CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 2025

Printed for the use of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Available via the World Wide Web: https://www.cecc.gov

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CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

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The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (the Commission) was established by the U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000, (Public Law No. 106–286, §§301–309) to monitor human rights and the development of the rule of law in China and to submit an annual report to the President and Congress. The 2025 Annual Report covers the period from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

The Commission is also mandated to maintain a database of political prisoners in China—individuals who have been imprisoned by the Chinese government for exercising their human rights.

As of December 2025, the Commission consists of six Senators and eight Members of the House of Representatives.

The Commission adopted this report by a vote of 13 to 0.[1]

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[1]Voted to adopt: Senators Sullivan, Blunt Rochester, Duckworth, Kim, and Merkley; Representatives Smith, Kiggans, McGovern, Nunn, Subramanyam, Stefanik, Strong, and Suozzi.
Voted to abstain: Senator Cotton.
Additional Views: Representatives Smith, Strong, McGovern and Senator Merkley.

II. Executive Summary

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRS

Promises made, promises broken: the People's Republic of China (PRC)—in reality, a party state run by and for the benefit of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—makes solemn commitments, then governs as if those commitments are optional. The gap between promise and practice runs through the Congressional-Executive Commission on China's evaluation of the PRC's record on such issues as religious freedom, labor rights, Hong Kong, free expression, and adherence to international law and treaties. Broken promises are not an exception; they are a feature of how the CCP deals with the world and with its own people.

The 2025 Annual Report traces broken promises across both international obligations and China's own stated guarantees—the fifty years of rights and unchanged "way of life" promised in Hong Kong, and "autonomy" to Uyghurs and Tibetans that has yielded mass detentions and omnipresent surveillance; "constitutional" protection for belief and speech overshadowed by tighter controls on worship and expression; declarations of labor rights contradicted by persistent forced labor and unfair trade practices; and pledges to play by global rules narrowed or reinterpreted in practice. What is promised on paper does not match what is practiced in reality.

These broken promises affect Americans. Wrongful detentions and exit bans continue to endanger U.S. citizens who work, study, or travel in the PRC. American consumers, including our men and women in uniform, consume seafood caught or processed using forced labor. Personal privacy is at risk when PRC national security and intelligence laws grant sweeping access to data held by companies in China; everyday apps, cloud services, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools collect sensitive information. Beyond China's borders, transnational repression reaches into diaspora communities in America and abroad—covert "overseas police" activity, harassment of dissidents with bounties placed on their heads and cyber operations aimed at critics and journalists, often employing pressure on families back home. CCP coercion crosses borders.

Broken promises also ripple through the international system. Allies and partners face maritime intimidation in open waters and even in their own Exclusive Economic Zones despite clear legal standards. "Smart city" projects in Africa arrive with censorship-ready software and opaque demands for user data that could help any aspiring authoritarian expand social control.

From this year's report, three implications are clear.

First, promises matter only when kept. Where commitments are repeatedly set aside—on labor, religion, due process, or maritime norms—U.S. policy must be calibrated to address behavior that harms U.S. interests. That means sustained enforcement against forced labor, real traceability in high-risk sectors like seafood and lithium, and alignment of federal procurement with human rights

standards so that American consumers and workers are not made to subsidize coercion. It means transparent, public reporting on compliance, and consequences that follow promptly when obligations are breached.

Second, Americans must be protected. We will continue to elevate the risks of wrongful detention and press for the return of our citizens. We support measures that keep high-risk software, services, and AI models off government and critical-infrastructure networks, and we will promote simple, effective privacy safeguards for the public. We also back robust law enforcement action—here and with like-minded countries—against covert policing, intimidation, cyberstalking, and harassment aimed at diaspora communities and human rights advocates. No one residing in America should have to look over their shoulder for fear of a foreign security service agent on U.S. soil.

Third, the free world must act together. Beijing will try to divide allies with threats and incentives; democracies must be diligent in closing ranks around our shared interests and values. That means coordinated sanctions and visa bans, joint prosecutions of illegal agents, shutting down covert "overseas police" outposts, aligned export controls on surveillance technology, and shared early-warning systems to protect diaspora communities from harassment and cyberattacks.

This year's report underscores the important role of human rights in U.S. strategy and diplomacy. When forced labor undercuts American workers, when state-sanctioned hostage taking endangers our citizens, when censorship chills speech globally, and when international rules at sea are ignored, Americans pay the price—in security, in prosperity, and in credibility. Upholding human dignity helps keep markets fairer, travel safer, technology freer, and alliances stronger. It reduces the leverage authoritarian states—led by a totalitarian PRC—wield over people and partners.

Throughout the year, the Commission's work advanced these issues: documenting cases of detention and torture in our Political Prisoner Database, examining the spread of censorship and surveillance technology, and detailing how rules are rewritten to entrench the CCP's political control. We also tracked how the CCP's malign influence operations and transnational repression target diaspora communities and rights advocates abroad, and how forced labor threatens American laborers.

At its core, the Commission's Annual Report shines a light on human rights abuses, ensuring that political prisoners are not forgotten, atrocities are documented, and that PRC behavior is publicly contrasted with its commitments made to the world, and indeed, to China's citizens.

Behind every chart and citation in this report is a person: a pastor barred from his pulpit; a woman punished for speaking about harassment; a student denied due process; a family separated by detention or exit bans; an activist abroad who still fears a knock at

the door. To them—and to the many Chinese citizens who persist in telling the truth—we dedicate this Annual Report.

Sincerely,

Senator Dan Sullivan
Chair

Representative Chris Smith
Co-Chair

OVERVIEW

As the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) nears a quarter century of existence, it is worth taking stock of what has been learned in that time—in particular the statutory charge to "monitor the development of the rule of law in the People's Republic of China (PRC)"—and reassess these assumptions in light of facts drawn from the current reporting year.

The PRC routinely enters into treaties, conventions, and international agreements but then fails to fulfill those obligations in practice. Pledges to respect trade commitments, to honor Hong Kong's autonomy, and to protect the basic human rights of China's citizens are made—then repeatedly broken. This "promises made, promises broken" framework captures the persistent gap between commitments and actions.

When the CECC's authorizing statute was introduced, the prevailing assumption was that if the United States engaged, opened its markets, and honored the rules, the PRC would, over time, play by the same rules that have preserved peace and fostered global prosperity for decades. The PRC did not become the responsible stakeholder in the international community that many had hoped. That assumption failed to account for how Beijing cloaks pledges to the international community in ambiguity—for example, invoking allegiance to *fazhi* (法治). To many, the term sounds like a commitment to the "rule of law," but in practice it signifies "rule by law"—where the law becomes a tool of control wielded by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to maintain domestic dominance and advance its ambitions abroad.

What is seen now, with respect to the rule of law, is not *development* but rather *regression*, making the monitoring work of the CECC all the more essential.

The persistent pattern of unfilled commitments extends beyond specific trade or human rights concerns and undermines confidence in China's adherence to international standards. It raises the broader questions of trust and cooperation in the global system. While American and other foreign companies have invested heavily in China, ongoing issues with intellectual property protections, subsidies, and labor practices illustrate the gap between the PRC's international commitments and its implementation, even as it continues to benefit from membership in global institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).[1]

Such contradictions have bred deep and widespread "promise fatigue"—a weariness felt by businesses, governments, and most heavily, by the citizens of the PRC.

Just as contracts bind companies to uphold their commitments, so too do treaties bind nations. Yet time and again, the PRC has signed on to international agreements only to disregard their obligations, betraying the trust of both the global community and its own people. It is this ongoing cycle of promises made and promises broken—formalized in treaties that China has ratified but routinely violates—that lays bare the extent of the CCP's abuses and the challenges faced in holding it accountable.

By sampling a select number of treaties that the PRC has ratified and subsequently broken, one is able to chronicle broken promises

made to other nations, particularly with regard to the abuses that the CCP has wreaked upon the people of China, as documented in the chapters of this year's Annual Report.[2]

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)—*ratified/promise made: 2001.* Disregard for labor rights and the "liberty of parents" to choose schools to "ensure the religious and moral education of their children" abrogates the ICESCR. As a State Party, the PRC agreed to several labor provisions—Articles 6, 7 and 8, governing freedom of choice, just and fair wages and working conditions, and the right to form unions. Yet, the PRC routinely flouts these promises. The CCP-led All-China Federation of Trade Unions remains the only organization permitted to represent workers under Chinese law and though not formally prohibited by law, workers are prosecuted for participating in strikes, often under the criminal charges of "disturbing public order" or "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." As a State Party, the PRC agreed to several provisions—Articles 10, 13 and 15, governing the right to education and to take part in cultural life. The PRC denies these rights by placing children from Tibet and the Uyghur region in colonial boarding schools, where strict rules regarding the use of Mandarin Chinese are enforced, per Xi Jinping's dictate, to strengthen "the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, and the Chinese Communist Party."

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)—*ratified/promise made: 1981.* As a State Party to ICERD, China made a commitment to "amend, rescind or nullify any laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination wherever it exists." ICERD extends the term "racial discrimination" beyond race to include "colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin." ICERD ratification also obligates China to guarantee, among other rights, "cultural rights" including "the right to equal participation in cultural activities." The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and States Parties have asserted the right of minority and marginalized groups to use their own language.[3] The CCP, far from nullifying discriminatory laws and regulations, has systematically sought to erase the cultures of Tibetans, Mongols, Uyghurs, and other citizens of the PRC and advance Han Chinese ethnic chauvinism. The CCP seeks also to "sinicize" religion, particularly Islam and Christianity, enforcing conformity to the Party and its agenda and bleaching them of any stain deemed "foreign"—such as Arabic-style minarets on mosques.

Convention Against Torture (CAT)—*ratified/promise made: 1988.* The CAT definition of torture includes "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person . . .." Torture, including in prisons and other types of detention centers in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), as well as during pretrial detention, is commonplace throughout the PRC. It is frequently directed at political prisoners, from human rights lawyers to religious prisoners—including Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, and members of new religious movements like the Church of Almighty God—as well as ethnic minorities such as predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and Tibetan

Buddhists. A particularly egregious violation is state-sanctioned harvesting of human organs, a practice reported extensively among Falun Gong practitioners and more recently among Uyghurs.

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention)—*ratified / promise made: 1982.* The Refugee Convention, along with the CAT, prohibits the refoulement of refugees to countries where they may face torture, imprisonment, or worse. Refugees from North Korea—many of whom were trafficked—have faced imprisonment, torture, sexual violence, forced abortions, forced labor, and even execution upon being repatriated to North Korea against their will, a practice the Chinese government has routinely engaged in since October 2023 after North Korea reopened border areas that had been closed during the COVID crisis. The PRC has pressured other countries to refoul Uyghurs, including 40 Uyghurs deported from Thailand in February 2025 following then Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra's visit to Beijing, and Abdureqip Rahman, who was refouled to the XUAR from Cambodia in February 2024.

Forced Labour Convention—*ratified / promise made: 2022.* The very first article of the Forced Labour Convention commits the PRC to "suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms within the shortest possible period." Notwithstanding this commitment, the PRC routinely engages in systematic forced labor practices, particularly with respect to Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities—a practice expanded in the XUAR during the reporting year.

A paramilitary organization that has been sanctioned by the U.S. Government, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, uses and distributes Uyghur forced labor throughout China, contaminating supply chains, including those of products found on supermarket shelves and apparel hanging from department store racks in the United States and around the world. Chinese fishing fleets routinely engage in "illegal, unreported and unregulated" (IUU) fishing, commandeering forced labor not only aboard fishing boats but also in processing plants, many of which employ Uyghurs, as well as women dispatched by the North Korean government, in exploitative working conditions.

Fish tainted by forced labor even finds its way onto the plates of American soldiers, children in school lunch programs, and prisoners incarcerated in federal penitentiaries. These government purchasing practices should be reviewed and addressed, U.S. taxpayer funds should not support goods linked to forced labor.[4]

Sino-British Joint Declaration—*ratified / promise made: 1984*. Pursuant to this bilateral treaty with the United Kingdom, the PRC government guaranteed the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region "a high degree of autonomy" with "executive, legislative and independent judicial power" to "remain basically unchanged." It further committed to maintaining "[r]ights and freedoms, including those of the person, of speech, of the press, of assembly," which would be enshrined in the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution. This past year saw authorities weaponizing national security laws foisted upon the former British colony by the mainland's National People's Congress Standing Committee to repress all forms of political dissent and convict 45 pro-democracy advocates of subversion

for having organized an unofficial primary election. In another case, a slogan emblazoned on a T-shirt was seen as a "national security" threat. Since 2021, the United Kingdom has considered the PRC to be in a "state of ongoing non-compliance" with its obligations under the Sino-British pact.

U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)—*ratified / promise made: 1996.* Despite being a State Party for nearly three decades, the PRC's aggressive assertion of an extralegal "nine-dash line" over much of what traditionally has been known as the "South China Sea" as its exclusive maritime domain violates numerous provisions of the UNCLOS treaty it ratified. Articles 56 and 57 create Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) that extend 200 nautical miles from coastal baselines, which the PRC has sought to circumvent by creating artificial "islands," intruding upon the EEZs of countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam, in addition to seizing the Scarborough Shoals, located within the Philippines' EEZ.

Both the assertion of sovereignty in these areas and the pretextual building of artificial islands to extend maritime claims violate UNCLOS, which states that only naturally formed islands capable of sustaining human habitation can be used as a basis for expanded EEZs. A 2016 UNCLOS arbitral ruling underscored the lack of a legal basis for the PRC's nine-dash line claims and found the PRC to have violated the Philippines' EEZ rights. The PRC nonetheless has ignored the ruling and continues to aggressively challenge Filipino vessels within the Philippines' EEZ, which, consistent with the UNCLOS ruling, Filipino authorities now refer to as the West Philippines Sea.

Vienna Convention on Consular Relations—*ratified / promise made: 1979.* Article 55(1) of the Consular Relations Convention requires consular officers to "respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State," and further imposes a duty "not to interfere in the internal affairs of that State."[5] PRC consular officials routinely derogate from this obligation. In a September 2024 article, the *Washington Post* confirmed in detail the role played by the PRC San Francisco and Los Angeles consulates, identifying culpable consular officials who coordinated counter-protests that turned violent against peaceful protesters demonstrating in opposition to the participation of Xi Jinping at the November 2023 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in San Francisco.[6]

Violations extend beyond street-level harassment. PRC consulates have been linked to the operation of so-called "service stations"—undeclared overseas police outposts—and to active engagement with Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) on U.S. campuses. Such associations, often operating under consular guidance, have monitored and reported on PRC students studying in the United States, pressuring them to toe the Party line, and have assisted in surveillance, particularly of those who speak critically of Beijing.

Meanwhile, American diplomats operating in the PRC face significantly greater restrictions. The PRC routinely limits U.S. diplomatic access, imposes stringent surveillance, and tightly controls interactions with civil society and media. In contrast to PRC officials abroad, who covertly extend their influence through the above-mentioned service stations and consular-backed networks like the

CSSA, U.S. diplomats encounter barriers that hinder their ability to engage openly and reciprocally.

This stark imbalance in diplomatic freedom and behavior undermines the principle of reciprocity that is foundational to international relations and the effective functioning of diplomatic missions worldwide.

Viewed collectively, such a sustained and systematic rejection of law, agreed-upon rules, and established customs while using them only where it is advantageous—such as by filing requests for consultation with the WTO against U.S. tariffs, or engaging the U.S. court system to conduct lawfare against CCP critics such as the Hui Muslim activist Ma Ju[7]— suggests a consistent strategic approach. But the challenges here are not simply economic or strategic, but systemic, as the PRC seeks to replace and supplant the current global system with one of its own devising.

As noted in last year's Annual Report, this pattern extends also to the domain of human rights, where the PRC manipulates notions of collective rights, such as the right to development, to suppress individual liberties. In doing so, it seeks to erode rights central to the post–World War II human rights architecture embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its progeny, reimagining a global order with the PRC at its center. It advances this vision through initiatives such as the "Global Civilization Initiative" and "Community of Shared Future for Mankind," through its redefinition of "whole process democracy," and via close coordination with Russia to promote alternative models for global governance in international forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Ultimately, as this survey of the PRC's broken promises reveals, those most harmed by this habitual prevarication are the citizens of China themselves. They are the ones whose rights are most often violated, be it at a detention center in the Uyghur region or on a street corner in San Francisco, where ruffians hired and directed by the PRC consulate target dissidents exercising the universally recognized right of freedom of expression denied to them in the PRC.

Once again, the CECC will call attention to such abuses. The chapters that follow document the PRC's broken promises and shine a bright light on the ways in which the PRC does violence to the fundamental rights of the citizens of the People's Republic of China.

Notes to Section II—Overview

[1]As part of congressional approval for the PRC's accession to the WTO, it was agreed that a hybrid House-Senate-executive branch entity (the CECC) would be established to monitor the PRC's adherence to international human rights norms and monitor rule-of-law developments.

[2]In addition to the treaties mentioned in the overview, see also, the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)," the PRC signed the ICCPR on October 5, 1998 but has not yet ratified it; the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)," the PRC signed CEDAW on July 17, 1980, and ratified it on November 4, 1980; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)," the PRC signed the CRC on August 29, 1990, and ratified it on March 2, 1992; the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)," the PRC signed the CRPD on March 30, 2007, and ratified it on August 1, 2008; United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter IV, Human Rights. These treaties are also used in the chapters that follow to assess the PRC's commitment to its international obligations."

[3]Treaty monitoring body interpretations and recommendations are non-binding, though they may be helpful where a treaty contains terminology that is undefined, such as in the case of ICERD, and serve as standards for assessing a government's behavior. See, e.g., Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, "General Recommendation No. 21," United Nations, CERD/48/Misc.7/Rev.3, adopted March 8, 1996; Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, "General Comment No. 27," United Nations, A/55/18, annex V, adopted August 16, 2000); and various Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Concluding Observations.

[4]As has been pointed out in a CECC report published in 2025, North Korean workers in fish processing plants in China are paid a fraction of the funds that are conveyed to the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for their services, thus violating the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act.

[5]"Vienna Convention on Consular Relations," adopted April 24, 1963, entered into force March 19, 1967, and ratified by China on September 17, 1980; "The Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations" (*ratified/promise made: 1975*), contains comparable provisions. Article 41(1) and (3) require diplomatic personnel to "respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State," and not to use the premises of the mission "in any manner incompatible with the functions of the mission."

[6]Shibani Mahtani et al., 'How China Extended Its Repression into an American City," *Washington Post,* September 3, 2024.

[7]Marie Tsai, "He Escaped China. Harassment Followed Him to a New York Courtroom," *Radio Free Asia,* March 19, 2025.

Key Findings

Freedom of Expression

• During the Commission's 2025 reporting period, the People's Republic of China (PRC) government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP or Party) persisted in imposing restrictions on expression that contravene Article 35 of China's Constitution, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
• Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked China 178 out of 180 countries and territories in its 2025 World Press Freedom Index, and Freedom House's 2025 Freedom in the World report scored China 0 out of 4 on "free and independent media" for the seventh year in a row.
• The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked China as the world's leading jailer of journalists during this reporting year. Currently detained or imprisoned journalists include **Zhang Zhan, Sophia Huang Xueqin, Dong Yuyu, Chen Pinlin, Gu Wanming, Li Weizhong,** and **Liu Hanbin.** Foreign journalists in China also continued to face restrictions and harassment.
• The Party continued its efforts to shape its image abroad through an expanding network of state-directed media initiatives, including its network of international communication centers (ICCs). OpenAI, a U.S. artificial intelligence (AI) company, found accounts which "appear to originate in China" that used AI to write news articles criticizing the U.S. in Latin American media outlets and to generate posts denouncing a critic of the Party.
• Chinese authorities exercised control over freedom of expression of global audiences on the app TikTok through content moderation and censored posts on the Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu, known as RedNote.
• Authorities in China continued to tightly control in-person assemblies that they viewed as potentially threatening to the Party and targeted even non-political gatherings, particularly those involving youth. Individuals who participated in protests or commemorative activities continued to face detention and harassment, including **Fang Yirong** and **Mei Shilin,** both detained for hanging pro-democracy banners.
• PRC legislators introduced several measures to tighten control over the internet, including a regulation on a new national internet identification (ID) system and a draft regulation targeting multi-channel networks (MCNs).
• Authorities and social media platforms in China continued to censor online discussions and public expression related to topics that generated criticism or contradicted official policy or positions. Observers noted various examples of authorities treating China's economic challenges as sensitive topics to be censored this past year.
• China experienced a series of violent "revenge against society" attacks this past year, including various knife attacks

and car ramming incidents. In response, the PRC government tightly controlled information about the events and prioritized surveillance and punishment.
• Authorities continued to exercise tight control over the entertainment, art, and literature sectors, including by imprisoning artists, writers, and public intellectuals such as **Gao Zhen, Fei Xiaosheng, Xu Lin,** and **Li Yanhe.**
• The PRC continued its control over educational and research institutions this past year, impeding free exchange of information and international academic collaboration.

Civil Society and Social Movements

• The Chinese Communist Party continued to increase its presence in social organizations, the PRC's term for civil society groups, preventing them from operating independently.
• This year, the Party set up central and local branches of the Central Society Work Department, created in 2023, in order to more fully penetrate all aspects of society. Local society work departments held training sessions and launched a range of projects focused on Party-building within new and priority sectors.
• As in previous years, PRC authorities have taken steps to eliminate "illegal social organizations," a category that refers to, among others, organizations engaged in activities deemed undesirable or sensitive by the government. In February 2025, the PRC Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the revised *Measures Banning Illegal Social Organizations.*
• PRC citizens continued to engage in ad hoc collective expressions of discontent and advocacy, predominantly in response to perceived injustices at the local level. According to *China Dissent Monitor,* there were 937 dissent events between July and September 2024, constituting a "27 percent year-on-year increase" over the same period in 2023. Groups engaged in protest events this past year included property owners and investors.
• PRC authorities also worked to suppress collective gatherings composed predominantly of young people, which were not explicitly political but were likely perceived as a threat. In November 2024, authorities cracked down on mass night bicycle rides by university students from Zhengzhou municipality to Kaifeng municipality in Henan province, an apparently grassroots phenomenon that peaked at between 100,000 and 200,000 students.
• Also during the 2025 reporting period, the Commission observed new efforts to leverage Chinese citizen activism outside of China to effect domestic policy change at the local level. The 611Study.ICU, led by a Milan-based Chinese activist, focused on exposing exploitative conditions at primary and secondary schools in China.
• The Chinese Communist Party and government continued to suppress independent civil society organizations and movements by isolating civil society leaders and by arbitrarily detaining religious clergy and practitioners, rights advocates, and independent organizers of civic and political activities.

• Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) persons living in China continued to experience ongoing state repression.

Freedom of religion

• The Chinese Communist Party and government continued to constrain individuals and groups from freely forming and practicing their religious beliefs, instead seeking to order religious observance around loyalty to the Party and state.
• During the 2025 reporting year, the Commission observed a coordinated campaign, led by the United Front Work Department, to train religious personnel in the "strict governance of religion."
• The Party sought to exert control over theological education and institutions across religious groups to ensure the political reliability of future religious leaders.
• The National Religious Affairs Administration published new regulations governing the religious activities of foreigners in China that create a more restrictive environment for non-PRC citizens to practice their own religion or interact with Chinese believers.
• The Party and government have continued their efforts to co-opt Buddhism, Taoism, and Chinese folk religion while also pushing for further "sinicization" of these groups.
• This past year, PRC authorities continued to suppress dissent and inculcate ideological conformity in ethnic minority Muslim communities, including in Yunnan province, following tensions over mosque "rectifications" and other sinicization efforts.
• The Party continued to assert its ultimate authority over the Chinese Catholic Church, despite the renewal of the Sino-Vatican Agreement. In the interregnum period after the death of Pope Francis, local authorities conducted "elections" to select two bishops when papal approval would have been impossible.
• Authorities continued to raid unregistered Protestant "house" churches and detain their members, using fraud charges, exit bans, censorship, and surveillance to suppress and intimidate clergy and laity from exercising their religious beliefs.
• The Party and government have continued to direct considerable resources and attention toward the suppression and persecution of Falun Gong, often detaining, charging, and prosecuting practitioners under Article 300 of the *PRC Criminal Law*. The Falun Gong-affiliated website *Minghui* reported the deaths of dozens of Falun Gong practitioners due to mistreatment while in custody and hundreds of cases of practitioners being sentenced by authorities, apparently for their connection with Falun Gong.
• In addition to Falun Gong, the Party and government have designated 22 religious groups to be "cult organizations" or *xiejiao* (邪教), a historical term used by the Party to refer to new religious movements it perceives as threatening, and continue to subject them to persecution. Among these groups, authorities have engaged in a protracted and apparently nationwide crackdown against the Church of Almighty God, launching consecutive campaigns to eradicate the religious group.

• In at least two cases this past year, authorities detained Taiwanese citizens for participation in religious activities associated with supposed *xiejiao*.

Criminal Justice

• The criminal justice system remained a political instrument used for maintaining social order in furtherance of the Chinese Communist Party's autocratic rule. In addition to combating criminal conduct, the government also targeted individuals who pursue universal human rights, such as exercising free speech and seeking remedies within the legal system.
• Government officials arbitrarily detained political activists, religious practitioners, ethnic minorities, and rights advocates, including through extralegal means such as "black jails" and psychiatric facilities, or through criminal prosecution under offenses such as "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" or crimes endangering state security. Some detainees, particularly those held incommunicado, reported being mistreated or tortured. After entering the formal legal process, defendants sometimes faced prolonged pretrial detention, closed trials, and delayed sentencing.
• Legal mechanisms such as administrative detention, "residential surveillance at a designated location" (RSDL), and "retention in custody" were frequently employed with minimal oversight. Amendments to the *PRC Supervision Law* in late 2024 further expanded state power, introducing new coercive measures and extending permissible detention periods.

Governance and Rule of Law

• The Chinese Communist Party continued to advance a governance model that prioritizes political security and social stability at the expense of individual rights. The Party's early intervention strategy in addressing social problems led to overzealous enforcement and an expansion of surveillance within a climate of ongoing suppression of citizens' access to justice—likely contributing to the very anti-social behaviors the government sought to contain. The Party's uncontested power also perpetuated a lack of transparency and public oversight, hampering institutional reforms and enabling persistent systemic corruption.
• The Party framed governance around risk prevention, using stability maintenance measures that draw from the "Fengqiao Experience" policy, a way to exert granular social and political control through neighborhood committees and other grassroots-level organizations. In implementing the policy, authorities expanded early intervention tactics, targeting individuals based on vague behavioral markers using techniques such as artificial intelligence analytics to enable preemptive intervention.
• Parallel to these security-driven measures, fiscal pressure on local governments spurred aggressive revenue-generation tactics such as retroactive taxes, arbitrary fines, and asset seizure. In some cases, authorities arbitrarily detained business owners

and conditioned their release on the payment of money, a practice that some critics likened to state-sanctioned extortion.
• Policymakers issued a new five-year plan with the aim of easing rural-to-urban migration restrictions so as to facilitate labor mobility and urbanization. Challenges in resource allocation, however, will likely continue, since the plan does not emphasize the provision of public services for new migrants in cities or for the elderly and disabled residents who remain in rural areas.
• In areas such as food and drug safety, authorities demonstrated a degree of responsiveness following exposés by state-run media, suggesting some space for public discourse. Nevertheless, efforts by independent investigators were censored, underscoring the government's intolerance of unsanctioned scrutiny and its broader resistance to bottom-up accountability.

Ethnic Minority Rights

• During the Commission's reporting year, authorities suppressed the expression of Islamic beliefs in Hui religious communities, including through actions aimed at "sinicizing" Islamic practices, a trend observers say limits Hui Muslims' ability to practice their religion and culture.
• In December 2024, hundreds of local Muslims gathered in front of the municipal government building in Yuxi municipality, Yunnan province to protest the detention of well-known imam **Ma Yuwei** and call for his release. Ma's detention and the ensuing protests followed a period in which authorities detained other Hui imams and targeted other Hui figures, and came in the wake of a May 2023 demonstration involving thousands of residents of Nagu town, Tonghai county, Yuxi, over the planned demolition of a local mosque.
• In January 2025, security personnel in Hohhot municipality, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, brought veteran Mongol rights advocate **Hada** to a hospital, where he was placed on a respirator in intensive care. During his hospitalization, state security personnel failed to provide information on Hada's condition to his wife, Xinna, and their son, Uiles. Hospital staff later moved Hada from intensive care to another part of the hospital, but police forbade them from disclosing where they had transferred him within the hospital.

Status of Women

• During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, Chinese political leaders implemented several legal measures related to women's rights in marriage and divorce**.** A law delegating more power to rural village assemblies sparked debate as to whether it is enough to guarantee women equal land rights and social insurance benefits. Additionally, online commentators spoke out against a revised draft law aiming to make registering for marriage easier and filing for divorce more difficult, citing concerns about domestic violence victims within the controversial 30-day "cooling-off" period.
• The Commission observed reports of sexual violence against women in China, along with varied responses from PRC au-

thorities. Netizens expressed concerns about a lack of sufficient official response to the following cases: a Ph.D. student accused of drugging and raping at least seven young women in China, a university professor who sexually abused his student for two years, the alleged trafficking of a rural woman suffering from mental illness, and cases of sexual assault of young girls. Such posts often faced official censorship.
• Women in mainland China and Hong Kong faced discrimination and harassment in the workplace. One report revealed that one-third of women in Hong Kong experienced workplace sexual harassment in the last three years, while other reports showed widespread discriminatory hiring practices based on female applicants' fertility and family status. Some blame the CCP's recent pro-natal policies and rhetoric for employers' reluctance to hire married women of child-bearing age.
• The Commission continued to monitor cases of official harassment and arbitrary detention of women's rights activists, including **He Fangmei, Sophia Huang Xueqin, Zhang Zhan,** and **Li Qiaochu.**

Population Control

• The Chinese Communist Party (CCP or "Party") and PRC government continued to implement population planning policies that violate international standards by seeking to control family size, including the application of the three-child policy, which permits and seeks to incentivize families to have up to but no more than three children.
• The National Bureau of Statistics of China's 2024 data revealed that, while the total number of births in China increased for the first time in eight years, likely due to the auspicious "Year of the Dragon," the overall population declined for the third consecutive year. Marriage rates also fell to the lowest rate since public records began in 1986.
• PRC central authorities announced a variety of pro-natal initiatives this year, including a survey to identify family and childbearing attitudes, increased support for infrastructure related to childrearing, and a proposed national childcare subsidy. Local authorities also attempted to boost birth rates through financial incentives, pro-natal messaging, and calling young women to ask about their family planning and menstrual cycles.
• The Commission observed reports of the discriminatory effects of centrally led family planning policies, including the likely continuation of birth suppression of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
• The legacy of the one-child policy (1980 to 2015) continues to have an impact on Chinese society, including the continued sex ratio imbalance and increased socio-economic precarity for China's elderly population.
• In September 2024, the PRC announced the end of international adoptions originating in China, to which the one-child policy era's social engineering abuses had often been linked. The sudden decision included the halting of hundreds of cases of families who had already been matched and had communi-

cated with a child and spurred particular concern for the thousands of children remaining in Chinese orphanages, often with disabilities.

Human Trafficking

- The government of Brazil accused China's BYD Company Ltd. of employing at least 163 workers in "slave-like conditions" at a construction site in Bahia. The Brazilian government said that the workers were "victims of international trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation." Brazilian authorities identified forced labor indicators including the withholding of the workers' passports and salaries.
- The Commission continued to observe reports of forced labor linked to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). In December 2024, Adrian Zenz and I-Lin Lin of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation asserted that the PRC government's heightened agricultural production policies have resulted in coercive forms of work that "constitute state-imposed forced labor as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and operationalized in its updated handbook on the measurement of forced labor."
- In February 2025, the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) documented the presence of North Korean workers on a fleet of Chinese tuna fishing vessels in the Indian Ocean between March 2019 and June 2024. At least five vessels showed indicators of forced labor, including deception related to wages, withholding of documents, physical and verbal abuse, and excessive overtime.

Worker Rights

- Documented worker strikes and protests in China decreased overall from 2023 to 2024; however, strikes in the manufacturing sector increased. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has attempted to resolve wage arrears, in part due to a desire to "maintain social harmony and stability." Wage arrears were the cause of the majority of worker strikes and protests in 2024.
- During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Hong Kong authorities continued to suppress labor rights activists. In Hong Kong, **Carol Ng Man-yee** and **Winnie Yu Wai-ming** were sentenced to prison for "conspiracy to commit subversion" under Hong Kong's *National Security Law* in November 2024. Mainland Chinese labor rights advocate **Wang Jianbing** was released from prison in March 2025, but human rights experts assert that he may continue to face unlawful restrictions and is at risk of re-detention. Similarly, in August 2024, Chinese labor activist and women's rights advocate **Li Qiaochu** was released after serving a three-year, eight-month prison sentence, and remains subject to two years' deprivation of political rights.
- Due to fears of instability and social unrest, PRC officials have sought to provide more protection for delivery workers, who have faced increasing pressure in the expanding gig econ-

omy. Observers are skeptical that these measures will directly benefit delivery workers.
• Chinese workers continued to face poor working conditions and were subject to excessive overtime practices. Workers in Yunnan province's coffee farms, who supply coffee to Starbucks and Nestlé, as well as workers at Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Ltd. (CATL), faced excessive overtime practices.
• The Commission continued to document cases of job discrimination in China. Local procurators found that women who applied to positions at over a dozen companies in Nantong municipality, Jiangsu province, were illegally administered pregnancy tests during pre-employment physicals. Concerns over age bias were raised by representatives at the annual meetings of the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in March (Two Sessions), with some calling for age limits to be formally eliminated in the hiring process.

The Environment

• During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Chinese Communist Party and government continued to state their intention to prioritize environmental protection.
• China continued to contribute to domestic and cross-border pollution, which experts suggested may contribute to "a vicious cycle of poverty and health hazards." Authors of a February 2025 study revealed "the existence of unidentified exposure sources" of lithium in Beijing municipality, resulting in higher lithium levels in maternal and umbilical cord blood samples of pregnant women in the city.
• While food and water security reportedly remain a top priority for the Party and government, PRC citizens continued to face difficulty accessing these resources. Local surface water monitoring stations located along the Leishui River in Hunan province detected "abnormal concentrations of thallium" in March 2025. In April 2025, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region experienced a severe drought, causing direct economic losses. More than 16,000 hectares of crops were severely damaged and 83,000 people faced a shortage of drinking water.
• Dams built by the PRC government, both in China and abroad, continued to contribute to environmental damage. The PRC government's building of dams in Tibet and along the Mekong River contributed to rapidly changing water levels and destruction of agriculture. A dam built in northwest China may have contributed to forced relocations and forced labor programs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).
• The Commission observed reports of environmental degradation tied to PRC-affiliated mines globally, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Laos, Peru, Tajikistan, and Zambia.
• PRC authorities sentenced 29-year-old Tibetan **Tsongon Tsering** to eight months in prison for "disrupting social order." Tsongon Tsering had posted a video online denouncing local

officials for failing to adequately address the environmental damage to the Tsaruma River caused by illegal mining.

Business and Human Rights

- Companies that do business in, source from, or work with companies in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) are at risk of complicity in human rights abuses committed by the Chinese Communist Party and government. Reports of corporate involvement in mass atrocities in the XUAR implicate the agricultural, apparel, automotive, critical minerals, pharmaceutical, shipbuilding, and tourism industries.
- The *Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act* (UFLPA; Public Law No. 117-78) Entity List consists of nearly 150 PRC-based companies found to be complicit in rights abuses in the XUAR. XUAR Communist Party Secretary Ma Xingrui claimed in March 2025 that U.S. sanctions on entities over forced labor had "become one of the biggest challenges in the region's development." According to *Radio Free Asia,* this was the first time such an admission had been made by a representative of the Chinese government, "proving that international sanctions do have bite."
- Reports from this past year link U.S. and Chinese companies, including **Apple, Google, Meta,** and **DeepSeek,** among others, in the Chinese government's data collection, surveillance, and censorship efforts.
- During the 2025 reporting year, the Commission observed some U.S. companies downsizing, withdrawing, or closing operations in China in part to address U.S.-China geopolitical tensions and legal risks of non-compliance with PRC laws.
- Companies that operate in Hong Kong may find themselves implicated or at risk of complicity in sanctions evasion. Information and communications technology (ICT) companies may encounter difficulty navigating Hong Kong's regulatory changes and threats to privacy and freedom of expression.

Technology and Human Rights

- The PRC government expanded digital repression on a global scale by exporting censorship technologies to authoritarian governments, undermining human rights by enabling these governments to silence dissent.
- China's expansion of satellite communications infrastructure also raised concerns about the global spread of digital authoritarianism, as its centralized satellite internet model could enable other governments to adopt PRC-style censorship, surveillance, and information control and at the same time deepen PRC influence over global digital governance.
- During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) released a report that analyzed internal Chinese documents about the Safe Silk Road (SSR) platform, which collects information from companies operating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and expands the PRC government's surveillance and data collection practices.

- The PRC government embedded the "core values of Socialism" alongside "society's morals and ethics" into its development of artificial intelligence (AI) by mandating that a type of machine learning systems, known as large language models (LLMs), align with the policies, propaganda, and principal tenets of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and by enforcing censorship using data evaluation standards.
- The PRC's advancements in quantum computing and AI surveillance could pose significant threats to human rights by enabling mass censorship, undermining privacy, and amplifying CCP narratives on human rights, ultimately expanding the government's ability to monitor, manipulate, and suppress dissent.
- The operations of DeepSeek reflected how PRC authorities can use a Chinese AI startup to insert censorship, propaganda, and surveillance into emergent AI technology.

Tibet

- The Commission did not observe any interest from People's Republic of China (PRC) officials in resuming formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama or his representatives. The last round of negotiations was held in January 2010. The Dalai Lama announced that a future reincarnation of the Dalai Lama would be born "in the free world."
- The PRC continued to restrict and seek to control the religious practices of Tibetans, the majority of whom practice Tibetan Buddhism, unduly limiting Tibetans' freedom of religion and belief. The PRC continued to assert control over the process of selection and recognition of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnated teachers, including the Dalai Lama. The National Religious Affairs Administration revised the *Measures on the Management of Tibetan Buddhist Temples,* increasing requirements on monasteries and nunneries to adhere to Chinese Communist Party political doctrine and placing new bureaucratic demands on monastic leadership.
- PRC authorities continued a program of mass expulsions and demolitions, begun in 2016, at Larung Gar Buddhist Academy, a major Tibetan Buddhist educational and training center. In November and December 2024, several hundred officials were stationed at the complex, and authorities pressured monastic residents to leave, ultimately expelling around 1,000 monks and nuns.
- The Commission did not observe reports of Tibetan self-immolations occurring during the 2025 reporting year, the third year since 2021 in which no self-immolations were reported to have occurred. The Commission has observed reports of 154 self-immolations since 2009 that were due to political or religious issues in Tibetan areas.
- PRC officials took steps this past year to further restrict the space for independent Tibetan education, ordering the temporary closure of at least one major non-state Tibetan school and forcing hundreds of young Tibetan novice monks to leave monastery-affiliated schools and instead enroll at state-run residential schools.

• In contravention of international human rights standards, PRC officials punished residents of Tibetan areas for the exercise of their protected rights, including expression of religious belief, protest against or criticism of Party or government policy, and free speech and assembly. Notable cases this past year included those of **Jampa Choephel,** a monk sentenced to one year and six months in prison for sharing a speech by the Dalai Lama on social media; **Sherab** (or Jamyang Legshe) and **Gonpo Tsering,** senior monks sentenced to four and three years, respectively, for protesting against construction of a hydroelectric dam; and **Gonpo Namgyal,** a language rights advocate who died due to torture in custody.

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

• During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum published research by scholar Rian Thum showing that PRC officials had perpetrated and continued to perpetrate mass atrocity crimes against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Thum determined that all of the official policies in the XUAR that led to the findings of crimes against humanity and genocide have continued.
• Reports indicated that authorities in the XUAR had recently expanded a system of forced labor that involved Turkic and Muslim individuals, often transferring them from traditional occupations in rural areas into industrial work. In conjunction with forced labor programs targeting rural Uyghurs, authorities have confiscated land held by Uyghur farmers and transferred their land use rights to state-run cooperatives and developers.
• As in previous reporting years, XUAR authorities placed restrictions on Muslims' observance of Ramadan. According to videos posted on Chinese social media platforms, authorities forced residents of various locations in Aksu and Hotan prefectures to engage in forced labor during the Ramadan period in March 2025 in order to prevent them from fasting. In addition, authorities required residents of several towns in Peyziwat (Jiashi) county, Kashgar prefecture, to film themselves eating lunch during the Ramadan period in order to prove that they were not fasting.
• On February 27, 2025, Thai officials deported 40 Uyghur asylum seekers to China, in spite of widespread international concern over their safety and evidence that PRC authorities had imprisoned or tortured 20 Uyghurs who were similarly deported from Cambodia to China in 2009. The men were among 500 Uyghurs who fled the XUAR to Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries around a decade ago in hopes of reaching Türkiye. In November 2024, *Radio Free Asia* reported that 16 of the Uyghurs deported from Cambodia in 2009 were sentenced to lengthy prison terms, and two of the deportees died in prison.
• In February 2024, Chinese officials sent 22-year-old **Abdureqip Rahman,** an ethnic Uyghur, to Kucha (Kuche) county, Aksu prefecture, XUAR, from Cambodia, where he had fled in

hopes of ultimately seeking asylum in the United States. In spite of U.N. officials' attempts to assist him, in January 2024, Abdureqip Rahman was first held in custody by Cambodian authorities and then transferred to the custody of PRC authorities in Cambodia, before being sent to Kucha on February 1. Abdureqip Rahman's whereabouts remained unknown as of December 2024.

- Authorities in the XUAR used surveillance technology and other methods to maintain control over Turkic and Muslim residents. Methods used included an online security operation in the summer of 2024; requirements in Kashgar and Hotan prefectures for Uyghurs to promptly report the arrival of guests to their home to the police; a winter security campaign in the runup to the Spring Festival in early 2025; and the re-detention of Uyghurs who had previously been detained, including businessmen, philanthropists, and people who had traveled abroad.

Hong Kong and Macau

- Since the 2019 pro-democracy protests, Hong Kong authorities have used national security laws to suppress and prevent all forms of political dissent. In 2024, 47 pro-democracy activists were convicted of subversion for organizing an unofficial primary election. A law passed in March 2024, the *Safeguarding National Security Ordinance,* introduced harsher penalties for offenses such as sedition and expanded the scope of punishable activities. By early 2025, hundreds had been arrested under national security charges, with many serving prison sentences. High-profile cases included the ongoing trial of publisher **Jimmy Lai**, charged with collusion with foreign forces, and the sentencing of former *Stand News* editors for publishing content critical of the government.
- More civil society organizations disbanded amid legal and political pressure. The Democratic Party, once Hong Kong's largest opposition party, began dissolution procedures after being approached by representatives allegedly linked to the PRC government. A religious group focusing on political engagement likewise announced disbandment, saying that it could no longer carry out its mission in the current social environment.
- Government control over the social work profession tightened, as the Legislative Council changed the law to consolidate control by government appointees and to disqualify social workers convicted of national security offenses, some of whom were present at protests in 2019 monitoring police conduct.
- Media restrictions continued, as journalists were deterred from advocating for press freedom by the threat of job termination. The Hong Kong government also denied entry to foreign journalists, a practice that could be regularized, as a law was passed that requires airlines to submit preboarding passenger information for screening purposes.
- Hong Kong authorities increasingly restricted the flow of information, including through censorship, with extraterritorial effect, as shown in their attempt to block the overseas publication *Flow HK*. A new law taking effect in 2026 will give police

broad powers over designated private tech companies, raising concerns about privacy, corporate autonomy, and the government's access to data, including data stored overseas.
• The Macau government implemented extensive security measures for a visit by PRC leader Xi Jinping in December 2024, and reports of consequent disruptions were censored. In addition to celebrating the 25th anniversary of Macau's reunification with China, Xi also inaugurated the new chief executive, Sam Hou Fai, who was elected in an uncontested election and whose judicial rulings in his former capacity as a top judge contributed to the restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE U.S. AND GLOBALLY

• 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."

Political Prisoner Database

The Commission's 2025 Annual Report provides information about Chinese political and religious prisoners[1] in the context of specific human rights and rule-of-law abuses. Many of the abuses result from the Chinese Communist Party and government's application of policies and laws. The Commission relies on the Political Prisoner Database (PPD), a publicly available online database maintained by the Commission, for its research, including the preparation of the Annual Report, and routinely uses the database as a resource to prepare summaries of information about and support advocacy for political and religious prisoners for Members of Congress and Administration officials. The Commission invites the public to read about issue-specific Chinese political imprisonment in sections of this Annual Report, and to access and make use of the PPD at *https://www.ppdcecc.gov*.

The Commission seeks to provide users with prisoner information that is reliable and up to date. Commission staff members seek to provide objective analysis of information about individual prisoners and about events and trends that drive political and religious imprisonment in China, and work on an ongoing basis to add, maintain, and update records of political and religious imprisonment in the PPD. Each prisoner's record describes the type of human rights violation by Chinese authorities connected to their detention. These include, among others, violations of the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of association, and freedom of expression, including the freedom to advocate peaceful social or political change and to criticize government policy or government officials.

When the PPD was first launched, the Dui Hua Foundation, based in San Francisco, and the former Tibet Information Network, based in London, shared their extensive experience and data on political and religious prisoners in China with the Commission to help establish the database. The Commission relies on its own staff research for prisoner information, as well as on information provided by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), groups that specialize in promoting human rights and opposing political and religious imprisonment, and other public sources of information.

Political Prisoners

Overview. As of June 30, 2025, the PPD contained 11,262 records of political or religious prisoners in China. Of those records, 2,755 are considered "active detentions," referring to records of political and religious prisoners currently known or believed to be detained or imprisoned, or under coercive controls. There are 8,507 records of prisoners who are known or believed to have been released, who were executed, who died while imprisoned or soon after release, or who escaped. The Commission notes that there are considerably more cases of current political and religious detention in China than are contained in the PPD.

Ethnic Group. Of the active detentions, 1,706 contained information on the prisoner's reported or presumed ethnicity. Of those, 788 were Tibetan, 507 were Uyghur, 315 were Han, 39 were Kazakh, 27 were Mongol, 9 were Hui, and 21 were of other ethnic groups. Of the 1,049 prisoners without recorded ethnicities, many were likely Han.

Religion. Of the 2,755 records of prisoners known or believed to be detained, 1,671 contained information on the prisoner's religious affiliation. 672 were Tibetan Buddhists, 485 were Falun Gong practitioners, 246 were Muslim, 83 were Protestants, 38 were members of the Church of Almighty God (also known as Eastern Lightning), 22 were adherents of Mentu Hui, 18 were Jehovah's Witnesses, 17 were Yi Guan Dao members, and 15 were Catholic.

Sex. Of the 2,755 records of prisoners known or believed to be detained, 1,714 were of male prisoners, 756 were of female prisoners, and 285 records did not contain information on the prisoner's sex.

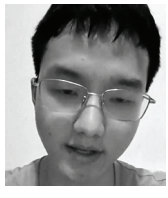
Sentencing. Of the 2,755 records of prisoners known or believed to be detained, 1,429 pertain to individuals serving prison sentences. Of those 1,429 prisoners, 1,335 were serving fixed-term sentences, 63 were serving life sentences, 24 were sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve, and 7 were sentenced to death.

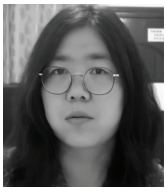
Place of Detention. The table below shows the number of active detentions in each province-level administrative division:

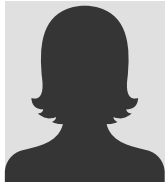
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region	618	Jiangsu province	44
Sichuan province	407	Shanxi province	42
Tibet Autonomous Region	255	Jiangxi province	41
Guangdong province	167	Jilin province	39
Qinghai province	147	Shaanxi province	33
Gansu province	86	Shanghai municipality	27
Heilongjiang province	80	Fujian province	27
Beijing municipality	79	Yunnan province	26
Liaoning province	74	Zhejiang province	22
Hong Kong SAR	72	Chongqing municipality	19
Shandong province	70	Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region	15
Henan province	67	Tianjin municipality	13
Hebei province	66	Guizhou province	12
Hubei province	55	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	8
Anhui province	52	Hainan province	1
Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	46	Macau SAR	0
Hunan province	45		

Political Prisoner Cases of Concern

Members of Congress and the Administration are encouraged to consult the Commission's Political Prisoner Database (PPD) for credible and up-to-date information on individual prisoners or groups of prisoners. The Cases of Concern in the Commission's 2025 Annual Report highlight a small number of individuals whom Chinese authorities have detained or sentenced for peacefully exercising their internationally recognized human rights. Members of Congress and the Administration are urged to advocate for these individuals in meetings with Chinese government and Communist Party officials. For more information on these cases and other cases raised in the Annual Report, see the Commission's Political Prisoner Database.

Name PPD Record No.	**Case Summary (as of June 30, 2025)**
Peng Lifa **彭立发** 2022-00176 **Mei Shilin** **梅世林** 2025-00043 **Fang Yirong** **方艺融** 2024-00158 	**Date of Detention:** Peng: October 13, 2022; Mei: April 2025; Fang: August 2024 **Place of Detention:** Peng: unknown location believed to be in Beijing municipality; Mei: unknown location believed to be in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province; Fang: unknown location believed to be in Loudi municipality, Hunan province **Charge(s):** All: Unknown **Status:** All: Detained **Context:** On October 13, 2022, days before the beginning of the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Peng, also known online as Peng Zaizhou, hung banners from Beijing's Sitong Bridge calling for PRC leader Xi Jinping to step down, criticizing the official response to COVID-19, and calling for elections. Following Peng's detention, information on his case was unclear, including his whereabouts, his condition and treatment in custody, and what charges, if any, he was facing. In April 2025, authorities in or around Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province, detained Mei Shilin following the April 15 appearance of banners hung from a road overpass in Chengdu critical of Chinese Communist Party rule and calling for political reform; shortly after news emerged online about the protest, Mei was confirmed as the one responsible. Mei reportedly had been involved in a labor dispute with a former employer and had sought help in vain from Chengdu officials to resolve the dispute. On an unknown date between July 30 and August 3, 2024, police detained Fang Yirong after he staged a solo protest during which he demanded freedom and democracy and hung a banner on a bridge in Xinhua county, Loudi municipality, Hunan province. Inspired by the "White Paper" movement, a series of protests beginning in late November 2022 in reaction to the government's harsh zero-COVID measures, Fang began to engage in activism, advocating for democratic reforms.

