

September 21, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Sean M. Curran
Director
U.S. Secret Service
245 Murray Lane, SW, BLDG T-5
Washington, DC 20223

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Todd Blanche
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Secretary Rubio, Secretary Mullin, Attorney General Blanche, and Director Curran:

We write to urge you to take every necessary step to ensure that all individuals in the United States can exercise their First Amendment right to peacefully protest—without intimidation, harassment, surveillance, or violence—during Chinese President Xi Jinping’s upcoming September 24 visit. Make no mistake: the Chinese government’s attempts to silence its critics inside our borders is a direct assault on U.S. sovereignty and the rights that belong to every person in this country, regardless of their citizenship.

Protecting these rights must be a priority before, during, and after the visit, not an afterthought. Your respective agencies must be prepared for the likelihood that the Chinese government and its proxies will try to disrupt, monitor, or physically attack lawful and peaceful protests on American soil, and should be ready to respond the moment they do.

President Xi’s visit comes at a time when China’s transnational repression has intensified. It is therefore essential that your agencies work together to prevent and respond to any effort by the Chinese government or its agents to use these tactics to interfere with the speech and advocacy of those living in the United States or retaliate against relatives inside the People’s Republic of China (“PRC”).

The Department of Justice defines transnational repression as “tactics that foreign governments employ to reach beyond their borders to harm, intimidate, threaten, harass, or coerce individuals.”¹ According to Freedom House, China is by far the leading perpetrator of transnational repression in the world.² Since 2014, Freedom House has confirmed 319 physical

¹ National Security Division, *Transnational Repression (TNR)*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, (Feb. 13, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/nsd/transnational-repression-tnr>.

² Yana Gorokhovskaia and Grady Vaughan, *Collaboration and Resistance: Tracking Transnational Repression in 2025*, FREEDOM HOUSE (2026), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2026/collaboration-and-resistance-tracking-transnational-repression-2025>.

incidents linked to Beijing.³ These represent nearly a quarter of all documented cases, and a number of them have occurred on U.S. soil.⁴

China employs a sophisticated coercive toolkit—including digital surveillance, physical attacks, AI-enabled sexual harassment, threats to family members in China, censorship, and lawfare—to target its diaspora, exile communities, and non-Chinese citizens overseas, many of them here in the United States.⁵ This includes Hong Kongers, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Mongolians, Taiwanese and Chinese, Falun Gong practitioners, former Chinese government officials, and others who speak out against the Chinese government.⁶

China's architecture of transnational repression is deeply embedded, as seen in international manhunts like Operation Fox Hunt and Operation Sky Net. In 2022, Safeguard Defenders identified over 100 undeclared Chinese police stations overseas dedicated to monitoring and intimidating Chinese communities, with some operating in the U.S.⁷ The United Front Work Department also keeps watch over PRC students abroad,⁸ who, according to Amnesty International, have experienced pressure through being photographed at protests; surveilled on campus; reported on by other students; and threatened with harm to their family members back home if they engage in activities that depart from the Chinese government's beliefs.⁹

Moreover, China's recent Ethnic Unity Law raises serious concerns about the expansion of Beijing's reach. By requiring ideological conformity with the Chinese Communist Party's conception of "ethnic unity" and asserting legal authority over conduct outside China, the law creates a broader basis for targeting activists, ethnic minorities, and critics abroad. Its sweeping language could enable Beijing to characterize peaceful speech or advocacy as undermining "ethnic unity and progress," extending the reach of China's domestic repression across borders to suppress dissent overseas.

As noted by the FBI, "if you are in the United States, including in a U.S. territory, your freedoms are protected, regardless of your citizenship."¹⁰ These freedoms encompass the freedoms of expression, assembly, and press, as elucidated in our First Amendment. Protection of these

³ Nicole Sadek, *'Escalating efforts': A year after China Targets, Beijing's global campaign against dissenters continues*, INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS (Apr. 28, 2026), <https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-targets/escalating-efforts-a-year-after-china-targets-beijings-global-campaign-against-dissenters-continues/>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Report on the PRC's Transnational Repression and Malign Influence in 2025*, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA (June 4, 2026), <https://www.cecc.gov/publications/commission-analysis/report-pres-transnational-repression-and-malign-influence-2025>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *110 Overseas: 230,000 Chinese "persuaded to return,"* SAFEGUARD DEFENDERS (Oct. 29, 2022), <https://safeguarddefenders.com/sites/default/files/pdf/110%20Overseas%20%28v5%29.pdf>.

⁸ Joshua Kurlantzick, *China's Transnational Repression Is Being Met with a Deafening Silence*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (July 13, 2026), <https://www.cfr.org/articles/chinas-transnational-repression-is-being-met-with-a-deafening-silence-2>.

⁹ *"On my campus, I am afraid": China's targeting of overseas students stifles rights*, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (May 13, 2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/8006/2024/en/>.

¹⁰ *Transnational Repression*, FBI, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/transnational-repression>.

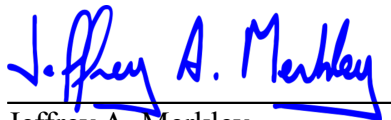
freedoms extends to anyone here who criticizes a foreign government or leader, President Xi Jinping among them.

Yet Chinese authorities have repeatedly worked to undermine these core American freedoms. When President Xi visited California in November 2023, a coalition of pro-democracy activists, Hong Kongers, Tibetans, and Uyghurs gathered to protest Chinese government policies. They were met with a wave of harassment and physical violence from Chinese diplomats and pro-China diaspora groups. The Washington Post reported that the Chinese consulate in Los Angeles had paid for these groups' hotels and meals, and that diplomats had hired at least 60 private security guards to "protect" them and help incite violence.¹¹ That is not diplomacy. It is a foreign government organizing and financing the assault of protestors on American streets for exercising American rights. It cannot be allowed to happen again.

The right to peacefully protest in this country is protected by the Constitution and must not be undermined by any government, including a foreign one. Not on American soil. Not ever.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue.

Sincerely,



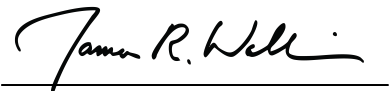
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator

¹¹ Shibani Mahtani, Meg Kelly, Cate Brown, Cate Cadell, Ellen Nakashima & Chris Dehghanpoor, *How China Expanded its Repression into an American City*, THE WASHINGTON POST (Sept. 3, 2024), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2024/chinese-communist-party-us-repression-xi-jinping-apec/>.



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator