

CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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IMAGE OF THE MONTH

Actress Erased Online

Actress Zhao Wei (Vicky Zhao) was [scrubbed](#) from the Chinese internet beginning August 26. This image, from Chinese search engine Baidu, removes Zhao's photo and name from the film credits of *My Fair Princess*, in which she starred. Her name was unsearchable on video-streaming platforms and removed from cast lists, and in some cases entire films and television shows she appeared in were removed from Chinese platforms. Internet companies confirmed that they had [received](#) requests to censor her. Zhao's deletion from the Chinese internet sparked angry online discussion, with one post questioning the development [receiving](#) 23,000 likes. While her Weibo account, with 85.6 million followers, remains accessible, the reason for her erasure elsewhere is unknown.

Credit: [Frankie Huang](#)



ANALYSIS

On Internet Freedom, China and Taiwan Are Worlds Apart

By Sarah Cook and Allie Funk

Sarah Cook is the research director for China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan at Freedom House. Allie Funk, one of the authors of *Freedom on the Net 2021*, is Freedom House's senior research analyst for technology and democracy.

One is ranked as the most oppressive digital environment. The other is among the freest.

Only 110 miles of water separate mainland China and the island of Taiwan. But when it comes to governance and human rights—and especially internet freedom—the two neighbors might as well be on different planets.



Freedom House's [Freedom on the Net 2021](#) report—which included an assessment of Taiwan for the first time—lays out the differences in stark relief. [China's](#) government, ruling over a massive population of 989 million internet users, was ranked as the world's worst abuser of internet freedom for the seventh consecutive year, earning the country a meager score of 10 on the index's 100-point internet freedom scale. By contrast, [Taiwan](#) emerged as the fifth freest online environment among the 70 countries assessed. It received a score of 80 on the same scale and surpassed many older democracies, including the United States.

The 70-point gap between China and Taiwan reflects the alternate online universes in which their respective netizens operate.

In China, for example, authorities over the past year censored calls for an independent investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic and complaints about Chinese-produced vaccines. Ordinary users faced severe legal repercussions—including extrajudicial detention, torture, and prison terms of over 10 years—for activities like criticizing Communist Party leader Xi Jinping, speaking openly about their religious beliefs, or communicating with family members and others overseas.

In Taiwan, by comparison, netizens and journalists regularly critique the actions and policies of President Tsai Ing-wen, including the government's handling of the pandemic amid a vaccine shortage, without fear of reprisal. Activists use platforms and apps like Facebook, YouTube, and Signal—which are blocked in China—to share news about local political and social issues while also voicing support for persecuted Hong Kongers, Uighurs, Tibetans, or Falun Gong practitioners in China.

Contrasting regulatory landscapes

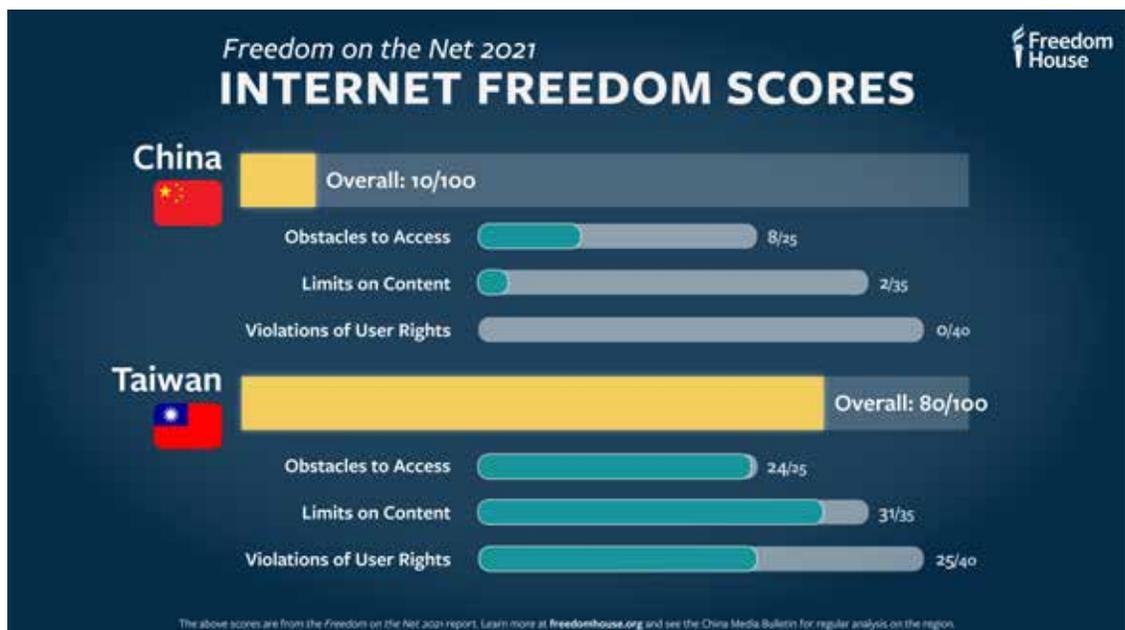
Freedom on the Net 2021 documented the ways in which authorities in both China and Taiwan have moved to step up regulation of the booming tech sector, despite taking radically different approaches.