Name PPD Record No.	Case Summary (as of June 30, 2025)
Gao Zhen **高铖** 2024-00161 	**Date of Detention:** August 26, 2024 **Place of Detention:** Sanhe PSB Detention Center, Sanhe city, Langfang municipality, Hebei province **Charge(s):** Insulting or slandering heroes and martyrs **Status:** Detained, awaiting trial **Context:** On August 26, 2024, police officers in Sanhe city, Langfang municipality, Hebei province, took into custody artist Gao Zhen at his Sanhe residence and studio. Police searched his studio, installed surveillance cameras, and seized artwork, books, and computer hard drives. Authorities held Gao at the Sanhe PSB Detention Center on suspicion of "insulting or slandering heroes and martyrs," reportedly in connection with his artwork, including on the theme of reassessing the Cultural Revolution.
Zhang Zhan **张展** 2020-00175 	**Date of Detention:** August 25, 2024 **Place of Detention:** Pudong New District PSB Detention Center, Shanghai municipality **Charge(s):** Picking quarrels and provoking trouble **Status:** Detained, awaiting trial **Context:** On August 25, 2024, public security officials from Shanghai municipality took citizen journalist Zhang Zhan into custody in Zhang's hometown of Xianyang municipality, Shaanxi province. Shortly thereafter, Shanghai police took Zhang to Shanghai, where she lives, and held her at the Pudong New District PSB Detention Center. Shanghai police criminally detained her on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." Prior to her detention, Zhang had traveled to Gansu province to advocate for recently detained rights defender Zhang Pancheng. **Additional Information:** Zhang Zhan was previously detained from 2020 to 2024 in connection with her work documenting and reporting on the COVID-19 epidemic in Wuhan municipality, Hubei province, on social media. The Pudong New District People's Court sentenced Zhang to four years in prison for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."
Chen Mingyu **陈明玉** 2025-00105 	**Date of Detention:** July 4, 2024 **Place of Detention:** Yubei District PSB Detention Center, Chongqing municipality **Charge(s):** Picking quarrels and provoking trouble **Status:** Sentenced to two years **Context:** Following a May 20, 2024, dinner gathering in Chongqing municipality where rights defenders celebrated the inauguration of Lai Ching-te as President of the Republic of China, Chongqing police questioned or took into custody over 20 attendees. On July 4, Yubei district police detained Chen Mingyu in connection with her attendance at the dinner, accusing her of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" and holding her at the Yubei PSB Detention Center. On March 26, 2025, the Yubei District People's Court sentenced Chen to two years and six months in prison.

Name PPD Record No.	**Case Summary (as of June 30, 2025)**
Xin Ruoyu **辛若雨** 2025-00104 	**Date of Detention:** July 2024 **Place of Detention:** Unknown location believed to be in Shandong province **Charge(s):** Unknown **Status:** Detained extralegally **Context:** In or around late July 2024, public security officials from Shandong province took Xin Ruoyu into custody in Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province. Authorities reportedly detained Xin, a mother of one in her thirties, due to her work in developing a Christian app that provided users access to hymns and worship music along with a library of devotional material. Xin was reportedly held at a "black jail," an extralegal detention facility, believed to be in Shandong province.
Zhao Ying **赵颖** 2025-00103 	**Date of Detention:** April 26, 2021 **Place of Detention:** Tianhe District PSB Detention Center, Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province **Charge(s):** Unknown **Status:** Sentenced to three years, six months **Context:** On April 26, 2021, police in Tianhe district, Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province, detained Zhao Ying, accusing her of distributing Falun Gong materials. Being over 80 years old, Zhao was released on bail on May 11, after the Tianhe PSB Detention Center twice refused to admit her due to high blood pressure. Authorities indicted Zhao in February 2023 and detained her again on August 1, 2024. On October 29, the Haizhu District People's Court sentenced her to three years and six months in prison. Zhao has serious health conditions, including bladder cancer, a heart condition, and diabetes.
Ikram Nurmehmet **ئىكرام نۇرمەمەت** **伊克拉木•努尔买买提** 2024-00172 	**Date of Detention:** May 29, 2023 **Place of Detention:** Urumqi No. 1 PSB Detention Center, Urumqi municipality, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region **Charge(s):** Unknown charge related to "separatism" and "terrorism" **Status:** Sentenced to six years, six months **Context:** On May 29, 2023, public security officials in Beijing municipality took Uyghur filmmaker Ikram Nurmehmet from his home and flew him to Urumqi municipality, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). He faced trial at the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court on October 27, 2023, alongside four friends with whom he had studied abroad in Türkiye. The court sentenced the five men in January 2024; Ikram Nurmehmet was sentenced to six years and six months in prison. **Additional Information:** At trial, Ikram Nurmehmet stated that he was held in a dark room for 20 days, tortured, and forced to make false confessions while in detention. Authorities cited his false confession obtained through torture and his Turkish residence permit as evidence against him.

Name PPD Record No.	Case Summary (as of June 30, 2025)
Xie Yang **谢阳** 2015-00295 	**Date of Detention:** January 11, 2022 **Place of Detention:** Changsha No. 1 PSB Detention Center, Changsha municipality, Hunan province **Charge(s):** Inciting subversion of state power **Status:** Formally arrested, awaiting trial **Context:** On January 11, 2022, domestic security protection officials in Changsha municipality, Hunan province, detained lawyer Xie Yang after he posted online a video of himself calling for the release of Li Tiantian, a Hunan teacher whom officials forcibly committed to a psychiatric institution. Changsha officials held Xie at the Changsha No. 1 PSB Detention Center, on suspicion of "inciting subversion of state power" and "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" and on February 17 formally arrested Xie for "inciting subversion of state power." **Additional Information:** Changsha officials previously detained Xie in July 2015 as part of the "709" crackdown on rights lawyers and advocates, holding him on suspicion of "disrupting court order" and "inciting subversion of state power." During Xie's time in detention, authorities tortured him through beatings, sleep deprivation, death threats, and denial of proper food, water, and medical care.
Yang Chih-yuan **楊智淵** 2024-00169 	**Date of Detention:** August 3, 2022 **Place of Detention:** Wenzhou municipality, Zhejiang province **Charge(s):** Separatism **Status:** Sentenced to nine years **Context:** State security police in Wenzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, detained Taiwan political activist Yang Chih-yuan on August 3, 2022, accusing Yang of promoting Taiwan independence and engaging in "separatist" activities. The next day, authorities placed Yang under "residential surveillance at a designated location" and formally arrested him on suspicion of "separatism" on April 25, 2023. On August 26, 2024, the Wenzhou Intermediate People's Court sentenced Yang to nine years in prison and three years' deprivation of political rights for "separatism." **Additional Information:** Yang's alleged "separatist" activities took place between 2008 and 2020 while he was still based in Taiwan. He is the first Taiwanese national to be charged with "separatism" under Article 103 of the PRC Criminal Law.
Sherab **(Jamyang Legshe)** **ཤེས་རབ་** **(འཇམ་དབྱངས་ལེགས་བཤད་)** **西饶** **(降央列谢)** 2025-00072 	**Date of Detention:** February 2024 **Place of Detention:** Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province **Charge(s):** Unknown **Status:** Sentenced to four years **Context:** In February 2024, police officials in Dege (or Derge; Chinese: Dege) county, Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province, detained hundreds of Tibetan protesters, including monks from nearby monasteries and local laypeople, after thousands of residents protested against the planned construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Drichu (Jinsha) river which would flood six monasteries and two villages in the area. In June 2025, reports emerged that authorities had sentenced two senior monks from the threatened Yena Monastery. Sherab (also reported as Jamyang Legshe) received a four-year prison sentence, and Gonpo Tsering a three-year sentence.

Name PPD Record No.	Case Summary (as of June 30, 2025)
Gulshan Abbas گۈلشەن ئابباس 古丽先•阿巴斯 2021-00002 	**Date of Detention:** September 11, 2018 **Place of Detention:** Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region **Charge(s):** Participating in a terrorist organization, aiding terrorist activities, and gathering a crowd to disrupt social order **Status:** Sentenced to 20 years **Context:** Authorities initially detained retired Uyghur doctor Gulshan Abbas in Urumqi municipality, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, in September 2018, after her sister Rushan Abbas spoke at a think tank in Washington, D.C., about Uyghur rights issues. Family members surmised the detention was likely in retaliation for her sister's human rights advocacy. In December 2020, the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that she had received a sentence of 20 years in prison. Gulshan Abbas reportedly suffers from high blood pressure, migraines, back problems, and osteoporosis.

Notes to Section II—Political Prisoner Database

[1]The Commission treats as a political prisoner an individual detained or imprisoned for exercising their human rights under international law, such as peaceful assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of association, and freedom of expression, including the freedom to advocate peaceful social or political change, and to criticize government policy or government officials. (This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.) In most cases, prisoners documented in the PPD were detained or imprisoned for attempting to exercise rights guaranteed to them by China's Constitution and law, or by international human rights standards, or both. Chinese security, prosecutorial, and judicial officials sometimes seek to distract attention from the political or religious nature of imprisonment by convicting a de facto political or religious prisoner under the pretext of having committed a generic crime. In such cases, defendants typically deny guilt, but officials may attempt to coerce confessions using torture and other forms of abuse, and standards of evidence are poor. A defendant may authorize someone to provide their legal counsel and defense, as the *PRC Criminal Procedure Law* guarantees in Article 33, yet officials may deny the counsel adequate access to the defendant, restrict or deny the counsel's access to evidence, and not provide the counsel adequate time to prepare a defense.

General Recommendations to Congress and the Administration

The Commission makes the following recommendations for Administration and congressional action.

CREATE A STRATEGY TO ADDRESS TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

Transnational repression—including that being perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) government—is a direct threat to national sovereignty, civil liberties, and the safety of persons residing in the United States and other countries. 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 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 PRC 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.

○ 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.

STOP SEAFOOD IMPORTS TAINTED WITH FORCED LABOR

The U.S. should stop imports of PRC seafood caught or processed with forced labor to protect American consumers from complicity in human rights abuse, to defend the domestic fishing industry from unfair competition, and to pressure the PRC and corporations to end exploitative practices that violate international labor standards.

Congress should—

• **Pass the FISH Act (S. 688)** to target harmful fishing practices and forced labor in the PRC seafood industry.

• **Restrict Department of Defense Procurement of PRC Seafood Imports** and require reporting on the national security implications of federal procurement of seafood procurement in China, which are provisions of the *Uyghur Genocide Accountability and Sanctions Act* (S. 2560 / H.R. 4830).

• **Urge the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Federal Procurement Policy** to issue clear guidance to all federal agencies to prohibit procurement of goods made with forced labor, particularly seafood processed in China or caught via "illegal, unreported, and unregulated" (IUU) fishing.

• **Direct the Secretary of State and the U.S. Director of National Intelligence** to report on the amount of foreign currency earned by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from North Koreans working in China and on the amount of seafood processed in China that skirts U.S. sanctions on Russian seafood imports.

The Administration should—

• **Implement Executive Order No. 14276, "Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness," by—**

○ Issuing an interagency Seafood Trade Strategy to combat IUU fishing, forced labor, and unfair trade practices;

○ Establishing a consolidated blacklist of vessels engaged in IUU fishing and Chinese facilities implicated in forced labor, aligning this list with the *Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act*

(UFLPA) Entity List, with enforcement of the *Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act* (CAATSA), and with Withhold Release Orders (WROs);
○ Committing sufficient resources to law enforcement investigations to explore additional WROs for Chinese fleets engaged in IUU fishing and connected to the seafood processing industries of Shandong and Liaoning provinces, given their reliance on the forced labor of Uyghurs and North Koreans and the likely processing of banned Russian seafood;
○ Supporting action to prohibit the procurement and commissary sales by the Department of Defense of seafood imported from China; and,
○ Strengthening enforcement cooperation with Canada, Mexico, and key Indo-Pacific allies, including South Korea and Japan, to improve data sharing and to align blacklists, enforcement actions, and port control.

• **Use the authorities available in the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act (Public Law No. 114-122)**, including sanctions and the freezing of assets of any person or company in the PRC that employs North Korean labor, particularly targeting the PRC seafood industry.

FREE UNJUSTLY DETAINED AMERICANS IN CHINA

The PRC unjustly detains more Americans than any other country, using arbitrarily enforced criminal charges and "exit bans" to restrict the liberty of Americans on spurious grounds and gain diplomatic bargaining leverage.

Congress should—

• **Pass the Nelson Wells Jr. and Dawn Michelle Hunt Unjustly Detained in China Act (H.R. 5491) and the Countering Wrongful Detention Act (S. 1478 / H.R. 4179)** to create additional diplomatic resources and accountability measures to address the PRC's unjust detention and mistreatment of Americans in China.

• **Task the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC)** (created by 22 U.S.C. § 1741b) to include the PRC's use of exit bans as a form of hostage taking in its annual reporting.

• **Conduct Regular Hearings on U.S. efforts** to secure the release of unjustly detained nationals and to deter future abuses.

The Administration should—

• **Expand Multilateral Coordination** by convening a multilateral "Wrongful Detention Working Group" with G7 and other allies to align case management, consular affairs demarches, and intelligence on detention tactics.

• **Enhance Travel Advisories and Risk Assessments** by creating an "Unjustly Detained Risk" indicator, clearly distinguishing arbitrary detention threats from general safety concerns.

• **Nominate a Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs** as stipulated in the *Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act* (22 U.S.C. § 1741a).

• **Provide Regular Congressional Briefings on Detentions** used to affect U.S. policy or intimidate U.S. citizens, including more

detailed reporting on the PRC's use of exit bans and U.S. efforts to end this practice.

STRENGTHEN ENFORCEMENT OF THE UYGHUR FORCED LABOR PREVENTION ACT (UFLPA; PUBLIC LAW NO. 117-78)

The PRC's continued use of forced labor—particularly of Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities—in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) not only sustains grave human rights abuses but also creates unfair competitive advantage for imports entering U.S. markets. Building on the UFLPA and the establishment of the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF), the Administration and Congress should take the following actions.

Congress should—

- **Authorize Funding for Enforcement Technologies** to assist with the enhanced adoption of DNA-origin testing, isotopic analysis, blockchain supply-chain mapping, and machine-learning screening to flag XUAR-sourced goods—even in low-value parcels.
- **Give the FLETF Exemption from the Administrative Procedure Act** notice and comment requirements to protect sources and methods of their investigation into UFLPA forced labor entities similar to those given the Bureau of Industry and Security under Section 1762 of the *Export Control Reform Act* (50 U.S.C. 4821).
- **Mandate Corporate Accountability in Federal Procurement** by requiring all federal agencies to certify that contracts (particularly for vehicles, electronics, seafood, and textiles) contain no inputs sourced from forced labor regions, backed by full supply chain audits and third-party verification.
- **Request a Government Accountability Office Study** to evaluate whether the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission is effectively enforcing the reporting requirements under the *Securities Exchange Act of 1934* and the *Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act* (Public Law No. 116-222), specifically regarding issuers' disclosure of transactions with Chinese companies listed on the Treasury Department's Non-SDN Chinese Military-Industrial Complex Companies List (NS-CMIC List), on the Commerce Department's Entity and Unverified Lists, or those implicated in forced labor or sanctioned for human rights abuses.
- **Hold UFLPA Oversight Hearings** with FLETF agencies to ensure ongoing visibility into forced labor enforcement resource allocations, stakeholder engagement, enforcement priorities, entity list expansion, staffing, and petition responses.

The Administration should—

- **Use Appropriated Funds for "Entity-List Targeting"** by employing the $5 million allocated by Congress in FY 2025 for technology acquisition to aid in UFLPA Entity List targeting, including database creation, secure compartmented information facility system updates, and other contract support.
- **Impose Targeted Sanctions for Forced Labor Complicity** using the sanctions authorities under Section 6 of the *Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act* (Public Law No. 116-145) on entities complicit in forced labor within global supply chains including in the seafood

industry, aluminum industry, and automotive industry, among others.

• **Accelerate Entity-List Designation** to ensure that enforcement keeps pace with identified risks, leveraging existing Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF) research to aggressively add companies, government bodies, and trade intermediaries with verifiable links to forced labor operations in the XUAR or upstream supply networks.

• **Expand Enforcement of Executive Order No. 14256** by directing that FLETF target international traders who use transshipment, origin masking, mislabeling, and other tactics to circumvent the elimination of the de minimis exception for small parcel and e-commerce shipments originating from China, particularly the XUAR.

• **Send Fast Fashion Retailers a Clear Message** by evaluating whether companies like Temu and SHEIN—if vertically integrated in manufacturing, sourcing, or warehousing—warrant inclusion on the UFLPA Entity List to clarify their legal obligations and potential liabilities related to forced labor.

• **Enhance Criminal Enforcement** by empowering the Department of Justice's Trade Fraud Task Force to investigate and prosecute UFLPA violations, particularly in sectors known for forced labor risk or deliberate transshipment schemes.

• **Promote Global Adoption of UFLPA-Style Measures** using bilateral and multilateral forums to encourage allies—especially in the G7, USMCA, and APEC—to enact comparable forced labor prohibitions and entity listing regimes and establish formal channels to share intelligence with partner governments to prevent transshipment and close enforcement gaps.

• **Consider Expanding Forced Labor Enforcement Efforts**, to further target the following sectors:

  ○ Seafood: IUU fishing fleets and PRC companies processing seafood caught by Russian fishing vessels or using North Korean labor; and

  ○ Electric Batteries: The import of lithium-ion batteries made in China produced with cobalt mined and processed using forced or child labor in the Democratic Republic of Congo and lithium mined by Chinese companies using state-sponsored forced labor transfer schemes.

PURSUE ACCOUNTABLITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE AND CULTURAL ERASURE

Congress and the Administration should take urgent and coordinated action to confront atrocity crimes and other egregious human rights abuses perpetrated by the PRC against Uyghurs, Tibetans, ethnic Mongols, Hong Kongers, and other ethnic and religious communities. These include genocide, torture, arbitrary detention, systematic cultural erasure, forced assimilation, and transnational repression.

Congress should—

• **Pass Key Legislation** such as the *Uyghur Genocide Accountability and Sanctions Act* (S. 2560 / H.R. 4830), the *Uyghur Poli-*

cy Act (H.R. 2635 / S. 1542), and the *Southern Mongolian Human Rights Policy Act* (S. 288) in order to expand accountability tools and elevate U.S. policy responses to atrocity crimes and PRC actions that endanger cultures.

• **Request a Sanctions Evaluation** from the Treasury Department on the enforcement and impact of Global Magnitsky sanctions imposed on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC).

• **Create an Endangered Voices of East Asia Fund** to support the preservation of at-risk languages and traditions—such as Tibetan, Uyghur, Mongolian, and Cantonese—through educational initiatives, academic research, and documentation of efforts by the PRC to suppress cultural identity.

• **Consider Legislation to Increase Financial Transparency** for nonprofit organizations that fail to disclose financial interests in PRC entities tied to forced labor, organ harvesting, other gross human rights abuses, or China's civil-military fusion efforts.

The Administration should—

• **Appoint a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues**, as mandated by the *Tibetan Policy Act*, as amended by the *Tibetan Policy and Support Act* (Public Law No. 116-260) at a senior level to coordinate U.S. Government policies, programs, and projects concerning Tibet.

• **Produce a Report Identifying all PRC Public Security and Police Entities** that can be considered by the Bureau of Industry and Security for addition to the Entity List, blocking their access to U.S. biometric and surveillance technologies.

• **Use authorities and funding provided by the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (Public Law No. 116-260)** to preserve the cultural, religious, and linguistic identity of Tibetan communities both inside China and in exile.

• **Advocate for a U.N. Security Council session,** through an open debate or Arria-formula briefing, to address the security risks posed by gross human rights violations in the XUAR and Tibet.

• **Elevate the State Department Travel Advisory** for the XUAR and Tibetan regions to discourage Americans from participating in state-managed tourism that may legitimize or facilitate atrocity crimes.

END FORCED ORGAN HARVESTING

Testimony and evidence provided to Congress include troubling allegations that the PRC engages in systematic and illegal harvesting of organs—in blatant violation of human rights and medical ethics—including by targeting specific ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities held in detention.

Congress should—

• **Pass the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act (H.R. 1503)** to expand annual reporting by the State Department on forced organ harvesting globally and to give needed authorities to stop "organ tourism."

• **Ask the State Department to Offer Rewards** for credible evidence that will deter and disrupt the market for illegally pro-

cured organs and hold accountable those responsible for the practice of forced organ harvesting.

The Administration should—

• **Deny U.S. Entry Visas** for physicians and researchers known to be involved in forced organ harvesting activities and research and announce such decisions publicly.

• **Pursue Accountability Actions** by sanctioning entities complicit in forced organ harvesting or illegal organ trafficking in the XUAR and add them to the Department of the Treasury's "Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List," which would prevent financial transactions with U.S. companies or research institutions.

• **Report on Federal Funding** provided to PRC entities involved in unethical organ transplantation practices, including those that violate human subject research protections outlined in the Common Rule and the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) policy on human subject protection and publicly announce the prohibition of such entities from receiving future NIH and National Science Foundation grants.

DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS IN HONG KONG

The Administration should fully and consistently apply the sanctions authorities provided under the *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act* (Public Law No. 116-76) and the *Hong Kong Autonomy Act* (Public Law No. 116-149) to hold accountable government officials, prosecutors, judges, police, and others complicit in the political persecution of Hong Kongers and the systematic erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy.

Congress should—

• **Pass the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Certification Act (H.R. 2661)** to determine if Hong Kong's three U.S.-based offices should have diplomatic immunity and other privileges.

• **Pass the Hong Kong Judicial Sanctions Act (S. 1755 / H.R. 733)** to mandate stronger sanctions on officials responsible for undermining democracy, human rights, and due process.

• **Pass the Stop CCP Money Laundering Act (S. 1339),** which requires a determination on whether Hong Kong is a jurisdiction of primary money laundering concern and a report on whether U.S. and foreign financial institutions operating in Hong Kong are capable of preventing the transfer of products, technology, and funds intended to evade U.S. sanctions.

• **Remove the Sunset Date on Sales of Police Equipment** to permanently prohibit the sale of U.S. police and crowd-control equipment to the Hong Kong Police Force, ensuring that American technology is not used to suppress peaceful dissent.

• **Support Secure Digital Infrastructure** to protect Hong Kongers from transnational repression by digital means, archive banned books and digital content, and facilitate diaspora-led news outlets and investigative journalism.

The Administration should—

• **Use Existing Sanctions** authorities provided under the *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act* (Public Law No. 116-76) and the *Hong Kong Autonomy Act* (Public Law No. 116-149) to hold accountable government officials, prosecutors, judges, police, and foreign financial institutions for the systematic erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy and fundamental freedoms.

• **Coordinate Sanctions with the United Kingdom** and other like-minded allies to maximize diplomatic pressure and visibility.

• **Issue a Financial Institutions Report** as required by Section 5(b) of the *Hong Kong Autonomy Act* (Public Law No. 116-149), as the last such report was issued in 2022.

• **Provide Regular Briefings on Jimmy Lai** and engage in other diplomatic efforts to free Hong Kong political prisoners such as **Joshua Wong, Chow Hang-tung, Gwyneth Ho, Benny Tai,** and **Lee Cheuk-yan.**

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—

• **Stand Up an Interagency Influence Hub** by tasking the State Department to chair a "Global PRC Influence Observatory," drawing in DNI, DOJ, Commerce, and civil society liaisons.

• **Require the Director of National Intelligence to create a semiannual open access assessment** on the impact of PRC malign influence by region (Africa, Latin America, Pacific Islands, etc.) and analyze consequences for U.S. security, human rights, and economic interests.

• **Deepen Linguistic and Cultural Expertise** by scaling up Mandarin Chinese, Uyghur, and Tibetan-language immersion programs in U.S. high schools and colleges, leveraging the U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative as a model.

• **Safeguard Vulnerable Diasporas** by directing DHS to report annually on efforts to shield diaspora communities and human rights NGOs from PRC digital harassment—detailing tool distribution, training sessions, and incident response metrics.

• **Pass the SHIELD Against CCP Act (H.R. 708 / S. 1625)** to form a working group at DHS tasked with improving cybersecurity, protecting critical infrastructure, and fighting threats to democratic institutions posed by the CCP.

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 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 FBI'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 (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to individuals, NGOs, faith organizations, and ethnic community centers at highest risk of PRC surveillance and digital intimidation in the United States.

DEFEAT DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM

The PRC attempts to export censorship, surveillance, and information manipulation tactics to undermine democratic institutions and enable the repression of dissent at home and abroad, including the intimidation of U.S. citizens, residents, and businesses.

The Administration should—

• **Create a "Digital Freedom Task Force"** charged with coordinating U.S. agencies, Congress, civil society, and industry partners to undermine the PRC's Great Firewall, disrupt its export of surveillance and censorship tools, and safeguard global internet openness.
• **Brief Congress on a "China Censorship Monitor and Action Group"** strategy to address PRC-directed censorship in the United States and enhance the U.S. Government's response to digital authoritarianism.
• **Create Cyber Resilience Programs** that run webinars and disseminate toolkits that ensure that activists, dissidents, and diaspora know and can use vetted secure communications and anti-hacking tools available through CISA at DHS.
• **Scale Digital Freedom Programs** by leveraging the Countering the PRC's Malign Influence Fund to:

  ○ Support investigative journalism in countries hosting Belt and Road Initiative projects, exposing corruption, malign influence tactics, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risks;
  ○ Advance anti-circumvention technologies through seed grants for research and development of next-generation platforms, including decentralized VPNs and peer-to-peer mesh networks and integrate these tools with public diplomacy efforts and a modernized international broadcasting architecture; and
  ○ Strengthen independent organizations dedicated to overcoming the censorship of the PRC's Great Firewall.

ADVOCATE FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS

Advocating for political prisoners serves U.S. interests by targeting PRC efforts to censor independent thought and export repression beyond its borders—including against U.S. citizens and residents. Through consistent and persistent advocacy for political prisoners,

coupled with public diplomacy efforts about political prisoners, the United States champions fundamental freedoms that have made America strong and prosperous and empowers local actors who often support freedom, transparency, and values aligned with long-term American strategic interests. Experience also shows that diplomatic efforts for individual prisoners can lead to better treatment in detention, reduced sentences, or even release.

Congress should—

- **Pass the FREEDOM for Gao Zhisheng Act (H.R. 5303)** to focus diplomatic advocacy and accountability efforts for arbitrarily detained Chinese rights defenders.
- **Engage PRC Officials on Political Prisoners** using the information compiled in the Commission's Political Prisoner Database, an authoritative resource on political and religious detention in China and Hong Kong.
- **"Adopt" Political Prisoners** through resources provided by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's Defending Freedoms Project.

The Administration should—

- **Maintain Comprehensive and Regularly Updated Prisoner Lists**, drawing on the CECC's Political Prisoner Database and other credible sources. These lists should include detailed case information to enable Administration officials—at the highest levels and in every appropriate engagement—to raise specific cases directly with PRC counterparts.
- **Designate a Senior Official** within the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to assist the families of political prisoners and coordinate the diplomatic efforts of the regional bureaus across the U.S. Government and with international partners, aimed at securing the release of political and religious prisoners and ending the PRC's abusive use of exit bans.

EVALUATE HUMAN RIGHTS DIPLOMACY

Given the creation of a new Bureau of Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom and plans for regional bureaus to assume responsibility for human rights diplomacy, the Administration should issue a policy directive affirming that defending human rights and democracy, opposing forced labor in supply chains, advocating for political prisoners, and supporting open access to information are integral to the mission strategies of all U.S. embassies and any U.S. Government entity or agency engaging with the People's Republic of China.

Congress should—

- **Require a Human Rights Strategy,** and if necessary fund, a State Department report that translates recent reorganizations into clear policy, resourcing, performance, and accountability measures for all U.S. country strategies and diplomatic engagements with the PRC, including:
    - ○ Integration of human rights and international religious freedom diplomacy into Integrated Country Strategies, Joint

Regional Strategies, Mission Resource Requests, and security assistance/arms transfer processes;
○ Interagency coordination with DHS, Treasury, Labor, and Commerce on forced labor, sanctions and visa restrictions, transnational repression, and open information/anti-censorship efforts;
○ Workforce measures—mandatory training, promotion and awards precepts, performance metrics—and public diplomacy requirements; and
○ A strategic impact analysis of any reductions to programs that assist human rights defenders, produce research and data on abuses, or document forced labor in the PRC.

• **Require a Government Accountability Office Multi-Year Performance Audit** that:

○ Evaluates initial progress in integrating human rights diplomacy across regional bureaus and measures the effects of foreign assistance program cuts on U.S. interests; and
○ In subsequent reports, assesses the effectiveness of efforts to mitigate forced labor, address unjust detentions and atrocities, and tackle other priority concerns; examines the impact of training standards and incentives tied to human rights tradecraft; and analyzes the national security implications of changes to foreign assistance and public diplomacy programs for overall human rights goals.

The Administration should—

• **Regularly Brief Members of Congress** on its PRC human rights strategy, including concrete developments on forced labor, the unjust detention of Americans, transnational repression, mitigating ongoing human rights abuse, including genocide, and the strategic impact of foreign assistance programs, including use of the Democracy Fund, the Countering the PRC's Malign Influence Fund, and religious freedom funds to advance U.S. interests.

CREATE A ROBUST PUBLIC DIPLOMACY STRATEGY

The Chinese Communist Party invests heavily to steer global narratives and censor dissenting opinions, integrating state-directed media control, content partnerships, and aggressive information operations into a sophisticated strategic weapon. The U.S. must respond by building out a world-class public diplomacy capability to advance national interests, values, and strategic objectives because truth remains the CCP's greatest vulnerability.

Congress should—

• **Fund International Broadcasting** and innovative digital platforms and new media and provide oversight for a robust public diplomacy strategy that will focus on communicating factual information about U.S. policy and values to foreign audiences, expose the malign activity of authoritarian regimes, and ensure uncensored global access to free and open information, particularly in East Asia, where the news and information services of *Radio Free Asia* and *Voice of America* regularly exposed CCP corruption and human rights abuses in Mandarin, Cantonese, Tibetan and Uyghur.

• **Institutionalize Funding Pathways for Censorship Circumvention Tools** and partnerships that bypass or dismantle the censorship systems of authoritarian regimes and enable access to fact-based content in repressive information environments such as the PRC.

The Administration should—

• **Provide Congress with a Public Diplomacy Strategy** and a timetable for implementing reinvigorated international strategic communications, global messaging, and information operations.

Commission Activity (November 2024–October 2025)

Hearings

- The Preservation of Memory: Combating the CCP's Historical Revisionism and Erasure of Culture (December 2024)
- Stand with Taiwan: Countering the PRC's Political Warfare and Transnational Repression (July 2025)

Commission Analysis

- First Separatism Conviction of a Taiwanese Citizen and Its Implications (January 2025)
- North Koreans in China: Marginalized, Exploited, and Repatriated (January 2025)
- 709 Crackdown: China's Overt Rejection of Universal Values (July 2025)

Letters

- Former Chair and Co-chair Urge Volker Türk, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, to Investigate Abuses in the Boarding School System in Tibet (January 2025)
- Former Chair and Co-chair nominate Ilham Tohti, Hada, Wang Yi, Sophia Huang Xueqin, and Jimmy Lai for 2025 Nobel Peace Prize (January 2025)
- Co-chair and House CCP Select Committee Chairman Ask Kennedy Center about Relationship with National Ballet of China (January 2025)
- Co-chair and House CCP Select Committee Chairman Nominate Five Champions of Peace and Freedom for Nobel Peace Prize (January 2025)
- Co-chair and House CCP Select Committee Chairman Urge U.K. Ambassador to Reject CCP's Largest European Embassy amid Human Rights Concerns (February 2025)
- Co-chair and House CCP Select Committee Chairman Ask U.S. Ambassador to PRC to Meet with Americans Whose Families Are Unjustly Detained or Forcibly Separated through Exit Bans (April 2025)
- Chairs Ask Executive Branch Leadership to End Importation of Seafood That Is Fished, Farmed, or Processed Using Forced Labor (July 2025)
- Co-chair and House CCP Select Committee Leadership Ask State Department to Hold Organ Traffickers Accountable by Leveraging the State Department's Rewards Program (August 2025)

III. Respect for Civil Liberties

Freedom of Expression

Findings

• During the Commission's 2025 reporting period, the People's Republic of China (PRC) government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP or Party) persisted in imposing restrictions on expression that contravene Article 35 of China's Constitution, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
• Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked China 178 out of 180 countries and territories in its 2025 World Press Freedom Index, and Freedom House's 2025 Freedom in the World report scored China 0 out of 4 on "free and independent media" for the seventh year in a row.
• The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked China as the world's leading jailer of journalists during this reporting year. Currently detained or imprisoned journalists include **Zhang Zhan, Sophia Huang Xueqin, Dong Yuyu, Chen Pinlin, Gu Wanming, Li Weizhong,** and **Liu Hanbin.** Foreign journalists in China also continued to face restrictions and harassment.
• The Party continued its efforts to shape its image abroad through an expanding network of state-directed media initiatives, including its network of international communication centers (ICCs). OpenAI, a U.S. artificial intelligence (AI) company, found accounts which "appear to originate in China" that used AI to write news articles criticizing the U.S. in Latin American media outlets and to generate posts denouncing a critic of the Party.
• Chinese authorities exercised control over freedom of expression of global audiences on the app TikTok through content moderation and censored posts on the Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu, known as RedNote.
• Authorities in China continued to tightly control in-person assemblies that they viewed as potentially threatening to the Party and targeted even non-political gatherings, particularly those involving youth. Individuals who participated in protests or commemorative activities continued to face detention and harassment, including **Fang Yirong** and **Mei Shilin,** both detained for hanging pro-democracy banners.
• PRC legislators introduced several measures to tighten control over the internet, including a regulation on a new national internet identification (ID) system and a draft regulation targeting multi-channel networks (MCNs).
• Authorities and social media platforms in China continued to censor online discussions and public expression related to topics that generated criticism or contradicted official policy or positions. Observers noted various examples of authorities treating China's economic challenges as sensitive topics to be censored this past year.

• China experienced a series of violent "revenge against society" attacks this past year, including various knife attacks and car ramming incidents. In response, the PRC government tightly controlled information about the events and prioritized surveillance and punishment.
• Authorities continued to exercise tight control over the entertainment, art, and literature sectors, including by imprisoning artists, writers, and public intellectuals such as **Gao Zhen, Fei Xiaosheng, Xu Lin,** and **Li Yanhe.**
• The PRC continued its control over educational and research institutions this past year, impeding free exchange of information and international academic collaboration.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of the Press

Party Control of the Media

During the Commission's 2025 reporting period, the People's Republic of China (PRC) government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP or Party) persisted in imposing restrictions on expression that contravene Article 35 of China's Constitution, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).[1] Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked China 178 out of 180 countries and territories in its 2025 World Press Freedom Index, and Freedom House's 2025 Freedom in the World report scored China 0 out of 4 on "free and independent media" for the seventh year in a row.[2]

The Party showcased its priorities for media coverage in November 2024 during the annual China Journalism Awards ceremony, giving top awards to state media outlets for their positive coverage of the Party.[3] One observer described the top four winners as "servile and anodyne," while others claimed that "news is dead."[4] Four of the top winning articles contained "propagandistic" headlines, promoting PRC leader Xi Jinping or the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," for instance.[5] To this end, one observer pointed out that during National Journalists' Day celebrations, local officials made constant references to "'news propaganda' (*xinwen xuanchuan,* 新闻宣传), which refers explicitly to the use of the news form to conduct state propaganda activities and reach the goals of the leadership."[6]

Control over China's Image Abroad

During this reporting year, the Party continued its efforts to shape its image abroad through an expanding network of state-directed media initiatives.[7] Building on Xi Jinping's directive to "tell China's story well" (*jiang hao Zhongguo gushi,* 讲好中国故事), the Party significantly expanded its network of "international communication centers" (*guoji chuanbo zhongxin,* 国际传播中心 or ICCs) at local and provincial levels that aim to "tailor" information to foreign audiences.[8] By early 2025, researchers had documented at least 70 ICCs (28 provincial-level and at least 50 at the city and district level) across China.[9] During this reporting year, the Party opened an ICC in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and one in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in September and December 2024, respectively.[10] The official announcement of the opening of the XUAR ICC described the center as the region's "principal window of external communication."[11] [For more information on Party control in the XUAR and TAR, see Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Chapter 14—Tibet.]

The Chinese government also placed pro-Party content in international media outlets and on social media platforms.[12] An article published in December 2024 noted that U.S. media company Nexstar Media Group, which owns 200 television stations "reaching 116 markets or more than 70% of all U.S. television households," distributed content from Party-run media outlet *Global Times.*[13] Major

publications including the *Los Angeles Times, Financial Times,* and *Time Magazine* also carried "China Watch" inserts from *China Daily,* which paid "hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to insert their content into major print media."[14]

OpenAI, a U.S. artificial intelligence (AI) company, found accounts which "appear to originate in China" that used AI to write news articles criticizing the U.S. in Latin American media outlets and to generate posts denouncing a critic of the Party.[15] Chinese state media also operated "cloaked" accounts that masked their government connections, which significantly increased engagements.[16] "China Says," an account on X with over 235,000 followers as of June 2025, ran paid promotional content and was revealed to be run by the Chinese Internet News Center, part of China's State Council Information Office.[17] Similar accounts included "Hi, this is GBA" and "Daily Bae," which presented as independent influencers while actually serving as "external propaganda brands run by Guangdong province."[18] [For more information on China's international influence campaigns, see Chapter 17—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally. For more information on China's use of AI, see Chapter 13—Technology and Human Rights]

TikTok and *Xiaohongshu* (RedNote)

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, Chinese authorities exercised control over freedom of expression on TikTok through content moderation. Investigations revealed TikTok and its parent corporation, ByteDance, had misused data to spy on journalists in the U.S.,[19] improperly collected and transferred personal data to China[20] and systemically suppressed political and other sensitive content to align with Chinese government interests.[21] Furthermore, under China's laws—including the *National Security Law, Cybersecurity Law, National Intelligence Law, and Counterespionage Law*[22]—the company must cooperate with PRC government defense and intelligence entities, including by sharing the vast amounts of user data it collects upon request, which poses a national security threat to the U.S.[23] After the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the *Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act* in January 2025, TikTok was temporarily banned in the United States until the Trump administration issued three executive orders delaying enforcement in 2025.[24]

TikTok and *Xiaohongshu* (RedNote)—Continued

When TikTok was temporarily unavailable in the United States, a significant number of American users—approximately 700,000 according to one source—migrated to the China-based social media platform known as RedNote internationally (小红书, *xiaohongshu)*.[25] One report noted that the large number of "TikTok refugees" was a byproduct of a possible CCP-backed influence campaign.[26] This influx created a situation where Chinese and American users were able to interact directly on the same platform, an unusual circumstance given China's typical restrictions on foreign social media.[27] The Cyberspace Administration of China responded by ordering RedNote to ensure that China-based users cannot see posts from U.S. users.[28] RedNote later directed different content to users based on their location, seeking to make content from foreign users less visible to Chinese users.[29] Multiple sources documented cases of American users experiencing censorship on RedNote, with posts being removed for discussing topics such as Taiwan, human rights concerns, or LGBTQ lifestyles, or for violating other unstated guidelines.[30] In some cases, the users' posts were quickly removed and accounts suspended.[31]

Some observers also raised concerns about RedNote's extensive data collection practices and potential connections to Chinese government entities.[32] Observers have raised similar concerns about several other Chinese-owned apps, including WeChat,[33] Temu,[34] Pinduoduo,[35] and DeepSeek.[36]

Detention and Imprisonment of Journalists

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, both the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked China as the world's leading jailer of journalists.[37] According to CPJ's 2024 prison census, over 50 journalists were in prison in China and Hong Kong as of December 2024.[38] RSF counted at least 125 journalists behind bars in China in 2024.[39]

PRC authorities continued to re-detain or harass journalists after they completed their sentences.[40] Authorities detained prominent COVID-19 citizen journalist **Zhang Zhan** again in August 2024, after Zhang advocated for the release of another activist.[41] By January 2025, reports indicated Zhang had begun a hunger strike while in detention, just as she had during her prior detention, and was being force-fed through a gastric tube, raising serious health concerns and contravening the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.[42] Authorities also cut off veteran journalist **Gao Yu**'s access to her internet, landline, and cellular connections in August 2024 after she published an article analyzing an *Al Jazeera* interview with a Chinese think tank vice president.[43] [For more information on Zhang Zhan, see Chapter 7—Status of Women.]

The Commission observed reports of detentions and developments in the cases of several other prominent journalists and media workers during this reporting year, including:

- **Sophia Huang Xueqin.** In September 2025, the Guangdong High People's Court secretly rejected an appeal from journalist

and women's rights advocate Sophia Huang Xueqin, upholding her original sentence of five years in prison.[44] [For more information on Sophia Huang Xueqin, See Chapter 7—Status of Women.]

- **Dong Yuyu.** In November 2024, the Beijing No. 2 Intermediate People's Court sentenced the former editor of the state-run newspaper *Guangming Daily,* Dong Yuyu, to seven years in prison on "espionage" charges.[45]
- **Chen Pinlin.** On January 6, 2025, the Baoshan District People's Court in Shanghai municipality tried in a closed proceeding and sentenced filmmaker Chen Pinlin to three years and six months in prison for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" after he produced a documentary about the 2022 White Paper protests against China's COVID-19 restrictions.[46] Chen's documentary, titled "Urumqi Middle Road" in Chinese and "Not the Foreign Force" in English, was released on YouTube and X, but his accounts have since been removed.[47]
- **Gu Wanming.** In November 2024, Minhang District People's Court in Shanghai sentenced Gu Wanming, a retired journalist from state-run media outlet *Xinhua,* to one year in prison for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," reportedly related to his 2023 public letter calling for an investigation into the sudden death of former Premier Li Keqiang.[48] In December 2024, *Xinhua* revoked Gu's retirement benefits.[49]
- **Li Weizhong.** Authorities placed Li Weizhong, an independent journalist writing under the pen name Li Yuanfeng, under "residential surveillance at a designated location," a form of secret detention, in November 2024 for "inciting subversion of state power" after being detained the previous month.[50]
- **Liu Hanbin.** Authorities detained Liu Hanbin, a blogger who documented farmers' protests against land seizures in Inner Mongolia, in November 2024 on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."[51]

CONDITIONS FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS

Foreign journalists also continued to face restrictions and harassment.[52] For nearly a week, from late May to early June 2024, two French investigative journalists received a dozen threatening messages, allegedly from Chinese police, after releasing a documentary about a Chinese dissident.[53]

Also during this reporting year, the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) expressed concern about employers pressuring foreign journalists not to join professional organizations such as the FCCC and Hong Kong journalists' associations, undermining freedom of association.[54]

In-Person Protest and Assembly

During the past year, authorities in China continued to tightly control in-person assemblies that they viewed as potentially threatening to the Party through a combination of preventive measures, real-time suppression, detentions, and intimidation.[55] According to Freedom House's *China Dissent Monitor,* which tracks the incidence and types of dissent in the PRC, Chinese citizens engaged in 937

documented protests in the third quarter of 2024 alone, a 27 percent increase over the same period in 2023.[56] Authorities demonstrated increased sensitivity toward non-political gatherings, particularly those involving youth. In October 2024, officials implemented a crackdown on Halloween celebrations across major cities including Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Hangzhou municipalities.[57] Police established checkpoints, detained costumed individuals, and demanded personal information from detained individuals.[58] According to leaked notices, authorities banned not only costumes and makeup but also Halloween decorations like "bats, pumpkins, ghosts, coffins and skeletons," while businesses had to seek prior approval for Halloween decorations.[59] These measures followed the 2023 celebrations at which some participants wore costumes satirizing government policies and officials.[60] Similarly, in November 2024, authorities in Henan province shut down a spontaneous trend of nighttime bicycle rides between the municipalities of Zhengzhou and Kaifeng involving tens of thousands of students.[61] According to one analyst, authorities' swift suppression of these non-political gatherings was "a sign of the authorities and police feeling very insecure after the uprising of 2022."[62] [For more information on the Henan night rides, see Chapter 2—Civil Society and Social Movements.]

Authorities continued to detain and harass individuals who participated in protests or commemorative activities. In August 2024, **Fang Yirong** hung pro-democracy banners from a footbridge in Loudi municipality, Hunan province and used a loudspeaker to call for democracy and Xi Jinping's removal, mimicking **Peng Lifa's**[63] 2022 "Bridge Man" protest.[64] In a later posted video, Fang identified himself as a White Paper movement participant and acknowledged possible consequences: "I expect to be treated as mentally ill. I could also wind up dying in prison. But I will have no regrets."[65] Similarly, in April 2025, **Mei Shilin,** a 27-year-old resident of Muchuan county, Leshan municipality, Sichuan province, displayed another banner from a road overpass in Chengdu municipality.[66] Authorities continued to detain all three individuals—Fang, Peng, and Mei—without providing information about their condition or whereabouts, effectively constituting an "enforced disappearance."[67] In July 2024, police took several individuals into custody who had participated in a memorial event for Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo, with rights advocates **Zan Aizong** and **Zou Wei** formally arrested on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."[68]

PRC Control over the Internet

The Party continued to maintain a tight grip on online spaces.[69] During this reporting year, PRC legislators introduced significant measures to tighten control over the internet, focusing on identity verification and data security, reflecting an ongoing strategy to enhance surveillance, regulate data flows, and enhance compliance.

In July 2024, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) and Ministry of Public Security jointly announced draft regulations for a national internet identification (ID) system, proposing to assign each internet user a unique code linked to their real identity.[70] The proposal triggered criticism on Chinese social media, leading to swift censorship.[71] Authorities blocked numerous search terms

related to the proposal and censored at least eight critical articles from academics and legal experts, among others.[72] Several commentators expressed concern that the new ID system would dampen freedom of expression by allowing the government to shut down all the internet accounts of a critic in a single action.[73] Despite being framed as "voluntary," as of August 2024, over 80 apps had already implemented the proposed authentication system on a trial basis since the release of the draft, including WeChat, Xiaohongshu (RedNote), Taobao, and Zhaopin (a job application app).[74] The finalized *Measures on the Management of the National Online Identity Authentication Public Service,* released in May 2025 and scheduled to take effect in mid-July, remained largely similar to the draft, but hardly any criticism could be found online.[75]

PRC authorities also introduced potential regulations aimed at controlling online content. In January 2025, CAC proposed new regulations targeting multi-channel networks (MCNs), which are third-party agencies that manage social media influencers.[76] These draft rules require MCN institutions to "adhere to correct political direction, public opinion guidance, and value orientation" and prohibit them from activities such as "manufacturing or spreading rumors" or "hyping social hot points."[77]

Authorities continued to target Chinese internet users accessing overseas platforms.[78] In July 2024, police detained members of a Discord community that had hosted political discussions among Chinese users.[79] In December 2024, a 2023 case against five individuals for their involvement with a pro-democracy X group (League for Tearing Down the Wall @LTDW2025) became public.[80] The individuals, **Ren Jianping, Yao Xirui, Lin Yangpeng, Gu Haiying,** and **Peng Haiming,** were sentenced to terms ranging from 4 to 10 years for "inciting subversion of state power."[81]

In December 2024, the Shanghai High People's Court upheld the seven-year prison sentence of blogger **Ruan Xiaohuan,** also known as "program-think" (*biancheng suixiang,* 编程随想), for "inciting subversion."[82] Ruan had posted for 12 years on topics such as technology, politics, and circumvention of the Great Firewall before his sudden disappearance in May 2021.[83]

CENSORSHIP

This past year, authorities and social media platforms in China continued to censor online discussions and public expression related to topics that generated criticism or contradicted official policy or positions.[84] The CAC launched what one expert characterized as its "annual, or semi-annual tradition" of censorship campaigns, including a three-month crackdown on online news content deemed false or contrary to the official line[85] and a two-month "Clear and Bright" operation targeting content considered harmful to children, including videos glorifying school bullying, "extravagant lifestyles," and other "vulgar" content.[86]

Other examples of online censorship include:

- **Economic discussions.** Observers noted various examples of authorities treating China's economic challenges as sensitive topics to be censored this past year.[87] In January 2025, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that economist Gao Shanwen faced

censorship after he questioned the reliability of China's GDP growth figures at a Washington forum.[88] Chinese economists Ren Zeping and Fu Peng have also both been silenced online since December 2024.[89] Following the Third Plenum economic meeting, nationalist commentator Hu Xijin disappeared from social media for months, apparently for espousing an interpretation of the Plenum counter to official policies.[90] Social media platforms also censored the phrase "garbage time of history"—used to describe China's economic malaise—after it gained popularity.[91]

- **Trade War.** After reciprocal tariffs on Chinese goods came into effect in April 2025, Chinese authorities began censoring some tariff-related content on Chinese social media platforms Weibo and WeChat including "104" (referring to 104 percent tariffs) while allowing comments that mock the U.S. position.[92] Online censors also took down posts by Chinese companies complaining about the negative impact of Trump's tariffs and other expressions of concern or dissent.[93]
- **Youth unemployment.** When images of a Hangzhou job fair with 35,000 job seekers went viral on Weibo, a social media outlet popular in China, online commentators noted the visual resemblance to Xi'an's famous Terracotta Warriors packed in tightly like a small army, and Weibo censored the original post making the comparison.[94]
- **Electoral politics and democracy.** Weibo suppressed discussion of Taiwan's January 2024 general election, blocking the hashtag "#TaiwanElection" after it reached number 11 on Weibo's "hot list."[95] During the U.S. election season in fall 2024, *CNN*'s broadcast of the vice presidential debate was abruptly cut off in China when the discussion turned to candidate Tim Walz's time in China and because of potential references to the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.[96] Later, a WeChat article calling for then-U.S. President Joseph Biden to "exit the political stage" was censored, possibly because authorities interpreted it as containing veiled messages relevant to Xi Jinping,[97] while influential blogger Sima Nan was banned for a year—reportedly for expressing support for Donald Trump in the U.S. election.[98]
- **Olympic training funding.** After the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Sports revealed it had allocated 47 million yuan (nearly US$6.5 million) to fund Eileen Gu's Olympic training in 2023, with a similar amount budgeted for 2025, censors quickly deleted a *Caixin* article reporting these figures.[99] Subsequently, four related articles discussing the expense were removed from multiple platforms, and Weibo users questioning the allocation of taxpayer money were censored, with one commenter asking, "Why are they so afraid the taxpayers will find out?"[100]
- **Bu Xiaohua trafficking case.** In December 2024, police announced they had located Bu Xiaohua, who, suffering from mental illness, disappeared in 2011 and was "taken in" by a man surnamed Zhang.[101] After Bu gave birth to multiple children during her 13-year ordeal, her case sparked widespread outcry and comparisons to the 2022 "chained woman" incident in Xuzhou municipality, Jiangsu province, a case that was also

heavily censored.[102] Censors moved to control the narrative, blocking several Weibo hashtags related to the case, removing commentary of Party-controlled newspaper *Beijing Daily*[103] calling for accountability, and deleting search terms related to "taking in" (*shouliu,* 收留)—language some have criticized as being a euphemism for trafficking and rape.[104] Authorities also censored discussions about the film "Blind Mountain," which depicts a similar abduction scenario.[105] [For more information on trafficking of women, see Chapter 9—Human Trafficking. For more information on lack of accountability for domestic abuse, see Chapter 7—Status of Women].

