III. Respect for Civil Liberties

Freedom of Expression

Findings

• This reporting year, the PRC continued to restrict online and in-person expression, censoring various forms of artistic, literary, historical, and entertainment content, in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and China's Constitution.

• Freedom House's 2024 Freedom in the World report scored China 0 out of 4 for "free and independent media," and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked China 172 out of 180 countries and territories in its *World Press Freedom Index*.

• The Chinese Communist Party continued to use Chinese news media as its mouthpiece to provide the Party's version of the news, signal and amplify policy priorities, and shape public opinion. Journalists at Party and state-run news outlets faced increased political pressure and censorship this past year to adhere to the Party line.

• Party efforts to control news media also continued to reach beyond China's borders. One program that expanded this past year was that of international communication centers (ICCs)—local and regional media groups within China acting as centers for external-facing propaganda.

• Authorities continued to harass, surveil, and restrict foreign journalists. The annual survey of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China in 2024 revealed that foreign reporters face significant obstacles in China.

• This past year, many journalists, other media professionals, and "citizen journalists"—non-professionals who publish independently to circumvent official restrictions—remained in detention, prison, or subject to bail conditions as a result of their reporting. RSF again ranked China "the world's largest prison for journalists," as nearly a quarter of all journalists detained worldwide are in Chinese jails. Currently detained or imprisoned journalists include **Huang Xueqin, Yang Zewei,** and **Shangguan Yunkai.**

• This past year, Freedom House ranked China the "world's worst abuser of internet freedom" for the ninth year in a row. The PRC's Ministry of Public Security declared 2024 a "year of special operations against online rumors," targeting influencers and content creators who "stage photos maliciously or fabricate rumors" about politically sensitive issues.

• Government agencies implemented new regulations and pressured internet companies to tighten restrictions on online expression, including mandating "real name" registration for popular users.

• Authorities continued to harass, detain, and imprison people who participated peacefully in protests, demonstrations, and other gatherings, including demonstrations against opaque han-

dling of school deaths and the demolition of Tibetan villages and monasteries.

• The PRC intensified its efforts to exert control over educational and research institutions, impeding the free exchange of information and hindering international academic collaboration.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of the Press

Party Control of the Media

During the Commission's 2024 reporting year, international observers continued to report harsh conditions for press freedom in China. Freedom House's 2024 Freedom in the World report scored China 0 out of 4 for "free and independent media,"[1] and Reporters Without Borders ranked China 172 out of 180 countries and territories in its World Press Freedom Index.[2] These conditions continue to violate Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)[3]—which China has signed but not ratified,[4] Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),[5] and Article 35 of China's Constitution.[6]

The Chinese Communist Party (Party) continued to leverage Chinese news media as a mouthpiece to amplify policy priorities and shape public opinion.[7] The Party reinforced its media control by promoting "Xi Jinping Thought on Culture," which was introduced at the October 2023 National Conference on Propaganda, Ideology and Culture.[8] One expert cautioned that Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's thoughts on culture should be understood as "leveraging culture to legitimize a one-party authoritarian dictatorship under an emerging cult of personality," rather than a tilt toward a "cultural renaissance."[9] In November 2023, the award ceremony for the annual China Journalism Awards exemplified this ideological adherence, honoring media outlets for "positive propaganda" reflecting "Xi Jinping Thought on Culture."[10] Awardees included a *China Central Television* (CCTV) documentary on China's "great achievements" in human rights, a *People's Daily* article condemning former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's 2022 visit to Taiwan, and a *Xinhua* piece praising Xi Jinping's accomplishments.[11] In July 2023, in order to increase Chinese journalists' understanding of the Party's press doctrine, the All-China Journalists Association (ACJA) released a new app[12] which was similar to the 2019 propaganda app "Study Xi, Strong Nation" that facilitated the study of Xi Jinping's precepts.[13]

Journalists at Party and state-run news outlets faced challenges from political pressure and censorship this past year. In March 2024, local security personnel obstructed and manhandled journalists from CCTV and China Media Group during a video broadcast at a fatal gas explosion site in Yanjiao township, Sanhe city, Langfang municipality, Hebei province.[14] The incident triggered online criticism and commentary about press freedom in China, especially since the reporters worked for Party outlets.[15] The Party-affiliated ACJA released a rare statement supporting press freedom, prompting Sanhe city officials to publicly apologize.[16] A February 2024 *Wire China* article based on interviews with current and former employees of *Sixth Tone*—a state-run English-language outlet known for covering sensitive social issues—revealed intensified censorship under *Sixth Tone*'s new management that includes requirements for editors to comply more strictly with Party guidelines and a directive to publish "at least one positive story a week."[17]

