 2021, art. 8.

³¹ Mimi Lau, “Chinese Lawyers Banned from Discussing Cases in Public in Latest Move to Tighten Control Over Legal Sector,” *South China Morning Post*, October 23, 2021.

³² Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and State Council, *Xinfang Gongzuo Tiaoli* [Regulations on Letters and Visits Work], passed January 24, 2022, effective May 1, 2022; 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; Liang Shibin, “Jianjue da ying huajie xinfang ji’an gong jian zhan” [Resolutely fight to win the battle on clearing backlog of petitioning cases], *Legal Daily*, April 27, 2016. Such grievances reportedly include cases concerning demolition or expropriation of property, social security, agriculture, land and resources, and environmental protection.

³³ Lu Dewen, “‘Jie ju’ nu jiaoshi juebi xin shijian: yi tiao guiyi de shangfang zhi lu” [“Solution” to female teacher’s last letter incident: a strange road of petitioning], *People’s Daily*, August 6, 2019.

³⁴ See, e.g., Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch, “Beijing Guojia Xinfangju bei shuwan shangfang minzhong baower” [Beijing’s State Bureau of Letters and Visits surrounded by tens of thousands of petitioners], February 26, 2018; “29 shengshi yu wan ming minban jiaoshi zai xian quanguo jiti shangfang chao” [Over ten thousand *minban* teachers from 29 provinces and municipalities caused another national wave of group petitioning], *Radio Free Asia*, October 19, 2016; “Shaanxi liangqian min shi sheng xinfangju shangfang yaoqiu shifang weiquan daibiao” [Two thousand petitioners from Shaanxi petition at provincial letters and visits bureau, ask for release of rights defense representative], *Radio Free Asia*, April 13, 2017; Yi Lili, “Zengqiang xinfang gangwei guazhi zhidu xiaoguo de youxiao tujing tantao” [Exploring efficient ways to improve results of temporary position assignments in the petition system], *Administration Reform*, reprinted in *Views.ce.cn*, December 25, 2018.

³⁵ Lu Dewen, “‘Jie ju’ nu jiaoshi juebi xin shijian: yi tiao guiyi de shangfang zhi lu” [“Solution” to female teacher’s last letter incident: a strange road of petitioning], *People’s Daily*, August 6, 2019.

³⁶ See, e.g., “Wuzhong dangju quantao? Shanxi fangmin shang Jing beizhi ‘qiaozha lesuo’ panqiu wu nian” [Fell into the government’s trap? Shanxi petitioner traveled to Beijing and accused of “extortion,” sentenced to five years], *Radio Free Asia*, January 24, 2022; Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch, “Xiangyang fangmin Hao Mingjing bei guan jingshenbing yuan” [Xiangyang petitioner Hao Mingjing forcibly committed to psychiatric hospital], September 9, 2021.

³⁷ Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch, “Lianghui lailin fangmin zaoyu xiezhen Zhongguo minsheng kunjing” [As Two Sessions approach, experience of petitioners depicts difficulties faced by people in China], March 3, 2022; Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch, “Zhongguo weiwen yu renquan dongtai (zong di yibai shiliu qi 2022 nian 2 yue)” [Developments in stability maintenance and human rights in China (cumulative issue no. 116, February 2022)], April 1, 2022.

³⁸ “Chang Weiping: Tamen shijin shouduan yao ba ren biancheng gou” [Chang Weiping: They use all means to turn people into dogs], *Radio France Internationale*, September 17, 2021; “Renquan lushi Chang Weiping zao Shaanxi difang guan baofu, kuli mingdan baoguang” [Human rights lawyer Chang Weiping suffers retaliation by local officials in Shaanxi, names of officials involved in torture exposed], *Radio Free Asia*, October 7, 2021; “Renquan lushi Chang Weiping zai bei ‘jianju’ ceng pai shipin toulou zao kuxing” [Human rights lawyer Chang Weiping detained under “residential surveillance” again, previously revealed in a video that he had suffered torture], *Radio Free Asia*, October 23, 2020.

³⁹ “Chang Weiping: Tamen shijin shouduan yao ba ren biancheng gou” [Chang Weiping: They use all means to turn people into dogs], *Radio France Internationale*, September 17, 2021; “Renquan lushi Chang Weiping zao Shaanxi difang guan baofu, kuli mingdan baoguang” [Human rights lawyer Chang Weiping suffers retaliation by local officials in Shaanxi, names of officials involved in torture exposed], *Radio Free Asia*, October 7, 2021.

⁴⁰ “Chang Weiping: Tamen shijin shouduan yao ba ren biancheng gou” [Chang Weiping: They use all means to turn people into dogs], *Radio France Internationale*, September 17, 2021; “Renquan lushi Chang Weiping zao Shaanxi difang guan baofu, kuli mingdan baoguang” [Human rights lawyer Chang Weiping suffers retaliation by local officials in Shaanxi, names of officials involved in torture exposed], *Radio Free Asia*, October 7, 2021.

⁴¹ ChinaAid Association, “Yin zhuanfa tingshen zhong jianchaguan huangtang shipin, Zhou Xiaoyun he Nie Min lushi she ‘xunxin zishi’ bei zhuabu” [Lawyers Zhou Xiaoyun and Nie Min detained for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” in connection with reposting ridiculous video recording of procurator during court proceeding], August 16, 2021; Ge Xinghang, “Lushi Zhou Xiaoyun, Nie Min bei fangle” [Lawyers Zhou Xiaoyun and Nie Min released], *Caixin*, October 2, 2021.

⁴² ChinaAid Association, “Yin zhuanfa tingshen zhong jianchaguan huangtang shipin, Zhou Xiaoyun he Nie Min lushi she ‘xunxin zishi’ bei zhuabu” [Lawyers Zhou Xiaoyun and Nie Min detained for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” in connection with reposting ridiculous video recording of procurator during court proceeding], August 16, 2021; Ge Xinghang, “Lushi

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Zhou Xiaoyun, Nie Min bei fangle” [Lawyers Zhou Xiaoyun and Nie Min released], *Caixin*, October 2, 2021.

⁴³“Liangming Zhongguo lushi bei kuasheng zhuabu jiancheng wuzui” [Two Chinese lawyers detained in cross-province operation, maintain their innocence], *Radio Free Asia*, August 10, 2021.

⁴⁴“Liangming Zhongguo lushi bei kuasheng zhuabu jiancheng wuzui” [Two Chinese lawyers detained in cross-province operation, maintain their innocence], *Radio Free Asia*, August 10, 2021; ChinaAid Association, “Yin zhuanfa tingshen zhong jianchaguan huangtang shipin, Zhou Xiaoyun he Nie Min lushi she ‘xunxin zishi’ bei zhuabu” [Lawyers Zhou Xiaoyun and Nie Min detained for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” in connection with reposting ridiculous video recording of procurator during court proceeding], August 16, 2021.

⁴⁵Panjin Municipal Procuratorate, “Jiancha jiguan yifa dui Nie Min, Zhou Xiaoyun, Teng Rouhan zuochu bu pizhun daibu jue ding” [Procuratorate decides not to arrest Nie Min, Zhou Xiaoyun, and Teng Rouhan in accordance with the law], October 9, 2021.

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