

Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China
& AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CANADA



**HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION
OF INDIVIDUALS IN CANADA
WORKING ON CHINA-RELATED
HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS**

An Update as of March 2020

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Harassment & Intimidation of Individuals in Canada
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2017, Amnesty International Canada, in coordination with other members of the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China, published a report to draw attention to an organized and sustained campaign of intimidation and harassment aimed at activists working on China-related human rights issues in Canada, in circumstances suggesting the involvement or backing of Chinese government officials. The present updated report documents ongoing incidents of harassment and intimidation of this nature since 2017 and provides further recommendations to Canadian authorities regarding measures to address this mounting human rights concern.

Research for this report was conducted from July 2019 to March 2020 by Amnesty International Canada in consultation with partners from the Coalition.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

The Chinese government has long pursued a strategy of extending political and cultural influence abroad, with the goal of suppressing dissidents and mobilizing overseas Chinese communities to act as agents of China's political interests. In Canada, Chinese authorities have exerted influence within various communities in the country, on elected officials, Chinese-Canadian media outlets, social media, and academic institutions.

Diplomatic relations between Canada and China have deteriorated recently, largely as a result of the 2018 arrest of Huawei's Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou by Canadian authorities. In apparent retaliation, China arbitrarily detained two Canadian citizens, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, and have held them in detention since December 2018 under harsh conditions. Two other Canadian citizens, Robert Schellenberg and Fan Wei, have been sentenced to death in China in that time. These disputes have engendered further diplomatic and economic tensions between the two countries, including China's suspension of key Canadian exports. China has also lately faced international backlash – including from Canada – due to China's human rights violations against Uyghur and other ethnic Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang autonomous region and Hong Kong law enforcement's excessive use of force against pro-democracy protestors, which followed the introduction of a proposed extradition bill in 2019.

Due to these recent difficulties in Canada's relationship with China, the Canadian government is cautious and reluctant to raise human rights issues with Chinese officials for fear of further inflaming tensions. In this context, in December 2019 the House of Commons created a Special Committee on Canada-China Relations to review the relationship between the two countries.

HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION

Since 2017, there have been continuing reports of individuals in Canada being subjected to rights violations further to a systematic campaign of harassment and intimidation that is often clearly linked to or backed by Chinese state authorities. A new trend highlighted in the present report points to an increased prevalence of such incidents and interference at universities and in the academic sphere.

HONG KONG

Individuals and groups in Canada that have denounced the actions of the Hong Kong government against protestors in Hong Kong have been the targets of particularly intense harassment and intimidation by individuals aligned with or supportive of the Chinese government. A number of protests organized by Hong Kong democracy supporters in Canada have been met by pro-Beijing counter-protestors who use aggressive, confrontational tactics, and who expert observers believe may be directed or organized by Chinese state authorities. Face-offs between pro-democracy protestors and pro-Beijing protestors occurred in 2019 in Toronto, Vancouver, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, and Richmond (British Columbia) with a pattern of aggressive, threatening, and intimidating measures employed by the pro-Beijing contingent. Similar incidents have occurred on Canadian university campuses. Compelling evidence has pointed to coordination and organization between protestors and Chinese officials in these incidents. Demonstrators fear retaliation by Chinese authorities, given credible reports of Chinese state surveillance overseas and harassment of pro-democracy protestors' family members in China. Individual Hong Kong activists also face pervasive personal harassment and intimidation as a result of their advocacy in the form of threats and intimidation, aggressive online attacks, and phone harassment.

PRO-DEMOCRACY

Other prominent Chinese-Canadian pro-democracy activists have been targeted as a result of their advocacy and have pointed to increasing Chinese state influence on consulates and Chinese-Canadian community groups in Canada as the source of suppression of their pro-democracy political positions. Chinese-Canadians have been denied entry into China, improperly detained and subject to bullying and intimidation at Chinese airports, and ultimately forced to leave China despite entering the country legitimately. As well, certain prominent pro-democracy activists have been the longstanding target of threats, harassment, and smear campaigns against their reputation.

FALUN GONG

Since 2017, practitioners of Falun Gong have continued to be targeted in Canada through incidents of harassment that appear to be linked to the Chinese state apparatus. There have been a number of incidents in Ottawa, Calgary, and Winnipeg involving threats, bullying, and harassment of Falun Gong practitioners, as well as false correspondence, a hallmark of the Chinese government, sent out in the alleged-name of the Falun Gong in efforts to discredit them. The Falun Dafa group in Ottawa has

observed that these are not isolated cases, but rather part of a longstanding pattern of persecution by Chinese state authorities.

TIBET

Advocates for Tibetan autonomy have been subject to campaigns of coordinated harassment and intimidation as well. The report highlights the case of a prominent Tibetan-Canadian student leader in Toronto who has faced aggressive online abuse, death threats, phone harassment, and monitoring by Chinese students, possibly linked to the Chinese consulate, due to her Tibet-related advocacy work. Moreover, in 2019, a Tibet organization suspected to be a Chinese government front organization was found to be propagating misinformation as a way to further Chinese interests and undermine support for Tibet in Canadian society.

UIGHURS

Amnesty International's research has documented Chinese state harassment and intimidation against Uighur diaspora populations around the world in the form of online and phone harassment, death threats, monitoring, and surveillance. Uighur individuals living in Canada have faced threats of retaliation against their relatives in Xinjiang as a result of their activism. Chinese state agents have also engaged in deceitful attempts to lure Uighurs living abroad back to China. Uighurs in Canada have been unable to seek out information about family members, who have presumably been arrested and detained in internment camps in Xinjiang, due to fears of retaliation by the Chinese state. In 2019, talks at Canadian universities on Uighur-related issues were disrupted by Chinese student protests, pointing to a broader pattern of China-critical activists at Canadian universities facing backlash from Chinese students, potentially coordinated by Chinese consulate officials.

OTHER CASES

In the realm of academia, universities and education boards in several provinces have recently pushed back against Chinese state-authorized Confucius Institute programs in their institutions over concerns regarding academic freedom and propaganda, and discriminatory hiring practices, among other issues. A 2019 Human Rights Watch report concerning several countries, including Canada, highlighted risks to academic freedom due to Chinese government pressure in the form of threats, monitoring, surveillance, and other censorship concerns.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The pattern of harassment and intimidation outlined in this report is part of a longstanding trend of incidents that are consistent with a systematic campaign targeting human rights defenders in Canada who take action on human rights concerns in China, in which there is direct and indirect involvement by the Chinese government or its agents. This report highlights that the situation may well be worsening: Chinese state actors have almost certainly become emboldened by the inadequate responses of Canadian officials (and officials in other countries faced with similar concerns), as incidents of interference have become increasingly pervasive.

The Canadian government must treat this issue with increased urgency, as it has resulted in insecurity and fear for human rights defenders in Canada working on Chinese human rights issues, as well as an unacceptable chilling effect on the exercise of free expression and other civil liberties and fundamental freedoms in the country. To date, responses from Canadian authorities have been piecemeal and largely ineffective in compiling a comprehensive picture of what is happening and addressing the source of the intimidation and harassment faced by human rights defenders.

The Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China recommends that Canadian authorities appoint a centralized focal point within the government to be the primary front-line contact for individuals and groups facing harassment and intimidation linked to activism on human rights concerns in China. Canada should maintain high-level diplomatic engagement with China on the harassment and intimidation issue, continually reassess economic and trade ties with China, and prioritize human rights concerns in their bilateral relationship. Moreover, Canada should work with other governments to raise concerns about Chinese human rights violations and should affirm its opposition to these violations of normal diplomatic practice. The Coalition further recommends an independent public inquiry into methods and incidents of interference specific to the education sector. The Canadian government should also examine legislation in other jurisdictions countering covert foreign interference and consider enacting similar legislation in Canada.

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OVERVIEW

In March 2017, Amnesty International Canada, in coordination with other members of the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China, a coalition of Canada-based civil society organizations with a specific focus on Canada's foreign policy with China, published the first version of this report.¹ The report pointed to a widespread pattern of harassment and intimidation aimed, in particular, at Tibetan-Canadians, Uighur-Canadians, Falun Gong practitioners, and democracy activists working on China-related human rights issues in Canada. The Coalition's report concluded that these abuses appeared to be part of an organized and sustained campaign of harassment and intimidation, and noted that there were credible reports attributing many of these incidents to a Chinese government-sponsored effort to target groups and individuals outside of China that are concerned about the Chinese government's human rights record.

Since then, the number of incidents of harassment and intimidation of this nature have continued to grow, prompting the Coalition to prepare this update to the earlier report. China has a well-documented record of pursuing its critics — primarily at home, but increasingly abroad as well — whether it is threatening them and interfering in their activities in other countries, banning them from entering China, detaining them when they do, abducting them from abroad, or harassing and/or retaliating against their family members in China.² Similar cases and patterns of interference with activists and groups of Chinese origin living abroad, including in the United States,³ United Kingdom,⁴ Australia⁵ and

¹ The Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in Canada, "Harassment and Intimidation of Individuals in Canada Working on China-related Activism", 3 April 2017.

² Yaqiu Wang, "Why some Chinese immigrants living in Canada live in silent fear", *The Globe and Mail* (25 February 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-why-some-chinese-immigrants-living-in-canada-live-in-silent-fear/>>.

³ Lauren Hilgers, "China's Oppression Reaches Beyond Its Borders", *The New York Times* (9 April 2018), online: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/09/opinion/china-oppression.html>> [Article recounts the experience of Zhuang Liehong, a Chinese democracy activist who moved to the U.S. to speak freely, but who started receiving threatening phone calls in which his parents were used as pawns to dissuade him from posting critical content on social media. The article discusses a broader upsurge in enforced censorship, increased surveillance and the Chinese government silencing dissent across borders, including by targeting academics, business elites, former judges and activists].

⁴ Frank Langfitt, "How The Chinese Government Works To Censor Debate In Western Democracies", *NPR* (3 October 2018), online: <<https://www.npr.org/2018/10/03/636299830/how-the-chinese-government-works-to-censor-debate-in-western-democracies>> [Article describes different incidents of Chinese interference in the UK, including the participation of a Tibetan soccer team in an international tournament, and the participation of Falun Gong practitioner and human rights activist Anastasia Lin at an event held by the Durham University students' union].

⁵ Frances Mao, "Hong Kong protests: I'm in Australia but I feel censored by Chinese students", *BBC News* (31 July 2019), online: <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-49159820>> [Article deals with the impact of Hong Kong protests being felt overseas, in particular among groups of Chinese and Hong Kong students studying abroad, including in Australia. Students from Hong Kong who voice their support for the protest movement in Australia have found themselves subject to physical, verbal and online harassment from counter-protesting Chinese students on university campuses. Hong Kong students have expressed anger that Chinese pressure has reached Australian soil, as well as feelings of powerlessness and fear that they may be being monitored]; See also: Clive Hamilton, "Why do we keep turning a blind eye to Chinese political interference?", *The Conversation*, online: <https://theconversation.com/why-do-we-keep-turning-a-blind-eye-to-chinese-political-interference-94299>.

New Zealand,⁶ have also gained significant attention in the past few years. Ultimately, such actions have a chilling effect on the rights, speech and advocacy of activists and members of the Chinese diaspora, including in Canada.

Notably, the inconsistencies and difficulties in obtaining effective support from Canadian authorities identified in the original report have continued to persist, as individuals who have experienced harassment and intimidation are not receiving a coherent response from public officials and find it difficult to determine whether they should seek assistance from municipal police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or even government ministries such as Global Affairs Canada [GAC], Public Safety or the Department of Justice.

METHODOLOGY

Research for this report was conducted from July 2019 to March 2020. Amnesty International Canada consulted with its partners from the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China. Amnesty International Canada conducted interviews, both in person and by telephone, with individuals who have had personal experience with intimidation or harassment in Canada that aligned with the focus of this report.⁷ This report also refers to open source materials and media reports which were reviewed and which pertain to events occurring since March 2017.

The information compiled for this report does not purport to be an exhaustive account of *all* incidents in Canada that have occurred since March 2017, but instead highlights some of the most representative incidents during this time period, as reported by member organizations of the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China, as well as other individuals and organizations closely associated with this coalition.