Rise of "Revenge against Society" Events and Censorship

China experienced a series of violent "revenge against society"[106] attacks this past year, including a knife attack at a Zhenxiong county, Yunnan province hospital (2 dead, 21 injured);[107] a stabbing in Suzhou municipality, Jiangsu province targeting Japanese victims, resulting in the death of a Chinese national who intervened;[108] a fatal stabbing of a Japanese schoolboy in Shenzhen municipality, Guangdong province;[109] a knife attack near a Beijing municipality primary school;[110] a car ramming at a Zhuhai municipality, Guangdong province sports center (35 dead, 43 injured);[111] a mass stabbing at a Wuxi municipality, Jiangsu province vocational school (8 dead, 17 injured);[112] and a car ramming outside a Changde municipality, Hunan province elementary school.[113]

The government's response followed a pattern of information control. After the Zhuhai incident, authorities delayed releasing details while implementing the playbook of "delet[ing] posts, clos[ing] comments, and reduc[ing] popularity" tactics.[114] Government officials framed the violence as "isolated incidents" stemming from individual grievances rather than systemic issues.[115] Comments demanding more information and pointing to potential deeper societal causes and governance failures, including economic pressure and state-sanctioned ultra-nationalism,[116] were also heavily censored.[117] A psychotherapist also reflected that these events suggest a "very strong sense of feeling that society is not just."[118] Authorities censored the name Zhang Xianzhong (张献忠), a brutal Ming-era rebel leader, whose name was used on line to refer to these attacks.[119] In modern Chinese internet culture, this term symbolizes an escape from societal pressure.[120] Rather than addressing root causes, authorities prioritized surveillance and punishment, developing technologies to predict behavior like the "Crowd Emotion Detection and Early Warning Device system" while emphasizing severe punishment of "major vicious crimes."[121] This security-focused approach aims to preempt violence through technical means while leaving the social pressures generating that violence unaddressed.[122] As Cornell University professor Peidong Song notes, "Public attacks are often reactions to repression; the irony is that the government generally responds to them with even more repression."[123]

Entertainment, Art, and Literature

This past year, Chinese authorities continued to exercise tight control over the entertainment, art, and literature sectors.[124] According to PEN America, an organization dedicated to defending freedom of expression, China jails the largest number of writers and public intellectuals.[125] Relevant examples follow:

- Police detained artist **Gao Zhen** in August 2024 when he was visiting China with his family, on charges of "insulting revolutionary heroes and martyrs" for creating satirical artwork in the past depicting Mao Zedong.[126] Authorities raided the studio belonging to Gao Zhen and his brother near Beijing and barred Gao's wife and minor son, who is a U.S. citizen, from leaving China.[127]
- Authorities in Xi'an municipality, Shaanxi province detained musician **Fei Xiaosheng** in January 2025, reportedly for supporting the Hong Kong democracy movement.[128]
- Authorities criminally detained Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province-based lyricist **Xu Lin** for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" in May 2024.[129] Before his criminal detention, Xu, who previously served three years in prison for songs he wrote promoting democratic values, said that he will not hire a lawyer but if he died, it would be as a result of "persecution by the CCP."[130]
- Shanghai First Intermediate People's Court held a so-called "public trial" of Taiwan-based publisher **Li Yanhe** (also known as Fu Cha or "Fuschia") after detaining him for two years while he was visiting Shanghai municipality.[131] Authorities detained Li on charges of "endangering national security" but later changed this to "secession" charges.[132] Li's Eight Banners publishing house published many works banned in China, including on the topics of China's overseas influence operations and the 1989 Tiananmen protests.[133]

Authorities also censored content deemed inconsistent with official values, including the following examples:

- Censors pulled the movie "Wild Child," about homeless children who care for each other.[134] According to *Radio Free Asia,* Cai Qi, a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party Central Committee Political Bureau,[135] likely ordered the film's withdrawal because it "didn't conform to the main theme of encouraging young people and teenagers to grow and thrive in a positive way."[136]
- Online censors deleted hundreds of TV micro-dramas portraying family conflicts, with authorities claiming that these shows "deliberately amplify and exaggerate conflicts between husband and wife."[137] This campaign appeared connected to government efforts to boost falling birth rates by promoting positive images of family life.[138] The National Radio and Television Administration ordered ByteDance's micro-drama streaming platform Hongguo to cease posting new videos in December 2024.[139] Hongguo subsequently removed 279 videos with "bad value orientation."[140] [For more information on China's attempts to control population growth, see Chapter 8—Population Control.

For more information on the complicity of businesses in human rights abuses, see Chapter 12—Business and Human Rights.]

- In the video game industry, NetEase Games released *Marvel Rivals* in December 2024, which reportedly contained censorship mechanisms that filter out statements critical of China while permitting criticism of the United States.[141] The players of the game *Black Myth: Wukong,* developed by Chinese company Game Science, also faced censorship, being told by developers to avoid discussing certain topics such as "feminist propaganda" or COVID-19.[142]

Authorities applied inconsistent censorship to foreign content, apparently influenced by economic considerations.[143] The Marvel film "Deadpool & Wolverine" gained approval with limited alterations, and rapper Kanye West's concerts in Hainan province generated substantial tourism revenue.[144] Meanwhile, U.S. Vice President JD Vance's book *Hillbilly Elegy* was removed from WeChat Reading, a Chinese reading platform, after his selection as U.S. Republican vice-presidential candidate.[145] Similarly, Peter Hessler's book *Other Rivers: A Chinese Education* disappeared from Chinese social media platform Douban, along with its reviews.[146]

Academic Freedom

The PRC continued to exert control over educational and research institutions this past year, impeding free exchange of information and international academic collaboration.[147]

The Commission observed numerous cases of public intellectuals or professors being harassed, censored, or silenced for expressing views that diverged from official positions:

- In July 2024, a report surfaced regarding the dismissal of foreign professor Björn Alexander Düben from Jilin University after a nine-year tenure following an interview with *Voice of America* about PRC leader Xi Jinping's Europe visit.[148] He was ordered to leave China by May 30, 2024.[149]
- Chinese academics faced similar or worse treatment. In September 2024, reporters said that Zhu Hengpeng, an economist at the state-run Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), was put under investigation, subsequently detained, and ultimately removed from his position after criticizing PRC leader Xi Jinping in a private WeChat group.[150] His name was subsequently scrubbed from CASS websites.[151] A scholar at the Shanghai Party Institute of the Communist Party, Hu Wei, was reportedly forced into early retirement in 2023 after publicly criticizing Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[152]
- Authorities also used travel restrictions against an academic. Law professor Liang Xingguo and his wife were banned from traveling to Hong Kong in November 2024, apparently due to an article he wrote two years earlier discussing how unlimited terms for leaders could transform a republic into a dictatorship,[153] but authorities refused to provide documentation explaining the ban.[154]

Notes to Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression

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Civil Society and Social Movements

Findings

- The Chinese Communist Party continued to increase its presence in social organizations, the PRC's term for civil society groups, preventing them from operating independently.
- This year, the Party set up central and local branches of the Central Society Work Department, created in 2023, in order to more fully penetrate all aspects of society. Local society work departments held training sessions and launched a range of projects focused on Party-building within new and priority sectors.
- As in previous years, PRC authorities have taken steps to eliminate "illegal social organizations," a category that refers to, among others, organizations engaged in activities deemed undesirable or sensitive by the government. In February 2025, the PRC Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the revised *Measures Banning Illegal Social Organizations*.
- PRC citizens continued to engage in ad hoc collective expressions of discontent and advocacy, predominantly in response to perceived injustices at the local level. According to *China Dissent Monitor*, there were 937 dissent events between July and September 2024, constituting a "27 percent year-on-year increase" over the same period in 2023. Groups engaged in protest events this past year included property owners and investors.
- PRC authorities also worked to suppress collective gatherings composed predominantly of young people, which were not explicitly political but were likely perceived as a threat. In November 2024, authorities cracked down on mass night bicycle rides by university students from Zhengzhou municipality to Kaifeng municipality in Henan province, an apparently grassroots phenomenon that peaked at between 100,000 and 200,000 students.
- Also during the 2025 reporting period, the Commission observed new efforts to leverage Chinese citizen activism outside of China to effect domestic policy change at the local level. The 611Study.ICU, led by a Milan-based Chinese activist, focused on exposing exploitative conditions at primary and secondary schools in China.
- The Chinese Communist Party and government continued to suppress independent civil society organizations and movements by isolating civil society leaders and by arbitrarily detaining religious clergy and practitioners, rights advocates, and independent organizers of civic and political activities.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) persons living in China continued to experience ongoing state repression.

Civil Society and Social Movements

Introduction

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the civil society landscape in China continued to deteriorate, with the Chinese Communist Party and government constraining social organizations (*shehui zuzhi,* 社会组织, the PRC's term for nongovernmental entities[1]) from operating independently of Party control while renewing efforts to root out illegal social organizations that survived previous campaigns. Also this year, likely in response to concerns about social instability resulting from ongoing economic uncertainty,[2] PRC officials reportedly sought to fend off public dissatisfaction and consolidate Party control at the grassroots level by devoting greater attention to "society work" through the Central Society Work Department. Nevertheless, social movements continued to emerge, especially at the local level, developing adaptive strategies in the face of increasing repression, demonstrating that authorities have not succeeded in fully suppressing independent association or expression. Indeed, Chinese citizens have explored new venues of association and advocacy, from university students organizing mass bike rides to foreign and domestically based Chinese citizens collaborating online to shape domestic policy responses. Even as existing or emerging independent civil society adapted to a changing environment, PRC authorities continued to repress human rights defenders, religious communities, and groups promoting labor rights, women's rights, and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) persons.

Social Organizations and Social Control

CENTRAL SOCIETY WORK DEPARTMENT

The Chinese Communist Party continued efforts to increase its presence in social organizations (SOs) and across community groups and organizations of all kinds.[3] To this end, the recently created Central Society Work Department (CSWD) set up departments in all province-level jurisdictions and continued to expand its presence downward in municipality- and county-level jurisdictions.[4]

The Party created the CSWD in 2023 in order to more fully penetrate all aspects of society and prevent social instability by assuming oversight of the petitioning (*xinfang,* 信访) system and taking charge of Party-building in all non-state entities, including SOs, among other functions.[5] In November 2024, the Party-run media outlet *People's Daily* reported on the Central Society Work Conference held early that month, featuring a read-out of "important instructions" from General Secretary Xi Jinping and a speech by Secretary of the Central Secretariat Cai Qi.[6] Speakers at the conference emphasized that the work of the CSWD was "related to the Party's long-term governance . . . [and] related to societal harmony and stability"; and that the CSWD must "strengthen Party-building work in new economic organizations, new social organizations, and new employment groups."[7]

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, local society work departments (SWDs) held training sessions and launched a range

of projects focused on Party-building within new sectors like the gig economy, and oversight and management in priority sectors like social work, elder care, and rural revitalization. Representative examples include the following:

- In July 2024, Xihua University in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province, held a cooperative exchange in Suining municipality, Sichuan, focusing on the development of charitable social work.[8] The event was cohosted with the Suining Municipal Organization Department, Suining Municipal SWD, Suining Bureau of Civil Affairs, and Chongqing municipality's Tongnan District SWD.[9] At the event, Suining Municipal Standing Committee member and Political and Legal Affairs Committee secretary Lei Gang thanked Xihua University for its support of Suining authorities' charitable social initiatives, and touted Suining's continuing prioritization of the charitable social work sector, including by issuing an opinion promoting systems for integrated, community-based social service provision.[10] Lei said that, as part of the next step in these efforts, Suining would further improve "Party-building-led grassroots governance" in the charitable sector.[11]
- In October 2024, the Qinghai Provincial SWD, together with the Qinghai Provincial Organization Department and the Qinghai Administration for Market Regulation, published *Several Measures for Strengthening Party Building Work with Provincial Online Ordering and Delivery Personnel*.[12] According to official reporting, the measures seek to "strengthen the Party's . . . influence in emerging fields," and specify the need for Party-building among gig workers.[13] [For more information on Party efforts at ideological control among food delivery workers, see Chapter 10—Worker Rights.]
- In October 2024, the Shandong Provincial SWD, together with two local-level SWDs and several other entities, held an opening ceremony in Jining municipality, Shandong province, for a service day with the theme, "Neighborhood Watch—Elderly Assistance Services Entering the Community."[14] The Shandong Provincial SWD reported that, in 2024 alone, over 9,200 elderly service volunteer activities had been organized with over 115,000 volunteers participating.[15] In an October notice promoting a similar "Neighborhood Watch" event in Linyi municipality, the Linyi Municipal SWD wrote that, "Party organizations at every level must take the lead in developing elderly assistance volunteer services."[16]
- In March, 2025, the Guangdong Provincial SWD launched the "Green, Beautiful, and Flourishing Countryside" special initiative.[17] The initiative sought to organize "village committee cadres, society workers, volunteers, as well as Party members from Party groups in new economic organizations, new social organizations, and new employment groups" for work on rural "greening" and beautification,[18] which have been a priority under PRC leader Xi Jinping's rural revitalization campaign.[19]

ILLEGAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

As in previous years, PRC authorities took steps to eliminate "illegal social organizations" (ISOs), a category encompassing organiza-

tions that have failed to register, those operating fraudulently, and those engaged in activities deemed undesirable or sensitive by the government.[20] In February 2025, the PRC Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) issued the *Measures for Banning Illegal Social Organizations* (hereafter "*Measures*"), replacing interim regulations from the year 2000 with the same purpose.[21] While largely devoted to preventing fraudulent groups and activities,[22] the *Measures* also enlist the public in monitoring, encouraging citizens to report suspected illegal groups.[23] One U.S.-based Protestant Christian NGO observed that the *Measures* also "expand the scope of responsible authorities," from the previous version, assigning responsibility for bans to county-level authorities, while providing for involvement by provincial and national authorities in cases where an ISO has operated in several localities.[24]

An MCA policy directive on the *Measures* outlined "Six Do Nots" directed at anyone who might interact with ISOs.[25] The directive closely mirrored the approach of the 2021 circular *Eliminate the Breeding Grounds for Illegal Social Organizations,* which targeted the infrastructure that allowed illegal social organizations to operate, including financial institutions, vendors, registered social organizations that cooperated with unregistered groups, media organizations, and others.[26] The "Six Do Nots" instruct influential individuals, including Party members, cadres, and celebrities not to "lend [their] support" to ISOs; news media not to devote coverage to ISOs; enterprises and institutions not to cooperate with ISOs; internet companies not to provide a platform for ISOs; financial institutions not to provide services to ISOs, and the public not to participate in the activities of or provide any support for ISOs.[27]

Freedom of Association and Social Movements

PROTEST MOVEMENTS

PRC citizens continued to engage in ad hoc collective expressions of discontent and advocacy, predominantly in response to perceived injustices at the local level.[28] Freedom House's *China Dissent Monitor (CDM)*, which tracks the incidence and types of dissent in China, logged 937 dissent events between July and September 2024, constituting a "27 percent year-on-year increase" over the same period in 2023.[29] While the majority of protest events were worker-led, protests led by property owners made up the second largest group, amounting to 28 percent of logged protest events.[30] [For more information on worker-led protests, see Chapter 10—Worker Rights.] *CDM* reported that homeowners typically found little available recourse when subjected to statutory restrictions and exploitative practices by property managers and were thus more likely to engage in public protest.[31] In cases where they did engage in public protest, authorities and "people associated with the [property management] company" responded by surveilling, detaining, and in at least 16 cases committing acts of violence against protesters.[32]

Also during the Commission's reporting year, demonstrators protested a revision to the *PRC Company Law* and the Supreme People's Court's interpretation of it, which were believed to unfairly affect transferors of stocks in transactions completed before the re-

vision.[33] During November and December 2024, social media users documented 17 protests concerning the *Company Law* revisions in 11 cities throughout China,[34] including major municipalities such as Chengdu in Sichuan province,[35] Guangzhou in Guangdong province,[36] and Chongqing.[37] In December 2024, Reuters reported that social media accounts posted videos of protesters outside and within multiple provincial high people's courts demanding to "see the chief."[38] Following the protests, the National People's Conference Standing Committee Legislative Affairs Commission, through its recording and review process, issued a report concluding that the law should not be applied retroactively.[39] Two days after the report, the Supreme People's Court reversed its interpretation.[40]

COLLECTIVE RECREATION SUPPRESSED

PRC authorities also worked to suppress collective gatherings, composed predominantly of young people, that were not explicitly political but were likely perceived as a particular threat following the White Paper protests of late 2022, in which Chinese citizens gathered across multiple cities and universities, prompted by grievances against harsh zero-COVID policy measures.[41] In November 2024, authorities cracked down on mass nighttime bicycle rides by university students from Zhengzhou municipality to Kaifeng municipality in Henan province, an apparently grassroots phenomenon that began with four students in June 2024 and peaked in November with between 100,000 and 200,000 students, according to one estimate.[42] While the students' night rides were planned around eating a well-known Kaifeng dumpling dish and visiting tourist sites, some participants also carried banners reading "freedom" and were filmed singing the national anthem,[43] a practice that has been associated with previous protest movements in China.[44] As the rides received national attention, students began to travel to join the rides in Zhengzhou and to replicate them in other cities, using social media and online tools to organize the events.[45] One report said that a group of veterans also traveled to Zhengzhou to join the rides.[46] According to *Voice of America,* China-based netizens discussing the communal rides online described them as "a new surge of mass student gatherings," and "even rising to a spontaneous exploration of 'freedom of association.'"[47] On November 9, 2024, authorities across multiple locations in the PRC moved to end the rides, either by restricting students to their campuses or blocking streets to bicycle traffic, among other measures.[48] [For more information on the "Henan night rides" discussed above and official suppression of recreational gatherings predominantly organized by young adults, see Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression.]

611Study.ICU: A Diaspora-Led Initiative

Also during the 2025 reporting period, the Commission observed an effort to leverage diaspora-led activism to effect domestic policy change at the local level. This past year, the Milan-based PRC activist Li Ying (pseudonym Teacher Li), known for his X account that receives and shares content considered sensitive by Chinese authorities,[49] launched the 611Study.ICU project.[50] The initiative focused on exposing exploitative and harmful practices at many Chinese primary and secondary schools, where students are made to spend long hours on campus through early start times, late study hours, and in some cases requiring students to return early from school vacation.[51] According to the New York-based NGO Human Rights in China, schools are motivated in part by "financial incentives . . . to keep students on campus as long as possible," referring to the revenue generated by fees, purchases, and vendor contracts associated with students' presence on campus.[52] The initiative, which posted data suggesting a correlation between requiring extended hours on campus and cases of student suicides, reportedly led to local government action, including in Zhongshan municipality, Guangdong province, where authorities banned schools from requiring that students return to school early.[53]

Suppression of Civil Society

The Chinese Communist Party and government continued to suppress independent civil society organizations and movements by isolating civil society leaders and by arbitrarily detaining religious clergy and practitioners, rights advocates, and independent organizers of civic and political activities.[54] The Commission observed PRC authorities targeting individuals, groups, and activities it deemed threatening, including the following:

- **Founder of Beijing-based school for disabled children Zhu Bin.** In September 2024, public security officials in Haidian district, Beijing municipality, took into custody **Zhu Bin,** founder of the Deep Breath Learning Center for special needs children, criminally detaining him on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."[55] According to one U.S.-based NGO that advocates on behalf of Chinese Christians, authorities detained Zhu in connection with his work for "justice and mercy,"[56] likely referring to his longtime advocacy on behalf of individuals and issues deemed politically threatening, including COVID-19 patients, victims of human trafficking, and citizen journalist Zhang Zhan, among others.[57] He was later released on bail.[58]
- **Protestant "house church" preacher Ma Yan.** In August 2024, public security officials in Jinfeng district, Yinchuan municipality, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, raided a gathering of Christians and took into custody preacher **Ma Yan,** along with three other participants, administratively detaining them for "disturbing social order."[59] Authorities then criminally detained Ma for "organizing an illegal gathering," trying him in February 2025 and sentencing him to nine months in prison.[60]

• **Individuals associated with a non-CCP political party.** According to the NGO Rights Defense Network, in December 2024, the Sichuan High People's Court affirmed the sentencing of six individuals who had been convicted of "subversion of state power" earlier the same year, namely **Tang Gaofeng, Wang Wei, Wang Yifei, Zhou Dan, Liu Zhengang,** and **Dai Lu.**[61] The six were convicted for their participation in the China Democratic Victory Party, which Tang helped to found in 2008.[62]
• **Dinner gathering participants.** In July 2024, authorities in Yubei district, Chongqing municipality, took into custody several of the participants in a May 2024 dinner gathering of rights defenders[63] celebrating the inauguration of Taiwanese president William Lai Ching-te, including rights defender **Chen Mingyu.**[64] Yubei police criminally detained Chen on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."[65] The Yubei District People's Court convicted her on the same charge in March 2025, sentencing her to two years and six months in prison.[66]

Status of LGBTQ Persons

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) persons living in China continued to experience ongoing state repression. A May 2024 report on social attitudes toward LGBTQ people in the PRC by the Williams Institute, a research center focused on law and policy related to sexual orientation and gender identity,[67] found that, while the past decade had been characterized by setbacks in government policy for the LGBTQ community in China, the majority of survey respondents supported "LGBTQ equal rights and protections on a societal and institutional level," and about half of them believed that same-sex marriage should be accepted.[68] While the PRC Constitution states that all citizens are equal before the law, it does not recognize LGBTQ persons as a distinct identity or class.[69] Also, PRC law does not enumerate protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, nor does it allow persons of the same sex to marry.[70]

Status of LGBTQ Persons—Continued

PRC Response to Universal Periodic Review

In May 2024, the PRC responded to non-binding recommendations[71] made at its January 2024 U.N. Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Chinese government's human rights record.[72] In one analysis, a group of human rights NGOs found that China had "accepted and implemented" one recommendation relating to the status of LGBTQ persons, noted seven, and rejected three outright.[73] The PRC rejected Iceland's recommendation that it remove restrictions on freedom of expression pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity and allow LGBTQ-focused civil society organizations to operate legally, claiming that it was "based on false information."[74] China dismissed a similar recommendation from Sweden that it "take urgent steps" to protect the free expression of those belonging to "LGBTIQ communities," claiming that, as it always protects citizens' rights, there was no need for urgency.[75] Likewise, PRC representatives rejected the United States' recommendation that it end "repressive measures against . . . LGBTQI+ persons," again asserting it was "based on false information."[76] In a shared statement, the New York-based NGO Human Rights in China, along with three Chinese advocacy groups focused on LGBTQ issues, described significant PRC violations of the rights of LGBTQ persons and concluded that China's rejection of recommendations intended to protect LGBTQ persons "reflects China's false commitment to human rights and deliberate violation of these rights."[77] [For more on the PRC's response to the UPR, see Chapter 17—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally.]

Surveillance and Harassment

This past year, PRC authorities reportedly surveilled and harassed LGBTQ rights activists and groups. In October 2024, an international LGBTQ rights NGO published a report based on interviews with 16 Chinese LGBTQ activists who had been "actively involved in Chinese LGBTQ movements during the past five years," all of whom reported monitoring, surveillance, and even threats.[78] In one instance, an interviewee recounted that authorities had "relentlessly contacted" her parents, informing them of the "problematic and dangerous nature of the activities [she was] involved in," connecting LGBTQ advocacy with endangering national security.[79]

Status of LGBTQ Persons—Continued

Other Developments

Efforts by members of the LGBTQ community to pursue legal redress for perceived harms based on sexual orientation and gender identity yielded mixed results. In one prominent case, a transgender woman won a settlement from Qinhuangdao No. 5 Hospital in Qinhuangdao municipality, Hebei province, where she was forcibly held and subjected to conversion therapy, including electroshock treatment,[80] though her gender identity may not have been addressed in the settlement.[81] In another case, the Fengtai District People's Court in Beijing municipality awarded the former spouse in a U.S.-registered lesbian marriage visitation rights to the daughter she carried, but not to the son that her former spouse carried (the former spouse's eggs were used in both cases), in what one reporter claimed was the "first time that a court in China has recognized that a child can have two legal mothers."[82] Also in 2024, the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal ruled in a review of three cases that the government could not exclude same-sex couples from rental or home ownership programs and that same-sex spouses have the same inheritance rights as opposite-sex spouses.[83]

The Chinese government continued to suppress LGBTQ representation and expression in entertainment.[84] In October 2024, the Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, and Tourism in Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province, canceled a performance by transgender dancer and television personality Jin Xing, possibly in connection with her displaying a rainbow flag during a show earlier in the year.[85] After she protested the cancellation on social media, at least three other localities also canceled her scheduled performances without explanation.[86]

Notes to Chapter 2—Civil Society and Social Movements

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the Human Rights of LGBT People in China," *Outright International,* January 12, 2021, 7, 23. Despite the lack of legal recognition, protection from discrimination, or recognition of same-sex marriage, Chinese representatives in international fora have articulated the Chinese position, see, e.g., "Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review—China," *U.N Human Rights Council,* A/HRC/56/6/, March 11, 2024; "Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review—China—Addendum," *U.N Human Rights Council,* A/HRC/56/6/Add.1, May 31, 2024, 2, 4.. In China's state party response to its Universal Periodic Review, the PRC declined to acknowledge the need for specific protections for LGBTQ persons as a class, claiming to protect all citizens against discrimination. PRC representatives have stated this position more explicitly at several U.N. treaty body reviews, saying that China does not have a concept of LGBTQ persons, see, e.g., "China Review—5th Meeting, 73rd Session, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)", *U.N. Web TV,* February 15, 2023, 1:06:17–1:06:40, 1:17:29–1:18:29; "China Review—1978th Meeting, 85th Session, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)", *U.N. Web TV,* May 12, 2023, 2:07:32–2:08:00; For a detailed discussion of PRC representations at the United Nations of Chinese law pertaining to the rights of LGBTQ persons, see Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "2023 Annual Report," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* May 2024, 77. For previous discussion of Chinese law pertaining to the rights of LGBTQ persons, see Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "2024 Annual Report," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* December 2024, 70.

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Freedom of Religion

Findings

- The Chinese Communist Party and government continued to constrain individuals and groups from freely forming and practicing their religious beliefs, instead seeking to order religious observance around loyalty to the Party and state.
- During the 2025 reporting year, the Commission observed a coordinated campaign, led by the United Front Work Department, to train religious personnel in the "strict governance of religion."
- The Party sought to exert control over theological education and institutions across religious groups to ensure the political reliability of future religious leaders.
- The National Religious Affairs Administration published new regulations governing the religious activities of foreigners in China that create a more restrictive environment for non-PRC citizens to practice their own religion or interact with Chinese believers.
- The Party and government have continued their efforts to co-opt Buddhism, Taoism, and Chinese folk religion while also pushing for further "sinicization" of these groups.
- This past year, PRC authorities continued to suppress dissent and inculcate ideological conformity in ethnic minority Muslim communities, including in Yunnan province, following tensions over mosque "rectifications" and other sinicization efforts.
- The Party continued to assert its ultimate authority over the Chinese Catholic Church, despite the renewal of the Sino-Vatican Agreement. In the interregnum period after the death of Pope Francis, local authorities conducted "elections" to select two bishops when papal approval would have been impossible.
- Authorities continued to raid unregistered Protestant "house" churches and detain their members, using fraud charges, exit bans, censorship, and surveillance to suppress and intimidate clergy and laity from exercising their religious beliefs.
- The Party and government have continued to direct considerable resources and attention toward the suppression and persecution of Falun Gong, often detaining, charging, and prosecuting practitioners under Article 300 of the *PRC Criminal Law*. The Falun Gong-affiliated website *Minghui* reported the deaths of dozens of Falun Gong practitioners due to mistreatment while in custody and hundreds of cases of practitioners being sentenced by authorities, apparently for their connection with Falun Gong.
- In addition to Falun Gong, the Party and government have designated 22 religious groups to be "cult organizations" or *xiejiao* (邪教), a historical term used by the Party to refer to new religious movements it perceives as threatening, and continue to subject them to persecution. Among these groups, authorities have engaged in a protracted and apparently nationwide crackdown against the Church of Almighty God, launching consecutive campaigns to eradicate the religious group.
- In at least two cases this past year, authorities detained Taiwanese citizens for participation in religious activities associated with supposed *xiejiao*.

Freedom of Religion

Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party and government continued to constrain individuals and groups from freely forming and practicing their religious beliefs, instead seeking to order religious observance around loyalty to the Party and state. Since 2015, Xi has touted "sinicization" (*zhongguohua*, 中国化)—which emphasizes the need for PRC-based religious groups to "actively guide religion to adapt to socialist society"—as a major policy priority for religious affairs management.[1] To this end, during the 2025 reporting year, PRC authorities pursued several policy initiatives focused on more closely controlling religious groups, such as launching trainings in the "strict governance of religion" for clergy in the official or "patriotic" religious associations and imposing new and invasive restrictions on foreign religious believers based in China. Consistent with the *Patriotic Education Law* of 2024,[2] religious affairs officials also continued to emphasize the necessity of ideological and national identity formation in state- and Party-run religious higher education. As in previous years, while the Party and government closely supervised official groups, they also worked to suppress unsanctioned expressions of religious faith, including unregistered Protestant "house" churches, underground Catholic bishops, and members of groups that the government designates as "cult organizations," or *xiejiao* (邪教) a historical term used by the Party to refer to new religious movements it perceives as threatening.

International and Chinese Law on Religious Freedom

International law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), protects the right to form, hold, and change beliefs without restriction while allowing such limited constraints on their outward manifestation as are "prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others."[3] Additionally, Article 36 of China's Constitution guarantees "freedom of religious belief" and protects "normal religious activities" but leaves "normal" undefined, allowing the government to stipulate what constitutes "normal" and to circumscribe religious activity that would otherwise be protected under the UDHR and the ICCPR.[4]

Since 2018, the Party and government have issued several key legal provisions to tighten control over religious activities, including the revised *Regulations on Religious Affairs* (2018),[5] *Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel* (2021),[6] *Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services* (2022),[7] and *Measures for the Management of Venues for Religious Activities* (2023).[8]

Regulatory and Policy Developments

STRICT GOVERNANCE OF RELIGION

During the 2025 reporting year, the Commission observed the launch of a coordinated campaign, led by the United Front Work Department (UFWD), to train religious personnel in the "strict

governance of religion." According to one former unregistered Protestant or "house" church pastor, the UFWD[9] instituted the "strict governance" training program based on a December 2021 conference on religious affairs work, where Xi Jinping proposed that religious groups should "comprehensively and strictly govern religion."[10] Since that time, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference chair Wang Huning, whom PRC observers and experts have characterized as highly influential,[11] has promoted the "strict governance" of religion across official religious groups.[12] UFWD head Shi Taifeng emphasized the importance of the "strict governance of religion" and called for strengthening ideological and political education during his visits to two ethnic minority regions in Gansu province: Linxia City, Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, and Kanlho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.[13]

The UFWD reportedly pioneered the "strict governance" trainings in the official Protestant church context, holding its first training in Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province for 100 head pastors of 100 "major churches" from around the country in July 2024.[14] According to the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (the joint governing bodies of the registered Protestant church in the PRC), the training focused on implementing the five-year plan for the sinicization of Christianity, including rooting out Western "colonial" influences from the Chinese Christian church, and on the importance of "strict governance of religion" to a Chinese model of church management.[15] Additional regional trainings were held throughout the reporting year, including in August, by the Ningde Municipal Taoist Association in Fujian province;[16] in February, by the Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province Catholic Patriotic Association;[17] and in April, by the Sichuan province Islamic Association.[18]

Party Control of Seminaries and Religious Education

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Chinese Communist Party sought to exert control over theological education and institutions across religious groups in an effort to ensure the political reliability of future religious leaders.[19] Scholars Peitong Jing and Karrie J. Koesel point out that, while patriotic education is required in all PRC educational institutions, the percentage mandated in seminaries is "more than double of what is required in non-religious colleges and universities," which they argue reflects PRC authorities' securitization of religion.[20] Examples of Party involvement in theological education from this year include:

- **China Taoist College.** In September 2024, China Taoist College in Beijing municipality held its 2024 fall semester opening ceremony at Baiyun Temple.[21] Chinese Taoist Association President Li Guangfu gave a speech emphasizing the importance of patriotism and ideological alignment in Taoist education.[22] Speakers called on students to uphold the principles of the "sinicization of Taoism" and to integrate socialist values into their studies and future religious service.[23]

Party Control of Seminaries and Religious Education—Continued

- **China Islamic Institute.** In September 2024, the China Islamic Institute, which provides theological education and training for imams associated with the official Islamic Association of China (IAC), held a week of military training for students.[24] In an opening speech for the training, IAC vice-president Mu Kefa told students that military training was an important component of patriotic education and would increase their "national defense consciousness."[25]
- **Jiangsu province theological institutions.** In August 2024, the Jiangsu Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission announced that authorities in the province had completed drafting syllabi for a series of courses at provincial theological schools meant to ensure that religious personnel are "politically reliable," among other goals, and that leaders of Party-controlled religious associations and theological institutions had reviewed the materials.[26]

DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION RULES ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF FOREIGNERS' RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

In April 2025, the National Religious Affairs Administration published the *Detailed Implementation Rules for the Provisions on the Administration of Foreigners' Religious Activities* (hereafter, *"Rules"*),[27] new comprehensive regulations governing the religious activities of foreigners in China that may create an even more restrictive environment for non-PRC citizens to practice their own religion or interact with Chinese believers.[28] The *Rules* focus on several areas—religious interaction between foreigners and PRC citizens,[29] facilities used for, and personnel involved in, religious activities,[30] and oversight of foreigners participating in official religious exchanges.[31]

The *Rules* institute a series of provisions to ensure all religious interaction between foreigners and Chinese citizens takes place in environments subject to government monitoring and control. According to the new regulations, foreigners may only hold "collective" religious activities in designated registered religious facilities, such as official churches, temples, or mosques,[32] and activities must be led by an approved Chinese officiant, unless the organizers can demonstrate a need for a foreigner to preside.[33] If no registered religious facility exists in a given locality, foreigners may apply to use an alternative temporary location; the *Rules* stipulate that, in general, there should only be one temporary location approved per belief system in a given county-level jurisdiction.[34] Even if a Chinese clergyperson is presiding over the religious activity, no other Chinese citizens are permitted to attend religious ceremonies organized by foreigners.[35] Speaking to a U.S.-based Catholic publication, one PRC-based cleric said that the regulations are likely intended to serve as a "protective" tool for authorities; i.e., not all foreigners who attend a religious service with Chinese citizens will be legally sanctioned, but the *Rules* give authorities recourse to legal sanctions, if they deem them necessary.[36] Another clergyperson told the same outlet that the *Rules* make it "dangerous" for local religious

believers, especially in underground communities, to have contact with foreigners, with the effect of "cutting the Chinese [Catholic] Church off from the outside world."[37] The *Rules* also target participants in religious exchanges, regulating the type and amount of religious materials that participants may bring into the PRC.[38] In the Party-run media outlet *Global Times*, the deputy director of a Zhejiang province-based research institute claimed that the new regulations would not restrict foreigners' "normal" religious activities and were meant to prevent "extremism."[39]

Buddhism (non-Tibetan), Taoism, and Folk Religion

Under Xi Jinping, the Chinese Communist Party and government have worked to balance their efforts to control Buddhism, Taoism, and Chinese folk religion with efforts to co-opt and leverage these supposedly more "sinicized" religious groups to their benefit.[40] Authorities reportedly view Taoism, a faith indigenous to China, as less susceptible to foreign influence, while Xi has lauded Buddhism as a successful model of "sinicization" and a "repository of China's traditional culture."[41] Yet the authorities have nevertheless insisted that these groups undertake ongoing efforts to more fully "sinicize," often by participating in various "red" activities, cultural events, or political trainings.[42] Examples of sinicization initiatives in the Buddhist and Taoist contexts from the Commission's 2025 reporting year include:

- The Hangzhou Municipal Taoist Association in Hangzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, organized a group of core figures from affiliated temples to travel to Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province for a "Red Education" study tour, in response to a Zhejiang province patriotic education campaign.[43] The delegation visited revolutionary sites intended to instill appreciation for the "red spirit" and urge them forward in the sinicization of religion.[44]
- To celebrate the PRC's 75th anniversary, the Jiangsu Provincial Taoist Association hosted a patriotic concert titled "Glorious 75 Years—Ode to the Motherland."[45] The concert, co-organized by the Wuxi Municipal and Jiangyin City Taoist Associations, featured traditional Taoist music troupes from Jiangsu and a repertoire blending cultural pieces with overtly patriotic content, including the recitation of a work titled, "Love the Country, Love Religion."[46]
- The Buddhist Association of Wuxi municipality, Jiangsu province, led its leadership on a patriotic study tour of revolutionary and Confucian sites in Qufu municipality, Shandong province,[47] the birthplace of Confucius.[48] Participants were directed to "cherish the revolutionary martyrs, boost cultural confidence, and enhance patriotic feelings" in an apparent effort to synthesize political, religious, and cultural identity.[49] [For more information on religious freedom for Tibetan Buddhists, see Chapter 14—Tibet.]

Islam

This past year, PRC authorities continued to suppress dissent and inculcate ideological conformity in ethnic minority Muslim communities, including in Yunnan province, following tensions over mosque

"rectifications" and other sinicization efforts.[50] In December 2024, Yuxi municipality, Yunnan province public security officials took into custody Imam **Ma Yuwei,** apparently in connection with his preaching.[51] According to a U.S.-based Muslim activist, authorities had designated Ma's Yuxi mosque as a "site of illegal religious activity" and directed the mosque to shut down its long-running Quranic study class.[52] [For more on Ma Yuwei and protests over his detention, see Chapter 6—Ethnic Minority Rights.]

Authorities have continued their efforts to limit the number and autonomy of mosques in Hui Muslim communities.[53] The Party-affiliated Islamic Association of China (IAC) has tightened control over mosque management committees, which 2023's *Measures for the Management of Venues for Religious Activities* require be formed at all mosques, and which provide a conduit for Party and government messaging to and oversight of Muslim communities.[54] Also, scholars Hannah Theaker and David Stroup documented a campaign to reduce the overall number and concentration of mosques through mergers, often under the pretense of urbanization and cost savings.[55] In Qinghai and Gansu provinces, officials were reportedly told to aim for only a single mosque per village.[56]

In March 2025, the *South China Morning Post (SCMP)* reported that just prior to Ramadan the IAC removed the traditional mosque dome and stars from its logo and website, revealing a new logo featuring only Chinese characters.[57] The rebranding also included a change in the logo's background color from green, which one expert called "integral to Islam," to blue.[58] According to *SCMP*, the IAC had already taken down all Islamic imagery from its official website.[59] [For more information on Uyghur, Hui, and other Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and other locations, please see Chapter 6—Ethnic Minority Rights and Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]

Christianity—Catholic

THE SINO-VATICAN AGREEMENT AND THE STATUS OF BISHOPS

The Chinese Communist Party continued to assert its ultimate authority over the Chinese Catholic Church, in particular by appointing bishops without papal approval,[60] despite the renewal of the Sino-Vatican Agreement, which established a process for appointing bishops mutually recognized by both parties.[61] In October 2024, the Holy See announced that it would provisionally extend the Agreement for four more years.[62] During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China ordained two bishops under the terms of the Agreement: Bishop Zhen Xuebin, coadjutor bishop of Beijing diocese, Beijing municipality in October 2024,[63] and Bishop Ji Weizhong, bishop of Luliang diocese, Luliang municipality, Shanxi province in January 2025.[64]

PRC officials also ordained two bishops in apparent contravention of the Agreement during the period following Pope Francis's death and preceding the appointment of a new pope, making Vatican approval impossible.[65] In April, the Asia-focused Catholic website *AsiaNews* said that, according to its sources, leaders in the Shanghai municipality Party-controlled official Church "summoned" local clergy and religious figures to ratify the "election" of Father Wu Jianlin

as auxiliary bishop.[66] In Xinxiang municipality, Henan province, officials reportedly facilitated the unopposed "election" of Father Li Jianlin as bishop, also during the interregnum period between popes.[67] Senior clerics in the PRC told another Catholic outlet that the decision to proceed with Father Li's "election" after the death of Pope Francis reflected the PRC's "policy of not officially acknowledging Rome in relation to episcopal appointments."[68] The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) offered little acknowledgment of Pope Francis's death, removing its brief condolence message from its home page after four days, and in Wenzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, authorities prevented even CCPA clergy from offering a Mass in memory of Pope Francis.[69]

ONGOING REPRESSION OF CATHOLIC CHURCHES

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, authorities continued to harshly suppress bishops in the unregistered Catholic Church who have refused to join the CCPA.[70] Authorities have repeatedly targeted Bishop **Peter Shao Zhumin,** appointed bishop of Wenzhou diocese in Wenzhou municipality, Zhejiang province by Pope Benedict XVI.[71] In March 2025, Wenzhou public security officials reportedly took Bishop Shao into custody in connection with a December 2024 Mass he celebrated for the Catholic Church's "Jubilee Year," which authorities said was illegal.[72] Local officials initially fined Shao for the Mass and ordered the demolition of his building, later detaining him after he refused to pay the fine.[73] Authorities have maintained ongoing pressure on both registered and unregistered Catholic churches, clergy, and laity in Wenzhou; in August 2024, Wenzhou public security officers raided a CCPA church, preventing priest Father Jin Mengxiu from celebrating Mass there.[74] In a letter protesting the raid, Father Jin—who was not the parish's priest—said that he wanted to provide the community with access to the sacraments after a diocesan reorganization left the church without a priest.[75] Public security officers have conducted regular surveillance of unregistered churches in Wenzhou, and Wenzhou religious affairs officials reportedly prevented local Catholics from participating in a planned pilgrimage.[76]

Party and government authorities also continued to restrict the unregistered Catholic bishop of Mindong diocese, Fujian province, **Guo Xijin,** to his residence, sealing his chapel.[77] According to local sources, authorities have increased restrictions on Guo since Christmas as part of an effort to pressure clergy to join the CCPA.[78]

Christianity—Protestant

Authorities continued to raid unregistered Protestant "house" churches and detain their members this reporting year, including:[79]

- **Beijing Zion Church.** In July 2024, authorities in Beijing municipality took into custody Preacher **Zhou Sirui** of Zion Church and held her in administrative detention for 14 days for the crime of "illegally carrying out activities in the name of an association with voided registration."[80] In September, authorities raided Zion Church again, detaining Zhou for another 15 days, along with Elders **Cai Jing** and **Wu Qiong.**[81] In October, authorities once again raided multiple meeting locations of Zion

Church and held Elder **Qin Guoliang** in administrative detention for 14 days for "illegally organizing a gathering."[82]

• **Early Rain Covenant Church.** In September 2024, authorities in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province, raided Early Rain Covenant Church and administratively detained Elder **Li Yingqiang,** Elder **Li Youhong,** also known as Yan Hong, Preacher **Wu Wuqing,** and Deacon **Zeng Qingtao** for 14 days.[83] Local police accused them of "illegally carrying out activities in the name of an association."[84]

• **Xinyi Village Church.** In February 2025, authorities in Panji district, Huainan municipality, Anhui province, criminally detained pastor **Zhao Hongliang** and three members of Xinyi Village Church.[85] Although Xinyi Village Church is registered with the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the church reportedly had refused to comply with requirements issued by local officials.[86]

This past year, PRC authorities continued to employ charges of "fraud" and "illegal business operations" to project a veneer of criminality onto activities that fall within the scope of normal religious activities, including establishing church-affiliated institutions and fundraising.[87] For example, in August 2024, the Yijiang District People's Court in Wuhu municipality, Anhui, held a closed trial for three Christians from Mount Carmel Church charged with "illegal business operations" for running an affiliated school.[88] The court sentenced both **Han Yanlei** and **Xie Zhifeng** to nine months in prison and sentenced **Lu Zhaojin** to nine months' imprisonment with a one year suspended sentence.[89] In June 2025, the Yaodu District People's Court in Linfen municipality, Shanxi province, handed down harsh sentences in two major "fraud" cases against house church clergy and laypeople, both premised upon donations made by church members.[90] While the court has not yet sentenced Linfen Golden Lampstand pastors **Yang Rongli** and **Wang Xiaoguang,** it sentenced 10 lay members of the church to sentences ranging from 1 year and 10 months to 9 years and 2 months in prison.[91] On the same day, the court also sentenced Linfen Covenant Church pastors **Li Jie** and **Han Xiaodong** to three years and eight months in prison.[92]

This reporting year, PRC authorities also employed exit bans to restrict the freedom of movement of Protestants associated with "house" churches, including:

• In July 2024, customs police in Macau intercepted Pastor Jin Mingri of Beijing Zion Church, preventing him from going abroad to visit his family in the United States.[93] Jin had previously been under a five-year border control period which should have ended in March 2024.[94]

• In September 2024, authorities in Dongguan municipality, Guangdong province, harassed unregistered house church pastor Xing Jinfu, asking him whether he had plans to go abroad.[95] They also pressured him to hand over his passport.[96] One leader of a U.S.-based religious freedom nongovernmental organization (NGO) speculated that this was related to worries that Xing intended to attend the Lausanne Congress, an international

Christian gathering focused on missionary work, which took place later that month.[97]

Also this year, the Commission observed PRC authorities employing various methods to censor and surveil Protestants' online expression of their religious beliefs. For example, in August 2024, authorities in Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong, took into custody Christian **Xin Ruoyu,** reportedly holding her in extrajudicial detention.[98] Xin had been involved in the development of the app "Song of Songs," which provides Chinese language hymns and sheet music.[99] Also in August 2024, Christian lawyer Xie Qida posted a Christian hymn onto his TikTok account.[100] The Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau of Xishan district, Kunming municipality, Yunnan province, issued him a notice requiring him to "delete videos of singing Christian hymns on all online media."[101] In April 2025, authorities in Song county, Henan province, issued a "Notice on the Reward for Reporting Illegal Religious Activities."[102] The Notice offered rewards for anyone reporting on people disseminating religious trainings through online platforms.[103]

Falun Gong

The Chinese Communist Party and government have continued to direct considerable resources and attention toward the suppression and persecution of Falun Gong, which they have designated a "cult organization" or *xiejiao* (邪教), a historical term that the Party has appropriated to refer to new religious movements it deems threatening to its rule.[104] Authorities have most often detained, charged, and prosecuted Falun Gong practitioners under Article 300 of the *PRC Criminal Law,* which criminalizes "organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law."[105] The Falun Gong-affiliated website *Minghui* reported the deaths of dozens of Falun Gong practitioners due to mistreatment while in custody and hundreds of cases of Falun Gong practitioners being sentenced by authorities in 2024.[106] Examples of detentions during the reporting year follow:

- In February 2025, *Minghui* reported that **Zuo Hongtao** of Qinhuangdao municipality, Hebei province, had died in prison the previous year while serving a 13-year sentence, reportedly for his involvement with Falun Gong.[107] In July 2024, prison officials at Baoding Prison, Hebei, brought Zuo to the hospital after he became critically ill, returning him to the prison after he was discharged.[108] In August, Zuo died, with *Minghui* reporting that prison officials prevented his family from seeing the body and cremated Zuo without their consent.[109]
- According to international human rights NGO Rights Defense Network (RDN), the Qindu District People's Court in Qindu county, Xianyang municipality, Shaanxi province, sentenced food inspector **Gao Xiaoying** to seven years in prison for propagating information about Falun Gong online.[110] Gao's family reported being turned away multiple times while attempting to visit him in detention and were ultimately only allowed to see him briefly before his March 2024 trial, which they were prevented from attending.[111]
- In November 2024, *Minghui* reported that the Haizhu District People's Court in Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong

province, sentenced **Zhao Ying,** a Falun Gong practitioner in her eighties, to three years and six months in prison despite her age and serious health conditions, including bladder cancer, a heart condition, and diabetes.[112] RDN additionally reported that Zhao is dying in prison.[113]

Other Religious Communities

In addition to Falun Gong, the Chinese Communist Party and government have designated 22 religious groups to be *xiejiao* and continue to subject them to persecution.[114] Authorities have engaged in a protracted and apparently nationwide crackdown against one of these groups, the Church of Almighty God (CAG), also called Eastern Lightning, launching consecutive campaigns to eradicate the religious group.[115] According to a report issued by CAG, in 2024 the Party Central Committee Political and Legal Affairs Commission coordinated the launch of a three-year "Tough Battle" campaign targeting CAG, following on the heels of its previous "General Battle" campaign.[116] In the year since the "Tough Battle" was launched, CAG reported a more than 50 percent rise in arrests.[117]

In at least two cases this past year, authorities detained Taiwanese citizens for participation in religious activities associated with supposed *xiejiao*. In October, police in Guangdong province raided a gathering of Yiguandao, a Chinese religious group with elements of Taoism, Buddhism, and folk religion, taking people into custody, including three Taiwanese participants.[118] In January 2025, police in Xiamen municipality, Fujian province, took into custody Unification Church members **Lu Chia-chen** and her husband **Chang Pi-shian** as they were holding a worship service at home.[119] On January 13, police criminally detained them on suspicion of "organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law," holding them at the Xiamen Public Security Bureau Detention Center.[120] On February 12, authorities released Chang on bail.[121]

Notes to Chapter 3—Freedom of Religion

[1] "习近平：巩固发展最广泛的爱国统一战线" [Xi Jinping: Strengthen and develop the broadest patriotic united front], *Xinhua,* May 20, 2015; "习近平在全国宗教工作会议上强调 坚持我国宗教中国化方向 积极引导宗教与社会主义社会相适应, 李克强主持 栗战书王沪宁赵乐际韩正出席 汪洋讲话" [At the National Conference on Religious Work, Xi Jinping stressed: persevere on the path of [China's] sinicization of religion and actively lead religion in the adaptation of religion to socialist society; Li Keqiang presided over the meeting, Li Zhanshu, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji, and Han Zheng attended, and Wang Yang delivered a speech], *Xinhua,* December 4, 2021; Richard Madsen, "Faith Under Party Rule: The Sinicization of Religion in China" *ChinaSource Journal,* vol. 27, no. 1, March 24, 2025, 24–25; Chit Wai John Mok, "(En)countering State-Led Sinicization: Critical Discursive Responses from Roman Catholics in China," *China Quarterly,* vol. 261, March 2025, 166–67.

