

CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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IMAGE OF THE MONTH

Hong Kong's Silent Supporters in China

This image is a screenshot taken from a video posted on YouTube of a choir singing one of the Hong Kong protest movement's anthems, "Do you hear the Hong Kong people sing?" in Cantonese. The video has garnered over 1.3 million views and a surprising number of supportive comments from viewers in China. A sample of translated comments published by [China Digital Times](#) on November 15 include encouragement to protesters to "Please hold up!", references to learning the truth about Hong Kong after "jumping" outside the Great Firewall to access blocked websites, and greetings from Guangdong, Guangxi, Sichuan, and as far afield as Inner Mongolia.

Credit: [HK isn't DONE! yet](#)



ANALYSIS

China's Internet Freedom Hit a New Low in 2019, and the World Could Follow

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No user or platform is safe from the leadership's insatiable appetite for ideological conformity.

Late last month, public security agencies and a school in [Hebei Province](#) “seriously criticized” a 15-year-old student for accessing blocked websites and browsing information that was deemed “antagonistic toward China.” A few days earlier, another Chinese netizen had reported that his account on Tencent’s social media platform [WeChat had been suspended](#) for “spreading malicious rumors” after he posted a comment about Winnie the Pooh, whose likeness is often used to mock President Xi Jinping. It will soon be even easier for authorities to track down such individuals: as of [December 1](#), all telecommunications companies will be required to obtain facial scans of new internet or mobile phone users as part of the real-name registration process.

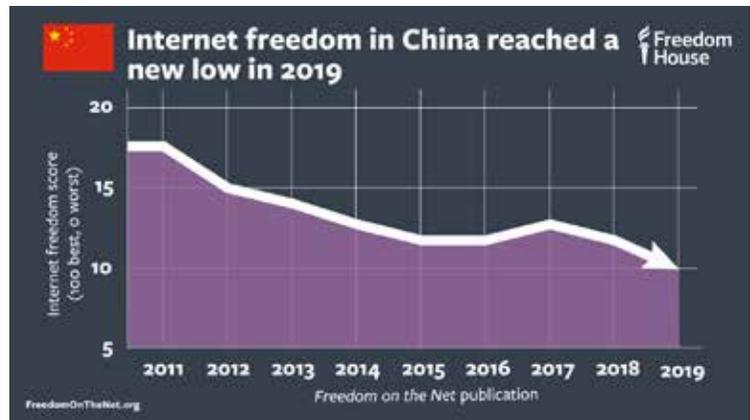
These are just a few recent examples of the daunting growth in restrictions on expression, privacy, and access to information in China. Indeed, the newly released edition of Freedom House’s annual global assessment of internet freedom, [Freedom on the Net](#), identified the Chinese government as the world’s worst abuser of internet freedom for the fourth consecutive year. But even by China’s own poor track record, [the past year](#) stood out, as the country’s score reached its lowest point since the inception of the report a decade ago.

Extreme censorship and penalties for once-tolerated activities

Driven by official paranoia surrounding the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, persistent antigovernment protests in Hong Kong, and an ongoing trade war with the United States, information controls in China reached exceptional levels over the past year. The scale of content removals, website closures, and social media account deletions [expanded](#), affecting tens of thousands of individual users and institutional content providers. Platforms focused on apolitical topics, including entertainment, dating, and celebrity gossip applications, faced new restrictions, particularly on their real-time communication features. Information on subjects like economic news that have traditionally been given freer rein became more systematically and permanently censored.

Chinese citizens’ risk of being detained or imprisoned for accessing or sharing information online has increased considerably in recent years. During the past year alone, [several new categories](#) of individuals were targeted with legal and extralegal reprisals for their online activity. These included users of [Twitter](#), which is blocked in China but still accessible via circumvention tools such as virtual private networks (VPNs). Numerous Twitter users were harassed, detained, interrogated by police, and forced to delete their past posts. Some users and sellers of VPNs faced similar reprisals, although on a smaller scale.

Ordinary users of WeChat increasingly faced detention and prosecution. Among others who were jailed during 2019, [the moderator of a popular WeChat account](#) that shared news from outside China was sentenced in July to two years in prison, [a professor from Guangdong Province](#) was jailed for three and a



half years after posting images related to the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement, and a 22-year-old [Tibetan monk from Sichuan Province](#) was arrested for expressing concern over Beijing's policies that are reducing use of the Tibetan language. Several activists who operated websites about civil society and human rights issues also faced pretrial detention and long prison sentences. The most prominent was Huang Qi, founder of the human rights website 64 Tianwang, who was sentenced in July to 12 years in prison for "intentionally leaking state secrets."

Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang region increasingly faced severe penalties and long-term detention for mundane online activities like communicating with relatives who live abroad. [Erpat Ablekrem](#), a 24-year-old aspiring professional soccer player, was sent to a reeducation camp in January 2019 for using WeChat to contact family members who had fled the country. [Rapid advances in surveillance technology](#) and greater police access to user data have helped facilitate this rise in arrests and prosecutions. In some instances, tools that were first deployed by police in Xinjiang have now spread to other parts of China, such as hand-held devices used for [extracting data from mobile phones](#).

Impact on user communication

In response to the escalation of real-world reprisals and legal penalties for online commentary, self-censorship has become more pervasive. The risk of losing one's personal WeChat account is a particularly strong deterrent, since the multifaceted application—used for everything from banking to ordering food—is now regarded as essential to everyday life in China.

The space for online mobilization has also narrowed. The effects of the Chinese government's multiyear crackdown on civil society and nongovernmental organizations are visible in the online sphere, as previously outspoken activists have gone silent following arrests or the closure of their social media accounts.

Several platforms that still provided alternative means of communication on routinely censored topics—such as video-sharing, live-streaming, and blockchain applications—faced new restrictions during the year, indicating that the authorities were determined to plug gaps in the system. For example, [blockchain](#) platforms were required to enforce real-name registration and censor their content, and [artificial intelligence](#) was deployed to screen images for banned material.

Global implications

Foreigners visiting China should not expect to be exempt from the government's ever-expanding web of surveillance and censorship. Recent [Freedom House](#) research on police use of advanced databases to track “key individuals” throughout China found that foreigners are one of the targeted populations. At least one [foreign journalist](#) reporting from China said he was barred from his WeChat account for “spreading rumors” about the Tiananmen Square massacre. He had to admit to the offense and provide a face scan before access could be restored. Ongoing restrictions on VPNs and implementation of the facial-scan requirement for SIM card registration may also disproportionately affect foreign visitors to the country.

Meanwhile, international companies and investors must grapple with the increasing censorship of economic news, US government sanctions on Chinese technology firms linked to human rights abuses in Xinjiang, and the prominent role of social media giants like Tencent in helping to detect and penalize users for engaging in legitimate political, religious, or simply humorous speech. Foreign firms like Apple, Microsoft, and LinkedIn have already complied with government censorship in China, and they could be forced to play a part in user arrests as well.

Even as it increases internet controls at home, the Chinese government and affiliated private companies are affecting internet freedom in other countries around the world. In [the 2018 edition of Freedom on the Net](#), Freedom House found that 36 out of 65 countries under study had sent personnel to China for training on new media or information management, while 18 had purchased artificial intelligence-enabled surveillance systems. New research published in 2019 by the [Open Technology Fund](#) shows that both fields of activity have continued to expand, with Chinese-made internet control equipment and official training reaching more than 70 countries.

The 2019 edition of [Freedom on the Net](#) noted that China has emerged as a leader in developing, employing, and exporting automated tools for mass surveillance of [social media](#). The Chinese firm Knowlesys, for example, is planning to provide live demonstrations at an upcoming trade show in Dubai on how to “monitor your targets’ messages, profiles, locations, behaviors, relationships, and more,” and how to “monitor public opinion” for elections. Mass surveillance of social media was identified in 40 of the 65 countries assessed in 2019, though not all employed Chinese technology.

This year featured a series of especially sensitive anniversaries that motivated the escalation in censorship and surveillance in China, but there is [no reason to believe](#) that the new restrictions will be rolled back. On the contrary, the leadership appears determined to ratchet up its repression indefinitely as it pursues the impossible goal of ideological conformity and social control in a globally engaged nation of 1.4 billion people. In fact, it is increasingly obvious that Beijing's efforts are, by necessity, global in scope, and that the rest of the world will have to choose between resistance and complicity.

IN THE NEWS

Communist Party Fourth Plenum: Xi Jinping governance model affirmed, tech innovation emphasized, Hong Kong warning issued

Last month, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee [completed its fourth plenum](#). The meeting of top leaders, held in the military-run Jingxi Hotel in Beijing from October 28 to 31, was long delayed; the previous plenum had taken place in February 2018. The final [bulletin](#) and [resolution](#) called on the party to [increase its role in society](#), but advocated few major changes. The outcome was considered by many [to be anticlimactic](#) when compared with the last plenum's announcement of a constitutional amendment removing presidential term limits. Perhaps for this reason, there was neither a public outcry nor increase in state censorship following the close of the plenum as had happened in 2018.