⁶ Canada Security Intelligence Service, “China and the Age of Strategic Rivalry”, (May 2018), online: <<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ctsis-scrs/documents/publications/CSIS-Academic-Outreach-China-report-May-2018-en.pdf>> [A May 2018 report from Canada’s Security Intelligence Service concluded that China was engaging in targeted efforts to co-opt the New Zealand business, political and intellectual elite in order to get them to advocate for China’s interests in New Zealand and internationally. The report documented massive efforts to bring New Zealand’s ethnic Chinese language media, Chinese community groups, and New Zealand’s ethnic Chinese politicians under Chinese Communist Party control, and efforts to influence their voting preferences. The report found that these activities resulted in “curtailing of freedom of speech, religion, and association for the ethnic Chinese community, a silencing of debates on the PRC in the wider public sphere, and a corrupting influence on the political system through the blurring of personal, political, and economic interests.”] The government of New Zealand has held a public inquiry on the issue of foreign interference, see: Anne-Marie Brady, “New Zealand needs to show it’s serious about addressing Chinese interference”, *The Guardian* (23 January 2020), online: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2020/jan/24/new-zealand-needs-to-show-its-serious-about-addressing-chinese-interference>>.

⁷ Interviews were generally unstructured, allowing participants to speak freely, with some guiding questions that corresponded with the overall purpose of the report: seeking information about incidents of harassment, intimidation and interference linked to activism on China-related issues within Canada; inquiring about these incidents potentially being directed, coordinated or organized by Chinese authorities; and inquiring about the response and/or support they received from Canadian authorities.

In this report, Amnesty International Canada refers to individuals by name when they have consented to being identified during interviews or when their experiences have previously been reported publicly.⁸ In many of the cases highlighted in this report, Chinese authorities cannot be directly implicated. Yet, despite the anecdotal nature of many such experiences, the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China considers the scale and consistency of rights violations, over a prolonged period, to be consistent with a coordinated, Chinese state-sponsored campaign to target political, ethnic, religious, and spiritual groups and individual activists who raise concerns about China's human rights record.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

The geopolitical context and state of Canada-China relations have evolved dramatically since the March 2017 report. That being said, many factors and issues identified at that time remain relevant to the current report.

INFLUENCE CAMPAIGN

The Chinese government has long pursued a strategy of extending political and cultural influence abroad under the auspices of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office⁹ and the United Front Work Department [UFWD].¹⁰ The UFWD is a Chinese government agency that had an important strategic role in the early years of the rule of former Chinese Chairman Mao by engaging in outreach to groups that did not form part of the traditional base of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP].¹¹ The UFWD's work in Western countries like Canada has traditionally involved "suppressing dissidents, winning overseas Chinese to the CCP cause and mobilizing them to act in support of Beijing's political and strategic interests".¹² Increasingly, the Chinese government has made direct and explicit appeals to ethnic Chinese individuals living overseas, urging them to "remember the call from the [Communist] Party and the People, spread China's voice, support the country's development, safeguard national interests".¹³ In recent years, the

⁸ When individuals have not consented to their name being shared, a pseudonym with an asterisk is used.

⁹ The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council is another government body charged with outreach to Chinese communities located abroad and whose stated objectives include enhancing "the unity and friendship in the overseas Chinese communities". See: Gov.cn, Factfile: Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, online: <http://www.gov.cn/english/2005-10/03/content_74290.htm>.

¹⁰ Tom Blackwell, "How China uses shadowy United Front as 'magic weapon' to try to extend its influence in Canada", *The National Post* (28 January 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/how-china-uses-shadowy-united-front-as-magic-weapon-to-try-to-extend-its-influence-in-canada>> [Anne Marie Brady, a political scientist professor and China expert from New Zealand describes the UFWD as "Operating partly through officials in foreign missions, its activities include influencing the Chinese diaspora to back China, co-opting foreign political and economic elites, promoting Beijing's agenda worldwide and forming a China-centred economic bloc."]

¹¹ Gerry Groot, "The United Front in an Age of Shared Destiny" in *The China Story* (Yearbook 2014), online: <<https://www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2014/forum-begging-to-differ/the-united-front-in-an-age-of-shared-destiny/>>.

¹² Clive Hamilton, "China's Influence Activities: What Canada can learn from Australia", *Macdonald-Laurier Institute Publication* (November 2018), online: <https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/201801026_Commentary_Hamilton_FWeb.pdf> at p. 2.

¹³ China Daily, "Top concern: happiness of compatriots", (30 August 2018), online: <<http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0830/c90000-9495358.html>>.

agency has reportedly evolved to target a more expansive list of groups both inside and outside of China.

Notably, media reports indicate that the UFWD has identified overseas students as one of 12 target groups for ideological guidance and promotion of party policies—important for “consolidating and expanding” the Party’s base.¹⁴ A 2016 Chinese Ministry of Education document similarly called for a network linking “the motherland, embassies and consulates, overseas student groups, and the broad number of students abroad” in order to harness “patriotic energy” among overseas students.¹⁵ Certain experts have identified Chinese Students and Scholars Associations as an example of UFWD involvement in the educational sphere abroad. These associations are purportedly tasked with “monitor[ing] the thoughts and behaviours” of Chinese students on school campuses abroad and have been central to stifling free speech on topics related to human rights and democracy that are sensitive for the Chinese government.¹⁶

As Leo Shin, a university professor and Chinese cultural historian, puts it, the Chinese Consulate cultivates ties within the Chinese diaspora across Canada with the goal of making requests of support for the Chinese regime down the line.¹⁷ As Shin describes, “[t]heir role is to build bridges and connections and incorporate various Chinese communities and organizations into a ‘sphere of friendship or influence’”.¹⁸

In addition to its work within China, the UFWD engages with not only Chinese emigrants and non-nationals of Chinese origin, but also other foreign nationals whom the agency attempts to persuade to adopt positions consistent with Chinese government policies.¹⁹ In Canada, these goals of projecting “soft power” abroad have led Chinese authorities to allegedly exert influence on elected officials, foreign media, and education to promote political positions consistent with Chinese government policies. Numerous allegations have also been made that certain Canadian politicians may act on behalf of or in furtherance of Chinese state interests, or maintain close relationships with Chinese consulates, embassies and pro-Beijing groups.²⁰

¹⁴ Eric Fish, “How Chinese overseas students are learning harsh life lessons”, *South China Morning Post* (3 February 2018), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2186263/chinese-students-canada-report-uygur-activists-talk-consulate>>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Clive Hamilton, “China’s Influence Activities: What Canada can learn from Australia”, *Macdonald-Laurier Institute Publication* (November 2018), online: <https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/201801026_Commentary_Hamilton_FWeb.pdf> at p. 4.

¹⁷ Cheryl Chan, “‘Overseas Chinese’ urged to be more vocal in support of Beijing, says Chinese cultural historian” (20 August 2019), online: <<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/overseas-chinese-urged-to-be-more-vocal-in-support-of-beijing-says-chinese-cultural-historian>>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Tom Blackwell, “How China uses shadowy United Front as ‘magic weapon’ to try to extend its influence in Canada”, *National Post* (28 January 2019; Last Updated 31 January 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/how-china-uses-shadowy-united-front-as-magic-weapon-to-try-to-extend-its-influence-in-canada>>.

²⁰ Tom Blackwell, “MPP’s ties to China raise questions about how close Canadian politicians should get to foreign powers”, *National Post* (6 September 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/mpps-ties-to-china-raise>>.

The apparent existence of a coordinated campaign to target certain activist groups and ethnic and spiritual minorities deemed hostile to the Chinese government appears to be a complementary initiative aiming to stifle alternative viewpoints and discourage movements that do not accept certain official Chinese government policies. The combination of efforts aiming to promote pro-government policies and an apparent campaign to target dissident groups has had a significant chilling effect on human rights activism in Canada and interfered with the rights to freedom of conscience, expression and association of many residents and Canadian citizens.

Moreover, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and its director, David Vigneault, have made clear behind closed doors that Canada is fully aware of the threat posed by Chinese attempts to influence, monitor and coerce its citizens abroad, “in an attempt to both root out dissidents and use their nationals as tools of influence and intelligence collection”.²¹ In a speech given to presidents of Canada’s leading research universities in 2018, Vigneault specifically identified China as the most significant and clear threat when it comes to the monitoring and coercion of students, faculty and other education officials.²² Vigneault said that China is particularly interested in universities and university students, especially in the context of the “five poisons” (groups that the CCP fears may threaten its stability and/or legitimacy of its rule: Falun Gong, Taiwan, Tibet, Uighur, and pro-democracy movements). Vigneault’s speech went on to explain how China’s state actors may seek to “covertly influence [Chinese students, faculty and researchers at Canadian universities] for the purposes of furthering state interests”, which could realistically take the form of pressuring students to participate in demonstrations or spy on other students. As Vigneault noted, all of these activities occur in a context wherein Chinese legislation was passed in June 2017 which *compels* Chinese individuals and organizations (public, private, at home and abroad) to cooperate with state intelligence officials upon request or face jail time.²³

Additionally, a May 2018 report from CSIS concluded that China has an organized strategy aimed at foreign interference in democratic systems. This strategy operates through several different categories of influence, including by strengthening efforts to guide overseas Chinese communities to use them as

[questions-about-how-close-canadian-politicians-should-get-to-foreign-powers](#) ; Tom Blackwell, “Former Ontario Liberal cabinet minister headlines pro-Beijing rally near Toronto”, *National Post* (20 August 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/former-ontario-liberal-cabinet-minister-headlines-pro-beijing-rally-near-toronto>>; Tom Blackwell, “Liberal party membership forms distributed at pro-Beijing rally against Hong Kong protests”, *National Post* (22 August 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/liberal-party-membership-forms-distributed-at-pro-beijing-rally-against-hong-kong-protests>>.

²¹ Douglas Quan, “‘Significant and clear’ threat: What Canada’s spy chief says about China behind closed doors”, *National Post* (13 August 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/significant-and-clear-threat-what-canadas-spy-chief-says-about-china-behind-closed-doors>> (Chinese embassy officials have responded by stating that all such accusations are baseless.)

²² *Ibid.* (Vigneault also stated that Chinese government officials can hold funding, applications, and future engagement “hostage” to coerce academic institutions to cooperate with state authorities.)

²³ For more information about this legislation, known as the *National Intelligence Law*, see: Canadian Security Intelligence Service, “China’s intelligence law and the country’s future intelligence competitions”, online: <<https://www.canada.ca/en/security-intelligence-service/corporate/publications/china-and-the-age-of-strategic-rivalry/chinas-intelligence-law-and-the-countrys-future-intelligence-competitions.html>>.

agents of Chinese foreign policy.²⁴ In July 2019, CSIS again raised the spectre of foreign “threat actors” attempting to interfere with Canadian democracy, pointing to a broad scope of interference activities including state-influenced/sponsored media, hacking, and traditional espionage in order to influence the Canadian public and “interfere with Canada’s democratic institutions and processes”.²⁵

A January 2020 report from democracy and human rights NGO Freedom House has documented the global expansion of CCP media influence, demonstrating how the Chinese government has successfully shaped media content and narratives around the world, particularly among Chinese-language communities.²⁶ The report goes into detail about efforts made to suppress critical coverage in overseas Chinese-language publications, and even in local mainstream media. These overt censorship efforts have also had the consequence of increasing self-censorship among independent voices in Canadian Chinese-language media, as many journalists may fear retaliation if they discuss and report on sensitive political and human rights issues. Also of notable concern, Freedom House’s report concludes that Chinese-owned social media platforms are engaging in politicized content manipulation to favour pro-Beijing narratives, with impacts being felt by Chinese diaspora communities worldwide, including in Canada. The NGO notes that “in Canada, WeChat²⁷ censors deleted a member of Parliament’s message to constituents praising Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement protesters, manipulated dissemination of news reports related to Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou’s arrest, and blocked broader media coverage of Chinese government corruption and leading Chinese officials”.²⁸

The impact of Chinese media influence in Canada has also been felt acutely by groups like the Falun Gong, who have been the victims of slanderous news articles published in Chinese-language newspapers that are distributed across Canada. In July 2015, Today Commercial News, a Chinese newspaper active in Canada, was forced to publish a retraction and issue an apology after reprinting a defamatory article about the Falun Gong that had previously been published in the People’s Daily, the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the CCP.²⁹ Today Commercial News published a second article of a slanderous nature against the Falun Gong in January 2020.

DIPLOMATIC SCHISM

²⁴ Canada Security Intelligence Service, “China and the Age of Strategic Rivalry”, May 2018, online: <<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/isis-scrcs/documents/publications/CSIS-Academic-Outreach-China-report-May-2018-en.pdf>>.

