

# CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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## IMAGE OF THE MONTH

### Deleted Xi Doppelgänger

Since last September, [opera singer](#) Liu Keqing's account on the video platform Douyin, China's version of TikTok, has been repeatedly shut down by online censors for "appearance violations." The shutdowns were triggered by large numbers of users commenting on his resemblance to President Xi Jinping, which activated sensitive keyword filters. Liu remarked that a video he had made on how to sing *bel canto* had within two days "passed 370,000 likes—not in support of my good singing, but because I look like a national leader." As of May 21, he has overcome the ongoing challenge by changing his photo to an animated avatar.

Credit: [China Digital Times](#)



## ANALYSIS

# Red Flags for Free Expression in Hong Kong

By Sarah Cook

Sarah Cook is a senior research analyst for China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan at Freedom House, as well as director of its [China Media Bulletin](#).

## **What to watch for as Beijing's new national security law comes into effect.**

On the opening day of its National People's Congress session last month, the Chinese government unexpectedly [unveiled plans](#) to authorize the body's Standing Committee to draft national security legislation that would be imposed on Hong Kong, short-circuiting the semiautonomous city's own lawmaking process.

The forthcoming [legislation](#) is expected to criminalize "[separatism](#)," "[subversion of state power](#)," "[terrorist activities](#)," and foreign interference. It would also allow mainland China's domestic security services to operate openly in Hong Kong for the first time. This could facilitate increased surveillance, intimidation, and possibly even rendition of Beijing's critics in a city that has long enjoyed significantly greater freedom of expression and civil liberties than the rest of China.

Hong Kong chief executive [Carrie Lam](#) and Beijing officials have tried to reassure Hong Kongers that the law will target "an extremely small minority of illegal and criminal acts" and that the "basic rights and freedoms of the overwhelming majority of citizens will be protected." However, experts on China's legal system like Professor [Jerome Cohen](#) of New York University have predicted an increase in mass arrests. The territory's residents appear to agree: inquiries on [emigration options](#) for Hong Kongers have spiked, and greater [self-censorship](#) has already begun to take hold.

The following are six possible effects to watch for after the law's implementation, which will probably come before the end of the summer. If some or all of these scenarios actually unfold, then Hong Kong people's fears will have been justified.

- 1. Jailed journalists:** Since mass protests over a proposed extradition bill broke out last summer, [violence against journalists](#) has increased in Hong Kong, occasional [arrests](#) have occurred, and [Jimmy Lai](#), a media owner who is critical of Beijing, has been prosecuted for participating in demonstrations. Still, so far no journalists have been convicted for their work or appeared on the [Committee to Protect Journalists'](#) global tally of jailed reporters, which China leads with 48 journalists behind bars. Watch for any signs that mainland-style imprisonment of journalists—and the egregiously unfair trials that go with it—is being introduced to Hong Kong.
- 2. Penalties for critical news outlets:** The public broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), founded in 1928, is editorially independent according to its charter and is a widely respected source of news and diverse viewpoints in the territory. But its autonomy is already being threatened. In late May, days before the security legislation was announced, RTHK canceled the popular satirical and current-events show *Headliner* under suspected direct or indirect [pressure from the government](#). The station is currently undergoing an unprecedented review of its management

and activities. On June 10, a [government-appointed adviser](#) urged the network to report on the national security legislation “positively” to enable citizens to form a “correct understanding” of it. Watch for whether RTHK is either slowly or abruptly transformed into a government mouthpiece, and whether the new legislation enables fines or suspensions of privately-owned media outlets for their coverage of sensitive topics including of Hong Kong’s autonomy, calls for universal suffrage, the ongoing protests, or the national security law itself.