CONTROL OVER CHINA'S IMAGE ABROAD

Party efforts to control news media also continued to reach beyond China's borders.[18] One program that expanded this past year was that of international communication centers (*guoji chuanbo zhongxin*, 国际传播中心 or ICCs)—provincial and local media groups within China acting as centers for external-facing propaganda.[19] In June 2024, the China Media Project reported that 23 provincial-level ICCs had been established.[20] Several ICCs, such as the Yunnan International Communication Center for South and Southeast Asia, focus on targeting specific geographical regions, though all are tasked with strengthening the Party's "voice in the international arena."[21] Other efforts to "tell China's story well"[22] abroad expanded as well, including in Africa.[23] In October 2023, the China Media Group announced the launch of the China-Africa Media Action Initiative, which has gained the support of at least 50 African media organizations, and is aimed at developing content covering China's Belt and Road Initiative.[24] Such efforts appear to garner desired effects for the Party, as seen in research published this year revealing that a similar media partnership between CCTV and Brazilian outlet *BandNews TV* has helped the PRC "gain agency to reshape [China's] image and counter hegemonic narratives."[25] [For more information on Chinese foreign media influence efforts, see Chapter 20—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally.]

Detention and Imprisonment of Journalists

This past year, many journalists, other media professionals, and "citizen journalists"[26]—non-professionals who publish independently to circumvent official restrictions—remained in detention, prison, or subject to bail conditions as a result of their reporting. Reporters Without Borders again ranked China "the world's largest prison for journalists," as nearly a quarter of all journalists detained worldwide are in Chinese jails.[27] Examples include:

- **Sophia Huang Xueqin.** In June 2024, the Guangzhou Intermediate People's Court sentenced #MeToo journalist **Huang Xueqin** to five years' imprisonment and four years' deprivation of political rights for "inciting subversion of state power."[28] Public security officials in Guangdong province detained Huang in September 2021 in connection with her reporting on pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong and sexual harassment of women journalists.[29]
- **Yang Zewei.** In June 2023, Chinese and Laotian authorities detained free-speech activist and reporter **Yang Zewei,** also known as Qiao Xinxin, at his exile home in Vientiane, Laos.[30] Yang disappeared from public view until resurfacing in August 2023 in a detention center in Hengyang municipality, Hunan province, facing charges of "subversion of state power."[31] A former *Radio Free Asia* reporter, Yang founded Ban the Great Firewall (BanGFW) to circumvent internet censorship.[32] Yang's detention underscores China's increasing cross-border policing efforts.[33] [For more information on the PRC's long-arm law enforcement operations, see Chapter 20—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally.]

• **Shangguan Yunkai.** On January 5, 2024, a district court in Ezhou district, Hubei province sentenced renowned anti-corruption investigative journalist **Shangguan Yunkai** to 15 years imprisonment.[34] Charges included "selling counterfeit medicine," "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," "fraud," "false imprisonment," and "bigamy."[35] Shangguan exposed official corruption, leading to investigations of hundreds of local officials and members of criminal organizations.[36] This track record has prompted widespread speculation that Shangguan's detention and sentencing constitute political retaliation.[37]

Formerly detained journalists faced severe harassment from authorities even after being released, including one fatality, in the case of **Sun Lin.** In November 2023, state security officials in Nanjing municipality, Jiangsu province, raided freelance journalist **Sun Lin**'s apartment and beat him to death, days after he re-posted videos of anti-Xi Jinping protests at the November 2023 APEC Summit in San Francisco.[38] Authorities also held advocate **Zou Wei** in detention for nine days for publicly demanding more information about Sun's death.[39] They warned Sun's family members and supporters to "keep quiet or face persecution."[40]

