



House Foreign Affairs Committee
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing on “Transnational Repression: Trends and Policy Approaches”

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Introduction

Thank you, Chairman McGovern, Chairman Smith, distinguished Members and all staff of the Commission, for the opportunity to provide remarks for the record on this critical topic being examined by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission today. The work of this Commission—to shine a light on transnational repression and to elevate the voices of those of us who have experienced it firsthand—is an essential step in raising greater awareness and prompting stronger action by the U.S. government and the public.

I testified before this Commission last year on the same subject.¹ Since then, the threats facing overseas Hong Kongers and other diaspora communities have not only persisted—they have grown more sophisticated, institutionalized, and far-reaching. Today, I submit this testimony to share two urgent developments:

1. The inability of the U.S. legal system to adequately address transnational repression.
2. The intensifying use of Hong Kong’s legal system to expand repression beyond its borders in punishing and silencing dissidents and the media.

Inability of the U.S. Legal System to Address Transnational Repression

Earlier this year, I served as a federal prosecution witness in *United States v. Litang Liang*, a case involving serious allegations of covertly acting on behalf of the People's Republic of China

¹ Hearing on Transnational Repression and the U.S. Response before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, 118th Congress (2024) ([Statement of Frances Hui](#)).



(PRC).² In 2019, Liang orchestrated a large counter-protest to disrupt a pro-democracy rally I co-organized in Boston—where Chinese protesters threatened to “bring weapons” or “shoot me in the face.” He took photographs of participants, including myself, and later shared them with PRC officials.³ These tactics—now seen across the West—form a familiar pattern of Beijing-directed harassment aimed at silencing overseas dissent.⁴

When Liang, an American citizen, was arrested and indicted in Massachusetts in 2023, I felt a rare sense of relief, as it seemed the U.S. was finally recognizing transnational repression as a serious threat and was taking concrete steps to protect those of us who are at risk.

But in February 2025, following a six-day trial in Boston, the jury found Liang not guilty.⁵ The verdict was devastating—not only to me personally, but to the broader diaspora community. The man who tried to silence me—who stood against my every right to protest and organize in the U.S.—walked free out of the courtroom.

Despite compelling evidence—including Liang’s past service in the Ministry of Public Security, his frequent communications with PRC officials, United Front activity, surveillance photographs, and possession of state-issued paraphernalia—the jury never received the full picture.⁶ Much of the context was excluded due to evidentiary rulings or classified information protections. Part of the expert testimony was excluded, with the court cautioning against the risk of inflaming “anti-China sentiment.” Liang’s defense framed the case as one of free speech and political bias, which was clearly not the case.⁷

This experience demonstrates to me the urgent need for stronger legal frameworks and international cooperation in the U.S. to counter the CCP’s campaign of transnational repression. The current legal tools available—including the Foreign Agent Registration Act—are narrow and insufficient.⁸ The absence of a clear definition of transnational repression in U.S. criminal law limits our ability to prosecute such acts, allowing authoritarian actors to exploit legal gray zones and operate without consequence.

Further policy recommendations will be provided after the next section.

² United States v. Litang Liang: <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/67351577/1/united-states-v-liang/>.

³ “[Massachusetts Man Indicted for Acting as an Illegal Agent of the People’s Republic of China](#),” U.S. Department of Justice, May 15, 2023.

⁴ “[China: The scale of transnational repression of protesters worldwide](#),” Article 19, June 4, 2025.

⁵ Nate Raymond, “[Boston man cleared of US charges he acted as Chinese agent](#),” Reuters, February 10, 2025.

⁶ Sam Cooper, “[Former Chinese Officer Acquitted in U.S. Trial Despite Allegedly Working Clandestinely for Ministry of Public Security to Target Democracy Activists](#),” The Bureau, June 11, 2025.

⁷ Bochen Han, “[Jury finds US citizen of Chinese descent not guilty of being a covert agent for Beijing](#),” *South China Morning Post*, February 11, 2025.

⁸ “[Foreign Agents Registration Act](#),” U.S. Department of Justice.