- 3. Retroactive charges:** As news of the forthcoming legislation broke, many Hong Kongers moved to purchase [virtual private networks](#) (VPNs) in order to circumvent any future website blocking and protect the privacy of their digital communications. Others began [closing social media accounts](#) on services like Telegram, which have been used to organize protests, because they feared their posts could be used to charge them with separatism or subversion under the new law. Watch for whether anyone is charged for speech or actions that predated the legislation’s enactment. Such retroactive application would signal a dangerous violation of the rule of law in Hong Kong.
- 4. Declining digital freedom:** In addition to the prospect of criminal prosecutions for legitimate and peaceful online speech, there are a number of ways in which the national security law could be used to curtail internet freedom. Charles Mok, a member of Hong Kong’s Legislative Council who represents the technology sector, told Freedom House that under the new law, “internet service providers, telecommunication operators, those who manage social networks and online platforms, and potentially those operating the numerous data centers in Hong Kong” could face greater liability for user content, meaning they would be obliged to censor their platforms. They may also be required to hand over user data to authorities. Indeed, Facebook chief executive [Mark Zuckerberg](#) has expressed concern about the law’s effects on his company’s ability to provide services in Hong Kong, including through its WhatsApp encrypted messaging application. Mok noted that after the neighboring semiautonomous territory of Macau introduced its own [National Security Law](#) in 2009, a separate [Cybersecurity Law](#) followed, imposing real-name registration for SIM cards and other mainland-style controls. Watch for any internet-related laws or implementing regulations addressing topics like data localization, intermediary liability, real-name registration, or designation of “fake news” that may follow in the wake of the new national security law.
- 5. Restrictions on artistic and academic expression:** Hong Kong is home to a thriving and [politically outspoken arts community](#). Statues depicting heroic protesters and murals mocking Carrie Lam and Chinese president Xi Jinping regularly pop up on buildings, in cafes, and at other venues. Such forms of expression are suppressed on the mainland, and Hong Kong artists are now wondering whether their work will be prosecuted as “separatism” or “subversion.” [More than 1,500 members](#) of the city’s arts scene signed a [petition](#) to one of Hong Kong’s representatives in the National People’s Congress that eloquently voiced these fears. Academic freedom in Hong Kong has already deteriorated somewhat in recent years, and Hong Kong

scholars have also raised concerns that Beijing will use the new law to further rein in the city's universities and undermine their [strong international reputation](#). Mainland academics like [Ilham Tohti](#) have received heavy prison sentences and other penalties for work that is deemed contrary to Beijing's political priorities.

- 6. Crackdowns on religious communities:** Various religious groups that face persecution in China enjoy comparative freedom in Hong Kong. Many residents—including protesters—are practicing Protestant Christians or Roman Catholics. The territory is also home to a modest number of locals who practice [Falun Gong](#), the spiritual discipline that is banned in China but legally registered in Hong Kong and practiced openly. All have engaged in activities that could fall afoul of the national security legislation: some churches offered [refuge](#) to protesters fleeing police and tear gas, several [Catholic churches held mass](#) and candlelight vigils commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, and [Falun Gong activists](#) regularly set up booths and marches to raise awareness of Chinese government rights abuses and convince visiting Chinese to symbolically renounce their association with the Communist Party and affiliated youth organizations. All have [voiced fears](#) that the new law will bring restrictions on worship or even the kind of arbitrary detention and torture their coreligionists endure in China. In one [telling case](#), Pastor Wang Yi of Sichuan Province was sentenced in late 2019 to nine years in prison on charges of "[inciting subversion](#)" after he publicly condemned forced abortions and the 1989 massacre.

It is a troubling sign of Beijing's intentions that the central government's own allies in Hong Kong were apparently not told about the legislative plan until hours before it was announced. Multiple news reports have described remarks from pro-establishment politicians saying they were "[caught off guard](#)," including those who were attending the National People's Congress session as the territory's representatives. If the Communist Party leadership [does not trust](#) Hong Kong officials even this much, it seems highly unlikely that it would defer to local practices and institutions on the enforcement of its security law.