CONDITIONS FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS

This past year, authorities continued to harass, surveil, and restrict foreign journalists. The annual survey of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) in 2024 revealed that foreign reporters face conditions in China that "rarely or never [meet] international reporting standards."[41] Also in this year's survey, a majority of respondents were unwilling to be quoted out of concern for potential retaliation—a recent development indicative of the shrinking space for press freedom in China.[42] The FCCC noted a 6 percent increase in trips and interviews canceled due to official interference, compared to 2022.[43] Such trends can be seen in reported examples this year, including that of a correspondent and a cameraman from the Dutch public broadcaster *Nederlandse Omroep Stichting* being harassed, beaten, and obstructed by local officials while covering a demonstration outside a bank in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province.[44]

In-Person Protest and Assembly

Authorities continued to harass, detain, and imprison people who participated peacefully in protests, demonstrations, and other gatherings, violating Articles 19, 20, and 21 of the ICCPR.[45] While the number of protests remains unclear, Freedom House documented over 1,600 "dissent events" between July and December 2023.[46] Throughout the past year, protesters demonstrated in response to a variety of issues, such as China's economy, unpaid wages, retirement pay, religious persecution, waste management, and more.[47] Examples include:

• **School deaths.** In December 2023, the death of Yang Liuyang, a 14-year-old student at Yuhuayuan Senior High School in Ningling county, Shangqiu municipality, Henan province, sparked widespread protest.[48] The school initially reported an

"accident" as the cause of death, but Yang's family discovered signs of torture on his body.[49] The school withheld video footage, and the local government further claimed the incident was a suicide.[50] The opaque handling of this case fueled public anger, prompting over 10,000 people to gather within three days.[51] Officials attempted to quell the unrest by blocking highways, detaining participants, ordering locals to stay away from the school, and cutting internet access to the county.[52]

- **Tibetan dam.** Residents of Derge (Dege) county, Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province, gathered beginning in mid-February 2024 to protest a government dam project in the region that would destroy six Buddhist monasteries and force the relocation of two villages.[53] Authorities shut down the protests using water cannons, pepper spray, and tasers[54] and detained more than 1,000 Tibetan monks and other ethnic Tibetans.[55] A month after the demonstrations, police continued to check social media accounts for evidence of past involvement in the protests or communications about them as grounds for detention.[56] [For more information on Tibetans and the Gangtuo dam, see Chapter 17—Tibet.]
- **Halloween.** During Halloween 2023 in Shanghai, several individuals donned costumes criticizing recent policies,[57] costumes including COVID-19 quarantine enforcers, unemployed college graduates, a surveillance camera, and Winnie the Pooh.[58] Police detained or began inviting individuals "to tea"[59] weeks after the event.[60] The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) later ordered China's major social media platforms to censor such costume content for violating "the core values of socialism."[61] **Rei Xia,** one of the individuals at the celebration, was detained for 28 days for wearing blank sheets of paper clipped to her clothes referencing the 2022 White Paper protests.[62] She was previously detained for 37 days for exposing the mistreatment of female protesters in Shanghai during the White Paper protests.[63]

PRC Control over the Internet

This past year, Freedom House ranked China "the world's worst abuser of internet freedom" for the ninth year in a row."[64] The PRC's Ministry of Public Security declared 2024 a "year of special operations against online rumors"[65] and reportedly targeted influencers and content creators who "stage[d] photos maliciously or fabricate[d] rumors" about politically sensitive issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic or natural disasters.[66] According to an April 2024 article published by the *South China Morning Post*, authorities detained over 1,500 individuals, penalized about 10,700 people, and "debunked" more than 4,200 rumors.[67] In January 2024, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) reported the details of its 2023 national internet cleanup campaign, claiming it had eliminated 259 mobile applications, shut down 14,624 websites, and instructed service providers to close 127,878 accounts.[68] Local police intensified spot checks of citizens' phones this year for apps circumventing the Great Firewall.[69] Sources reported being forced to download an "anti-fraud" app that continuously tracks the user's activities.[70] [For

more information on the PRC's regulatory controls over the internet, see Chapter 16—Technology-Enhanced Authoritarianism.]