With regard to media, internet, and academic freedom, there are three main takeaways from the plenum:

- **Continuing support for Xi and his policies of increasing political and ideological control:** This year's plenum reaffirmed [President Xi Jinping's particular brand of authoritarianism](#). [Xi's 65-page-long speech](#) was replete with references to the tenets of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era—the full name of the ideology commonly known as “Xi Jinping Thought,” which undergirds party policies and is increasingly incorporated into schools, workplaces, media, public spaces, and other components of everyday life. The plenum's bulletin stressed the need to [reconsolidate the power of the Communist Party](#), extend party control over all levels of Chinese society, and strengthen people's faith in China's socialist system, while managing domestic risks and improving ideological purity. The strong show of support for Xi deflated some earlier [speculation](#) that the plenum's delay had been due to party infighting and challenges to Xi's leadership.
- **Tech investment and innovation:** This year, tech innovation was emphasized, with the plenum calling for [a national system to master new “core technologies.”](#) [According to the Elsa Kania](#), a research fellow at Georgetown's Center for Security and Emerging Technology, the bulletin used the word “innovation” 31 times. This comes after calls made by President Xi prior to the plenum for China to invest in [further development of blockchain technologies](#), the technology behind Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. However, after the price of bitcoins and blockchain shares began to rise in the plenum's wake, state media like the People's Daily tried to rein in investor enthusiasm, urging them to [“remain rational.”](#)
- **Hard-line stance on Hong Kong, Taiwan:** Although no specific mention was made of the ongoing unrest in Hong Kong, [the plenum's bulletin](#) included calls to uphold the “one country, two systems” arrangement governing Hong Kong, and to promote Taiwan's unification with China. It urged creation of an improved mechanism for

“safeguarding national security” in Hong Kong, where prodemocracy protests have now entered their sixth month, as well as the deepening of cross-strait integration. It further called for new policies aimed at fostering sentiments favorable to reunification among the Taiwanese public. [Statements to the media by officials after the end of the meeting](#) further signaled Beijing’s intention to take a more active role in Hong Kong’s affairs, including by more frequently exercising its power to interpret the territory’s Basic Law, increasing patriotic education, and exercising greater scrutiny over the selection of future chief executives.

Censorship Updates: Shutterstock, YouTube celebrity, iPhone browsers use Tencent blacklist

- Shutterstock censoring search results in China:** Last month, stock image supplier Shutterstock began censoring search results in mainland China, [according to a November 6 report by the Intercept](#), after engineers received instructions in September to implement the changes. Banned keywords reportedly include “President Xi,” “dictator,” and “yellow umbrella,” a symbol of 2014 prodemocracy protests in Hong Kong. A petition signed by 180 Shutterstock employees called on the company to reject Chinese government demands that search results be censored, referencing in part the many company employees from around the world who have “experienced government oppression firsthand.” Employees further expressed concern about the slippery slope the change entails, be it in terms of future demands from China, or similar requests from other restrictive governments. Shutterstock chief executive Jon Oringer [admitted](#) that the company would filter search results in China, but defended the decision as being in line with the company’s “brand promise” by enabling Chinese storytellers to still access a wide range of creative content. Shutterstock has been distributing its images in China since 2014, but its involvement grew last year with a [\\$15 million investment](#) in the tech platform ZCool—a partnership that grants Shutterstock greater access to widely used platforms like Tencent Social Ads.
- PewDiePie censored in China after discussion of Hong Kong protests:** Popular YouTube personality Felix Kjellberg—known as PewDiePie—has claimed that [the Chinese government censored online references to him](#) after he recorded a video commenting on the Hong Kong protest movement. With more than 100 million subscribers to his video-sharing channel, PewDiePie is the world’s second-most popular YouTube personality. In an October 16 video, PewDiePie referred to the Chinese government’s response to overseas media personalities’ expressions of support for Hong Kong protesters and shared memes about the protests, as well as memes mocking Xi Jinping. Shortly after, media outlets and Chinese internet users reported that [references to him had been scrubbed from Baidu’s Tieba](#), an online forum similar to Reddit. [According to one Twitter user](#), PewDiePie has 600,000 fans in China, who know him mostly through reposts of his content on domestic video-sharing and social media platforms.