[2] "中华人民共和国爱国注意教育法" [PRC Patriotic Education Law], passed October 24, 2023, effective January 1, 2024. For more on the PRC Patriotic Education Law's implications for freedom of religion in China, see Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2024," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* December 2024, 81.

[3] "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 10, 1948, art. 18; "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," United Nations, adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 18. The PRC signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) on October 5, 1998, but has not yet ratified it, despite stating repeatedly its intent to ratify including in the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2016–2020. The U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-286, §§301–309 requires the CECC to use the ICCPR's provisions to monitor compliance with human rights standards in the PRC. See also State Council Information Office, "国家人权行动计划 (2021－2025 年)" [National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2021–2025)], September 2021, sec. 2(4).

[4] "中华人民共和国宪法" [PRC Constitution], passed December 4, 1982, amended March 11, 2018, art. 36; "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 10, 1948, art. 18; "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 18.

[5] "宗教事务条例" [Regulations on Religious Affairs], issued November 30, 2004, amended June 14, 2017, effective February 1, 2018.

[6] "宗教教职人员管理办法" [Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel], effective May 1, 2021.

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[8] "宗教活动场所管理办法" [Measures for the Management of Venues for Religious Activities], passed June 29, 2023, effective September 1, 2023.

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IV. Rule of Law in the Justice System

Criminal Justice

Findings

- The criminal justice system remained a political instrument used for maintaining social order in furtherance of the Chinese Communist Party's autocratic rule. In addition to combating criminal conduct, the government also targeted individuals who pursue universal human rights, such as exercising free speech and seeking remedies within the legal system.
- Government officials arbitrarily detained political activists, religious practitioners, ethnic minorities, and rights advocates, including through extralegal means such as "black jails" and psychiatric facilities, or through criminal prosecution under offenses such as "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" or crimes endangering state security. Some detainees, particularly those held incommunicado, reported being mistreated or tortured. After entering the formal legal process, defendants sometimes faced prolonged pretrial detention, closed trials, and delayed sentencing.
- Legal mechanisms such as administrative detention, "residential surveillance at a designated location" (RSDL), and "retention in custody" were frequently employed with minimal oversight. Amendments to the *PRC Supervision Law* in late 2024 further expanded state power, introducing new coercive measures and extending permissible detention periods.

Criminal Justice

Introduction

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, PRC officials continued to use the criminal justice system and extrajudicial forms of detention to arbitrarily detain individuals. According to the database maintained by Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), PRC authorities sentenced 1,422 prisoners of conscience between January 1, 2019, and December 31, 2024, with a six-year average prison term, which increased to a seven-year average if the case involved state security charges.[1] As highlighted by a group of United Nations experts in a letter dated November 14, 2024, there continued to be "recurring patterns of repression, including incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance, aimed at restricting artistic, cultural and religious expressions, and silencing human rights defenders and dissenting or opposing views critical of the Government."[2] [For more information on arbitrary detention of ethnic minorities, the full extent of which is not reflected by the 1,422 figure above, see Chapter 6—Ethnic Minority Rights, Chapter 14—Tibet, and Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]

Arbitrary Detention

Authorities' use of arbitrary detention, including through extralegal or extrajudicial means, did not abate during this reporting year. The U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention considers a detention arbitrary if 1) it has no legal basis, 2) it is used to suppress the exercise of universal human rights, 3) the detainee's due process rights are violated, 4) asylum seekers or refugees are subjected to prolonged detention, or 5) the detention is discriminatory on grounds such as religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and political opinion.[3] Arbitrary detention violates international human rights standards[4] and China's Constitution as regards the unlawful deprivation or restriction of a person's liberty.[5] All forms of arbitrary detention violate international law, including "detention within the framework of criminal justice, administrative detention, detention in the context of migration and detention in . . . health-care settings."[6]

United States Citizens Arbitrarily Detained in China

At a hearing held in September 2024, the Commission received testimony on the issue of U.S. citizens being wrongfully detained in China and laid out measures to raise awareness and to secure their release.[7] Some of these wrongful detentions were part of a campaign around 2013 to clean up "foreign trash"; some were connected to economic disputes; and some were the result of the PRC government's effort to suppress fundamental freedoms.[8] Sources indicate that at least 20 Americans were wrongfully detained in China and many more were prevented from leaving China (i.e., exit ban) without any legally prescribed time limitation or method of remediation.[9] In November 2024, the PRC government released three of the wrongfully detained Americans.[10]

Extrajudicial Detention

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Reports of enforced disappearance continued to emerge this past year.[11] Enforced disappearance is any form of deprivation of a person's liberty carried out by the government or with its acquiescence, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the detention or to disclose the detainee's whereabouts.[12] The U.N. Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances reported that there were 144 outstanding cases of enforced disappearance as of May 2024, and CHRD documented 33 such cases in its database, 9 of which took place between January and August 2024.[13] Rights lawyer **Gao Zhisheng,** for example, remained missing for over seven years as of April 2025.[14]

BLACK JAILS

The informal term "black jail" refers to buildings such as hotels and training centers that government officials or their agents use to detain people.[15] These extralegal detention facilities operate under different names, including "assistance and service centers" and "legal education centers."[16] Their existence and use have no legal basis, and people detained in such sites—many of whom are petitioners[17] and Falun Gong practitioners[18]—do not know when they will be released and do not have any procedural protection.[19] A former government official reported that almost all grievances brought by petitioners remained unresolved, and that petitioners ran the risk of being detained in "black jails."[20] Of the many instances of black jail detentions documented in Shanghai municipality during this reporting year, only two petitioners received acknowledgement from police that the detention that they had experienced was illegal.[21]

PSYCHIATRIC FACILITIES

Forcibly committing individuals without mental illness to psychiatric facilities (*bei jingshenbing,* 被精神病) for acts such as expressing political opinions or grievances against the government continued during this past year,[22] despite domestic legal provisions prohibiting such abuse.[23] In particular, the nonbinding "U.N. Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care" provides that a "determination that a person has a mental illness shall be made in accordance with internationally accepted medical standards" and must not be based on "political . . . or any other reason not directly relevant to mental health status."[24] Human rights organization Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch documented nine cases of forcible commitment to psychiatric facilities in 2024 across China, although the actual number could not be discerned due to authorities' efforts to suppress this type of information.[25] Most of the documented cases involved longtime petitioners who tried to expose corruption or other misconduct by local officials.[26]

ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION

Chinese authorities continued to suppress freedoms—such as protest,[27] movement,[28] and religion[29]—through administrative de-

tention,[30] which is among several types of administrative penalties authorized by the *PRC Public Security Administration Punishment Law* and the *PRC Administrative Penalty Law*[31] and which is referenced in about 90 domestic laws and regulations.[32] Some political detainees are further subjected to criminal detention and prosecution after completion of administrative detention.[33]

In June 2025, the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) revised the *PRC Public Security Administration Punishment Law* to provide for additional offenses that do not rise to the level of crimes and that are punishable administratively outside of the judicial system.[34] These new offenses include school bullying, abuse of vulnerable individuals, pyramid schemes, unlawful sale of personal data, and disrupting the operation of public transportation.[35] In particular, the new offense of disparaging heroes and martyrs, including through one's attire, sparked public discourse, with many people expressing concern because the offense is vaguely defined.[36] Tracking the language in the *PRC Criminal Procedure Law*, the revision added a provision authorizing public security officials to collect biometric samples of a person under investigation.[37] In addition to Party leadership, the revision also codifies the "comprehensive management" principle,[38] which may suggest the extent of the law's application given authorities' emphasis on this governance approach. [For information on the "comprehensive management center" system, see Chapter 5—Governance and Rule of Law.]

RETENTION IN CUSTODY

The *PRC Supervision Law* (Supervision Law)[39] authorizes the National Supervisory Commission (NSC) and its local branches to investigate suspected official misconduct using methods including "retention in custody" (*liuzhi,* 留置), which allows the NSC and its local branches to hold individuals for up to six months without legal representation.[40] The law applies to "Communist Party members or public sector personnel—virtually anyone working directly or indirectly for the government."[41]

Between 2017 and November 2024, "at least 218 liuzhi centers have been built, renovated or expanded across China to accommodate the new detention system . . .," as shown by tender notices reviewed by *CNN*.[42] In 2023 alone, authorities held over 26,000 individuals under retention in custody, during which allegations of torture and mistreatment continued to emerge.[43]

In December 2024, the NPCSC amended the *PRC Supervision Law*.[44] The amended law, which took effect in June 2025, created new types of compulsory measures that restrict people's liberty for periods shorter than retention in custody; these are—compulsory appearance (*qiangzhi dao'an,* 强制到案), confinement (*jinbi,* 禁闭), and protective care (*guanhu,* 管护).[45] The amendment also lengthened the potential period of retention in custody by adding a two-month extension for offenses that carry a minimum of 10 years' imprisonment and by resetting the clock for calculating maximum length of retention in custody if new offenses are discovered.[46] [For more information on the use of retention in custody by local government officials to extract money from entrepreneurs, see Chapter 5—Governance and Rule of Law .]

Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location

Chinese authorities continued to abuse the form of detention known as "residential surveillance at a designated location" (RSDL, *zhiding jusuo jianshi juzhu,* 指定居所监视居住), which the *PRC Criminal Procedure Law* reserves for situations where the detainee does not have a permanent residence or if the case involves state security or terrorism.[47] The law does not provide for the right to family visits or the disclosure of the detention location, requiring only that the family be notified of the fact of the detention within 24 hours if possible.[48] The law further subjects counsel visits to approval by the investigation unit.[49] A group of U.N. experts deemed RSDL "analogous to incommunicado and secret detention and tantamount to enforced disappearance," all of which heighten the risk of torture and abuse.[50] Given the measure's lack of effective oversight and legal certainty, some experts have called for it to be abolished.[51]

In one instance, the government displayed a lack of commitment to investigating allegations of abuse that took place during RSDL. Testimony given at a court hearing revealed that between September 2023 and January 2024, police detained over 20 company employees suspected of fraud in a villa complex in Zhengzhou municipality, Henan province.[52] The male detainees were shackled in groups of about 10, including at night, when they slept on mattresses on the floor while still being bound.[53] Some defendants said police ordered them to crawl on the floor and kicked them in the chin.[54] The shackles caused lacerations, and the accumulation of rust necessitated firefighters' assistance to unbind.[55] The prosecutor, however, declined to confirm the allegations, claiming that the police officers responsible for the detention could not recall which detainees were shackled.[56] The prosecutor also said that footage from surveillance cameras had all been overwritten.[57] A Beijing-based lawyer commenting on the case explained that detention under RSDL should provide for normal living conditions and that the use of shackles was subject to a strict approval process, the violation of which could constitute abuse of power, a criminal offense.[58]

Torture and Abuse

China has ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which mandates that each State Party take effective measures to prevent acts of torture within its territory.[59] Reports of torture, mistreatment, and custodial death, however, continued to emerge this past year, as illustrated in some of the cases listed at the end of this chapter.[60]

In some cases, police officers who perpetrated torture faced criminal prosecution.[61] For example, on February 13, 2025, a court in Baoding municipality, Hebei province, tried eight officers on the charges of "intentional injury" and "extracting confession through torture."[62] In 2022, the officers involved held 10 individuals under RSDL in a guesthouse, the northwest quarter of which was reserved for holding detainees.[63] The interrogators struck the detainees in the face and beat them using belts, pipes, pickaxe handles, and electric batons.[64] One detainee died after 13 days, and another suffered broken ribs.[65] When the detainees were not being interrogated, se-

curity guards would shackle them, order them to sit on metal chairs, and deprive them of adequate food.[66] Most of the defendants were young police officers who had received interrogation training from a co-defendant who lacked proper police credentials.[67] The court had not made a ruling as of February 2025.[68]

Denial of Counsel and Family Visits

The Commission observed cases in which Chinese authorities denied detainees the right to counsel and family visits in violation of international law.[69] While domestic legal provisions permit counsel and family visits, they do not describe such visits as rights.[70] In particular, the *PRC Criminal Procedure Law* does not provide for family visits per se but permits visitation only if the family member is acting as a defense representative.[71] The law likewise circumscribes counsel visits during the investigation phase in cases of endangering state security or terrorist activities, requiring prior permission from relevant authorities.[72]

For example, authorities prevented **Xu Guang's** family from visiting him since May 2022, when he was detained.[73] In 2023, the Xihu District People's Court in Hangzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, sentenced Xu to four years in prison for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" in connection with his call for rectifying the violent suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen protests.[74] Authorities denied Xu's family members' request to attend the trial and their subsequent attempt to deliver personal use items to him at the Hangzhou Beijiao Prison, where he was serving his sentence.[75]

In another case, the mother of **Niu Tengyu** recounted how authorities threatened and harassed multiple lawyers to prevent them from providing legal representation.[76] Based on allegations that Niu had disclosed information about Xi Jinping's relatives, authorities detained Niu in 2019, holding him under RSDL, and sentenced him in 2020 to a total of 14 years in prison.[77] Government officials in Maoming municipality, Guangdong province, on different occasions demanded that the lawyers withdraw from the case, threatening them with detention and license revocation.[78] Officials also harassed some of them through telephone calls, texts, and personal visits and in one instance denied access to the case file.[79]

Selected Cases of Arbitrary Detention

Name PPD Record No.	**Case Summary (as of June 30, 2025)**
Cao Kexiong **曹可雄** 2025-00093	**Issue:** Involuntary commitment to a psychiatric hospital for political speech **Summary:** In December 2024, police forcibly committed Cao Kexiong to the Zigong Mental Health Center in Zigong municipality, Sichuan province.[80] Cao's detention reportedly was related to his social media posts in which he criticized government policies and voiced support for vulnerable groups.[81] Authorities previously detained Cao on multiple occasions.[82] In May 2024, for example, authorities administratively detained Cao on the charge of "falsifying facts to disrupt public order"; they later transferred him to the same psychiatric hospital.[83] During this detention, Cao was subjected to electroconvulsive therapy and was forced to take medication before being released in July.[84]
Gao Zhen **高缜** 2024-00161	**Issue:** Sculptor charged with "injuring the reputation of a hero or martyr" for political artwork **Summary:** In August 2024, police officers took into custody artist Gao Zhen at his residence and studio in Sanhe city, Langfang municipality, Hebei province.[85] Police searched his studio, installed surveillance cameras, and seized artwork, books, and computer hard drives.[86] Authorities held Gao at the Sanhe PSB Detention Center on suspicion of "insulting or slandering heroes and martyrs," reportedly in connection with his artwork, including art with the theme of reassessing Mao Zedong's rule.[87] Authorities denied Gao visits from his family and lawyer.[88] Gao is a lawful permanent resident of the United States, and his minor son is an American citizen.[89]
He Zongwang **何宗旺** 2017-00403	**Issue:** Rights defender detained for "assaulting a police officer" **Summary:** In December 2023, police summoned He Zongwang and demanded that he surrender his phone.[90] When He asked to see a notice of summons, one of the police officers present began shouting.[91] Police administratively detained He and later criminally charged him with "assaulting a police officer," citing an officer's minor injury caused by He's attempt to resist being handcuffed.[92] Authorities sentenced He to one year and three months in prison, releasing him in March 2025.[93] A commentary noted an uptick in people being criminally charged for minor scuffles or verbal altercations with police—a trend implicitly addressed by a January 2025 Supreme People's Court interpretation, which requires that violent acts toward police officers be weighed in light of any police misconduct.[94]
Tang Gaofeng and five others **唐高峰** 2025-00009	**Issue:** Democracy advocates sentenced for "subversion" **Summary:** On December 2, 2024, the Sichuan High People's Court affirmed the convictions of six individuals, namely, Tang Gaofeng, Wang Wei, Wang Yifei, Zhou Dan, Liu Zhengang, and Dai Lu, who had been sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from 3 to 12 years.[95] On April 24, 2024, the Luzhou Intermediate People's Court convicted them of "subversion of state power" based on their participation in a political group called "China Democratic Victory Party," which Tang founded in 2008.[96] The court found that the group held its first meeting in October 2011, during which the group passed governing documents declaring their purpose to be toppling the Chinese Communist Party's leadership and changing the socialist system.[97]

Name PPD Record No.	**Case Summary (as of June 30, 2025)**
Wang Yu 王宇 2015-00252	**Issue:** Rights lawyer mistreated during administrative detention **Summary:** In October 2024, while representing her client in Handan municipality, Hebei province, lawyer Wang Yu was falsely accused by police of "disrupting a workplace" and ordered to serve nine days of administrative detention.[98] Wang went on a hunger strike to protest her wrongful detention and mistreatment, which included deprivation of adequate food and potable water.[99]
Xie Yang 谢阳 2015-00295	**Issue:** Prolonged pretrial detention and degrading treatment suffered by rights lawyer **Summary:** After over three years of detention beginning in January 2022, rights lawyer Xie Yang continued to await trial on the charge of "inciting subversion of state power" in connection with his voicing support for a victim of forcible commitment to a psychiatric hospital and other rights advocacy activities.[100] Xie experienced degrading treatment, including being subjected to a strip search and cavity search as a condition to meet with his lawyer, and being ordered to perform a recorded strip dance in front of police officers.[101] His lawyer also reported unlawful interruption and obstruction of a meeting with Xie by police at the detention center.[102] Authorities previously detained Xie on the same charge during a nationwide and coordinated crackdown on legal professionals around July 2015.[103]
Yang Chih-yuan 楊智淵 2024-00169	**Issue:** Crime of "separatism" expanded to cover Taiwan citizen **Summary:** Effective June 21, 2024, the *Opinion on Lawfully Punishing Obstinate "Taiwan Independence" Offenders for Committing or Inciting Separatism (22 Guidelines)* was jointly issued by five official bodies of the PRC, namely, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of State Security, and the Ministry of Justice.[104] The document lays out circumstances under which activities promoting "Taiwan independence" may constitute the crime of "separatism" under Article 103 of the *PRC Criminal Law,* as well as factors relevant to sentencing.[105] In terms of procedure, the guidelines provide that the statute of limitations may be extended indefinitely for people who avoid investigation or trial and that they may be tried in absentia.[106] The guidelines further specify that the death penalty may be imposed for crimes with undefined attendant circumstances that are especially serious.[107] Following the issuance of the *22 Guidelines,* activist Yang Chih-yuan was sentenced to nine years in prison for "separatism," the first Taiwanese national to be convicted on this charge.[108]
Yao Xilin and nine others 姚西林 2025-00026	**Issue:** Christians in Tibet indicted as cult members **Summary:** In December 2024, authorities in Linzhi (Nyingtri) municipality, Tibet Autonomous Region, indicted Yao Xilin and nine other Christians on the charge of "organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law" because they publicly talked about the Christian doctrine of original sin.[109] Contemporaneously, similar cases were reported in Hubei and Henan provinces.[110]

Name PPD Record No.	Case Summary (as of June 30, 2025)
Zhang Wenpeng **张文鹏** 2025-00071	**Issue:** Lawyer punished for speaking out against official corruption **Summary:** In September 2024, police in Sanya municipality, Hainan province, detained intern lawyer Zhang Wenpeng on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" after he advocated for his corporate client online.[111] Detention center officials restrained him with leg cuffs for at least seven days, causing lacerations and unhealed wounds on his ankles.[112] Zhang's lawyer wrote a complaint about authorities unlawfully preventing her client from reviewing the evidence against him.[113] In March 2024, authorities in Shenzhen municipality detained Zhang, stripped him naked and subjected him to interrogation for eight hours.[114] The detention was requested by authorities in Qingdao municipality, Shandong province, after Zhang publicly accused the head of the Qingdao Justice Bureau in 2022 of corruption and dereliction of duty.[115] Although Zhang had fulfilled his internship requirements, authorities refused to approve his law license application because of his activism.[116] In a separate case, the Beijing Justice Bureau revoked lawyer Zhang Qingfang's law license in September 2024, accusing him of "hyping up" cases online.[117] Zhang Qingfang previously represented detained democracy advocate Xu Zhiyong and had made complaints about corrupt practices by officials in the judicial and procuratorate bodies.[118]
Zhang Zhan **张展** 2020-00175	**Issue:** Use of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" offense to suppress information and rights advocacy **Summary:** About three months after completing her four-year sentence for reporting on the COVID-19 outbreak, citizen journalist and disbarred lawyer Zhang Zhan was detained again in August 2024 in Xianyang municipality, Shaanxi province.[119] The detention took place after Zhang received written consent to serve as a representative to help secure the release of detained activist Zhang Pancheng.[120] According to the indictment, the procuratorate recommended sentencing in the range of four to five years for the charge of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."[121]
Zhu Hengpeng **朱恒鹏** 2025-00070	**Issue:** Enforced disappearance following critical comments on China's economy **Summary:** Zhu Hengpeng, an economist at a state-run think tank, was reportedly detained in spring 2024, and his whereabouts remained unknown as of September.[122] His detention was believed to be related to his comments made in a private chat group about China's sluggish economy or comments about Xi Jinping's mortality.[123]

Notes to Chapter 4—Criminal Justice

[1]"In a Prison Cell Waiting for Daybreak," *Chinese Human Rights Defenders,* March 2025, 3, 5.
[2]Gabriella Citroni et al., "Letter," *U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,* AL CHN 15/2024, November 14, 2024, 1.
[3]See, e.g., Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, U.N. Human Rights Council, "Opinions Adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at Its 78th session, 19–27 April 2017," *United Nations,* A/HRC/WGAD/2017/5, July 28, 2017, 1.
[4]"International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 9. "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," *United Nations Treaty Collections,* Chapter IV Human Rights. The PRC signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) on October 5, 1998, but has not yet ratified it, despite stating repeatedly its intent to ratify including in the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2016–2020. The U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-286, §§301–309 requires the CECC to use the ICCPR's provisions to monitor compliance with human rights standards in the PRC. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *United Nations,* December 10, 1948, art. 9.
[5]"中华人民共和国宪法" [PRC Constitution], passed December 4, 1982, amended March 11, 2018, art. 37.
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V. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

Governance and Rule of Law

Findings

- The Chinese Communist Party continued to advance a governance model that prioritizes political security and social stability at the expense of individual rights. The Party's early intervention strategy in addressing social problems led to overzealous enforcement and an expansion of surveillance within a climate of ongoing suppression of citizens' access to justice—likely contributing to the very anti-social behaviors the government sought to contain. The Party's uncontested power also perpetuated a lack of transparency and public oversight, hampering institutional reforms and enabling persistent systemic corruption.
- The Party framed governance around risk prevention, using stability maintenance measures that draw from the "Fengqiao Experience" policy, a way to exert granular social and political control through neighborhood committees and other grassroots-level organizations. In implementing the policy, authorities expanded early intervention tactics, targeting individuals based on vague behavioral markers using techniques such as artificial intelligence analytics to enable preemptive intervention.
- Parallel to these security-driven measures, fiscal pressure on local governments spurred aggressive revenue-generation tactics such as retroactive taxes, arbitrary fines, and asset seizure. In some cases, authorities arbitrarily detained business owners and conditioned their release on the payment of money, a practice that some critics likened to state-sanctioned extortion.
- Policymakers issued a new five-year plan with the aim of easing rural-to-urban migration restrictions so as to facilitate labor mobility and urbanization. Challenges in resource allocation, however, will likely continue, since the plan does not emphasize the provision of public services for new migrants in cities or for the elderly and disabled residents who remain in rural areas.
- In areas such as food and drug safety, authorities demonstrated a degree of responsiveness following exposés by state-run media, suggesting some space for public discourse. Nevertheless, efforts by independent investigators were censored, underscoring the government's intolerance of unsanctioned scrutiny and its broader resistance to bottom-up accountability.

Governance and Rule of Law

The Chinese Communist Party continued to advance a governance model that prioritizes political security and social stability at the expense of individual rights.[1] The Party's early intervention strategy in addressing social problems led to overzealous enforcement and an expansion of surveillance within a climate of ongoing suppression of citizens' access to justice—likely contributing to the very anti-social behaviors the government sought to contain. The Party's uncontested power also perpetuates a lack of transparency and public oversight, hampering institutional reform and enabling persistent systemic corruption.[2]

Risk Management as a Governance Goal

At the annual meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC) held in March 2025, Premier Li Qiang presented the government's work report, touting steady economic growth within a stable social context and highlighting the government's effective use of risk management measures.[3] The types of risks requiring mitigation and prevention included financial, environmental, manufacturing, and social risks, and risk associated with local government debt.[4] Concerning social risks, the government sought to detect and resolve them early at the grassroots level.[5] To this end, the report outlined plans to continue to integrate the petitioning system into the legal system and to standardize the "comprehensive management center" system as part of the broader "Fengqiao Experience" policy,[6] which, according to some observers, is a way to exert granular social and political control through neighborhood committees and other grassroots-level organizations.[7]

Tighter Control over Risk Management

In managing social risk, officials continued to rely on punishment and government-led intervention, rather than on improving access to justice or civil society support as ways to address citizens' grievances. Symptoms of "social risk" that emerged this reporting year include a series of protests[8] and mass attacks.[9] One of the nine mass attacks in 2024 documented by *Reuters* took place in November in Zhuhai municipality, Guangdong province, where "[a] 62-year-old man killed 35 people and severely injured 43 by driving a car into a crowd. . . [reportedly because he was] upset about the split of assets in his divorce settlement."[10] General Secretary Xi Jinping issued a directive in response, calling on government officials "to strengthen measures to prevent and control the source of risks and to promptly resolve disputes."[11] The Supreme People's Procuratorate characterized the mass attacks as "acts of revenge against society" and vowed to impose heavy punishment swiftly, even in cases from over 20 years ago and past the statute of limitations.[12] Court officials dispatched the Zhuhai case swiftly: the assailant in the attack was sentenced to death in a closed proceeding on December 27, 2024, and was executed on January 20, 2025, about 10 weeks after the incident.[13] [For more information on the suppression of reporting on the mass attacks, see Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression.]

Government officials continued implementing the existing policy of early intervention and indicated that these efforts would intensify.[14] Shortly after Xi issued the directive, over a dozen local governments announced responsive actions, identifying broad categories of people as targets for monitoring, including people who are disillusioned with life, people with low social or economic status, and people with disharmonious relationships.[15] In one example, a risk supervision department in Hangzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, cited a worker for not smiling and demanded rectification by the employer within four days.[16]

Against the backdrop of the crackdown on rights lawyers and the destruction of civil society since 2015, one scholar speculated that the motivation underlying the mass attacks could be a sense of injustice.[17] Other experts expressed concern that tighter internal security measures and attempts to intervene early in social conflicts could generate additional pressure points and would "do little to reassure people discomfited by the recent high-profile violence."[18]

Comprehensive Management

"Comprehensive management" (*zonghe zhili,* 综合治理) was introduced as a governance approach over four decades ago, and has been institutionalized since 1991; it has reemerged as an important policy-planning strategy in recent years.[19] Early intervention efforts within the framework of comprehensive management are overseen by the Communist Party Central Committee Political and Legal Affairs Commission (PLAC).[20] In January 2025, the PLAC outlined its goal of unifying different government functions and processes for handling citizens' requests in one location—including services relating to litigation, legal consultation, and petition reception.[21] The plan also aimed to improve information sharing among government bodies and use technologies such as artificial intelligence and behavioral analytics to monitor and give alerts regarding public security challenges.[22] The Henan provincial government, for example, established comprehensive management centers consistent with the central government's plan, with the added emphasis of combating criminal activity.[23] A Henan Party official reported that there was, on average, one such center for each of the province's 175 administrative jurisdictions at or above the county level, with an additional 23 centers among its 184 development zones.[24]

According to an official news outlet, the government in Yuhang district, Hangzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, established one of the first neighborhood-level comprehensive management centers in 2004.[25] A Party official in the district reported that the center facilitates pretrial settlements and recently saw a noticeable reduction in the number of disputes, including those involving petitioning.[26] Despite such claims, authorities in Yuhang have a record of resorting to arbitrary detention to suppress petitioners.[27]

Petitioning System

The petitioning system (*xinfang,* 信访), also known as the "letters and visits system," is led by the Party's Society Work Department and administered by the National Public Complaints and Proposals

Administration.[28] The system operates outside the formal judicial system as a channel through which citizens present their grievances in hopes of triggering discretionary involvement of Party officials to provide a resolution.[29] Although petitioners rarely see any results, the system remains widely used, especially among people who lack the financial means to file court cases.[30]

As authorities sought to resolve social disputes, the petitioning system continued to be a source of tension between citizens and the government and in some cases generated additional grievances. This phenomenon is in part due to the deployment of public security forces in suppressing petitioners, a practice motivated by the fact that since 2005 local officials' performance evaluation has been tied to the number of petitions being filed.[31] Public security officials restrict petitioners' liberty, detaining and returning them to their place of origin, thereby neglecting the underlying social grievances.[32] In October 2024, for example, authorities in Jiangsu province detained 72-year-old **Xu Dongqing** and her daughter **Yang Li** in connection with their petitions concerning alleged fraudulent land seizure by the local government.[33] Officials at the Changzhou Municipal PSB Detention Center shackled Yang Li for four days and deprived her and her mother of necessary medications.[34] In addition, a police officer and a procurator charged that Xu and Yang were responsible for the large sum of expenses incurred in having to surveil and intercept them during their repeated petitioning attempts.[35]

Revenue-Driven Law Enforcement

Mounting debt and a slowing economy motivated some local governments to use fines and other law enforcement methods to generate revenue. By way of background, local governments in the 1990s set up financing vehicles in response to a tax reform that allocated more revenues to the central government and away from them.[36] These financing vehicles were generally state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that raised money primarily to fund infrastructure projects.[37] Given the opacity of this arrangement, the central government prohibited SOEs from taking on additional debt and attributing it to local governments (known as "hidden debt" because it is off the government's balance sheet).[38] Some economists estimated this debt to be between US$7 and $11 trillion, with a substantial portion being at risk of default.[39] While some SOEs were able to adjust their business models to pay down the debt with profits or to shift the debt to the government, some of them had more difficulty, especially those in less affluent provinces.[40] The central government announced plans in November 2024 to swap some portions of hidden debt with bonds, which could reduce the burden of interest payments.[41] According to one scholar, however, the measure was expected to bring only marginal improvement.[42]

With debt repayment exceeding revenue, local governments experienced difficulties providing public services and resorted to abusive tactics to generate revenue.[43] According to the *Wall Street Journal,* "In cities such as Wuhan, Dalian and Guangzhou, public healthcare systems have cut medical benefits. Last year, a bus company in Shangqiu nearly suspended operations due to [a shortage in govern-

ment subsidies]."[44] To fill the funding gap, local governments asked companies to pay back taxes, and law enforcement stepped up efforts to collect fines and fees and to seize assets.[45] Some experts described the tax collection practice as arbitrary, and public sources suggested that there had been nearly 10,000 incidents in which police had frozen companies' assets in Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province, alone.[46] Measures taken by local authorities—such as citing residents for unwashed dishes and issuing traffic tickets based on false claims—had doubled revenue from fines compared to a decade ago, making up at least 10 percent of revenues in some cities across China.[47] Central authorities reportedly were concerned that excessive fines might spark public discontent.[48]

In some cases, law enforcement resorted to what some called "extortion" to raise money.[49] One audio recording revealed an official from Shandong province demanding that an entrepreneur pay a substantial fine and threatening to destroy their business by amplifying a small issue.[50] Some local anti-corruption officials detained businesspeople based on unsubstantiated allegations of impropriety and released them upon payment of money.[51] While a central official assured wronged business owners that the government would offer assistance, authorities censored an economist who wrote about this form of abuse.[52]

Household Registration Reform

Moving in the general policy direction of gradually removing restrictions on internal migration, the State Council released a five-year plan in August 2024 to relax the household registration (*hukou,* 户口) system to encourage urbanization.[53] The hukou system designates a place of registration as either urban or rural and ties access to resources (such as medical care, health insurance, and social welfare) to a person's place of registration.[54] Under current law, changing address within the same type of *hukou* requires re-registration, and moving a *hukou* from a rural area to a city requires approval by a government body in the city.[55] The five-year plan proposes to lift restrictions for moving a rural *hukou* to a city with a population of under 3 million and to relax those for a city with a population of between 3 and 5 million.[56] The plan does not propose to alter the existing restrictions for the 29 cities with a population of over 5 million, but it encourages that the quota for the score-based *hukou* transfer policy be removed.[57] Moreover, the plan calls on local governments to ensure that their registered residents have access to basic public services, vocational training, and education for the accompanying children.[58] While *hukou* reform may promote labor mobility, economic integration, and social equity, challenges in resource allocation, such as providing public services for new migrants in cities and for elderly and disabled residents who remain in rural areas, would likely continue.[59]

Food and Drug Safety Concerns and Government Response

Public discourse revealed that the desire of government and private companies to cut costs has negatively affected food and drug safety. The government responded with law enforcement and

rulemaking efforts, but it censored information that undermined the validity of the official narrative.

COOKING OIL SCANDAL

In July 2024, state media outlet *Beijing News* revealed that tankers were routinely being used to transport both fuel and food products such as soybean oil and syrup without proper cleaning, prompting public concern over food contamination that could lead to poisoning.[60] People involved in the transportation process reportedly were aware of the practice but opted to skip proper cleaning due to narrowing profit margins.[61] Existing standards for transporting cooking oil had limited binding effect, and the inspection procedures were completed in a perfunctory manner, according to the report.[62]

In response, the National Standardization Administration issued a set of mandatory standards, which specifies that a tank used to transport non-food products should not be used to transport edible oil.[63] The Food Safety Commission also launched an investigation with other government bodies, imposing administrative penalties, and the Supreme People's Procuratorate indicated that serious offenses could lead to criminal liability.[64]

GENERIC DRUGS' EFFICACY

At an official meeting held in January 2025 in Shanghai municipality, a group of 20 physicians called attention to the problem of inconsistent efficacy of domestically produced medicines.[65] For instance, the dosage of one generic anesthetic needed to be increased by three- to fourfold to match the efficacy of the original brand-name drug, and one doctor reported that some patients would regain consciousness prematurely.[66] Drugs used in the public health care system are purchased through a centralized volume-based procurement process overseen by the National Healthcare Security Administration (NHSA), which favors domestic generic drugs for their cost savings, in some cases to the exclusion of imported drugs.[67] Some observers noted that the government's monopoly over procurement deprives physicians and patients of treatment options.[68] Accordingly, the physicians proposed that patients be given the option to be prescribed and pay for brand-name drugs and receive pro rata reimbursement.[69] While the NHSA said that it welcomed feedback from "whistleblowers," the proposal's main author closed his social media account for unknown reasons, and he was rumored to have been questioned by the government and disciplined by the hospital where he worked.[70]

Writing separately, two physicians raised doubt about the generic drug approval process in online articles, which were soon taken down.[71] To be eligible for procurement, a generic drug must be shown to have efficacy comparable to the original drug.[72] But the physicians pointed out that the data submitted for different drugs were identical, which was impossible given variations in people's metabolism.[73] The National Medical Products Administration claimed that these entries were a result of editorial errors, but it later updated the original data without explaining the reason behind the multiple instances of identical datasets.[74]

Systemic Corruption

Following the sustained anti-corruption campaign that was launched in 2012 and the convictions of 4.7 million government officials, corruption still remained "the biggest threat" to the Party and continued to worsen, as Xi Jinping declared at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) held in January 2025.[75] The plenary session report identified 10 priority areas—including healthcare, state-owned enterprises, and construction—and called for strengthening political supervision, including over officials' family members in their business dealings.[76] The report also noted forthcoming legislation for combating international corruption and a three-year reform plan that would institutionalize a "culture of probity."[77] According to a report prepared by the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), however, the lack of transparency, the absence of external oversight, and incentives for corruption entrenched in the bureaucratic system are among many factors that impede the central government's anti-corruption efforts.[78] The ODNI report also highlighted the fact that "as of 2024, Xi's family retains millions in business interests and financial investments."[79]

Rulemaking Efforts

In 2024, the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) passed 6 laws, amended 13, and adopted 3 decisions during the six sessions that it held.[80] Continuing a trend that began in 2018, all major legislation passed in 2024—including a new law concerning preschool education—contained language requiring obedience to the Party.[81] Relevant rulemaking efforts include the following:

- **Rural development.** The *PRC Rural Collective Economic Organizations (RCEOs) Law,* effective in May 2025, was enacted by the NPCSC to clarify the role of management and operations of RCEOs in advancing the government's rural revitalization strategy.[82] Having roots in a collective ownership model developed in the 1950s, RCEOs are legal entities that perform economic activities on behalf of their rural resident members and that serve as vehicles for implementing rural governance and providing basic public services.[83] The law contains provisions that improve oversight and accountability, such as requiring an auditing mechanism and granting members the right to access accounting information.[84] These provisions may prevent farmers' land from being unjustly expropriated by local officials.[85] Some observers, however, expressed concern that the new law would have the effect of augmenting the Party's top-down control over rural areas, thereby diminishing farmers' autonomy.[86] [For information on the law's potential implications on women's property rights in rural areas, see Chapter 7—Status of Women.]
- **Public health.** The NPCSC amended three laws relating to public health and emergency response, namely, the *PRC Emergency Response Law,* the *PRC Border Health and Quarantine Law,* and the *PRC Law on the Prevention and Control of Infec-*

tious Diseases.[87] Drawing partly from the COVID-19 experience, the amendments emphasize central planning, expand provisions for movement restrictions on individuals, and require information sharing (such as health code and contact tracing) to contain the spread of disease.[88] In particular, the *PRC Emergency Response Law* strengthens control over information flow, prohibiting the spread of false information and requiring the government to provide "service and guidance" to media outlets.[89] Since the amendment does not outline the specific manner of implementation, it is unclear whether or how the provision will affect press freedom.[90] The PRC government has a record of disallowing independent media coverage before official announcements are made.[91] A related law on public health emergency response was introduced in September 2024 but remained in draft form as of May 2025.[92]

- **Delegates law.** The NPCSC amended the *PRC Law on Deputies to the National People's Congress and to the Local People's Congresses at Various Levels (Delegates Law)* primarily to require political obedience and emphasize interaction with citizens and other government bodies.[93] According to an analysis, the amendment codifies various existing procedural and institutional reforms across different localities, improving uniformity of delegates' function of conveying public opinion on non-political issues such as education, environment, healthcare, and employment.[94]
- **Constitutional analysis.** As part of the effort to improve implementation of constitutional provisions, the Legislative Affairs Commission (LAC) of the NPCSC in December 2024 reported on its findings that the constitutional guarantee of public assistance for incapacitated people extends to people with a criminal record and that overly broad or arbitrary restrictions on employment are inconsistent with the constitutional principle upholding people's rights and obligations to work.[95] One legal expert underscored "the governance implications of the rise in minor crimes" as a policy concern and noted approvingly the LAC's invocation of specific constitutional provisions in its review.[96]

[For information on the amendment to the *PRC Supervision Law* and revision to the *PRC Public Security Administration Punishment Law,* see Chapter 4—Criminal Justice. For information on the *Marriage Registration Regulations,* see Chapter 7—Status of Women. For information on the NPCSC's *Decision on Gradually Raising the Statutory Retirement Age,* see Chapter 10—Worker Rights.]

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80 Changhao Wei & Taige Hu, "Year in Review: The NPC and the Observer in 2024," *NPC Observer,* December 31, 2024; "Previous Sessions," *National People's Congress,* accessed May 16, 2025.

[81] Changhao Wei & Taige Hu, "Year in Review: The NPC and the Observer in 2024," *NPC Observer,* December 31, 2024; "中华人民共和国学前教育法" [PRC Preschool Education Law], passed November 8, 2024, effective June 1, 2025, art. 4.
[82] "中华人民共和国农村集体经济组织法" [PRC Law on Rural Collective Economic Organizations], passed June 28, 2024, effective May 1, 2025, art. 1; "全国人大常委会法工委相关负责人权威解读农村集体经济组织法" [Official from the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee provides authoritative interpretation of the Law on Rural Collective Economic Organizations], *Legal Daily,* reprinted in *Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs,* July 2, 2024.
[83] "中华人民共和国民法典" [PRC Civil Code], passed May 28, 2020, effective, January 1, 2021, art. 99; "中华人民共和国农村集体经济组织法" [PRC Law on Rural Collective Economic Organizations], passed June 28, 2024, effective May 1, 2025, art. 36. "全国人大常委会法工委相关负责人权威解读农村集体经济组织法" [Official from the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee provides authoritative interpretation of the Law on Rural Collective Economic Organizations], *Legal Daily,* reprinted in *Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs,* July 2, 2024; Zhang Yinghong, Wang Lihong, and Liu Wei, "农村集体经济组织发展历程回顾" [Review of the Development of Rural Collective Economic Organizations], *China Rural News,* August 18, 2021.
[84] "中华人民共和国农村集体经济组织法" [PRC Law on Rural Collective Economic Organizations], passed June 28, 2024, effective May 1, 2025, arts. 13, 26, 47.
[85] Mei Mei Chu, "China Passes New Rural Collective Law to Protect Farmers' Land Rights," *Reuters,* June 27, 2024.
[86] Anbound and Yang Xite, "Understanding China's Rural Collective Economic Organizations Law—Analysis," *Eurasia Review,* July 13, 2024; Yang Ming, "三中全会农村篇：重回集体经济的三大宿命？" [Chapter on rural matters at the Third Plenum: Three destined outcomes of returning to the collective economy?], *Voice of America,* July 13, 2024.
[87] "中华人民共和国突发事件应对法" [PRC Law on Emergency Response], amended June 28, 2024, effective November 1, 2024, arts. 16, 30, 73; "中华人民共和国传染病防治法" [PRC Law on the Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases], amended April 30, 2025, effective September 1, 2025, arts. 8, 13; "中华人民共和国国境卫生检疫法" [PRC Border Health and Quarantine Law], amended June 28, 2024, effective January 1, 2025, arts. 5, 11; Changhao Wei, "June 2024: Post-Covid Revisions to China's Emergency Response and Border Health Laws," *NPC Observer,* July 15, 2024; "2022年浙江省政务公开工作要点" [Key points of government transparency in Zhejiang province], *Economy and Information Technology Department of Zhejiang,* May 8, 2022.
[88] "中华人民共和国突发事件应对法" [PRC Law on Emergency Response], amended June 28, 2024, effective November 1, 2024, arts. 16, 30, 73; "中华人民共和国传染病防治法" [PRC Law on the Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases], amended April 30, 2025, effective September 1, 2025, arts. 8, 13; "中华人民共和国国境卫生检疫法" [PRC Border Health and Quarantine Law], amended June 28, 2024, effective January 1, 2025, arts. 5, 11; Changhao Wei, "June 2024: Post-Covid Revisions to China's Emergency Response and Border Health Laws," *NPC Observer,* July 15, 2024; "2022年浙江省政务公开工作要点" [Key points of government transparency in *Zhejiang province], Economy and Information Technology Department of Zhejiang,* May 8, 2022.
[89] "中华人民共和国突发事件应对法" [PRC Law on Emergency Response], amended June 28, 2024, effective November 1, 2024, arts. 7, 8.
[90] Yuanyue Dang, "China's Emergency Law Amendment May Curb Media Reporting on Disasters and Accidents," *South China Morning Post,* January 1, 2024.
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[92] "突发公共卫生事件应对法立法" [Legislation on Law Response to Public Health Emergencies], *National People's Congress,* accessed May 16, 2025.
[93] "中华人民共和国全国人民代表大会和地方各级人民代表大会代表法" [PRC Law on Deputies to the National People's Congress and to the Local People's Congresses at All Levels], amended March 11, 2025, arts. 3, 11.
[94] Changhao Wei and Ying Sun, "Why Did China Amend Its Law Governing Delegates to People's Congresses?," *Diplomat,* April 10, 2025.
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[96] Changhao Wei, "Constitutional Social Rights vs. Collateral Consequences of Criminal Convictions," *NPC Observer,* December 26, 2024.

VI. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Ethnic Minority Rights

Findings

• During the Commission's reporting year, authorities suppressed the expression of Islamic beliefs in Hui religious communities, including through actions aimed at "sinicizing" Islamic practices, a trend observers say limits Hui Muslims' ability to practice their religion and culture.
• In December 2024, hundreds of local Muslims gathered in front of the municipal government building in Yuxi municipality, Yunnan province to protest the detention of well-known imam **Ma Yuwei** and call for his release. Ma's detention and the ensuing protests followed a period in which authorities detained other Hui imams and targeted other Hui figures, and came in the wake of a May 2023 demonstration involving thousands of residents of Nagu town, Tonghai county, Yuxi, over the planned demolition of a local mosque.
• In January 2025, security personnel in Hohhot municipality, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, brought veteran Mongol rights advocate **Hada** to a hospital, where he was placed on a respirator in intensive care. During his hospitalization, state security personnel failed to provide information on Hada's condition to his wife, Xinna, and their son, Uiles. Hospital staff later moved Hada from intensive care to another part of the hospital, but police forbade them from disclosing where they had transferred him within the hospital.

Ethnic Minority Rights

Party and Government Policy toward Ethnic Minorities

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, Chinese Communist Party and government authorities implemented policies that limited the freedom of ethnic minority groups to express their cultural and religious identities, in contravention of the *PRC Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law*[1] and international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.[2] During a December 2024 meeting of the Party Central Committee Political Bureau (Politburo), PRC leader Xi Jinping called for the increased use of Mandarin Chinese in border regions, prompting international observers to voice concern that the promotion of Mandarin would marginalize ethnic minorities.[3] At the meeting, Xi called on officials to guide ethnic minority groups in these regions to strengthen their identification with "the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, and the Chinese Communist Party."[4] During China's annual meetings of the legislative body, the National People's Congress, and the advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference ("Two Sessions") in March 2025, PRC officials echoed Xi's emphasis on the importance of all ethnicities' identification with the "Chinese nation" and highlighted the importance of ensuring "ethnic unity."[5] Party officials also continued to implement a campaign, launched in 2023, to change the terminology used to describe the culture and history of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR).[6] The Australian Strategic Policy Institute said the use of the new term *bei jiang wenhua,* or "northern frontier culture," "appears to be part of the CCP's growing campaign to weaken Mongolian ethnic identity and instead push a Han Chinese-centric national identity through the elimination of Mongolian language education and other measures."[7] The launch of the campaign to promote the new terminology took place as officials in the IMAR completed the transition to a region-wide policy, begun in 2020, of enforcing instruction in Mandarin Chinese for all subjects from kindergarten through senior high school.[8]

Crackdown on Hui Religion and Culture

During this reporting year, authorities suppressed the expression of Islamic beliefs in Hui religious communities, including through actions aimed at "sinicizing" Islamic practices, a trend observers say limits Hui Muslims' ability to practice their religion and culture.[9] According to scholars Hannah Theaker and David Stroup, the sinicization of Islam in China "reflects an increasingly authoritarian crackdown on both expression and practice of identity across the PRC" and includes such measures as arrests of imams and other "key individuals," mosque renovations and closures, and heightened control over scriptural interpretation.[10]

On December 15, 2024, police in Yuxi municipality, Yunnan province, detained well-known imam **Ma Yuwei** at a local restaurant, accusing him of having engaged in "illegal preaching."[11] According to *Radio Free Asia* (RFA), Ma had been living for several months for safety reasons at Yuxi's Daying Mosque, where he served as imam.[12] He had been surveilled by unknown individuals, and local

religious authorities warned in May 2024 that mosque practitioners were engaging in "illegal religious activities."[13] According to *Voice of America* (VOA), police also detained Ma's parents, wife, and children at the same time as Ma, releasing his wife and children a short time later.[14] In addition, police in Gejiu city, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan, briefly detained or attempted to detain Ma's brother, Ma Yuqing, at around the same time, but a crowd of protesters prevented them from holding him in custody.[15] Beginning in the afternoon of December 15, hundreds of local Muslims gathered in front of Yuxi's municipal government building, protesting Ma Yuwei's detention and calling for his release.[16] Military and police personnel from Yuxi and Kunming municipality, Yunnan, arrived to disperse the protesters, set up communication jammers, block the highway into Yuxi, and set up local checkpoints to question Hui Muslims.[17]

Ma's detention and the ensuing protests followed a period in which authorities detained other Hui imams and targeted other Hui figures, and came in the wake of a May 2023 demonstration involving thousands of residents of Nagu town, Tonghai county, Yuxi, over the planned demolition of a local mosque.[18] In 2023, authorities in Wenshan city, Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan, reportedly sentenced imam **Ma Ao** to five years in prison on unknown charges, and police forbade his relatives from publicizing information about his verdict.[19] Around October 2024, police detained imam **Ma Simin,** who was the principal of an Arabic language school in Gejiu city, after which nothing was heard from him.[20] During a May 2024 meeting in Yuxi, local religious authorities criticized imam Ma Cunguang of Yuxi's Daying mosque, who held several Communist Party representative positions, accusing him of being a "fake" religious figure.[21] In addition, in or around October 2024, the Gansu Province Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision opened an investigation into Hui Muslim scholar Li Zongyi, former vice president of Lanzhou Jiaotong University in Lanzhou municipality, Gansu province, accusing him of "serious violations of discipline and law."[22] In November, state-run media outlet *Xinhua* reported that the same commission had found that Li had committed numerous offenses, including illicitly accepting gifts and cash and "believing in religion for a long period of time," and therefore expelled him from the Party and transferred his case to the procuratorate.[23]

Constraints on Language and Ethnic Identity in the IMAR

Mongol Rights Advocate Hada Hospitalized, Cut Off from Family Members Following Nobel Nomination

On January 25, 2025, security personnel in Hohhot municipality, IMAR, brought veteran Mongol rights advocate **Hada** to a hospital, where he was placed on a respirator in intensive care.[24] Hada's wife, Xinna, told *RFA* that he was suffering from organ failure, had lost control of his bowels and bladder, and had bruises on one of his legs.[25] Hada had reportedly been under home confinement since 2014, living in an apartment under the strict surveillance of security personnel, following 4 years of extrajudicial detention and 15 years' imprisonment.[26] Authorities detained him in 1995 after he organized peaceful protests for the rights of ethnic Mongols in Hohhot.[27] Just prior to his hospitalization, four Japanese parliamentarians nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize, citing his dedication to Mongol rights advocacy.[28] During his hospitalization, state security personnel failed to provide information on Hada's condition to Xinna and their son, Uiles, including what illness he suffered from.[29] After hospital staff moved Hada from intensive care to another part of the hospital, a doctor at the hospital informed his wife that police had forbidden him from providing specific details about Hada's condition or disclosing which ward he had been transferred to, thereby cutting off contact with his family members.[30] During the reporting year, authorities also subjected Xinna to surveillance and restricted her internet access, and the family's only income came from Uiles' job at a restaurant.[31]

HERDERS PROTEST LACK OF COMPENSATION

On two separate days in the fall of 2024, Mongol herders in Heshigten (Keshenketeng) Banner,[32] Chifeng municipality, IMAR, demonstrated over the local government's failure to provide them with promised compensation for bans on livestock grazing occurring in the past two years.[33] Local herders said the most recent livestock grazing ban had been particularly strict, lasting for 75 days and causing difficulty for those who could not afford to buy fodder for their fenced-in animals.[34] *VOA* reported that "grazing ban teams" kept watch over grasslands, punishing herders who, unable to afford hay and feed, had put livestock out to pasture.[35] Punishments included fines, confiscation of livestock, beatings, and detention.[36] Local herders posted and circulated videos voicing their discontent over the lack of compensation on social media networks serving hundreds of subscribers, even after authorities ordered them to delete such content.[37] The herders discussed hiring lawyers to sue the local government for their withheld compensation.[38] Observers have noted that state control over livestock grazing and interference with herders' economic traditions in recent years have resulted in environmental damage, financial difficulties, and the loss of herders' cultural traditions.[39]

PARENTS EXPRESS OUTRAGE AFTER TEACHER INJURES NINE-YEAR-OLD MONGOL STUDENT

In November 2024, news that a Han Chinese teacher at a grade school in Uushin (Wushen) Banner, Ordos (E'erduosi) municipality, IMAR, had seriously injured a nine-year-old Mongol student sparked outrage among parents, who vowed to keep their children out of school until the teacher was held accountable.[40] The teacher struck the student and pulled her ear because she did not finish her homework, glued the resulting tear on her ear, and warned the student not to tell her family what had happened.[41] According to *RFA* and *VOA,* some Mongols connected the teacher's actions with policies suppressing the use of Mongolian as a language of instruction in schools.[42] *VOA* reported that according to participants in a WeChat group discussing the incident, the teacher involved had carried out corporal punishment on students many times and had frequently warned students not to tell their families what had happened.[43]

Notes to Chapter 6—Ethnic Minority Rights

[1] "中华人民共和国民族区域自治法" [PRC Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law], passed May 31, 1984, amended February 28, 2001, arts. 10, 11, 21, 36, 37, 47, 49, 53. The PRC Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law contains protections for the languages, religious beliefs, and customs of ethnic minority "nationalities" in addition to a system of regional autonomy in designated areas.