Government agencies implemented new regulations and pressured internet companies to tighten restrictions on online expression. Examples include:

- **"Hurt Feelings" ban.** An August 2023 amendment proposal to the Public Security Administration Punishment Law aims to punish Chinese citizens for "hurting the feelings of the Chinese people."[71] The vaguely worded law bans "items or remarks that contain sentiments . . . detrimental to the spirit of the Chinese nation," potentially criminalizing actions ranging from wearing clothes deemed offensive to the Party to online complaints.[72] Legal experts worry that this ambiguity grants authorities unchecked enforcement power.[73] The amendment states that violators could face fines of up to 5,000 yuan (US$680) or 15 days in jail.[74] The online community criticized the amendment's arbitrary nature,[75] submitting over 110,000 suggestions on the National People's Congress (NPC) website in the first two weeks alone[76]—an unusually high number of responses.[77]
- **Self-Media regulations.** The CAC intensified its efforts to restrict "self-media" in July 2023 by requiring all social media platforms and websites to strengthen self-media management.[78] Wei-feng Tzeng, assistant professor at the Graduate Institute of China Studies at Tamkang University in Taiwan, suggested that these regulations stem from officials' worry about potential public unrest following increased self-media activity during recent accidents and disasters.[79] In April 2024, the CAC launched another two-month campaign targeting five categories, including "self-directed fakery," "no-holds-barred hyping of social hot points," "use of generalizations to set the topic," "generating of personas that go against public order and morals," and "indiscriminate dissemination of 'new yellow journalism.'"[80]
- **Social media "real names."** Likely prompted by the CAC's "self-media" requirements, in October 2023, social media platform Weibo implemented new regulations requiring that most popular users display their real identities, including name, gender, IP location, and professional and educational background.[81] Initially targeting users with over one million followers, Weibo expanded the policy to those with more than 500,000 followers.[82] Other prominent Chinese social media platforms, such as WeChat, Douyin, Zhihu, Xiaohongshu, and Kuaishou, adopted similar requirements after Weibo, mandating public disclosure of legal names for top users.[83]

CENSORSHIP

This past year, authorities and social media platforms censored online discussions and public expression related to topics that generated criticism or contradicted official policy or positions. Examples include:

- **Li Keqiang.** Following former Premier Li Keqiang's sudden death in October 2023, authorities intensified censorship in order to restrain online discussion and public grief.[84] Li, often viewed as having been "sidelined" by Xi Jinping,[85] had symbol-

ized support for reform policies.[86] His passing sparked expressions of frustration toward the government and especially Xi's handling of the economy.[87] Weibo censored sensitive posts that included Li's name, his famous phrases, and a love song used as a coded criticism of Xi.[88] Authorities monitored and restricted public gatherings,[89] rushed mourners in Beijing municipality and Hefei municipality, Anhui province,[90] and removed tributes in other cities.[91] Police stopped several artists commemorating Li's death in Shanghai.[92] Authorities at some universities also warned university students against organizing commemorations, fearing potential protests.[93] This crackdown highlighted the politically sensitive nature of leaders' deaths in China.[94]

• **"Two Sessions."** Censorship intensified before and during China's annual meetings of the legislative body, the NPC, and the advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) ("Two Sessions") in March 2024,[95] continuing a trend seen during major political events.[96] Astrill, a popular virtual private network service for foreigners, reported significant disruptions to its services in the days leading up to the Two Sessions,[97] while Chinese search platforms blocked "sensitive" terms and discussions about representation and Xi Jinping.[98] PRC authorities also canceled the traditional Premier's press conference held at the end of the Two Sessions,[99] which eliminated a rare opportunity for the media to directly engage with China's second-in-command.[100] Censors removed news reports and comments discussing this cancellation and its implications, further tightening control over public discourse.[101]

• **Economic commentary.** This past year, the PRC cracked down on economic commentary.[102] One expert noted that this wave of censorship particularly targeted "sensitive" topics such as income inequality, youth unemployment, and poverty among elders.[103] In December 2023, a week after Party leaders announced a renewed effort to "strengthen public opinion guidance on economic affairs," Weibo warned users against posting negative content about the economy[104] and censored prominent economic commentators' analyses.[105] [For more information on censorship of discussions about the Chinese economy, see Chapter 14—Business and Human Rights.]