- **Apple using Tencent blacklist for iPhone web-browsing filter:** [An October 31 report by Quartz revealed](#) that Apple is working with Chinese tech giant Tencent to identify websites for blocking by the Safari web browser in China. Outside of China, Apple cooperates with Google’s “safe browsing service” to provide Safari with a blacklist of sites with malware or phishing content. Inside China, where Google is blocked, Apple is partnering with Tencent for the same functionality. However, along with malicious malware sites, Tencent’s blacklist includes websites containing political material the Chinese government considers harmful. Apple has repeatedly complied with Chinese government censorship demands in an effort to retain market access, although some of its most revenue-rich services like Apple TV+, Apple Books, and iTunes movie rentals [remain unavailable in China](#).

Facial recognition upgrades and US sanctions fuel citizen complaints, lawsuit, and scrutiny of international collaboration

- **Facial recognition systems continue to expand in use and location:** Authorities have continued to expand use of facial recognition technologies, with some cases triggering public concerns over privacy. At the Urban Rail Transit Operation and Development Forum held in Beijing on October 29, [it was announced](#) that the city’s metro would implement facial recognition technology to classify passengers, as part of a security screening system. In Xiangyang, Hubei Province, local authorities have used facial recognition cameras at a downtown crosswalk to identify jaywalkers and broadcast their images, names, and national ID numbers on a large electronic screen, [according to recent footage](#) uploaded to video sharing platform Douyin. Over the past two months, similar initiatives have reportedly been introduced in Zhenjiang (Jiangsu Province), Wenzhou (Zhejiang Province), and Xining (Qinghai Province). In Shanghai, facial recognition equipment has been installed in [a third of the city’s apartment complexes](#) as of this May, in some instances drawing complaints from residents who had not been alerted. Emotion-recognition camera systems were advertised widely at [China’s Public Security Expo](#) held in Shenzhen in late October. These systems are reportedly being tested in Xinjiang, [though experts suggest the technology is still in its infancy](#). [Other technology displayed at the expo](#) included prison surveillance systems, eyeglasses with hidden cameras, and devices which could read all Chinese- and foreign-language material on a user’s personal computer or phone.
- **Chinese professor files lawsuit against the use of facial recognition at wildlife park:** A professor from Zhejiang University of Science and Technology has taken legal action against a Hangzhou safari park which requires visitors to [scan their faces in order to gain entrance](#). In a complaint accepted by a Hangzhou court on November 1, Professor Guo Bing accused the park of infringing on customer privacy and questioned how visitor information was being stored after members with annual passes like himself were told that they would not be allowed to enter if they refused to provide a facial scan. He is seeking modest financial compensation, but reportedly

hopes the case will encourage increased regulation of biometric data collection. [According to the Guardian](#), the case has the potential to “open wider debate in China over the use of such technology by businesses and the government.”

- **Increased scrutiny of international collaboration with banned Chinese firms:** Companies and institutions outside China have come under greater scrutiny for their ties with Chinese firms that have been blacklisted by the US government for their involvement in human rights abuses and surveillance in Xinjiang. An October 14 report by Australia’s national broadcaster ABC found that leading Australian universities have potentially [assisted the Chinese government](#) in the development of surveillance and military technologies, including through partnerships with two entities on the US government’s entities list. BuzzFeed reports that as of early November, [tech firms Google, Apple, and Amazon](#) continue to distribute physical products and apps produced by three companies—Hikvision, Dahua Technology, and iFlytek—that have been placed on the entities list. On November 8, Pittsburgh’s local Action News 4 reported that [dozens of the city’s surveillance cameras](#) purchased by the local district attorney are manufactured by Dahua, a Chinese firm banned by the US government from selling to federal agencies, and whose equipment is reportedly vulnerable to hacking.

HONG KONG

Government, airport, “testing waters” of internet censorship

Censorship of the sort seen within China has long been absent in Hong Kong, even as local authorities have adopted increasingly repressive measures to deter prodemocracy protests. But 24 weeks into the current protest movement, signs have emerged that this may be changing.