²⁵ Alex Boutilier, Craig Silverman & Jane Lytvynenko, “Canadians are being targeted by foreign influence campaigns, CSIS says”, *Toronto Star* (2 July 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/2019/07/02/canadas-voters-being-targeted-by-foreign-influence-campaigns-spy-agency-says.html>> (While China was not explicitly named by CSIS, a clear inference was made that they are one major potential risk).

²⁶ Freedom House, “Beijing’s Global Megaphone: The Expansion of Chinese Communist Party Media Influence since 2017” (January 2020), online: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/beijings-global-megaphone-china-communist-party-media-influence-abroad>.

²⁷ WeChat is a popular Chinese social media platform with over 1 billion monthly active users.

²⁸ Freedom House, “Beijing’s Global Megaphone: The Expansion of Chinese Communist Party Media Influence since 2017” (January 2020), online: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/beijings-global-megaphone-china-communist-party-media-influence-abroad>, at p. 18.

²⁹ Information provided by Grace Wollensak, Falun Dafa Association of Canada, corroborated by legal documents.

More recently, diplomatic relations between Canada and China have steadily deteriorated, as a result of tensions and disagreements surrounding several high-profile cases. Most notably, the arrest of Huawei's Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou on December 1, 2018 by Canadian authorities in Vancouver, further to an extradition request from the U.S. Department of Justice, has inflamed relations between the two countries and angered the Chinese government, especially in light of the prominent position held by Huawei in Chinese society.³⁰ Meng is accused of personal complicity in providing false assurances that Huawei was not evading American sanctions against Iran.³¹ Meng Wanzhou's extradition trial began in January 2020.³²

China acted promptly, ostensibly in retaliation for the arrest of Meng, by arbitrarily detaining two Canadian citizens – businessman Michael Spavor and former diplomat Michael Kovrig – allegedly for stealing state secrets and being 'threats to China's security'.³³ The "two Michaels" have been held in detention since December 2018 under extremely harsh conditions: they have been denied regular consular access to which they are entitled (receiving roughly 30 minute visits once a month), interrogated at length while being denied the right to legal counsel until very recently, denied access to their families, denied medical care, kept in conditions akin to solitary confinement, deprived of natural daylight and subjected to bright fluorescent light which remain on in their cells 24 hours a day.³⁴ In the case of Michael Kovrig, who was on temporary leave from his diplomatic posting at the time of his arrest while he worked for the International Crisis Group (an independent NGO), Canada has argued that China

³⁰ Grant Wyeth, "A Bitter Stalemate in Canada-China Relations", *The Diplomat* (19 June 2019), online: <<https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/a-bitter-stalemate-in-canada-china-relations/>>.

³¹ *Ibid.* For more information about the charges against Meng, see the U.S. Department of Justice website: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/chinese-telecommunications-conglomerate-huawei-and-huawei-cfo-wanzhou-meng-charged-financial>.

³² Karin Larsen, "Who paid for the (fake) protest outside Meng Wanzhou's hearing? We still don't know", *CBC News* (22 January 2020), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/who-paid-for-the-fake-protest-outside-meng-wanzhou-s-hearing-we-still-don-t-know-1.5436448>>; Douglas Quan & Wanyee Li, "What am I protesting? What am I doing here?' How one young woman says she got roped into protesting at the Meng Wanzhou trial", *Toronto Star* (21 January 2020), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/01/21/meng-wanzhou-protester-says-she-was-paid-to-hold-sign-at-huawei-executives-extradition-trial.html>>. Several people were reportedly offered between \$100-200 to hold signs in support of Meng and protest outside the courthouse before her hearings. Individuals were told they would be acting as extras in movies. Many people left when they realized what they were being asked to do. Chinese state media reporting on the trial portrayed them uncritically as "protesters asking for Meng's freedom". People who participated in the protest were unclear about who had actually co-ordinated recruitment of the protesters. Suspicions have been raised that these individuals were being paid by the Chinese government to spread pro-Beijing messages (both Huawei and the consul-general in Vancouver denied any involvement).

³³ Grant Wyeth, "A Bitter Stalemate in Canada-China Relations", *The Diplomat* (19 June 2019), online: <<https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/a-bitter-stalemate-in-canada-china-relations/>> (The two men were detained without formal arrest or charge until May 2019, at which point they were accused of violating 'state secret' laws.)

³⁴ Nathan Vanderklippe, "365 days of detention in China: What life is like for Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig", *The Globe and Mail* (9 December 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-michael-kovrig-michael-spavor-china-detained-canadians-huawei/>>; Kristin Huang, "Canadian MP Michael Cooper calls China's treatment of detainees 'unacceptable'", *South China Morning Post* (12 January 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2181817/canadian-official-calls-chinas-treatment-detainees-unacceptable>> (The conditions of detention of the two men have been likened to torture (i.e. stimulatory deprivation from a lack of natural sunlight ; sleep deprivation from fluorescent lights 24/7).

is violating his diplomatic immunity, as guaranteed under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.³⁵ The Chinese government has responded by claiming that Kovrig is not entitled to diplomatic immunity, given that he was not serving as a diplomat or travelling with his diplomatic passport or visa at the time of his arrest.³⁶ Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has publicly criticized the detentions of the two Michaels, stating that China was “using arbitrary detention as a tool to achieve political goals,” and that such behaviour was unacceptable in the international community.³⁷ China has denied these allegations, claiming that it is acting in accordance with the law and labelling Canada’s treatment of Meng as inconsistent with the rules of the international community.

Furthermore, many experts believe that the criminal case of Canadian citizen Robert Lloyd Schellenberg, whose initial 15-year prison sentence on drug trafficking charges, imposed in November 2018, was later increased to the death penalty in January 2019 following a summary appeal and retrial, and of Canadian citizen Fan Wei, who was the only one of 10 co-accused in a Chinese drug trial to be sentenced to death, are additional cases of retaliation for Meng’s arrest.³⁸

Parallel to these legal disputes, Chinese officials temporarily froze out their Canadian counterparts, by refusing attempts by high-level officials, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and former Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, to initiate dialogue.³⁹ The countries’ respective ambassadors have also changed since tensions began: Canada dismissed its previous ambassador John McCallum in January 2019 following comments he made about Meng’s case, appointing Dominic Barton as its new ambassador in September 2019, and China reassigned its ambassador Lu Shaye in June 2019, replacing him in September 2019 with new envoy Cong Peiwu.⁴⁰

China has further attempted to pressure Canada economically, in retaliation over the Meng case, by suspending trade of key Canadian exports, including beef, pork, canola and soybeans, citing dubious

³⁵ Campbell Clark, Nathan Vanderklippe & Les Perreux, “Canada protests China’s interrogation of Kovrig over past diplomatic work”, *The Globe and Mail* (16 January 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-canada-protests-chinas-interrogation-of-kovrig-over-past-diplomatic/>> (At the time of his arrest, Michael Kovrig was on temporary leave/sabbatical from the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, working as a consultant with the International Crisis Group.)

³⁶ Thomson Reuters, “China says detained Canadian Michael Kovrig doesn’t have diplomatic immunity”, (14 January 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/china-says-detained-canadian-michael-kovrig-doesn-t-have-diplomatic-immunity-1.4976894>>.

³⁷ Yanan Wang, “China slams Canada after Trudeau criticizes detentions”, *CTV News* (6 September 2019), online: <<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/china-slams-canada-after-trudeau-criticizes-detentions-1.4580744>>.

³⁸ Keegan Elmer, “Chinese court sentences Canadian drug trafficker to death six years after his trial”, *South China Morning Post* (30 April 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3008239/chinese-court-sentences-canadian-drug-trafficker-death-six>>.

³⁹ Grant Wyeth, “A Bitter Stalemate in Canada-China Relations”, *The Diplomat* (19 June 2019), online: <<https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/a-bitter-stalemate-in-canada-china-relations/>>.

⁴⁰ Mike Blanchfield, “Liberals tap economic adviser Dominic Barton as new ambassador to China”, *National Post* (4 September 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/pmnl/news-pmnl/canada-news-pmnl/liberals-tap-economic-adviser-dominic-barton-as-new-ambassador-to-china>>.

health-related grounds for doing so.⁴¹ In turn, Canada has been in a drawn-out review and decision-making process revolving around whether or not it will block Huawei from participating in the development of the country's 5G network, in light of fears that Huawei is too closely connected to the Chinese government and the company's equipment might therefore cause Canada cybersecurity risks and make it vulnerable to state-sanctioned espionage.⁴²

CHINESE DOMESTIC CONTEXT

The summer of 2019 saw sustained public backlash and protests in Hong Kong following the introduction of an extradition bill, which have been met with violence and excessive use of force from Hong Kong law enforcement, as well as threatening language from mainland Chinese authorities.⁴³ Additionally, Hong Kong activists have observed a global strategy on behalf of the Chinese government, which has made a coordinated and concerted effort to smear the Hong Kong protest movement and has attempted to manipulate international public opinion. Notably, China has expressed its displeasure over perceived antagonism in Canada's public rebuke of the treatment of pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong.⁴⁴ Former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland expressed concern about the repercussions of the proposed extradition bill on Canadian citizens in Hong Kong and on respect for Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and its international reputation. The Chinese embassy in Canada denounced these comments as "irresponsible" and "crude interference in the internal affairs of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region".⁴⁵ A further joint statement by Canada and the European Union calling for de-escalation of the situation in Hong Kong was also met by hostility from the Chinese Embassy.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Grant Wyeth, "A Bitter Stalemate in Canada-China Relations", *The Diplomat* (19 June 2019), online: <<https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/a-bitter-stalemate-in-canada-china-relations/>>.

⁴² Steven Chase & Robert Fife, "Is there a halfway for Huawei? Western allies can't agree on role for Chinese giant in 5G networks", *The Globe and Mail* (9 February 2020), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-is-there-a-halfway-for-huawei-western-allies-cant-agree-on-role-for/>>- (Fellow 'Five Eyes' allies the United States and Australia have blocked Huawei, while the United Kingdom has allowed Huawei to play a limited role in its networks.)

⁴³ Yanan Wang, "China slams Canada after Trudeau criticizes detentions", *CTV News* (6 September 2019), online: <<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/china-slams-canada-after-trudeau-criticizes-detentions-1.4580744>>. (The bill in question would have established a mechanism for transfers of fugitives from Hong Kong to Mainland China, Taiwan and Macau. Opposition to the bill was focused primarily on the elements pertaining to extradition to Mainland China.)

⁴⁴ Marie-Danielle Smith, "Canada, U.K. worry about citizens as Hong Kong offers China new extradition powers", *National Post* (30 May 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/canada-britain-worried-about-citizens-as-hong-kong-offers-china-new-extradition-powers>>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*; Joanna Chiu, "How Canadians are part of an underground network helping Hong Kong protesters in their struggle against Chinese control", *Toronto Star* (14 July 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2019/07/14/how-canadians-are-part-of-an-underground-network-helping-hong-kong-protesters-in-their-struggle-against-chinese-control.html>>.

⁴⁶ Global Affairs Canada, "Joint Statement by Canada and European Union on situation in Hong Kong", 17 August 2019, online: <<https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/08/joint-statement-by-canada-and-european-union-on-situation-in-hong-kong.html>>; Thomson Reuters, "Chinese Embassy tells Canada to stop meddling in Hong Kong affairs", *CBC News* (18 August 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/china-canada-hong-kong-embassy-meddling-1.5251663>>.

The situation in Xinjiang, the autonomous region in northwest China, has further deteriorated since 2017. The Chinese government has expanded its network of 're-education camps' in the region (which are more accurately described as concentration or internment camps), arbitrarily detaining up to one million individuals of Muslim ethnic minority groups, including Uighurs and Kazakhs.⁴⁷ The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed alarm in its August 2018 review of China, flagging reports of arbitrary, prolonged and incommunicado mass detention of Uighurs and other Muslim minorities under the pretext of countering terrorism and religious extremism.⁴⁸ After initially denying existence of the camps, China has since acknowledged their existence, but claimed they were 'vocational training centres', and has thus far resisted international pressure to allow for independent investigators and experts to access the region and its camps without restrictions or monitoring.⁴⁹ Investigative reporting from different news organizations, including from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, has shed light on the true sinister nature of these camps, the involuntary presence of their Uighur occupants, and the broader crackdown on ethnic minorities in both Xinjiang and on diaspora members living abroad.⁵⁰

In July 2019, Canada and other like-minded countries called out the widespread human rights violations being perpetrated by the Chinese government against the Uighurs in a joint statement at the UN Human Rights Council, including ethnic discrimination, arbitrary detention, restrictions on freedom of movement, and the repression of freedom of religion.⁵¹ Canada's criticisms were once more met with a dismissive response from China, which accused countries that made such statements of infringing on their sovereignty and meddling in their domestic affairs.⁵²

⁴⁷ Amnesty International, "Up to One Million Detained in China's Mass 'Re-Education' Drive", online: <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/china-up-to-one-million-detained/>>.