The Chinese government and its powerful regulator—the Cyberspace Administration of China—have been among the most aggressive state actors worldwide in tightening control over technology firms, employing new investigations and laws meant to address [anticompetitive behavior](#) and [data abuse](#). For example, the [Personal Information Protection Law](#) adopted in August is the country’s first comprehensive attempt at limiting how companies collect, store, and use personal data; the law failed to address, however, how pervasive state surveillance itself systematically undermines data protection.

This year also brought new criminal penalties that reduce the space for unregulated speech in the country. New restrictions on online self-publishing that took effect in January, for instance, require administrators of independently operated social media accounts to obtain a permit and refrain from commenting on a list of restricted topics. These and other censorship mechanisms in China are arbitrary, opaque, and inconsistently applied due to the weak rule of law provided by the authoritarian political system. Under legal changes that came into effect in March, those who defame national “heroes and martyrs” face up to three years’ imprisonment; detentions under the new legislation are already occurring.

In Taiwan, the government has kept to a more democratic path in regulating tech companies. The Telecommunications Management Act, which went into effect in July 2020, relaxed previous requirements for internet service providers to register and obtain a specific amount of capital in order to operate in the country—changes that could contribute to a more diversified telecommunications market.

Other regulatory efforts in Taiwan have aimed to limit the impact of and enhance resilience against the onslaught of disinformation emanating from Beijing in a way that does not infringe on free expression, access to information, and other human rights. The draft Internet Audiovisual Service Management Act (IASMA) would enhance the



transparency of streaming platforms' operations by requiring that certain companies report revenue and user statistics, provide users with an easy-to-use complaint mechanism about offending content, and ensure that companies' terms of service clarify how data are collected and used.

Thus far, Taiwanese regulators have avoided blocking digital platforms and instituting other forms of technical censorship—a welcome distinction from the Chinese regime's systematic filtering of disfavored websites. However, the IASMA requires companies to ensure that hosted content does not endanger national security, public order, or the moral good, or impair the emotional or physical well-being of youth. Regulators should ensure that these categories of speech are narrowly and proportionately defined so that companies are not encouraged to err on the side of censorship and remove protected political, social, and religious speech in their efforts to comply with the law.

Shades of gray

Notwithstanding the vast gap in performance, there are exceptions to both China's dismal repression of internet freedom and Taiwan's strong protections. In China, the government and tech sector have delivered widespread and expanding access to internet communications and technologies, including the development and rollout of fifth-generation (5G) mobile networks. And Chinese investigative journalists, activists, bloggers, and ordinary internet users deserve credit for continuing to demand accountability for government abuses, criticizing the authorities' response to the pandemic, and sharing information about other sensitive topics, all despite a growing risk of criminal penalties.

In Taiwan, certain laws dole out disproportionate punishments for defamation and spreading false information, and internet users have been investigated, prosecuted, and fined for their online speech. Criminal penalties for disinformation and defamation are prone to arbitrary application and abuse by prosecutors and law enforcement agencies, and charges can do damage even if they are eventually thrown out by an independent judiciary. Last September, for example, a music teacher was investigated for a Facebook post claiming that lunch provided at a government cabinet meeting was extravagant and an abuse of public funds, though a court later dismissed the case. Separately, while the country's surveillance laws and procedures are a far cry from the pervasive and comprehensive monitoring system that exists in China, they have nevertheless undermined privacy rights in practice. The draft Technology Investigation Act, proposed in September 2020, would enhance the government's ability to access private communications stored on people's electronic devices.

