

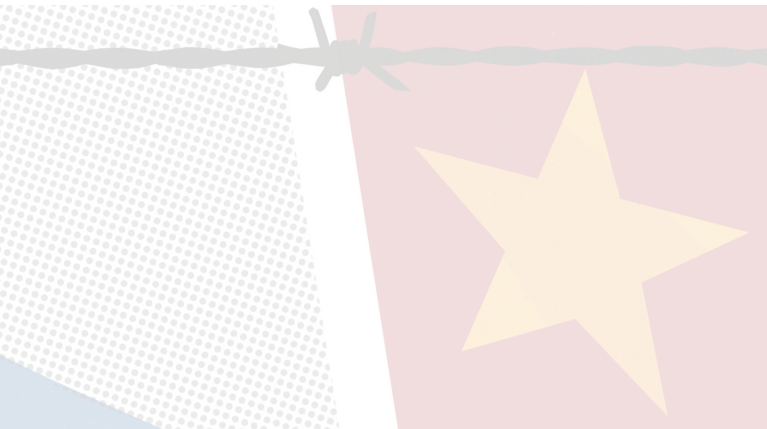


CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

2023 ANNUAL REPORT • EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION
MAY 2024



Over 400 people participate in a candlelight vigil at Tiananmen Memorial in Boston Chinatown to protest against China's zero-COVID policy and to commemorate the victims of the Urumqi tragic fire on December 2, 2022. (SOPA Images Limited/Alamy Live News)



Activists of the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) hold blank sheets of paper in New Delhi to protest against China's zero-COVID policy and in solidarity with the White Paper protests in China. December 2, 2022. (Kabir Jhangiani/ZUMA Press Wire/Alamy Stock Photo)



Illustration, North Korean Defector (Mitch Blunt)



Chinese flags next to minarets of Uyghur mosque against blue skies in Grand Bazaar of Urumchi, Xinjiang Autonomous Region, China. October 10, 2018 (karenfoleyphotography/iStock)



CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

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STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRS

This reporting year was marked by Communist Party leader Xi Jinping securing his third term as General Secretary, breaking from post-Mao “reform era” precedent, and by a continued high level of state repression, particularly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and areas of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) inhabited by Tibetans and other ethnic minority groups.

In spite of this—or perhaps because of it—the past year also saw the most public demonstrations directed at Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership since 1989’s reform protests that ended in the Tiananmen Square Massacre. As elaborated more fully in the overview below and in the chapters of the Annual Report, this combination of factors pushing toward and pulling away from the PRC’s centralizing governance system forces us to question assumptions about the durability of the repressive status quo.

Consistent with our statutory mandate to chronicle the PRC’s human rights record via our comprehensive Annual Report, maintenance of a representative political prisoner database, and critical hearings examining expert testimony, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC, or the Commission) has sought to highlight abuses by the CCP and PRC authorities on a range of subjects, including worsening persecution of religious minorities—including Muslims, Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetan Buddhists and those whose faith practices are deemed unorthodox or “evil cults” (*xiejiao*) by the Communist Party—and the use of forced labor, particularly of oppressed groups such as Uyghurs and North Koreans in the PRC.

The Commission has expanded its focus on the PRC’s transnational repression, directed primarily at diaspora communities in the United States and elsewhere, in particular targeting Hong Kongers, Uyghurs, and other political dissidents.

The Commission also exposed the increasing use of technology as a tool of repression, from ubiquitous surveillance cameras to the digital tools used to surveil and suppress online religious expression.

Reflecting a desire by policymakers to expand the range of tools available to promote accountability for human rights violations, an increasing focus of the Commission has been to address complicity by U.S. and foreign corporations with regard to CCP oppression.

The Commission questioned Thermo Fisher Scientific over use of its DNA sequencers by police in the XUAR and Tibet, as well as the National Basketball Association’s squelching of free expression of its players—including Enes Kanter Freedom—for speech that could be seen to offend the political leadership of the PRC, such as with regard to speaking out about atrocities in the XUAR or the shrinking political space in Hong Kong.

The Commission has overseen the implementation of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), perhaps the most significant China-focused legislation to have come out of Congress in recent decades. The UFLPA, by creating a rebuttable presumption that goods originating in the XUAR are tainted by forced labor, has put American businesses on notice about complicity in human rights abuse in the PRC and requires them to either clean up their supply chains or have their goods banned from importation. This is having a demonstrable impact on corporate behavior.

There is more that can be done to change how corporations view the risks of doing business in the PRC. As we look forward, this could be accomplished by linking access to capital markets to human rights records and directing the Securities and Exchange Commission to compel publicly traded corporations to disclose activities that intersect with human rights violations in the PRC such as forced labor, forced organ harvesting, or compliance with Hong Kong's National Security Law.

Finally, it is critical to note the unity of the Co-Chairs and Commissioners in viewing the leadership of the PRC as systematically and systemically seeking to redefine the rules of the post-World War II international order, including and in particular with regard to human rights norms.

Congress created the CECC in 2000. The way policymakers viewed China's trajectory then, both its domestic economic and political development and its relationship to the world, seems alien to us today. A majority in Congress thought that economic liberalization would lead to political liberalization. A minority, including the current Chair, did not accept this assumption and believed that a failure to put human rights at the forefront of engagement would enable Communist Party leaders to couple domestic repression with global economic integration.

Back then, the Commission looked at rule of law, labor rights, and other topics as areas for potential progress. By contrast, today's Commissioners monitor genocide against Uyghurs, technology-enhanced authoritarianism, and Communist Party co-optation of religion. This is the harsh reality. Commissioners remain resolved to shine a light on this reality even as the CCP tries to cover it up. The work of this Commission remains as relevant as ever.

The Commission, and the Co-Chairs, stand united in their belief that human rights are universal, to be enjoyed by all—including by the long-suffering people of China.

Sincerely,



Representative Chris Smith
Chair



Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley
Co-Chair

OVERVIEW

This reporting year, the tension between the Chinese Communist Party’s continuing efforts to tighten political control and the Chinese people’s growing frustration with such efforts was very evident, making this year one which posterity may look back upon as pivotal. Notwithstanding the apparent triumph of Xi Jinping’s consolidation of power at the 20th Party Congress in October 2022 and the vanquishing of intraparty rivals—punctuated by the very public removal of Xi’s predecessor Hu Jintao from the Congress—the Commission’s 2023 reporting year, which spans July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, was also an extraordinary year of public protest. After nearly three years of a heavy-handed, top-imposed zero-COVID policy that one writer likened to a “mass imprisonment campaign,” China saw its largest mass protests since 1989, with citizens not only speaking out against censorship and restrictions on personal liberty but also demanding political reform.

In what became the most iconic image of the reporting year, a protester on Beijing’s Sitong Bridge hung a banner calling for Xi Jinping to step down which quickly went viral, inspiring replicative protest statements in numerous cities and leading hyper-vigilant Party censors to go so far as to remove reference to Sitong Bridge from online maps. CECC Chair Representative Chris Smith and Co-Chair Senator Jeff Merkley, joined by former Chairs Senator Marco Rubio and Representative James McGovern, nominated Sitong Bridge protester **Peng Lifa**—known as “Bridge Man,” as his courage was redolent of Tiananmen Square’s “Tank Man”—for a Nobel Peace Prize.

The chairs and former chairs also nominated, among others, **Li Kangmeng**—a university student from Nanjing, said to be the first person to have held up a blank sheet of paper as a protest symbol against censorship in what became known as the White Paper protests, echoing Hong Kongers’ earlier use of blank sheets of paper to protest the enactment of the National Security Law.

Anti-COVID-lockdown protests erupted nationwide—one source recorded 77 mass protests in 39 cities throughout China from November 27 to December 8, 2022—after news that at least 10 Uyghur residents of an apartment complex in Urumqi perished in a fire due to a draconian zero-COVID lockdown that prevented their escape and rescue. Other mass protests this past year included demonstrations sparked by denial of access to bank funds in Henan province, which lasted from May to July 2022. Police squelched these protests, as captured on videos posted to social media. Additionally, retirees

in Liaoning and Hubei took part in “gray hair” protests after local governments slashed promised medical benefits.

Likewise, the reporting period was marked by labor unrest, most notably at a Foxconn facility in Zhengzhou municipality, Henan—the world’s largest assembly site for Apple iPhones—in late October and November 2022. Some workers protested management’s purported disregard for their health and safety during the October protests by escaping the fenced-in compound. During the November protests, workers smashed security cameras, which in turn led to clashes with baton-wielding security forces.

Protests such as Bridge Man’s and the White Paper protests are particularly significant because they engaged the Han majority and took place in the Han-majority heartland, but there were also attempts to pull the peripheries toward the center, which was met with consequential resistance. Most notable were efforts to erase the cultures of ethnic minorities via colonialist and assimilationist policies in Tibetan areas, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), as well as the near-total extinguishing of Hong Kong’s unique identity, promised under the “two systems” framework.

During the reporting period, PRC officials continued to narrow the scope of mother-language education in Tibetan regions, the IMAR, and the XUAR, with plans announced or underway in some areas to restrict or even eliminate instruction in languages other than Mandarin. Criticism of these policies has been widespread, including from United Nations (U.N.) treaty monitoring bodies and special rapporteurs, as well as from this Commission, whose first hearing of the 118th Congress addressed “Preserving Tibet: Combating Cultural Erasure, Forced Assimilation, and Transnational Repression.”

Xi Jinping’s visit to the XUAR in July 2022 followed the end of a five-year plan to achieve “comprehensive stability” in the XUAR—a “stability” characterized by concentration camps, forced labor, and mass indoctrination of Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities, aided and abetted by Western corporations who source material from the XUAR. U.N. experts raised concerns about reports of the ongoing use of coercive birth control measures against these groups in the XUAR, including forced abortion, sterilization, and the placement of contraceptive devices, reportedly resulting in “unusual and stark” population declines in the XUAR in recent years.

The vigorous implementation in Hong Kong of the National Security Law led to increasingly constrictive control

COMMISSION ACTIVITY

JULY 2022–NOVEMBER 2023



Hearings

- **The Dismantling of Hong Kong's Civil Society** (July 2022)
- **Control of Religion in China through Digital Authoritarianism** (September 2022)
- **China's Zero-COVID Policy and Authoritarian Public Health Control** (November 2022)
- **CECC at 20: Two Decades of Human Rights Abuse and Defense in China** (December 2022)
- **Preserving Tibet: Combating Cultural Erasure, Forced Assimilation, and Transnational Repression** (March 2023)
- **Implementation of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act and the Impact on Global Supply Chains** (April 2023)
- **One City, Two Legal Systems: Political Prisoners and the Erosion of the Rule of Law in Hong Kong** (May 2023)
- **North Korean Refugees and the Imminent Danger of Forced Repatriation from China** (June 2023)
- **Corporate Complicity: Subsidizing the PRC's Human Rights Violations** (July 2023)
- **Countering China's Global Transnational Repression Campaign** (September 2023)
- **From Bait to Plate: How Forced Labor in China Taints America's Seafood Supply Chain** (October 2023)
- **From Cobalt to Cars: How China Exploits Child and Forced Labor in the Congo** (November 2023)

over a former colonial territory whose internal autonomy had been “guaranteed” under the “one country, two systems” formula to be retained for 50 years following 1997’s retrocession. Overt protests in Hong Kong have receded in the wake of the dismantling of civil society and the heavy-handed prosecution of political and democratic opposition figures stripped of procedural rights; in the past few years, Hong Kong authorities have incarcerated political prisoners at a rate rivaling authoritarian regimes like Belarus and Burma. This transformation of Hong Kong society precipitated an outflow of talent to countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Recent harassment of family members of overseas activists and restricted access to earned pension funds have also worked against the Hong Kong government’s efforts to retain businesses and maintain confidence in the economy.