⁴⁸ UN CERD, *Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China (including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China)*, CERD/C/CHN/CO/14-17 (19 September 2018), at paras 38, 40-42.

⁴⁹ Reuters, "China shows off Xinjiang 'vocational education training centres' despite global concern", *Global News* (7 January 2019), online: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/4823673/china-xinjiang-education-centres/>>.

⁵⁰ Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, "Exposed China's Operating Manuals For Mass Internment And Arrest By Algorithm", *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists* (24 November 2019), online: <<https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-cables/exposed-chinas-operating-manuals-for-mass-internment-and-arrest-by-algorithm/>>; Austin Ramzy & Chris Buckley, "'Absolutely No Mercy': Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detention of Muslims", *New York Times* (16 November 2019), online: <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html>>; Austin Ramzy, "How China Tracked Detainees and Their Families", *New York Times* (17 February 2020), online: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/17/world/asia/china-reeducation-camps-leaked.html>>.

⁵¹ Ben Westcott & Jo Shelley, "22 countries sign letter calling on China to close Xinjiang Uyghur camps", *CNN* (11 July 2019), online: <<https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/11/asia/xinjiang-uyghur-un-letter-intl-hnk/index.html>>; Amnesty International, "Amnesty Welcomes Statement at Human Rights Council Addressing China's Appalling Violations in Xinjiang" (12 July 2019), online: <<https://www.amnesty.ca/news/amnesty-welcomes-statement-human-rights-council-addressing-china%E2%80%99s-appalling-violations>>.

⁵² Tom Miles, "Saudi Arabia and Russia among 37 states backing China's Xinjiang policy", *Reuters* (12 July 2019), online: <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-xinjiang-rights/saudi-arabia-and-russia-among-37-states-backing-chinas-xinjiang-policy-idUSKCN1U721X>>.

More generally, the Chinese authorities have continued to systematically subject human rights defenders (HRDs) to surveillance, harassment, intimidation, detention and imprisonment.⁵³ Many activists and HRDs continue to be prosecuted on vague and overly broad charges such as “subverting state power”, “inciting subversion of state power” and “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”. Family members of human rights defenders in China have also been subject to police surveillance, harassment and restrictions on their freedom of movement.

CANADIAN DOMESTIC CONTEXT

A Special Committee on Canada-China Relations was created in the House of Commons following the passage of a December 2019 motion, calling for study and review of all aspects of the relationship between the two countries, including consular, economic, legal, security and diplomatic relations.⁵⁴ Ambassador Dominic Barton appeared before the Committee on February 5, 2020 reiterating on several occasions that the promotion and protection of human rights in China was a Canadian priority in the bilateral relationship. Ambassador Barton flagged issues associated with arbitrary detention, surveillance and family separation in Xinjiang, noted the crackdown on dissent within the country, and expressed concern about the increasing suppression of dissent beyond Chinese borders as well.

Ambassador Barton stated that his main priority was seeking the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor and seeking clemency for Robert Schellenberg.⁵⁵ After he was prompted by committee members, Ambassador Barton also acknowledged the detention of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian citizen and member of the Uighur Muslim minority, who has been detained by China since 2006. The Ambassador appeared unaware that Celil is a Canadian citizen and claimed that Canada had done everything it could to access him in order to provide consular services, but supposedly had not succeeded due to his citizenship status.

Similarly, no mention was made of other cases involving Canadians being detained in China, including, for instance, Qian Sun, a 51-year-old Canadian citizen, businesswoman and Falun Gong practitioner, who was blindfolded, arrested without a warrant by over two dozen Chinese police officers, and has remained in detention in Beijing since February 19, 2017.⁵⁶ Cases like Huseyin Celil and Qian Sun’s are

⁵³ Amnesty International, “Annual Report 2019: China”, online: <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/china/report-china/>>.

⁵⁴ David Lao & Amanda Connolly, “Parliament passes Conservative motion to create committee on Canada-China relations”, *Global News* (10 December 2019), online: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/6280435/china-canada-relations-committee/>>; Kathleen Harris, “China says Canadian detainees face prosecution on national security charges”, *CBC News* (10 December 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/michael-kovrig-spavor-china-1.5390406>>; Rachel Aiello, “365 days detained: Opposition parties agree to special study as two Canadians remain held in China”, *CTV News* (10 December 2019), online: <<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/365-days-detained-opposition-parties-agree-to-special-study-as-two-canadians-remain-held-in-china-1.4723763>>.

⁵⁵ Peter Zimonjic, “6 things we learned from Dominic Barton’s appearance before a committee of MPs”, *CBC News* (5 February 2020), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/dominic-barton-china-committee-1.5453779>>.

⁵⁶ Charlie Smith, “Falun Gong practitioners plan vigil outside Chinese consulate over arrest of Canadian woman”, *The Georgia Straight* (8 May 2017), online: <<https://www.straight.com/news/906706/falun-gong-protesters-plan-vigil-outside-chinese-consulate-protest-arrest-canadian-woman>>; Nathan Vanderklippe, “Family fears Canadian Falun Gong

part of a serious and concerning trend involving a growing number of Canadians and individuals with strong Canadian connections who have been imprisoned in China in recent years. While such cases are not the primary focus of this report, they point to another trend that should be of serious concern for the Canadian government.

Senators Leo Housakos and Thanh Hai Ngo tabled a motion in the Senate on December 12, 2019, calling on the government to sanction Chinese and/or Hong Kong officials under Canada's Magnitsky Act for their widespread human rights violations, including their treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang and protesters in Hong Kong, as well as their persecution of Tibetans, Falun Gong practitioners, other minority groups, and dissidents. China's ambassador to Canada warned that if the motion passes and if Canada proceeds with "this kind of dangerous" activity, "very firm countermeasures" would result.⁵⁷

The issue of Chinese interference in Canada had previously been addressed by parliamentarians in October 2018, when Independent Senator Yuen Pau Woo, alongside Conservative Senator Victor Oh, Liberal MP Joyce Murray and NDP MP Don Davies, co-sponsored a panel discussion on the topic. A summary report from the discussion determined that "examples of Chinese interference at Canadian universities [...] are few and far between", and that "while there is undoubtedly an effort on the part of the CCP to enlist ethnic Chinese living outside of Canada as supporters of PRC government views, it is unclear that such efforts have had any meaningful impact in Canada".⁵⁸ The report also concluded that fears of UFDW infiltration in the Canadian Chinese community were overblown, and that the Canadian government needed to learn from experiences in the United States and Australia in order to calibrate its response and avoid the excesses, sensationalism and stigmatization that have supposedly characterized the Chinese interference debate in those countries.⁵⁹ Moreover, the summary suggested that "Canada already has the toolkit to deal with cases of Chinese interference in Canada, and that security and intelligence officials have already been taking action, albeit without the glare of publicity that has characterized such cases in other countries. [...] the Canadian government should ensure that the relevant agencies have sufficient resources to employ those tools fully and firmly".⁶⁰ Given the ongoing concerns revolving around Chinese interference and the lack of adequate action from the Canadian

practitioner tortured for confession", *Globe and Mail* (16 November 2018), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-canadian-falun-gong-practitioner-arrested-in-china-for-her-beliefs/>>.

In May 2017 Falun Gong practitioners and their supporters in Vancouver protested her illegal detention and called on the Canadian government to protect its citizens in China by demanding Sun's unconditional release. Sun stood trial in September 2018 on charges of "organizing/using a cult to undermine implementation of the law", accusations that are commonly used to prosecute Falun Gong practitioners in China. Through statements provided to her lawyer, Sun has been able to communicate that she has been subject to mental and physical torture. Sun's family has raised concerns that her confession was likely coerced through such torture. Several lawyers have been pressured and dissuaded by the authorities from taking Sun's case, leaving her unrepresented for long periods of time.

⁵⁷ Giuseppe Valiante, "Ambassador says China will retaliate if Canada places human rights sanctions", *Global News* (5 December 2019), online: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/6260910/china-ambassador-canada-sanctions/>>.

⁵⁸ "'Chinese Interference' in Canada: What do We Know and What Should We Do About It?", Centre Block, Parliament of Canada (Ottawa, 5 October 2018), online:

<<http://www.senatoryuenpauwoo.ca/uploads/3/9/0/1/39018137/chineseinterferencesummaryreportoct15.pdf>>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

government that are raised by the present report, it is not clear what toolkit was being referred to, and what action has been taken by security and intelligence officials. The conclusions of this report have been heavily criticized by members of the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China for being inaccurate, incomplete and misleading.

Ultimately, the heightened tensions between the two countries makes it more difficult for Canada to engage in open and productive dialogue with the Chinese government on the issues raised in this report, namely the harassment and intimidation of individuals and groups working in Canada on China-related human rights concerns. Recent events have placed Canada in a defensive posture in its relations with China, such that the government often appears to be less willing to raise these kinds of issues with their Chinese counterparts out of fear of further inflaming tensions or antagonizing China. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that Canadian public opinion with respect to China in general, Canada-China relations, and specifically China's record on human rights and the rule of law, have deteriorated considerably as public distrust and wariness continue to mount.⁶¹ Certain public opinion polls also demonstrate that when asked, a majority of Canadians (7/10) say that China's record on human rights and the rule of law should be a more important consideration than trade and investment opportunities for Canada when assessing the Canada-China relationship.⁶²

TYPES OF HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION

In Canada, Tibetan-Canadians, Uighur-Canadians, Falun Gong practitioners, Hong Kong Canadians, pro-democracy activists and other individuals working on China-related human rights issues have long alleged that they have been subject to a concerted campaign of harassment and intimidation at the hands of the Chinese authorities. In the previous iteration of this report, the Coalition found credible reports of Canadians and residents of Canada being subjected to a wide range of rights violations consistent with allegations that Chinese authorities or their agents have been engaging in a systematic campaign of harassment and intimidation against these groups. The present updated report expands on these earlier findings, as there have been continued incidents of digital attacks, phone harassment, in-person monitoring of individuals in Canada, harassment and intimidation at demonstrations, harassment of family members in China, and interference with freedom of assembly and media. This

⁶¹ Matt Robinson, "Most Canadians say China can't be trusted on human rights, rule of law: poll", *Vancouver Sun* (11 December 2019), online: <<https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/most-canadians-say-china-cant-be-trusted-on-human-rights-rule-of-law-poll>>. A November 2019 Angus Reid poll found that 9 in 10 Canadians say China can't be trusted on human rights and the rule of law (up from around 5/10 in 2018); Joanna Chiu, "As Huawei decision looms, Canadians turning 'very cold' on China, survey finds", *Toronto Star* (5 November 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2019/11/05/as-huawei-decision-looms-canadians-turning-very-cold-on-china-survey-finds.html>>. A poll conducted by the University of British Columbia and the University of Ottawa in late September/early October 2019 found that only 29% of Canadians viewed China favourably.

⁶² Angus Reid Institute, "China-Canada relations: in fraught times, there is little consensus on how best to resolve tensions" (February 1 2019), online: <<http://angusreid.org/china-canada-relations-huawei-meng-wanzhou/>>; Matt Robinson, "Most Canadians say China can't be trusted on human rights, rule of law: poll", *Vancouver Sun* (11 December 2019), online: <<https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/most-canadians-say-china-cant-be-trusted-on-human-rights-rule-of-law-poll>>.

report also highlights some new trends identified since March 2017: in particular, an increased incidence of interference, harassment and intimidation on university campuses and in the realm of academia, with a noticeable mobilization of Chinese international students.