Global implications

The vast difference between internet freedom conditions in China and those in Taiwan has profound implications not only for human rights, but also for international security and democratic values. The distorted online environment created by the Chinese regime, which also affects Taiwan through disinformation and political polarization, has fueled mistrust within each society and across the Taiwan Strait. Indeed, one of the most encouraging incidents of the past year was the brief glimmer of open communication and mutual understanding exhibited between Chinese and Taiwanese users

that was facilitated by the Clubhouse live audio app in February, before it was abruptly blocked by government regulators and app stores in China.

The sophistication and aggression of Beijing's information campaign against Taiwan should not be underestimated, nor should its potential to influence political and electoral outcomes. Although public-private partnerships have been relatively successful in fending off such attacks to date, especially surrounding the January 2020 general elections in Taiwan, the China-linked actors driving disinformation and political interference efforts are constantly innovating and exploring new tactics to more effectively influence Taiwanese voters of all ages.

Meanwhile, the demolition of media and internet freedom in Hong Kong since Beijing's forced imposition of the National Security Law there last year demonstrates just how quickly the Communist Party regime can turn a previously vibrant information landscape into an authoritarian shadow of its former self, if given the chance.

There are many reasons for the United States, other democratic governments, and major technology firms to support and protect internet freedom in Taiwan. Doing so would obviously benefit the local population, but the latest *Freedom on the Net* findings highlight how important the country is to the broader cause of global internet freedom, in which all societies share an interest. Democratic forces in Taiwan are exploring innovative and principled solutions to the challenge presented by Beijing's expanding digital influence. The island also serves as a unique beacon of hope, possibility, and demonstrated success for the many millions of Chinese netizens who yearn for greater free expression, privacy, and other fundamental rights in their own country.

IN THE NEWS

Online propaganda push, Huawei executive's homecoming lauded, mixed messaging on Evergrande scandal

- **Central Committee launches online propaganda push:** On September 14, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the State Council jointly issued [an opinion](#) on constructing a “civilized internet” in service of making China a “strong cyber power.” The new digital propaganda strategy requires that all localities and departments implement new guidance for promoting ideas, cultural trends, behavioral norms, and a legal environment in line with Xi Jinping Thought. Among other provisions, it requires that drafting and implementation of data and privacy regulations be accelerated, and, naming young people as a target audience, calls for the creation of new websites, accounts, and platforms to disseminate content in line with “socialist core values” and to enhance its “attractiveness.” While long-standing information-control [efforts](#) have focused on taking down “harmful” online content, this one specifically emphasizes the promotion of “positive” content. The opinion comes on the heels of a broader effort during the Xi Jinping era to promote “[positive energy](#)” in official messaging.

- State media response to Meng Wanzhou release:** The three-year hostage and diplomacy crisis that [saw](#) its resolution in the return of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou to China from Canadian custody on September 25, and China’s release of two Canadians and two Americans to their respective countries, was celebrated in a massive nationalistic campaign by Chinese state media. In a September 26 [editorial](#), the Communist Party mouthpiece *People’s Daily* touted Meng’s release as “a major victory of the Chinese people” showing that “no power can stop China’s advancing steps.” According to leaked [propaganda directives](#), officials gave precise guidance on how to celebrate her return, including directives on the use of “warm colors on screen.” Such stories of Meng’s release occupied 9 of the top 10 trending hashtags on popular microblogging platform Weibo for a time, though [some dissent](#) also appeared. The broadcast of Meng’s arrival celebrations on September 25—an unusually grand even by Chinese standards—was [watched](#) by nearly 100 million viewers, and drew comparisons to the 2008 Olympics and the 1997 return of Hong Kong to China. On the other hand, the return of the North Americans was [largely ignored](#) by the Chinese media.
- Mixed messaging on Evergrande debt default, as netizens air grievances online:** In mid-September, after news circulated that China Evergrande Group, one of the country’s largest property developers, might default on a major payment, netizens who felt wronged [took to social media platforms](#) Weibo and WeChat to express grievances and call for organized protests. The company, who has debt of US\$300 billion, [missed](#) repayments on September 23 and 29. The government was [faced](#) with the choice of trying to perpetuate the myth of the success of the Chinese growth model (as well as the investments of millions of people) by bailing it out, or let Evergrande collapse, demonstrating that no company is too big to fail. In early September, some state media outlets like Xinhua and the *People’s Daily* had [amplified](#) commentary from leftist, nationalistic writers arguing for the demise of debt-saddled companies, which [sparked concerns](#) about a potential Mao-style ideological “revolution” against the private sector. However, a September 8 *People’s Daily* [editorial](#) affirmed the role of private industry in China’s development. State media have since been relatively quiet about Evergrande’s debt trouble, while WeChat censors reportedly [blocked](#) at least eight messaging groups involving unhappy creditors.