Some of the most outrageous attempts to assert centralized control occurred in the area of freedom of religion and belief. Under Xi Jinping, the Party has adopted a policy of “sinicization” of religion. During the reporting year, authorities took numerous steps to force religious teaching to conform with Party dogma or to further tighten state control over religious bodies, including:

- the flattening of domes and leveling of minarets of mosques not only in Muslim-majority communities in the XUAR, but also in Hui Muslim communities with deep roots in China;
- the installation of two Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association bishops in contravention of the 2018 Sino-Vatican accord that was renewed during the reporting year;
- restrictions upon proselytization of Tibetan Buddhism in non-Tibetan regions;
- the promulgation of Measures for the Financial Management of Venues for Religious Activities which bring religious organizations’ finances under the joint oversight of the Ministry of Finance and the National Religious Affairs Administration, severely hampering their ability to raise and disburse funds independently; and
- the increased use of digital surveillance to track religious adherents, including, in Henan province, the forced downloading of a “Smart Religion” app.

Reactions to attempts to centralize control of religion included at least one case of mass protest, in Yuxi municipality in Yunnan province, in response to the attempted

removal of “Arabic-style” domes and minarets in May 2023. Authorities deployed police in riot gear, who detained dozens of protesters, and, reportedly, a People’s Liberation Army unit. In most cases, however, responses of dissent and resistance were more individualized.

Individual prisoners of conscience, including those whose beliefs are founded on conscientious adherence to religious tenets, those who advocate for civil and political rights, and those who merely associate with a disfavored group, are catalogued in the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database (PPD), the maintenance and updating of which entails a major staff endeavor throughout the year. The PPD contains details concerning the unjust imprisonment of 10,889 prisoners of conscience—2,615 of whom were currently in detention as of June 30, 2023. The cases documented in the PPD are reflective of broad trends of government repression, though the total number of political prisoners in detention is much larger.

While active protest and direct criticism of government policies garnered the most headlines and attention, a more subtle but significant undercurrent emerged in the form of passive resistance. Unlike active street protests, where pan-opticon surveillance systems can identify ringleaders and vocal participants who then can be targeted for arrest, it is harder for authorities as well as outside observers to identify Chinese citizens engaging in the more subtle form of protest of disengaging from society out of disillusionment with the political or economic state of affairs in China.

The interplay between state tyranny and active or passive resistance is captured in one viral protest video that circulated last year before “being scrubbed from Weibo,” China’s Twitter-like medium, in which a security officer yelled at a protester that he and his descendants would be punished “for three generations!” Such a threat would have been effective not only during imperial times but also during the Maoist era, when the stain of being a member of an oppressor class like that of “landlord” was passed on generationally, but its efficacy is blunted when the response, as seen in the video, is “We are the last generation!” The disillusionment embodied by this statement can be viewed as a warning to the PRC’s ruling authorities of rising disaffection, particularly among younger generations, exacerbated by significant headwinds currently buffeting the PRC, including economic contraction.

These challenges may be compounded by significant failures of governance, demonstrated most vividly this past year by authorities’ apparent inability to grapple effectively with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Party’s over-long

COMMISSION ACTIVITY

JULY 2022–NOVEMBER 2023



Annual Report

- 2022 Annual Report (November 2022)



Commission Analysis

- Hong Kong Prosecutors Play a Key Role in Carrying Out Political Prosecutions (July 2022)
- Hong Kong’s Civil Society: From an Open City to a City of Fear (October 2022)
- One City, Two Legal Systems: Hong Kong Judges’ Role in Rights Violations under the National Security Law (May 2023)

COMMISSION ACTIVITY

JULY 2022–NOVEMBER 2023



Letters

- **Commissioners Ask President Biden to Sanction Hong Kong Prosecutors** (July 2022)
- **Chairs Seek UN Investigation on Forced Family Separations in Tibet** (November 2022)
- **Commissioners Ask Thermo Fisher if Its Products Are Involved in Human Rights Abuses in Tibet** (December 2022)
- **Bipartisan Group of Lawmakers Seeks Answers from Administration about Enforcement of Forced Labor Legislation** (April 2023)
- **Chairs Ask British Prime Minister to Take Action on Behalf of Jimmy Lai and Other Political Prisoners in Hong Kong** (June 2023)
- **Chairs Write Administration Saying Entity List Additions a “Step in the Right Direction” but Robust Enforcement of UFLPA Still Needed** (June 2023)
- **Chairs Ask Milwaukee Tool about Reported Forced Labor in Its Supply Chain** (July 2023)
- **Chairs Seek Meeting with UN High Commissioners to Avert North Korean Refugee Crisis** (August 2023)
- **Chairs Call for the Release of Ilham Tohti on the Ninth Anniversary of His Sentencing** (September 2023)
- **Chairs Say UFLPA Enforcement Must Be Prioritized** (September 2023)
- **Chairs Ask NBA and NBPA for Stance on Forced Labor and Freedom of Expression** (October 2023)
- **Chairs Seek Export Controls on Technology Used for Mass Biometric Data Collection in Tibet** (October 2023)
- **Chairs Ask Homeland Security Department to Restrict U.S. Imports of Seafood from China** (October 2023)

adherence to its zero-COVID policy, against the advice of medical and scientific experts, superseded putting in place a calibrated vaccination campaign that would have reached the most vulnerable; careful planning for the end of the policy; or coordination of broader healthcare needs. When the zero-COVID policy abruptly ended, massive infection rates and large-scale deaths ensued among a highly vulnerable population, particularly the elderly. The human toll of this governance failure reverberated in the form of over a million deaths and food, housing, and employment insecurity.

In spite of all of this, brave and determined people across China continue to push back against heavy-handed authoritarianism. White Paper protest participants demonstrated that “loose networks of professionals, friends, affinity groups, students, and others”—what one activist has called “units of resistance”—were able to connect and mobilize mass protesters.

The members of this Commission stand with those fighting for a freer future. In addition to advocating for political prisoners and shining a light on violations of universally recognized human rights, the Commissioners seek to prevent American businesses and capital markets from subsidizing tyranny, especially by holding to account corporations that are complicit in the importation of goods made with forced labor and by requiring that they cleanse their supply chains. Moreover, the Commission is concerned about reports published this past year documenting massive police surveillance programs in Tibetan areas that have collected the personal biometric data of millions of people, apparently without obtaining the consent of subjects and without any reference to a legitimate law enforcement need. These reports once again implicate an American company in the supply of instruments of repression to those seeking to crush ethnic and religious minority communities in China.

The chief legislative focus of the Commission, fully implemented during the reporting period, has been the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), landmark legislation introduced by then-Chairs McGovern and Rubio with lead co-sponsorship by current Chairs Smith and Merkley. The genius of the UFLPA is that it shifts the burden of demonstrating that goods are free from forced labor by creating a rebuttable presumption that any goods emanating from the XUAR are tainted and thus prohibited from importation.

The implementation of the UFLPA, overseen by the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force and chaired by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has impacted corporate behavior. Businesses are now on notice that they must trace their supply chains and, armed with substantial new

resources provided by Congress, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) now devotes unprecedented attention to investigating those supply chains. As a result, direct exports from the XUAR have plummeted and businesses are changing their practices to speed up production capacity elsewhere in the world, increasing the diversification and sustainability of their supply chains. A publicly accessible CBP dashboard now tracks the number of shipments subjected to CBP review and enforcement action. During the reporting period, CBP also held a two-day “tech expo” for companies to underscore the UFLPA’s requirements and CBP’s intention to vigorously implement and enforce its provisions. Further actions taken by the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force included expansion of the “Entity List” of banned Chinese companies tied to forced labor, which the Commission’s Chairs have called a “a step in the right direction,” though more needs to be done, as civil society organizations have identified thousands of companies based in China that are implicated in forced labor violations in the XUAR.

Other legislation advanced by the Commission’s leadership seeks to elevate further the nexus between human rights and commercial activity. Senators Rubio and Merkley introduced the Uyghur Genocide Accountability and Sanctions Act to enhance accountability for and assist the victims of genocide, promote the preservation of cultural and linguistic heritages repressed by the Chinese government, and improve transparency of financial flows benefiting the perpetrators of egregious human rights abuses. Chairman Smith reintroduced the China Trade Relations Act of 2023 that would relink the PRC’s Permanent Normal Trade Relations status with its human rights record, subjecting it to annual review.

And in a year that saw reports of extraterritorial Chinese police stations, also known as “service stations,” in the United States and elsewhere in the world, the Chair, Co-Chair, and two ranking members simultaneously introduced the Transnational Repression Policy Act in both the Senate and the House.

Ultimately, notwithstanding efforts by the United States to encourage the PRC to safeguard the human rights of its citizens, the future direction of China resides decidedly within the country itself, and in the contest between authorities’ efforts to assert broad societal control and the Chinese people’s efforts to have a say in their own governance. Surveying the shifting landscape of the reporting year, with its centripetal and centrifugal forces contending, efforts to consolidate control continually collided with individual aspirations for freedom. This Commission remains committed to standing with the people over the powerful.

COMMISSION ACTIVITY

JULY 2022–NOVEMBER 2023

- Letter to Costco and ADI Raises Concerns about Sale of Hikvision and Dahua Products (November 2023)



Other Commission Activity

- Unpacking the CCP’s Malign Influence Efforts in the Solomon Islands—A Conversation with Daniel Suidani (April 2023)
- “Hong Kong Summit 2023” by Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC) (July 2023)
- Taiwan International Religious Freedom Summit: Advancing the Global Challenge in Religious Freedom, Human Rights, and Democracy (September 2023)
- “China’s Destruction of Freedom in Hong Kong: What Xi Jinping’s Crackdown Means for America,” Symposium by the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation (CFHK) (October 2023)
- “Like We Were Enemies in a War: China’s Mass Internment, Torture and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang,” Senate Rotunda exhibit of illustrations by Molly Crabapple from the AI report (October 2023)
- “Transatlantic Cooperation—Crafting U.S.-EU Policy Alignment,” roundtable by All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hong Kong (APPG-HK) (October 2023)

KEY FINDINGS

Freedom of Expression

- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continued to treat news media as its mouthpiece to provide the Party's version of the news and thereby shape public opinion. Xi Jinping framed the role of media as "ideological" work in his political report during the 20th Party Congress in October 2022.
- Many journalists, other media professionals, and "citizen journalists" remained in detention, in prison, or subject to bail conditions as a result of their reporting. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) estimated that China held 114 journalists in detention, and continued to rank China the world's top jailer of journalists overall and female journalists specifically.
- Authorities continued to harass, surveil, and restrict foreign journalists and Chinese nationals working for foreign media companies. According to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC), harassment of foreign and local journalists and their sources significantly increased around the time of politically sensitive events. Of 102 survey respondents representing news organizations from 30 countries and regions, "100% said China did not meet international standards for press freedoms and reporting last year."
- Authorities continued to harass, detain, and imprison people who participated peacefully in in-person protests, demonstrations, and other gatherings, including those involved in the White Paper protests. During and after the White Paper protests, authorities took at least 30 people into custody and detained at least 100, while also interrogating many more participants about "sensitive" topics unrelated to the protests.
- Authorities censored online discussion of sensitive topics in which sources criticized or contradicted official policy or positions, including the September 2022 crash of a bus carrying people to a COVID-19 quarantine site that led to 27 deaths, information about mortgage boycotts involving tens of thousands of people and related protests, and social media posts covering a hospital fire in Beijing municipality that killed 29 in April 2023.
- The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) continued to unveil regulations diminishing freedom of expression in Chinese cyberspace, launching a "crack-down campaign" against "self media," or news created

by independent users not registered as journalists, and adding requirements to monitor and control commenters and the content of comments on all internet platforms.