HONG KONG

Hong Kong Protests: While millions of protesters in Hong Kong have taken to the streets to manifest their opposition to a proposed extradition bill, among other human rights and democracy-related demands,⁶³ thousands of people have also taken to the streets in Canadian cities, actively denouncing the actions of the Hong Kong government and threats emanating from China. Many Canadians were concerned that the proposed extradition bill would allow Hong Kong authorities to arbitrarily arrest anyone of any nationality who was living in Hong Kong, or even in transit through its airport, and extradite them to China, with activists and vocal dissidents facing particularly heightened risk.⁶⁴

The broad community of Canadians with Chinese origins, both those from Hong Kong and those from mainland China, are far from having a unified view on the issue, which has been reflected in events that have transpired in Canada as well. On many occasions, groups and individuals who favour a higher level of autonomy for Hong Kong have been met with counter-protests and rallies seeking to disrupt their message and activities. Tensions and divisions have been most strongly felt in Vancouver and Toronto, where Chinese-Canadians often have different views on politics and identity based on the temporal wave of migration that brought them to Canada.⁶⁵ Observers have suggested that since 1997, increased immigration from mainland China has significantly changed the political dynamics in the Chinese-Canadian community.⁶⁶ Currently, the majority of Chinese-Canadians in Canada are from mainland China. They are far more likely than Hong Kong or Taiwanese immigrants to support the Beijing

⁶³ The movement has 5 main demands: 1) Full withdrawal of the extradition bill; 2) Commission of inquiry/independent investigations into alleged police brutality; 3) Retracting the classification of protesters as rioters; 4) release and amnesty for arrested protesters; 5) the resignation of Carrie Lam, the current Chief Executive of Hong Kong + dual universal suffrage, for both the Legislative Council and the Chief Executive. Wong Tsui-kai, "Hong Kong protests: What are the 'five demands'? What do protesters want?", *Young Post* (20 August 2019), online: <<https://yp.scmp.com/hongkongprotests5demands>>.

⁶⁴ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link; Interview with Cherie Wong, Executive Director of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 12 February 2020; Marie-Danielle Smith, "In the battle over Hong Kong, the surveillance state knows no boundaries", *Macleans* (3 February 2020), online: <<https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/in-the-battle-over-hong-kong-the-surveillance-state-knows-no-boundaries/>>; "'People are actually scared': Hong Kongers in Canada watch nervously as tensions simmer back home", *CBC News* (14 August 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/hong-kong-canada-solidarity-1.5246153>>; Ian Young, "Vancouver's Hong Kong protesters think they're being watched. They're right – but by whom?", *South China Morning Post* (3 September 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3025575/vancouver-hong-kong-protesters-think-theyre-being-watched>>.

⁶⁵ Kevin Chong, "Divided loyalties: How the Hong Kong protests are exposing tensions among Canadians of Chinese descent", *The Globe and Mail* (12 July 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-divided-loyalties-how-the-hong-kong-protests-are-exposing-tensions/>>.

⁶⁶ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link; Miu Chung Yan, Karen Lok Yi Wong & Daniel Lai, "Subethnic interpersonal dynamics in diasporic community: a study on Chinese immigrants in Vancouver" (2019) 20:4 *Asian Ethnicity* 451.

government. China has used this critical mass to create a dominant pro-Beijing and nationalistic sentiment in the Chinese-Canadian community.⁶⁷

MEDIA INFLUENCE

An open letter published as an advertisement in Vancouver and Toronto Chinese-language newspapers in July 2019, signed by over 200 organizations in the country (and paid for by the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver, a group with deep ties to Chinese-Canadian businesses and community leaders), expressed support for Hong Kong's Beijing-backed government, opposed any Hong Kong independence movement, defended China's 'inalienable' right to control Hong Kong and denounced 'radicalism' and violent extremism among the demonstrators.⁶⁸ The publication of the statement raised questions about whether the Chinese government and its arms of influence were involved in its preparation, an allegation that was denied by the message's signatories.⁶⁹ In particular, the statement noted that "Hong Kong's affairs are China's internal affairs; and we oppose any foreign interference", which appeared to be a tell-tale sign that the Chinese government was involved to some degree in inserting language of this nature, which is often a hallmark of Chinese state diplomacy and foreign policy.

Hong Kong activists in Canada have denounced the newspaper ads as "propaganda" and labelled them as attempts to buy influence.⁷⁰ Cheuk Kwan, of the Toronto Association for Democracy in China, told the National Post that many signatories were shell groups beholden to the state party line, acting as mouthpieces, and that the statement was likely orchestrated by Chinese representatives in Canada.⁷¹ Fenella Sung, a spokeswoman for Vancouver's Friends of Hong Kong, also expressed doubts about the origin of the letter, noting that the language used seemed typical of the United Front Work Department, especially the appeal to ethnic nationalism (saying that Chinese Canadians are all "sons of China and members of the Chinese people" and that "blood is thicker than water").⁷² Similarly, Eleanor Yuen, of

⁶⁷ The term "pro-Beijing" is used in this report to connote groups or individuals aligned with or sympathetic to Chinese government policies and positions.

⁶⁸ Kevin Chong, "Divided loyalties: How the Hong Kong protests are exposing tensions among Canadians of Chinese descent", *The Globe and Mail* (12 July 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-divided-loyalties-how-the-hong-kong-protests-are-exposing-tensions/>>; Zak Vescera, "Local Chinese groups take out pro-Communist Party ads amidst Hong Kong protests", *Vancouver Sun* (26 June 2019), online: <<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/local-chinese-groups-take-out-pro-communist-party-ads-amidst-hong-kong-protests>>.

⁶⁹ Tom Blackwell, "Open letter from Chinese-Canadian groups boosts Hong Kong government, blasts protesters", *National Post* (9 July 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/open-letter-from-chinese-canadian-groups-boosts-hong-kong-government-blasts-protesters>>.

⁷⁰ Zak Vescera, "Local Chinese groups take out pro-Communist Party ads amidst Hong Kong protests", *Vancouver Sun* (26 June 2019), online: <<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/local-chinese-groups-take-out-pro-communist-party-ads-amidst-hong-kong-protests>>.

⁷¹ Tom Blackwell, "Open letter from Chinese-Canadian groups boosts Hong Kong government, blasts protesters", *National Post* (9 July 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/open-letter-from-chinese-canadian-groups-boosts-hong-kong-government-blasts-protesters>>.

⁷² *Ibid.*

the pro-democracy Vancouver Hong Kong Forum Society, suggested that several of the organizations that signed the letter have “intense links to China”.⁷³

In October 2019, a Chinese Canadian group known as the Council of Newcomer Organizations, which has previously received federal funding, paid for a newspaper advertisement in the Chinese Canadian Times condemning Hong Kong democracy protesters and adopting Chinese government talking points.⁷⁴ The use of Canadian taxpayer money to fund such an organization was decried by spokespeople for pro-democracy groups in Canada, who criticized the Canadian government for allowing public funds to be used to enable CCP influence in Canadian society and politics.⁷⁵

PROTESTS & COUNTER-PROTESTS

Hong Kong support groups have become a major target of CCP-directed intimidation and harassment in Canada following the growing momentum of the resistance movement against Chinese authoritarianism in Hong Kong. After the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement in 2014 and the subsequent 2015 Canadian parliamentary study and hearings on the democratic future of Hong Kong, the Chinese Embassy in Canada has considered the Hong Kong issue to be of major concern to them. As protests against Hong Kong’s extradition bill sparked demonstrations of support around the globe, many activists have observed a well-orchestrated global campaign of harassment and intimidation against individuals and civil society organizations supporting the Hong Kong protests.⁷⁶

A number of protests organized by Hong Kong pro-democracy supporters across Canada have been met by counter-protesters, who many expert observers believe may be directed or organized by Chinese government and UFDW officials, including at the consular level.⁷⁷ In recent months, Hong Kong pro-democracy supporters have felt increasingly threatened by groups of provocateurs, which are believed to be primarily Chinese international students, who take aggressive measures like dismantling protest

⁷³ Kevin Chong, “Divided loyalties: How the Hong Kong protests are exposing tensions among Canadians of Chinese descent”, *The Globe and Mail* (12 July 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-divided-loyalties-how-the-hong-kong-protests-are-exposing-tensions/>>.

⁷⁴ Tom Blackwell, “Hong Kong democracy advocates angry after Ottawa-funded group buys ad backing China’s side”, *National Post* (3 October 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/hong-kong-democracy-advocates-angry-after-ottawa-funded-group-buys-ad-backing-chinas-side>>.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link, corroborated by supporting evidence.

⁷⁷ Cheryl Chan, “‘Overseas Chinese’ urged to be more vocal in support of Beijing, says Chinese cultural historian”, 20 August 2019, online: <<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/overseas-chinese-urged-to-be-more-vocal-in-support-of-beijing-says-chinese-cultural-historian>> (The article notes that attendees of pro-Beijing protests outside the consulate often claim that they are volunteers and do not receive any resources from the Chinese consulate. The Chinese consulate has denied involvement or ignored media questions about their involvement. In its denials, the consulate has said it was “understandable and reasonable for local overseas Chinese to express indignation and opposition against words and deeds that attempt to separate China and smear its image.”)

installations, instigating physical confrontations, shouting at and verbally assaulting them, and other means of harassment and intimidation.⁷⁸

This specific campaign of harassment and intimidation serves several purposes,⁷⁹ including: manipulating the international narrative of the Hong Kong movement by smearing the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement to be a violent, purely pro-Hong Kong independence movement, and subsequently diminishing its international support; suppressing Canadians' constitutional rights to freedom of expression by harassing them as they participated in rallies supporting Hong Kong in various cities, such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, and Halifax; and marginalizing Canadian civil society organizations instrumental in supporting the Hong Kong protest movement.

On August 17, 2019, one day before the Montreal Pride parade, a group of LGBTQ pro-democracy Hong Kong activists were blocked from marching in the parade for 'security reasons' as organizers faced unspecified threats of sabotage and disruption from pro-Beijing individuals over the group's participation.⁸⁰ Parade organizers did not share the threatening messages with the targeted group, nor did they inform them of the platform on which the threats were made, the content or their nature, and the origins of the threats.⁸¹ LGBTQ Hong Kong activist Henry Lam, member of Action Free Hong Kong Montreal, was critical of the organizers' decision to bar them from participating rather than increasing security to ensure their protection. Montreal police informed reporters that they had not communicated with Pride organizers over potential threats, raising questions as to whether parade organizers took an appropriate course of action by immediately giving in to the threats without first communicating with police.

On the day of the parade a group of pro-Beijing protesters were seen near the parade route, waving Chinese flags and singing the Chinese national anthem (multiple reports indicate that the singing continued during the moment of silence for all those from the community that have lost their lives to AIDS and hate crimes).⁸² One Hong Kong activist who marched in the parade by himself, Francis Tang

⁷⁸ Marie-Danielle Smith, "In the battle over Hong Kong, the surveillance state knows no boundaries", *Macleans* (3 February 2020), online: <<https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/in-the-battle-over-hong-kong-the-surveillance-state-knows-no-boundaries/>>.

⁷⁹ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link.

⁸⁰ Claire Loewen, "Hong Kong activists booted from Montreal Pride parade after alleged pro-Communist threats", *CBC News* (27 August 2019), online: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/hong-kong-montreal-pride-1.5260820?fbclid=IwAR3L-AMttBgx_jt-BX3SeTkFITqGQNS3WTm0NWt1St8hZui0SDI9dkGmsZY> (In response to questions from journalists, Montreal Pride claimed that its policy is "not to interfere in geopolitical conflicts"); Ian Young, "Montreal Pride expels gay Hong Kong marchers, blaming 'threats by pro-Communists' to sabotage parade", *South China Morning Post* (29 August 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3024800/montreal-pride-expels-gay-hong-kong-marchers-blaming-threats-pro>>.

⁸¹ Interview with Amy Li*, member of Action Free HK MTL, 14 February 2020.