Censorship updates: New crackdowns on social media accounts, financial news, celebrities, discussion of women’s rights

- Cyberspace “clean-up” campaign reaffirms state control of internet:** On the heels of the previous day’s propaganda directive issued by the CCP Central Committee and State Council (see above), the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) on September 15 [released](#) new opinions to further [bring](#) the domestic internet space under control. The CAC said the opinions, which called for platforms to uphold

the notion that the “Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rules the internet,” were to address “problems” with internet platforms which led to “illegal and harmful information” being banned but “not eradicated.” Earlier, the *South China Morning Post* reported on September 2 that some “self-media” accounts that specialized in financial advice and which had millions of followers were [banned](#) by Weibo amid an ongoing cyberspace crackdown. The effort was part of a larger CCP campaign to “clean up” cyberspace by implementing new directives emphasizing “morality,” Xi Jinping Thought, and other values, with the goal of ensuring party [dominance](#) in the cultural sectors and tightening control over all facets of society.

- **Crackdown on fan groups:** Celebrity fan groups are also among those targeted by the CAC in its ongoing clean-up campaign. Under [new measures](#) released August 27, the CAC ordered platforms to better regulate fan groups and prohibit minors from participating in such groups, and banned celebrity popularity rankings in order to “rectify the chaos” the groups were allegedly inflicting on cyberspace. The [Central Propaganda Department](#), government-run [China Performance Industry Association](#), and [State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television](#) all took measures to implement the directives. One group [closed](#) as a result counted some 700,000 members and focused on celebrity gossip, but also highlighted social issues including sexual harassment, and had mobilized online protests. The extent of government power to control and censor celebrity culture was also reflected in the complete erasure from the Chinese internet landscape of the actress Zhao Wei [beginning](#) August 26, for reasons that remain unclear.
- **Censorship of netizen comments on #MeToo case:** Weibo censors [suspended and deleted accounts](#) that discussed the September 14 dismissal by a Beijing court of a sexual assault case brought by a former intern against a prominent Central Television (CCTV) host. Journalists also [received](#) directives not to cover the case, which was among the first #MeToo cases in China.
- **Inner look at Weibo censorship system:** After a Weibo censor [bragged](#) about reporting another user, other netizens dug into his timeline and uncovered details about the inner workings of Weibo censorship. They brought to light an apparent quota of 500 reports a month, of which 90 percent must be considered “well-founded.” The supervisors are considered “active or rewarded community members” who are given verified status and financial perks, but have to leave the team if they fail to report enough content per month. According to Weibo’s July censorship report, there were 840 active censors in July 2021, who each filed an average 4,472 censorship reports monthly. Another netizen recently crowdsourced and [compiled](#) a list of the types of censorship on Weibo, including disabling comments, deleting posts, and closing accounts.

Activists and others face reprisals for criticizing injustice, pandemic handling, prodemocracy activism, possessing Dalai Lama photos, or commenting on India-China tensions