Hong Kong's Lawfare: Exporting Repression

Since the last hearing, the Hong Kong government has escalated its use of lawfare, particularly through the implementation of the "Safeguarding National Security Ordinance," also known as the Article 23 security law. This law criminalizes a broad range of activities and applies extraterritorially to Hong Kong residents and businesses worldwide.⁹

Just four weeks after my last testimony, the law was enacted and has since been used to further suppress dissent domestically and to intimidate overseas activists, civil society organizations, and independent media, while isolating them from financial or international support.

In December 2024, a year after I was placed on a list of 11 overseas Hong Kongers wanted with a HK\$1 million bounty, Secretary for Security Chris Tang invoked Article 23 to issue special orders against seven of us.¹⁰ These orders included canceling our Hong Kong passports, prohibiting financial transactions in Hong Kong, and banning any involvement with immovable property or business partnerships—in an attempt to isolate us economically. Eight additional individuals were added to the bounty list, including my 19-year-old CFHK colleague, Chloe Cheung, bringing the total number of bountied and wanted Hong Kongers to 19.

One of the core tactics the CCP uses to silence us is collective punishment by targeting our families and advocates on the ground. On April 10, one week after the U.S. sanctioned six Hong Kong officials for undermining the city's autonomy, my parents were summoned by national security police for questioning. Photos of them leaving the station were circulated by local media to publicly shame and intimidate them.¹¹

Shortly after, on May 2, the 68-year-old father of Hong Kong Democracy Council activist Anna Kwok was arrested and charged under Article 23 for allegedly handling funds from her insurance policy.¹² It implies that the insurance company—AIA International Limited—complied with government requests to provide supporting evidence, raising serious concerns about the state's pressure on the private sector to turn in information for political enforcement. This marks the first known prosecution of a family member of an exiled activist under Article 23.

⁹ Kelly Ng, "[Article 23: What is Hong Kong's tough new security law?](#)" BBC, March 25, 2024; "[Hong Kong Adopts New National Security Ordinance: Article 23](#)," Congressional Research Service, June 24, 2025.

¹⁰ Kelly Ho, "[Hong Kong gov't cancels passports of 7 'absconder' activists under new domestic security law provision](#)," Hong Kong Free Press, December 24, 2024.

¹¹ James Lee, "[HK police take in parents of US-based activist Frances Hui for questioning](#)," Hong Kong Free Press, April 10, 2025.

¹² Kelly Ho, "[Nat sec case of HK activist's father adjourned until August](#)," Hong Kong Free Press, June 13, 2025.



In June, Joshua Wong, who was already sentenced to four years and eight months in prison for participating in an unofficial democratic primary, was charged again under the National Security Law for “collusion with foreign forces.”¹³ He allegedly conspired with another wanted activist, Nathan Law, and “other persons unknown” to advocate for “sanctions, blockades or engage in other hostile activities against Hong Kong or China.” While Joshua has already served more than half of his sentence, the Hong Kong government intends to keep him behind bars and to silence global support for him.

These arbitrary prosecutions and legal threats against people on the ground send a chilling message: those who are or were associated with exiled activists will be punished for our continued advocacy abroad. The ultimate goal is to isolate us.

Another central target of Article 23 is the press—particularly foreign-based outlets covering Hong Kong. Since the law's passage, Radio Free Asia (RFA), a Congress-funded media outlet with a long-standing Cantonese service in Hong Kong, was publicly accused by Hong Kong officials of “smearing” the government, “misleading” the public, and interviewing “wanted fugitives.” One week after Article 23 took effect, RFA closed its Hong Kong bureau, citing safety concerns under the new law.¹⁴

These are just a few examples among countless attempts by the Chinese regime to silence dissent abroad. The Hong Kong authorities have clearly weaponized Hong Kong’s legal system to suppress opposition and project repression well beyond the city’s borders.

Policy Recommendations

To counter the CCP’s transnational repression and better protect U.S. national security, a stronger and more coordinated response is urgently needed. The U.S. government should:

- 1. Define and Codify Transnational Repression as a Federal Crime**

Pass legislation that criminalizes coordinated surveillance, harassment, and threats by foreign governments, agents, or proxies targeting individuals on U.S. soil.

- 2. Raise Awareness of Transnational Repression**

Partner with civil society, academia, media, and industry to educate the public and vulnerable communities about how transnational repression operates, the patterns, and the

¹³ Kanis Leung, “[Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong charged under security law for a second time](#),” AP News, June 6, 2025.

¹⁴ Kanis Leung, “[US-funded Radio Free Asia closes its Hong Kong bureau](#),” AP News, March 29, 2024.



resources they can rely on so they can better recognize and handle transnational repression when they encounter or witness them in real life.

3. Train Law Enforcement and the Judiciary

Provide specialized training for federal, state, and local authorities, including judges and intelligence officials, on recognizing and responding to transnational repression. Improve coordination between federal and local law enforcement, as well as the global intelligence community.

4. Advance Multilateral Response Mechanisms

Work with democratic allies to create shared legal definitions, improve intelligence-sharing, and align sanctions and accountability efforts.

5. Defend U.S. Institutions from Political Intimidation

Support U.S.-based institutions and companies in resisting politically motivated compliance requests and strengthen protections against foreign legal intimidation.

6. Hold Hong Kong Officials, Judges, and Prosecutors Accountable

The U.S. should not overlook the complicity of the judiciary in the political crackdown, as they prosecute and rule on the repressive national security law to enable the pursuit of activists abroad and legal threats against their families. Members of Congress in both houses should support the bipartisan Hong Kong Judicial Sanctions Act (H.R. 733/S. 1755) introduced in this congress to provide for a review of sanctions on 45 Hong Kong officials, judges, and prosecutors.¹⁵

7. Pass the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices Certification Act (H.R. 2661). The HKETOs, as an avenue for the Hong Kong and Chinese governments to monitor the activities of overseas Hong Kongers in the U.S., should be closed. Members of Congress should support the bipartisan HKETO Certification Act that requires the Secretary of State to certify within 30 days of the enactment of the bill and annually whether the HKETOs merit the extension and application of the privileges, exemptions, and immunities that provided Hong Kong a pseudo-diplomatic representation in the U.S. in the form of ETOs.¹⁶

¹⁵ The House bill, H.R. 733, was introduced in January 2025 by Rep. Young Kim and Rep. Jim McGovern; It can be viewed online: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/733>. The Senate companion bill, S. 1755, was introduced in May 2025 by Sen. Dan Sullivan, Sen. Jeff Merkley, and Sen. John Curtis. The Senate version eliminated four of the names from the House original list of 49 individuals after the U.S. issued targeted sanctions on the named Hong Kong officials in March 2025; The full text can be viewed online: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/1755>.

¹⁶ The House bill, H.R. 2661, was introduced in April 2025 by Rep. Chris Smith and Rep. Jim McGovern; It can be viewed online: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/2661>.



8. Restore Funding for Radio Free Asia (RFA)

Administered by the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), RFA reports on events and issues in China that are often underreported or censored by state-controlled media. It is one of the few media outlets with the capacity to break through China's "Great Firewall" while continue to serve as a check-and-balance to the regime's repressive practices. It has provided groundbreaking reporting on Uyghur mass internment camps, the COVID-19 coverup, and repression in Hong Kong, to name a few highlights of its work. On April 10, 2025, a coalition of China human rights organizations issued a joint statement in support of restoring funding for RFA.¹⁷ The current funding level for RFA is \$60.83 million. Members of Congress should support the restoration of funding for RFA to safeguard its operation in countering Chinese propaganda.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to stress the importance of the Commission's leadership in confronting transnational repression. The threats I have described are personal, ongoing, and intensifying.

Your work—through hearings, documentation, and legislation—is critical. So is standing firmly with those targeted not just by surveillance and threats, but by fear, silence, and isolation. Transnational repression is real, and if left unchecked, it will continue to erode the freedoms that define this country.

I will continue to speak out—not only for my own safety, but for the safety of my community and the values we all share. I thank the Commission again for your leadership, and I urge you to treat this testimony not just as a record, but as a call to act.

¹⁷ ["Joint Statement in Support of Radio Free Asia,"](#) April 9, 2025.