Legislation in mainland China is often vaguely worded to give authorities maximum discretion. What is tolerated or even officially sanctioned today may be banned as "sedition" or "subversion" tomorrow, without any change in the law. This is why it is so crucial to carefully monitor the new national security measure's implementation – to detect how far down the slippery slope of vague criminal offenses and arbitrary law enforcement Hong Kong's political system descends.

## IN THE NEWS

### Eyeing US protests, Chinese state media promote CCP's preferred narratives

- Media coverage of US protests in China:** Chinese state media's response within China to the US protest movement against police violence and systemic racism—which emerged in late May after the killing of an African American man, George Floyd, by a police officer in Minneapolis—has been a mixture of muted reporting, coverage emphasizing “[chaos](#),” and citations of Russian state media. Analysis from the China Media Project indicates limited coverage in print newspapers, especially the CCP mouthpiece, *the People's Daily*, and provincial offshoots, whose front pages instead featured the usual fare of Xi Jinping's activities and other official announcements. The state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) has covered demonstrators protesting against US president Donald Trump, and sporadic instances of protesters violently attacking police in its [evening newscast](#). Searches by Freedom House and the China Media Project of the CCTV's website also returned news [reports](#) about US police violence [against journalists](#), alongside references to [Chinese](#) foreign ministry responses and [RT reports](#), many of which were reposted on other news websites in China. The relative silence of some outlets alongside an emphasis on violent interactions between protesters and police fits a longer-term pattern of Chinese state media selectively highlighting unrest and especially racial tensions in the United States and other democracies, while also being wary of provoking a domestic conversation about its own record of police brutality and ethnic discrimination.
- State media directed at foreign audiences:** English-language Chinese state media has also covered the protests for audiences overseas, with a strong emphasis on US police action to suppress peaceful demonstrations. The *Global Times* released a number of editorials on the demonstrations, claiming that the “[barbarism](#)” of US police contrasts with the “patience” shown by the Chinese government toward Hong Kong protesters. One [editorial](#) called on the US government to “stand with Minnesota people,” while another described the protests as “[retribution](#)” for the US government's support of the Hong Kong prodemocracy movement. Such criticisms similarly seem part of Chinese government efforts to [direct attention](#) away from the country's own poor human rights record, both in mainland China and in Hong Kong. In a June 3 [tweet](#), *Global Times* editor Hu Xijin stated that the violent response of US police to protests has reaffirmed the “importance” of China's attempts to “restore order” in 1989, an oblique reference to the violent suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen democracy movement. Although published in English, quotes from some of these articles have also circulated back into China via social media.
- Social media amplification:** Chinese officials and state media have also made use of Twitter to [promote criticism](#) of the response of US authorities to the ongoing protest movement. According to a June 1 article in [Politico](#), the CCP was one of several regimes that has “increasingly piggybacked onto hashtags linked to George Floyd... to push divisive messages.” According to Bret Schafer at the German Marshall

Fund, this type of activity on global social media platforms is unusual and is “the first time we’ve seen China fully engaged in a narrative battle that doesn’t directly affect Chinese interests.”

- **Chinese netizen reaction:** George Floyd’s death and the massive protest movement it inspired have become [trending topics](#) on the Sina Weibo microblogging platform in China. Many netizens sarcastically described the protests as a “[beautiful sight](#),” appropriating a phrase used by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to describe the Hong Kong protest movement. (It should be noted that Pelosi [did visit](#) a protest in Washington, DC, and has expressed sympathy with protesters’ demands.) However, China’s censored media environment makes it difficult to ascertain how widely shared these views are and comments critical of Chinese official reactions to the US protest movement have also appeared. In response to a tweet by Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying quoting George Floyd’s final words, “I can’t breathe,” some netizens took to Weibo [to post](#) “I can’t tweet,” pointing to the double standard of officials having access to a platform that is blocked for ordinary citizens. Others pointed out that even limited peaceful protests are still [not permitted](#) in China.