[2] "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 10, 1948, arts. 22, 27; "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 27; "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)," *United Nations Treaty Collection,* Chapter IV Human Rights. The PRC signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) on October 5, 1998 but has not yet ratifed it, despite stating repeatedly its intent to ratify including in the National Human Rights Action Plan 2016–2020. The U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-286, §§301–309 requires the CECC to use the ICCPR's provisions to monitor compliance with human rights standards in the PRC. "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)," adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force January 3, 1976, art. 1; "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," *United Nations Treaty Collection,* Chapter IV Human Rights. China signed the ICESCR on October 27, 1997, and ratified it on March 27, 2001. The U.S. signed ICESCR in 1977, but has not ratified it. For reporting on the implementation of policies contravening domestic and international obligations, see, e.g., Hannah Theaker and David R. Stroup, "Making Islam Chinese: Religious Policy and Mosque Sinicisation in the Xi Era," *International Network for Critical China Studies,* reprinted in *Social Science Research Network,* February 2025, 7–8; Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, "China's Revised Religious Measures Tightens State Control over Tibetan Buddhism," February 14, 2025; National Religious Affairs Administration, "藏传佛教寺庙管理办法" [Measures for the Administration of Tibetan Buddhist Temples], passed November 5, 2024, effective January 1, 2025, arts. 4, 10, 11, 15, 30.

[3] Wang Yun, "习近平边疆治理最新讲话 外界忧少数民族打压加剧" [Xi Jinping's latest speech on border governance, the outside world is worried about the intensification of suppression of ethnic minorities], *Radio Free Asia,* December 10, 2024; Taejun Kang, "Xi Jinping Calls for Wider Use of Mandarin in China's Border Areas," *Radio Free Asia,* December 12, 2024.

[4] Wang Yun, "习近平边疆治理最新讲话 外界忧少数民族打压加剧" [Xi Jinping's latest speech on border governance, the outside world is worried about the intensification of suppression of ethnic minorities], *Radio Free Asia,* December 10, 2024; Taejun Kang, "Xi Jinping Calls for Wider Use of Mandarin in China's Border Areas," *Radio Free Asia,* December 12, 2024.

[5] See, e.g., "China's 2025 Two Sessions Show Tibetans Are Testing Ground for a New CCP 'Ethnic Unity' Policy," *International Campaign for Tibet,* March 17, 2025; "李强在参加云南代表团审议时强调：发挥特色优势 加快转型升级 在深化改革开放中走出高质量发展新路子" [Li Qiang emphasized when participating in the deliberation of the Yunnan delegation: Give full play to the advantages of unique characteristics, accelerate transformation and upgrading, and find a new path of high-quality development in deepening reform and opening up], *Xinhua,* reprinted in PRC Central People's Government, March 5, 2025; "中共中央、全国人大常委会、国务院等领导同志分别参加十四届全国人大三次会议代表团分组审议" [The leaders of the CCP Central Committee, the National People's Congress Standing Committee, and the State Council and other leaders respectively participated in the group deliberation of the delegations of the Third Session of the 14th National People's Congress], *Xinhua,* reprinted in PRC Central People's Government, March 6, 2025.

[6] Bethany Allen, Daria Impiombato, and Nathan Attrill, "'Northern Frontier Culture': How China Is Erasing 'Mongolia' from Mongolian Culture," *Strategist, Australian Strategic Policy Institute,* August 29, 2024. See also Zheng Xueliang, "领略非遗里的'北疆文化'" [Experience the 'Northern Frontier Culture' of intangible cultural heritage], *Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Daily,* reprinted in *People's Daily,* December 14, 2024; T.S, "Constructing a De-Ethnicised Inner Mongolia," *Made in China Journal,* December 3, 2024.

[7] Bethany Allen, Daria Impiombato, and Nathan Attrill, "'Northern Frontier Culture': How China Is Erasing 'Mongolia' from Mongolian Culture," *Strategist, Australian Strategic Policy Institute,* August 29, 2024. See also Bruce Humes, "The Battle over Politically Correct Designations for China's Borderlands," *Ethnic ChinaLit,* January 2, 2025.

[8] Bethany Allen, Daria Impiombato, and Nathan Attrill, "'Northern Frontier Culture': How China Is Erasing 'Mongolia' from Mongolian Culture," *Strategist, Australian Strategic Policy Institute,* August 29, 2024. See also Qian Lang, "China Recruits Mandarin-Speaking Teachers to Move to Inner Mongolia," *Radio Free Asia,* May 6, 2024; Gu Ting, "China Bans Mongolian-Medium Classes, Cuts Language Hours in Schools," *Radio Free Asia,* October 5, 2023; Kasim Kashgar, "China Enforces Ban on Mongolian Language in Schools, Books," *Voice of America,* September 13, 2023; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2024," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* December 2024, 137.

[9] Hannah Theaker and David R. Stroup, "Making Islam Chinese: Religious Policy and Mosque Sinicisation in the Xi Era," *International Network for Critical China Studies,* reprinted in *Social Science Research Network,* February 2025, 7–8; "How China Is Tearing Down Islam," *Financial Times,* November 27, 2023; Jeremy Goldkorn, "Xi Jinping Orders Officials to Persist with Hard-Line Xinjiang Policies," *China Project,* August 27, 2023; Chinese Human Rights Defenders and Hope Umbrella International Foundation, "Will the Hui Be Silently Erased?," March 22, 2023; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Hui Muslims and the 'Xinjiang Model' of State Suppression of Religion," March 29, 2021.

[10] Hannah Theaker and David R. Stroup, "Making Islam Chinese: Religious Policy and Mosque Sinicisation in the Xi Era," *International Network for Critical China Studies,* reprinted in *Social Science Research Network,* February 2025, 7–8.

[11] Qian Lang, "云南玉溪穆斯林抗议升级 马玉巍阿訇被捕引发对峙" [Muslim protests in Yuxi, Yunnan Province escalate, Ma Yuwei's detention triggers confrontation], *Radio Free Asia,* De-

cember 16, 2024; Wu Yitong and Song Zijie, "雲南知名宣教師馬玉巍被捕當局鎮壓抗議活動　疑針對回族的集中營正內陸化" [Well-known Yunnan imam Ma Yuwei detained, authorities suppress protests. It is suspected that concentration camps targeting the Hui people are being set up in inner China], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024; "云南伊斯兰学者频遭逮捕　各界担心中国按新疆模式建'回族集中营'" [Yunnan Islamic scholars frequently detained; people from all walks of life worry that China will build 'Hui concentration camps' based on the Xinjiang model], *Voice of America,* December 18, 2024; "CECC Record Number: 2025-00045, Ma Yuwei," *CECC Political Prisoner Database,* accessed September 15, 2025.

[12] Qian Lang, "云南玉溪穆斯林抗议升级　马玉巍阿訇被捕引发对峙" [Muslim protests in Yuxi, Yunnan Province escalate, Ma Yuwei's detention triggers confrontation], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024.

[13] Qian Lang, "云南玉溪穆斯林抗议升级　马玉巍阿訇被捕引发对峙" [Muslim protests in Yuxi, Yunnan Province escalate, Ma Yuwei's detention triggers confrontation], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024; Wu Yitong and Song Zijie, "雲南知名宣教師馬玉巍被捕當局鎮壓抗議活動　疑針對回族的集中營正內陸化" Well-known Yunnan imam Ma Yuwei detained, authorities suppress protests. It is suspected that concentration camps targeting the Hui people are being set up in inner China], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024.

[14] "云南伊斯兰学者频遭逮捕　各界担心中国按新疆模式建'回族集中营'" [Yunnan Islamic scholars frequently detained; people from all walks of life worry that China will build 'Hui concentration camps' based on the Xinjiang model], *Voice of America,* December 18, 2024. Reports did not indicate whether or not authorities had also released Ma's parents.

[15] "云南伊斯兰学者频遭逮捕　各界担心中国按新疆模式建'回族集中营'" [Yunnan Islamic scholars frequently detained; people from all walks of life worry that China will build 'Hui concentration camps' based on the Xinjiang model], *Voice of America,* December 18, 2024; Qian Lang, "云南玉溪穆斯林抗议升级　马玉巍阿訇被捕引发对峙" [Muslim protests in Yuxi, Yunnan Province escalate, Ma Yuwei's detention triggers confrontation], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024; Wu Yitong and Song Zijie, "雲南知名宣教師馬玉巍被捕當局鎮壓抗議活動　疑針對回族的集中營正內陸化" [Well-known Yunnan imam Ma Yuwei detained, authorities suppress protests. It is suspected that concentration camps targeting the Hui people are being set up in inner China], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024.

[16] Qian Lang, "云南玉溪穆斯林抗议升级　马玉巍阿訇被捕引发对峙" [Muslim protests in Yuxi, Yunnan Province escalate, Ma Yuwei's detention triggers confrontation], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024; "云南伊斯兰学者频遭逮捕　各界担心中国按新疆模式建'回族集中营'" [Yunnan Islamic scholars frequently detained; people from all walks of life worry that China will build 'Hui concentration camps' based on the Xinjiang model], *Voice of America,* December 18, 2024; Wu Yitong and Song Zijie, "雲南知名宣教師馬玉巍被捕當局鎮壓抗議活動　疑針對回族的集中營正內陸化" [Well-known Yunnan imam Ma Yuwei detained, authorities suppress protests. It is suspected that concentration camps targeting the Hui people are being set up in inner China], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024.

[17] Qian Lang, "云南玉溪穆斯林抗议升级　马玉巍阿訇被捕引发对峙" [Muslim protests in Yuxi, Yunnan Province escalate, Ma Yuwei's detention triggers confrontation], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024; Wu Yitong and Song Zijie, "雲南知名宣教師馬玉巍被捕當局鎮壓抗議活動　疑針對回族的集中營正內陸化" [Well-known Yunnan imam Ma Yuwei detained, authorities suppress protests. It is suspected that concentration camps targeting the Hui people are being set up in inner China], *Radio Free Asia,* December 16, 2024.

[18] For more information on the May 2023 demonstration, see, e.g., Nectar Gan and Wayne Chang, "Thousands of Ethnic Minority Muslims Defy Chinese Authorities in Defense of Mosque," *CNN,* June 2, 2023; Vivian Wang, "Behind a Rare Clash, a Fight over Faith in China," *New York Times,* June 8, 2023; Ruslan Yusupov, "Chinese Muslims and Police Clash over Partial Demolition of Historic Mosque," *China Project,* May 30, 2023; Emily Feng, "The Plan to Remove a Mosque's Domes in China Sparks Rare Protest," *NPR,* May 31, 2023. See also Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2023," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* May 2024, 148–49.

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[40]"Chinese Teacher Injures Mongolian Student, Sparking Outrage and Boycott by Parents," *Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center,* November 22, 2024; Qian Lang, "内蒙古汉族教师殴打蒙古族女童事件引发不满" [Ethnic Han teacher in Inner Mongolia beats Mongol girl, causing discontent], *Radio Free Asia,* November 28, 2024; Na Ran, "内蒙汉族女教师殴打蒙古族女童致严重伤害，引起蒙古族民众强烈不满" [A female ethnic Han teacher in Inner Mongolia beat a Mongolian girl and caused serious injuries, which elicited strong dissatisfaction among the ethnic Mongolian people], *Voice of America,* November 27, 2024.

[41]Qian Lang, "内蒙古汉族教师殴打蒙古族女童事件引发不满" [Ethnic Han teacher in Inner Mongolia beats Mongol girl, causing discontent], *Radio Free Asia,* November 28, 2024; "Chinese Teacher Injures Mongolian Student, Sparking Outrage and Boycott by Parents," *Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center,* November 22, 2024; Na Ran, "内蒙汉族女教师殴打蒙古族女童致严重伤害，引起蒙古族民众强烈不满" [A female ethnic Han teacher in Inner Mongolia beat a Mongolian girl and caused serious injuries, which elicited strong dissatisfaction among the ethnic Mongolian people], *Voice of America,* November 27, 2024.

[42]Qian Lang, "内蒙古汉族教师殴打蒙古族女童事件引发不满" [Ethnic Han teacher in Inner Mongolia beats Mongol girl, causing discontent], *Radio Free Asia,* November 28, 2024; "Chinese Teacher Injures Mongolian Student, Sparking Outrage and Boycott by Parents," *Southern Mon-*

golian Human Rights Information Center, November 22, 2024; Na Ran, "内蒙汉族女教师殴打蒙古族女童致严重伤害，引起蒙古族民众强烈不满" [A female ethnic Han teacher in Inner Mongolia beat a Mongolian girl and caused serious injuries, which elicited strong dissatisfaction among the ethnic Mongolian people], *Voice of America,* November 27, 2024.

[43] Na Ran, "内蒙汉族女教师殴打蒙古族女童致严重伤害，引起蒙古族民众强烈不满" [A female ethnic Han teacher in Inner Mongolia beat a Mongolian girl and caused serious injuries, which elicited strong dissatisfaction among the ethnic Mongolian people], *Voice of America,* November 27, 2024.

Status of Women

Findings

- During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, Chinese political leaders implemented several legal measures related to women's rights in marriage and divorce**.** A law delegating more power to rural village assemblies sparked debate as to whether it is enough to guarantee women equal land rights and social insurance benefits. Additionally, online commentators spoke out against a revised draft law aiming to make registering for marriage easier and filing for divorce more difficult, citing concerns about domestic violence victims within the controversial 30-day "cooling-off" period.
- The Commission observed reports of sexual violence against women in China, along with varied responses from PRC authorities. Netizens expressed concerns about a lack of sufficient official response to the following cases: a Ph.D. student accused of drugging and raping at least seven young women in China, a university professor who sexually abused his student for two years, the alleged trafficking of a rural woman suffering from mental illness, and cases of sexual assault of young girls. Such posts often faced official censorship.
- Women in mainland China and Hong Kong faced discrimination and harassment in the workplace. One report revealed that one-third of women in Hong Kong experienced workplace sexual harassment in the last three years, while other reports showed widespread discriminatory hiring practices based on female applicants' fertility and family status. Some blame the CCP's recent pro-natal policies and rhetoric for employers' reluctance to hire married women of child-bearing age.
- The Commission continued to monitor cases of official harassment and arbitrary detention of women's rights activists, including **He Fangmei, Sophia Huang Xueqin, Zhang Zhan,** and **Li Qiaochu.**

Status of Women

Introduction

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and People's Republic of China (PRC) government officials upheld and promoted legislation and practices that violate the human rights of women in China, including freedom of expression, equality in marriage, and equal protection in the workplace, violating the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.[1]

The year 2025 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in China in 1995 ("Beijing Conference").[2] The milestone prompted observers to reflect on the "watershed" conference as well as continuing discrimination against women in Chinese law and society, as treatment of women today in China is "far away from its 1995 commitments."[3] In March 2025, PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced plans to host a new women's conference within the year to showcase China's "historic achievements in women's development," though women's rights activists responded with skepticism, with one claiming this is likely to serve a political purpose for the CCP to attempt to further legitimize its rule.[4]

Legal Developments in Women's Rights

Despite Chinese officials implementing new policies connected to women's rights this past year,[5] the PRC government has not yet implemented recommendations from the international community to better codify women's rights in law. In the spring of 2023, the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued recommendations to the PRC government to strengthen compliance with the respective treaties and to provide a report on its progress.[6] According to reports submitted to the committees in April and May 2025 by a non-profit organization, the PRC government has not made progress toward implementing the committees' recommendations.[7]

Chinese political leaders implemented legal provisions this reporting year on topics related to women's legal rights in marriage and divorce.[8] One issue rural Chinese women face is that of land rights and village membership, as those who marry outside their *hukou,* or household registration area ("married-out women"), are routinely stripped of their village membership and related rights, including land ownership and health insurance.[9] An increasing number of affected women have taken legal action through lawsuits and petitioning, and while some win their legal battles, laws have failed to protect these rights in practice.[10] The National People's Congress passed a law in June 2024, effective May 2025, delegating more power to village assemblies, sparking some debate among observers as to whether this legislation helps married-out women.[11] While some remain concerned that the law is not explicit enough in stating that women are village members regardless of their marriage

status, some also note that this law marks progress in specifying the path for newly married individuals to obtain village membership.[12]

Public debate surfaced this past year regarding marriage registration law. The State Council passed revised *Marriage Registration Regulations* in March 2025, which took effect on May 10, 2025.[13] In August 2024, the Ministry of Civil Affairs released a draft of the regulations for public comment, which included making registering for marriage easier and filing for divorce more difficult, sparking online debate.[14] In an attempt to make marriage registration easier, the draft regulations stipulated that couples would no longer be required to present a *hukou* while registering for marriage.[15] Some voiced concern that this may lead to an increase in bride-trafficking, forced marriages, or young people being coerced or impulsively entering into marriage without parental consent.[16] The draft regulations also maintained the existing controversial 30-day "cooling-off" period from the PRC Civil Code but allow for one partner to more easily stop divorce proceedings unilaterally in the 30 days following an initial divorce filing.[17] Online commentators and one member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference voiced concern that women seeking to escape abusive marriages and domestic violence would suffer, echoing concerns raised in response to the PRC Civil Code revisions in 2020, though Weibo quickly censored such discussion.[18] The final regulations did not mention the "cooling-off" period.[19]

Official Handling of Cases of Sexual Violence

The Commission observed reports this past year of sexual violence against women in China, along with varied responses from PRC authorities. Selected examples include:

- **Sexual assault of minors:** In two cases involving young girls, the public called for more protection for minors. In November 2024, various news groups, including state-owned news outlet *The Paper,* reported on a 13-year-old girl identified by the pseudonym "Li Xiaoxia," who suffered abuse and was forced into prostitution by 14 individuals, including 3 public officials.[20] Online commentators raised concerns about "systemic flaws in sexual assault protections for children" while also calling for greater accountability for the public officials involved.[21] A month later, public discourse erupted over a report of a 12-year-old girl admitted to a hospital in Xintai municipality, Shandong province, who tested positive for the sexually transmitted disease human papillomavirus (HPV).[22] The girl's doctor met resistance in her attempts to report the case to authorities, despite the age of consent in the PRC being 14.[23] Police eventually detained the 17-year-old boy responsible, though social media users again expressed contempt for "systemic failures" that did not protect the girl, including those of her parents, the school, and the hospital.[24]
- **UK Ph.D. student:** In March 2025, a court in the United Kingdom found Zou Zhenhao, a Chinese Ph.D. student at University College London, guilty of drugging and raping 10 women in England and China, though police stated there may be more than 50 other victims.[25] Zou attacked 7 of the 10 victims in the

PRC, and although British police stated that PRC authorities had been cooperative with their investigation, reports did not indicate that Chinese authorities were pursuing a criminal investigation into Zou in China.[26] WeChat, Weibo, and RedNote (Xiaohongshu) censored news about Zou's case following his conviction, frustrating the hopes of UK police that publicity from the case would help them in identifying more of Zou's victims.[27]

- **Wang Di:** In what some touted as a rare victory for China's #MeToo movement, Renmin University fired a professor in July 2024 after verifying allegations that he had sexually harassed a student for two years.[28] The student, Wang Di, posted a video on Weibo accusing her Ph.D. supervisor, Wang Guiyuan (no relation), of sexual harassment, and shortly after the video went viral, the university announced the professor's firing and revocation of his Chinese Communist Party membership.[29] Some women praised Wang Di for speaking out against her abuser, while feminist activists and scholars noted the university and state media's failure to describe the professor's actions as "sexual harassment," instead characterizing it as a "moral failing."[30] Some posts related to the case, including Wang Di's original video, were later taken off WeChat and Weibo.[31]
- **Bu Xiaohua:** In November 2024, local authorities in Tuling village, Qingcheng town, Heshun county, Jinzhong municipality, Shanxi province, found 45-year-old Bu Xiaohua, malnourished and unkempt, in a village approximately 100 miles from her family home after disappearing over 13 years earlier.[32] When found, Bu was living in the home of a man named Zhang Ruijun, with whom she had at least two children.[33] Initial reporting of Bu's case raised concerns among the public, as official media seemed to compassionately describe Zhang as having "taken in" or "sheltered" Bu after finding her wandering in 2011 following inpatient treatment for schizophrenia.[34] Social media users argued that Zhang should be investigated for human trafficking and rape, given Bu's mental illness and the physical state in which authorities found her.[35] Local authorities began investigating the possibility of criminal activity.[36] Online commentators also highlighted broader issues of lack of law enforcement protection for women in rural China, noting the similarities between Bu's case and that of the woman found shackled in a shed in Jiangsu province in 2022.[37] In both cases, official narratives praised the "good intentions" of the men involved while downplaying signs of trafficking and abuse.[38] [For more information on human trafficking in China and the handling of Bu Xiaohua's case in the media, see Chapter 9—Human Trafficking and Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression.]

Workplace Discrimination

Women in mainland China and Hong Kong faced harassment and discrimination in the workplace this past year, because of both government policies and lack of official response to existing problems. One survey highlighted the persistence of sexual harassment in the workplace in Hong Kong, revealing that one-third of women in Hong Kong have faced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last

three years, including text messages, emails, inappropriate conversations, or physical contact.[39] A majority of those women reported not doing anything in response, most commonly because of fear or feeling it would be futile.[40]

This reporting year, observers also expressed concerns with the PRC government's focus on pro-natal policies to boost China's birth rate, some of which threaten to disproportionately burden women in the workforce.[41] As stated by one journalist, PRC leader Xi Jinping's call for Chinese women to promote childbirth "is happening against the backdrop of persisting discrimination against women in the workplace over the issue of fertility."[42] The Commission observed several reports of discriminatory hiring practices by Chinese employers against women based on their fertility and family status.[43] One study found that employers in Nantong municipality, Jiangsu province, often required women to take pregnancy tests during the hiring process and discouraged the hiring of pregnant women because of labor costs.[44] In another study, 61 percent of women reported having been asked about their plans to marry and have children during the hiring process by China-based employers, as opposed to only one-third of men being asked the same questions.[45] Although it is illegal in the PRC for companies to discriminate against applicants based on sex, observers suggest that the high labor cost of maternity leave, and rhetoric from the top echelon of the CCP, contribute to firms opting for male candidates.[46]

Treatment of Women Activists

Women who engage in human rights advocacy continued to face surveillance and the threat of detention by PRC authorities.[47] One report revealed that in China, women political prisoners outnumber men, despite the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women calling on the PRC to reduce the number of women in detention following its May 2023 review.[48] The report's authors expressed particular concern about these statistics due to PRC authorities' documented gender-based violence against detained women human rights activists.[49] Gender-based violence and harassment extended beyond China's borders, too, as evidenced by multiple reports of transnational repression against women activists abroad.[50] Female human rights activists around the world reported disproportionate harm from transnational repression at the hands of authorities and proxies, including online gender-based abuse, harassment, and intimidation.[51] [For more information on the PRC's use of transnational repression, see Chapter 17—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally.]

The Commission continued to monitor multiple cases of arbitrary detention of women human rights defenders in its Political Prisoner Database,[52] including the following selected cases:

- In October 2024, the Huixian Municipal People's Court in Xinxiang municipality, Henan province, sentenced **He Fangmei** to five years and six months in prison for "bigamy" and "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."[53] This is He's second detention for her advocacy work for vaccine safety and accountability following her daughter's diagnosis with a paralyzing neurological disease after receiving a defective vaccine.[54]

• The Guangdong High People's Court secretly rejected an appeal from **Sophia Huang Xueqin,** a journalist and feminist activist sentenced in June 2024 to five years in prison for "inciting subversion of state power."[55] Prior to her September 2021 detention, Huang's activism included women's rights and civil society advocacy.[56] Human rights advocates and Huang's defense attorney denounced the court's secretive sentencing process, as it violates defendants' rights in Chinese law.[57] [For more information on abuses in the PRC's justice system, see Chapter 4—Criminal Justice. For more information on the PRC's repression of journalists, see Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression.]
• Authorities in Shanghai municipality criminally detained journalist **Zhang Zhan** in August 2024, three months after her release from a four-year prison sentence for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."[58] Zhang's first sentence was linked to her early reporting on the spread of COVID-19.[59] Following her release in May 2024, Zhang resumed her public support and advocacy for fellow activists in China, despite being kept under surveillance.[60] Zhang began a hunger strike following her August 2024 detention, similar to one during her first sentence which left her dangerously ill, and authorities have force-fed Zhang, according to reports from January 2025.[61] Chinese legal experts have expressed worry about Zhang's condition, noting that Chinese dissidents tend to face harsher treatment and sentences when detained for a second time.[62] [For more information on the PRC's repression of journalists, see Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression.]
• Women's and labor rights activist **Li Qiaochu** was released in August 2024 after completing a sentence of three years and eight months for "inciting subversion of state power."[63] Observers commented that Li's detention was likely due to her speaking publicly about the torture and maltreatment in detention of her partner, **Xu Zhiyong.**[64] Prior to her initial detention in 2020, Li advocated for the rights of Chinese workers and political prisoners.[65] [For more information on Li Qiaochu and the PRC's repression of labor rights activists, see Chapter 10—Worker Rights.]

Notes to Chapter 7—Status of Women

[1]"International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, arts. 19, 23, 26; "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," *United Nations Treaty Collection,* Chapter IV Human Rights. The PRC signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) on October 5, 1998, but has not yet ratified it, despite stating repeatedly its intent to ratify including in the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2016-2020. The U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-286, §§301–309 requires the CECC to use the ICCPR's provisions to monitor compliance with human rights standards in the PRC. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 10, 1948, arts. 2, 16; "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force January 3, 1976, arts. 2, 3, 6, 7, 10; "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," *United Nations Treaty Collection,* Chapter IV Human Rights. China ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on March 27, 2001. The U.S. signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1977, but has not ratified it. "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," *United Nations,* adopted December 18, 1979, entry into force September 3, 1981; "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," *United Nations Treaty Collection,* Chapter IV Human Rights. China ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on November 4, 1980.

[2]Li Jun, "News Media and the Feminist Movement in China: A Brief History," *Made in China Journal,* February 19, 2025.

[3]Li Jun, "News Media and the Feminist Movement in China: A Brief History," *Made in China Journal,* February 19, 2025; Lee Chung Lun, "Chinese Feminists Continue to Resist Amidst Repression 30 Years After Beijing Conference on Women," *International Service for Human Rights,* March 4, 2025; Phoebe Zhang and Meredith Chen, "As the US Backslides, can China Claim Moral High Ground on Women's Rights?," *South China Morning Post,* March 14, 2025; Isabel Choat, "'We Had All This Energy': The Landmark Gathering of Women that Unnerved the Chinese Government," *Guardian,* March 3, 2025; Arthur Kaufman, "'Beijing +30' Inspires Reflection on the Evolution of Gender Equality in China," *China Digital Times,* March 6, 2025.

[4]"China to Hold 2025 Global Summit of Women: FM," *Xinhua,* March 7, 2025; Phoebe Zhang and Meredith Chen, "As the US Backslides, can China Claim Moral High Ground on Women's Rights?," *South China Morning Post,* March 14, 2025.

[5] "中华人民共和国农村集体经济组织法" [PRC Rural Collective Economic Organizations Law], passed June 28, 2024, effective May 1, 2025; "'婚姻登记条例（修订草案征求意见稿）'公开征求意见" [Public solicitation of comments on the "Marriage Registration Regulations (Draft for Soliciting Comments)"], *Xinhua,* August 15, 2024.

[6]"Chinese Government Ignores UN Human Rights Reviews," *Chinese Human Rights Defenders,* May 1, 2025.

[7]"Chinese Government Ignores UN Human Rights Reviews," *Chinese Human Rights Defenders,* May 1, 2025; "CHRD Submits Follow-up Report to Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women," *Chinese Human Rights Defenders,* May 1, 2025; "CHRD Submits Follow-up Report to UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights," *Chinese Human Rights Defenders,* April 1, 2025.

[8] "中华人民共和国农村集体经济组织法" [PRC Rural Collective Economic Organizations Law], passed June 28, 2024, effective May 1, 2025; "'婚姻登记条例（修订草案征求意见稿）'公开征求意见" [Public solicitation of comments on the "Marriage Registration Regulations (Draft for Soliciting Comments)"], *Xinhua,* August 15, 2024.

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Population Control

Findings

- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP or "Party") and PRC government continued to implement population planning policies that violate international standards by seeking to control family size, including the application of the three-child policy, which permits and seeks to incentivize families to have up to but no more than three children.
- The National Bureau of Statistics of China's 2024 data revealed that, while the total number of births in China increased for the first time in eight years, likely due to the auspicious "Year of the Dragon," the overall population declined for the third consecutive year. Marriage rates also fell to the lowest rate since public records began in 1986.
- PRC central authorities announced a variety of pro-natal initiatives this year, including a survey to identify family and childbearing attitudes, increased support for infrastructure related to childrearing, and a proposed national childcare subsidy. Local authorities also attempted to boost birth rates through financial incentives, pro-natal messaging, and calling young women to ask about their family planning and menstrual cycles.
- The Commission observed reports of the discriminatory effects of centrally led family planning policies, including the likely continuation of birth suppression of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
- The legacy of the one-child policy (1980 to 2015) continues to have an impact on Chinese society, including the continued sex ratio imbalance and increased socio-economic precarity for China's elderly population.
- In September 2024, the PRC announced the end of international adoptions originating in China, to which the one-child policy era's social engineering abuses had often been linked. The sudden decision included the halting of hundreds of cases of families who had already been matched and had communicated with a child and spurred particular concern for the thousands of children remaining in Chinese orphanages, often with disabilities.

Population Control

Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and PRC government continued to implement population planning policies that violate international standards. The one-child policy, in force from 1980 through 2015, restricted most couples to one child,[1] with exceptions permitted in some cases, most commonly for those in rural areas or for ethnic minority groups.[2] Enforcement of the one-child policy included the use of birth permits and fines to punish couples for exceeding birth limits, intrusive monitoring of women's fertility, and coercive measures such as forced placement of intrauterine devices, forced sterilizations, and forced abortions.[3] In December 2015, due to weak population growth, the PRC government modified the birth limit policy to allow all couples to have two children.[4] In subsequent years, however, PRC authorities intensified measures such as forced abortion and sterilization to significantly decrease the fertility of ethnic minority women in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).[5] [For more information on human rights abuses in the XUAR, see Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]

To address the "great challenge" of the PRC's aging population and decreasing fertility rate, the National People's Congress Standing Committee adopted a policy in August 2021, allowing couples to have up to three children ("three-child policy").[6] The previous use of fines for exceeding birth limits was also abolished.[7] The shift to the two- and now three-child policy, however, did not alter the basic premise of PRC authorities' "claim [of] sovereignty over childbearing" of Chinese citizens, as observed by political scientist Tyrene White.[8] In a comprehensive report on the PRC's various population planning policies published this past year, one civil society organization stated, "Whether China implements the one-child policy or the three-child policy, it is 'national family planning' led and controlled by the government, and the question of how many children are allowed to be born is [thus] . . . not a decision made within the family."[9]

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Attempting to control family size, both through the official three-child limit and by coercing women to bear more children, violates standards set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1994 Programme of Action of the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development.[10] Harsh measures taken against ethnic minority groups to reduce their population size contravene the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Genocide Convention.[11]

Population Decline and Official Responses

In January 2025, the National Bureau of Statistics of China announced that in 2024, China's overall population continued to decline[12]—the third year in a row of officially reported population

decline in China.[13] Births, however, increased for the first time in eight years.[14] Some attributed the rise in births to 2024 being the auspicious "Year of the Dragon" in the lunar calendar,[15] with observers noting that this rise likely will not be a continuing trend.[16] Also in 2024, marriages fell to the lowest number since public records began in 1986.[17]

Throughout the past year, the CCP and PRC government discussed and introduced several new policy measures in an attempt to boost the birth rate. In October 2024, official media announced the launch of a national survey to identify public attitudes towards childbearing in order to address reluctance through new policies.[18] In the same month, the State Council General Office issued *Several Measures to Accelerate the Improvement of the Fertility Support Policy System and Promote the Construction of a Fertility-Friendly Society,* which include 13 measures aimed at increasing nationwide support for maternity, childbirth, and childcare services, as well as for general public services such as education, housing, and employment.[19] Additionally, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) members offered proposals related to marriage and childbearing at the annual meeting of the CPPCC in March 2025.[20] These included proposals to eliminate the current three-child limit, mandate paternity leave of at least 30 days to encourage shared childcare responsibilities, and increase work recruitment events for mothers, and one especially controversial proposal to lower the legal marriage age from 22 for men and 20 for women to 18 to "unleash reproductive potential."[21] Premier Li Qiang also proposed a national childcare subsidy at the March 2025 National People's Congress (NPC) meeting, and the National Health Commission later confirmed that it was drafting detailed plans for the policy and conducting research on similar measures.[22]

Several other government entities implemented policies this past year aimed at boosting China's birth rate. Examples include:

- **Local financial incentives.** Local governments continued to offer financial incentives to promote births,[23] such as monthly cash payouts during infancy, childcare subsidies, and covering medical expenses for childbirth.[24] The government of Tianmen city, Hubei province, caught the attention of national officials, boasting a 17 percent increase in births in 2024, one year after introducing some of the highest subsidies nationwide for second and third children.[25] Officials visited Tianmen to study its "fertility secret" for national replication, while state media praised the Tianmen government for its subsidies and pro-natal propaganda led from "high levels."[26] When interviewed, however, Tianmen residents who planned to have two or three children stated that, while helpful, the local subsidies were not the deciding factor for their family's size.[27] Observers noted that most babies born in Tianmen in 2024 were conceived before authorities announced the cash incentives, and that the share of childbearing-aged citizens in the city recently increased due to young workers moving from more expensive cities.[28] Experts continued to debate such incentives' efficacy more broadly, as research suggests that while some state investments in maternity and child subsidies are linked to modest increases in birth

rates, such effects appear temporary or too small to change an entire population's demographic trajectory.[29] Large cash incentives in other localities, such as Hohhot municipality, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, have not appeared effective in boosting birth rates.[30]

- **Government employees.** A leaked draft policy document from the Quanzhou municipality, Fujian province Municipal Health Commission revealed internal discussions about encouraging Party members and government employees to "take the lead" in implementing the three-child policy by having three children themselves.[31] Online observers drew parallels between the memo and a famous open letter from PRC central authorities that launched the one-child policy in 1980, calling on Party members to "take the lead" in having one child.[32]
- **Calling women.** Young women across China received calls from local government officials asking them if they were pregnant, whether they planned to have children, and for details about their menstrual cycle.[33] Most calls came from local family planning associations, which report to the central government and previously enforced the one-child policy.[34] While some women reported appreciating the support, many took to social media to complain about the "invasive" questioning.[35]
- **Pro-natal messaging.** Party and government officials continued to push pro-natal messaging[36] through essays, banners, publicity campaigns, and public artwork, promoting "positive perspectives on marriage, childbirth, and family."[37] Such efforts are often carried out by local family planning associations, although central government entities such as the National Health Commission also announced more focused efforts on advocating for marriage and childbirth.[38] Central authorities also suppressed viewpoints counter to official pro-natal messaging, censoring netizens "deliberately playing up anti-marriage and anti-fertility topics."[39] [For more information on the PRC's control of messaging and the media, see Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression.]

Discriminatory Effects

FORCED POPULATION CONTROL OF UYGHURS AND OTHER ETHNIC MINORITIES

The Commission observed reports of discriminatory effects of centrally led family planning policies. PRC leader Xi Jinping's rhetoric this past year calling for "high-quality population development" implies the existence and judgment of a "low-quality" counterpart, as argued by one Chinese economist.[40] Observers expressed concern with regard to population control policies directed at Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), where authorities have long sought to lower high growth rates, particularly since 2017, while at the same time the central government has sought to boost the birth rate of the majority Han population.[41] Since 2020, the PRC has suppressed local-level population data in the XUAR, limiting researchers' ability to estimate population growth rates.[42] The most recent available data, the 2023

XUAR birth and death rates, indicate severely diminished population growth rates; Turkic minority birth rates used to be some of the highest in China but now approach a growth rate of zero.[43] According to one Uyghur history scholar, "the state likely continues to achieve its goals of birth suppression among minorities in the XUAR."[44] [For more information on population control measures directed against Uyghur women, see Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]

WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

Without direct clarification from authorities, the tone of pro-natalism set at top levels of the Party-state apparatus can lead to workplace discrimination, as seen this past year. In a January 2025 notice widely shared on social media, Shuntian Chemical Group in Shandong province instructed unmarried employees between the ages of 28 and 58 to get married and start families by September 30, or else face termination.[45] After online backlash, local government officials intervened, and Shuntian Chemical Group withdrew the announcement.[46] Lu Pin, a Chinese feminist scholar and activist, suggested that the company likely "thought the orders would be well received," given the PRC government's promotion of a broader pro-natal atmosphere.[47]

Continuing Effects of the One-Child Policy

The legacy of the one-child policy continues to have an impact on Chinese society and beyond.[48] Multiple news stories this year highlighted the "collective trauma" of the one-child policy, including the grief and fear of parents who desired, and in some cases bore, additional "illegal" children, and the painful memories of hiding unauthorized children from authorities.[49] Reports linked this trauma to young people's reluctance to have children of their own, citing deep fear and distrust of government family planning policies.[50] Other lingering effects of the one-child policy include:

- **Sex imbalance.** Throughout the one-child policy era, due to the combination of the cultural preference for sons, and couples only being allowed to have one child, a surge in sex-selective abortions led China's population to suffer "the worst imbalance in its sex ratio at birth" compared to other countries.[51] The National Bureau of Statistics of China reported in January 2025 that in 2024, there were 29.9 million more males than females in China, with a sex ratio of 104.34 males to 100 females.[52] Observers link this sex imbalance to human trafficking, as the struggle of young men to find spouses in China leads to the "importing" of foreign women into the country for marriage.[53] [For more information on human trafficking in China, see Chapter 9—Human Trafficking.]
- **Abandoned disabled children.** The one-child policy prompted many families in China to put children up for adoption, especially girls and children with disabilities.[54] Chinese orphanages heavily relied on international adoptions due to overwhelming capacity, granting overseas adoptions of more than 160,000 Chinese children since 1992.[55] As of 2022, reportedly more than 50,000 children remain in Chinese state orphan-

ages, with approximately 98 percent of them living with severe illnesses or disabilities.[56] In August 2024, however, the PRC Ministry of Civil Affairs suddenly announced the end of China's international adoption program.[57] The policy shift halted the majority of international adoptions in progress, including those of hundreds of families who had already been matched and had established relationships with a child.[58] Observers expressed particular concern for Chinese children with disabilities who now may not be adopted at all, as international families have been the most likely to adopt these children.[59] The PRC government offered a vague explanation for ending the program.[60] Observers speculated that the adoption suspension may be due to the slowing birth rate, nationalistic pride, deteriorating relations with Western countries, concerns about systemic abuse within the international adoption system, or following the global trend of ceasing international adoptions.[61]

• **Pressures on the elderly.** Chinese authorities' enforcement of population control policies has contributed to increasing socio-economic precarity for China's elderly population. In particular, as China faces an increasingly aging population due to the effects of the one-child policy,[62] the elderly struggle to find sufficient healthcare, especially in rural areas.[63] Structural changes to families, propelled by the one-child policy, also weaken the traditional reliance on adult children to care for elderly parents.[64] Chinese lawmakers addressed some related challenges of the rapidly aging population this past year, including by pledging to raise old age benefits and expand elderly care services, and implementing a decision to gradually increase the statutory retirement age, despite vocal disapproval from the citizenry.[65] [For more information on changes to the retirement age in the PRC, see Chapter 10—Worker Rights.]

Notes to Chapter 8—Population Control

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Findings

- The government of Brazil accused China's BYD Company Ltd. of employing at least 163 workers in "slave-like conditions" at a construction site in Bahia. The Brazilian government said that the workers were "victims of international trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation." Brazilian authorities identified forced labor indicators including the withholding of the workers' passports and salaries.
- The Commission continued to observe reports of forced labor linked to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). In December 2024, Adrian Zenz and I-Lin Lin of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation asserted that the PRC government's heightened agricultural production policies have resulted in coercive forms of work that "constitute state-imposed forced labor as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and operationalized in its updated handbook on the measurement of forced labor."
- In February 2025, the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) documented the presence of North Korean workers on a fleet of Chinese tuna fishing vessels in the Indian Ocean between March 2019 and June 2024. At least five vessels showed indicators of forced labor, including deception related to wages, withholding of documents, physical and verbal abuse, and excessive overtime.

Human Trafficking

China's Human Trafficking and Forced Labor Obligations under International Law

The Chinese government is obligated to combat human trafficking and enact legislation criminalizing human trafficking as a State Party to the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol),[1] and has also committed to obligations to combat forced labor under the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Forced Labour Convention of 1930[2] and Abolition of Forced Labour Convention of 1957.[3]

In 2024, the ILO released an updated framework to identify forced labor of adults, specifying conditions of involuntary work and coercion.[4] While there is no set list of indicators that guarantee the existence of either condition, according to the ILO, several practices could point to the use of involuntary and/or coerced work.[5] The revised ILO guidelines strengthen methodologies for identifying non-internment forms of state-imposed forced labor, allowing researchers to more accurately capture the complexities of systemic coercion in regions such as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).[6]

Cross-Border Trafficking

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, China remained[7] both a source of, and destination country for, human trafficking across international borders. Examples of cross-border trafficking during this reporting year include the following:

- **Brazil accuses BYD of trafficking Chinese nationals at local factory.** Brazilian authorities announced in December 2024 that they would conduct probes of BYD Company Ltd. ("BYD"), a Chinese company that has deep ties to and receives financial support from the PRC government, and one of its Chinese contractors, who were suspected of trafficking Chinese workers building a local factory.[8] Labor inspectors discovered that 163 Chinese workers were living in "slave-like conditions" at a construction site in Bahia.[9] A statement issued by the Brazilian government said that the workers, who were employed by BYD contractor Jinjiang Open Engineering, were "victims of international trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation."[10] The workers lived in four different facilities in the city of Camaçari, including one where prosecutors claim some workers were forced to sleep on beds without mattresses.[11] Brazilian authorities identified the presence of forced labor indicators, such as the withholding of workers' passports and salaries.[12] Aaron Halegua, a lawyer and fellow at New York University Law School, said that a labor contract signed by one of the workers had "textbook 'red flags' of forced labor," and asserted that withholding passports as well as requiring performance bonds or security payments is not allowed under Chinese law.[13] Mao Ning, a spokesperson for the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that the PRC's embassy and consulates were working with Brazil to "verify the situation and handle the issue properly."[14]

In January 2025, *Reuters* reported that a Brazilian labor inspector said BYD would be fined and also noted that, in order to comply with Brazilian labor laws, BYD agreed to adjust the conditions of the workers who will remain in Brazil.[15]

• **Forced labor indicators identified at Chinese companies in Serbia.** In 2024, China Labor Watch (CLW) published a report detailing in-person and online interviews held between July and October 2024 with foreign migrant workers at the Linglong Tire Factory in Zrenjanin, Serbia and the Chinese state-owned Zijin Mining Group's copper mine in Bor, Serbia.[16] Foreign workers from not only China, but also India, Nepal, Zambia, and Indonesia, were subject to conditions matching at least six ILO indicators of forced labor.[17] Under a 2018 bilateral deal between China and Serbia, Serbian labor law is suspended for Chinese nationals during their first five years in the country, with Chinese labor laws applying to the workers instead.[18] The Labor Inspectorate of Serbia is thus prohibited from reviewing Chinese workers' contracts or checking to see if they are being paid.[19]

• **PRC complicity in the trafficking of North Korean workers and refugees.** In February 2025, the ILO reported that Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) nationals working abroad were placed in coercive and exploitative conditions and threatened with repatriation for poor performance or rule violations.[20]

  ○ Recent reporting has shed light on the PRC government's disregard for U.N. sanctions, as North Korean workers have been discovered on a number of Chinese fishing vessels.[21] The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) released a report in February 2025 that documented the presence of North Korean workers on 12 Chinese-flagged tuna longliners in the Indian Ocean between March 2019 and June 2024.[22] According to the EJF, the presence of North Korean workers on Chinese vessels likely breaches U.N. sanctions.[23] Ship captains made concerted efforts to hide the presence of North Koreans on these vessels and forced some of them to remain at sea for as long as 10 years.[24] The EJF said that "[t]his would constitute forced labor of a magnitude that surpasses much of that witnessed in a global fishing industry already replete with abuse."[25] At least five vessels showed indicators of forced labor, including deception related to wages, withholding of documents, physical and verbal abuse, and excessive overtime.[26]

• **Trafficking of women and girls.** Reports continued in this reporting year of women and girls trafficked into China to meet the growing demand for brides as a result of the gender imbalance fueled by the PRC's previous one-child policy.[27] In November 2024, state-run media reported that two traffickers were sentenced in Xiajin county, Shandong province, for taking men across borders illegally in search of brides.[28] In December 2024, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference held a meeting with experts where they discussed "illegal cross-border marriages," and said that the

management of cross-border marriages had become a "difficult problem."[29] Madagascar authorities arrested eight PRC nationals and three others in March 2025 as part of a trafficking ring that was uncovered after one Malagasy family reported their daughter had been lured to China under false pretenses and was "forced to bear children" and prohibited from going out.[30] The PRC Embassy in Bangladesh issued a document in May 2025 that warned Chinese citizens not to believe short-form videos that promote cross-border blind dates and marriages, and not to "buy a foreign wife" or get married in Bangladesh.[31]

Human Trafficking in Scam Centers and Other Criminal Enterprises in Southeast Asia

During this reporting year, the PRC government accelerated its efforts to crack down on scam centers and other criminal enterprises in Southeast Asia. Chinese criminals operating in Southeast Asia have lured citizens from at least 40 countries to participate in various scams, promising well-paying jobs and travel perks.[32] Many Chinese nationals are lured into the scam centers, where they are abused and forced to conduct scam operations.[33] PRC authorities ramped up prosecution of suspects involved in telecom fraud in 2024, with the Supreme People's Procuratorate announcing that over 67,000 people had been indicted on telecom fraud charges between January and November, an increase of 58.5 percent from the previous year, and that more than 40,000 individuals who were "suspected of involvement in cross-border telecom fraud operations" in northern Burma (Myanmar) had been repatriated.[34] The head of the economic crimes division within the Supreme People's Procuratorate said that overseas cases of telecom fraud have risen despite China's intensified crackdown.[35]

The PRC government previously acknowledged domestic dissatisfaction over the scam centers.[36] In May 2023, Qin Gang, then-PRC Minister of Foreign Affairs, said "Telecommunications and internet fraud gangs have long been entrenched in Burma's border areas, seriously infringing on the interests of Chinese citizens, and the Chinese people hate this," and pledged that the PRC government would crack down on the organizations.[37]

Human Trafficking in Scam Centers and Other Criminal Enterprises in Southeast Asia—Continued

Recent reporting has revealed details about the PRC's links to some of the criminal networks operating in Southeast Asia. In January 2024, Burmese authorities handed over the bosses of three crime families to China, including Bai Suocheng, Wei Chaoren, and Liu Zhengxiang, accusing them of being involved in the organized cyberfraud industry.[38] The *Washington Post* reported in June 2024 that the criminal networks run by the three families benefited from close relations with Chinese officials in Yunnan province, the PRC government, and the military government in Burma for over a decade.[39] Through their alliances, the families created a "profitable criminal ecosystem" across the Kokang region of Burma comprising both legal and illegal businesses.[40] The criminal networks cooperated on numerous economic projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars with PRC and Burmese authorities.[41] The families were able to establish companies in China and obtain identity papers in part due to their Han Chinese background and ran operations involving "illegal gambling, human trafficking[,] and narcotics."[42] Chinese nationals and ethnic Chinese people were trafficked and "beaten, tortured or killed" if they tried to escape or failed to reach monetary targets.[43]

Domestic Trafficking

During this reporting year, the Commission continued to observe reports concerning cases of domestic human trafficking in China:[44]

- **Trafficking case of Bu Xiaohua.** In December 2024, reporting emerged that Bu Xiaohua, a woman residing in Heshun county, Shanxi province who was missing for 13 years, was allegedly trafficked and abused.[45] From 2011 to 2024, Bu lived in a village approximately 100 miles from her hometown with a man named Zhang Ruijun and reportedly gave birth to several children.[46] When found, Bu showed signs of neglect, including "matted hair, severe malnourishment, as well as being deprived of eyeglasses and unable to see well."[47] Zhang, who asserted that he "gave shelter" to Bu, was eventually detained by local authorities on suspicion of rape.[48] Despite Chinese state media downplaying the possibility that Bu was trafficked, one WeChat commentator argued that the use of the term "sheltering" could be used to "mask serious criminal activities against vulnerable people such as victims of trafficking or those suffering from mental illness."[49] As of March 2025, the case involving Bu Xiaohua was in the prosecution stage.[50] [For more information on the trafficking case of Bu Xiaohua, see Chapter 7—Status of Women.]