- In anticipation of the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, authorities launched physical and digital campaigns of "stability maintenance and security work" and internet "purification," respectively—to suppress various sources of independent expression.
- Censors continued to suppress various forms of entertainment content that did not conform to the PRC's priorities, including books, comedy shows, and online poetry.
- State security officials continued detaining publishers and editors responsible for material considered sensitive to the Chinese government, including a high-ranking editor at a Party newspaper and a Taiwan-based publisher of books critical of the Party.
- The PRC continued to limit freedom of expression within educational and research institutions, introducing a draft law on widespread "patriotic education" and also issuing a guiding opinion that would increase ideological control over legal education.

Civil Society

- During the Commission's 2023 reporting year, PRC authorities tightened control over civil society, bolstering oversight of legal nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which the Chinese government calls "social organizations" (SOs), and widely cracking down on the activities, expression, and existence of unregistered or "illegal social organizations" (ISOs), including 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.
- The Chinese Communist Party and government have pursued and implemented regulatory efforts to "gatekeep" registration for SOs, resulting in the lowest rate of registration of SOs since 2008.
- This year, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee said that it would establish a social affairs work department that aims to improve Party-building in SOs, more firmly entrenching Party control over civil society.
- This past year, the Commission observed efforts to institutionalize an aggressive 2021 campaign that targeted

both ISOs and the financial, technological, and administrative infrastructure that enables them to function, taking actions including banning legal organizations from any contact with ISOs.

- The Chinese Communist Party and government continued to incentivize SOs to engage in charity work and service provision in key sectors. Official efforts encouraged philanthropic giving aligned with Party and government goals, using oversight of crowdfunding platforms to both direct funds and exert control over NGOs.
- As of December 8, 2022, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s China Protest Tracker recorded 77 protests across 39 Chinese cities, demonstrating that, while decentralized and ad hoc, White Paper protesters appear to have leveraged existing networks to generate a temporary but sustained nationwide pressure campaign against the PRC’s zero-COVID policy.
- In April 2023, PRC authorities sentenced China Citizens Movement organizers and rights defenders **Xu Zhiyong** and **Ding Jiayi** to 14 and 12 years in prison, respectively, for “subversion of state power,” constituting what one longtime observer of the PRC justice system described as some of the harshest sentences he had seen in over 20 years.
- Chinese government authorities continued to censor and suppress efforts by advocacy groups in the LGBTQ community. In May 2023, the Beijing LGBT Center, one of the largest organizations serving the LGBTQ community, closed, reportedly due to pressure from authorities.
- Although social acceptance of LGBTQ persons and relationships has grown in China in recent years, PRC authorities have continued to tighten control over suspected LGBTQ representation and expression in media and entertainment.

Freedom of Religion

- During the 2023 reporting year, the Commission observed ongoing violations of religious freedom by the Chinese Communist Party and government, aimed at increasing state control of believers in both registered and unregistered religious communities.
- The Party and government took steps to implement measures pertaining to religion passed over the last several years, including measures regulating finances, venues, online activity, and religious clergy.
- Authorities required religious groups affiliated with Party-controlled religious associations to participate in educational and ceremonial events surrounding the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, designed to reinforce “sinicization” among religious bodies.
- The Party and government sought to closely monitor and regulate Taoist and Buddhist groups, ensuring their adherence to the Party line and national agenda. In one instance, authorities used a controversial incident at a Buddhist temple to crack down on religious venues nationwide.
- National Religious Affairs Administration authorities launched searchable databases of approved Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Protestant, and Catholic clergy.
- PRC authorities continued to control and forcibly assimilate Hui Muslims throughout the country. According to a joint report released by two nongovernmental organizations, authorities have used counterterrorism policies instituted in Xinjiang to bar a range of Muslim practices, imposed “sinicization” to eradicate distinct ethnic and religious characteristics, and have “scattered” and relocated Hui communities under the rubric of Xi Jinping’s “poverty alleviation” campaign.
- The Chinese Communist Party and government have continued their efforts to assert control over Catholic leadership, community life, and religious practice, installing two bishops in contravention of the 2018 Sino-Vatican agreement and accelerating the integration of the church in Hong Kong with the PRC-based, state-sponsored Catholic Patriotic Association and its Party-directed ideology.
- PRC authorities continued to violate the religious freedom of Protestants, engaging in pressure campaigns against unregistered churches by detaining church leaders and targeting several influential “house” church networks, renewing their campaign against Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province’s Early Rain Covenant Church.
- Chinese authorities continued to prosecute Falun Gong practitioners under Article 300 of the PRC Criminal Law, which criminalizes “organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law.” In December 2022, Falun Gong practitioner and radio host **Pang Xun** died after authorities tortured him while in custody.
- The Party’s Anti-Cult Association updated their list of *xiejiao* (a historical term usually translated as “evil cults” or “heretical teachings”), a tool it uses to rank groups according to threat level and communicate its enforcement priorities.

Criminal Justice

- The criminal justice system in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) remained a political instrument used for maintaining social order in furtherance of the Chinese Communist Party’s authoritarian rule. The government punishes criminal acts, but it also targets individuals who pursue universal human rights, particularly when they independently organize or challenge the state’s or the [Chinese Communist] Party’s authority.
- The judiciary is unambiguously political, as the chief justice of the Supreme People’s Court called for “absolute loyalty” to the Party. Moreover, political intervention was evidenced in the case of citizen journalist **Fang Bin**, detained in 2020 in connection with his reporting on the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in Wuhan municipality, Hebei province. A leaked document indicated that the court judgment in his case was a result of a decision made by the Party Central Committee Political and Legal Affairs Commission.
- 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.
- Examples of arbitrary detention during the Commission’s 2023 reporting year include the forcible disappearance in Shanghai municipality in March 2023 of **Li Yanhe**, an editor who published books banned in China. In April, police in Beijing municipality detained human rights lawyer **Yu Wensheng** and his wife, **Xu Yan**, as they were on their way to meet the European Union’s Ambassador to China.
- Authorities likewise criminally detained participants in the White Paper protests, a series of nationwide citizen protests that took place in November 2022 in reaction to the government’s harsh COVID-19 prevention measures and censorship. Protesters, including **Cao Zhixin**, **Li Yuanjing**, **Zhai Dengrui**, and **Li Siqi**, were forcibly disappeared for several months before authorities lodged formal criminal charges against them.

Access to Justice

- In the annual work report delivered in March 2023 at the meeting of the National People’s Congress, Supreme People’s Court (SPC) President Zhou Qiang emphasized the Chinese Communist Party’s absolute leadership over the judiciary and reported having endeavored to strengthen political loyalty, protect political security, and educate court personnel about safeguarding Party General Secretary Xi Jinping’s core leadership position. Rather than promoting judicial independence, reform efforts focused on improving organizational and bureaucratic efficiency in accordance with the Party’s plans. While the work report claimed there had been improvements to judicial transparency, authorities had removed a significant number of judgments from an online judgment disclosure database, particularly in the areas of criminal cases and administrative litigation.
- Central authorities further formalized the Party’s leadership in the petitioning system as part of an institutional reform that aimed at extending the Party’s control over society as a whole. The petitioning system (*xinfang*) operates outside of the formal legal system as a channel for citizens to present their grievances in hopes of triggering discretionary involvement by Party officials in providing a resolution. Under a recently announced institutional reform plan, the government agency that oversaw petitioning was to be led by a functional department of the Party that coordinates and guides work relating to petitions and collecting citizens’ suggestions.
- Petitioners continued to face persecution in the form of arbitrary detention in extralegal facilities. Some of those detained suffered mistreatment, including physical assault and electric shock.
- The space for human rights lawyers to operate continued to shrink in the wake of a nationwide crackdown that began in July 2015. As of February 2023, at least 14 human rights lawyers were under different forms of restrictions on their personal liberty: 1 lawyer was missing, 4 were serving prison terms, and 9 were being held in pre-sentencing detention.

Governance

- The PRC moved further away from the collective governance model as Xi Jinping secured a third term as president and general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, breaking with the established norm of a two-term office designed for peaceful transition

of power. Individuals selected to fill other leadership positions had a working relationship with Xi or were described as Xi’s loyalists, further reinforcing Xi’s political dominance.

- Despite a claimed commitment to promoting democracy, the political system as envisioned by Xi Jinping is fundamentally undemocratic. When delivering his policy objectives, Xi described a political system that was identical to the existing authoritarian system and called it democratic.
- While Xi said community-level self-governance was a manifestation of democracy, it was in fact a grid management system in which communities were divided into discrete units to facilitate monitoring and surveillance. Recent national-level policy that called for the grid to be staffed by police further demonstrated the government’s intent on implementing pervasive social control.
- The PRC government’s handling of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) displayed a pattern of enforcing extreme social control at the expense of citizens’ well-being, giving rise to a series of mass protests, to which the government responded with censorship and criminal prosecution.
- Harsh COVID-19 measures disrupted people’s lives and prompted a series of large-scale protests, where some protesters called for democratic reforms. The government responded by arresting some of the protesters after the fact, particularly targeting those who were deemed to be influenced by “Western ideology” or feminism. Shortly after the protests, the government abruptly reversed the COVID-19 policy without proper transitional measures in place, resulting in many preventable deaths.

Ethnic Minority Rights

- During the Commission’s 2023 reporting year, Chinese Communist Party and government officials championed the “integration” of ethnic minorities, continuing the implementation of policies contravening the rights of Uyghurs, Tibetans, Mongols, Hui, and other ethnic minorities to maintain their own languages and cultures. The October 2022 election of Pan Yue to the Party Central Committee, following his June 2022 appointment to the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, indicated that Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s policies of assimilation and “ethnic fusion” would likely be maintained.
- In May 2023, Hui Muslims in Yunnan province protested over official plans to forcibly remove Islamic

features from a 13th-century mosque, plans that reflected authorities’ intentions to “sinicize” their community. Authorities cracked down on protesters, detaining dozens at the scene and subsequently urging others to surrender to authorities. Hui Muslims interviewed by international media expressed the belief that, following authorities’ demolition of domes and minarets of the mosques where they worshipped, authorities would begin to impose tighter restrictions on Muslims’ ability to practice their faith.