On November 1, Hong Kong’s High Court [granted a temporary injunction](#) to block incitement to violence or property damage on “any internet-based platform or medium.” These included but were not limited to messaging app Telegram and online forum LIHKG—platforms popular among protesters, which the Hong Kong government has accused of [facilitating “unlawful activities.”](#) The move apparently came in response to, among other things, activity on the Telegram channels “dadfindboy” and “tanakayotsuba.” Each with large followings, the channels have been used [to collect and share personal information about police officers](#). As of November 7, “dadfindboy” had reportedly been shuttered because it violated Telegram’s terms of service. Police are now reportedly also seeking to break the app’s encryption protocol in order to reveal the identity of the channels’ administrators, as well as those of other protesters using the app.

Responses from legislators and international rights groups to the injunction was swift. Legislative Council Chairman of Information Technology Charles Mok expressed concern that the injunction is [“just testing the waters,”](#) and may presage further government censorship. [In an open letter to Chief Executive Carrie Lam](#), digital rights organi-

zation Access Now and other international groups including Freedom House said the injunction “enables overly broad restrictions on the freedom of expression of Hong Kong residents and interferes with access to popular forums...in violation of fundamental rights,” and asked the government to withdraw it.

The international and local pressure may have had some impact. While the [injunction was extended](#) on November 15—the day it was to expire—the renewed version reportedly had a narrowed scope, relaying that online platforms themselves would not be liable for violence-inciting content on their services. Nonetheless, the Hong Kong Internet Society expressed disappointment with the extension, and Mok voiced concern over the chilling effect it creates for internet users.

Online censorship has also extended to the government-operated Hong Kong International Airport. In late October, a Reddit user reported that the Hong Kong Free Press (HKFP) website [had been blocked](#) on the airport’s public ASUS internet terminals, though it remained accessible at non-ASUS terminals and through the airport’s Wi-Fi. HKFP is an independent, English-language digital news outlet that has reported extensively on the protests and police violence against them.

As protests show no sign of abating, [comments from Chinese Vice Premier Han Zheng](#) on November 6 calling for the imposition of national security laws in the city suggest that government censorship may increase in the future.

BEYOND CHINA

Huawei “safe cities,” Chinese cameras at US military facilities, university influence, Taiwan elections

- **New report finds Huawei “safe cities” have spread to 52 countries:** A November report released by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) found that more than 73 cities in 52 countries around the world have entered into [“safe city” agreements with Huawei](#). Through these agreements, the Chinese tech firm provides local authorities with surveillance technology, including facial and license plate recognition cameras and social media monitoring tools. Of these agreements, 71 percent were concluded with administrations in countries rated Not Free or Partly Free by Freedom House; 59 percent are with governments in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; and 71 percent with those in middle-income countries. The CSIS analysis also questions the supposed benefits of the technology in reducing crime, saying that Huawei’s “solutions are difficult to verify and appear grossly exaggerated in some cases.” By contrast, reports have already emerged of the systems being used to suppress political opponents in recipient countries. In a recent example, the Associated Press (AP) reported on October 16 that police in Belgrade, Serbia’s capital, [leaked footage of antigovernment protesters](#) taken from Huawei cameras to progovernment media, which then published the images alongside the names of the participants.

- **New York firm sold Chinese cameras to military facilities, claiming they were US-made:** In early November, federal prosecutors filed fraud charges against seven current and former employers of the New York-based Aventura Technologies. They accused the company of selling tens of millions of dollars of Chinese security equipment—[goods Aventura falsely claimed were US-made](#)—to American government facilities. The firm reportedly relabeled the items to hide their Chinese origin. Federal prosecutors claim that purchasers included military bases, US Department of Energy facilities, and even a Navy aircraft carrier, and that individuals in China were reportedly aware of the deception.
- **Canadian Chinese student association decertified:** Universities continue to struggle with [how to respond to growing Chinese presence on their campuses](#), and the impact on academic freedom, but one potentially fruitful approach is fair enforcement of school regulations when violations by Chinese students or officials occur. [On November 3, the student union of McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada](#), upheld its September 22 decision to decertify the Chinese Student and Scholars Association (CSSA) for having violating school guidelines. The initial decision was made after members of the CSSA disrupted a February talk by a Uighur activist, and after the revelation of messages in the CSSA's WeChat group that indicated that photographs of the event had been supplied to the Chinese consulate in Toronto. Similar worries have been raised in the United Kingdom, where [a November 5 House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee report](#) cited several scholars who expressed concern about the negative impact of Chinese government influence on academic freedom across British universities.
- **Governments, civil society, social media firms on high alert for Chinese disinformation ahead of Taiwan elections:** As [Taiwan's January 2020 elections](#) approach, some observers are concerned that China will step up disinformation aimed at the country's voters. According to researchers from V-Dem, a program at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden that assesses democracies, Taiwan is subjected to the [dissemination of more false information from Beijing](#) than any other country in the world, with misleading content being spread by hackers and bots on social media platforms like Facebook, Sina Weibo, and the Japanese instant messaging app Line. China's efforts are believed to have favored [Kuomintang presidential candidate Han Kuo-yu](#) in November 2018, when he successfully ran for the mayorship of Kaohsiung; Han has called for closer ties with China. In response to ongoing concerns, Facebook pledged to [strengthen measures to combat disinformation](#) on the platform in the lead-up to the polls. Meanwhile, several civil society groups—including [Taiwan Fact-check Center](#), [Cofacts](#), [MyGoPen](#), and [Rumor and Truth](#)—are running various initiatives to combat online disinformation related to the elections and other topics, at times in collaboration with social media platforms like Line.