FORCED LABOR IN AND FROM THE XINJIANG UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION

The forced labor of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in and from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) remained a concern during the Commission's 2025 reporting year.[51] A December 2024 report by Adrian Zenz and I-Lin Lin of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation asserted that the PRC government's

heightened agricultural production policies have resulted in coercive forms of work that "constitute state-imposed forced labor as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and operationalized in its updated handbook on the measurement of forced labor."[52] Officials have applied this coercive pressure on Turkic ethnic minority groups through forced agricultural production mandates, the mandated transfer of rural land-use rights, labor transfers, and other means.[53] In its *Application of International Labour Standards 2025* report, citing the research of the International Trade Union Confederation, the ILO reported that the PRC government has engaged in a system of transferring "surplus" rural workers in the XUAR into industries including the processing of raw materials for the production of vehicle components, seafood processing, and seasonal agricultural work.[54] [For more information on the PRC government's use of Uyghur forced labor and forced land transfers, see Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and Chapter 12—Business and Human Rights.]

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VII. Worker Rights

Worker Rights

Findings

- Documented worker strikes and protests in China decreased overall from 2023 to 2024; however, strikes in the manufacturing sector increased. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has attempted to resolve wage arrears, in part due to a desire to "maintain social harmony and stability." Wage arrears were the cause of the majority of worker strikes and protests in 2024.
- During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Hong Kong authorities continued to suppress labor rights activists. In Hong Kong, **Carol Ng Man-yee** and **Winnie Yu Wai-ming** were sentenced to prison for "conspiracy to commit subversion" under Hong Kong's *National Security Law* in November 2024. Mainland Chinese labor rights advocate **Wang Jianbing** was released from prison in March 2025, but human rights experts assert that he may continue to face unlawful restrictions and is at risk of re-detention. Similarly, in August 2024, Chinese labor activist and women's rights advocate **Li Qiaochu** was released after serving a three-year, eight-month prison sentence, and remains subject to two years' deprivation of political rights.
- Due to fears of instability and social unrest, PRC officials have sought to provide more protection for delivery workers, who have faced increasing pressure in the expanding gig economy. Observers are skeptical that these measures will directly benefit delivery workers.
- Chinese workers continued to face poor working conditions and were subject to excessive overtime practices. Workers in Yunnan province's coffee farms, who supply coffee to Starbucks and Nestlé, as well as workers at Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Ltd. (CATL), faced excessive overtime practices.
- The Commission continued to document cases of job discrimination in China. Local procurators found that women who applied to positions at over a dozen companies in Nantong municipality, Jiangsu province, were illegally administered pregnancy tests during pre-employment physicals. Concerns over age bias were raised by representatives at the annual meetings of the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in March (Two Sessions), with some calling for age limits to be formally eliminated in the hiring process.

Worker Rights

Introduction

During the 2025 reporting year, the Commission observed the suppression of internationally recognized worker rights in China. In 2024, worker strikes continued to occur at a high pre-pandemic level, even as the government continued to crack down on labor rights activity and labor activists. The People's Republic of China (PRC) government also extended the statutory retirement age, raising concerns that rural migrant workers would potentially face a more difficult road to gaining access to social insurance benefits. The Commission continued to observe instances of excessive overtime, as well as employment discrimination against women and job applicants over the age of 35.

Worker Strikes and Protests

STRIKES AND LABOR PROTESTS REMAINED FREQUENT

The Commission monitors China's compliance in protecting internationally recognized worker rights as part of its legislative mandate.[1] This includes the right to form trade unions and the right to strike as provided in Article 8 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which China has ratified, and the right to organize as provided for in International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions that China has not ratified.[2] China has, however, ratified 7 of the 10 ILO fundamental conventions, including the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention of 1957.[3] The right to strike is an "intrinsic corollary of the fundamental right of freedom of association," a freedom that, on paper,[4] is protected by Article 35 of China's Constitution.[5] Though the PRC government notes that strikes are not formally prohibited by law, workers have been prosecuted for participating in strikes, often under the criminal charges of "disturbing public order" or "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."[6] Furthermore, the CCP-led All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) remained the only trade union organization permitted to represent worker rights under Chinese law.[7]

China Labour Bulletin (CLB), a Hong Kong-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) that closed in June 2025,[8] compiled data annually on worker actions collected from traditional news sources and social media and documented protests carried out by workers across China on its "Strike Map."[9] CLB cautioned that their reporting on collective actions is incomplete given difficulties with the availability of information, and estimates that its database only collects roughly 5 to 10 percent of all incidents.[10]

Despite an overall decline in documented strikes and labor actions since 2023, China's worker unrest continued to remain at a high level in 2024.[11] CLB documented 1,509 incidents in 2024, compared to 1,794 incidents in 2023.[12] The last time China witnessed more than 1,509 incidents was 2018, when a total of 1,707 incidents were documented by CLB.[13]

Labor Actions by Sector

WORKER STRIKES AND OTHER LABOR ACTIONS BY SECTOR
BASED ON CHINA LABOUR BULLETIN'S (CLB) STRIKE MAP

- **Construction workers.** Similar to last year's reporting cycle, the construction industry continued to see the most protests of all sectors, as financial issues in China's real estate market continued to inhibit developers' ability to pay out wages to construction workers.[14]
- **Manufacturing workers.** Although labor protests have decreased overall, the manufacturing sector saw an increase in protests, with most strikes in this sector taking place in the electronics and apparel industries.[15] For instance, a Foxconn factory in Hengyang municipality, Hunan province, faced protests after the company cut workers' subsidies and overtime shifts.[16]
- **Service workers.** The services sector saw a decrease in the total number of strikes, with the catering, sanitation, and retail industries experiencing the greatest number of protests within the service industry.[17] In the sanitation sector, workers protested unpaid wages attributable to the financial challenges facing local governments, such as a December 2024 incident involving hundreds of sanitation workers in Xi'an city, Shaanxi province, who surrounded government offices and blocked a road due to lack of payments for five months.[18] According to CLB, an official claimed that the government could not pay workers due to a lack of funds but promised that it would pay them before the end of the month.[19]
- **Logistics and transportation workers.** The logistics and transportation sectors also saw a decline in the number of protests, but taxi drivers, who faced intensified competition from ride-hailing companies, initiated many protests.[20] In September 2024, hundreds of drivers went on strike in Xiangyang municipality, Hubei province, after the local government "ordered taxi drivers to transfer their permits to a designated company."[21] An X account named "Yesterday," run by a project dedicated to recording and sharing information about protests in China, said that the Xiangyang government sent "transportation management personnel" to intercept and seize taxis on the road in an effort to make the drivers comply.[22]

China Seeks to Maintain Social Stability by Combating Wage Arrears

The CCP has sought to resolve cases of wage arrears in order to maintain "social stability." CLB asserts that wage arrears accounted for 88 percent of reported labor disputes in 2024.[23] The State Council acknowledged that one of its objectives was to "firmly prevent any major mass incidents or vicious extreme events triggered by wage arrears" and to also "maintain social harmony and stability."[24] As noted by the *South China Morning Post,* PRC officials' efforts to maintain social stability took place during a period of economic pressure and high-profile mass killings.[25] [For more on officials' tightening control on risk management, see Chapter 5—Governance and the Rule of Law.]

During this year's reporting cycle, the PRC government sought to address the issue of wage arrears by prosecuting individuals and businesses responsible for failing to pay wages.[26] Beginning in November 2024, the Supreme People's Court launched a three-month campaign that aimed to have courts expedite criminal proceedings against those who failed to pay wages, prioritizing projects initiated by local governments and state-owned enterprises.[27] Chinese state media claimed that China's courts processed around 82,000 cases involving the recovery of unpaid wages during the first 11 months of 2024.[28] In January 2025, state media asserted that "procuratorates in China prosecuted 1,866 individuals for failing to pay labor compensation," claiming that this was a 7.3-percent increase from 2023.[29] During the same month, the Supreme People's Court and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security also said that between 2020 and 2024, courts around the country closed over 6,200 criminal cases of "refusal to pay labor remuneration."[30]

Continued Suppression of Labor Rights Advocates

During this reporting year, the Commission continued to observe reports of PRC and Hong Kong authorities' suppression of worker and labor advocates.[31]

- **Carol Ng Man-yee and Winnie Yu Wai-ming.** In November 2024, two Hong Kong labor rights advocates, Carol Ng Man-yee, former chairperson of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, and Winnie Yu Wai-ming, founder and former chairperson of the Hospital Authority Employees Alliance, were sentenced to prison for "conspiracy to commit subversion" under Hong Kong's *National Security Law.*[32] Hong Kong police arrested Ng and Yu in 2021 along with other prominent pro-democracy activists who organized a non-binding primary election in July 2020.[33] Hong Kong judges sentenced Ng to four years and five months in prison and Yu to six years and nine months.[34] According to Hong Kong Labour Rights Monitor, Yu and Ng participated in the primary election to "strengthen the bargaining power of ordinary citizens through legislative means and protect workers' rights."[35] Ng stated in her mitigation hearing that "[p]articipating in the primary election was a means to enter the legislature, to allow workers to share in the fruits of socio-economic development and to protect labour rights, not to subvert the state."[36]
- **Wang Jianbing.** The Guangdong High People's Court rejected the appeal of Chinese labor rights advocate Wang Jianbing in September 2024, upholding his original June 2024 verdict.[37] Wang, along with journalist and human rights advocate **Sophia Huang Xueqin,** were convicted in June 2024 of "inciting subversion of state power."[38] The Guangzhou Municipal Intermediate People's Court sentenced Wang to three years, six months' imprisonment and three years' deprivation of political rights.[39] According to *China Digital Times,* the Guangdong High People's Court held the trial in September 2024 without notifying Wang and Huang's lawyers, leading to criticism by supporters and human rights organizations, who asserted that the decision was a violation of due process.[40] In March 2025, Rights Defense

Network reported that Wang was released from prison and noted that he was in good spirits but appeared to have lost a significant amount of weight.[41] Amnesty International expressed concern that Wang may continue to face "unlawful restrictions on his freedoms and the risk of re-detention" following his release.[42] [For more information regarding Wang Jianbing's case, see Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression.]

- **Li Qiaochu.** In August 2024, Chinese labor activist and women's rights advocate Li Qiaochu was released after serving three years and eight months in prison.[43] Li posted on the social media platform X, saying that she and legal rights activist **Xu Zhiyong** still needed the public's continued attention "so that we can live in this country free from fear."[44] Li was initially taken into custody in February 2020 and detained incommunicado under "residential surveillance at a designated location" (RSDL).[45] Following her release on bail in June 2020, authorities arrested Li in March 2021 for "inciting subversion of state power" after she documented poor conditions at the Linshu County Public Security Bureau Detention Center and posted about it online.[46] Li's sentence includes a two-year term of deprivation of political rights following release.[47] [For more information regarding Li Qiaochu's case, see Chapter 7—Status of Women.]

China's New Retirement Age Fuels Dissatisfaction among Workers

China's new retirement ages were announced during this reporting year, laying out new requirements for male and female workers. The raising of the retirement age is taking place amid China's challenges in facing an aging population and a falling birth rate, both of which have led to "concerns about the country's shrinking labor force and the sustainability of the pension system."[48] In September 2024, the National People's Congress Standing Committee announced a decision on the implementation of raising the retirement age.[49] Effective January 2025, the statutory retirement age will gradually be raised over a 15-year period.[50] For men, the retirement age will be raised from 60 to 63 years of age.[51] Retirement ages will be raised from 55 to 58 for women who hold "cadre positions," such as managers or senior technical staff.[52] The retirement age for other female workers will increase from 50 to 55.[53] Beginning in January 2030, the minimum period of contributions toward the basic pension insurance fund needed before being able to receive monthly pension benefits will gradually increase from 15 years to 20 years, rising in six-month increments per year.[54]

Chinese workers expressed discontent online and through interviews with the media over the new policy, while observers said that the new requirements will negatively impact China's migrant workers in particular. Over 100,000 people posted on social media following the announcement, with many internet users expressing concern that there would not be enough job openings for those seeking employment and that pension funds would be depleted by the time of retirement, among other issues.[55] There was no public consultation process for the new retirement age.[56] Journalist Deng Yuwen explained that "[d]elaying retirement is different from general public policies. It involves the practical rights and interests

of almost every worker, so it is particularly necessary to consult the public."[57] Furthermore, migrant workers,[58] who do not possess an urban residency within China's household registration (*hukou,* 户口) system, lack the same access to local government services as compared to their urban counterparts.[59] China Labour Bulletin previously assessed that raising the retirement age may add burdens to migrant workers who already have difficulty finding jobs that pay for social insurance benefits, which includes pension payments even for the current minimum period of 15 years.[60]

Food Delivery Workers in the Gig Economy

PRC authorities took steps to improve protection for food delivery workers due to fears of social unrest and to buttress against the slowing economy, but analysts have expressed doubt that such efforts will directly benefit workers. Official media described employment in the gig economy, including work as food delivery drivers, live-streamers, couriers, and drivers for ride-hailing services, as "flexible employment."[61] Although the gig economy offers workers flexible hours, pay structures, and work terms, this model has allowed companies to avoid formal obligations like providing social insurance.[62] Rising unemployment and an economic slowdown have led to the expansion of China's gig economy in recent years, which has created additional competition and pressure for food delivery workers.[63] Following a February 2025 meeting between PRC leader Xi Jinping and Chinese business leaders, China's largest food delivery platforms JD, Meituan, and Ele.me said that they would expand social insurance benefits for delivery workers.[64] Analysts asserted that Xi's meeting with the leaders indicated a push to make the private sector better serve the CCP's goals.[65] Gig workers were a focus at the annual meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in March (Two Sessions).[66] At a press conference during the Two Sessions, Minister of Human Resources and Social Security Wang Xiaoping stated that a pilot government program providing occupational injury insurance for gig workers would be expanded from 7 provinces to 17 provinces.[67] Commentators are skeptical that efforts to expand social or state insurance to delivery workers will be directly beneficial for them and have also noted that details on implementation have been sparse.[68] In a letter to the *Financial Times,* one Shanghai municipality-based commentator said that "[b]y adding state insurance to the delivery drivers, the primary beneficiary would be the state insurance fund, whose coffers have been emptied by mismanagement, corruption, and most importantly, misguided Covid restrictions."[69]

Excessive Overtime

The Commission continued to observe cases of Chinese workers being subject to excessive overtime practices during this reporting year:

- **Coffee farm workers in Yunnan province.** China Labor Watch (CLW) asserted that coffee farms in Yunnan subjected workers to excessive hours and poor working conditions.[70] CLW conducted three undercover investigations in 2024 that consist-

ed of interviews with 66 individuals working on Yunnan farms that supply coffee to Starbucks and Nestlé.[71] Coffee farmers and hired pickers endured excessive work hours, consisting of a schedule of 11 to 12 hours a day, seven days a week, for three months straight.[72] Employers did not provide paid leave, compensation for statutory holidays, or personal leave.[73] Farmers did not receive medical or health insurance and were not provided with safety equipment.[74] The farms also used child workers for tasks including picking coffee beans during school breaks, potentially exposing them to agrochemicals.[75] CLW's investigation found that "ethnic minorities, including the Wa, Hani, Lisu, Lahu and others, face cultural and linguistic marginalization within the coffee industry," since many of the workers do not speak Mandarin Chinese, impeding their ability to advocate for improved workplace conditions and defend their rights.[76]

• **CATL corporate workers.** Chinese state media reported that the Chinese battery company Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Ltd. (CATL) launched a "Strive for 100 Days" campaign, and pushed employees to work from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week, or an "896" work schedule.[77] This schedule exceeds the "996" work schedule, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week.[78] The PRC government stated in 2021 that the "996" work schedule is illegal.[79] Article 36 of the *PRC Labor Law* provides that the workday should not exceed 8 hours and that the workweek may not exceed on average 44 hours.[80] CATL's management did not issue an official document requiring the "896" schedule, but a company source said that department heads have "mandated their subordinates [to] work overtime."[81] One CATL employee noted that others had resigned in response to the requirement.[82]

Employment Discrimination

During this reporting year, the Commission continued to observe cases of employment discrimination in China:

• **Companies illegally administer pregnancy tests for job applicants.** In July 2024, state media reported that over a dozen Chinese companies allegedly asked job applicants to take pregnancy tests.[83] According to the *Procuratorial Daily,* a Chinese state media outlet, procurators found that 168 women who applied to positions at 16 companies in Nantong municipality, Jiangsu province, were illegally tested during pre-employment physicals.[84] Procurators later conducted an investigation, visiting two public hospitals and a medical exam center.[85] The procurators found that one woman who was pregnant was not hired.[86] [For more on the illegally administered pre-employment pregnancy tests in Nantong municipality, Jiangsu province, see Chapter 7—Status of Women.]

• **Age bias negatively impacts prospective job applicants.** For years, ageism has been a form of job discrimination in China, and the *PRC Labor Law* lacks prohibitions against age-based discrimination.[87] During the Two Sessions, the CCP signaled that addressing ageism will be a focus during the year.[88] For instance, Zheng Gongcheng, an NPC delegate, said that age lim-

its were "wasting talent" and suggested that such limits should be illegal.[89] Another NPC deputy, Meng Yuan, urged that China's labor laws be strengthened to eliminate arbitrary age restrictions that are unrelated to job requirements.[90] These calls for strengthened regulations against age restrictions emerged following several prominent cases of ageism in China.[91] For instance, in February 2025, a job advertisement for sanitation workers in Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province, sparked outrage online, after Xinshi subdistrict, Baiyun district, set an age limit of 35 for the position, with a possible extension to 40.[92] According to *Sixth Tone,* a Chinese state-affiliated media outlet,[93] screenshots of the job description garnered millions of views on Weibo, a popular Chinese microblogging platform, with many internet users criticizing the age limit and expressing how difficult it is to find work as people get older.[94]

Notes to Chapter 10—Worker Rights

[1]"U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000," Pub. L. No. 106-286, §§301–309.

[2]"International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)," adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force January 3, 1976, art. 8; "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," *United Nations Treaty Collection,* Chapter IV Human Rights; "Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948," *International Labour Organization,* No. 87, adopted July 9, 1948, entry into force July 4, 1950; "Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949," *International Labour Organization,* No. 98, adopted July 1, 1949, entry into force July 18, 1951.

[3]"Ratifications for China," *International Labour Organization,* accessed March 31, 2025; "Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957," *International Labour Organization,* No. 105, adopted June 25, 1957, entry into force January 17, 1959.

[4]Maina Kiai, "UN Rights Expert: Fundamental Right to Strike Must Be Preserved," *U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,* March 9, 2017; "张千帆：中国宪法为何难以落实" [Zhang Qianfan: Why is the Chinese constitution difficult to implement?], *Yanhuang Chunqiu,* no. 5, reprinted in *China Digital Times,* May 11, 2011; "零八宪章全文（刘晓波等）" [Full text of Charter 08 (Liu Xiaobo et al.)], December 9, 2008, reprinted in *Radio Free Asia,* July 13, 2016. Legal scholars in China have asserted that while the PRC has a constitution, it does not have a constitutional government. In other words, the constitution fails to protect citizens' rights in practice.

[5]"中华人民共和国宪法" [PRC Constitution], passed December 4, 1982, amended March 11, 2018, art. 35.

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[13]"China Labour Bulletin Strike Map Data Analysis: 2024 Year in Review for Workers' Rights," *China Labour Bulletin,* January 29, 2025.

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[17]"China Labour Bulletin Strike Map Data Analysis: 2024 Year in Review for Workers' Rights," *China Labour Bulletin,* January 29, 2025.

[18]"Strike Map," *China Labour Bulletin,* (Keyword: 陕西省西安市，一环卫公司拖欠工资，工人堵路; Date: 2024-12-2024-12), accessed April 1, 2025; "China Labour Bulletin Strike Map Data Analysis: 2024 Year in Review for Workers' Rights," *China Labour Bulletin,* January 29, 2025.

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VIII. Other Thematic Issues

The Environment

Findings

• During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Chinese Communist Party and government continued to state their intention to prioritize environmental protection.
• China continued to contribute to domestic and cross-border pollution, which experts suggested may contribute to "a vicious cycle of poverty and health hazards." Authors of a February 2025 study revealed "the existence of unidentified exposure sources" of lithium in Beijing municipality, resulting in higher lithium levels in maternal and umbilical cord blood samples of pregnant women in the city.
• While food and water security reportedly remain a top priority for the Party and government, PRC citizens continued to face difficulty accessing these resources. Local surface water monitoring stations located along the Leishui River in Hunan province detected "abnormal concentrations of thallium" in March 2025. In April 2025, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region experienced a severe drought, causing direct economic losses. More than 16,000 hectares of crops were severely damaged and 83,000 people faced a shortage of drinking water.
• Dams built by the PRC government, both in China and abroad, continued to contribute to environmental damage. The PRC government's building of dams in Tibet and along the Mekong River contributed to rapidly changing water levels and destruction of agriculture. A dam built in northwest China may have contributed to forced relocations and forced labor programs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).
• The Commission observed reports of environmental degradation tied to PRC-affiliated mines globally, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Laos, Peru, Tajikistan, and Zambia.
• PRC authorities sentenced 29-year-old Tibetan **Tsongon Tsering** to eight months in prison for "disrupting social order." Tsongon Tsering had posted a video online denouncing local officials for failing to adequately address the environmental damage to the Tsaruma River caused by illegal mining.

The Environment

PRC Government Actions and Legal Developments

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and government officials repeated their commitment to environmental protection in their public messaging, both domestically and internationally.[1] At the December 2024 Central Economic Work Conference, members of the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Political Bureau urged continued efforts to "keep the skies blue, waters clear and lands clean."[2] Subsequently, in Premier Li Qiang's March 2025 government work report at the National People's Congress, he reaffirmed the CCP's commitment to ecological protection, pollution reduction, and resource conservation.[3] He also emphasized the Party's desire to "actively engage in and steer global environmental and climate governance."[4] General Secretary and President Xi Jinping delivered remarks at a virtual summit in April 2025 hosted by U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres and Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, where Xi extolled environmental protection and "harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature."[5]

PRC government actions and legal developments in the past year addressing environmental protection included the following:

- On July 4, 2024, the China Meteorological Administration published the annual *Blue Book on Climate Change of China 2024*.[6] The publication noted that instances of heavy precipitation and extreme high temperatures in China were "more frequent and severe," compared to extreme low temperature events in the country.[7]
- On July 11, 2024, the PRC State Council Information Office released a white paper titled *Marine Eco-Environmental Protection in China*.[8] The white paper featured an overview of the government's efforts to achieve "harmonious coexistence between humans and the ocean."[9] Approaches discussed in the white paper included regional-specific monitoring mechanisms and pollution prevention initiatives across land and sea.[10]
- Effective October 1, 2024, the PRC Rare Earth Management Regulations aim to address the protection and development of rare earth resources within the country.[11] The regulations require companies engaged in rare earth mining and smelting to "adopt reasonable environmental risk prevention, ecological protection, and safety protection measures" to prevent environmental pollution.[12] The International Energy Agency noted that the regulations seemingly underscore that "rare earth resources belong to the state."[13]
- On December 27, 2024, the China Meteorological Administration and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences released the *Green Book of Climate Change*, an annual report that compiles the PRC's domestic policies addressing challenges posed by climate change and provides an update on their implementation.[14] The report highlighted the application of new technologies such as artificial intelligence to provide accurate predictive analytics about climate.[15]

- Effective January 1, 2025, the *PRC Energy Law* aims to safeguard national energy security and coordinate development and use of coal, solar, oil, natural gas, hydrogen, wind, and other forms of energy.[16] The law is China's first piece of legislation that provides a legal structure at the national level for cross-sectoral energy planning.[17] The world's largest solar plant is located in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), and as of November 2024, the XUAR was reported to be an emerging key hub for coal production in China.[18] [For more information about industries implicated in or at risk of complicity in rights abuses in the XUAR, see Chapter 12—Business and Human Rights.]
- On February 23, 2025, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and State Council released the *2025 No. 1 Document,* which outlines annual top priorities for the country's agricultural sector and rural development.[19] Initiatives include using new technologies to increase productivity, coordinating waste and sewage management, and "curbing illegal activities that damage arable land."[20] According to an analysis by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, the document reveals that "[w]hile food security remains a cornerstone, the policy now places greater emphasis on reforming and modernizing rural practices to address emerging challenges in China's rural revitalization efforts."[21]
- On February 28, 2025, the China Meteorological Administration's National Climate Center released the *China Climate Bulletin 2024,* which revealed that in 2024, the national average temperature "reached a record high."[22] The bulletin also noted that the country experienced more precipitation in 2024 compared to previous years.[23]

Pollution

China continued to contribute to domestic and cross-border pollution, which experts suggested may contribute to "a vicious cycle of poverty and health hazards."[24] In the fall of 2024, high humidity and low wind speeds in Beijing municipality and other parts of northern China exacerbated and contributed to air pollution and persistent smog.[25] Researchers found that the number of "air-pollution-induced premature deaths" varied by province, with southern and southwestern China, in particular, impacted by heavy pollution from northerly winds in the winter.[26] Chinese workers with sufficient means tend to seek opportunities in areas with better air quality, amplifying economic disparities with low-income individuals or rural residents who have lower mobility.[27] One study noted that "air pollution will significantly reduce the innovation output of inventors . . . and ultimately impede labor productivity as well as hinder economic and social advancement." [28] In February 2025, Li Tianwei, Director of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment's Department of Atmospheric Environment, announced that the Ministry "aims to eliminate days with heavy pollution [in 2025], despite expecting less favorable weather conditions," by bolstering its air quality forecasting systems and emission reduction efforts.[29] A briefing published in June 2025 by a researcher at the Centre for Research on Energy

and Clean Air noted that although China's national average fine particulate matter (PM2.5) level decreased in the first quarter of 2025, certain provinces in western China experienced "significant increases."[30] The researcher observed that the XUAR surpassed Henan province to become the most polluted region in the country, with a PM2.5 level 14 times higher than the World Health Organization's recommended PM2.5 level of 5 μg/m^3.[31]

"Mystery" Lithium Pollution in Beijing Municipality

In a February 2025 research report, authors uncovered in Beijing municipality "the existence of unidentified exposure sources" of lithium—a critical mineral used in batteries—which resulted in higher lithium levels in maternal and umbilical cord blood samples of pregnant women in the city.[32] The researchers warned that "as lithium demand continues to grow, increasing environmental lithium concentrations pose potential health risks to sensitive populations, particularly pregnant women and fetuses."[33] In a *South China Morning Post* article summarizing the report, the author noted that a lithium battery factory opened in October 2024 in Beijing municipality.[34] International human rights standards on health include Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which China signed on October 27, 1997, and ratified on March 27, 2001.[35]

Food and Water Security

While food and water security reportedly remains a top priority for the Party and government, PRC citizens continued to face difficulty accessing these resources.[36] In August 2024, Chinese media outlets *China Central Television (CCTV)* and *Sixth Tone* reported that high temperatures and other severe weather patterns have resulted in a more than 40 percent increase in vegetable prices—the highest increase recorded in China in this past decade.[37] The weighted average price of vegetables that month reportedly was 25 percent higher than the previous year.[38] In the first half of 2024, citizens reportedly had difficulty accessing water due to droughts and insufficient water storage.[39] In October 2024, Chinese state media reported that authorities established contingency plans and monitoring stations to gather grain market information across the country to bolster "its emergency food supply in response to increasing extreme weather events and natural disasters."[40]

According to observers and Chinese media, local surface water monitoring stations located between Chenzhou municipality and Hengyang municipality along the Leishui River in Hunan province detected "abnormal concentrations of thallium" in March 2025.[41] Water contaminated by thallium, a toxic colorless metal, causes adverse health effects including cancer and organ damage.[42] The *Southern Metropolis Daily* (*Nanfang Dushi Bao,* 南方都市报), owned by Party-run *Nanfang Media Group,*[43] noted that the abnormal levels of thallium caused "trans-municipal pollution and threat[ened] downstream water safety."[44] Residents reportedly rushed to stockpile drinking water.[45]

In April 2025, China experienced higher-than-average temperatures and low precipitation levels.[46] Chinese state media reported that 52 counties in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in southern China were impacted by a severe drought, causing direct economic losses of up to 210 million yuan (US$28.8 million).[47] A *Global Times* article directly acknowledged that the drought has affected agricultural production and access to drinking water for livestock and people.[48] More than 16,000 hectares of crops were severely damaged and 83,000 people faced a shortage of drinking water.[49]

Impact of the PRC's Dams

Dams built by the PRC government, both in China and abroad, continued to pose threats to the environment and local communities. In July 2024, a dam located in Dongting Lake, Huarong county, Hunan province, ruptured and resulted in flooding and the evacuation of more than 5,000 people.[50] The PRC government's building of hydropower dams in Tibet and along the Mekong River has contributed to the displacement of local Tibetan communities, rising water levels, and increased the risk of landslides and earthquakes.[51] According to the International Campaign for Tibet, at least 193 known hydropower dams have been "built or planned across Tibet" since 2000.[52] Reports from international media this past year discussed China's previously approved plans to construct the Yarlung Tsangpo dam—the "world's largest hydropower dam"—and raised concerns about further exploitation of Tibetan land and downstream effects on the livelihoods of local communities in India and Bangladesh.[53] [For more information on threats to Tibetan culture, see Chapter 14—Tibet.]

Local communities in Southeast Asia have expressed concern about the PRC's dams along the Mekong River—dams constructed without prior consultation with downstream countries Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.[54] Compared to other forms of infrastructure, China's 12 hydropower dams located in the upper basin of the Mekong River "are arguably the source of the greatest environmental harm," according to experts at the International Crisis Group.[55] In December 2024, more than 150 people in northern Thailand peacefully protested the construction of the Pak Beng Hydropower Project, a dam to be built in Laos bordering Thailand's Chiang Rai province by China Datang Overseas Investment Co., Ltd. and Thailand-based Gulf Energy Development.[56] China Datang Overseas Investment Co., Ltd. is a subsidiary of PRC state-owned China Datang Corporation.[57] Thai protesters and experts called for more ecological studies to first be conducted to determine the project's environmental impact, including the risk of rising water levels and the destruction of agriculture and culturally important sites.[58] In addition, several environmental organizations and residents from Laos and Thailand voiced opposition to the construction of the Laos-based Sanakham hydropower dam developed by Datang (Lao) Sanakham Hydropower Co. Ltd, a subsidiary of China Datang Corporation, citing concerns about potential forced relocations and disruptions to local biodiversity.[59]

A dam built by the PRC government in northwest China may have contributed to forced relocations and forced labor programs

in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).[60] A reporter from Party-run media outlet *Global Times* made a visit to the XUAR's largest hydropower dam—the Aratax Water Conservation Project, referred to as "Xinjiang's Three Gorges"—and to an "ethnic minority community village that was relocated due to the project's construction," according to an in-depth report published in August 2024.[61] The report featured an individual from the dam construction company who "mobiliz[ed] villagers to relocate"[62] and also included a photo documenting "local women work[ing] at a factory in Tong'an township that produces socks."[63] [For information on forced relocations and forced labor involving Turkic and Muslim XUAR residents, see Chapter 12—Business and Human Rights and Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]

Repression of Environmental Advocacy in the Tibet Autonomous Region

China's Constitution provides for freedom of speech, assembly, and association, as do the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—which China has signed but not ratified—and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[64] In November 2024, reports emerged that officials sentenced 29-year-old Tibetan **Tsongon Tsering** to eight months in prison for "disrupting social order."[65] Tsongon Tsering had posted a video online denouncing local officials for failing to adequately address the environmental damage to the Tsaruma River caused by illegal mining activities conducted by Chinese construction company Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Company.[66] According to the International Campaign for Tibet, Tsongon Tsering's case is "not isolated but rather symptomatic of broader challenges facing Tibet's environment and its defenders."[67] [For more information on Tsongon Tsering and the PRC's suppression of advocacy in Tibet, see Chapter 14—Tibet.]

Impact of the PRC's Mining

The Commission observed reports of environmental degradation this past year tied to PRC-affiliated mines globally, including in:

- **Democratic Republic of Congo.** In a November 2024 article posted on *Africa Defense Forum Magazine,* a quarterly publication of U.S. Africa Command, authors warned that the environmental impact of PRC gold mining companies operating illegally in South Kivu province in the eastern part of the country is "devastating," citing water pollution, river dredging, and land degradation.[68] The *Associated Press* reported that a Chinese-run gold mine is "rapidly encroaching" on the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, recognized as an endangered U.N. World Heritage site, increasing the risk of poaching and pollution.[69] In a February 2025 report, researchers noted that PRC state-owned Sicomines' copper and cobalt mining operations resulted in destruction of local agricultural infrastructure and raised concerns about potential forced evictions.[70]
- **Indonesia.** According to the Center for Advanced Defense Studies, a non-profit research organization, Chinese companies or shareholders—several of which have direct links to the PRC

government or receive support from PRC state-owned banks—control at least 75 percent of Indonesia's nickel refining industry.[71] Observers reported examples of negative environmental impacts associated with these companies, including water pollution, particulate pollution, and severe flooding.[72]

- **Laos.** Residents of northern Laos continued to express concern this reporting year about water and food security following a February 2024 chemical leak from Laos's largest rare earth mining site jointly owned by Beijing Platinum World Technology Development and Laos's Phadang Hungheuang Huaphan Mining Sole Company.[73] A Laos-based journalist documented evidence of ongoing harm to local aquaculture from the leak, including water contamination and agricultural land loss, as well as illness.[74]
- **Peru.** Beginning in 2013, nearly the entire population of Morococha, a town located in central Peru, was forced to relocate to a flood-prone wetland area due to a Chinese mining company's construction of an open pit copper mine.[75] A report in October 2024 revealed that the relocated residents faced extreme poverty, and residents who refused to relocate had limited access to electricity and clean water.[76] In a February 2025 data analysis of the PRC's financing for transition minerals, researchers identified Las Bambas and Toromocho copper mines in Peru as "two of the largest destinations for Chinese state-directed financing for overseas transition mineral operations."[77] Communities near Las Bambas's mining operations reportedly have previously raised concerns about toxic chemicals, dust pollution, and water pollution.[78] These instances are reflective of the PRC's lack of safeguards to ensure "compliance with environmental or labor regulations" in its economic deals with Peru.[79]
- **Tajikistan.** A July 2024 report entitled *Dead Fish and Dirty Air: Chinese Firms Leave Waste as They Mine Tajikistan's Gold* by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* assessed the health and environmental impacts of four PRC-affiliated projects.[80] The report revealed damaged crops, health issues, including breathing problems and stillbirths, and troubling exposures to cyanide.[81] The report also found that some Tajik officials "protect[ed] the Chinese companies from public scrutiny because China is Tajikistan's main source of foreign investment."[82]
- **Zambia.** A February 2025 acid spill of an estimated 50 million liters of acidic waste from a copper mine owned by Sino-Metals Leach Zambia Limited contaminated the country's most important waterway, the Kafue River, resulting in widespread threats to water and food security.[83] Sino-Metals Leach Zambia Limited is an enterprise of PRC state-owned China Nonferrous Mining Corporation Limited.[84] A local environmental activist described the leak as "an environmental disaster" with "catastrophic consequences."[85] Zambian civil society organizations urged Sino-Metals to "finance and conduct cleanup efforts," and an environmental coalition called on the Zambian government to immediately prosecute Chinese companies for their "environmental crimes."[86] Civil society advocates expressed concern about how China's "significant economic and political influence . . . could potentially undermine" their push for accountability.[87]

The PRC in the South China Sea

In January 2025, an analysis published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies documented environmental damage in the South China Sea linked to regional claimants, including the PRC.[88] The authors reviewed commercial satellite imagery and found that the PRC's artificial island expansion activities—including landfilling and dredging—have destroyed about 4,648 acres of coral reefs since 2013.[89] According to the researchers' analysis, China caused more reef destruction than Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Taiwan combined.[90] The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which China ratified, includes the obligation to "protect and preserve the marine environment."[91]

Notes to Chapter 11—The Environment

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Business and Human Rights

Findings

- Companies that do business in, source from, or work with companies in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) are at risk of complicity in human rights abuses committed by the Chinese Communist Party and government. Reports of corporate involvement in mass atrocities in the XUAR implicate the agricultural, apparel, automotive, critical minerals, pharmaceutical, shipbuilding, and tourism industries.
- The *Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act* (UFLPA; Public Law No. 117-78) Entity List consists of nearly 150 PRC-based companies found to be complicit in rights abuses in the XUAR. XUAR Communist Party Secretary Ma Xingrui claimed in March 2025 that U.S. sanctions on entities over forced labor had "become one of the biggest challenges in the region's development." According to *Radio Free Asia,* this was the first time such an admission had been made by a representative of the Chinese government, "proving that international sanctions do have bite."
- Reports from this past year link U.S. and Chinese companies, including **Apple, Google, Meta,** and **DeepSeek,** among others, in the Chinese government's data collection, surveillance, and censorship efforts.
- During the 2025 reporting year, the Commission observed some U.S. companies downsizing, withdrawing, or closing operations in China in part to address U.S.-China geopolitical tensions and legal risks of non-compliance with PRC laws.
- Companies that operate in Hong Kong may find themselves implicated or at risk of complicity in sanctions evasion. Information and communications technology (ICT) companies may encounter difficulty navigating Hong Kong's regulatory changes and threats to privacy and freedom of expression.

Business and Human Rights

Introduction

China-based companies and international companies that seek to operate in the People's Republic of China (PRC) may find themselves complicit in, or at risk of complicity in, the PRC's human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, genocide, data collection, surveillance, and censorship.[1] Companies complicit in such abuses contravene existing U.S. laws and international human rights norms.[2]

Corporate Involvement in Human Rights Abuses in the XUAR

Companies that do business in, source from, or work with companies in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) are at risk of complicity in human rights abuses committed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and government. PRC authorities have subjected individuals from ethnic minority groups in the XUAR to mass surveillance, mass arbitrary detention, forced family separations, and forced labor.[3] Companies are particularly at risk of complicity in crimes against humanity and genocide in the XUAR if they do business with the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), its affiliate companies, or any other entities that have close ties to the XPCC.[4] The XPCC is a paramilitary organization sanctioned by the U.S. for its links to human rights abuses in the XUAR.[5]

Effective since June 21, 2022, the *Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act* (UFLPA; Public Law No. 117-78) establishes a rebuttable presumption that all goods made in whole or in part in the XUAR have been made with forced labor and that the importation of such goods is prohibited by Section 307 of the *Tariff Act of 1930* (19 U.S.C. Chapter 4).[6] The UFLPA Entity List consists of nearly 150 PRC-based companies found to be complicit in Uyghur forced labor.[7] This past year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security added manufacturers of aspartame and steel to the list for the first time.[8] Other added entities included companies in the cotton, mining, and solar industries.[9] XUAR Communist Party Secretary Ma Xingrui claimed in March 2025 that U.S. sanctions on entities over forced labor had "become one of the biggest challenges in the region's development."[10] According to *Radio Free Asia,* this was the first time such an admission had been made by a representative of the Chinese government, "proving that international sanctions do have bite."[11] In May 2025, U.S. Customs and Border Protection disclosed that 140 shipments valued at more than US$3 million had been stopped pursuant to the UFLPA in April alone.[12]

Experts warned that goods made with forced labor continued to "flow through global supply chains."[13] During the 2025 reporting year, the Commission observed the following reports detailing evidence of various industries implicated in or at risk of complicity in human rights abuses in the XUAR:

- **Agricultural industry.** A *BBC* investigation revealed that XUAR tomatoes linked to forced labor had been transported to Europe and found in tomato purees labeled as "Italian."[14] According to lab tests of 64 tomato purees sold in supermarkets

across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, 17 likely consisted of tomatoes from China.[15] Chinese state media outlet *People's Daily* had previously touted the XUAR as "one of the most suitable places in the country— or even the world—to process tomatoes."[16] Adrian Zenz and I-Lin Lin reported on forced agricultural production mandates, labor transfer programs, government surveillance, and political indoctrination associated with the supply chains and production of tomatoes, red pepper pigments, stevia, and marigold in the XUAR.[17]

• **Apparel industry.** In September 2024, apparel and footwear company **Skechers** opened a new outlet in the XUAR.[18] Several experts criticized the opening, and Uyghur Human Rights Project research director Henryk Szadziewski questioned the ethical considerations underpinning the company's decision.[19] In February 2025, reporting by non-profit organization Disclose and television show *Cash Investigation* revealed that **Qingdao Jifa Group,** one of the suppliers of French sports apparel company **Decathlon,** "has been taking an active part" in Uyghur forced assimilation and forced labor policies.[20] Following the reporting, the National Basketball Association (NBA)—which sources NBA-branded apparel from Decathlon—claimed they were "addressing the allegations regarding Decathlon with the company directly."[21]

• **Automotive industry.** According to supply chain mapping by U.S. analytics firm Kharon, several companies in the global automotive industry with links to Chinese suppliers of car parts—including electric vehicle batteries, glass, electronics, and tires—are at risk of complicity in abuses due to suppliers' links to government labor transfers or factories where forced labor is prevalent.[22] In January 2025, the *Guardian* reported that car parts, among other products, made by suppliers on the UFLPA Entity List, were found to have been imported into Australia's market.[23]

• **Critical minerals industry.** In June 2025, Global Rights Compliance, an international law foundation, released a report documenting how the production of beryllium, lithium, magnesium, and titanium in the PRC is linked to state-imposed forced labor transfer programs targeting Uyghurs and other Turkic ethnic groups.[24]

• **Pharmaceutical industry.** An October 2024 report by non-profit research organization Center for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS) found that pharmaceutical products and traditional Chinese and Uyghur medicines manufactured in the XUAR "expose global supply chains to forced labor."[25] **China National Pharmaceutical Group Co. Ltd.,** one of China's largest pharmaceutical companies, and **Xinjiang Huashidan Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd.,** previously owned by the XPCC, reportedly participated in government-sponsored "poverty alleviation" forced labor and forced assimilation schemes.[26] **Xinjiang Deyuan Bioengineering Co. Ltd.** received government subsidies for manufacturing on land where Uyghurs previously lived, and **Xinjiang Nuziline Bio-Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd.** accepted forced labor transfers.[27] The U.S. Department of Homeland

Security had not added these companies to the UFLPA Entity List as of January 2025.[28]

- **Shipbuilding industry.** In January 2025, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative issued a report that found that PRC-owned company **China Baowu Steel Group** and its subsidiary **Xinjiang Bayi Iron and Steel Co. Ltd.,** which was added to the UFLPA Entity List in October 2024, participated in state-sponsored forced labor transfer schemes.[29] The report also found that **Shougang Group Co., Ltd.** and its XUAR-based subsidiary **Shougang Ili Iron & Steel Co.** likely engaged in the "mass incarceration" of Uyghurs.[30] China Baowu Steel Group and Shougang Group Co., Ltd. are considered key suppliers of steel for PRC shipbuilders.[31]
- **Tourism industry.** An April 2025 report published by the Uyghur Human Rights Project identified international hotel chains with "ownership structures and franchise agreements [with] Chinese companies . . ., participation in state-led programs such as Xinjiang Aid and labor transfers, and hotel presence in areas administered by the XPCC."[32]

Companies' Role in Government Data Collection and Surveillance

During the 2025 reporting year, the Commission observed reports of companies directly or indirectly supporting the PRC's data collection and surveillance efforts. In November 2024, the non-profit publication *Rest of World* reported that the incubator program of U.S. technology company **Microsoft** may have inadvertently facilitated rights abuses linked to Chinese technology companies, including facial recognition startup **DeepGlint** and artificial intelligence (AI) analytics company **HYDATA.**[33] After completion of Microsoft's program, DeepGlint sold surveillance camera systems to the Urumqi Public Security Bureau and was subsequently sanctioned by the United States in 2021 for its involvement in rights abuses in the XUAR.[34] HYDATA, which serves roughly 33 percent of the PRC's police market and was previously recognized as a "technical support unit" for police in the XUAR, was also identified as a participant in Microsoft's incubator program.[35] Scholar Jeffrey Ding observed that Microsoft could enable China's surveillance state, intentionally or not, by investing in the "general infrastructure and foundations for technology."[36] He said that investors should have "some responsibility . . . to have clarity" about potential implications of different technology applications, especially in China's market.[37] [For more information about PRC data collection and surveillance, see Chapter 13—Technology and Human Rights.]

Companies with operations in China must comply with demands to provide information and access to data under the PRC's cybersecurity and data security laws.[38] As a result, U.S. Government agencies, at both federal and state levels, and other governments, have restricted the use of China-based generative artificial intelligence chatbot **DeepSeek AI** on government devices and networks, citing privacy, surveillance, ethical, and national security concerns.[39] DeepSeek reportedly stores the biometric data and other personal information of users on servers in China and shares this information within its corporate group.[40] PRC officials have reportedly called on

Chinese AI companies to build their data centers in specific locations in order to have "greater visibility into their operations."[41]

Reports emerged this past year showing that the mobile application stores for Apple and Google hosted free virtual private networks (VPNs) linked to the Chinese Communist Party and government, exposing U.S. users to potential PRC government surveillance and data collection. **Apple's App Store** and **Google's Play Store** hosted at least five free VPNs linked to PRC-listed company **360 Security Technology** also known as Qihoo 360, which is sanctioned by the U.S. for its ties to the People's Liberation Army.[42] The research group Tech Transparency Project raised concerns about the VPNs' ability to collect data on the activities of U.S.-based users, which may become accessible to PRC authorities.[43] Researchers described obfuscation tactics that companies deploy to conceal ownership structures and highlighted Apple's failure to take "adequate steps to determine who owns the apps it offers its users and what they do with the data they collect."[44]

Companies' Role in Censorship and Removals

Companies can face expulsion from the Chinese market, loss of revenue, or other forms of punishment for actions or speech that do not align with PRC narratives or censorship guidelines.[45] Multinational companies often, therefore, self-censor or assist the PRC in exporting censorship for the sake of maintaining market access, while Chinese companies operating overseas adhere to PRC censorship.[46] An academic explained in an August 2024 *Radio Free Asia* interview that "Chinese capital uses its commercial clout to demand political statements and threatens you with delisting if you don't comply with China's wishes."[47]

U.S. and Chinese companies were both targets and enablers of PRC government censorship. Examples include the following:

- U.S. companies either directly or indirectly engaged in PRC government censorship.
    - **Apple.** In August 2024, Apple's streaming platform Apple Music and Swedish music service Spotify reportedly removed the original version of the protest anthem "Glory to Hong Kong" for listeners in the United Kingdom, Canada, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.[48] The Hong Kong Court of Appeal had previously issued an injunction to limit the song from being broadcast on Hong Kong's internet and media platforms on national security grounds.[49] DGX Music, the creators of the song, noted that the removal of the anthem from other jurisdictions "poses a serious threat to the principles of freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of artistic expression."[50]
    - **Google.** In February 2025, the *Guardian* reported that Google removed more than 200 videos after receiving a total of 412 removal requests from the Ministry of Public Security.[51] Of the 412, 346 "contained allegations about corruption within the political system in the People's Republic of China or stories about top government officials."[52]
    - **Meta**. According to an exclusive *Washington Post* article from March 2025, a former Meta employee claimed that the

company—at the time called Facebook—created a specialized censorship system in 2015 and considered loosening privacy protections for users in mainland China and Hong Kong in its unsuccessful efforts to break into China's market.[53] The system reportedly included the ability to "automatically detect restricted terms and popular content."[54] PRC authorities allegedly pressured company executives to crack down on political dissent and store data locally.[55]

○ **Reddit,** an American social media platform, in October 2024 reportedly banned an online community forum that consisted of Chinese dissidents, according to U.S.-based nongovernmental organization Human Rights in China (HRIC).[56] HRIC noted that Chinese company Tencent is Reddit's second-largest shareholder.[57] Some users expressed the belief that the ban was an example of the PRC's "long-arm jurisdiction."[58] [For more information on China's transnational repression campaign, see Chapter 17—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally.]

• Chinese companies censored or removed content that does not support government or Party narratives.