⁸² Ian Young, "Montreal Pride expels gay Hong Kong marchers, blaming 'threats by pro-Communists' to sabotage parade", *South China Morning Post* (29 August 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3024800/montreal-pride-expels-gay-hong-kong-marchers-blaming-threats-pro>>; Claire Loewen, "Hong Kong activists booted from Montreal Pride parade after alleged pro-Communist threats", *CBC News* (27 August 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/hong-kong-montreal-pride->

Yiu-Kwong, was followed throughout by pro-Beijing protesters before ultimately stepping out of the parade for safety reasons. Media reports, corroborated by screenshots and witness testimony, revealed that a WeChat group with hundreds of members had been discussing the participation of pro-democracy Hong Kong activists in the parade and was organizing a counter-protest. The WeChat communications included threatening messages suggesting that marchers should be followed, confronted and beaten up.⁸³

On August 17, 2019 there was a particularly tense face-off mediated by police officers between pro-democracy protesters and hundreds of pro-Beijing counter-protesters outside of Old City Hall in Toronto, which led to shouting matches and heated exchanges.⁸⁴ Witnesses stated that members of a pro-Beijing group were chanting “One China” and other nationalistic slogans, booed the Hong Kong supporters when the Canadian national anthem was being sung, and blocked the pro-democracy protesters from leaving the area for the march, despite requests from Toronto police.⁸⁵ Democracy protesters had to be escorted by police to leave the venue safely at the end of the rally. Pro-democracy Hong Kong activists labelled the presence of pro-Beijing government supporters as an intimidation tactic aimed at repressing the lawful exercise of constitutional rights to freedom of expression.⁸⁶ Protest organizers alleged that many counter-protesters attempted to attack the pro-Hong Kong protesters and dispossess them of their Hong Kong flags.⁸⁷ Toronto police later confirmed that no one was physically injured. Many pro-Hong Kong protesters expressed disappointment with the police’s response to the counter-protests, as the police simply stated that they could not impede the counter-protesters from exercising their right to protest, and did not take further action to de-escalate the situation.⁸⁸ Screenshots captured from WeChat groups indicated that many message threads in the days preceding August 17 were used to fan Chinese nationalistic sentiment and call for people to oppose the Hong Kong independence movement.⁸⁹ Mainland Chinese people engaged in communication on WeChat using

[1.5260820?fbclid=IwAR3L-AMttBgx_jt-BX3SeTkFITqGQNS3WTm0NwT1St8hZui0SDI9dkGmsZY](https://www.facebook.com/1.5260820?fbclid=IwAR3L-AMttBgx_jt-BX3SeTkFITqGQNS3WTm0NwT1St8hZui0SDI9dkGmsZY)>; These events were also corroborated by witness testimony and through video evidence (Interviews with Amy Li* and Cherie Wong).

⁸³ Young, *ibid.* This was also corroborated by interview with Amy Li*, who relayed that messages in the WeChat group included instructions to dress in red and bring China flags, as well as the suggestion to bring water guns filled with pepper spray to use against parade participants from Hong Kong (no sign they went through with this).

⁸⁴ Katherine DeClerq, “Toronto march in support of Hong Kong protests blocked by pro-China group”, *CTV News* (17 August 2019), online: <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/toronto-march-in-support-of-hong-kong-protests-blocked-by-pro-china-group-1.4554312#_gus&_gucid=&_gup=Facebook&_gsc=iDZD1aa>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link; Albert Delitala & Ryan Rocca, “Protesters face off at rally for Hong Kong in Toronto”, *Global News* (17 August 2019), online: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/5778860/hong-kong-toronto-rally/>>.

⁸⁷ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link.

⁸⁸ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link; Interview with Jane Lee, member of the New Hong Kong Cultural Club, 11 February 2020.

⁸⁹ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link. All of these WeChat groups were deleted following the counter-protest, presumably to prevent anyone involved from having their identity traced.

violent language to condemn the Hong Kong and Canadian protesters. Some even showed pictures of weapons implying that they might bring them to their counterdemonstrations.⁹⁰

On August 17, 2019, a demonstration in Vancouver supporting the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement was met by pro-Beijing counter-protesters, leading to the closure of a major intersection as hundreds of demonstrators spilled into the streets.⁹¹ The next day on August 18, 2019, a prayer action aimed at promoting “love, peace and justice in Hong Kong” in a Vancouver church was surrounded by approximately 100 pro-Beijing protesters holding Chinese flags, before police were called to the scene to diffuse tensions.⁹² The people inside the church felt threatened by the pro-Beijing group’s actions and they were deeply concerned about their safety. At the end of the event, the prayer group members had to be escorted by Vancouver Police as they left the church.⁹³

Community group leaders like Mabel Tung, chair of the Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement, have attended pro-democracy protests in Canada for decades, noting that the summer of 2019 was the first time that she ever encountered a counter-protest.⁹⁴ Jane Lee of the New Hong Kong Cultural Club, a recently established community organization, highlighted evidence of possible coordination and organization between protesters and Chinese officials, noting how counter-protesters repeat the same talking points propagated by Chinese state media, in a way that seems orchestrated or controlled. Similarly, Kevin Huang of the non-profit Hua Foundation noted with suspicion occasions on which hundreds of counter-protesters would seemingly all disappear and disperse at a fixed time, as if they were not there of their own volition and were on a set schedule or shift.⁹⁵ Moreover, members of the Alliance Canada Hong Kong have decried the inaction and lack of response from politicians and the government in the face of increasingly brazen displays of Chinese nationalism and intimidation against pro-democracy Hong Kong protesters within Canada.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link, corroborated by supporting evidence (photos, screenshots, etc.).

⁹¹ Sean Boynton, “Duelling Hong Kong protests in Vancouver shut down major intersection near city hall”, *Global News* (17 August 2019), online: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/5779842/vancouver-hong-kong-protests/>>.

⁹² Jenny Peng, “Christian group says its religious rights were violated when pro-China supporters ‘surrounded’ church”, *Toronto Star* (20 August 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2019/08/20/christian-group-says-its-religious-rights-were-violated-when-pro-china-supporters-surrounded-church.html>>.

⁹³ Information provided by Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link.

⁹⁴ Marie-Danielle Smith, “In the battle over Hong Kong, the surveillance state knows no boundaries”, *Macleans* (3 February 2020), online: <<https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/in-the-battle-over-hong-kong-the-surveillance-state-knows-no-boundaries/>>.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Jeremy Nuttall, “Why a new Hong Kong activist organization has its eye on Canadian politicians”, *Toronto Star* (21 January 2020), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/01/21/why-a-new-hong-kong-activist-organization-has-its-eye-on-canadian-politicians.html>>.

On September 28, 2019, a demonstration in support of Hong Kong protestors in Halifax, where 60 people joined hands to form a human chain around the Halifax Public Gardens, was met by counter-protestors holding large Chinese flags and playing the Chinese national anthem.⁹⁷

On September 29, 2019, a demonstration of a few hundred individuals was held in Montreal by Hong Kong activists, conjointly with members of Tibetan and Uighur communities. Roughly 30 pro-Beijing counter-protesters wearing all-red clothing and brandishing Chinese flags confronted the protest participants, attempting to intimidate them by yelling at them, following them during their procession, and even pushing one participant off his bicycle, before police intervened and separated the groups.⁹⁸

On October 1, 2019, a rally was held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa by a group of pro-democracy Hong Kong-Canadians, after which they were followed, harassed and surrounded by pro-Beijing individuals, who subjected them to intimidation and death threats before police belatedly intervened.⁹⁹ Individuals who were present for the rally felt that the RCMP response was completely insufficient and inappropriate given the circumstances: only two officers responded to calls for assistance in a situation where over 100 Chinese counter-protesters were intimidating the pro-democracy rally attendees.¹⁰⁰

On October 5, 2019, around 200 supporters (mostly high school students) of the Hong Kong protest movement built a 'Lennon Wall' at a city SkyTrain station in Richmond, British Columbia; within an hour the wall had promptly been defaced and torn down by counter-protesting supporters of the Chinese government.¹⁰¹ This led to escalating tensions between the two parties, including harassment, taunts, shoving, coins being thrown, and invitations to fight, which were eventually defused by RCMP

⁹⁷ Anjali Patil, "Halifax demonstrators form human chain to support Hong Kong", *CBC News* (28 September 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/halifax-demonstrators-form-human-chain-support-hong-kong-1.5301644>>.

⁹⁸ Interview with Amy Li*, member of Action Free HK MTL, 14 February 2020; Sophie Langlois, "La bataille de Hong Kong à Montréal", *Radio-Canada* (5 December 2019), online: <<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1417672/democratie-montreal-etudiants-espions-chine-hong-kong>>.

⁹⁹ Interview with Cherie Wong, Executive Director of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 12 February 2020; See also: Terry Glavin, "The Liberals need to decide if Canada really wants to be on China's side", *National Post* (2 October 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/election-2019/terry-glavin-the-liberals-need-to-decide-if-canada-really-wants-to-be-on-chinas-side>>.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Cherie Wong, Executive Director of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 12 February 2020.

¹⁰¹ Ian Young, "Canadian police go undercover as Hong Kong protest tensions rise in Richmond, the world's most Chinese city outside Asia", *South China Morning Post* (4 October 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3031486/canadian-police-go-undercover-hong-kong-protest-tensions-rise>>; "Residents clash in Richmond over Hong Kong protests", *CBC News* (5 October 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/richmond-residents-clash-hong-kong-protests-1.5310805>>; Terry Glavin, "The Liberals need to decide if Canada really wants to be on China's side", *National Post* (2 October 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/election-2019/terry-glavin-the-liberals-need-to-decide-if-canada-really-wants-to-be-on-chinas-side>>. Lennon Walls are inspired by a wall in Prague, Czech Republic that is filled with John Lennon-inspired graffiti, advocating for peace and local and global causes. Similar walls have emerged in Hong Kong since the 2014 democracy protests, as thousands of people have posted Post-it notes expressing support for the democracy movement, as well as in 2019 during the protests against the extradition bill. Walls of this nature have appeared in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Seoul, Tokyo, Berlin, London, Sydney, Auckland, etc. Many of these walls have been subjected to vandalism.

officers.¹⁰² Several Lennon Walls of this nature have cropped up around Canada but have been vandalized or taken down, ostensibly by pro-Beijing demonstrators.

Many protesters and dissidents have expressed concerns that CCP agents and/or pro-Beijing supporters could take photos of pro-Hong Kong protests and use facial recognition technology to identify people, or otherwise document pro-Hong Kong activism, including in online spaces.¹⁰³ A number of activists have expressed serious and legitimate fears that once their identities are known by Chinese state agents, this information could be used to arrest or detain them if they were to travel to China, and/or to intimidate or retaliate against their loved ones, family members, employers/colleagues, and any individuals associated with them.¹⁰⁴

These are well-founded fears, given that there are many reports of police and Chinese state agents harassing relatives of pro-Hong Kong protesters abroad. Even in Canada, many members of the Chinese and Hong Kong diaspora say that they feel watched by Chinese government surveillance, which shows no regard for borders and foreign sovereignty. Activists and community members are increasingly taking concerted measures to mask their appearances and conceal their identities to prevent any potential monitoring or surveillance linked to the Chinese government. Chinese consulates have continued to deny any direct involvement, calling these allegations groundless and malicious, and instead claiming that local overseas Chinese citizens are understandable and reasonable in their expressions of indignation and opposition to “attempted Hong Kong separation”.¹⁰⁵

UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Around 50 students and community members who were gathered in solidarity with Hong Kong protesters were met by roughly the same number of pro-Beijing counter-protesters on the campus of the University of British Columbia on October 1, 2019, the 70th anniversary of Chinese communist rule. While there were no serious physical altercations between the two sides, tensions were high as both sides tried to chant and sing over the other.¹⁰⁶ One Chinese counter-protestor threw a portable

¹⁰² Ian Young, “Canadian police go undercover as Hong Kong protest tensions rise in Richmond, the world’s most Chinese city outside Asia”, *South China Morning Post* (4 October 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3031486/canadian-police-go-undercover-hong-kong-protest-tensions-rise>>.

¹⁰³ Sophie Langlois, “La bataille de Hong Kong à Montréal”, *Radio-Canada* (5 December 2019), online: <<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1417672/democratie-montreal-etudiants-espions-chine-hong-kong>>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid; Interview with Cherie Wong, Executive Director of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 12 February 2020.