• **Taiwan's election.** Chinese social media platforms suppressed discussion of Taiwan's January 2024 general election.[106] Weibo blocked the hashtag "#TaiwanElection" after it reached number 11 on Weibo's "hot list."[107] One observer also noted that a number of online comments praising Taiwan's electoral process were censored.[108] When the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson criticized the election results on Weibo, online commentators mocked China's own political system in response, prompting a shutdown of the comments section.[109]

• **Emergency reporting.** PRC officials often censor public outrage following fatal disasters.[110] In one example this past year, a deadly fire at a rural Henan province elementary boarding school killed 13 boys, sparking online criticism of safety measures and censorship.[111] As the online community mourned the students and expressed frustration at the government and

media's silence, censors removed the fire-related hashtag from Weibo's "hot topic" list and deleted online discussions about the incident.[112]

• **"Teacher Li."** The PRC's censorship apparatus reaches beyond China's borders, as evidenced by this year's targeting of Li Ying (pseudonym Teacher Li) and his followers. Based in Italy, Li gained fame in 2022 for sharing censored news, including White Paper protest footage on X.[113] In February 2024, Li reported that authorities questioned at least 200 people in three months for following him on social media.[114] Li warned his 1.6 million followers to unfollow him because Chinese police were reportedly combing through his followers to interrogate them about their internet usage.[115] Li lost 200,000 followers within days.[116] Other Chinese advocates on X and YouTube also lost followers, likely due to fear of government harassment.[117] [For more information on the transnational repression of Chinese advocates and the PRC's repression of free speech abroad, see Chapter 20—Human Rights Violations in the U.S. and Globally.]

Entertainment, History, and Literature

This past year, Chinese authorities continued to censor, suppress, and detain people for various forms of literary, historical, and entertainment content that did not conform to the Chinese Communist Party line. The following examples illustrate the government's efforts to enforce multimedia censorship:

• **Chongzhen Emperor book.** In October 2023, the distributors of a reprint of the historical biography *The Chongzhen Emperor: Diligent Ruler of a Failed Dynasty* announced it was being recalled due to an unspecified "printing problem,"[118] and the hashtag #Chongzhen was censored on Weibo.[119] Some speculated the recall was due to the title and cover design which read, "The diligent ruler of a failed dynasty, Chongzhen's repeated mistakes were the result of his own ineptitude," which could be interpreted as a criticism of Xi Jinping.[120]

• **Sci-Fi awards.** In February 2024, a report revealed that several authors critical of the PRC government were excluded from the Hugo Awards finalist reviews in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province, despite receiving enough nominations to be included for consideration.[121] Documents show the administrators flagged politically sensitive content to "determine if it was safe to put it on the ballot," later claiming that they tried to adhere to PRC law.[122] *Babel* by R. F. Kuang, an episode of the Netflix drama *The Sandman*, and author Xiran Jay Zhao were among those excluded and marked as "not eligible."[123] These exclusions raised concerns about censorship and self-censorship for international awards in science fiction and fantasy writing.[124]

• **Migrant worker documentary.** In January 2024, NetEase News released a documentary highlighting the harsh living conditions of migrant workers in China titled *Working Like This for 30 Years*."[125] Within one day of its publication, the documentary disappeared from the internet, and the social media platform Weibo removed discussions and a hashtag relating to it.[126]

• **Uyghur filmmaker.** Uyghur filmmaker **Ikram Nurmehmet** appeared in October 2023 at the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court facing accusations of "separatism" and "terrorism," though his friends and family allege that his time studying abroad in Türkiye and frequent portrayal of Uyghurs in his work are the underlying causes.[127] Being denied family visits and legal counsel of his choice, Ikram Nurmehmet testified at trial that he had never joined any terrorist group and that he was tortured and forced to incriminate himself.[128] Authorities barred Ikram Nurmehmet's family from seeing him from his May detention to his October court appearance.[129] [For more information on the PRC's persecution of Uyghurs, see Chapter 18—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]

35th Anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Protests

On the 35th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen protests, Chinese authorities intensified censorship efforts in mainland China and Hong Kong. PRC internet censors routinely scrubbed references to the anniversary throughout the reporting year.[130] In April 2024, authorities sentenced 1989 student leader **Xu Guang** to four years in prison for demanding acknowledgment of the violent suppression of the Tiananmen protests and holding a sign at a local police station demanding redress two years earlier.[131] Xu reportedly suffered torture and other forms of mistreatment while detained.[132] In an effort to prevent any commemorations on the anniversary of the violent suppression of the protests this reporting year, authorities in Beijing municipality deployed checkpoints and increased security leading up to June Fourth.[133] In Hong Kong, police arrested seven people in May 2024, including already-detained **Chow Hang-tung,** for "exploit[ing] an upcoming sensitive date," in connection with Facebook posts commemorating June Fourth.[134] [For more information on the erosion of freedom in Hong Kong, see Chapter 19—Hong Kong.]