- In a case exemplifying the risks facing Mongols fleeing China to escape surveillance and persecution, on May 3, 2023, Chinese police officers detained 80-year-old Mongol historian and writer **Lhamjab Borjigin** in Mongolia and forcibly returned him to China.

Status of Women

- Authorities in the PRC have increasingly treated women’s public participation as politically sensitive. Cases of official retaliation or punishment against women who have gone public with criticism of the Chinese Communist Party and PRC government are well documented during Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s first decade in power. This past year, public security officials reportedly focused on identifying “feminists” among those detained for participating in the November 2022 anti-COVID lockdown (White Paper) protests.
- In May 2023, a U.N. expert committee reviewed China’s compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Submissions from independent nongovernmental organizations to the CEDAW Committee focused on authorities’ widespread use of gender-based violence and harassment against women political and religious prisoners in China.
- The 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2022 illustrated the underrepresentation of female Party members in the Party’s seniormost ranks, reflecting male-dominated institutional barriers to political leadership in the PRC. No women were among the 24 individuals selected to join the 20th Party Central Committee Political Bureau or its 7-member Standing Committee, China’s paramount policy and decisionmaking body led by Xi Jinping.
- China’s “huge arsenal of laws designed to combat and punish domestic violence” is failing Chinese women, including those women who have turned to the courts

for personal safety protection orders, according to a U.S.-based scholar. According to official data, judges throughout China granted 4,497 protection orders in 2022. In contrast, a domestic violence hotline app in China reportedly received 13,000 calls in August 2022 alone.

- International reports about gender-based violence in China this past year raised concerns about an official policy that coerces Uyghur women to marry Han men; the use of strip searches to humiliate women rights defenders in detention; and the use of online harassment and threats against women journalists of Chinese and Asian descent as a way to silence their reporting on China.

Population Control

- Authorities in the PRC continue to treat population growth, childbearing, and women's fertility in China as subject to official control and policymaking. In response to demographic and economic pressure, PRC authorities ended the one-child policy in 2015, replacing it with the two-child policy in 2016 and the three-child policy in 2021. In July 2022, 17 Party and government entities jointly issued a set of "guiding opinions" that aim to incentivize marriage and childbirth by improving healthcare, education, employment conditions, insurance, and other benefits.
- Enforcement of birth limits in China has been characterized by the use of harshly coercive measures in violation of international human rights standards. This past year, U.N. experts raised concerns about reports of the use of coercive birth control measures against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), including forced abortion and sterilization, and the placement of contraceptive devices, that reportedly resulted in "unusual and stark" population declines in the XUAR from 2017 through 2019.
- Among the supportive measures to boost the population suggested during the March 2023 meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference was improving the rights of unmarried parents. Although several municipalities and at least one province reportedly allow unmarried women to register the birth of children, those children are not eligible for the household registration (*hukou*) permits that are crucial for access to public services. Moreover, an unmarried woman lost a lawsuit

in July 2022 against a hospital in Beijing municipality which refused to allow her to undergo a procedure to freeze her eggs. An appeal hearing was held in May 2023, but the decision has not been announced.

- Many young people reportedly are reluctant to marry and have children due to the high cost of raising children, low incomes, and a weak social safety net. Public opinion reflected unease with the government's focus on population growth as a national responsibility for the rising generation of young adults.

Human Trafficking

- Multiple U.N. human rights bodies and experts expressed concern over the PRC's government-sponsored forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). U.N. bodies and experts expressed concern that such forced labor was systematic and policy-driven in nature and called on the PRC government to end forced labor programs in the XUAR.
- In December 2022, the U.S. Treasury Department "sanctioned two individuals, Li Zhenyu and Xinrong Zhuo, and the networks of entities they control, including Dalian Ocean Fishing Co., Ltd. and Pingtan Marine Enterprise, Ltd.," for their connection to serious human rights abuses.
- Political prisoners including **Lee Ming-cheh** and **Cheng Yuan** were forced to work while in detention. Both Lee and Cheng were convicted under broad and vaguely defined state security charges for their exercise of rights recognized under international law.
- Examples of cross-border trafficking during the Commission's 2023 reporting year included women and girls from Cambodia trafficked in China, Chinese nationals forced into international online scamming schemes in Cambodia, and Chinese nationals subjected to abusive practices in state-funded investment projects abroad.
- An international non-profit said that data involving human organs and tissues from the PRC would not be accepted for submission for its meetings or publications due to "the body of evidence that the [PRC] stands alone in continuing to systematically support the procurement of organs or tissue from executed prisoners."

Worker Rights

- The U.N. committee that reviewed China's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in February 2023 highlighted

worker rights violations in China and called on the PRC government to address unsafe working conditions; widespread discrimination against migrant workers; gender and ethnic discrimination; lack of protection for workers in the informal economy; and inadequate access to various employment-related benefits.

- Gender discrimination in the workplace in China was a focal issue this past year as PRC authorities aimed to strengthen the legal framework and guidelines on safeguarding women's rights in the workplace. Women are the primary victims of sexual harassment in the workplace in China, but access to legal relief is rare. In a case that epitomized China's emerging #MeToo movement, a former female intern at state media outlet China Central Television (CCTV) who brought a lawsuit against a male CCTV television host in 2018 for sexual harassment lost her final appeal in August 2022 based on what a court in Beijing municipality said was "not sufficient" evidence.
- China Labour Bulletin, a nongovernmental organization in Hong Kong, documented 830 strikes and other labor actions in 2022 on its Strike Map and 2,272 public requests on its Worker Assistance Helpline Map in 2022. More than 87 percent of these strikes and labor actions and nearly 90 percent of requests for assistance were related to wage arrears.
- Worker protests overlapped with frustration at the harsh and disproportionate measures imposed under China's zero-COVID policy and the economic impact of the pandemic after those measures were lifted. Protests in late October and November 2022 at Foxconn's factory campus in Zhengzhou municipality, Henan province—the largest assembly site of Apple iPhones in the world—demonstrated worker dissatisfaction with Foxconn's management of worker health and safety and deceptive recruitment promises.
- PRC authorities' suppression of worker representation and independent labor advocacy in China has left little space for workers to organize, express their grievances, or negotiate satisfactory remedies. In May 2023, a migrant workers' museum on the outskirts of Beijing municipality closed after 15 years due to its impending eviction.
- Changes to one of China's major health insurance programs led to street protests by thousands of retired workers in Guangzhou municipality, Guangdong province; Wuhan municipality, Hubei province; and Dalian municipality, Liaoning province. Authorities in Wuhan

detained **Zhang Hai** and **Tong Menglan** for expressing support for the protesters.

Public Health

- The PRC government and Chinese Communist Party's public health response to the spread of the Omicron variant of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) continued to reflect Chinese leader Xi Jinping's political priorities. The consequences were massive infection rates throughout China and the deaths of an estimated 1 million to 1.5 million people in December 2022 and January 2023 alone, following the abrupt discontinuation of the majority of the prevention and control measures associated with the zero-COVID policy on December 7, 2022. The Party's rigid adherence to the policy's implementation superseded putting in place a robust vaccination campaign, careful planning for the discontinuation of the policy itself, or coordination of the broader healthcare needs of the Chinese population.
- PRC authorities vastly underreported the number of deaths in China following the discontinuation of the zero-COVID policy. Moreover, in March 2023, the international scientific community also criticized the PRC government for not sharing data gleaned in January 2020 from the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan municipality, Hubei province.
- Numerous public protests against zero-COVID policy restrictions took place from October 2022 through January 2023. Observers pointed to anger and frustration with the PRC authorities' pandemic measures as catalyzing the participation of "a broad range of contentious constituencies" in these protests.
- Official media messaging about the impact of the pandemic in China swerved between claims of China's historic success in saving lives and disinformation that blamed "hostile powers" for developments that did not support uplifting propaganda. The Party also condemned "Western media" for undermining the official narrative of its "important contributions to the global fight against the pandemic . . ."
- The PRC Mental Health Law reached its tenth year of implementation in May 2023, but key provisions—including the prohibition on the abuse of forcible psychiatric commitment and supporting the use of the principle of voluntary hospitalization—have not yet been achieved. Authorities' use of forcible psychiatric commitment continued to be a tool of political repression.

- Individual and organized public health advocacy continues in China, but the personal and professional risks of organized public health advocacy that authorities deem politically sensitive or even threatening are evident in ongoing or new detentions this past year, including **Cheng Yuan**, co-founder of the advocacy organization Changsha Funeng; **He Fangmei** and **Li Xin**, advocates for the victims of defective vaccines; and **Ji Xiaolong**, who criticized senior officials in Shanghai municipality for the lengthy lockdown there in spring 2022.

The Environment and Climate Change

- While China’s leaders pledged to prioritize efforts to protect the environment and to realize their carbon emissions targets, observers raised doubts about the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) ability to achieve senior officials’ climate goals. According to scholars, the PRC government views a leadership role in international environmental governance as one route to achieving global leadership. PRC officials have used their “ecological civilization” framework—under which they seek to “selectively . . . achieve [their] environmental goals”—to strengthen authoritarian governance.
- In 2022, the PRC government approved the highest number of new coal-powered energy plants in seven years, increasing the country’s coal power capacity by more than 50 percent from the previous year. According to international observers, China’s substantial increase in coal plant construction threatened global climate efforts. China’s high levels of air pollutants contributed to negative health effects, including stillbirths and premature death.
- China remained the world’s leading emitter of CO₂, with emissions rising four percent to reach a record high in the first quarter of 2023. China also remained the world’s leading emitter of methane, which is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. China has not signed the Global Methane Pledge to cut methane emissions 30 percent by 2030.
- China experienced many extreme weather events this past year, including a heatwave, drought, heavy rainfall and floods, and sandstorms, that experts linked to climate change.
- China’s distant water fishing fleet was reportedly involved in illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing practices that threaten ocean ecosystems and wildlife populations, as well as economic livelihoods.
- Although PRC authorities continued to suppress civil society on a range of issues that authorities deem politically sensitive, environmental nongovernmental organizations have remained viable platforms for education and advocacy. Nevertheless, environmental advocacy in China has narrowed as organizations strategically focus their work within the bounds of government policy narratives or pursue collaboration with local governments.
- In January 2023, the Supreme People’s Court issued ten guiding cases for environmental public interest litigation (PIL). The procuratorate has a key role in prosecuting environmental PIL cases, which requires navigating between local government resistance to environmental protection standards and holding agencies environmentally accountable. Scholars have observed that the procuratorate’s “reliance on top-down political support may ultimately hinder [PIL’s] expansion and stability.”