¹⁰⁵ Marie-Danielle Smith, “In the battle over Hong Kong, the surveillance state knows no boundaries”, *Macleans* (3 February 2020), online: <<https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/in-the-battle-over-hong-kong-the-surveillance-state-knows-no-boundaries/>>.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Davin Wong, member of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 21 February 2020; Salomon Micko Benrimoh & Henry Anderson, “At rally on Chinese National Day, students clash over democracy in Hong Kong”, *The Ubysey* (2 October 2019), online: <<https://www.ubyssey.ca/news/clash-over-democracy-in-hong-kong-rally/>>; Terry Glavin, “The Liberals need to decide if Canada really wants to be on China’s side”, *National Post* (2 October 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/election-2019/terry-glavin-the-liberals-need-to-decide-if-canada-really-wants-to-be-on-chinas-side>>.

microphone at one of the Hong Kong supporters; RCMP officers intervened, but the woman declined to press charges.¹⁰⁷ Many students who were gathering in solidarity with Hong Kong protesters wore clothing, masks and goggles aimed at concealing their identities, as they expressed fear of Chinese governmental surveillance and retaliation, both personally and against their families, for their participation in the demonstration.¹⁰⁸ The Hong Kong supporters later learned from internal sources that a WeChat group composed of Chinese students at UBC had been used to mobilize counter-protestors.¹⁰⁹ In talking with counter-protestors at a later event, UBC Hong Kong organizers learned that many of the Chinese students were mobilizing and demonstrating on the basis of misinformation and propaganda relayed by Chinese state media sources about the nature of the Hong Kong protests.¹¹⁰

On November 24, 2019, tensions were sparked on the campus of the University of Guelph after a cannon known as 'Old Jeremiah', which students have painted for decades as part of campus tradition, was painted black with yellow letters that read "Stand with Hong Kong", "Free Hong Kong" and "Don't take democracy for granted".¹¹¹ A group of students from Hong Kong and their supporters took credit for these messages. The following day, on November 25, the cannon was painted purple and the statements of support were fully covered. International students from China claimed that these messages advocating for Hong Kong's separation from China were offensive, thereby justifying their removal.¹¹² That evening, the cannon was repainted red for a third time and aggressive verbal altercations broke out between students. Coalition sources reported that Chinese students stationed themselves around the canon to prevent Hong Kong students from re-painting the canon.¹¹³ Different inscriptions were added to the cannon in the following days, including the words "love", "peace", "oppose violence", and yellow stars, before later being removed by a masked individual.

HIGH SCHOOLS

2019 also saw a number of incidents of intimidation and harassment against Hong Kong democracy supporters in high schools and secondary schools. At Burnaby North Secondary School in British Columbia, pro-Hong Kong posters were vandalized and torn from lockers, while some of the students

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Davin Wong, member of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 21 February 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Salomon Micko Benrimoh & Henry Anderson, "At rally on Chinese National Day, students clash over democracy in Hong Kong", *The Ubysey* (2 October 2019), online: <<https://www.ubyssey.ca/news/clash-over-deomcracy-in-hong-kong-rally/>>; Marie-Danielle Smith, "In the battle over Hong Kong, the surveillance state knows no boundaries", *Macleans* (3 February 2020), online: <<https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/in-the-battle-over-hong-kong-the-surveillance-state-knows-no-boundaries/>>.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Davin Wong, member of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 21 February 2020.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Anam Khan, "Support for Hong Kong on U of G cannon sparks campus conflict", *Guelph Today* (26 November 2019), online: <<https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/support-for-hong-kong-on-u-of-g-cannon-sparks-campus-conflict-4-photos-1883951>>.

¹¹² The University of Guelph's Chinese Students and Scholars Association, a pro-Beijing student group with ties to the Chinese government and the UFWD, released a statement declaring its opposition to "internal separatist forces", "ulterior external reaction forces", "false reports", "discrediting rumors" and the "occurrence of violence".

¹¹³ Interview with Jane Lee, member of the New Hong Kong Cultural Club, 11 February 2020.

who had put up the posters were shoved by pro-Beijing students.¹¹⁴ At Richmond Secondary School, an anonymous letter was taped to the locker of a student who had publicly expressed his support for the protests in Hong Kong, denouncing the protesters and their supporters as evil and praising the Chinese Communist Party and its leader.¹¹⁵ The letter included a passage that stated “insulting our dearest motherland is absolutely not allowed because your so-called uprising isn’t righteous but evil”.¹¹⁶ In a separate incident, an altercation broke out between pro-Hong Kong and pro-Beijing students, requiring school administrators to report the incident to police.¹¹⁷ Parents of some students reported concerns about being unable to speak out about the protests in Hong Kong, for fear of retaliation from their peers.¹¹⁸

In October 2019, activists from the Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement handed out informational pamphlets on the Hong Kong protests and the Tiananmen Square massacre to social studies teachers at a professional development conference in British Columbia, after which the Chinese Consulate In Vancouver released a statement objecting to the pamphlet campaign, alleging that it was an effort by foreigners to “interfere in Hong Kong’s affairs, which they consider to be China’s domestic affairs”.¹¹⁹

INDIVIDUAL HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION

The Coalition has received reports of many Hong Kong supporters and activists who have faced individualized harassment and intimidation as a result of their advocacy and public outspokenness. In particular, core organizers of Hong Kong support groups have noted an influx of cyber attacks around symbolic dates (i.e. June 4: anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre; July 1: anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to China) and during times when major pro-democracy movements such as the Umbrella Movement and the Anti-Extradition Bill Movement were being launched in Hong Kong.

Cherie Wong, executive director of the Alliance Canada HK, reports having faced serious harassment and intimidation since at least July 2019, when she became a vocal leader in the Hong Kong community

¹¹⁴ Angela Jung, “Hong Kong-China tensions intensify at local demonstration, high school”, *CTV News* (4 October 2019), online: <<https://bc.ctvnews.ca/hong-kong-china-tensions-intensify-at-local-demonstration-high-school-1.4625424>>.

¹¹⁵ Ian Young, “Hong Kong tensions trigger meetings with Canadian school principals, after anonymous pro-communist letter warns pupil of ‘consequences’”, *South China Morning Post* (7 December 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3041048/hong-kong-tensions-canadian-schools-trigger-meetings-principals-after>>.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Xiao Xu, “Hong Kong supporters picket Richmond City Hall to demand resignations at high school”, *Globe and Mail* (13 December 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-hong-kong-supporters-picket-richmond-city-hall-to-demand-resignations/>>.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Xiao Xu, “B.C. schools caught up in Hong Kong-China dispute”, *Globe and Mail* (30 October 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-bc-schools-caught-up-in-hong-kong-china-dispute/>>.

within Canada, speaking out in support of the protest movement in Hong Kong.¹²⁰ Cherie describes having been subject to “coordinated social media attacks”, including death threats and rape threats online, which increased notably following her participation in the October demonstration in Ottawa.¹²¹ On WeChat, posts have encouraged users to publicly harass and confront Cherie (branding her as ‘Ms. Hong Kong Independence’).¹²² In addition, Cherie has received an increased number of harassing phone calls. Most notably, in January 2020, while staying in Vancouver for meetings with media to talk about Alliance Canada HK’s work, Cherie received a phone call on her hotel landline from an unidentified man who aggressively and repeatedly demanded that she leave her hotel room right away with all of her belongings, and that he was sending people up to collect her; she hung up after a couple of minutes of back and forth before being able to get more detail.¹²³ These events have led Cherie to fear that she may have been doxed, causing her to feel threatened, intimidated and worried for her safety. She has not received any closure or information about who the caller was, why they wanted her to leave her room, and whether or not she is or was in any kind of danger. Cherie reported the hotel incident to Vancouver police, who were unable to take any concrete action other than providing some attention and comfort, given that they claimed there was ‘no credible threat’ (despite acknowledging that there are definite problems with harassment and intimidation of Hong Kong supporters in Vancouver).¹²⁴

These kinds of experiences are all too common for activists working on China-related human rights issues in Canada, who face pervasive intimidation, harassment, and even psychological torture, which can ultimately lead to increased paranoia and feelings of insecurity.

Gloria Fung, the President of Canada-Hong Kong Link, has been a major target of cyber attacks, phone harassment and intimidation. Phishing attempts have been made on multiple occasions in order to hack into the computers of Hong Kong civil society organizations and their members within Canada.¹²⁵ Fung

¹²⁰ Alliance Canada HK is a national campaign plan (formally established in January 2020, but has been organizing and working on projects for longer beforehand) that is driven by pro-democracy Hong Kongers in Canada working to collectively mobilize and empower Canada-Hong Kong community groups to take political action and to create a nationwide Hong Konger community.

¹²¹ Interview with Cherie Wong, Executive Director of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 12 February 2020; Cherie describes a very clear trend in the identities of the social media profiles that are harassing her – lots of Chinese international university students, with Chinese flags in their profiles.

¹²² Cherie describes this as being part of a broader issue of social media ‘hit lists’ within ‘patriotic’ group chats. These messages have also identified the Ottawa neighbourhood in which she is most active. Cherie has witnessed individuals taking photos of her in the streets of Ottawa on several occasions; when she has approached them, they have run away.

¹²³ Interview with Cherie Wong, Executive Director of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 12 February 2020 ; See following Twitter posts for corroboration: <https://twitter.com/chericywong/status/1221133293803859968> ; <https://twitter.com/chericywong/status/1221581057109086208>.

¹²⁴ Interview with Cherie Wong, Executive Director of Alliance Canada Hong Kong, 12 February 2020.

¹²⁵ Fake emails pretending to be from Hong Kong civil society groups such as the Federation of Students or the Hong Kong Alliance have been received. In these fake emails, files purporting to be updates about the movement or confidential information are attached to induce recipients to open the malware contaminated attachments.

has also repeatedly received calls from various individuals who use foul language to threaten her, warning her not to interfere in Hong Kong affairs.¹²⁶

From May to June 2019, Fung was invited to speak at an international conference on the 30th anniversary of the 1989 pro-democracy movement in Taiwan and a press conference in Hong Kong about international support for the anti-extradition bill movement. Soon after that, Fung received a suspicious email from an anonymous person who claimed to have just arrived in Hong Kong from Mainland China and urgently needed to meet with her in Hong Kong for unspecified help. When Fung asked for their contact number instead, the sender did not respond for over a week, then repeated their request. Fung feels she has been closely monitored by CCP and the email requesting help was an attempt to lure her to a place where she might be abducted from Hong Kong.¹²⁷

PRO-DEMOCRACY

Ti-Anna Wang case: Wang Bingzhang is a jailed Chinese dissident and pro-democracy activist who obtained a doctorate from McGill University in the 1980s and is the father of three Canadian citizens, including his daughter Ti-Anna Wang. Ti-Anna faced Chinese state interference in January 2019, while attempting to visit her father in China, where he has been serving a sentence of life imprisonment in solitary confinement since being kidnapped by Chinese agents in Vietnam in 2002.¹²⁸

Ti-Anna was initially issued a valid visa allowing her to enter China; the first time she had been able to secure a visa in 10 years. Upon arrival in Hangzhou, China on January 9, 2019, Wang was denied entry, while her husband and 11-month old daughter were allowed in. Agents did not give Wang and her family any reason for the denial, other than that they were following orders from the Minister of State Security.¹²⁹

The family was eventually forced to board a flight to the South Korean island of Jeju, from where they attempted to fly back home to Toronto, transiting through Seoul and Beijing. At the Beijing Airport, 6 Chinese agents boarded her plane and refused to allow her to transit through China.¹³⁰ Wang was escorted off the plane, asked for her ID, detained with her infant daughter and separated from her husband for almost two hours. She was told that she had to go back to South Korea and, without any attempts at justification, was not allowed on the flight from Beijing to Toronto. The agents told Wang

¹²⁶ Information from Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link. These calls reached their peak as the momentum of global support rallies built up in August 2019.

¹²⁷ Information from Gloria Fung, President of Canada-Hong Kong Link.

¹²⁸ Tonda MacCharles, "Chinese police prevent Canadian woman from returning home on connecting flight through Beijing", *Toronto Star* (16 January 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2019/01/16/chinese-police-prevent-canadian-woman-from-returning-home-on-connecting-flight-through-beijing.html>>.

¹²⁹ "Canadian denied entry to China to visit jailed father fears she'll never see him again", *CBC Radio* (9 January 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-the-wednesday-edition-1.4971399/canadian-denied-entry-to-china-to-visit-jailed-father-fears-she-ll-never-see-him-again-1.4971426>>.