## Despite CCP propaganda wins, COVID-19 info controls and citizen defiance continue

As the rest of the world reels from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, life in much of China appears to have returned to normal. At a June 7 [press conference](#), Chinese officials presented a white paper that describes China’s response to COVID-19 as a [model](#) for other countries to follow, overlooking the lasting effects of early cover-ups during an essential window of time for curbing the outbreak. Other observers have lamented the “[amnesia](#)” that has set in among many in China who seem to have forgotten the fear and anger that swelled in February and March as the pandemic spread. Nevertheless, various examples of ongoing COVID-19 information controls—and citizen defiance—have continued to emerge:

- **Continuing media censorship, journalist detentions in Wuhan:** Reports continue to emerge of censorship and detentions related to the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan. On May 15, the financial publication *Caixin* published an article claiming that coronavirus tests on 10 million people in Wuhan had found that 500,000 people had contracted the virus—a figure far above those officially reported—but it was [quickly deleted](#). Reports also emerged in May that a citizen journalist and former lawyer, Zhang Zhan, had been [detained](#) by authorities in Wuhan after uploading to YouTube interviews with local residents about life in the city during lockdown. And in late April, Hunan democracy activist Xie Wenfei was [arrested](#), possibly in relation to a poem he had written about the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan.
- **Grieving relatives harassed:** Chinese authorities have sought to [silence](#) family members of people who died from the coronavirus who have [demanded justice](#) for

their deceased relatives. In April, a group of people looking to sue the governments of Wuhan and Hubei Province for their earlier efforts to cover up the outbreak were forced to [abandon](#) their pursuit of justice after being threatened and intimidated by police. On May 11, a woman in Wuhan was [dragged away](#) by police after visiting municipal government offices to demand compensation for the death of her 24-year-old daughter from COVID-19. In another case, a Wuhan man abandoned plans to crowdfund a memorial to his father and others who died, after coming under [pressure](#) from local police.

- **Netizens express anger at another Wuhan doctor's death:** The death from the coronavirus of another doctor in Wuhan has prompted [further anger](#) from netizens. The death of 42-year-old Hu Weifeng, who had worked at the same hospital as the whistleblowing doctor Li Wenliang, led many on Weibo to question why the Communist Party committee chair and other top officials at the hospital had yet to be sanctioned over the deaths from COVID-19 of six doctors at the facility. A hashtag on Hu's death had more than 400 million views on June 3 and over 46,000 comments, indicating that beneath the surface, much public frustration with the party-state's mishandling of the outbreak remains.

## Underlying insecurities exposed, as authorities silence talk of 1989 Tiananmen massacre

In advance of the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre on June 4, Chinese authorities engaged in the [usual efforts](#) to silence activists, prevent commemoration, and censor references to this sensitive date. And, for the first time, a ban was imposed on Hong Kong's annual vigil commemorating the events of June 4, 1989. Still, activists and netizens managed to find ways to mark the date.

- **Li Wenliang's Weibo:** On June 4, Chinese netizens returned to the final [post](#) of late coronavirus whistleblower Li Wenliang on the Sina Weibo microblogging platform to obliquely commemorate the Tiananmen massacre. Since his death in February, Dr. Li's final Weibo post has become in the words of [one netizen](#) "an internet wailing wall" for frustrated citizens who have continued to leave comments on the post.
- **Detention and release of activist:** In early June Chen Yunfei, a participant in the 1989 prodemocracy movement, was [detained](#) and then [released](#) by authorities in Sichuan Province for his participation alongside some 200 other rights advocates in an online memorial commemorating the massacre.
- **New research on protests:** [New research](#) by Erin Baggott Carter and Brett Carter of the University of Southern California indicates that the memory of "failed" prodemocracy movements continues to inspire activists across China, with protests being [thirty percent](#) more likely to occur on the anniversaries of previous uprisings.
- **Remembering Tiananmen in Hong Kong:** Defying a government ban, on June 4 tens

of thousands of Hong Kong residents took part in [peaceful vigils](#) to commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen massacre and express their support for Hong Kong's ongoing prodemocracy movement. In Hong Kong's [Mong Kok](#) district, police used pepper spray and batons against demonstrators and made several arrests. Others in Hong Kong sought to avoid the government ban on public gatherings by participating in online vigils held on the Nintendo Switch game [Animal Crossing](#).