Business and Human Rights

- Chinese and international businesses are at risk of complicity in—and of profiting from—the Chinese Communist Party and government’s use of forced labor to suppress ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Reports of state-sponsored forced labor implicate supply chains of industries and products including automobile manufacturing, red dates, and cotton and the garment industry.
- Investigations found that Chinese fast fashion direct-to-consumer retailers Shein and Temu are linked to the XUAR and have exploited the US\$800 de minimis threshold, which allows vendors to send shipments below that value without having to report basic data.
- A May 2023 report detailed how the U.S. Federal Government’s employee retirement plan, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), included options to invest in Chinese companies that are on watchlists or are sanctioned by the U.S. Government for their ties to forced labor in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) or surveillance efforts in the XUAR.
- Chinese and international companies were reported to be supporting the Chinese government’s data collection, surveillance, and censorship. Some examples include:
 - China-based video surveillance manufacturer Uniview developed Uyghur recognition technology and co-authored ethnicity and skin color tracking policy standards;

- Bresee, Uniview’s sister company, provided artificial intelligence support relating to ethnicity tracking and facial recognition;
- U.S.-sanctioned Dahua and Hikvision and New Jersey-based video surveillance manufacturer Infinova developed various “alarms” to help police identify and detect potential political protests;
- Apple removed full AirDrop functionality in China by setting a 10-minute limit for the file-sharing feature;
- Thermo Fisher Scientific sold DNA equipment to police in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), where Human Rights Watch identified mass involuntary DNA collection programs; and
- HSBC and PayPal HK targeted the League of Social Democrats, one of the last pro-democracy parties in Hong Kong, with forced closures of their accounts.
- Leading up to the PRC Counterespionage Law’s July 1, 2023, effective date, the Commission observed reports of Chinese authorities targeting global firms including U.S.-headquartered corporation Mintz Group and U.S. consulting firm Bain & Company.
- Abusive practices toward workers were found in Chinese factories of third-party printing inkjet and toner cartridge manufacturers.

North Korean Refugees in China

- Heightened security along the China-North Korea border due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the Chinese government’s pervasive surveillance technology, increased the risk of being caught by Chinese police and has significantly reduced the defection rate of North Korean refugees. As a result of the closed border, many North Korean workers are stranded in China and are living in dire conditions without any income, leaving them vulnerable to human trafficking. With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, defection attempts and detentions rose, as authorities have intensified their measures to capture and subsequently repatriate North Korean refugees.
- According to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), as of June 30, 2023, an estimated 2,000 North Korean refugees were awaiting repatriation in China. Additionally, experts point out that the cost of defection, which involves paying intermediaries or “brokers” to arrange an escape, has greatly increased due to the risks associated with defecting from North Korea.
- Repatriated North Koreans remain vulnerable to torture, imprisonment, forced labor, and execution. According to the Citizens’ Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, a nongovernmental organization advocating for human rights in North Korea, Chinese companies and the DPRK government likely derive financial benefits from forcibly repatriating refugees to North Korea, where they are allegedly subjected to forced labor in detention facilities operated by the DPRK government. This forced labor reportedly involves the production of goods for Chinese businesses at considerably reduced costs.

Technology-Enhanced Authoritarianism

- In contravention of its signed and ratified commitment to the International Convention to End All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the PRC has continued to facilitate the development and use of domestic standards and surveillance technologies that employ racial profiling and thus encouraged discrimination on the basis of ethnicity.
- The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council jointly released the “Plan for the Overall Layout of Building a Digital China,” which prioritizes the digitalization of governance in China, interconnectedness and efficiency across China’s digital infrastructure, and expansive control of data using next-generation technologies.
- International observers reported that PRC authorities have increased investments in next-generation data-intensive technologies, such as “smart city” projects and police geographic information systems designed to better surveil and control society.
- This past year, Party and government agencies released regulations concerning generative artificial intelligence (AI) to ensure that AI-generated content puts the PRC in a positive light, downplays criticism, and excludes content that authorities deem to be a threat to social stability.
- PRC authorities carried out digital surveillance and censorship to suppress the White Paper protests that took place throughout China in late November 2022 in opposition to harsh zero-COVID measures. Leaked directives revealed Chinese authorities initiated the highest “emergency response” level to restrict protesters’ access to virtual private networks (VPNs) and instructional materials for accessing foreign news and social media apps.

- During the reporting year, a report documented PRC authorities using advanced technology and ethnic minority online “influencers” to present a rosy picture of life in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 1,741 videos spread out among 18 YouTube accounts with 2,000 to 205,000 followers, as part of a larger effort to deny the PRC’s ongoing genocide in the region.
- Authorities implemented technological upgrades to the PRC’s censorship mechanisms, together known as the Great Firewall, during the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Information emerged this past year about blogger **Ruan Xiaohuan**, an information security expert who provided online guidance to circumvent the Great Firewall, and who was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment for “inciting subversion of state power.”

Tibet

- The Commission did not observe any interest from People’s Republic of China (PRC) officials in resuming formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama’s representatives, the last round of which, the ninth, was held in January 2010.
- The PRC continued to restrict, and seek to control, the religious practices of Tibetans, the majority of whom practice Tibetan Buddhism. Authorities in Tibetan areas issued prohibitions on forms of religious worship, particularly during important religious events or around the times of politically sensitive anniversaries, and restricted access to religious institutions and places of worship, including Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and temples. The PRC continued to assert control over the process of selection and recognition of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnated teachers, including the Dalai Lama.
- The Commission did not observe reports of Tibetan self-immolations that occurred during the 2023 reporting year, the first year since 2021 in which no self-immolations were reported to have occurred. Chinese authorities reportedly continued to harass family members of Tibetans who had self-immolated in the past.
- International observers expressed concern over reports in recent years of PRC policies aimed at severely restricting the domains of usage of Tibetan and other local languages, including school closures, reduction in school instruction in languages other than Standard Mandarin,

and a network of colonial boarding schools that house a majority of Tibetan school-age children.

- Reports published this year documented police-run programs in the Tibet Autonomous Region and Qinghai province in which officials have collected sensitive biometric information from millions of Tibetans and other local residents in recent years. The DNA, blood sample, and iris scan collection programs reportedly are employed as forms of social control, surveillance, and repression of the residents of Tibet.
- In contravention of international human rights standards, officials punished residents of Tibetan areas for exercising protected rights, including the expression of religious belief, criticism of PRC policies, and sharing information online. Notable cases this past year included those of writer **Rongbo Gangkar**, a writer and translator detained since 2021 after he led a discussion at a meeting in which he advocated celebration of the Dalai Lama’s birthday; **Thubsam**, accused of sending “information about Tibet” to individuals in Europe and India, and later sentenced to two years in prison for “leaking state secrets” and “separatism”; and **Jamyang**, also known as Zangkar Jamyang, a writer detained in June 2020 and held incommunicado until information emerged in March 2023 on his four-year sentence related to his advocacy for Tibetan language rights in schools.

Xinjiang

- Research published this past year indicated that Turkic and Muslim individuals formerly detained in mass internment camps continued to serve long prison terms. Official figures on prosecutions in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) released in February 2022 and analyzed by Human Rights Watch showed that more than half a million people had been sentenced and imprisoned in the region since 2017, when authorities began carrying out the mass detention, in both prisons and mass internment camps, of Turkic Muslims.
- On August 31, 2022, minutes before the end of her tenure, then-U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet issued a long-awaited report on human rights in the XUAR, determining that Chinese authorities had committed a wide range of serious human rights violations as part of counterterrorism and counter-extremism strategies. In particular, the report found that the “arbitrary and discriminatory detention” of Uyghurs

and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in the XUAR may constitute crimes against humanity.

- During this reporting year, authorities in the XUAR maintained a system of forced labor that involved former mass internment camp detainees and other Turkic and Muslim individuals. Officials continued two distinct types of forced labor—one involving current and former mass internment camp detainees, and the other, referred to as “poverty alleviation through labor transfer” (*tuopin zhuanyi jiuye*), involving people who usually have not been detained, often referred to as “surplus labor.”
- Zero-COVID measures and discriminatory policies toward Uyghurs reportedly caused or contributed to deaths and injuries during a fire that took place on November 24, 2022, at a high-rise apartment building in Urumqi municipality, XUAR. Immediately following the incident, authorities suppressed information about the fire, which they viewed as a national security issue, including by holding Uyghur survivors for questioning at a local hotel and confiscating their phones, and by detaining neighbors and acquaintances of victims who posted about the fire on social media.
- A report published in November 2022 by the Uyghur Human Rights Project provided evidence showing that Chinese Communist Party and government authorities had incentivized and likely forced marriages between Han Chinese and Uyghur and other Turkic individuals in the XUAR since at least 2014. The report outlined how authorities promoted the assimilation of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities through interethnic marriages against a backdrop of government and Party birth restriction policies and policies to encourage Han Chinese in-migration and the movement of ethnic minority laborers out of the XUAR.
- Reports published this past year indicated that XUAR officials continued to arbitrarily detain and hold in detention ethnic Kazakhs, members of an ethnic group numbering around 1.5 million in the region. Kazakhstan-based relatives of many ethnic Kazakhs who have been detained in the XUAR since 2017 have campaigned publicly for their release.

Hong Kong and Macau

- Two United Nations committees reviewed Hong Kong’s compliance with its human rights obligations, finding that the Hong Kong government had “de facto abolished the independence of the judiciary” through the National

Security Law (NSL), and calling for the repeal of the NSL and sedition provisions under the Crimes Ordinance. In particular, the Human Rights Committee noted several areas of concern, including—the potential for the transfer of defendants to mainland China; the excessive and unchecked power of the chief executive and the police regarding enforcement measures; and the lack of legal certainty concerning the definition of “national security” and grounds for extraterritorial application.

- In May 2023, Chief Executive John Lee proposed a bill that would change the composition of District Councils, which are community-level bodies that advise the government on matters affecting residents in each district. Although District Councils have limited influence in policymaking, they serve as the last institution through which residents can directly choose their representatives. Under the reform plan, the number of directly elected seats would be significantly reduced, and all candidates would be subject to a vetting process designed to exclude candidates considered to be disloyal to the government.
- Hong Kong authorities continued to prosecute individuals for violating the National Security Law, under which basic procedural rights, such as trial by jury and presumption of innocence, are disregarded. Hong Kong extended the restrictions on procedural rights to crimes that the government deems to involve national security, augmenting authorities’ ability to punish people for peacefully exercising their universally recognized rights. Hong Kong authorities also applied the law extraterritorially, charging people with criminal offenses for actions committed outside of Hong Kong, creating a chilling effect that had a global reach.
- The prison system augmented the enforcement of the “deradicalization program” that is designed to treat political prisoners as extremists and to instill in them a sense of hopelessness and fear, deterring them from future political activism. The program uses tactics including mandatory propaganda movie-watching, confession sessions, and corporal punishment, all of which escalated drastically this past year, according to one former detainee.
- After the prosecution unsuccessfully tried to prevent a foreign lawyer from representing pro-democracy entrepreneur **Jimmy Lai** in a criminal case, John Lee sought an intervention from the National People’s Congress Standing Committee, which issued an interpretation affirming the chief executive’s power to certify whether

a foreign lawyer should be admitted in a particular case. While the interpretation did not create a blanket ban on foreign lawyers, some analysts were concerned that the interpretation had the broader effect of allowing the chief executive to “bypass unwelcome court decisions” and giving them unchecked power “to rule by decree” over a broad range of issues.

Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally

- The PRC continued a multi-faceted campaign of transnational repression against critics, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, and others to stifle criticism and enhance control over emigrant and diaspora communities. After engaging in China-related protests abroad, some individuals experienced reprisal from Chinese authorities, intimidation or harassment from unidentified individuals, or self-censorship due to fear of reprisal. Authorities in the United States reported criminal charges against or arrested several groups and individuals involved in such PRC-led transnational repression plots.
- Prompted by reporting from the international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Safeguard Defenders this past year, governments, international media, and NGOs investigated extraterritorial Chinese police stations, also known as “service stations,” around the globe with reported connections to Chinese law enforcement authorities. Reporting also detailed some of the “service stations” activities, including persuading alleged criminal suspects to return to China.
- The Commission observed reports that the PRC is targeting foreign politicians to influence them to support the Chinese Communist Party. This past year, former Solomon Islands Premier Daniel Suidani claimed he was ousted from his post due to PRC political influence operations, while Canadian intelligence officials announced they had evidence of PRC influence operations targeting Canadian policymakers Michael Chong, Jenny Kwan, and Erin O’Toole.
- Chinese-owned companies and banks responsible for foreign development projects continued allowing abusive conditions for workers abroad. This past year, multiple reports detailed forced labor conditions for workers in Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and non-BRI Chinese projects abroad, including physical and sexual violence, withholding of wages, and debt bondage.
- Chinese authorities continued to attempt to influence U.N. processes, including efforts to prevent the publication of the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights’ report on human rights violations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and Chinese Communist Party- and government-affiliated NGOs monopolizing time dedicated to civil society organizations during the review of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in May 2023.



Commissioners listen to witness testimony at the October 24, 2023, hearing entitled “From Bait to Plate—How Forced Labor in China Taints America’s Seafood Supply Chain.”



“The Tibetan people’s call for dialogue with the People’s Republic of China is an urgent cry for self-determination, to protect Tibet’s unique culture, religion, and linguistic and environmental heritage,” Richard Gere, Chair of the International Campaign for Tibet, said in testimony at the CECC’s March 28, 2023, hearing on “Preserving Tibet: Combating Cultural Erasure, Forced Assimilation, and Transnational Repression.”



Anna Kwok, Executive Director of Hong Kong Democracy Council, testified at the May 11, 2023, hearing on “One City, Two Legal Systems: Political Prisoners and the Erosion of the Rule of Law in Hong Kong.”



Rushan Abbas, Founder and Executive Director of Campaign for Uyghurs, holds a picture of her sister during her testimony at the September 12, 2023, hearing on “Countering China’s Global Transnational Repression Campaign.”



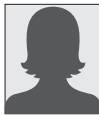
POLITICAL PRISONER CASES OF CONCERN

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 2023 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 encouraged to advocate for these individuals in meetings with Chinese Communist Party and government 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, 2023)		
 <p>Ruan Xiaohuan 2023-00101</p> <p>Date of Detention May 10, 2021</p>	<p>Place of Detention Yangpu District Public Security Bureau (PSB) Detention Center, Shanghai municipality</p> <p>Charge(s) Inciting subversion of state power</p> <p>Status Sentenced to seven years</p>	<p>Context Ruan was detained in connection with writings posted to his blog and on his Twitter account, under the handle “Program-think.” For over 10 years, Ruan anonymously provided guidance on his blog for circumventing government internet censorship, and wrote political analysis critical</p>	<p>of Chinese authorities, including coverage of the 1989 Tiananmen protests. On a separate website, he also documented high-ranking officials’ hidden wealth.</p> <p>Additional Information Ruan was reportedly the chief information security engineer for the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.</p>
 <p>Peng Lifa (Peng Zaizhou) 2022-00176</p> <p>Date of Detention October 13, 2022</p>	<p>Place of Detention Unknown location believed to be in Beijing municipality</p> <p>Charge(s) Unknown</p> <p>Status Detained</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
 <p>Tonyee Chow Hang-tung 2021-00514</p> <p>Date of Detention June 4, 2021</p>	<p>Place of Detention Tai Lam Centre for Women, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR)</p> <p>Charge(s) Inciting others to join an unauthorized assembly; inciting subversion of state power; failure to comply with notice to provide information</p> <p>Status Detained</p> <p>Context On June 4, 2021, Hong Kong police arrested Tonyee Chow Hang-tung, alleging that she had incited others to join a candlelight vigil commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen</p>	<p>protests, which police had declined to authorize on public health grounds. Police released her on bail but arrested her again on June 30, accusing her of inciting others to join an unauthorized assembly on July 1, the anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover. Chow was a rights lawyer and vice chair of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Hong Kong Alliance that organized June 4th vigils annually. In September, police arrested Chow and several other Hong Kong Alliance members for failing to surrender documents relating to the organization’s operations, additionally charging her with “inciting subversion of state power”</p>	<p>under the National Security Law (NSL). Chow has been sentenced to a total of 22 months in prison for two charges relating to unauthorized assembly. In December 2022, the Hong Kong High Court overturned a 15-month sentence related to the unauthorized assembly. The charges brought under the NSL remained pending as of June 2023.</p> <p>Additional Information In May 2023, the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention held that Chow’s detention was arbitrary, and called on Hong Kong authorities to release her.</p>


Name			
PPD Record No.	Case Summary (as of June 30, 2023)		
 <p>Jimmy Lai Chee-ying 2020-00323</p> <p>Date of Detention August 10, 2020</p>	<p>Place of Detention Stanley Prison, Hong Kong SAR</p> <p>Charge(s) Collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security; conspiracy to defraud</p> <p>Status Detained</p> <p>Context On August 10, 2020, Hong Kong police took Jimmy Lai Chee-ying into custody on suspicion of</p>	<p>“collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security” under the National Security Law (NSL) and “conspiracy to defraud.” Lai is the founder of the now-defunct Apple Daily, which media sources have described as a pro-democracy publication. On the same day he was taken into custody, police also detained nine other individuals, including Lai’s two sons and other democracy advocates and newspaper executives. Police did not</p>	<p>disclose the specific facts underlying the NSL charge, and did not explain why the fraud charge, which was based on an alleged breach of a commercial lease, rose to the level of a criminal offense. Observers have said the arrests were authorities’ efforts to suppress the free press and to intimidate pro-democracy advocates. Lai was formally charged under the NSL on December 11. He was briefly released on bail but has remained in detention since December 2020.</p>
 <p>Lhamjab Borjigin 2019-00105</p> <p>Date of Detention May 3, 2023</p>	<p>Place of Detention Xilingol (Xilinguole) League, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR)</p> <p>Charge(s) Unknown</p> <p>Status Detained</p>	<p>Context PRC authorities reportedly seized Lhamjab Borjigin, an 80-year-old ethnic Mongol historian and writer, in Mongolia, where he had fled to in March 2023. He was forcibly returned to his home in the IMAR, but detailed information on his detention, including if authorities criminally detained or subjected him to other coercive measures, was unavailable.</p>	<p>Additional Information Authorities previously detained Lhamjab Borjigin in 2018, reportedly because of his self-published Mongolian-language history of the Cultural Revolution. In August 2019, a Xilingol court sentenced him to one year in prison, suspended for two years, on charges related to “separatism.”</p>
 <p>Li Yuhan 2017-00361</p> <p>Date of Detention October 9, 2017</p>	<p>Place of Detention Shenyang Municipal No. 1 PSB Detention Center, Liaoning province</p> <p>Charge(s) Picking quarrels and provoking trouble, fraud</p> <p>Status Tried, awaiting sentencing</p> <p>Context A lawyer, Li previously represented rights lawyer Wang Yu,</p>	<p>whom authorities detained in a crackdown on human rights legal professionals that began in mid-2015. Authorities held Li in extended pre-trial detention from 2017 until her trial before the Heping District People’s Court in Shenyang on October 20, 2021.</p> <p>Additional Information Li suffers from various health conditions including heart disease, hypertension, and hyperthyroidism.</p>	<p>Staff at the detention center reportedly urinated on her food, denied her hot water for showering, denied her medical treatment, and threatened that they would beat her to death. In March 2018, Li went on a hunger strike to protest mistreatment, which prompted detention center officials to force-feed her. Detention center officials blocked her lawyer from meeting her, citing the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>

Name PPD Record No.	Case Summary (as of June 30, 2023)		
 <p>He Fangmei 2019-00185</p> <p>Date of Detention October 9, 2020</p>	<p>Place of Detention Xinxiang Municipal PSB Detention Center, Henan province</p> <p>Charge(s) Bigamy; picking quarrels and provoking trouble</p> <p>Status Tried, awaiting sentencing</p> <p>Context He Fangmei, also known by her online handle “Sister Thirteen,” began her public health advocacy</p>	<p>after her daughter became disabled due to a defective vaccine. She was detained by officials in Huixian county, Xinxiang, who allegedly prevented her from taking her daughter to receive medical care. She and her husband Li Xin were accused of “bigamy” and “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”; Li was sentenced to 5 years in prison. He, who was seven months pregnant when detained, gave birth to a third child in custody. The couple’s</p>	<p>disabled daughter is unable to obtain adequate medical care or to attend school, while their son was reportedly placed with a local resident who previously surveilled He.</p> <p>Additional Information Authorities previously detained He in 2019 for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” after she was petitioning in Beijing. A Henan province court tried her, but in January 2020 authorities withdrew the charge for lack of sufficient evidence.</p>
 <p>Rahile Dawut 2018-00552</p> <p>Date of Detention December 2017</p>	<p>Place of Detention Unknown location in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)</p> <p>Charge(s) Unknown</p> <p>Status Sentenced to prison term of unknown length</p>	<p>Context Uyghur ethnographer Rahile Dawut disappeared in December 2017 and was believed to have been held in a mass internment camp. In July 2021, sources confirmed that she had been sentenced to prison, possibly in December 2020, on unknown charges. Friends and other observers suggested authorities may</p>	<p>have detained her due to her efforts to preserve Uyghur culture and heritage, or her foreign connections. She formerly taught at Xinjiang University and is well regarded for her scholarly research on traditional Uyghur culture.</p> <p>Additional Information At least one of Dawut’s graduate students also reportedly disappeared.</p>
 <p>Niu Xiaona 2023-00113</p> <p>Date of Detention April 19, 2021</p>	<p>Place of Detention Ha’erbin municipality, Heilongjiang province</p> <p>Charge(s) Organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law</p> <p>Status Sentenced to 15 years</p> <p>Context Authorities in Ha’erbin detained Niu and her elderly mother Tuo Wenxia</p>	<p>in connection with their practice of Falun Gong. Police separately released Tuo and Niu on bail, but in March 2022 took Niu back into custody. Niu is disabled due to rheumatoid arthritis, which causes her chronic pain and severe mobility problems. In September 2022, a railway court in Ha’erbin sentenced her to 15 years in prison, citing a 14-year sentence handed down to Niu in 2004, which she served outside</p>	<p>prison due to her disability; the court wrote that Niu had not provided official records of her having served the sentence.</p> <p>Additional Information The Dui Hua Foundation described Niu’s 15-year sentence as “one of the longest prison sentences known to have been given to Falun Gong practitioners convicted of the sole offense of Article 300 [of the PRC Criminal Law].”</p>

Name	Case Summary (as of June 30, 2023)	
PPD Record No.		