FEATURED PUSHBACK

European rights prizes awarded to political prisoners in China

Over the past two months, European organizations have awarded three prestigious human rights and free speech prizes to political prisoners in China. These came despite threats and Chinese government reprisals for similar actions in the past, such as a series of retaliatory steps taken against [Norway](#) in 2010 after pro-democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.



In late October, the European Parliament announced that the [2019 Sakharov Prize](#), the European Union's prestigious human rights prize, was being awarded to Uighur scholar Ilham Tohti. Earlier in the month, Tohti was the recipient of the Council of Europe's Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize. Tohti, an academic, is serving a life sentence for "separatism" due to his efforts to foster dialogue between Han and Uighur citizens, and to speak out against violations of Uighur rights. Activists have been touting Tohti as a deserving recipient of such prizes since his initial arrest in 2014. The current timing of the awards speaks to both his own plight and his symbolism as a voice silenced for speaking up on behalf of an ethnic minority; [an estimated one million Uighurs](#) are in detention in China due to their religious beliefs and ethnic identity.

Additionally, on [November 15](#), Sweden's branch of PEN International awarded its [Tucholsky Prize](#) for a persecuted writer or publisher to Swedish citizen and bookseller Gui Minhai, who has been held in Chinese police custody since his 2015 abduction from Thailand. In advance of the ceremony, Chinese diplomats reportedly [threatened consequences](#) for Swedish-Chinese relations, and implied that any government representatives attending the event would be barred from entering China in the future. Despite the threats, Swedish culture and democracy minister Amanda Lind attended the ceremony to present the award. Earlier in the day, [Swedish prime minister Stefan Löfven](#) told local television, "We are not going to give in to this type of threat. Never. We have freedom of expression in Sweden, and that's how it is, period."

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- **Political prosecutions relying on facial recognition tools:** As facial recognition technologies spread throughout China—including on public transportation and in private residential units—and are also integrated with other police [surveillance databases of “key individuals,”](#) watch for emerging examples of the technology being used as a trigger for arrests, or as evidence in the prosecution of political activists, ethnic minorities, and religious dissidents.
- **Escalating Hong Kong crackdown amid winter holidays:** The Chinese Communist Party has [a long track record](#) of timing politicized arrests and prosecutions of prominent activists within China to occur around Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Eve—a holiday period when many Americans and other international observers take time off to spend with family, and may be slower to respond to heightened repression. As tensions and unrest escalate in Hong Kong after six months of protests, watch for whether the CCP will apply this playbook in the territory to deploy paramilitary forces to violently suppress the demonstrations.
- **Outcome and impact of US national security review of Tiktok acquisition:** On November 1, [Reuters](#) and other [news outlets](#) reported that the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) had initiated a national security review of the 2017, \$1 billion acquisition of Musical.ly by Tiktok, which is owned by the Chinese company Bytedance. The review was triggered in part by bipartisan congressional calls for greater scrutiny of the app after recent reports of Tiktok’s popularity among American teenagers, evidence of the app censoring content that would be deemed undesirable by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and concerns about the status of Americans’ online data accessed by the Chinese tech firm. As the review proceeds, watch for how the committee addresses these concerns, the impact of its final decision on Tiktok’s operations in the United States and globally ([about 60 percent](#) of the app’s monthly active users reportedly are US residents), and whether the process sets a precedent for future reviews of other Chinese tech acquisitions—including Tencent, which has stakes in online forum [Reddit](#) and the gaming company Blizzard.

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 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*



Freedom House is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights.

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