- **Chinese sports star condemns CCP:** Chinese censors found themselves grappling with a new challenge after a retired sports star called for the end of CCP rule. In a June 3 [video](#) released on the YouTube page of exiled billionaire and government critic Guo Wengui, Chinese men's soccer icon Hao Haidong denounced the Communist Party as a "terrorist organization" and called for the creation of a "federal state of New China." According to a leaked [propaganda directive](#), Hao's name was quickly made a sensitive online search term and all of his social media accounts, some with millions of followers, were closed.

Other recent actions by censors reflect the sensitivity of authorities to real or perceived criticisms of the Communist Party and anniversaries of past protest movements. In early May, government authorities ordered the [deletion](#) of all references to a Mandarin-language speech given by US Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger, which commemorated the May 4 student movement of 1919, and called for political reform in China. According to Inkstone, a news outlet affiliated with the *South China Morning Post*, such efforts seem to have been [successful](#); little discussion of his speech has appeared online and even scribbled screenshots of the speech transcript were censored.

## Surveillance updates: Long-term impact of coronavirus monitoring, US sanctions, flawed data-protection measures

- **Mobile phone applications:** In an effort to stem the spread of the coronavirus, the Chinese government has in recent months required smartphone users to download applications that assign color-coded health assessments and assign them mobility options based on their quarantine status. Many are tied to other popular applications run by [private Chinese companies](#) like Alibaba and Tencent. In the case of one popular app deployed in over 200 cities, the *New York Times* found in March that it was also transmitting users' [personal data and locations](#) to local police. As the coronavirus appears to recede, a growing number of local governments are nevertheless discussing expanding the use of such applications, rendering the intrusive state surveillance more permanent. [In Hangzhou](#), local officials have expressed a desire to expand monitoring applications created in response to the spread of COVID-19 to assign a general health score based on a person's daily habits, such how much sleep and exercise they get.
- **Targeted video camera surveillance:** Local authorities across China have also pro-

moted the installation and use of more [surveillance cameras](#) as part of the “war” on the coronavirus, with human monitors observing footage and taking action against citizens and businesses found to flout social distancing and mask-wearing rules. Many of these camera systems have been installed outside Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist [houses of worship](#). Some have been positioned outside the homes of people coming from Hubei Province or overseas to ensure they observe [quarantine measures](#).

- **Genetic data collection:** BGI, a major Chinese biomedical firm involved in coronavirus testing in China and abroad, is cooperating with authorities in Xinjiang to build a [gene bank](#) containing the genetic data of the region’s residents. The firm’s international client base has raised concerns that genetic data from around the globe could be added to the bank, potentially contributing to further abuses against ethnic minorities in China. Even prior to the revelations regarding Xinjiang, Israel’s largest HMO announced in April it would [not partner](#) with BGI out of concerns that the company would provide customer data to government authorities in China.
- **New US sanctions and tech firm connections:** The US government placed 33 Chinese companies and institutions on a [blacklist](#), including nine linked to the Chinese government’s campaign of repression in Xinjiang, with associated sanctions taking effect on June 5. Placement on the blacklist will prevent these entities from purchasing US goods and services unless they obtain a waiver. Meanwhile, according to an investigative report by Top10VPN, US-based companies Google, Amazon, and Microsoft continue to provide [web services](#) to at least 10 Chinese surveillance campaigns placed on a similar US government list in late 2019, including [video surveillance](#) companies Hikvision and Dahua Technology.
- **New data-privacy protections unlikely to address state surveillance:** In May, the National People’s Congress passed the country’s first [Civil Code](#), which included protections for individual [data privacy](#). According to the Civil Code, an individual’s digital and biometric data cannot be collected, shared, or disclosed without the individual’s consent. The provisions come amid growing public concern in China over data collection, hacking, and potential leaks by private companies, but are unlikely to offer users protection from increasingly pervasive state surveillance.