○ **Cathay Pacific,** an airline registered in Hong Kong, removed an episode of *Family Guy* from its in-flight entertainment system and apologized after receiving a complaint.[59] The episode reportedly made a reference to the 1989 Tiananmen protests.[60] In December 2024, *NBC News* explained that an internet user reported the airline's inclusion of the episode to the National Security Department of the Hong Kong Police Force and accused Cathay Pacific of spreading "subversive ideas."[61] [For more information about Hong Kong's National Security Law, see Chapter 16—Hong Kong and Macau.]

○ Chinese artificial intelligence chatbots by **DeepSeek** reportedly "self-censor" on sensitive topics.[62] Observers have pointed out instances of the chatbots' ability to answer queries about Taiwan or the 1989 Tiananmen protests, for example, after which it proactively erases its responses, and deflects or prompts users to "talk about something else."[63]

○ In December 2024, the National Radio and Television Administration, which is subordinate to the Party's Central Propaganda Department, warned **ByteDance's** micro-drama streaming service **Hongguo** to "reflect deeply . . . act quickly, and make rectifications" after identifying several dramas on the platform that "set a bad example."[64] Hongguo's official account on social media platform Weixin issued a statement expressing the company's commitment to improving its content-review protocols and preventing "the emergence of illegal content."[65] According to a January 2025 announcement, the streaming service removed 279 micro-dramas from its platform and renamed 1,080 micro-dramas.[66]

○ **NetEase Games,** a Chinese company, applied PRC censorship practices to its video game, *Marvel Rivals.*[67] Some players noted that certain phrases were flagged as inap-

propriate and banned from the game's internal chat function.[68] Banned phrases reportedly include "1989," "Tiananmen Square," "Free Tibet," and "Free Hong Kong."[69] The *New York Times* described the reported bans as "the latest example of Chinese censorship creeping into media that Americans consume."[70]

- Chinese social media outlet **WeChat** continued to censor content that diverges from the government narrative about the economy.[71] In one example this past year, WeChat removed a viral speech by a Chinese economist that expressed pessimism about China's youth employment rates and economic health.[72] One observer warned that the PRC's censorship about the economy has "taken a darker turn of late, sending chills through anyone in the country who analyzes the economy as part of their profession."[73] [For more information on measures taken by PRC authorities to address the economy, see Chapter 4—Criminal Justice and Chapter 5—Governance and Rule of Law.]
- Chinese video-sharing platform **Xiaohongshu,** also known as RedNote, censors politically sensitive topics such as Taiwan and the PRC government's treatment of Uyghurs.[74] Human Rights in China noted that the platform "functions dually as a social app and a vehicle for ideological influence."[75]

In February 2025, the *New York Times* reported that in recent years, Chinese companies have hired Western lawyers to levy defamation lawsuits against researchers in the United States, Europe, and Australia who have published reports documenting human rights violations, such as forced labor practices in the XUAR.[76] The use of libel lawsuits by PRC companies reportedly creates a perception of "high legal or political risk" and has the effect of silencing critics by introducing potential financial burdens for researchers.[77] [For more information on PRC censorship, see Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression.]

Doing Business in China: Risks and Considerations

During the 2025 reporting period, the Commission observed some U.S. companies downsizing, withdrawing, or closing operations in China to, in part, address U.S.-China geopolitical tensions and legal risks of non-compliance with PRC laws. For example, U.S. consulting firm **Bain & Company** is downsizing its operations advising "sensitive industries" in China, according to the *Financial Times,* citing concerns about the evolving regulatory environment.[78] U.S. company **IBM** announced the closure of its research and development operations in China.[79] According to international media reports, the closures were likely decided upon in part due to geopolitical risks and the Chinese government's "growing obsession with security."[80] U.S. consulting firm **McKinsey & Company** downsized its China operations and separated them from its global operations.[81] The firm also reportedly stopped working with PRC government clients and limited its operations with state-owned firms and projects,[82] and one report noted that the company's senior partners are questioning "whether China is worth the risk."[83] Legal observers and

international media noted the continued "exodus" of U.S. law firms from China.[84] Donald Clarke, professor emeritus at George Washington University Law School, commented that while security concerns, the risk of arbitrary detention, and the lack of attorney-client confidentiality are not new, "they have been rapidly increasing in salience."[85]

This past year, the Commission observed reports of PRC actions impacting businesses in China that have Taiwanese staff. Effective since May 26, 2024, the *Opinion on Lawfully Punishing Obstinate "Taiwan Independence" Offenders for Committing or Inciting Separatism,* sometimes referred to as the *22 Guidelines,* lays out criteria explaining which activities promoting "Taiwan independence" may constitute the crime of "separatism" under Article 103 of the *PRC Criminal Law.*[86] Following the issuance of the guidelines, *Reuters* reported that some multinational companies considered relocating Taiwanese employees who work in China, citing potential legal and safety risks.[87] While the PRC Taiwan Affairs Office claimed that the *22 Guidelines* target "an extremely small number" of "offenders," a lawyer interviewed by *Reuters* expressed concern about the "grey areas" of the PRC's interpretation of "pro-independence activities."[88] Such uncertainties can be seen in reported examples this past year, including PRC authorities blocking a senior executive from Taiwanese company **Formosa Plastics Group** from leaving mainland China, and the detaining of four Taiwanese **Foxconn** employees in mainland China.[89]

DOING BUSINESS IN HONG KONG: RISKS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Companies that operate in Hong Kong may be implicated in, or at risk of complicity in, sanctions evasion. In July 2024, the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation issued a report by American lawyer Samuel Bickett that revealed instances of Hong Kong-based operators transferring money, technology, and other commodities—which include products manufactured by multinational companies—to sanctioned entities in Russia, Iran, and North Korea.[90] One observer argued that, in light of new national security legislation, "Hong Kong is not the same—in fact, it's a far riskier place to do business today than ever before."[91] In a September 2024 updated Hong Kong business advisory, five U.S. Government agencies warned that U.S. businesses operating in Hong Kong may "face potential legal, regulatory, operational, financial, and reputational risks" and "conflicting jurisdictional requirements and liability in connection with sanctions compliance efforts."[92] The advisory also noted heightened risks surrounding surveillance, data privacy, and freedom of expression.[93]

Information and communications technology companies, in particular, may encounter difficulty navigating Hong Kong's regulatory changes and threats to privacy and freedom of expression.[94] Athena Tong of the China Strategic Risks Institute reported in November 2024 that Hong Kong's national security laws present compliance challenges and operational vulnerabilities.[95] Tong's report, in addition, warned of legal uncertainties and raised concerns about corporate complicity.[96] [For more information about rights abuses in Hong Kong, see Chapter 16—Hong Kong and Macau.]

Notes to Chapter 12—Business and Human Rights

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Findings

- The PRC government expanded digital repression on a global scale by exporting censorship technologies to authoritarian governments, undermining human rights by enabling these governments to silence dissent.
- China's expansion of satellite communications infrastructure also raised concerns about the global spread of digital authoritarianism, as its centralized satellite internet model could enable other governments to adopt PRC-style censorship, surveillance, and information control and at the same time deepen PRC influence over global digital governance.
- During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) released a report that analyzed internal Chinese documents about the Safe Silk Road (SSR) platform, which collects information from companies operating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and expands the PRC government's surveillance and data collection practices.
- The PRC government embedded the "core values of Socialism" alongside "society's morals and ethics" into its development of artificial intelligence (AI) by mandating that a type of machine learning systems, known as large language models (LLMs), align with the policies, propaganda, and principal tenets of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and by enforcing censorship using data evaluation standards.
- The PRC's advancements in quantum computing and AI surveillance could pose significant threats to human rights by enabling mass censorship, undermining privacy, and amplifying CCP narratives on human rights, ultimately expanding the government's ability to monitor, manipulate, and suppress dissent.
- The operations of DeepSeek reflected how PRC authorities can use a Chinese AI startup to insert censorship, propaganda, and surveillance into emergent AI technology.

Export of Technology

The PRC government exported censorship technologies to authoritarian governments and weak democracies, undermining human rights by enabling the silencing of dissent, and expanded digital repression on a global scale. In February 2025, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) reported that the PRC appeared to prioritize the export of surveillance technologies to "prop up" authoritarian countries and weak democracies, by assisting them in countering internal unrest and dissent while also benefiting the PRC's security and political partnerships.[1]

The Department of State previously noted that the Pakistani government "used a systematic, nationwide, content-monitoring and -filtering system" to censor information that was seen as "un-Islamic . . . or critical of the state or military forces."[2] In August 2024, the Pakistani government announced that it had designated between US$72 million and $108 million for the installation of a new web management system; a director for a think tank working on communication and information technology said that the system has content monitoring and censoring capabilities similar to the PRC's Great Firewall.[3] A Pakistani Ministry of Defense official later confirmed that Pakistan bought a firewall system from the PRC.[4] *Intelligence Online*, a publication covering the global intelligence community, reported that the Chinese and Pakistani governments collaborated for almost a year on an internet system capable of blocking foreign websites.[5] In addition, the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority approved Chinese telecommunications companies, including Huawei, to help build a "Great Digital Firewall similar to that developed in China."[6] Doublethink Lab, a civil society organization analyzing malign Chinese influence, ranked Pakistan's technology sector as number one globally for the extent of PRC influence in the country.[7]

Freedom House concluded in October 2024 that Burma (Myanmar) and China were the world's "worst environment[s] for internet freedom," noting that the Burmese military junta cracked down violently on dissent while also "building a mass censorship and surveillance regime to suppress the activities of civilian prodemocracy activists and armed resistance groups."[8] Justice for Myanmar (JFM), an activist group, reported the Burmese junta began using a web surveillance and censorship system that included technology from a Chinese company, Jizhi (Hainan) Information Technology Company Limited, also known as Geedge Networks, in May 2024.[9] JFM called for governments to impose sanctions against Geedge Networks, related companies, and Geedge's directors, including Fang Binxing, a founder of Geedge Networks and a leading pioneer in the development of the PRC's Great Firewall.[10]

China's expansion of satellite communications infrastructure also raised concerns about the global spread of digital authoritarianism, as its centralized satellite internet model could enable other governments to adopt PRC-style censorship, surveillance, and information control and at the same time deepen PRC influence over global digital governance. In August 2024, the PRC launched 18 low-Earth-orbit communication satellites, a small

portion of the total number reportedly planned.[11] By bypassing traditional internet infrastructure, which is administered by many stakeholders through multiple gateways, making it harder for any single country to control, the Chinese government could increase control over the internet to the detriment of freedom of expression.[12] An expert warned that the centralized design of satellite internet could enable other governments using Chinese satellite providers to monitor content, block sensitive topics, and shut down access during unrest, as with the Great Firewall.[13] The expert also warned that the PRC could pressure countries using these satellites to "comply with Beijing's demands, including censoring content critical of China, sharing sensitive data or suppressing domestic dissent," to the benefit of China.[14]

9TH FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION

In September 2024, the 9th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) took place in Beijing municipality and was "the largest diplomatic event China has hosted in recent years," according to a PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson.[15] According to Article 19, an international nongovernmental organization focused on freedom of expression, the PRC government used the event to promote cooperation across the continent on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.[16] Article 19 also noted that similar cooperation initiatives had "tended to focus on the normalisation of China's model of digital governance, which favours . . . censorship and surveillance."[17] The FOCAC Beijing Action Plan (2025 to 2027) agreed to at the forum contained a new separate section on artificial intelligence (AI) alongside previous mentions of digital infrastructure and innovation, and included a statement that both sides would "jointly advance rules-making for global digital governance."[18] Article 19 raised concerns that the Action Plan would deepen cooperation in line with China's ambitions to "lead in repositioning global digital governance norms that favour its technologies and policies at the expense of rights-based models."[19]

Belt and Road Initiative

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) released a report that analyzed internal Chinese documents about the Safe Silk Road (SSR) platform, which collects information from companies operating under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The SSR is a non-public digital platform operated by the External Security Affairs Department of the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).[20] Launched in 2017, the platform acts as a centralized channel to collect data from "dozens of Chinese companies" operating under the BRI abroad.[21] ASPI reported that the goal of the SSR is to expand PRC surveillance and to better understand the operating environment of Chinese interests.[22] The report notes that experts in China differ on whether to add to the traditional definition of China's interests as security of people and assets the protection of China's national image and reputation.[23] PRC central, provincial, and municipal governments made use of the SSR's information, which allows the PRC government to better analyze the safety of PRC citizens and investments.[24] Companies

submit information concerning their foreign operations and activities abroad, a country's conditions, and security incidents.[25]

The PRC government is directly involved in approving corporate users and the operation of the SSR. The MFA approves user applications, and once approved, designated users can only access the SSR while using a specifically tailored virtual private network.[26] The platform also comes in a mobile app form not available in app stores and can only be downloaded through a QR code after the PRC government approves a designated liaison within a company.[27] The MFA prohibits companies from sharing information about the SSR online, and the information is only meant for internal company use.[28]

ISOON SURVEILLANCE

The Chinese cybersecurity firm Anxun Information Technology Co. Ltd. (iS00N, or i-Soon) developed surveillance tools, targeted countries participating in the BRI, and conducted hacking on behalf of or for sale to PRC security agencies that facilitated digital transnational repression. A February 2024 leak from iS00N revealed that the company developed surveillance tools targeting government ministries and critical infrastructure in BRI partner countries.[29] The leak also demonstrated that iS00N could support PRC state surveillance by acting as a proxy to expand PRC control of cyberspace while allowing authorities to keep their distance from the operations.[30] In one example of how iS00N supported PRC surveillance, in March 2025, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed indictments against 12 cyber actors, including iS00N executives, employees, and freelancers, for hacking operations directed by the PRC Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of State Security or undertaken by iS00N in order to sell hacked information to PRC agencies.[31] Hacking targets included several Asian foreign ministries and U.S.-based individuals critical of the Chinese Communist Party.[32]

Artificial Intelligence

AI ALIGNMENT WITH CCP IDEOLOGY

The PRC government embedded the "core values of Socialism" alongside "society's morals and ethics" into its development of AI by mandating that a type of machine learning systems, known as large language models (LLMs), align with the policies, propaganda, and principal tenets of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and by enforcing censorship using data evaluation standards. The PRC government passed legal provisions requiring that machine learning technology uphold "the core values of Socialism" and maintained a list of sensitive topics for training data in AI.[33] The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), which also has a dual-CCP role as the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, also required technology companies to test, review, and adjust their algorithms to ensure that LLMs produce content in line with PRC policy.[34]

PROPAGANDA, SURVEILLANCE, AND CENSORSHIP

PRC authorities used AI to monitor and analyze public sentiment on sensitive political and social issues, seeking to proactively control online discourse.[35] In March 2025, TechCrunch, a technology news

website, reported on a leaked database of 133,000 examples of content on sensitive topics that was used to train LLMs.[36] The content was related to politics, the military, and issues such as pollution, labor disputes, and fraud, that had led to protests.[37] Political satire was a priority, with "Taiwan politics" and certain portrayals of "current political figures" instantly flagged.[38] The report noted that "an LLM trained on such instructions would significantly improve the efficiency and granularity of state-led information control." A February 2025 NED report noted that instead of only searching for banned keywords, PRC authorities could rely on LLMs and multimodal foundation models to "identify the expression of sentiments" directed at the political system.[39]

Chinese LLMs aligned with "CCP values" represent a tool for amplifying CCP narratives on human rights and enhancing censorship, posing a risk to international standards of freedom of expression. One expert on technology at China Media Project reported that "most Chinese LLMs I approached interpreted 'human rights' the same way the CCP does: not rights to freedom of expression, assembly, or a fair trial, but primarily the rights to political stability and economic development."[40] He suggested that "LLMs trained on CCP values" could become a new source of international propaganda imposing the PRC's narrative of human rights.[41]

The PRC's advancements in quantum computing and AI surveillance could pose significant threats to human rights by enabling mass censorship, undermining privacy, and amplifying CCP narratives on human rights , ultimately expanding the government's ability to monitor, manipulate, and suppress dissent. The above-mentioned NED report noted that PRC authorities could use quantum computing to improve AI-powered surveillance and to circumvent encryption used by human rights defenders, journalists, and government critics to protect their communications and hide their identities.[42] The NED report also observed that AI-powered systems for data fusion and rapid analysis, known as "city brains"—the next evolution for "smart cities"—could track and visualize "pedestrians, vehicles, buildings, and police forces" on a unified map.[43] Even traffic management, if boosted by AI tools, could be a threat to human rights, for example, by clearing a path for police cars to a protest.[44]

In February 2025, OpenAI researchers reported they had banned ChatGPT accounts that likely originated in China and that had used ChatGPT's models to generate English-language social media posts criticizing Cai Xia—a critic of the CCP under Xi Jinping.[45] The banned accounts also created Spanish-language articles criticizing U.S. society and politics that were published on news websites in several Latin American countries, including some articles which were attributed to an individual allegedly linked to a Chinese company.[46]

DeepSeek

The operations of DeepSeek reflected how PRC authorities can use a Chinese AI startup to insert censorship, propaganda, and surveillance into emergent AI technology. DeepSeek has extensive ties to the PRC government, military, and state-owned entities.[47] In 2025, data analysis firm Exiger reported on numerous past or current connections between DeepSeek-affiliated researchers and PRC government-affiliated entities.[48] In addition, China Mobile, a company with direct links to the People's Liberation Army, provided DeepSeek with critical support including telecommunications infrastructure and AI servers.[49] After a meeting between PRC leader Xi Jinping and the head of DeepSeek in February 2025, PRC authorities began to adopt DeepSeek for government uses, including in public security bureaus.[50]

The Chinese cybersecurity companies TopSec and QAX announced the integration of DeepSeek to enhance their services, which the PRC government uses,[51] while another company, NetEase, said DeepSeek would improve its censorship and surveillance capabilities of texts, images, videos, and other media.[52] One researcher predicted that the PRC would likely incorporate DeepSeek and other generative AI models into its surveillance system for searching and summarizing a large amount of data, including video footage.[53]

During this reporting year, researchers and journalists noted how DeepSeek's chatbot aligned with PRC official policy, amplifying PRC propaganda and disinformation.[54] A China Media Project researcher tested DeepSeek in multiple languages, asking the model to "describe the stereotypes of Urumqi," capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), and found uniform answers that characterized the region as having been stabilized due to "heightened security."[55] In response to a reporter asking about Uyghur scholar **Ilham Tohti,** whom a PRC court sentenced in 2014 to life in prison for "separatism," DeepSeek's chatbot responded that he was "known for spreading separatist ideas and . . . ethnic division," and that DeepSeek "firmly support[ed]" the government's actions.[56] The chatbot refused to answer questions about the violent suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen protests and gave one-sided responses consisting of either PRC official statements or answers in line with PRC propaganda when asked about U.S.-China relations, Taiwan, forced labor, and euphemisms for PRC leader Xi Jinping's name.[57] When asked about PRC violations of religious freedom, DeepSeek's chatbot displayed a "thought process" indicating that it incorporated official restrictions on discussion of "sensitive topics," including suppression of Falun Gong and detentions of Christian clergy.[58] As its technology was updated over time, DeepSeek's chatbot reportedly gave responses that were progressively more narrow and that replicated official PRC narratives, including with respect to human rights issues affecting ethnic minority groups.[59] In May 2025, computer scientists reported that DeepSeek used "possible additional censorship integration" in training its chatbot,[60] and a June 2025 paper claimed that the updated model "exhibits 'thought suppression' behavior that indicates memorization of CCP-aligned responses."[61]

Notes to Chapter 13—Technology and Human Rights

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IX. Tibet

TIBET

Findings

• The Commission did not observe any interest from People's Republic of China (PRC) officials in resuming formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama or his representatives. The last round of negotiations was held in January 2010. The Dalai Lama announced that a future reincarnation of the Dalai Lama would be born "in the free world."
• The PRC continued to restrict and seek to control the religious practices of Tibetans, the majority of whom practice Tibetan Buddhism, unduly limiting Tibetans' freedom of religion and belief. The PRC continued to assert control over the process of selection and recognition of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnated teachers, including the Dalai Lama. The National Religious Affairs Administration revised the *Measures on the Management of Tibetan Buddhist Temples,* increasing requirements on monasteries and nunneries to adhere to Chinese Communist Party political doctrine and placing new bureaucratic demands on monastic leadership.
• PRC authorities continued a program of mass expulsions and demolitions, begun in 2016, at Larung Gar Buddhist Academy, a major Tibetan Buddhist educational and training center. In November and December 2024, several hundred officials were stationed at the complex, and authorities pressured monastic residents to leave, ultimately expelling around 1,000 monks and nuns.
• The Commission did not observe reports of Tibetan self-immolations occurring during the 2025 reporting year, the third year since 2021 in which no self-immolations were reported to have occurred. The Commission has observed reports of 154 self-immolations since 2009 that were due to political or religious issues in Tibetan areas.
• PRC officials took steps this past year to further restrict the space for independent Tibetan education, ordering the temporary closure of at least one major non-state Tibetan school and forcing hundreds of young Tibetan novice monks to leave monastery-affiliated schools and instead enroll at state-run residential schools.
• In contravention of international human rights standards, PRC officials punished residents of Tibetan areas for the exercise of their protected rights, including expression of religious belief, protest against or criticism of Party or government policy, and free speech and assembly. Notable cases this past year included those of **Jampa Choephel,** a monk sentenced to one year and six months in prison for sharing a speech by the Dalai Lama on social media; **Sherab** (or Jamyang Legshe) and **Gonpo Tsering,** senior monks sentenced to four and three years, respectively, for protesting against construction of a hydroelectric dam; and **Gonpo Namgyal,** a language rights advocate who died due to torture in custody.

Tibet

Status of Negotiations between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama or His Representatives

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Commission did not observe any interest or progress on the part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) toward resuming formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama or his representatives. The last round of such negotiations was held in January 2010.[1]

In line with his 2011 statement on planning around the question of reincarnation,[2] the Dalai Lama announced in a book published in March 2025 that a future reincarnation of the Dalai Lama would be born "in the free world."[3] In response, a PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson claimed that the Dalai Lama was "engaged in separatist activities under the guise of religion" and pointed to PRC legal provisions[4] asserting the power of the government to select the Dalai Lama, saying "the reincarnation of Living Buddhas including the Dalai Lama must comply with Chinese laws and regulations."[5]

Self-Immolations

The Commission did not observe reports of Tibetan self-immolations occurring during the 2025 reporting year, nor did new reports of past self-immolations emerge. This was the third consecutive year in which no self-immolations were reported to have occurred.[6] The Commission has observed reports of 154 self-immolations since 2009 that were due to political or religious issues in Tibetan areas.[7]

Religious Freedom for Tibetans

The PRC continued to restrict and seek to control the religious practices of Tibetans, particularly practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism.[8] International observers and rights advocacy groups reported on continuing violations of international human rights standards, including the right to freely worship and to choose one's own religion, that result from PRC religious policy and its implementation.[9] PRC officials exercise political control and supervision of Tibetan Buddhist monastic and educational institutions through the National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA), a Party office under the United Front Work Department, and through the Buddhist Association of China, the supervisory organization for Buddhism operating under the NRAA.[10] [For more information on religion and religious policy in China, see Chapter 3—Freedom of Religion.]

During the 2025 reporting year, Chinese Communist Party and government organizations continued to target Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns, and laypersons in political propaganda campaigns.[11] As part of these campaigns, Party and government officials held events, including lectures, study sessions, and competitions, at religious and lay sites to expound on Party policies and reinforce Party control over religious life.[12] In these events, often presented as visits to monastic institutions, Party officials responsible for religious policy stressed Party leadership and oversight of religious institutions, and the responsibility of monastic leaders to ensure that religious personnel follow Party dictates.[13] At these propaganda events,

Party officials instructed monastics and laypersons on policies or legal provisions restricting religious life, such as the Party and government's assertion of control over the recognition of reincarnated teachers like the Dalai Lama,[14] and lectured on major Party policy decisionmaking events, including the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party.[15] Party outreach to Tibetans also emphasized Party ethnic policy, including the requirement to learn and use Mandarin Chinese.[16] [For more information on language rights in Tibet, see Language and Cultural Rights in this chapter.]

In November 2024, the National Religious Affairs Administration issued a revised version[17] of the 2010 *Measures on the Management of Tibetan Buddhist Temples,*[18] increasing requirements on monasteries and nunneries to adhere to Chinese Communist Party political doctrine and placing new bureaucratic demands on monastic leadership.[19] The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy found that the new measures "systematically enforce the Chinese Communist Party's ideological control over Tibetan Buddhism by embedding political loyalty requirements into religious administration"[20] through, among other new provisions, mandating that administrators of Tibetan Buddhist monastic institutions "support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system"[21] and requiring administrators to conduct political education for monks and nuns to reinforce Party religious policies.[22]

EXPULSIONS AT LARUNG GAR

PRC authorities continued a program of mass expulsions and demolitions, begun in 2016, at Larung Gar Buddhist Academy, a major Tibetan Buddhist educational and training center in Serta (Seda) county, Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province.[23] In November and December 2024, several hundred officials were stationed at the complex, and authorities pressured monastic residents to leave, ultimately expelling around 1,000 monks and nuns.[24] The expulsions brought the resident population of Larung Gar to 5,000, down from a high of approximately 40,000 in the early 2000s, and authorities planned to demolish residences exceeding the 5,000-person limit.[25] The officials stationed at Larung Gar prohibited photography and videography in the complex and have reportedly restricted discussions about Larung Gar on social media platforms.[26]

THE DALAI LAMA

Reports continued to emerge this year of Chinese authorities penalizing Tibetans for expressions of reverence for the Dalai Lama, including through harassment and surveillance, detention, and imprisonment. Chinese authorities regularly punish Tibetans for possessing or sharing writings, teachings, or recordings of the Dalai Lama.[27] Authorities in Tibetan areas reportedly detained Tibetans in connection with online discussions of the Dalai Lama, praying for him, or displaying or sharing his image. In one case, in March 2024, authorities in Rebgong (Tongren) city, Malho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province, detained **Jampa Choephel,** a monk at Pangkar Thang Monastery in Rebgong, after he reportedly shared a speech by the Dalai Lama over the social

media platform WeChat.[28] In August 2024, a court sentenced him to one year and six months in prison, and on September 22 he was transferred to a prison in Xining municipality, the capital of Qinghai.[29] Local authorities reportedly withheld information about Jampa Choephel's detention from his family in Rebgong and threatened them with retaliation if they inquired into his condition.[30]

DISAPPEARANCE AND DEATH OF HUNGKAR DORJE RINPOCHE

In August 2024, Hungkar Dorje Rinpoche, abbot of Lungngon Monastery in Gade (Gande) county, Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai, disappeared following conflict with Chinese authorities over his public advocacy for linguistic rights for Tibetans and his refusal to comply with official religious and educational directives.[31] Hungkar Rinpoche went into hiding in Vietnam until his detention on March 25, 2025, by PRC and Vietnamese authorities.[32] Three days later, he was transferred to PRC custody, and died the same day in Ho Chi Minh City.[33] Groups including the Tibetan government in exile called for an independent investigation into the cause and nature of his death, as Lungngon monks who traveled to Vietnam alongside PRC officials to receive his body were allowed to view only his face.[34] In April 2025, authorities in the area around Lungngon Monastery restricted public discussion of Hungkar Rinpoche's death, inspecting local residents' phones, banning public commemorations, and detaining an unknown number of individuals in connection with sharing information about his death online.[35]

Language and Cultural Rights

China's Constitution and laws affirm the freedom of ethnic minorities to "use and develop"[36] their languages, yet this past year Chinese authorities continued to threaten linguistic rights in Tibetan areas, including through implementation of policies promoting or enforcing the use of Mandarin Chinese instead of Tibetan or other local languages, as well as policies of neglect with regard to minority languages.[37] PRC ethnic policy ignores unrecognized linguistic communities, including in Tibetan areas,[38] and individuals or communities with languages that lack official recognition are deprived of access to official support in education and other government services.[39] China is a State Party to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child,[40] which recognizes and protects the rights of ethnic and linguistic minority groups to use their languages.[41] [For more information on language rights and ethnic policy, see Chapter 6—Ethnic Minority Rights.]

SCHOOL CLOSURES THREATEN TIBETAN EDUCATIONAL AND LINGUISTIC RIGHTS

PRC officials took steps this past year to further restrict the space for independent Tibetan education,[42] forcing hundreds of young Tibetan novice monks to leave monastery-affiliated schools and instead enroll at state-run residential schools, and ordering the closure of at least one major non-state Tibetan school.[43] In July 2024, authorities in Dzoege (Ruo'ergai) county, Ngaba (Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (T&QAP), Sichuan province, ordered

more than 300 novice monks aged 15 and under who were studying at a school affiliated with Dzoege's Lhamo Kirti Monastery to disrobe and enroll at state-run schools in September.[44] In October, authorities ordered the remaining student monks at the Lhamo Kirti school, ages 15 to 18, to leave the school as well.[45] Similarly, around the same time, authorities in Ngaba (Aba) county, Ngaba T&QAP, ordered approximately 1,000 student monks at a school attached to Ngaba county's Kirti Monastery to leave the school for state boarding schools.[46]

Also in July 2024, the independent Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling school in Machen (Maqin) county, Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province, closed on the orders of Golog and Qinghai Party officials.[47] The school had operated for three decades offering Tibetan-language education in northeastern Tibet.[48] Local officials reportedly demanded that the school's founder transfer control of the school to the government or close the school.[49] Students from Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling were reportedly registered at a state-run school in the Golog area for the 2024–2025 school year.[50] In April 2025, the school's founder reportedly told students and their family members that authorities had granted permission to reopen the school, though the date of reopening was not announced, and reporting suggested that the curriculum would change from what it was prior to the 2024 closure.[51]

Some Tibetan children sent to state-run boarding schools experienced abusive and neglectful conditions.[52] In September 2024, *Radio Free Asia* published video of five former Tibetan novice monks from Muge Monastery, in Zungchu (Songpan) county, Ngaba (Aba) T&QAP, who escaped from a residential boarding school in the area, which authorities required them to attend after ordering their expulsion from the monastery.[53] In the video, several of the children referred to the boarding school as "like a prison" and described discriminatory treatment they had received there, saying that school officials beat them, denied them adequate food, and forced them into "political education" in contrast to the curriculum offered to other, non-monastic students.[54] The Tibet Action Institute, an international Tibetan advocacy organization, reported that the students were among 140 Muge monks whom authorities placed in local residential schools after their removal from the monastery.[55]

PRC officials sought to limit the sharing of information about linguistic and cultural rights, including about the forced closures of independent schools, and punished Tibetans for expressions of opposition to official cultural policy, as illustrated in the following cases:

- In July or August 2024, police in Nagchu (Naqu) municipality, Tibet Autonomous Region, detained **Zomkyi,** a Nagchu resident whose brother was a student at Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling school.[56] Nagchu police reportedly accused Zomkyi of "spreading misinformation" about the school online around the time of its closure.[57] Further information on Zomkyi's case, including her whereabouts and condition in custody, was unavailable.[58]
- Following the forced closure of schools affiliated with Lhamo Kirti Monastery and Kirti Monastery, located in, respectively, Dzoege and Ngaba counties, Ngaba T&QAP, local authorities

inspected monks' phones to see if they had been sharing information about the schools and confiscated phones from monks who they alleged had done so.[59]

• On September 1, 2024, police in Derge (Dege) county, Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, detained **Tashi Nyima,** a Tibetan live-streamer also known as Gang Lhaja, days after ordering the social media platform Kuaishou to suspend Tashi Nyima's ability to share live videos.[60] Reports did not identify the location where police held Tashi Nyima, but said that they beat him in custody prior to his release on September 3.[61] Tashi Nyima films and shares live videos featuring Tibetan-language content, including games and interviews quizzing participants on their Tibetan knowledge.[62] The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy reported that shortly before his suspension, Tashi Nyima announced plans for a tour across the Tibetan plateau.[63]

• In December 2024, reports emerged regarding the May 2024 detentions of approximately 20 Tibetans over their language rights advocacy in Darlag (Dari) county, Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province.[64] Authorities detained **Gonpo Namgyal,**[65] leader of Darlag's Ponkor township, **Tenpa Dargye,**[66] *khenpo* (abbot) of a nearby Tibetan Buddhist monastery, and nine others[67] in connection with a "Language Protection Association" in Ponkor led by Tenpa Dargye.[68] Prior to their detentions, the members of the association reportedly organized Tibetan-language education for Darlag-area residents and encouraged them to speak and use Tibetan.[69] Authorities released Gonpo Namgyal from custody on December 15, 2024, and he died three days later, reportedly due to injuries suffered under severe torture in detention.[70] Following Gonpo Namgyal's death, witnesses reported seeing evidence of torture on his body, including signs of electrical burns.[71] Further information on the detainees' conditions, exact whereabouts, and the criminal charges against them was unavailable.[72]

Restrictions on the Freedom of Expression, the Free Flow of Information, and Access to Tibet

Chinese authorities continued[73] to restrict contact between Tibetans in Tibetan areas of China and individuals or groups abroad, including by punishing or threatening to punish those found to have contact with Tibetans in exile—often those in India—or who have shared information in Tibet about Tibetans living abroad.[74] Chinese authorities also strictly monitored online communications to find and punish Tibetans who Chinese authorities alleged had committed crimes online.[75] Examples of Tibetans detained by Chinese authorities in connection with their exercise of freedom of expression or sharing information include the following:

• In early September 2024, authorities in Ngaba (Aba) county, Ngaba (Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (T&QAP), Sichuan province, took into custody at least three Tibetan residents of Ngaba county over their contact with individuals outside Tibet.[76] The detainees included brother and sister **Tsering Tashi** and **Wangkyi,** and monk **Lobsang**

Samten of Ngaba's Kirti Monastery.[77] Authorities reportedly detained Tsering Tashi and Wangkyi after they contacted someone in southern India and detained Lobsang Samten after he contacted someone outside Tibet to dedicate prayers.[78] Sources were unable to obtain further details on their detentions, noting increasing restrictions on communications in the Ngaba area around the time of their detentions.[79]

- Tibetan entrepreneur and language rights activist **Tashi Wangchug** served 15 days' administrative detention beginning in October 2024.[80] Cybersecurity police in Yulshul (Yushu) city, Yulshul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province, detained Tashi Wangchug on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," accusing him of criticizing government agencies on social media platforms.[81] Tibet Watch reported that in the months leading up to his detention, Tashi Wangchug shared content on his social media accounts including video of police removing a prayer flag from his home and a photo of Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling school after authorities ordered its closure in July 2024.[82] Tashi Wangchug previously served a five-year prison sentence from 2016 to 2021 for "inciting separatism" due to his language rights advocacy.[83]

PRC official interference in the free flow of information in and out of Tibet, using means including online censorship, surveillance of social media, and punishment of individuals or groups sharing information about Tibet, often prevents timely reporting on developments inside Tibet. Information on some cases of political or religious detention pre-dating the Commission's 2025 reporting year only emerged months or years later; examples of these cases follow.

- In May 2024, authorities in Lhasa municipality, Tibet Autonomous Region, detained **Losal,** a monk at Lhasa's Sera Monastery, on suspicion of contacting people outside Tibet and sharing information with them.[84] Information on where exactly authorities held Losal was unavailable, but officials reportedly beat him while he was in custody and denied him medical care.[85] Officials did not inform Losal's family of his condition until October 21, 2024, when they returned his body to his family; Losal's exact date of death was unknown.[86]
- Kirti Monastery monk **Lobsang Thabkhe** was initially detained in June 2023 in Ngaba (Aba) county, Ngaba T&QAP, after authorities accused him of maintaining contacts outside China and publishing books he had received from Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India.[87] In September 2024, *Radio Free Asia* reported that after a closed trial, an unidentified court had sentenced Lobsang Thabkhe to three years in prison.[88] According to Tibet Watch, authorities accused him of "inciting separatism," and following sentencing held him in Deyang Prison, located in Jingyang district, Deyang municipality, Sichuan.[89]
- In June 2025, *Radio Free Asia* and *Voice of Tibet* reported that authorities had sentenced two senior monks from Yena Monastery,[90] in Derge (Dege) county, Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, in connection with mass protests against the planned construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Drichu (Jinsha) River that threatened Yena and other area monasteries and

villages.[91] Sources did not report the dates of the trials or sentencings, the exact charges against the monks, or the court(s) that sentenced them, but **Sherab** (also reported as Jamyang Legshe)[92] received a four-year prison sentence, and **Gonpo Tsering**[93] a three-year sentence.[94] Authorities reportedly tortured Gonpo Tsering in custody so severely that he was hospitalized in intensive care in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan.[95]

ACCESS TO TIBET REMAINS HEAVILY RESTRICTED

The U.S. State Department reported that in 2024 PRC authorities continued to heavily restrict access to Tibetan areas of China, particularly the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).[96] U.S. officials unsuccessfully applied to visit the TAR five times in 2024; the TAR remained the only province-level administrative division for which official permission was required for foreign officials to visit.[97] PRC authorities did not impose similar restrictions on access to Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, or Yunnan provinces—for either foreign officials or journalists—but employed "conspicuous surveillance to intimidate, monitor, and harass travelers" in Tibetan areas outside the TAR.[98] Tibetan-Americans had "a stricter screening process" in applying for Chinese visas compared to other U.S. nationals, with requirements for more burdensome supporting documentation, and reported "more frequent harassment by security officials" in Tibet compared with other areas in China.[99]

2025 Dingri Earthquake

Following a major January 2025 earthquake in the TAR, observers raised concerns over how relief efforts were hampered by a lack of government transparency and over the impact on affected residents' rights. The earthquake struck on January 7, 2025, with an epicenter beneath Dingri county, Shigatse (Rikaze) municipality, TAR.[100] Chinese official media reported a death toll of 126, with several hundred more injured and tens of thousands displaced or forced to evacuate, but reporting from other outlets raised doubts about the veracity or accuracy of the official numbers.[101] *Radio Free Asia* reported that at least 100 people died in Dramtso (Changsuo) township, Dingri, alone.[102] The earthquake and its aftershocks reportedly caused serious damage across affected areas, including to several monasteries in Dingri.[103]

Local authorities imposed restrictions on travel into the region affected by the earthquake and tried to prevent unauthorized photography or filming of damaged areas.[104] Government officials reportedly also prohibited independent distribution of relief and aid supplies, instead confiscating supplies at travel checkpoints.[105] One week after the earthquake, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) announced that it had investigated 21 cases of internet users accused of spreading "false" information online about the earthquake and its aftermath.[106] In a set of "model cases" published with the announcement, MPS accused three partially anonymized individuals of "disturbing social order" by sharing posts on social media platforms that said the death toll from the earthquake was higher than official figures.[107] MPS wrote that all of the people investigated had admitted their guilt and had been warned or issued administrative fines.[108]

TIBETAN ENVIRONMENTAL WHISTLEBLOWER IMPRISONED

In mid-October 2024, **Tsongon Tsering,** a resident of Tsaruma (Cha'erma) township, Khyungchu (also Kakhog or Marthang; Chinese: Hongyuan) county, Ngaba (Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, posted a video online in which he denounced local officials for failing to adequately address the environmental and potential property damage caused by the sand mining of a local river by Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Company and called on the PRC central government to intervene.[109] Following the video's posting, local police reportedly briefly summoned Tsongon Tsering and other Tsaruma residents for questioning, and authorities took down the video he posted as well as his account on the social media platform WeChat.[110] Several days later, authorities brought Tsongon Tsering in for more questioning and subsequently held him in detention.[111] In late November, reports emerged that the Hongyuan County People's Court had sentenced Tsongon Tsering on October 27 to eight months in prison for "disrupting social order."[112] Authorities told Tsongon Tsering's family that his sentence could still be extended, though the legal basis for this was unclear.[113] In January 2025, authorities reportedly extended his sentence by another eight months.[114] On January 21, three U.N. special rapporteurs wrote to the Chinese government inquiring into Tsongon Tsering's case, expressing concern over possible violations of his freedom of expression and ability to engage in environmental advocacy.[115]

Notes to Chapter 14—Tibet

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[6]Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2024," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* December 2024, 242; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2023," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* May 2024, 285; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2022," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* November 2022, 283.

[7]Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "CECC Update: Tibetan Self-Immolations," January 10, 2017; International Campaign for Tibet, "Self-Immolation Fact Sheet," accessed April 3, 2025; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2022," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* November 2022, 283. This cumulative total does not include six deaths by self-immolation of Tibetans in 2012 and 2013.

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[9]"Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 10, 1948, art. 18; "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," *United Nations,* adopted December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 18; "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," *United Nations Treaty Collections,* Chapter IV Human Rights; "Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties," adopted May 23, 1969, entered into force January 27, 1980, art. 18. China has not ratified the ICCPR, but signed the treaty on October 5, 1998, which obligates it to refrain from acts that would defeat the treaty's purpose.

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[11]For past Commission coverage, see, e.g., Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2024," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* December 2024, 242–43; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2023," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* May 2024, 285–87; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2022," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* November 2022, 283–87.

[12]See, e.g., Nagchu Municipality Committee United Front Work Department, "那曲市宗教界深入开展'三个意识'教育暨寺庙僧尼书法比赛" [Nagchu municipal religious sector thoroughly launches "three consciousnesses" education and calligraphy competition for temple monks and nuns], *Tibet Autonomous Region United Front Work Department,* October 30, 2024; Ngari Prefecture Committee United Front Work Department, "阿里地区开展宗教界代表人士2024年'三个意识'教育及'爱国爱教'巡回宣讲活动" [Ngari prefecture holds 2024 "three consciousnesses" education and "love the country, love religion" touring propaganda events for representatives from religious sector], *Tibet Autonomous Region United Front Work Department,* November 26, 2024.

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X. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

XINJIANG UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION

Findings

• During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum published research by scholar Rian Thum showing that PRC officials had perpetrated and continued to perpetrate mass atrocity crimes against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Thum determined that all of the official policies in the XUAR that led to the findings of crimes against humanity and genocide have continued.
• Reports indicated that authorities in the XUAR had recently expanded a system of forced labor that involved Turkic and Muslim individuals, often transferring them from traditional occupations in rural areas into industrial work. In conjunction with forced labor programs targeting rural Uyghurs, authorities have confiscated land held by Uyghur farmers and transferred their land use rights to state-run cooperatives and developers.
• As in previous reporting years, XUAR authorities placed restrictions on Muslims' observance of Ramadan. According to videos posted on Chinese social media platforms, authorities forced residents of various locations in Aksu and Hotan prefectures to engage in forced labor during the Ramadan period in March 2025 in order to prevent them from fasting. In addition, authorities required residents of several towns in Peyziwat (Jiashi) county, Kashgar prefecture, to film themselves eating lunch during the Ramadan period in order to prove that they were not fasting.
• On February 27, 2025, Thai officials deported 40 Uyghur asylum seekers to China, in spite of widespread international concern over their safety and evidence that PRC authorities had imprisoned or tortured 20 Uyghurs who were similarly deported from Cambodia to China in 2009. The men were among 500 Uyghurs who fled the XUAR to Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries around a decade ago in hopes of reaching Türkiye. In November 2024, *Radio Free Asia* reported that 16 of the Uyghurs deported from Cambodia in 2009 were sentenced to lengthy prison terms, and two of the deportees died in prison.
• In February 2024, Chinese officials sent 22-year-old **Abdureqip Rahman,** an ethnic Uyghur, to Kucha (Kuche) county, Aksu prefecture, XUAR, from Cambodia, where he had fled in hopes of ultimately seeking asylum in the United States. In spite of U.N. officials' attempts to assist him, in January 2024, Abdureqip Rahman was first held in custody by Cambodian authorities and then transferred to the custody of PRC authorities in Cambodia, before being sent to Kucha on February 1. Abdureqip Rahman's whereabouts remained unknown as of December 2024.
• Authorities in the XUAR used surveillance technology and other methods to maintain control over Turkic and Muslim

residents. Methods used included an online security operation in the summer of 2024; requirements in Kashgar and Hotan prefectures for Uyghurs to promptly report the arrival of guests to their home to the police; a winter security campaign in the runup to the Spring Festival in early 2025; and the re-detention of Uyghurs who had previously been detained, including businessmen, philanthropists, and people who had traveled abroad.

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Mass Atrocities Continue in the XUAR

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum published research by scholar Rian Thum showing that PRC officials had perpetrated and continued to perpetrate mass atrocity crimes against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).[1] In January 2021, the U.S. State Department issued a determination that genocide was ongoing against Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minority groups in the XUAR and that authorities had committed crimes against humanity against these groups since at least March 2017.[2] The State Department found that acts constituting genocide and crimes against humanity included arbitrary detention, forced abortion and forced sterilization, rape, torture, forced labor, and the violation of freedom of religion, expression, and movement.[3]

In research published in February 2025, Thum determined that all of the official policies in the XUAR that led to the findings of crimes against humanity and genocide had continued.[4] Thum's findings included the following points:

- **Detention.** While officials appear to have closed most mass internment camps, and rates of new formal imprisonment appear to have declined, the current number of Turkic Muslim individuals formally or extrajudicially detained in the XUAR likely exceeds half a million, and may be much higher.[5] Even as authorities removed security features from mass internment camps in 2019 and 2020, officials expanded and constructed prisons and public security bureau (PSB) detention centers (看守所 or *kanshousuo*), which may be used for extended extrajudicial detention.[6] An expansion of one prison was ongoing as late as April 2024.[7] Individuals formerly detained in PSB detention centers have reported numerous accounts of torture and sexual assault.[8]
- **Boarding schools and nursing homes.** Authorities continued to build, and plan the expansion of, boarding schools for Uyghur and other ethnic minority children, with the goal of breaking the transmission of cultural traditions from parents to children.[9] Officials often go against parents' wishes in forcing children to attend such schools, and parental compliance is achieved under the threat of potential detention.[10] Officials have also forced ethnic minority families to send elderly parents to live in nursing homes, in spite of strong cultural beliefs against such practices.[11] Regional officials planned to triple the number of placements in such facilities between 2017 and 2025, housing elderly relatives of people forced to take part in labor programs.[12]
- **Population control.** Officials have obscured data about population control, population growth, and demographics in recent years, but the limited data available suggests that officials have continued to implement forced sterilization and other forms of coercive family planning measures among ethnic minorities

in the XUAR, severely repressing their rates of population growth.[13]

- **Forced labor and land transfers.** Officials expanded forced labor and "labor transfer" programs, likely sending more Turkic Muslims into forced labor in 2023 than in any previous year.[14] The transfer of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims to forced labor programs, often from rural areas into factories and other industrial work, continued to be widely implemented through 2024 and was set to continue through 2025.[15] Alongside such programs, officials coerced farmers to transfer their land use rights to state-run entities and companies.[16] [For more information on forced labor programs involving Turkic Muslims, see Chapter 12—Business and Human Rights.]

FORCED POPULATION CONTROL TARGETING UYGHUR WOMEN

In March 2025, a panel of experts hosted by the advocacy organization Campaign for Uyghurs discussed the implementation of forced population control measures against Uyghur women.[17] Scholar Adrian Zenz emphasized that such measures align with Article 2(d) of the Genocide Convention, which addresses "[i]mposing measures intended to prevent births within the group."[18] Zenz stated that according to a U.N. risk framework, indicators for genocide and crimes against humanity continued to be evident in the XUAR.[19] Sophie Richardson, co-executive director of Chinese Human Rights Defenders, noted that officials had viewed "faith-based and culturally based resistance to family planning policies" in the XUAR among ethnic minority communities as "extremism," leading to intensified persecution of Uyghur women and their families.[20] [For more information on forced population control measures imposed on Uyghur women, see Chapter 8—Population Control.]

