

House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party
Hearing on “CCP Transnational Repression:
The Party’s Effort to Silence and Coerce Critics Overseas”

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Observers once [hoped](#) that as the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) became more secure the entities would feel less threatened by criticism, and abandon efforts to control what is known and said about them globally. But this is simply not the current reality.

Indeed, as recently as November 27, 2023, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping [presided](#) over a Politburo meeting on foreign affairs, reiterating the priority of promoting “Xi Jinping Thought in Diplomacy.” He spoke again of “creat[ing] favorable conditions for advancing the great cause of...national rejuvenation...and promot[ing] the construction of a [common] destiny for all mankind.”

Inherent in this agenda: limiting if not erasing criticism of his regime—across “all mankind.” And having never been made to pay a meaningful price for appalling human rights violations, including atrocity crimes, Xi and his allies are comfortable in their expectations of impunity for human rights violations at home and abroad.

The Chinese government’s and Chinese Communist Party’s efforts to silence critics beyond the country’s borders are not new. Some of the more vivid recent examples include kidnapping Swedish publisher [Gui Minhai](#) from his home in Thailand, Chinese diplomats repeatedly [harassing](#) independent civil society representatives trying to participate in reviews at the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the relentless [cyber-harassment](#) of some of the same individuals who have testified before this Committee. The problem is increasingly [well-documented](#), and so acute that [civil society](#) and [governments](#) have produced materials that ease the process of seeking help for specific communities.

Other forms and instances of transnational repression are corrosive but harder to document and redress. For years, refugees and asylum seekers from China have privately shared their experiences of harassment in democracies, but never lodged those concerns with law enforcement or other public officials, fearing that doing so would further complicate their legal status and could risk their being returned to China. Students and scholars of and from China at [academic institutions](#) in democracies have confided about their inability to engage in classroom discussions or research on particular topics, fearing reprisals for themselves and family members in China.

In some cases, even people who are not themselves victims of transnational repression are influenced by it. For example, in November 2020, I helped Chinese-speaking voters cast ballots at a polling station in a Washington, D.C. suburb. Over the course of the day, a few dozen people

expressed concern about the secrecy of their ballot. They were not worried about whether American authorities could know that or how they voted, but whether *Chinese* authorities could know that. They all cast ballots, but did so having to overcome some anxiety about whether exercising a democratic right might engender reprisals.

We need to be concerned about these broader dimensions and implications of transnational repression. If people in democracies are refraining from reporting threats, harassment, or other forms of transnational repression perpetrated by Chinese authorities, it is urgent to understand why and remove the barriers to reporting those crimes. Democracies need to ensure that all people can attend community events like peaceful protests, participate in elections, or debate ideas online or in classrooms without fear of reprisals and sure that threats will be redressed. Effectively challenging transnational repression requires not just investigating and prosecuting visible violations. It also entails ensuring democratic institutions function and enjoy the confidence of people affected by transnational repression.

Democracies have been relatively slow to grasp the nature and reality of transnational repression and respond to it effectively. It has been encouraging to see United States authorities investigate and prosecute cases of harassment, stalking, and other crimes by actors linked to the Chinese government, to see a greater degree of engagement by different US government agencies, and to observe more concerted efforts to understand the nature of the problem.

Yet the persistence of the visible and less visible problems make clear there is a great deal more work to do. I offer these recommendations to deter—and ideally—transnational repression.

First, Congress can help ensure that law enforcement has the necessary resources to pursue investigations and prosecutions. Seeing actual [cases](#) against Chinese government or party officials or their proxies advance through the US legal system simultaneously reassures those vulnerable to transnational repression that their concerns are understood—and also demonstrates to Beijing that impunity for such conduct is ending.

Second, this Committee and other members of Congress with a longstanding interest in human rights in China could engage in community outreach in their own districts to better understand—and explore responses to—less visible vulnerabilities to transnational repression. Some of the solutions lie in expediting asylum claims; others in translation and language capabilities for law enforcement or other social services; still others in ensuring integrity at the ballot box. In my experience, sometimes simply demonstrating an understanding and awareness of the threats is sufficient to encourage people to bring information forward, and having that experience with elected representatives could be powerful.

Third, ending transnational repression should be high on the diplomatic agenda in bilateral, multilateral, and international forums. In my view no administration in any democracy has devoted sufficient resources to challenging the Chinese government over its appalling and worsening human rights record. That in turn has given Beijing confidence it can threaten human rights in those countries and at key international institutions. US administrations should commit to making the nature and number of [crimes](#)—stalking, harassing, hacking, assaulting, and other elements of transnational repression—committed by Chinese government actors public ahead of

and during any high-level interactions. Senior US officials should also call on Chinese authorities to end their harassment of peaceful critics and their family members in China, and give a platform to courageous individuals targeted by Beijing.

Finally, we must remain focused on changing the ultimate enabling condition for transnational repression: Xi Jinping's and his allies' profound hostility towards human rights for people across China. Democracies cannot content themselves with "[responsibly managing](#)" a competition with Beijing about human rights—they must aspire to *win* it. They should devote the necessary diplomatic, financial, and political resources to holding Chinese government officials accountable for [atrocity crimes](#), to challenging Beijing's encroachments on the [international human rights system](#), and to ending the ruthless [suppression](#) of peaceful government critics inside and outside China. A failure to do so enables Xi's vision of a "common destiny for all mankind."