 <p>Ding Jiayi 2013-00307</p> <p>Date of Detention December 26, 2019</p>	<p>Place of Detention Linshu County PSB Detention Center, Linyi municipality, Shandong province</p> <p>Charge(s) Subversion of state power</p> <p>Status Sentenced to 12 years</p> <p>Context Ding Jiayi is a disbarred lawyer and rights advocate involved in the China Citizens Movement (formerly known as the New Citizens' Movement). His December 2019 detention is linked to other rights advocates detained the same month following a gather-</p>	<p>ing at which participants discussed Chinese politics and civil society. Police from Yantai municipality, Shandong, placed Ding under "residential surveillance at a designated location" (RSDL) before Linyi police arrested him in June 2020 for "inciting subversion of state power," a charge later changed to the more serious "subversion of state power." Ding and Xu Zhiyong have alleged that officials tortured them in custody, including by restraining them in "tiger chairs" during prolonged interrogations. In June 2022, the Linshu County People's Court held</p>	<p>closed trials for Xu and Ding; in April 2023, the court sentenced Xu to 14 years in prison and Ding to 12 years. Both appealed their sentences.</p> <p>Additional Information Ding served a prison sentence from 2013 to 2016 due to his anti-corruption and government transparency advocacy. Authorities sentenced him to three years and six months in prison for "gathering a crowd to disrupt public order" in connection with planned demonstrations calling on officials to disclose their wealth.</p>
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 <p>Xu Zhiyong 2005-00199</p> <p>Date of Detention February 15, 2020</p>	<p>Place of Detention Linshu County PSB Detention Center, Linyi municipality, Shandong province</p> <p>Charge(s) Subversion of state power</p> <p>Status Sentenced to 14 years in prison</p> <p>Context Xu Zhiyong is a prominent legal advocate and one of the initiators of the China Citizens Movement (previously known as the New Citizens' Movement). His detention is connected to the December 2019 gathering that also led to</p>	<p>Ding Jiayi's detention. Xu evaded a police search for 50 days prior to his detention, during which time he publicly urged Xi Jinping to leave office over the government's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak. Prior to Xu's arrest in June 2020, authorities held him under RSDL in Beijing municipality. Xu and Ding Jiayi have alleged that officials tortured them in custody, including by restraining them in "tiger chairs" during prolonged interrogations. In June 2022, the Linshu County People's Court held closed trials for Xu and Ding; in April 2023, the court sentenced Xu to 14 years in prison</p>	<p>and Ding to 12 years. Both appealed their sentences.</p> <p>Additional Information On February 16, 2020, Beijing police detained Li Qiaochu, a women's and labor rights advocate and Xu's partner; on June 18, authorities released her on bail and subsequently arrested her in March 2021. Xu served four years in prison from 2013 to 2017 for his rights advocacy work. In November 2020, the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found Xu's detention to be arbitrary and in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</p>
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 <p>Qurban Mamut 2019-00191</p> <p>Date of Detention Unknown date in late 2017</p>	<p>Place of Detention Unknown location in the XUAR</p> <p>Charge(s) Unknown</p> <p>Status Sentenced to 15 years</p>	<p>Context XUAR authorities detained Qurban Mamut, the retired editor-in-chief of the Xinjiang Cultural Journal, in or around late 2017, possibly in connection with his work as editor. He was initially held in a mass internment camp, but further information on his detention was</p>	<p>unavailable. In April 2022, authorities confirmed that he was serving a 15-year prison sentence "for political crimes," but did not say which court sentenced him, when, or on what specific charges. His whereabouts are unknown.</p>
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Name PPD Record No.	Case Summary (as of June 30, 2023)		
 <p>Yang Rongli 2009-00428</p> <p>Date of Detention August 7, 2021</p>	<p>Place of Detention Yaodu District PSB Detention Center, Linfen municipality, Shanxi province</p> <p>Charge(s) Fraud</p> <p>Status Formally arrested and indicted, awaiting trial</p>	<p>Context Yang and her husband Wang Xiaoguang, both pastors at Linfen's unregistered Golden Lampstand Church, were among approximately a dozen church leaders and members detained in a lengthy campaign targeting the church and its members over their refusal to join the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement.</p>	<p>Additional Information Yang was previously sentenced to seven years in prison, served from 2009 to 2016, after she and other Shanxi church leaders went to Beijing municipality to petition about an attack against a house church. In 2018, local authorities forcibly demolished Golden Lampstand Church's building.</p>
 <p>Zhou Deyong 2021-00516</p> <p>Date of Detention April 23, 2021</p>	<p>Place of Detention Binhai District PSB Detention Center, Dongying municipality, Shandong province</p> <p>Charge(s) Organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law</p> <p>Status Sentenced to eight years</p>	<p>Context Dongying police detained Zhou Deyong, an oilfield engineer, at his home and seized Falun Gong materials reportedly belonging to his wife, a Falun Gong practitioner who lives in the United States. A Dongying court sentenced him in April 2023 to eight years in prison.</p>	<p>His detention may be connected with a crackdown on Falun Gong in Dongying begun in November 2020.</p> <p>Additional Information U.S. officials, including Florida Rep. Gus Bilirakis and Sen. Marco Rubio, have advocated on his behalf and called for his release.</p>
 <p>(Gangkye) Drubpa Kyab 2012-00092</p> <p>Date of Detention March 23, 2021</p>	<p>Place of Detention Unknown location in Sichuan province</p> <p>Charge(s) Unknown; possibly inciting separatism</p> <p>Status Sentenced to 14 years</p> <p>Context Drubpa Kyab, or Gangkye Drubpa Kyab, was one of six Tibetan</p>	<p>intellectuals detained in Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, between late 2020 and early 2021. They were sentenced on March 23, 2021, to prison terms ranging from 4 years to 14 years, but other details on their cases were largely unavailable. The exact charges against Gangkye Drubpa Kyab and his whereabouts in custody were unknown.</p>	<p>Additional Information Gangkye Drubpa Kyab was previously sentenced to five years and six months in prison for alleged membership in an anti-Communist organization. Following his 2016 early release, authorities detained and tortured him after he publicly displayed an image of the Dalai Lama.</p>
 <p>Rongbo Gangkar 2023-00002</p> <p>Date of Detention Unknown date in early 2021</p>	<p>Place of Detention Unknown location believed to be in Rebgong (Tongren) county, Malho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province</p> <p>Charge(s) Unknown</p>	<p>Status Detained</p> <p>Context A Tibetan writer and translator, Rongbo Gangkar was detained in early 2021 near Rebgong's Rongbo Gonchen Monastery. Information on his case was limited until 2022, when reports emerged</p>	<p>that his detention was connected with a public meeting, possibly in Rebgong, at which he advocated celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday. Further details on his detention, including his precise whereabouts, the charges against him, if any, and his condition in custody, were unavailable.</p>

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION

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

Robust Enforcement of Forced Labor Restrictions

The Administration should fully implement the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (Public Law No. 117-78, UFLPA), including by regularly expanding the “Entity List” of companies found to be complicit in forced labor and greater integration of innovative technologies to assist enforcement of the UFLPA. Congress should provide robust appropriations in support of enforcement, consider legislation to reduce the *de minimis* level for duty-free shipment so that PRC-based companies cannot circumvent the import restrictions required by the law, and explore whether existing customs transparency laws provide sufficient transparency for air, land, and rail cargo. In addition, the Administration should:

- Employ existing funds for new technologies to assist in UFLPA enforcement, particularly “pilot projects” such as geospatial search and rescue; unmanned maritime vessels; remote sensing; mesh networking; satellite communications; and DNA traceability tools to assist in UFLPA enforcement;
- Focus UFLPA enforcement on fast fashion and online retail companies such as Temu and SHEIN and others using the existing \$800 duty-free threshold to import goods made with forced labor including by considering placing a “Withhold Release Order” on Temu and SHEIN, blocking all imports until they can demonstrate the ability to ensure clean supply chains for the goods they sell online;
- Expand the list of priority enforcement sectors regularly—to auto parts, aluminum, rayon, electronic goods, and fishing industry, for example—to ensure that no company profits from atrocities; and
- Encourage foreign governments and legislatures to adopt their own national legislation or regulations modeled on the UFLPA and create opportunities for Members of Congress to engage with parliamentary counterparts globally on forced labor, sanctions, and atrocity accountability.

Prioritize Atrocity Crime Accountability

Congress should pass the bipartisan Uyghur Genocide Accountability and Sanctions Act (S. 1770) and the Uyghur Policy Act (H.R. 2766) to target both government officials and companies assisting with policies of forced sterilization and mass surveillance in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), and appropriate sufficient funds to keep expanding the broadcasts and programming of the Uyghur Service of Radio Free Asia. The Administration should fund programs to document and preserve evidence of genocide and crimes against humanity committed in the XUAR and more robustly use existing sanctions authorities found in the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act (Public Law No. 116-145) to hold PRC officials accountable for atrocity crimes, particularly those identified by the “Xinjiang Police Files.” In addition, the Administration should:

- More aggressively employ available sanctions to target PRC officials and entities responsible for policies of forced sterilization and forced abortions of Uyghur women and forced separation of children from their families;
- Coordinate with allies and partners to press for the formation of a U.N. Commission of Inquiry for the XUAR or the appointment of a U.N. special rapporteur to address the PRC’s atrocities;
- Request an open debate or an Arria-formula briefing at the U.N. Security Council on the situation in the XUAR;
- Ensure that export controls are up to date and prohibit U.S. companies from assisting Chinese companies engaged in digital or biometric surveillance that aids in the commission of atrocity crimes in the XUAR; and
- Seek additional funding for personnel for the various sanctions offices at the Department of the Treasury and the Department of State, to more efficiently gather information and vet suspected perpetrators’ eligibility for sanctions.

Support the People of Hong Kong

The Administration should employ more robustly the sanctions authorities found in the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act (Public Law No. 116-76) and the Hong Kong Autonomy Act (Public Law No. 116-149) including those for financial institutions and target specifically prosecutors, judges, and other individuals complicit in the dismantling of Hong Kong’s autonomy and rights protections.

Congress should pass the Hong Kong Judicial Sanctions Act (S. 3177 / H.R. 6153), which requires a review of all sanctions with possible application in those areas. In addition:

- The Administration should coordinate sanctions and messaging about political prisoners in Hong Kong with the United Kingdom and other like-minded nations to amplify the impact of diplomatic efforts;
- The Administration should expand media accelerator and investigative journalism projects to preserve the flow of independent news and information from Hong Kong and create academic residency programs for Hong Kong journalists and executives whose news and media outlets were shuttered due to abuse or threats under the National Security Law;
- The Administration should remove barriers for Hong Kong residents to receive U.S. visas, including by extending Priority 2 refugee status to those attempting to exit Hong Kong for fear of political persecution, and publish a plan to address the long-term status and treatment of Hong Kong citizens in the United States;
- Congress should permanently extend the prohibition on sales of police equipment and crowd control technology to the Hong Kong police; and
- Congress should pass the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Certification Act (S. 490 / H.R. 1103) to consider removal of the diplomatic privileges given to Hong Kong's three offices in the United States.