- Veteran activist tried over COVID-19 articles:** On September 9, Guo Quan, a former Nanjing Normal University professor detained in January 2020, was [tried](#) for “incitement to subvert state power.” The prosecution’s case relied on several articles he had written that criticized social injustice, corruption, and the Chinese Communist Party’s response to COVID-19. Guo had previously served 10 years from 2009 on the same charge, after he set up the now-banned China New People’s Party in 2007.
- Human rights lawyers face life imprisonment:** Veteran human rights legal scholar Xu Zhiyong and lawyer Ding Jiayi were [indicted](#) in August on charges of “subversion” related to their participation in a meeting of prodemocracy activists in December 2019. Another participant in the meeting, human rights lawyer Chang Weiping, faces separate charges of subversion over a YouTube video in which he recounted torture he suffered after being detained alongside Xu and Ding. On September 14, Chang met with his lawyer for the [first time](#) since being [seized](#) almost a year ago. All three face potential life imprisonment.
- Over 100 Tibetans detained for Dalai Lama images, overseas communications:** From August 21 to September 3, authorities [detained](#) 111 residents of the Kardze Prefecture in connection with possession of photos of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, and communication with exiled Tibetans, according to the UK-based [Tibet Watch](#). Many of those detained were [also](#) members of a social group that aims to protect the Tibetan language. Further details of charges against them were not immediately available. Separately, on September 30, the Chinese nongovernmental organization (NGO) Rights Defense Network [revealed](#) a case in which a Tibetan entrepreneur was sentenced to life imprisonment, and that he was allegedly tortured during interrogations about his contact with the Dalai Lama.
- Falun Gong practitioners harassed, arrested, and jailed for sharing information:** The US-based Falun Dafa Information Center [reported](#) that authorities arrested 884 practitioners of the spiritual practice Falun Gong and harassed 2,057 from July to August this year. Judges meted out prison sentences of [up to](#) 10 years to some detainees, with reasons including [using](#) a cell phone hotspot to spread information about Falun Gong (5 years) and [telling](#) others how Falun Gong helped cure personal depression (5.5 years). According to the group, the total number of Falun Gong arrests in China for 2021, through August, reached 4,175.
- Chinese and Uyghur activists pursued in the Netherlands and Morocco:** Wang Jingyu, who narrowly escaped deportation from Dubai in April and is seeking asylum in the Netherlands, [revealed](#) on September 12 and 13 that Chongqing police had

detained his mother and father in China. Police claimed his father had been “planning to travel to Hong Kong to foment chaos,” but their detention appears to be form of [transnational repression](#) against Wang for his online comments about military tensions between India and China. In June 2020, police [announced](#) Wang was being “pursued online” for posts on Weibo about India-China military tensions; his parents were reportedly detained, interrogated, and tortured, and remained under surveillance following their release until being [detained](#) again. In another case of transnational repression, Uyghur activist Idris Hasan has been detained in Morocco since July at China’s request, and is awaiting an extradition hearing scheduled for October.

HONG KONG

Police investigate more journalists and NGOs, doxing law adopted, global tech firms respond

- Apple Daily staff face possible life sentences for publishing articles:** Six *Apple Daily* journalists and executives, including the paper’s editor in chief, could face life in prison after Hong Kong prosecutors [moved](#) on September 30 to have their cases heard at the territory’s High Court. They were all charged with “collusion with foreign forces” under the National Security Law (NSL) over opinion articles in the now-closed newspaper calling for sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials. Separately, authorities recently [removed](#) a foundation linked to the paper from the list of tax-exempt charities, and amended the rules for charities to delist organizations “supporting, promoting, or engaging in activities disadvantageous to national security.” Other media in Hong Kong have also faced pressure. Last month, public broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) [released](#) new editorial guidelines that prohibit its journalists from “providing a platform” for content that endangers national security, and [canceled](#) a popular current affairs show, ending its run of 41 years. The newspaper *Ming Pao* [ended](#) the column of a Georgetown-based Hong Kong legal scholar. A recent [article](#) from the *Columbia Journalism Review* described complex business models the independent digital outlets Stand News, Citizen News, and HK Feature have used to stay in business—including irregular payment schedules, reliance on networks of citizen journalists and students, and disseminating articles as PDFs to avoid online surveillance.
- Doxing law comes into effect:** On September 29, the Legislative Council [passed](#) amendments to the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance that criminalize doxing, or releasing person information online, making offenses punishable by up to five years in prison and a HK\$1 million (US\$128,000) fine. The law, which took effect October 8, also empowers the Hong Kong privacy commissioner to authorize warrantless investigations and searches in instances of suspected doxing, press charges without involvement of the Justice Department, order that content be removed from online sites and to issue such orders to extraterritorial parties. It would permit local employees of overseas technology companies to be arrested and jailed

for two years if their companies fail to comply with takedown requests. The [Asia Internet Coalition](#), an industry group including Google, Twitter, and Facebook, and the [Hong Kong Law Society](#), previously detailed concerns about the amendments.