## BEYOND CHINA

### Beijing’s media influence, and pushback in response, felt worldwide

Over the past month, a large number of news reports and investigations have highlighted the impact of Chinese government-linked actors on global information flows. In response, various governments and technology firms have taken action. Below is a brief overview of these developments.

## Beijing's global influence:

- Thailand:** Thailand's cash-strapped media companies are increasingly relying on Chinese state media like the official newswire, Xinhua News Agency, to [provide coverage](#) on the global response to the coronavirus. But China's influence on Thai news precedes the pandemic, with at least a dozen outlets inking partnerships with Xinhua and 2019 being named by the Thai government as the "ASEAN-China Year of Media Exchanges."
- Italy:** According to *Formiche*, coverage on Italian public television of Chinese government assistance to the coronavirus-ravaged country has been [three times](#) greater than comparable coverage of US government help. The reporting appears to have contributed to improved public opinion of China compared to the United States, according to recent polls.
- India:** *The Times of India* reports that many videos on TikTok, a Chinese-based app, that discuss military tensions along the India-China border have been subject to "[shadow bans](#)" on the social media platform, effectively hiding them from other users on the platform. According to the article, "#ladakhchinaborder, #chinaladakh, #chinainladakh are all hashtags that exist, they have zero views and no link to the videos." India has TikTok's largest user base with over 150 million monthly active users. The events have given rise to further speculation that TikTok censors material critical of China.
- 35 African countries:** A [new report](#) from the Heritage Foundation alleges that Chinese companies involved in renovating government structures and building telecommunication networks across Africa may be involved in [surveilling](#) both African and US officials and business leaders. The study found, among other things, that Chinese companies had done construction work on at least 186 sensitive government buildings across Africa, had built 14 "secure" telecommunications networks, and had provided computers to governments in 35 African countries. It urges US and African officials to take precautions with any meetings or content they would not want accessed by Beijing.
- United States:** In early June, Google's Threat Analysis Group [announced](#) that a China-linked hacking group had conducted [phishing](#) attacks against the campaign of US presidential candidate Joe Biden. Although the assaults appeared not to have been successful, it is the first indication of China-based actors targeting the campaign, either for the purposes of influencing the presidential contest or gaining intelligence on a potential incoming administration.
- United States:** On June 10, [Axios](#) reported that the US-based video conferencing company Zoom had shuttered the account of Chinese American democracy advocate Zhou Fengsuo after he organized a virtual commemoration of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre using the application. The account was reinstated after

the news report was published. Zoom has done extensive product development in China, and later [admitted](#) that the closure had been triggered by a request from the Chinese government.

### **Notable examples of pushback:**

- **United Kingdom:** Regulators in the United Kingdom have found that the China Global Television Network (CGTN), the international arm of China’s state broadcaster, [repeatedly violated](#) broadcasting rules through its biased coverage of the Hong Kong protest movement. The channel [could face](#) millions of dollars’ worth of fines and the revocation of its broadcasting license.
- **Facebook:** On June 4, [Facebook announced](#) that it would begin labelling pages and posts from media outlets “wholly or partially under the editorial control of their government,” a decision that could impact the promotion of Chinese state media pages on the platform, which have tens of millions of followers worldwide. The company said that in the coming months it would also begin labeling ads from such accounts and blocking them from placing ads in the United States in advance of the country’s November 2020 presidential election.
- **Twitter:** In late May, Twitter added [fact-checking](#) warnings to two tweets sent in March by China’s foreign affairs ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, which shared conspiracy theories asserting that the United States had brought the coronavirus to Wuhan.
- **Removal of bot networks:** On May 28, the [BBC](#) reported that an investigation they conducted found 1,200 apparently automated or hijacked social media accounts that had amplified negative messaging about critics of China’s handling of the coronavirus outbreak, while also applauding the Chinese government’s response. After they shared their findings with the relevant companies, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube removed hundreds of the accounts.
- **US visas for Chinese journalists:** In early May, the US government imposed tighter [visa restrictions](#) on Chinese journalists working in the United States, regardless of whether or not they are employed by a state media company. The move, which limits Chinese nationals who work as journalists to three month-long work visas, was criticized by [press freedom](#) groups.