Assist Victims of Persecution

Congress and the Administration should work to accelerate processing times for current refugee and asylum cases and ensure that the expansion of the annual cap on refugees admitted to the United States is used to increase protection and resettlement of those fleeing PRC persecution, prioritizing steps to:

- Ensure that sufficient funding and authorities are available for psychological and medical support for victims of genocide and crimes against humanity, particularly in countries of first asylum, through programs authorized by the Torture Victims Protection Act (Public Law No. 102-256);
- Engage with countries with significant populations of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities fleeing persecution in China and with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to stop forced deportations to the People's Republic of China;
- Recognize as persons of special humanitarian concern those Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim

ethnic minorities living outside the United States and who experienced egregious human rights abuses in the XUAR, so they are eligible for Priority 2 processing for refugee resettlement by the United States; and

- Prohibit the use of INTERPOL notices on their own to deny immigration or asylum benefits, particularly when the notice comes from a country with whom the United States does not have an extradition agreement.

End Transnational Repression

Congress should pass the Transnational Repression Policy Act (S. 831 / H.R. 3654) to provide resources and additional authorities to U.S. law enforcement agencies to constrain the PRC's ability to commit acts of transnational repression, increase accountability for perpetrators of such acts, and to better protect those at risk of intimidation and harassment, including by:

- Imposing targeted sanctions on perpetrators and enablers of acts of transnational repression;
- Making additional U.S. law enforcement resources and information readily available to U.S. residents experiencing intimidation and surveillance;
- Creating proactive law enforcement outreach efforts to diaspora communities and accessible, safe, and secure portals to report coercion or intimidation;
- Training State Department and law enforcement personnel to recognize and combat transnational repression; and
- Creating a "whole-of-government" strategy to address transnational repression and better coordinate law enforcement and diplomatic actions.

Create Global Resiliency to Economic Coercion

The Administration and Congress should work together to create a strategy for reducing the use of trade restrictions or other economic coercion to advance the PRC's interests that includes:

- Creation of an interagency group within the U.S. Government to counter economic coercion through identification of vulnerable industries and sectors of the U.S. economy, coordination of anti-coercion relief tools across the U.S. Government and with allies and partners, and creation of robust public diplomacy messaging to build support and resiliency among targeted partners;
- Identification of trade barriers that need to be revised either to impose retaliatory tariffs on Chinese imports as part of joint action with allies and partners or to buy products targeted by the PRC through economic coercion;

- Deployment of expert economic response teams to assist countries facing economic coercion or challenges related to worker rights violations, environmental protections, debt restructuring, and other human rights concerns created as a result of Belt and Road Initiative projects; and
- Advancing the Group of Seven (G7) leaders' statement on economic coercion, including coordinated action with allies at the World Trade Organization or other international institutions to challenge boycotts and trade restrictions that undermine the integrity of the rules-based global economic order.

Expand Responses to Digital Authoritarianism

The Administration should work with like-minded allies to develop clearer multilateral frameworks and norms for the use of AI-driven biometric surveillance and high-standard internet governance principles that support freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms. In addition, the Administration and Congress should work together to:

- Ensure that the “China Censorship Monitor and Action Group” (22 U.S.C. 3363) is implemented and integrated fully into the interagency process and has sufficient resources to address the impacts of censorship and intimidation of American citizens and legal residents and be a critical part of a whole-of-government response to digital authoritarianism;
- Utilize the Digital Ecosystem Fund at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership at the State Department to enable affirmative alternatives to the PRC's digital infrastructure through targeted investments, capacity building, and access to private-sector expertise;
- Develop an export control regime for critical and emerging technologies that includes a strong consideration of human rights abuses;
- Require companies exporting dual-use technologies to report on the human rights impacts of their products;
- Expand resources for the Open Technology Fund and other internet freedom entities within the U.S. Agency for Global Media to distribute proven and effective anti-censorship tools globally, provide media literacy to help users circumvent China's “Great Firewall,” and provide digital security training for civil society advocates and journalists to help identify and counter foreign government propaganda efforts;

- Create a set of standards that tests all foreign digital platforms, such as WeChat, for their potential to conduct espionage while operating in the United States and signal to foreign governments and actors that utilizing digital authoritarian tools against U.S. residents or companies will incur a significant cost, including but not limited to U.S. sanctions; and
- Amend the Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernization Act (Title XVII, Public Law No. 115-232) to trigger a Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) review of any foreign company seeking to acquire U.S. assets controlling or collecting biometric information of Americans and coordinate such screening processes with allies.

Confront the Challenge of Malign Influence Operations

The Administration should end operations of all PRC security agencies in the United States, including Ministry of Public Security and subordinate branches, to prevent surveillance and intimidation of diaspora communities and intelligence gathering activities. To further address the challenge of PRC malign influence operations in the United States and globally, the Administration and Congress should work together to:

- Use the “Countering Chinese Influence Fund” to build the capacity of independent investigative journalists and civil society organizations in countries with Belt and Road Initiative projects to expose corruption; malign influence tactics; and environmental, social, and governance risks;
- Ensure that the recommendations produced by the Foreign Malign Influence Center (FMIC) within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence are implemented and shared widely with allies and partners;
- Expand the “Protected Voices” initiative at the Federal Bureau of Investigation to provide resources for U.S. residents to protect themselves from PRC propaganda, intimidation, and cyber-attacks;
- Develop a multi-stakeholder action plan with universities, foundations, think tanks, film production companies, publishers, nongovernmental organizations, and state and local governments so that their interactions with foreign governments or entities uphold standards of academic freedom, corporate ethics, and human rights;
- Require U.S. educational institutions, think tanks, and other nongovernmental organizations to publicly report all foreign gifts, grants, contracts, and in-kind

contributions that exceed \$50,000 as part of their annual tax filings to maintain non-profit status;

- Expand Mandarin-language training in U.S. schools and colleges by creating and funding the Liu Xiaobo Fund for the Study of Chinese Language;
- Update and expand the requirements of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) to cover individuals and other entities lobbying on behalf of foreign governments, entities, or organizations working on educational or scientific pursuits to restrict acquisition of technologies banned under U.S. export controls, and ban lobbying on behalf of entities affiliated with the People's Liberation Army, the Ministry of State Security, or others complicit in egregious human rights abuses; and
- Support educational and cultural exchange programs, including restoration of the Fulbright exchange program in China and Hong Kong and preservation of the scholarship and exchange programs for Tibetans, as a valuable resource and to maintain positive influence channels with the Chinese people.

Form Global Coalition to Advance Human Rights Diplomacy

The Administration should issue a policy directive to require that human rights, the rule of law, and democratic governance goals are embedded in the critical mission strategies of all U.S. Government entities interacting with the PRC and to create action toolkits to share with like-minded allies that include coordinated messaging, sanctions, political prisoner advocacy, atrocity prevention, import restrictions to address forced labor, infrastructure and development models that respect human rights, and programing initiatives that address the rights violations that affect the largest number of China's citizens. In addition, the Administration should empower senior officials from the State Department and the National Security Council to coordinate regional bureaus and directorates to mainstream human rights diplomacy on China within the Administration and with key allies and partners. In addition, Congress should replace the now closed Open Source Fund with a new federal entity that will translate and maintain collections of important open-source Chinese-language materials from the PRC and provide access to all government-sponsored research projects.

Protect North Korean Refugees

Congress should pass the North Korea Human Rights Reauthorization Act (S. 584 / H.R. 3012) and the Administration should coordinate with the South Korean

government on public messaging and other initiatives to protect North Korean refugees facing severe human rights abuses and forced deportation by the PRC, including through briefings at the U.N. Security Council while South Korea is a member of the Security Council, establishing multilateral "first asylum" arrangements for North Korean asylum seekers, and gaining access to North Koreans in China for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and humanitarian organizations.

Strengthen International Organizations

The Administration should work with allies and partners to ensure that the governance structures of entities like the International Telecommunication Union, the International Labour Organization, INTERPOL, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the World Health Organization (WHO) meet the highest standards of transparency, accountability, and reform; uphold universal human rights; and address pressing transnational challenges.

Preserve Threatened Cultures and Languages

Congress and the Administration should respond to threats to the cultural and linguistic heritages of repressed groups in the PRC through the development of assistance programs, both in the United States and around the world, to preserve threatened cultures and languages. The Administration should expand grant programs to assist Uyghur, Mongol, and other ethnic and religious minorities in cultural and linguistic preservation efforts and leverage the tools available in the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (Public Law No. 116-260, 134 Stat. 3119) to help sustain the religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of the people of Tibet. The Administration should prioritize—and Congress should fund—research, exhibitions, and education related to these efforts.

Condition Access to U.S. Capital Markets

Congress should strengthen disclosure and auditing requirements for any listed Chinese companies in U.S. capital markets to ensure that American retirement and investment dollars do not fund companies with links to the PRC's security apparatus, genocide, or other malevolent behavior that undermines U.S. interests and work with the Administration to:

- Require issuers of securities to disclose to the Securities and Exchange Commission whether they have business activities with entities in the XUAR identified as complicit in the use of forced labor or other gross violations of human rights or have any transactions with

companies placed on the Treasury Department's Non-SDN Chinese Military-Industrial Complex Companies List (NS-CMIC List) and the Commerce Department's Entity List and Unverified List.

Stop Organ Harvesting

Congress should pass the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act (H.R. 1154 / S. 761) to impose sanctions and other penalties for anyone involved in human trafficking for the purpose of organ removal and expand annual reporting by the State Department on the practice in China and worldwide. The Administration should organize allies and partners at the U.N. Human Rights Council to support the concerns raised by the PRC's "organ harvesting" practices by U.N. human rights experts and seek independent oversight of the PRC organ transplantation system.

Create a Special Advisor for Political Prisoners

The Administration should consider creating the position of Special Advisor for Political Prisoners within the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to develop and coordinate diplomatic strategies to

gain the release of political and religious prisoners; end the PRC's unacceptable use of "exit bans"; and to serve as a resource to former political prisoners living in the United States seeking guidance on their travels abroad and medical and psychological care.

Advocate for Political Prisoners

The State Department should develop lists with information about political prisoners, and Members of Congress and Administration officials, at the highest levels and at every opportunity, should raise specific political prisoner cases in meetings with PRC officials. Experience demonstrates that consistently raising individual prisoner cases and the larger human rights issues they represent can result in improved treatment in detention, lighter sentences or, in some cases, release from custody, detention, or imprisonment. Members of Congress are encouraged to consult the Commission's Political Prisoner Database for reliable information on cases of political and religious detention in China and in Hong Kong, and to advocate for individual prisoners through the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's "Defending Freedoms Project."

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