During this reporting year, governments, international organizations, and human rights advocates voiced concerns that PRC officials had continued to carry out systematic rights abuses in the XUAR in the two years since an August 2022 U.N. report found that the "arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim groups . . . may constitute . . . crimes against humanity."[21] In September 2024, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Council read a joint statement from the 10 member countries of the "Core Group on Xinjiang," calling upon the PRC to implement the report's recommendations and to release Uyghurs and others unjustly detained in the XUAR.[22]

Turkic Muslims Sentenced to Lengthy Prison Terms

Cases of Uyghurs sentenced to long-term imprisonment that were reported this past year include the following:

- **Tursunjan Hezim.**[23] In January 2025, *Radio Free Asia* (RFA) reported that in 2022, security personnel in the XUAR detained Uyghur historian and website founder Tursunjan Hezim, and an unknown court sentenced him to life in prison on unknown charges later that year.[24] The website he created, *Orkhun,* was popular among Uyghurs, serving as a repository for Uyghur historical materials and as an alternative to state-sponsored websites.[25] Authorities previously detained Tursunjan Hezim

in 2009, following demonstrations and riots that took place in Urumqi municipality beginning on July 5, and in 2010, a court sentenced him to seven years in prison on unknown charges.[26] Earlier in his career, officials removed him from his teaching position at a school in Aksu prefecture because of his views on Uyghur history and assigned him to guard the school's dormitory.[27]

- **Elijan Ismail.**[28] In August 2024, *RFA* reported that in 2017, authorities in Urumqi municipality detained Uyghur entrepreneur Elijan Ismail, the owner of a biotechnology company, and in 2018, an unknown court sentenced him to 18 years in prison.[29] His detention and sentencing were reportedly related to his distribution of charitable donations called *zakat,* including to family members of political prisoners.[30] Elijan Ismail was part of a group of entrepreneurs who made such donations and who authorities said were an "ethnic separatist group."[31] Officials in the XUAR largely banned *zakat* in 2016.[32] *RFA* reported that according to a police officer in Maralbeshi (Bachu) county, Kashgar prefecture, authorities had detained more than 20 individuals in connection with Elijan Ismail's case.[33]

Tenth Anniversary of the Sentencing of Ilham Tohti

In September 2024, on the tenth anniversary of the conviction and life imprisonment of Uyghur scholar **Ilham Tohti,** international observers called for his release.[34] According to Agnes Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, "When Ilham Tohti promoted cooperation and peaceful coexistence between China's Uyghur and Han communities, the Chinese government responded with repression and imprisonment. His decade-long incarceration is a further shameful stain on China's troubled human rights record."[35]

A court in Urumqi municipality, XUAR, sentenced Ilham Tohti to life in prison on September 23, 2014, on the charge of "separatism."[36] He has reportedly not been allowed visits from family members since 2017.[37] During his pretrial detention, authorities reportedly subjected him to abuse, including by shackling his feet for more than a month and depriving him of food.[38] Prior to his detention, he taught economics at Minzu University in Beijing municipality, and he founded the website *Uyghur Online,* which promoted discussion among different ethnic groups in China on a variety of different issues.[39]

In September 2024, *RFA* reported that a court in the XUAR had sentenced Uyghur prison guard Ghopur Abdureshit, who had overseen Ilham Tohti in XUAR No. 1 Prison, to seven years in prison for sharing information on Ilham Tohti's condition.[40] Authorities reportedly detained Ghopur Abdureshit in February 2024 for "intentionally spreading sensitive and negative information" after he revealed to other prisoners that Ilham Tohti had been placed in solitary confinement, was in poor health, and had limited access to sunlight.[41] Interviewees told *RFA* that Ghopur Abdureshit had used Ilham Tohti's situation to warn other prisoners to abide by the prison's rules in order to avoid ending up like Ilham Tohti, and this information ended up reaching other prisoners' family members.[42]

As in the past reporting year,[43] reports emerged documenting the deaths of individuals in custody or shortly after they were released. Examples include the following:

- **Ibrahim Dawut,** a chemistry teacher and language rights advocate in his late fifties, died in custody around two months after his July 2019 detention in the XUAR.[44] A former high school teacher in Kashgar prefecture, he had criticized the "bilingual education" system in the region, translated high school textbooks into Uyghur, and helped found a Uyghur-language kindergarten.[45] On October 6, 2019, authorities informed Ibrahim Dawut's family members of his death but did not allow his family to see his body before he was buried.[46] Police forced his family members to sign a document stating that his cause of death was a heart attack.[47]
- **Shirzat Bawudun,** a former senior government and Party official in his late fifties, died in a prison in Turpan municipality, XUAR, around four years after he was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve for charges including "separatism" and "participating in terrorist organizations."[48] Authorities did not inform family members of the cause of his death.[49] In April 2021, official media outlet *CGTN* released a video featuring Shirzat Bawudun that portrayed him as having used his position as the head of the regional justice department to support terrorist activity.[50]

AUTHORITIES DETAIN ETHNIC KAZAKH JOURNALISTS AND SCHOLARS

During this reporting year, authorities continued to detain or hold in detention a number of ethnic Kazakh journalists and intellectuals in the XUAR.[51] Examples include the following:

- In July 2021, authorities in Changji city, Changji Hui Autonomous prefecture, XUAR, detained educator and composer **Qarapa Nasiolla** after he returned to the XUAR from teaching outside the region the previous month.[52] He maintained a WeChat account that was popular with the ethnic Kazakh community on which he published Kazakh literary, musical, and historical material.[53] According to the Xinjiang Victims Database, he may have been held at the Changji Municipal PSB Detention Center.[54] Information on any charges against Qarapa Nasiolla was not available, but authorities may have detained him for reasons including his social media posts, his contacts with people in Kazakhstan, and encouraging his students to study in Kazakhstan.[55]
- In April 2024, authorities in the XUAR detained **Kanat Yerezhep,** who had retired from a senior position at state-owned *Xinjiang Television.*[56] He is believed to have subsequently been imprisoned on unknown charges.[57]
- In 2022 or 2023, authorities in the XUAR detained Urumqi-based **Zhanibek Zhaudet,** who worked as a reporter and translator at the *Xinjiang Daily* newspaper.[58] He was reportedly formally arrested in 2024.[59]

According to *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (RFERL), a Kazakhstan-based newspaper reported in July 2024 on the cases of 22 ethnic Kazakh intellectuals detained in China, but family members

refused to comment on their cases, due to fear that speaking out could adversely affect their imprisoned relatives.[60] *RFERL* noted that Qarapa Nasiolla's Kazakhstan-based mother and brother, for instance, had publicly advocated on his behalf when authorities initially detained him in 2021, but refused to speak to *RFERL* about his case in August 2024.[61]

Forced Labor and Land Appropriation involving Turkic and Muslim XUAR Residents

During this reporting year, reports indicated that authorities in the XUAR had recently expanded a system of forced labor that involved Turkic and Muslim individuals, often transferring them from traditional occupations in rural areas into industrial work.[62] According to a report published in February 2025 by the International Labour Organization, in recent years officials raised their targets for sending individuals to other provinces to work in forced labor.[63] In conjunction with forced labor programs targeting rural Uyghurs, authorities have confiscated land held by Uyghur farmers and transferred the land use rights of Uyghur farmers to state-run cooperatives and developers.[64] According to Rian Thum's research, while officials have long carried out the transfer of rural land in many parts of China as part of agricultural industrialization, the magnitude and speed of land transfers in the XUAR exceeds that seen in other parts of the country.[65] Thum also noted that land transfers in the XUAR are carried out in a more coercive manner, and they are linked with other abusive policies that disrupt Uyghur families and communities.[66] Research published by scholar Adrian Zenz and I-Lin Lin connects these land transfers to large Chinese agricultural corporations, particularly those producing tomatoes and red peppers.[67] Zenz and Lin's research indicates that both Chinese agribusinesses and Western companies working with or purchasing products from them facilitate forced labor and forced land transfer policies in the XUAR, in turn fragmenting Uyghur communities and making it easier for officials to surveil and control them.[68] [For more information on forced labor involving Turkic and Muslim XUAR residents, see Chapter 12—Business and Human Rights.]

Officials Demolish Rebiya Kadeer Trade Center

In November 2024, authorities in Urumqi municipality, XUAR, demolished the Rebiya Kadeer Trade Center, in a move Uyghur rights advocates view as targeting Uyghur identity.[69] Officials have for years persecuted the XUAR-based family members of **Rebiya Kadeer,** who went into exile in the United States in 2005, in retaliation for her human rights activism.[70] She operated the trade center, which hosted hundreds of mainly Uyghur-owned businesses, from 1991 until her imprisonment in 1999 for her Uyghur rights advocacy.[71] Following demonstrations and riots beginning in July 2009 in Urumqi, officials shut down the trade center and said it would be demolished.[72] A Uyghur rights activist living in the U.S. said local residents told her that officials sealed off the area around the trade center the day before demolishing it, treating its demolition as a "state secret."[73] Rebiya Kadeer said officials had not compensated her for the demolition.[74]

Freedom of Religion

XUAR government officials curtailed Muslim residents' freedom to practice their religious beliefs, including by holding Turkic Muslims in detention for observing their faith, as in the following examples.

- In December 2024, *RFA* reported that in late 2018, authorities in Konasheher (Shufu) county, Kashgar prefecture, XUAR, sentenced **Seylihan Rozi** to 17 years in prison for providing "illegal religious education" to her two sons and neighbor Yaqup Hidayet at least a decade earlier.[75] Seylihan Rozi's sons **Sattar Qadir** and **Yusupehmet Qadir** were sentenced to 7 and 10 years in prison, respectively, for having received religious instruction from their mother between 2004 and 2008.[76] Additionally, **Yaqup Hidayet** was reportedly sentenced to nine years in prison for receiving three days of religious instruction from Seylihan Rozi in June 2006.[77]
- *RFA* reported in August 2024 that Uyghur entrepreneur **Ablikim Qurban** had been sentenced to life in prison sometime after being detained in July 2017 for alleged involvement with "religious extremism."[78] Prior to establishing a company selling imported sesame seeds in April 2017, he toured factories in Egypt and met with Uyghurs from his hometown who were studying at a university in Cairo.[79] Authorities attributed Ablikim Qurban's detention to his meetings with these students, saying they constituted involvement with "terrorists."[80] In 2016, PRC government officials had threatened Uyghurs studying in Egypt with punishment and detained their relatives in some cases, to compel them to return to China; many of the students were studying Islamic theology.[81] In 2017, officials included Egypt on a list of 26 countries linked to terrorism.[82]

As in previous reporting years,[83] XUAR authorities placed restrictions on Muslims' observance of Ramadan. According to videos posted on Chinese social media platforms, authorities forced residents of various locations in Aksu and Hotan prefectures to engage in forced labor during the Ramadan period in March 2025 in order to prevent them from fasting.[84] In addition, authorities required residents of several towns in Peyziwat (Jiashi) county, Kashgar prefecture, to film themselves eating lunch during the Ramadan period in order to prove that they were not fasting.[85] A government worker interviewed by *RFA* said local residents would not disobey requests to film themselves eating during Ramadan because some people had been sentenced to prison terms as punishment for fasting during previous Ramadan periods.[86]

XUAR authorities also restricted Muslim residents' freedom of religion by preventing them from making the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. According to a July 2024 *RFA* report, statistics provided by the Islamic Association of China showed that among the more than 1,000 PRC citizens registered in early June to make the Hajj pilgrimage later that month, none were Uyghurs or other Muslim residents of the XUAR.[87] XUAR authorities have prohibited independent Hajj pilgrimages since 2014,[88] and rules issued in October 2020 by the National Religious Affairs Administration and seven other government entities barred any Muslim PRC citizens from

making independent Hajj pilgrimages.[89] [For more information on official restrictions on Muslims' right to practice their faith throughout China, see Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression and Chapter 3—Freedom of Religion.]

Transnational Repression of Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims

Reports published this past year documented the PRC's continued transnational repression of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, through harassment and intimidation, to prevent them from speaking out about human rights conditions in the XUAR.[90] Examples include the following:

- U.S.-based Uyghur journalist Kasim Abdurehim Kashgar, a reporter at *Voice of America* (VOA), told Reporters Without Borders that PRC authorities had sentenced at least four of his former colleagues and one friend to lengthy prison terms in retaliation for his work.[91]
- U.S.-based Uyghur activist Tahir Imin told *VOA* that in early 2024, the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court had sentenced six of his former business contacts in the XUAR for "separatism," one of whom was sentenced to 15 years in prison and five of whom were sentenced to 12 years.[92] According to Tahir Imin, he previously learned that authorities had sentenced 28 of his relatives to prison because of their connection to him.[93]
- *RFA* reported in February 2025 that authorities had sentenced **Yalqun Isa,** the older brother of former World Uyghur Congress president Dolkun Isa, to 20 years in prison for "inciting terrorism."[94] Yalqun Isa is one of several family members of Dolkun Isa whom authorities have detained or persecuted because of his overseas rights advocacy.[95]
- In February 2025, the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) canceled the presentation of Uyghur rights advocate **Abduweli Ayup** the day before he was scheduled to speak at a panel on language and technology at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France.[96] Abduweli Ayup expressed the belief that PRC officials pressured UNESCO officials to cancel his presentation after he questioned a Chinese state media journalist about language rights for Uyghurs in China during a panel the previous day.[97]

In February 2025, Human Rights Watch reported that XUAR authorities had begun permitting some Uyghur exiles to visit the XUAR, but only after undergoing extensive vetting and under restrictive conditions.[98] Vetting reported by interviewees included background checks taking up to six months and approval from "neighborhood committees" in their hometowns.[99] Uyghurs living in countries requiring a visa to visit the PRC reported having visa applications rejected for reasons including enrolling their children in Uyghur-language classes and attending weddings that were also attended by Uyghur activists.[100] PRC diplomatic officials required some Uyghur exiles wishing to visit family members to join official tours organized by the XUAR United Front Work Department, during which they were closely surveilled, required to speak Mandarin Chinese at all times, and forced to participate in propaganda such as praising the Chinese Communist Party's policies in the region.[101]

"Through these controlled visits and tours," reported Human Rights Watch, "the Chinese government has continued to control the Uyghur diaspora, some of whom stay silent or shun activism and even Uyghur cultural activities in hopes of resuming contact with their families and visiting the region."[102]

UYGHURS DEPORTED FROM THAILAND FACE PERSECUTION

On February 27, 2025, Thai officials deported 40 Uyghur asylum seekers to China,[103] in spite of widespread international concern over their safety and evidence that PRC authorities had imprisoned or tortured Uyghurs who were similarly deported from Cambodia to China in 2009.[104] The men were among 500 Uyghurs who fled the XUAR to Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries around a decade ago in hopes of reaching Türkiye.[105] In March, PRC officials hosted a group of Thai officials and reporters during a visit to Kashgar prefecture, XUAR, that was aimed at showing that the Uyghurs who were deported the previous month and Uyghurs who were deported from Thailand in 2015 were all being treated well.[106] One of the reporters said that security personnel closely surveilled their visit and vetted material before it could be transmitted to Thailand.[107] In November 2024, *RFA* reported on the imprisonment and torture of 20 Uyghur asylum seekers deported from Cambodia to China in 2009.[108] According to *RFA*'s report, one of the detainees, who is serving a 20-year sentence, was forced to work despite being in very poor health, and another detainee suffered a miscarriage after being tortured, including by electric shock.[109] Four of the Uyghurs deported from Cambodia were sentenced to life in prison; four were sentenced to 20 years; four others were sentenced to 17 years; and four more were sentenced to 16 years.[110] Two of the deportees died in prison.[111] According to a separate *RFA* report, one of the two, **Memet'eli Rozi,** died after prison officials rejected his requests to remove metal rods that had been implanted in his wrist following a traffic accident, leading him to develop a fatal ailment.[112]

Uyghur Man Disappears After Being Refouled from Cambodia

In February 2024, Chinese officials sent 22-year-old **Abdureqip Rahman,** an ethnic Uyghur, to Kucha (Kuche) county, Aksu prefecture, XUAR, from Cambodia, where he had fled in hopes of ultimately seeking asylum in the United States.[113] According to a *Washington Post* investigation, Chinese authorities sentenced him to one year in prison sometime after his March 2022 resignation from employment at a Kucha detention center, accusing him of being a "two-faced" person.[114] Fearing that he was at risk of being detained again following his August 2023 release, Abdureqip Rahman arranged to be smuggled out of China and was trafficked into a scam center in Cambodia.[115] While working inside the scam center—which his overseers did not allow him to leave—and seeking to flee, he secretly contacted United Nations (U.N.) officials and international activists, and informed them of the abuses he had witnessed while being imprisoned and working at a detention center in China.[116] He expressed the fear that he would face "unimaginable" consequences if officials forced him to return to China.[117] In spite of U.N. officials' attempts to assist him, in January 2024, Abdureqip Rahman was first held in custody by Cambodian authorities and then transferred to the custody of PRC authorities in Cambodia before being sent to Kucha on February 1.[118] Abdureqip Rahman's whereabouts remained unknown as of December 2024.[119] [For more information on the transnational repression of Turkic Muslims, see Chapter 17—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally. For more information on human trafficking in scam centers in Southeast Asia, see Chapter 9—Human Trafficking.]

Repressive Surveillance Technology and Security Measures

During the Commission's 2025 reporting year, reports emerged regarding ways in which authorities in the XUAR used surveillance technology, requirements for reporting visitors, and other methods to maintain control over Turkic and Muslim residents.[120] These security measures were consistent with XUAR Communist Party Secretary Ma Xingrui's July 2024 call for regional security officials to conduct "high-intensity crackdowns" and ensure "social stability" in the region.[121] Examples include the following:

- In the summer of 2024, XUAR public security personnel carried out an online security operation in which they reportedly cracked down on "rumors" about regional tourism and "fake videos involving the police."[122]
- Authorities in localities in Kashgar and Hotan prefectures recently strengthened enforcement of requirements, first implemented in the XUAR in June 2015, that Uyghurs promptly report the arrival of guests to their homes to the police.[123] The mandated time frame for reporting guests ranged from within ten minutes to two hours, with violators subject to punishment.[124] In July 2024, police in Yengisheher (Shule) county, Kashgar, detained and interrogated a married couple overnight because the husband had forgotten to report the arrival of a family member from another prefecture earlier in the month.[125]
- Regional authorities launched a winter security campaign targeting Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups that focused

on managing security risks in the runup to the Spring Festival in early 2025.[126] George Washington University professor Sean Roberts noted, however, that officials had already intensified security measures in the region as much as possible.[127]

- According to a July 2024 *RFA* report, public security officials targeted previously detained Uyghurs for detention, including businessmen, philanthropists, and people who had traveled abroad, deeming them national security threats.[128] Among those targeted was 24-year-old **Abuzer Abdughapar,** whom public security authorities detained in Urumqi municipality on March 25, 2024.[129] Abuzer Abdughapar, who had planned to get married in May, had been previously detained in Ghulja (Yining) county, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, XUAR, in 2017 after returning from a year studying in Türkiye, and was held in a mass internment camp for almost a year.[130]

Notes to Chapter 15—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

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[2] U.S. Department of State, "Determination of the Secretary of State on Atrocities in Xinjiang," January 19, 2021. See also Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: China (Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet)," March 30, 2021; "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," *United Nations,* adopted December 9, 1948, entry into force January 12, 1951; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2020," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* December 2020, 299–301; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2019," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* November 2019, 267–8.

[3] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: China (Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet)," March 30, 2021.

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[5] Rian Thum, "Eight Years On, China's Repression of the Uyghurs Remains Dire: How China's Policies in the Uyghur Region Have and Have Not Changed," *Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* February 2025, 1, 4, 9.

[6] Rian Thum, "Eight Years On, China's Repression of the Uyghurs Remains Dire: How China's Policies in the Uyghur Region Have and Have Not Changed," *Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* February 2025, 7–8.

[7] Rian Thum, "Eight Years On, China's Repression of the Uyghurs Remains Dire: How China's Policies in the Uyghur Region Have and Have Not Changed," *Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* February 2025, 7.

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[10] Rian Thum, "Eight Years On, China's Repression of the Uyghurs Remains Dire: How China's Policies in the Uyghur Region Have and Have Not Changed," *Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* February 2025, 10.

[11] Rian Thum, "Eight Years On, China's Repression of the Uyghurs Remains Dire: How China's Policies in the Uyghur Region Have and Have Not Changed," *Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* February 2025, 1, 15–17.

[12] Rian Thum, "Eight Years On, China's Repression of the Uyghurs Remains Dire: How China's Policies in the Uyghur Region Have and Have Not Changed," *Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* February 2025, 1, 15–17.

[13] Rian Thum, "Eight Years On, China's Repression of the Uyghurs Remains Dire: How China's Policies in the Uyghur Region Have and Have Not Changed," *Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* February 2025, 12–13. See also Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: China (Includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)," April 22, 2024. According to the report, "[t]here were widespread reports of coercive population control measures, including forced abortions, forced sterilizations, involuntary IUD insertions, and pregnancy checks, occurring at detention centers in the [XUAR] and targeting minority groups, primarily Uyghurs and ethnic Kazakhs."

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[29] Shöhret Hoshur, "Karxanichi élijan isma'il 10 mingdin artuq kishige zakat bergenliki üchün 18 yilliq késilgen" [Entrepreneur Elijan Ismail sentenced to 18 years for giving zakat to more than 10,000 people], *Radio Free Asia,* August 14, 2024; Shöhret Hoshur, "'Maralbéshidiki saqchi xadimi: 'Élijan isma'il délosigha chétilghanlarni hélihem qézip tutuwatimiz'" [Police officer in Maralbeshi: "We are still investigating those involved in the Elijan Ismail case"], *Radio Free Asia,* August 19, 2024; Shohret Hoshur, "Uyghur Entrepreneur Serving 18 Years for Charitable Contributions," *Radio Free Asia,* August 22, 2024.

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XI. Hong Kong and Macau

Hong Kong and Macau

Findings

- Since the 2019 pro-democracy protests, Hong Kong authorities have used national security laws to suppress and prevent all forms of political dissent. In 2024, 47 pro-democracy activists were convicted of subversion for organizing an unofficial primary election. A law passed in March 2024, the *Safeguarding National Security Ordinance,* introduced harsher penalties for offenses such as sedition and expanded the scope of punishable activities. By early 2025, hundreds had been arrested under national security charges, with many serving prison sentences. High-profile cases included the ongoing trial of publisher Jimmy Lai, charged with collusion with foreign forces, and the sentencing of former *Stand News* editors for publishing content critical of the government.
- More civil society organizations disbanded amid legal and political pressure. The Democratic Party, once Hong Kong's largest opposition party, began dissolution procedures after being approached by representatives allegedly linked to the PRC government. A religious group focusing on political engagement likewise announced disbandment, saying that it could no longer carry out its mission in the current social environment.
- Government control over the social work profession tightened, as the Legislative Council changed the law to consolidate control by government appointees and to disqualify social workers convicted of national security offenses, some of whom were present at protests in 2019 monitoring police conduct.
- Media restrictions continued, as journalists were deterred from advocating for press freedom by the threat of job termination. The Hong Kong government also denied entry to foreign journalists, a practice that could be regularized, as a law was passed that requires airlines to submit preboarding passenger information for screening purposes.
- Hong Kong authorities increasingly restricted the flow of information, including through censorship, with extraterritorial effect, as shown in their attempt to block the overseas publication *Flow HK.* A new law taking effect in 2026 will give police broad powers over designated private tech companies, raising concerns about privacy, corporate autonomy, and the government's access to data, including data stored overseas.
- The Macau government implemented extensive security measures for a visit by PRC leader Xi Jinping in December 2024, and reports of consequent disruptions were censored. In addition to celebrating the 25th anniversary of Macau's reunification with China, Xi also inaugurated the new chief executive, Sam Hou Fai, who was elected in an uncontested election and whose judicial rulings in his former capacity as a top judge contributed to the restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

Hong Kong

Following the large-scale pro-democracy protests in 2019, Hong Kong authorities have been trying to suppress political dissent in the name of national security. Such efforts have resulted in the rapid curtailment of fundamental freedoms and the erosion of the rule of law, a trend that has continued during this reporting year.

Criminal Prosecution

As the Hong Kong government emphasized security as a primary policy objective, authorities continued to impose criminal penalties to suppress dissent, mainly relying on national security laws.[1] Two sets of national security laws are enforced in Hong Kong: the *People's Republic of China (PRC) Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region* (*National Security Law* or NSL) enacted in June 2020, and the *Safeguarding National Security Ordinance* (SNSO) enacted in March 2024.[2] The Hong Kong judiciary reported that as of February 2025, the court system had received 2,350 protest cases and 230 national security cases, at a rate of about 4 per month and 2.5 per month in 2024, respectively.[3] National security cases consume significant resources, as they must be adjudicated by three judges, which lengthens the wait time to nearly 400 days for non-political cases at the district courts.[4]

A study reported that between 2020 and 2024, Hong Kong authorities arrested 296 individuals under national security laws, charged 158, convicted 77, and acquitted 2.[5] Other laws, such as those applicable to rioting and unauthorized assembly, are similarly applied in ways that undermine fundamental freedoms, including speech, press, and assembly.[6] Taking into account a broader range of offenses such as rioting, non-profit organization Hong Kong Democracy Council documented 1,928 political prisoners as of April 2025.[7]

NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

The prosecution of 47 pro-democracy activists, commonly referred to as the "Hong Kong 47," highlights how the NSL has targeted peaceful civic participation. In November 2024, three High Court judges, Andrew Chan Hing-wai, Alex Lee Wan-tang, and Johnny Chan Jong-herng, sentenced 45 individuals to prison terms ranging from 4 years and 2 months to 10 years on subversion charges.[8] The court found four defendants to be principal offenders: **Benny Tai Yiu-ting, Au Nok-hin, Andrew Chiu Ka-yin,** and **Ben Chung Kam-lun.**[9] With the exception of **Gwyneth Ho Kwai-lam,** the defendants received sentence mitigation for various reasons, including having pleaded guilty or having assisted the investigation.[10] Twenty-eight defendants pleaded guilty, and two were acquitted in May 2024.[11] Police arrested the defendants in January 2021 for participating in an unofficial primary election conducted in July 2020 to select candidates in the pro-democracy camp to run for election to the Legislative Council.[12] The U.S. Consulate in Hong Kong maintained that peaceful participation in political activity is protected under Hong Kong's Basic Law.[13]

In a different case, pro-democracy figure **Jimmy Lai Chee-ying** completed his 52-day- long testimony in March 2025, concluding the 144-day trial in which he defended himself against two counts of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and one count of conspiracy to publish seditious materials.[14] Authorities alleged that Lai, founder of newspaper *Apple Daily,* had urged foreign politicians to impose sanctions and trade restrictions on Hong Kong and China and that he had provided financial support for the pro-democracy movement in 2019.[15] As of March 2025, the closing argument was scheduled for August 2025.[16] Lai's legal team alleged that Lai had been held under solitary confinement, spending over 23 hours a day in his cell, and was deprived of independent medical care.[17]

THE SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL SECURITY ORDINANCE

Enacted in March 2024, the SNSO supplements the NSL primarily by modifying existing offenses and putting them in one place.[18] For example, the offense of sedition was moved from the *Crimes Ordinance,* and the maximum sentence was increased from 2 to 7 years (and 10 if foreign forces are involved).[19] Within the first year of the SNSO's enactment, Hong Kong authorities had charged five individuals, sentencing three, with the goal of suppressing conduct deemed seditious and discouraging support for "absconders."[20] Foreign investors expressed concern about offenses such as "theft of state secrets," and legal experts flagged the law's chilling effect on political speech.[21]

The number of people arrested under the SNSO remained undisclosed as of May 2025. Among those arrested were **Chow Hang-tung,** her mother and uncle, and five others,[22] who were accused by the police of using social media posts to incite hatred of the PRC and the Hong Kong governments ahead of June 4, 2024, the 35th anniversary of the violent suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen protests.[23] Authorities released the arrestees on bail, except for Chow, who remained held at the Tai Lam Centre for Women as of March 2025.[24]

The first conviction under the SNSO involved **Chu Kai-pong,** who wore a T-shirt and a mask bearing slogans used during the 2019 protests in Hong Kong.[25] Chief Magistrate Victor So Wai-tak sentenced Chu to 14 months in prison for sedition in September 2024, finding that an earlier prison sentence of three months for wearing a similar T-shirt did not sufficiently deter Chu.[26] Shortly thereafter, the judge sentenced **Chung Man-kit** to 10 months in prison on the same charge for writing protest slogans on bus seats.[27] Similarly, **Au Kin-wai** received a 14-month sentence for posting on social media with "seditious intention."[28]

The SNSO also amended existing law to retroactively provide that a prisoner convicted of a national security offense is ineligible for remission of sentence unless the commissioner of correctional services is satisfied that granting it would not be contrary to national security interests.[29] Individuals affected by this amendment include **Ma Chun-man,** who was convicted of inciting secession in 2021 for advocating for Hong Kong independence and was expected to be released by March 25, 2024, for good conduct, two days after the effective date of the SNSO.[30] Ma's appeal of the denial of his

remission application, however, was dismissed in December 2024 by High Court Judge Alex Lee Wan-tang.[31] Chief Executive John Lee said that not granting remission was standard practice in national security cases.[32]

In May 2025, **Kwok Yin-sang,** father of exiled activist **Anna Kwok,** appeared before Chief Magistrate Victor So on the charge of "attempting to deal with . . . any funds . . . belonging to . . . a relevant absconder," after allegedly trying to obtain funds from Anna's insurance policies.[33] He was the first person charged for this offense and was later granted bail.[34]

SNSO SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION

In May 2025, Hong Kong authorities enacted the *Safeguarding National Security (Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) Regulation (SNSO Subsidiary Legislation)*.[35] The government introduced the bill using a procedure that allowed it to be published in the government's gazette before being submitted for scrutiny by the Legislative Council, which vetted the legislation in about five hours.[36] Designed to facilitate the operations of the Office for Safeguarding National Security (OSNS) of the PRC central government, the law requires public servants to assist the OSNS and creates six offenses to punish people who frustrate demands made by it.[37] In June, the OSNS requested assistance from the national security arm of the Hong Kong Police Force and carried out a joint operation, raiding the homes of six people and the office of an organization suspected of collusion with a foreign country.[38]

Another piece of legislation, passed at the same time using the same abbreviated procedure, designated the offices of the OSNS as "prohibited places."[39] Criminal liability may attach for anyone who approaches, inspects, or is in the neighborhood of a prohibited place without authorization.[40] Within days after the law was passed, police stopped journalists of a local media outlet from photographing and filming near two locations linked to the OSNS.[41]

SEDITION

People prosecuted under the previous sedition law (the version before it was subsumed under and modified by the SNSO) included **Chung Pui-kuen** and **Patrick Lam,** former editors of news outlet *Stand News,* which was shuttered in 2021 after police raided its newsroom and froze its assets.[42] In September 2024, District Court Judge Kwok Wai-kin found that 11 articles published during the tenure of the defendants were intended to "smear and vilify" the PRC and Hong Kong governments when over half of Hong Kong society was distrustful of authorities.[43] Accordingly, the judge sentenced Chung to 1 year and 9 months in prison and Lam to time served of 10 months.[44]

In March 2025, the Court of Final Appeal dismissed a challenge brought by radio host **Tam Tak-chi** concerning his 40-month sentence that was in part premised on his chanting a protest slogan deemed to be seditious.[45] One of the conclusions reached by the court was that "the prosecution was not required to establish that the words uttered by the appellant were intended to incite violence

or public disorder."[46] Several pending cases were adjourned, as this ruling could have implications on how defendants plea.[47]

RIOTING

In February 2025, District Court Judge Stanley Chan Kwong-chi sentenced former opposition politician **Lam Cheuk-ting** to three years and one month in prison on a rioting charge, a heavier sentence than the sentences given the other six defendants who stood trial with him.[48] The charge was related to a mob attack that took place in July 2019 at a subway station where suspected gang members wearing white shirts indiscriminately attacked commuters ("721 incident").[49] The judge rejected Lam's contention that he was trying to de-escalate and to monitor police conduct, finding instead that Lam had provoked the attackers.[50] Lam himself was attacked by a white-shirted person and sustained injuries to his arms and head.[51] At the time of sentencing in this case, Lam was serving two other sentences: six years and nine months in the Hong Kong 47 case discussed above, and four months for disclosing information about an investigation concerning allegations of police misconduct in the 721 incident.[52]

UNAUTHORIZED ASSEMBLY

In August 2024, Magistrate Edward Wong sentenced **Isaac Lee** to eight weeks in prison for unauthorized assembly.[53] Sixteen years old at the time, Lee joined around 100 people singing songs in a shopping mall on June 30, 2020, hours before the NSL became effective.[54] Reports did not show that the prosecution alleged any acts of violence or disorderly conduct.[55]

Also convicted of unauthorized assembly for joining a peaceful demonstration were **Martin Lee Chu-ming, Margaret Ng Ngoi-yee, Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, Albert Ho Chun-yan, Lee Cheuk-yan, Leung Kwok-hung,** and **Cyd Ho Sau-lan.** In August 2024, the Court of Final Appeal dismissed their appeal, declining to follow a test established in British jurisprudence that assesses whether an official action disproportionately infringes on a fundamental right.[56]

Adjudicating an appeal challenging the acquittal of former district councilor **Lo Kin-hei,** the Court of Appeal in March 2025 affirmed the lower court's decision, reasoning that the prosecution failed to establish the requisite intent to participate in an unauthorized assembly.[57] While Lo in November 2019 was near Hong Kong Polytechnic University where protesters and police clashed, he was not in protest gear and did not confront police, the court found.[58]

NATIONAL ANTHEM ORDINANCE

Enacted in 2020, the *National Anthem Ordinance* imposes up to three years of imprisonment on a person found to have "undermine[d] the dignity of the national anthem as a symbol and sign of the People's Republic of China . . .."[59]

In October 2024, **Chan Pak-yui** decided to drop his appeal and began serving his eight-week sentence for allegedly covering his ears, remaining seated, and singing a protest song when the national anthem was played at a volleyball game.[60] Magistrate Kestrel Lam Tsz Hong had previously rejected his defense that he had au-

tism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, finding that he had told police that he disliked China's team and the PRC anthem.[61]

In January 2025, **Lau Pun-hei** pleaded not guilty before Magistrate Don So to the charge of insulting the national anthem, which was based on police allegations that he had turned his back to the field and not stood for the entirety of the anthem when it was played at a soccer match.[62]

FAILURE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

In March 2025, the Court of Final Appeal quashed the convictions of **Tang Ngok-kwan, Tsui Hon-kwong,** and **Chow Hang-tung,** who were members of the disbanded Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (Hong Kong Alliance).[63] The convictions were premised on their refusal to surrender documents to authorities, who alleged that the group was a "foreign agent" for an unidentified organization.[64] In granting the appeal, the court held that the trial judge failed to establish acting as a "foreign agent" as a necessary element of the offense and that it was an error to preclude the defendants from challenging the validity of the notice demanding information.[65]

BANNER DISPLAY

Police arrested **Chan Ki-kau** after he displayed two banners in a park in 2023 without having obtained prior permission, charging him with an offense that carried a maximum sentence of three months in prison.[66] The wording on the banners was not political, but Chan was known to be an activist, having been on the front lines of demonstrations attempting to de-escalate tensions between protesters and police during the 2019 protests.[67] Chan stood trial and argued that briefly displaying the banners for about one minute lacked sufficient regularity or permanence to warrant the requirement of prior permission.[68] Agreeing with the argument, the judge acquitted Chan and awarded him litigation fees.[69]

Blocking Business Deal on National Security Grounds

Beyond the criminal context, PRC authorities tried to block a private business transaction on national security grounds, potentially leading to apprehension on the part of international businesses about investing in Hong Kong.[70] The proposed sale of two ports in Panama by Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison Holdings Limited to U.S.-based BlackRock, Inc. became the focal point of a contest of control between China and the United States over an important transportation route.[71] The PRC government, through state-controlled news outlet *Ta Kung Pao*, urged Hutchison to reconsider the sale, claiming that it could violate national security and antitrust laws.[72] Success in such effort could be evidence of the PRC government's direct control over private companies and of the further erosion of Hong Kong's reputation as an international financial hub.[73]

Transnational Repression

In December 2024, the Hong Kong Police Force issued arrest warrants for 6 exiled Hong Kongers, bringing the total number of such warrants to 19.[74] Accused of national security offenses including secession, subversion, and collusion with a foreign country, the six wanted individuals are **Tony Chung Hon-lam, Chung Kim-wah, Victor Ho Leung-mau, Joseph Tay, Carmen Lau Ka-man,** and **Chloe Cheung Hei-ching.**[75] The charges were based on speech and peaceful activities advocating for policy measures such as revoking diplomatic privileges of Hong Kong's economic and trade offices, or issuing warnings on the risk of conducting business in Hong Kong.[76] Simultaneously, police also announced the freezing of assets and cancellation of the passports of seven individuals who were previously identified as absconders.[77] As of March 2025, police also had taken in for questioning a total of at least 15 family members of some wanted individuals.[78] Partly in response to the arrest warrants, the United States Government imposed sanctions on 6 Hong Kong officials, adding to the list of 42 previously sanctioned individuals.[79] Commissioner of Police Joe Chow Yat-ming, appointed in April 2025, characterized the sanctions as evidence of the government's success in its national security work and vowed to do more of it.[80] [For more information, see Chapter 17—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally.]

Civil Society

The Hong Kong government further marginalized people who joined the protests in 2019 and directly or indirectly exerted pressure to cause more civil society groups to disband. The Legislative Council in July 2024 changed the composition of the Social Workers Registration Board, a statutory body responsible for regulating a body of 27,000 social workers by maintaining their registrations and handling disciplinary matters.[81] The legislative amendment increased seats on the board from 15 to 27 and raised the number of government-appointed seats from 6 to 18,[82] thus making elected representatives a minority on the Board.[83] A provision also was revised to disqualify a person for registration if convicted of a national security offense.[84] Over 90 percent of social workers and students in the field who responded to a survey were worried that social workers could be accused of national security offenses when doing their job and said that that would undermine professional autonomy.[85] Seven of the eight elected board members resigned before the amendment took effect, and the election for the reconstituted board saw a 17 percent drop in turnout.[86]

Some social workers, including those arrested for unlawful assembly and other charges related to the 2019 protests, were concerned that they could face obstacles when renewing their licenses in the future.[87] Social worker **Jackie Chen Hung-sau,** for example, was originally acquitted of the charge of "rioting," but upon appeal by the prosecution was sentenced in April 2025 to three years and nine months in prison.[88] Chen was a member of a civil society organization called "Battlefield Social Worker" and was present at protests to monitor police action and to provide emotional support to people.[89]

Social work reportedly was one of three areas targeted by the central government, along with the judiciary and education.[90]

Shortly after the amendment of the social work ordinance, the Hong Kong Christian Institute announced that it would deregister and disband by the end of July 2024.[91] Having an expressed goal of engaging in social and political action, the group said that it could no longer freely carry out its mission in the current social environment.[92] The group supported the pro-democracy protests in 2019, during which it called for a strike and criticized the Hong Kong police's use of excessive force.[93] One of the group's former chairs, **Helena Wong Pik-wan,** was among those detained in the Hong Kong 47 case.[94]

In April 2025, the chairman of the Democratic Party told reporters that the party would begin a dissolution process once 90 percent of its 110 members voted in favor of it.[95] Senior members of the party said that PRC officials or their middlemen had asked the party to dissolve or face serious consequences.[96] Founded in 1994, the Democratic Party is considered the last remaining major opposition group previously active in the Legislative Council.[97]

In June 2025, another major pro-democracy group, the League of Social Democrats, announced its disbandment after nearly two decades of advocating for democratic reform and worker rights.[98] The group said the decision was made under "immense political pressure," as nearly all its members in leadership positions had been imprisoned.[99]

Freedom of Information

Through a series of rulemaking and enforcement measures, Hong Kong authorities continued to restrict freedom of information, creating an environment more aligned with the PRC.[100] A November 2024 report identified 11 sets of laws that worked in tandem within the national security framework to restrict the flow of information on the internet, resulting in at least eight instances of website censorship since 2021.[101] One of these instances concerned the diaspora magazine *Flow HK,* which Hong Kong police tried to block by demanding that the publication's U.S.-based hosting provider Automattic Inc. cease its hosting services on national security grounds.[102] Despite threats of criminal liability, Automattic Inc. declined to comply.[103] But in October 2024, *Flow HK* reportedly was inaccessible through three network providers.[104] This development highlighted several risks faced by tech companies, including losing product control and creating conflicts with their code of ethics.[105]

The trend of increasing information restriction continued with the passage of a law called the *Protection of Critical Infrastructures (Computer Systems) Ordinance.*[106] Expected to take effect in January 2026, the law exempts government agencies from compliance and grants police broad search and seizure powers over private companies designated as "Critical Infrastructure Operators," the list of which will not be publicized.[107] While the Secretary for Security said that the law had no extraterritorial effect, the law requires covered companies to produce information accessible from Hong Kong even if it is stored elsewhere.[108] Analysts expressed concern that the law would empower the Hong Kong government to compel pri-

vate companies to disclose sensitive information, putting personal privacy and property rights at risk.[109]

Media Freedom

In addition to its attempt to block *Flow HK* as mentioned above, the Hong Kong government continued to implement a policy that had the effect of undermining media freedom in the city. Diminishing media freedom was on display when the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) fired reporter Selina Cheng, who had been elected weeks before to chair the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA), the city's largest press union with over 300 members.[110] Management of WSJ previously told Cheng to refrain from advocating for press freedom in Hong Kong and asked her to quit the HKJA board and to withdraw from the election.[111] Other HKJA members reportedly received similar pressure from their employers.[112] State-run news outlet *Global Times* ran an article speaking favorably of Cheng's termination, criticizing her for attacking national security laws in Hong Kong.[113] Moreover, Reporters Without Borders found that since the adoption of the NSL in 2020, press freedom in Hong Kong has "suffered an unprecedented series of setbacks," with 11 journalists being held in detention.[114]

Authorities also tried to interfere with the distribution of printed materials under the pretext of enforcing building codes. In December 2024, police and environmental hygiene officers inspected shopfront extensions during a weeklong independent bookfair.[115] While no building violations were cited, police searched the bags and identifications of people who bought books.[116] The bookfair was held at and near the location of the shuttered Mount Zero, an independent bookstore that hosted activities featuring pro-democracy topics and which was forced to close in 2024 due to a series of inspections and anonymous complaints.[117]

New Regulation May Regularize Entry Denials

During this reporting year, Hong Kong authorities denied entry to at least three foreign journalists, namely, Haze Fan of *Bloomberg News,* Louise Delmotte of the *Associated Press,* and David Missal of Tibet Initiative Deutschland.[118] These cases add to the list of journalists and activists who were previously denied entry on apparent political grounds.[119]

With the enactment of the advance passenger information (API) regulation in September 2024, this type of entry denial may become more frequent.[120] The regulation requires airlines to furnish before departure the personal information of all inbound travelers, including those in transit, and authorizes immigration officers to deny entry without giving a reason.[121] While over 100 countries have similar API requirements,[122]

New Regulation May Regularize Entry Denials—Continued

Hong Kong's regulation does not provide for any data retention period, creating privacy risks.[123] After several months of implementation, the Secretary for Security reported in February 2025 that the API system had successfully prevented persons ineligible for entry from boarding inbound flights, but he declined to provide the figures.[124] The Secretary added that the Immigration Department would "enhance intelligence exchanges with law enforcement agencies in Hong Kong and other places . . . to prevent the entry of undesirable persons into Hong Kong,"[125] which suggests that, as cautioned by the U.S. Government, travelers will be exposed to the increased risk of arbitrary enforcement of national security laws.[126]

Self-Censorship in Media

Increased restrictions on the media may have induced self-censorship.[127] While self-censorship is difficult to gauge due to its inherently private nature, a survey reflected an increased prevalence of the perception that self-censorship was being practiced in the media.[128] The survey, conducted by the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute (PORI), showed that 65 percent of 669 Hong Kong residents interviewed "perceived news outlets to have practiced self-censorship—up eight per cent from [2023] and a record high—while only 22 per cent indicated otherwise."[129]

Chilling Effect on Opinion Polls

Datapoints such as those collected by PORI, however, may soon no longer be available.[130] Shortly after the above-mentioned survey was published, PORI announced in February 2025 that it would suspend all self-funded research and may even close down.[131] The announcement was made after police raided its office and after they had twice taken in its CEO Robert Chung for questioning in January.[132] The questioning could be related to the arrest warrant for PORI's former deputy CEO Chung Kim-wah, which was issued in December 2024 based on allegations that he had requested that foreign governments impose sanctions on the Hong Kong and PRC governments.[133] While the Secretary for Security said that the questioning of Robert Chung was unrelated to PORI's survey results, Chung said that the organization had to suspend the promotion of scientific polling given the current environment.[134]

Macau

In December 2024, PRC leader Xi Jinping visited Macau to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the city's reunification with China.[135] Extensive security measures affected the normal operations of the city, such as rail and ferry services.[136] A report about facilities being shut down was removed by its publisher, *All About Macau Media,* which issued an apology but declined to confirm whether the removal was ordered by authorities.[137] Political activists, including those living outside of Macau, were pressured to refrain from making "inharmonious" comments.[138]

Another purpose of Xi's visit was to inaugurate Macau's new chief executive, Sam Hou Fai, who in effect won in a unanimous vote, as he was the only candidate.[139] During his tenure as the president of the Court of Final Appeal of Macau, Sam handed down several politically sensitive rulings that severely restricted fundamental freedoms in the city.[140]

Notes to Chapter 16—Hong Kong and Macau

[1]"The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address," *Chief Executive's Office, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, People's Republic of China,* October 16, 2024, sec. 15. For previous coverage of the application of Hong Kong's national security laws to suppress dissent, see, e.g., Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "2024 Annual Report," *U.S. Government Publishing Office,* December 2024, 276–282.

[2]"Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region," passed and effective June 30, 2020; "Safeguarding National Security Ordinance," Instrument A305, passed and effective March 23, 2024.

[3] "司法機構稱過去一年新接獲約80宗反修例或國安案　認多宗案件矚目「審期超出預計」" [The Judiciary says it received about 80 new cases related to anti-extradition law [protests] and national security in the past year, admitting that many cases were "exceeding the expected trial time"], *Channel C HK,* April 2, 2025.

[4] "司法機構稱過去一年新接獲約80宗反修例或國安案　認多宗案件矚目「審期超出預計」" [The Judiciary says it received about 80 new cases related to anti-extradition law [protests] and national security in the past year, admitting that many cases were "exceeding the expected trial time"], *Channel C HK,* April 2, 2025.

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[8] "47人案｜港首宗顛覆案判刑　戴耀廷囚10年　官裁4人屬首要分子、三級罰則不完全適用" [Hong Kong 47 case | Hong Kong's first subversion case sentenced; Benny Tai sentenced to 10 years in prison; judge ruled that 4 people were the main culprits, and the third-level penalty was not fully applicable], Witness, November 19, 2024; Brian Wong, "Hong Kong 47: Court Rules Subversion Scheme as Severe as Violent Attack against Government," *South China Morning Post,* November 19, 2024.

[9] "47人案｜港首宗顛覆案判刑　戴耀廷囚10年　官裁4人屬首要分子、三級罰則不完全適用" [Hong Kong 47 case | Hong Kong's first subversion case sentenced; Benny Tai sentenced to 10 years in prison; judge ruled that 4 people were the main culprits, and the third-level penalty was not fully applicable], *Witness,* November 19, 2024; "Hong Kong: 45 Democracy Advocates Harshly Sentenced," *Human Rights Watch,* November 20, 2024.

[10] "47人案｜港首宗顛覆案判刑　戴耀廷囚10年　官裁4人屬首要分子、三級罰則不完全適用" [Hong Kong 47 case | Hong Kong's first subversion case sentenced; Benny Tai sentenced to 10 years in prison; judge ruled that 4 people were the main culprits, and the third-level penalty was not fully applicable], *Witness,* November 19, 2024; "【47人案】被判罪成囚7年　何桂藍提出上訴" [[Hong Kong 47 case] convicted and sentenced to 7 years; Gwyneth Ho appeals], *Radio Free Asia,* November 29, 2024.

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[19]"Crimes Ordinance," Cap. 200; "Safeguarding National Security Ordinance," Instrument A305, secs. 23, 24.

[20]"Safeguarding National Security Ordinance," Instrument A305; Edith Lin and Connor Mycroft, "Hong Kong's Article 23, a Year of Restraint but What about Broader Impact?," *South China Morning Post,* March 25, 2025.

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[30] Kanis Leung, "A Jailed Hong Kong Activist Loses Appeal over Denial of Early Release under New Security Law," *Associated Press,* updated December 6, 2024.
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XII. Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally

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."[3] 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.[9] 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.[10] In addition, tensions erupted in the United Kingdom this reporting year over the PRC's proposed new "super-embassy" in London.[11] 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.[12] 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 Uyghur 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 Uyghurs 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"[82] 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.[84] 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.[85] MI5, the U.K.'s 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.[86]
• **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.[91] Some individuals faced legal charges this year due to their alleged involvement with influence operations in local governments.[92] 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.[93] Sun allegedly conspired with Chen Jun,[94] requesting $80,000 from PRC officials to fund pro-PRC activities in the United States.[95] 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]

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XIII. Additional Views of Commission Members

Additional Views of Senator Jeff Merkley and Representative Jim McGovern

We commend the Commission's hard-working, non-partisan staff for producing another quality annual report on developments in human rights and rule of law in the People's Republic of China. Their commitment to accuracy and faithful adherence to the Commission's mandate has given the Commission a well-earned reputation for producing accurate, thorough and well-sourced material.

This annual report continues that tradition and we commend its reporting and recommendations to Members of Congress, executive branch policymakers, advocates and immigration lawyers defending asylum claims of those fleeing persecution.

The Overview in this annual report includes an analysis of the "broken promises" of the Chinese government in regard to its commitments under a select list of treaties and agreements. Assessing the government's compliance with its international obligations is not only informative, it represents the core mission of this Commission.

The PRC is party to six of the nine core international human rights treaties. The Overview includes analysis of only three of these: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), and the Convention Against Torture (CAT). It excludes the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), without explanation for the omission, and despite the fact that CRC and CEDAW are cited in the body of the report.

Each of these treaties are equally valid under international law. The obligations that the PRC Government incurs under one of these duly ratified treaties are no less or more than those under any other. Per the Commission's mandate and practice, it appears analytically inconsistent for the Overview to cover some treaties and not others.

The international human rights standards that the Commission is required to use are universal—not standards determined by government officials in China, in the United States, or in any other country. These standards include but are not limited to treaties ratified by the PRC, as the mandate's reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides.

This Commission has always sought to center its work on the lived experience of the people of China, their aspirations and their challenges. The same holds for its analysis. The people of China are entitled to expect their government to respect their rights under its legal obligations per the six core human rights treaties it has ratified and according to international standards.

It would be a disservice to the people of China if the Commission were to analyze the PRC's compliance against standards other than those the people of China are entitled to under international law. We sincerely hope that the selective exclusion of human rights treaties in the Overview does not suggest that a different or domes-

tic standard is being applied. We look forward to working with our colleagues to ensure that the Commission's work continues through a universal lens.

Additional Views of Co-Chairman Christopher H. Smith and Commissioner Dale Strong

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) maintains strong bipartisan unity with regards to documenting human rights abuses by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Nonetheless, as noted in previous reporting periods, some views do diverge, reflective of larger divisions on social and political issues in the United States.

While we welcome the Annual Report's thematic accounting of treaties entered into and broken by the PRC, we nonetheless must reiterate, that the citation of non-binding recommendations of United Nations treaty monitoring bodies and independent experts divert attention away from the PRC's failure to meet its hard-law obligations contained in treaties duly ratified.

Furthermore, the report continues to elevate disproportionately issues important to certain domestic, partisan constituencies, to the detriment of those Chinese citizens who suffer from the grossest violations of human rights. With respect to reporting on those who identify as members of the LGBTQ community in China, it is important to note that such individuals continue to have recourse to the judicial system, which, although flawed, allows them to adjudicate grievances successfully—as chronicled in this year's annual report—something which is denied members of disadvantaged ethnic groups, including Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Kirghiz, and practitioners of the multitude of religions being persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party. Consistent with the overall crackdown on civil society organizations, on which we report, the space for organizations that fall under the LGBTQ umbrella has been constricting. Individuals, however, are not imprisoned on the basis of their perceived sexual orientation, and social spaces still exist and are not subject to restrictions akin to those borne by members of religions that are unregistered or designated "evil cults"—including the most recent crackdown on evangelical Christian churches, which occurred after the close of this reporting period.

We continue to have concern that the reporting on this particular social issue, which remains controversial in the United States, will be used improperly to leverage certain positions in intra-American debates. We remain particularly concerned at the use of an elastic "non-discrimination" principle that can be used to undermine freedoms that have been deemed fundamental since the drafting of the U.S. Constitution, in particular freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

Notwithstanding these concerns, we vote in favor of this annual report, with the inclusion of this statement, and compliment the dedication of staff in producing a thorough and well-researched report.