## FEATURED PUSHBACK

### New Inter-Parliamentary Initiatives

As governments and democratic societies grapple with the challenges of dealing with the Chinese Communist Party’s growing influence beyond the borders of mainland China, including in ways that infringe upon media freedom and information flows, two multilateral initiatives were recently launched to coordinate and guide a response. On June 5, the [Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China](#) (IPAC) announced its inception. The effort is co-chaired by 18 members of parliament from 9 countries, with pluralistic political representation for each state. The coalition includes in its guiding principles for members the belief that “democratic states must...actively seek to preserve a marketplace of ideas free from distortion” and that “a free, open, and rules-based international order that supports human dignity is created and maintained through intention.”



Notably, IPAC articulates clearly in several places its concern about China’s influence under the leadership of the CCP, an attempt to avoid being mistaken as more broadly “anti-China” or “anti-Chinese.” In an indication of the interest and demand in such multilateral engagement, [within one week](#), the alliance had already garnered 86 more members, including from 4 additional countries. The alliance is aided by an [impressive collection](#) of advisers, activists, and scholars.

Similarly, within days of China’s National People’s Congress announcing its intention to impose national security legislation on Hong Kong, Britain’s last governor of the territory, Chris Patten, and former British foreign minister Malcolm Rifkind initiated a [statement](#) condemning the proposal as a “flagrant breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.” As of June 11, the brief statement had been signed by [896 parliamentarians](#), diplomats, and former officials from 43 countries, including many members of IPAC. Such multilateral approaches to the threat that China under the CCP’s leadership poses to freedom and democracy globally is a welcome development, enabling improved sharing of best practices, reducing the [risk of bilateral reprisals](#) from Beijing, and highlighting that critiques of the CCP’s actions are not only an outcome of growing US-China tensions.

## WHAT TO WATCH FOR

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- **New online “clean-up”:** On May 22, the [Cyber Administration of China](#) announced that it was launching a special “clear and bright” (*qinglang*) action for the internet environment in China to last for eight months. As the campaign gets underway, watch for what content is being targeted—especially political, social, and religious content deemed “illegal”—and the degree to which “self-media” accounts sharing unofficial news are shuttered, as has occurred in past online “rectification” efforts.
- **Hong Kong National Security Law on NPCSC agenda?** China’s National People’s Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC), which has been tasked with drafting national-security legislation for Hong Kong, is expected to convene in Beijing in from June 18 to 20. Although the legislation has not yet been listed on the agenda, as the [NPC Observer](#) notes, “it is possible that a bill has been submitted to the NPCSC, but is kept secret for now.” Watch for information indicating it will be discussed and any further details on what it might contain.
- **Zoom’s next steps:** As new concerns emerge over [censorship](#) and security related to the video conferencing services of Zoom, its operations in China, and its [apparent complicity](#) with Chinese government requests, watch for what the [company does next](#) to either comply with Beijing’s preferences to isolate Chinese users from foreign counterparts, or better protect free expression and privacy. Also watch for how investors and international clients of the firm’s services respond.

## TAKE ACTION

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- **Visit the *China Media Bulletin Resources* section:** Learn more about how policy-makers, media outlets, educators and donors can help advance free expression in China and beyond via a [new resource section](#) on the Freedom House website.

### For more information

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- For archives, go to: [www.freedomhouse.org/China-media](http://www.freedomhouse.org/China-media)
- For additional information on human rights and free expression in China, see: *Freedom in the World 2018*, *Freedom of the Press 2017*, *Freedom on the Net 2018*, and *The Battle for China's Spirit: Religious Revival, Repression, and Resistance under Xi Jinping*



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