Globally, activists organized assemblies and vigils to commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen protests' anniversary.[135] At a June 2024 hearing held by the Commission, witnesses spoke about the legacy of the 1989 protests and how a new generation of rights advocates are pushing for human rights in China.[136] Testifying at the Commission's hearing, former student leader at the 1989 Tiananmen protests Zhou Fengsuo tied recent advocacy work back to the 1989 protests, stating, "[t]he fight didn't stop then—for most of us, it was only the beginning of our journey."[137]

Academic Freedom

The PRC intensified its efforts to exert control over educational and research institutions, impeding the free exchange of information and hindering international academic collaboration.

• **Patriotic Education Law.** The National People's Congress Standing Committee adopted the PRC Patriotic Education Law in October 2023, which took effect on January 1, 2024.[138] The law mandates the inclusion of state-directed ideological content throughout all sectors of society, but especially focuses on students,[139] by requiring all to study "Xi Jinping Thought on So-

cialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era" in schools as part of mandatory ideological and political education.[140] The law includes a list of offenses including "undermining the dignity" of the national anthem, flag, and emblems as well as "denying acts of aggression."[141]

- **University professors.** China continues to clamp down on academic freedom by punishing university professors for doing research or lecturing on sensitive topics. Examples include:
  - **Uyghur professor.** In September 2023, the Dui Hua Foundation reported that acclaimed Uyghur professor **Rahile Dawut** is serving a life sentence for "endangering state security."[142] Detained in December 2017, Dawut, a renowned ethnographer, was teaching at Xinjiang University College of Humanities and founded the Ethnic Minorities Research Center.[143] Her disappearance was first reported in 2018.[144] She was sentenced and imprisoned in 2021, though her life sentence was not confirmed by a Chinese government source until this year.[145] Considered a leading scholar of traditional Uyghur culture, Dawut is one of more than 300 intellectuals, artists, and writers believed to be detained in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region as part of an official Chinese state-sponsored campaign to assimilate Uyghurs into Chinese culture and "[promote] ethnic harmony."[146] [For more information about the PRC's persecution of Uyghurs, see Chapter 18—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.]
  - **Economics professor.** In August 2023, the Guiyang Intermediate People's Court in Guizhou province sentenced **Yang Shaozheng,** an economics professor, to four years and six months in prison on the charge of "inciting subversion of state power," a crime of "endangering state security."[147] Yang's research and reporting on Party and government personnel costs to the Chinese taxpayer was linked to his detention.[148] Yang lost his job at Guizhou University's Institute of Economics in November 2017 due to government orders and was later investigated by police and secretly detained, likely also for promoting his research detailing Party and state personnel costs.[149]
- U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Burns accused Chinese authorities of undermining people-to-people academic, cultural, or other forms of exchange through intimidation and "suppression of American diplomatic activities."[150] He reported 61 instances of Chinese authorities intimidating individuals attending U.S. Embassy public events in China, since November 2023.[151] Ambassador Burns also highlighted Chinese authorities' efforts to obstruct Chinese students from studying in the U.S. by rescinding invitations to diplomatic staff promoting American colleges at university fairs in China and pressuring participants to withdraw from U.S.-funded exchange programs.[152]

