

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	693
Land:	Kina
Kilde:	Human Rights Watch
Titel:	World Report 2023
Udgivet:	12. januar 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	13. januar 2023

In June, Chile ratified the Escazú Agreement, an international treaty protecting environmental defenders and guaranteeing rights related to the environment.

Chile and five other Latin American countries led the renewal of the mandate for the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela in October.

The same month, Chile was elected as a member of the UN Human Rights Council for the 2023-2025 term.

China

Repression deepened across China in 2022. Xi Jinping secured an unprecedented third term as the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, making him the country's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong. In October, a man draped two banners over a bridge in Beijing, calling for the "dictatorial traitor" Xi to be removed, and for freedoms and universal suffrage for people in China. The lone protestor inspired solidarity protests around the world.

The Chinese government tightened its Covid-19 restrictions, imposing repeated, unpredictable lockdowns on hundreds of millions of people. In some cases, officials used barbed wire, metal bars, and large barriers to prevent people from leaving their homes. In Sichuan province, residents were unable to leave buildings even during an earthquake. During these lockdowns—which lasted from days to weeks—people reported difficulties accessing food and medical care, in some cases leading to deaths. Others reported privacy violations, censorship, disruptions to their livelihoods, and government brutality as police and health officials kicked and shoved people who resisted Covid restrictions. In Tibet and Xinjiang, residents reported even more draconian Covid-19 controls imposed by local authorities already severely limiting rights.

China suffered its most severe heat wave ever recorded, causing widespread power shortages that prompted authorities to revert to using coal, and underscoring the urgency of a transition to clean energy.

Beijing and Hong Kong authorities continued their assault on human rights in the territory, a downward trajectory that is expected to continue as Beijing appointed an abusive former police official, John Lee, as the city's chief executive.

International attention to Chinese government human rights violations grew. Eight governments engaged in a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics in protest. In June, entry into force of the United States Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act established a presumption that goods from Xinjiang are made from forced labor and cannot be imported. In August, the former United Nations high commissioner for human rights released her report on Xinjiang, concluding that the abuses in the region "may constitute crimes against humanity."

Hong Kong

Hong Kong authorities attacked press freedom. National security police raided the office of influential media outlet Stand News on December 29, 2021, charged its editors with sedition, and effectively forced it to close; this prompted seven other outlets to close within two weeks. In April, police arrested the ex-Stand News columnist and veteran journalist, Allen Au, on baseless charges of sedition. Later that month, the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents' Club canceled the Human Rights Press Awards, citing fear of arrest. In September, police charged Hong Kong Journalists Association chair Ronson Chan with "obstructing police officers" during a reporting assignment.

In August, the High Court ruled that journalistic materials are not legally protected under the draconian National Security Law (NSL). The decision affirmed the legality of police searches of the phones of media tycoon Jimmy Lai, who faces three NSL charges and one sedition charge, along with six other executives of Hong Kong's former leading pro-democracy paper *Apple Daily*.

At least 231 people have been arrested for allegedly violating the NSL since it was imposed on June 30, 2020, and for "sedition," a colonial-era law the authorities have revived to crush dissent. The NSL imposes a presumption against bail, a rule inconsistent with the presumption of innocence. Among the 138 individuals charged, most had been under pretrial detention for nearly a year or more.

In May, police charged 90-year-old pro-democracy advocate Cardinal Joseph Zen and five others for failing to properly register the legal aid group 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund. Under police pressure, in July, the Bar Association opened inquiries into the professional conduct of at least 35 barristers who represented the fund's beneficiaries.

After police arrested unionists and effectively forced many unions to disband, in September the government further restricted union activities by requiring founders of new unions to pledge that they will not threaten "national security."

Censorship is now commonplace in Hong Kong. In May, a government-run book fair banned several publishers of political books from participating. Public libraries, commercial bookstore chains, and some school libraries continue to pull from their shelves politically "sensitive" titles.

Several films portraying Hong Kong political issues were banned under the new censorship regime, which prohibits movies that may "endanger national security." In August, a film festival dropped an award-winning film after its director refused to yield to authorities' demand to remove a scene depicting the 2014 pro-democracy Umbrella Movement.

Universities were complicit in the authorities' repression of students, who have been central to the city's pro-democracy movement. After four universities removed artwork about the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre in late 2021, in January 2022, the University of Hong Kong further covered up Tiananmen-related slogans painted on university pavement. All eight public universities have obstructed their student unions' operations, including by ceasing to recognize them and refusing to help them collect membership dues. Universities introduced mandatory national security law courses while the Chinese University of Hong Kong began hosting weekly Chinese flag-raising ceremonies.

Police intensified surveillance of Hong Kong society. In June, police set up a "counter-terrorism" hotline in addition to an existing "anti-violence" hotline for reporting national security violations. In August, the police said it would "dispel misinformation" about the force through a "round-the-clock public opinion tracking system."

Hong Kong people continued to risk arrests to protest. On June 4, many people commemorated the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre in public; police made six arrests that day. In September, as hundreds gathered outside the British consulate to mourn the passing of the British Queen Elizabeth II, some sang the banned protest song "Glory to Hong Kong." Police arrested a man for sedition for playing the protest tune on a harmonica. Over 150,000 people have left Hong Kong since the NSL was imposed; many have continued their activism abroad.

Xinjiang

In December 2021, authorities replaced Xinjiang's party secretary, Chen Quanguo, who oversaw the region's repressive "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism," with Ma Xingrui, a technocrat experienced in governing wealthier coastal regions. In July, President Xi visited Xinjiang, and said that while the re-

gion must “maintain a firm grip on stability,” it should also “move towards prosperity.”

Despite government propaganda portraying its policies in the region as successful efforts to counter terrorism, international scrutiny of crimes against humanity in the region grew. In May, an anonymous source released hacked police files from the region, which included nearly 3,000 photos of Uyghur detainees, along with key policy documents outlining harsh policies from China’s top leadership. As many as a million people were wrongfully detained in political education camps, pretrial detention centers, and prisons at the height of the Strike Hard Campaign. While some have been released, the Chinese authorities have also sentenced an estimated half-million people, many of whom remain imprisoned, Human Rights Watch found in a September report.

Tibet

Authorities in Tibetan areas continue to enforce severe restrictions on freedoms of religion, expression, movement, and assembly. Popular concerns over issues such as mass relocation, environmental degradation, or the phasing out of the Tibetan language in primary education were met with repression. Local officials are required to educate the public in “obeying the law,” and cash rewards are offered to citizens prepared to inform on others.

Under intense censorship, Tibetans continue to be detained for online offenses, such as having banned content on their phones or “spreading rumors.” Authorities introduced a ban on posting religious teaching and other content online, intended to enforce tight official control over religious institutions and teachers. In a Tibetan area of Sichuan province, regional authorities ordered the demolition of outdoor statues and temples, the construction of which had initially been approved.

Reports emerged of the arrest and sentencing of Tibetan religious and cultural figures suspected of dissent, and of their mistreatment in detention—notably the writers Go Sherab Gyatso, Rongwo Gendun Lhundrup, and Tubten Lodro (alias Sabuchey). In March, the popular young pop singer Tsewang Norbu staged a self-immolation protest in front of the Potala Palace, the first by a Tibetan from an urban background.

Freedom of Religion

State control over religion has increased since 2016, when Xi called for “Sinicization” of religions. Going beyond controlling religion by dictating what constitutes “normal,” and therefore legal, religious activity, authorities now seek to comprehensively reshape religions such that they are consistent with the party’s ideology and that they help promote allegiance to the party and to Xi.

Police continue to harass, arrest, and imprison leaders and members of “house churches,” congregations that refuse to join official Catholic and Protestant churches. Authorities also disrupt their peaceful activities and ban them outright. In September, dozens of members of a Shenzhen church fled to Thailand to seek refuge after having left China three years ago due to escalating police harassment and after they failed to secure refugee status in South Korea. The group reported being monitored by Chinese government agents in Thailand.

The new Measures on the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services came into effect in March, prohibiting individuals or groups from teaching or otherwise propagating religion online without official approval. A widely used Catholic app, CathAssist, shut down in August because it was unable to obtain a license. The regulations have reportedly severely disrupted people’s religious life as many have increasingly relied on online religious gatherings and information especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In October 2022, the Vatican and the Chinese government renewed an agreement signed in 2018. It was renewed despite the Chinese government’s arrest of Cardinal Joseph Zen and the continued detentions of Bishops Zhang Weizhu and Cui Tai, among others.

Covid-19

Authorities maintained a strict “Zero Covid” policy, viewing even a single infection as unacceptable, even though effective vaccines and medication are widely available.

In Ruili, a border city in Yunnan province, residents endured seven separate lockdowns from March 2021 to April 2022, spending 119 days confined to their homes except for mandatory Covid testing. In Shanghai, a commercial hub of 25

million people, residents endured a similarly strict lockdown from March to May. Chengdu, a city of 21 million people, was locked down for two weeks in September.

While such draconian measures prevented Covid-related deaths and illnesses, they significantly impeded people's access to health care, food, and other necessities. An unknown number of people died after being denied medical treatment for their non-Covid-related illnesses. In some cases, residents had to resort to threats of self-harm or violence to have their family members admitted to hospitals. In Shanghai, authorities separated small children from their parents after positive Covid tests, which required those testing positive to isolate in a hospital or designated facility, reversing the policy only after public outcry. Numerous people reported that they faced severe shortages of food, medicines, menstrual hygiene products, and other essential items. People in mandatory quarantine facilities also took to social media to expose crowded and unsanitary conditions there.

While authorities apologized for "shortcomings and deficiencies" in their Covid responses, they continued to control the flow of information regarding the pandemic. Censors removed numerous social media posts criticizing the government, such as a viral video that protested the lockdown in Shanghai and angry comments after a bus carrying dozens to a quarantine center crashed and killed 27 in the middle of the night, while police across the country detained netizens who complained about the government's Covid response.

The lockdowns and other Covid control measures also forced factories, restaurants, and businesses to cut jobs and wages, or to close altogether. Videos posted on social media showed people begging officials to release them from lockdown so they could go to work and feed their families.

Human Rights Defenders

Authorities continued to harass, detain, and prosecute human right defenders. In December 2021, authorities in Jilin province forcibly disappeared human rights lawyer Tang Jitian. Before his disappearance, authorities stopped Tang from traveling to Japan to visit his daughter, who was in a coma due to illness.

In June, a court in Shandong province held secret trials of prominent legal scholar Xu Zhiyong and human rights lawyer Ding Jiaxi for "subversion." Their verdicts were unknown at time of writing. The men were detained in 2020 and 2019 respectively after organizing a small gathering to discuss human rights and democracy issues. Li Qiaochu, a women's rights activist and Xu's partner, has also been detained since February 2021.

In September, Dong Jianbiao, the father of Dong Yaoqiong, who authorities disappeared for splashing ink on a poster of President Xi Jinping in 2018, died in a prison in Hunan province. Family members said his body showed signs of injuries. Dong had protested his daughter's disappearance and was imprisoned for a domestic dispute. Also in September, Shanghai police detained Ji Xiaolong, an activist who had called on Shanghai Party Secretary Li Qiang to resign for Covid mismanagement.

Huang Xueqin, a journalist and leading voice in China's #MeToo movement who was disappeared by Guangdong authorities in September 2021, was reportedly in poor health. Authorities dismissed Huang's family-appointed lawyer, and instead forced her to use a government-appointed lawyer.

Shenyang-based human rights lawyer Li Yuhan, who had been detained since 2017, was reportedly ill-treated by detention center authorities and was seriously ill. Li was tried in 2021 but no verdict had been issued at time of writing. The whereabouts of human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who went missing in August 2017, remained unclear. Gao's family had continued to call on the Chinese government to disclose whether he was still alive.

Freedom of Expression

Authorities continue to harass, detain, and prosecute people for their online posts and private chat messages critical of the government, bringing trumped-up charges of "spreading rumors," "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," and "insulting the country's leaders." In May, a court in Hainan province sentenced former journalist Luo Changping to seven months in prison for a Weibo post that questioned China's justification for its involvement in the Korean War.

Authorities continued to suppress online content deemed politically sensitive. In early 2022, after Russia invaded Ukraine, censors removed social media posts

critical of the Russian government or those that advocated peace. In June, prominent live streamer Li Jiaqi went offline for three months after he showed off a tank-shaped cake ahead of the 33rd anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre, even though he was likely unaware of the tank's symbolism. In August, the Cyberspace Administration announced that it "dealt with" 1.34 billion social media accounts, "cleaned up" 22 million illegal messages, and closed 3,200 websites.

Despite Beijing's sophisticated censorship apparatus, netizens continued to develop creative ways to evade control. In Guangzhou, residents used vernacular Cantonese terms, instead of standard Mandarin, to express their frustrations with the government's draconian Covid policy.

Women's and Girls' Rights

China's #MeToo movement continued to gain traction, despite online censorship and repression of women's rights activists. Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai's November 2021 Weibo post, which alleged that she was sexually assaulted by a retired senior party official, took #MeToo accusations to the top echelons of the CCP. While her Weibo post, along with discussions around it, was quickly censored within the country, it generated enormous interest outside the country as the Chinese government prepared to host the Winter Olympics in February. Peng was not seen in public for weeks after making the post. Her subsequent appearances in videos and photos were widely believed to have been stage-managed by the authorities.

In August, a Beijing court rejected the appeal of Zhou Xiaoxuan, who filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against a prominent TV host at the state broadcaster CCTV, ruling the evidence submitted "insufficient." The landmark sexual harassment case had inspired many others to share their stories of sexual assault.

In September, Chinese police detained Du Yingzhe, a prominent Chinese film director, for sexual abuse. Twenty-one women and girls accused him of coercing students and staff members into having sex with him over a period of 15 years. In October, Richard Liu, a Chinese tech billionaire, settled a civil rape case in Minnesota, after Jingyao Liu, a former University of Minnesota student, sued him in 2018.

Two cases involving sexual violence generated nationwide outrage in 2022. In January, a video showing a woman chained around her neck in a hut in rural Jiangsu province went viral. A government investigation found that the woman was trafficked and sold as a bride twice in the late 1990s. Authorities censored the video and discussions, detained activists who tried to visit the woman's village, threatened people who did their own online research, and questioned the official findings.

In June, CCTV footage circulated online showed four women being viciously attacked after one of them rejected a man's sexual advance in a restaurant in the northeastern city of Tangshan. The video sparked heated debates around gender-based violence. Twenty-eight people were later charged in relation to the incident.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

China decriminalized same-sex conduct in 1997. It does not have laws protecting people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, and same-sex partnerships are not recognized.

Authorities continued to ban depictions of same-sex relationships from film and television. In February, the popular American sitcom "Friends" returned to several Chinese streaming sites, but scenes featuring lesbian characters were cut. In April, references to a gay relationship in Warner Brothers' movie "Fantastic Beasts 3" were edited out. In June, authorities banned Disney's animation "Lightyear" after the company refused to cut out a scene featuring a same-sex couple kissing.

Disability Rights

In China, people with real or perceived psychosocial disabilities can be shackled—chained or locked in confined spaces—due to inadequate support and mental health services as well as widespread beliefs that stigmatize people with psychosocial disabilities.

In September, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that the Chinese government "repeal provisions and practices that

allow for the deprivation of liberty of adults and children with disabilities on the basis of actual or perceived impairment.”

Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), announced in 2013, is the government’s trillion-dollar infrastructure and investment program stretching across some 100 countries. Some BRI projects have since been criticized for lack of transparency, disregard of community concerns, and negative environmental impacts, prompting widespread protests.

In August, Chinese authorities announced they would waive 23 interest-free loans for 17 African countries, covering about 1 percent of total loans, according to a study by Boston University. A study by the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies on Chinese companies’ labor practices in six African countries found widespread labor rights violations, including unpaid wages, physical violence, instant dismissal in the event of injury or sickness and the lack of workplace safety.

In August, protesters in Pakistan’s port city Gwadar, a signature project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, took to the street demanding water and electricity and a stop to Chinese trawlers’ illegal fishing in the area. Local fishermen had raised concerns about the lack of transparency and consultations, and potential impacts on their livelihoods. This was seen as part of a growing backlash against the BRI in Pakistan.

Climate Change Policies and Actions

China remains the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, although its per capita emissions put it only in the top 40 countries. Much of the considerable energy that has fueled economic growth comes from coal, driving these emissions. It produces half of the world’s coal and is also its largest importer of oil, gas, and coal.

The Chinese government announced in 2021 it would reach carbon neutrality before 2060 and reach peak carbon emissions before 2030. Despite these improved targets, the Climate Action Tracker rates the domestic target as “highly

insufficient” to meet the Paris Agreement goal to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

China also leads the world in renewable energy production and is the largest funder of overseas renewable projects, some of which, however, have been linked to human rights abuses. Much of the global production capacity for the minerals and materials needed for renewable energy technologies, including wind turbines, solar panels, and electric car batteries, is in China. Some of these minerals are produced in Xinjiang, raising concerns about the use of forced labor.

Chinese companies’ operations abroad frequently caused or contributed to human rights abuses and environmental damage. In Guinea, Human Rights Watch documented the involvement of a Chinese company in a bauxite (aluminum) mining joint venture that has exploited farmers’ land without adequate compensation and destroyed local water sources.

China’s imports of agricultural commodities drive more deforestation globally than those of any other market. This deforestation is largely illegal. In November, the US and China jointly committed to eliminating global illegal deforestation by enforcing their respective laws that ban illegal imports of timber. China has yet to enforce a restriction on illegal timber imports it adopted in 2019.

Key International Actors

In May, Michelle Bachelet made the first visit to China by a United Nations high commissioner for human rights in 17 years; authorities closely controlled her activities. In August, Bachelet released a report substantiating the widespread human rights violations in Xinjiang, concluding that the abuses “may amount to crimes against humanity.”

The Chinese government repeatedly sought to stop the release of the report. Following the report’s publication, more than 40 UN independent experts released a joint statement supporting its findings. In September, the US, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom launched an initiative at the UN Human Rights Council to hold a discussion on the report during its March 2023 session. The effort fell short by a close vote of 17-19, with support from all UN regional groups: Ukraine subsequently ex-

pressed support, narrowing the margin to a single vote. However, the number of UN delegations willing to publicly condemn the government's abuses in Xinjiang keeps growing. In October, a record 50 UN member countries joined a Canadian-led joint statement calling on Beijing to end human rights violations in Xinjiang and implement the recommendations in Bachelet's report.

Governments increasingly took steps to ensure commercial activity does not fuel repression across China. In addition to the entry into force of the US Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, the European Union was reportedly deliberating a ban on the import and export of all forced labor products, prompted in part by concerns over Xinjiang abuses. The EU introduced draft legislation to establish global standards for human rights due diligence for companies. The International Olympic Committee and its lead sponsors did not publish their human rights due diligence assessments ahead of the 2022 Winter Games in China.

In March, the US Justice Department announced cases against five people for harassing critics of the Chinese government in the US, reflecting growing concern about threats to diaspora communities. In Australia, the University of Technology Sydney campus took a step towards better protecting academic freedom for students wanting to offer views critical of the Chinese government by adding to orientation materials a new warning informing students of their right to be free from any form of state-backed harassment or political intimidation.

Foreign Policy

In February, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited China, where he and Xi published a statement pledging the two governments' "no-limits friendship." The Chinese government has not condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine or the numerous violations of the laws of war committed by Russian forces in the conflict.

The Chinese government continues to provide direct assistance and military aid to several highly abusive governments, including the Taliban in Afghanistan and the military junta in Myanmar.

In October, the Chinese consul-general in Manchester, England, and other consulate staff dragged a pro-Hong Kong democracy protester into the compound and struck him; the consul-general justified his conduct as his "duty."

Chinese diplomats also attacked the mandates of UN human rights bodies in response to their increasingly vocal concern about violations inside China. Beijing dismissed the high commissioner's report on Xinjiang as a "farce," and efforts to advance a debate on the situation as "illegal and invalid."