- **NGOs and museum websites shutter amid NSL investigations:** Two NGOs and an online museum have had their websites or social media accounts shut down or blocked under the National Security Law. On September 10, police [ordered](#) the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China to remove all content from its website and from its Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube channels; the group, whose senior leadership has been jailed, [complied](#) on September 16, and dissolved on September 25. Another group, the China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group, announced on September 21 that it was disbanding, and shut down its website and social media accounts amid a national security investigation into the group. On September 28, the website for an online museum commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre, “8964museum.com”, was [blocked](#) in the territory, becoming the seventh website taken down in Hong Kong under the National Security Law.
- **Tech companies navigate increasingly restrictive environment:** Google [provided](#) user data in three instances to Hong Kong police between July and December 2020, despite a public promise after the enactment of the National Security Law not to comply with such requests. The company said that one request involved a “credible threat to life,” and two others involved claims of human trafficking. It had previously said requests could only be made through diplomatic channels under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with the US Justice Department. Meanwhile, the Wikimedia Foundation [announced](#) on September 13 that it had banned seven mainland Chinese editors and revoked access to Wikipedia to 12 others over alleged doxing of Hong Kong editors, and other concerns. An earlier report from local outlet Hong Kong Free Press [found](#) that some mainland Chinese editors had threatened to report Hong Kongers to the national security hotline amid editing disputes.

BEYOND CHINA

CCP influence in diaspora media, West African media, and the World Bank; hack on Indian media; Lithuania finds Xiaomi phone censorship

- **CCP influence over Chinese diaspora media:** The influential New Zealand-based, Chinese-language media website Skykiwi has clauses in its terms and conditions [enforcing](#) Chinese censorship laws on its site, and has warned users that it may share their information with “relevant state agencies” if they violate Chinese laws in posts on its message boards, according to a September 25 report by the independent New Zealand-based outlet Newsroom. Meanwhile, a September 29 [report](#) about Australian Chinese-language media found that translators often soften or remove criticism of the Chinese government during their work for fear of reprisals

against themselves, their families, or their employers. And a September 23 report in [the Economist](#) identified WeChat as among the most significant dissemination channels for Chinese-language news globally and noted that the platform censors content—albeit to a lesser degree in the international versions compared to the domestic Chinese app.

- **Meddling in data at World Bank to benefit China:** An investigation ordered by the World Bank [found](#) on September 15 that the then chief executive Kristalina Georgieva and other senior bank leaders had pressured economists to change data to improve China’s ranking in a 2018 report on business environments. As a result, the bank [canceled](#) the report’s production. Georgieva, who is now the managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), [rejected](#) the investigation’s findings; meanwhile, the IMF has launched an ethics review.
- **Reports on media influence in Ghana and Nigeria:** A September 14 [report](#) drawing from 53 interviews with Ghanaian and Nigerian journalists and policymakers discussed perceptions of Chinese and other international media in West Africa. Nigerian journalists tended to view both Chinese and Western media as influenced by national interests, while Ghanaian journalists viewed Western media as more credible than Chinese; respondents in both countries said they were reluctant to use Chinese media sources in their reporting due to perceptions that they are influenced by the CCP. The report highlighted concerns that Chinese media influence in the region may weaken freedom of expression by promoting a Chinese model of journalism that prioritizes “positive reporting” over watchdog-style investigative reporting. The report said that many Nigerian and Ghanaian media consumers also view Chinese media as propaganda, or as biased towards the Chinese government. Meanwhile, the Chinese embassy announced on October 6 it had [donated](#) computers, tablets, and phones to news wire Ghana News Agency.
- **Suspected Chinese hack targets Indian media:** A cyberattack on Indian media company *Times of India* and various Indian government bodies is believed to have come from a Chinese state-sponsored group, according to a [report](#) released on September 21. The authors at Recorded Future, a data-analysis company, found that 500 MB of data had been extracted between February and August 2021, and that the hackers likely targeted journalists, their sources, and prepublication news content related to India-China relations. A separate September 3 [report](#) by an Indian think tank examined Chinese influence in Indian media, social media, academia, think tanks, and the entertainment and tech industries.
- **Lithuania alleges Xiaomi phones have censorship capabilities:** On September 21, Lithuania’s National Cyber Security Centre released an [assessment](#) of three phones available in the country made by China-based manufacturers—Huawei, Xiaomi, and OnePlus—and [recommended](#) consumers dispose of them “as fast as reasonably possible.” They found that Xiaomi phones [contain](#) an advertising blacklist of terms [related](#) to political, religious, and ethnic minorities in China, which could be activated remotely. In addition to terms related to pornography, some of the re-

stricted terms included “CCP,” “Taiwan country,” “June 4 student movement,” “Falun Dafa,” and “Free Tibet.” Following Lithuania’s announcement, the Germany Federal Office for Information Security also [began](#) a technical investigation into a Xiaomi smartphone. Xiaomi [denied](#) the report’s findings and hired an expert to investigate.

FEATURED PUSHBACK

International tribunal investigates human rights violations against Uyghurs

On September 13, the London-based Uyghur Tribunal [held](#) its last day of hearings. The body heard testimony from a total of 53 witnesses during two sessions in June and September, and received over 300 written statements. It was set up as an independent people’s tribunal [through](#) a crowdfunding campaign that raised £250,000 (\$340,000) to investigate the Chinese government’s treatment of Uyghurs amid a widespread failure of states to do so. Geoffrey Nice, a former prosecutor with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), chaired the nine-member jury panel, which will release its final ruling in December.



Photo credit: [Uyghur Tribunal](#)

Witnesses [included](#) victims of China’s internment camps, family members, experts, and at least one former Chinese police officer. The tribunal provided an avenue for Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims to testify in a semijudicial setting about the abuses they suffered, and to raise awareness of the human rights violations in Xinjiang. The evidence collected will contribute to the legal historic record of the CCP’s human rights violations, and could be used in future prosecutions.

The Uyghur Tribunal also serves as an avenue to counter CCP propaganda. Its website is available in [Mandarin Chinese](#), [Uyghur](#), [Arabic](#), and [Russian](#), and it has received widespread international media coverage. Such was the perceived threat posed by the tribunal’s amplifying of the voices of Uyghur victims that Chinese authorities [imposed sanctions](#) on Nice, harassed and launched cyberattacks against witnesses, pressured the venue hosting the tribunal, and [hosted](#) a press conference in which the family members of witnesses denounced the hearing, apparently having been coerced to do so.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- **Mandatory apps tracking users online in China:** An antifraud app [launched](#) by the Ministry of Public Security and [made](#) mandatory for many local government employees, or to enter certain residence buildings or receive vaccines, was [found](#) to track users who had visited overseas websites, including the US financial site Bloomberg, resulting in visits from police. Watch for the development and promotion of government-backed apps with far-reaching surveillance powers.
- **Chinese state-backed influencers pushing propaganda globally:** A recent [profile](#) of an Arabic-speaking social media influencer in Egypt who works for the China Media Group highlighted how the CCP is using influencers to push propaganda narratives in Muslim majority countries, including regarding its denial of mass atrocities against Uyghurs. Watch for increased use of social media influencers who obscure their relationship to Chinese state-backed entities and promote government narratives in local languages, as well as criticism of such efforts from local communities.
- **Criticism of US, Australian efforts to counter CCP interference:** Two legislative responses to counter CCP espionage and interference have come under criticism for racial profiling or intimidating people of Chinese origin. In the United States, a group of Stanford professors [called](#) on the FBI to [end](#) its “China Initiative,” claiming it has deviated from its mission and targeted ethnic Chinese academics unfairly. In Australia, [criticism](#) of a foreign influence transparency scheme has emerged, including from a former [prime minister](#), for being too wide-ranging, leading to uncertainty and confusion. Watch for further efforts to ensure democratic governments’ efforts at resilience to authoritarian reach are grounded in human rights principles.

TAKE ACTION

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- **Access uncensored content:** Find an overview comparing popular circumvention tools and information on how to access them via GreatFire.org, [here](#) or [here](#). Learn more about how to reach uncensored content and enhance digital security [here](#).
- **Support a prisoner:** Learn how to take action to help journalists and free expression activists, including those featured in passed issues of the *China Media Bulletin*, [here](#).
- **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

- For archives, go to: www.freedomhouse.org/China-media
- For additional information on human rights and free expression related to China, see: *Freedom in the World 2021*, *Freedom on the Net 2020*, *Beijing's Global Megaphone*, and *The Battle for China's Spirit: Religious Revival, Repression, and Resistance under Xi Jinping*



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