Notes to Chapter 1—Freedom of Expression

[1] Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report: China," accessed August 5, 2024.
[2] Reporters Without Borders, "China," *World Press Freedom Index 2024*, accessed May 3, 2024. Bahrain, Vietnam, Turkmenistan, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Syria, and Eritrea ranked below the PRC, respectively.
[3] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by U.N. General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) on December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 19.
[4] United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter IV, Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, accessed May 1, 2024.
[5] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by U.N. General Assembly resolution 217A (III) of December 10, 1948, art. 19.
[6] 中华人民共和国宪法 [PRC Constitution], passed and effective December 4, 1982, amended March 11, 2018, art. 35.
[7] Frederik Kelter, "Media Feel Pressure to Tell 'Positive' China Story as Party Tightens Grip," *Al Jazeera*, April 4, 2024; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, *2023 Annual Report* (Washington: May 2024), 51; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, *2018 Annual Report* (Washington: October 2018), 66–68.
[8] "深入学习贯彻习近平文化思想—论贯彻落实全国宣传思想文化工作会议精神" [Deeply study and implement Xi Jinping's Thought on Culture—on implementation of the spirit of the National Conference on Propaganda, Ideology, and Culture], *People's Daily*, October 11, 2023. Although Party media announced "Xi Jinping Thought on Culture" as a new official phrase in October 2023, its foundations can be traced to speeches given by Xi Jinping around prior official Party conferences called "National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conferences." David Bandurski, "Xi Jinping's Cathedral of Pretense," *China Media Project*, October 13, 2023.
[9] David Bandurski, "Xi Jinping's Cathedral of Pretense," *China Media Project*, October 13, 2023; Jamestown Foundation, "David Bandurski," accessed August 5, 2024.
[10] David Bandurski, "China's Press Under Xi Jinping Thought," *China Media Project*, November 22, 2023. See also David Bandurski, "Xi Jinping's Cathedral of Pretense," *China Media Project*, October 13, 2023.
[11] David Bandurski, "China's Press Under Xi Jinping Thought," *China Media Project*, November 22, 2023.
[12] "The 'Everything App' for China's Journalists," *China Media Project*, July 4, 2023.
[13] David Bandurski, "The Dawn of the Little Red Phone," *China Media Project*, February 13, 2019; Rita Liao, "A Government Propaganda App Is Going Viral in China," *TechCrunch*, February 1, 2019.
[14] David Bandurski, "The Ugly Politics of Media Obstruction," *China Media Project*, March 14, 2024; "Police Prevent State Media from Reporting on Yanjiao Explosion: 'The Party Muffled Its Own Mouthpiece,'" *China Digital Times*, March 15, 2024.
[15] David Bandurski, "The Ugly Politics of Media Obstruction," *China Media Project*, March 14, 2024; "Police Prevent State Media from Reporting on Yanjiao Explosion: 'The Party Muffled Its Own Mouthpiece,'" *China Digital Times*, March 15, 2024.
[16] Simina Mistreanu, "Chinese City Officials Issue a Rare Apology after Authorities Harass Journalists on Live TV," *Associated Press*, March 14, 2024; John Feng, "China Gas Explosion Death Toll Rises Amid State Media Scandal," *Newsweek*, March 14, 2024; "Police Prevent State Media from Reporting on Yanjiao Explosion: 'The Party Muffled Its Own Mouthpiece,'" *China Digital Times*, March 15, 2024.
[17] Rachel Cheung, "Tone Deaf," *Wire China*, February 25, 2024; Frederik Kelter, "Media Feel Pressure to Tell 'Positive' China Story as Party Tightens Grip," *Al Jazeera*, April 4, 2024. See also "Words of the Week: 'Handing Someone a Knife,' and the Flattening of Sixth Tone," *China Digital Times*, February 28, 2024.
[18] For information on such efforts in prior reporting years, see, e.g., Sarah Cook, "China's Foreign PR Enablers," *Diplomat*, June 27, 2023; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, *2021 Annual Report* (Washington: March 2022), 46–7.
[19] Dalia Parete and David Bandurski, "What Does It Mean to Understand China?," *China Media Project*, January 4, 2024.
[20] David Bandurski, "More Local Centers for Global Propaganda," *China Media Project*, June 12, 2024.
[21] Dalia Parete and David Bandurski, "What Does It Mean to Understand China?," *China Media Project*, January 4, 2024.
[22] The phrase "telling China's story well" was first introduced by Xi Jinping in August 2013 at a National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference and has been repeatedly promoted by Party officials in the decade since to encourage Chinese media and other groups to "strengthen and innovate external propaganda." "Telling China's Story Well," *China Media Project*, April 16, 2021; Jian Xu and Qian Gong, "'Telling China's Story Well' as Propaganda Campaign Slogan: International, Domestic and the Pandemic," *Media, Culture & Society* (March 13, 2024).
[23] "Xi Exports His Personal Podcast, CMG Launches New China-Africa Media Initiative [updated]," *China Digital Times*, October 26, 2023.
[24] "Xi Exports His Personal Podcast, CMG Launches New China-Africa Media Initiative [updated]," *China Digital Times*, October 26, 2023.
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