¹³⁰ Tonda MacCharles, "Chinese police prevent Canadian woman from returning home on connecting flight through Beijing", *Toronto Star* (16 January 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2019/01/16/chinese-police-prevent-canadian-woman-from-returning-home-on-connecting-flight-through-beijing.html>>.

they were ‘investigating’ her case, without giving her any more information. She was not allowed to use her phone or computer, to contact Air Canada to book a new flight, to get in touch with the Canadian Embassy, or even contact her husband before being escorted to another gate to board a flight back to Seoul. Wang described the incident as “a shocking, terrifying and senseless ordeal with no purpose but to bully, punish and intimidate me and my family”.¹³¹

The timing of the incident, shortly after Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was arrested, has been picked up by many observers as evidence of retaliatory measures, specifically aimed at a young Canadian pro-democracy activist of Chinese origin, whose father is a prominent Chinese political prisoner. More broadly, this case fits the pattern of harassment and intimidation levied by Chinese officials against Canadians of Chinese origins who are active in the pro-democracy activism sphere. Wang speculated that her detainment while in transit at Beijing Airport may have been in retribution for speaking out after having been turned away in Hangzhou.¹³² Wang is no stranger to intimidation and harassment from the Chinese state in response to her advocacy: China tried to stop her from speaking at the UN Human Rights Council in 2014.¹³³

Richard Lee case: Chinese-Canadian politician Richard Lee, a former British Columbia Liberal MLA from 2001 to 2017, publicized a number of allegations about Chinese interference in Canadian society in November 2019.¹³⁴ Lee alleged that he was improperly detained upon arriving at Shanghai airport in November 2015, was separated from his wife for eight hours, had his government phone confiscated and searched, and was eventually accused of “endangering national security” before his visa was cancelled and he was ordered to fly back to Canada.¹³⁵ More generally, Lee claimed that China has aggressively attempted to influence Canada’s political system and its elected leaders, control the Chinese-Canadian diaspora, and silence dissent and criticism of its practices within Canada. Notably, Lee accused China’s Consulate General in Vancouver of applying pressure on Chinese-Canadian community groups to ostracize him, as a result of his vocal support for democracy in China and his regular participation in commemorations of the Tiananmen Square massacre in front of the Chinese consulate in Vancouver.¹³⁶ Lee believes his activism and public actions on these issues are linked to his treatment at the Shanghai airport. In line with the findings of this report, Lee suggested that China’s foreign services were increasingly active in suppressing public support for Taiwan’s independence, for

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Omar Sachedina, “Canadian who tried to visit ailing father in China blocked from flying home”, *CTV News* (16 January 2019), online: <<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/canadian-who-tried-to-visit-ailing-father-in-china-blocked-from-flying-home-1.4257009>>.

¹³³ Mike Blanchfield, “China NGO accused of ‘amateur’ spying attempt on Canadian at UN”, *Global News* (21 March 2014), online: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/1223671/china-ngo-accused-of-amateur-spying-attempt-on-canadian-at-un/>>.

¹³⁴ Sam Cooper, “B.C. politician breaks silence: China detained me, is interfering ‘in our democracy’”, *Global News* (29 November 2019), online: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/6228973/b-c-politician-richard-lee-china-detained-interfering-democracy/>>.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* Lee alleges that the consul general, Liu Fei, had told him directly not to attend the Tiananmen Square commemorations, and had also complained to some of his colleagues that he should not attend.

democracy protesters in Hong Kong, and in suppressing discussion of China's persecution of religious groups and its mass detentions of Uighurs.

Case of Sheng Xue: Sheng Xue/Zang Xihong is an outspoken critic of the Chinese government and a prominent Chinese-Canadian pro-democracy activist, living in Toronto, who has been the long-standing target of a smear campaign that has left her reputation tainted.¹³⁷ Xue has reportedly had her phone hacked and has, along with her family, been the subject of threats. Several of her colleagues in Canada have reported receiving pressure from Chinese security agents over their ties to her.¹³⁸ In her case, many of her supposed adversaries, interviewed by the *New York Times*, have alleged that someone had been impersonating them online to spread more accusations about Xue.¹³⁹ Amnesty International's East Asia regional director, Nicholas Bequelin, has identified her case as having the markings of a coordinated attack by the CCP, although they cannot definitively be linked to the Chinese government.¹⁴⁰ In her case, many observers consider that the smear campaign is an attempt to exploit tensions within the Chinese dissident movement abroad. Xue believes the situation is worsening in Canada, as she continues facing increasingly overt threats, both personally and against her friends and family.¹⁴¹ Xue has faced vicious harassment and death threats on Twitter – for instance when she discusses Hong Kong – and has tried reporting to the police but has obtained no results, leading her to feel powerless and unprotected. All of these events have taken their toll on Sheng Xue, who faces declining health.

TIBET

Chemi Lhamo case: Chemi Lhamo, a student leader of Tibetan origin at the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTS) faced rampant online abuse and backlash, including a petition signed by over 10,000 students in response to her election as President of the UTS Student Union in February 2019.¹⁴² The protesters, the large majority (if not all) of whom were of Chinese origin, called into question her qualifications for the position and denounced her support for greater Tibetan autonomy and her affiliation with groups like Students for a Free Tibet and the Tibetan Youth Alliance Committee. The petition aimed to invalidate the results of the student election, accusing her of anti-Chinese prejudice.

¹³⁷ Catherine Porter, "Chinese Dissidents Feel Heat of Beijing's Wrath. Even in Canada", *New York Times* (1 April 2019), online: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/01/world/canada/china-dissident-harassment-sheng-xue.html>>. Sheng Xue recounts having her contact information listed on online hook-up ads, blog posts being made with fake nude photos of her, the creation of entire anti-Sheng Xue blogs, images published purporting to depict her infidelity, and a protester standing in front of Parliament Hill in Ottawa with a poster calling her a spy.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* Yi Jun, president of a Federation in Toronto, says that every time he returns to China he is "taken to tea" (a phrase used to refer to interrogations performed by the CCP) by members of the Communist Security Bureau, with agents who tell him that Sheng Xue is a counter-revolutionary. Leon Liang, another dissident, has a wife in Shenzhen who is regularly visited by authorities and warned that she could lose her job if her husband doesn't inform on Sheng Xue.

¹³⁹ Catherine Porter, "How I Reported on the Smear Campaign That Followed a Chinese Activist to Canada", *New York Times* (6 April 2019), online: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/06/reader-center/sheng-xue-chinese-activist-canada-smear-campaign.html>>.

¹⁴⁰ Catherine Porter, "Chinese Dissidents Feel Heat of Beijing's Wrath. Even in Canada", *New York Times* (1 April 2019), online: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/01/world/canada/china-dissident-harassment-sheng-xue.html>>.

¹⁴¹ Information provided by Sheng Xue, November 2019.

¹⁴² See: <https://www.change.org/p/update-on-petition>.

Chemi Lhamo has since faced cyberbullying, online harassment, death threats, sexist and racist insults, and a barrage of obscene and degrading comments on her social media accounts (most of the messages have been in Mandarin), as well as comments with Chinese nationalistic sentiments.¹⁴³ Lhamo also received occasional phone calls playing propaganda songs praising the CCP.¹⁴⁴ Several comments on the petition echoed familiar language used by Chinese state authorities, with references to purported “attempts to split the Chinese territory and sovereignty”. Lhamo has criticized her university for its failure to release a statement pertaining to the election.¹⁴⁵

Shortly before the election, a message had circulated on WeChat, calling on Chinese international students to act to ensure that Lhamo did not become president, purportedly to prevent the student union from being “controlled by Tibetan separatists”. Lhamo had not faced any outright hostility during the election campaign, nor had she faced such a backlash during her tenure in other positions in student government, and was open with the student population about her Tibet-related advocacy work before the election.

The university offered minimal assistance. Lhamo was given a walkie-talkie to communicate with campus security and was told there would be increased patrolling in the building housing her office.¹⁴⁶ She received some academic and mental health support from the university and had a meeting with a community safety officer, who provided her some obvious advice (e.g. don’t be on social media, don’t mark your location on social media, don’t stay on campus too late).¹⁴⁷ At one point, Lhamo was required to close her office for safety reasons. Lhamo’s requests for a formal investigation from the university were ignored. Lhamo has expressed concern about how this coordinated campaign against her leadership may impact her work and her advocacy moving forward. Significantly, Lhamo has said that the lack of support and help from campus security has made her feel helpless, hopeless and unsafe on campus.¹⁴⁸ She has had to resort to relying on friends who offer to escort her around campus to make her feel safe.

¹⁴³ “Toronto police investigating online abuse of student leader at U of T”, *CBC News* (28 February 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canadatoronto/toronto-police-investigating-online-abuse-tibetan-canadian-student-chemi-lhamo-1.5038517>>. Comments included: “China is your daddy – you better know this”, “Ur not gonna be the president of UTSC. Even if you do, we will make sure things get done so u wont survive a day. Peace RIP”, “youre going to get shot and the bullets are going to be made in China”, and “people like u deserve a gunshot. Hope you go to hell immediately”,

¹⁴⁴ Zhao Yulin, “A Tibetan-Canadian student was attacked online after winning student council elections. She thinks Beijing is to blame”, *Global Voices Advox* (20 February 2019), online: <<https://advox.globalvoices.org/2019/02/21/a-tibetan-canadian-student-was-attacked-online-after-winning-student-council-elections-she-thinks-beijing-is-to-blame/>>.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Chemi Lhamo, President of the University of Toronto Scarborough Student Union, 24 July 2019; See also: ‘China is your daddy’: Backlash against Tibetan student’s election prompts questions about foreign influence”, *CBC News* (14 February 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/china-tibet-student-election-1.5019648>>.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Chemi Lhamo, President of the University of Toronto Scarborough Student Union, 24 July 2019.

¹⁴⁷ Amanda Connolly, “Chinese influence in Canada ‘alive and well,’ says student leader threatened by trolls”, *Global News* (25 August 2019), online: <<https://globalnews.ca/news/5804742/chinese-influence-canada/>>. Lhamo was told by campus security that these were issues “above that person’s paygrade” and that they did not have the capacity to investigate or deal with the issue, beyond developing a “safety plan” in which she would have to report her whereabouts on campus to campus security hour by hour.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Chemi Lhamo, President of the University of Toronto Scarborough Student Union, 24 July 2019.

Toronto Police eventually launched an investigation in February 2019 with regards to the online threats that had been made against Lhamo.¹⁴⁹ In April, Lhamo was contacted by the RCMP for their own investigation, who told her it was going slowly because of their lack of experience dealing with cyberbullying issues.¹⁵⁰ Lhamo has decried the treatment of her case by authorities for being slow and at times non-existent. As of February 2020, she had not received any significant follow-up or updates about her case from police and authorities. While Lhamo did not contact Global Affairs Canada directly, members of Students for a Free Tibet Canada contacted the department on her behalf; again, she does not feel that authorities provided her with much help or guidance. A few federal and provincial politicians have made comments in support of Lhamo on social media, including Alberta Conservative MP Garnett Genuis, who met with Lhamo in person and spoke about her case in the House of Commons.¹⁵¹

While Lhamo is unable to point to specific evidence or proof of Chinese state involvement in her case, she does believe that the pace at which Chinese students coordinated and organized against her, in such great numbers, is a sign that they were likely directed to act by the Chinese consulate.¹⁵² This hypothesis has been supported by different experts on China-Canada relations, some of whom have concluded that Chinese state inference is plausible in a case like this, involving a prominent student leader who would be targeted for their active participation in pro-Tibetan independence groups (as well as her outspoken support for the demands for autonomy by people from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Xinjiang).¹⁵³ The Chinese consulate in Toronto has denied any involvement, but did not condemn the views expressed against Lhamo, claiming that they represented “an entirely spontaneous action of those Chinese students based on objective facts and patriotic enthusiasm”. The consulate even went so far as to say that it firmly opposed “anti-China separatist activities by Tibet independence activists who are plotting to split Tibet from China”.

¹⁴⁹ Tom Blackwell, “Toronto police probe online abuse of Tibetan-Canadian student leader accused of offending China”, *National Post* (28 February 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/toronto-police-probe-online-abuse-of-tibetan-canadian-student-leader-accused-of-offending-china>>.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Chemi Lhamo, President of the University of Toronto Scarborough Student Union, 24 July 2019.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² “Death threats against a pro-Tibetan university student in Canada were ‘likely’ organised by Chinese diplomats, source says”, *Free Tibet* (2 May 2019), online: <<https://www.freetibet.org/news-media/na/death-threats-against-pro-tibetan-university-student-canada-were-likely-organised>>. “A Canadian university professor who asked to remain anonymous told Free Tibet that a request like this can be difficult for students with Chinese citizenship to turn down because refusal can mean repercussions for family members at home or a possible damage to their careers when they return to China.”

¹⁵³ “‘China is your daddy’: Backlash against Tibetan student’s election prompts questions about foreign influence”, *CBC News* (14 February 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/china-tibet-student-election-1.5019648>>; “Death threats against a pro-Tibetan university student in Canada were ‘likely’ organised by Chinese diplomats, source says”, *Free Tibet* (2 May 2019), online: <<https://www.freetibet.org/news-media/na/death-threats-against-pro-tibetan-university-student-canada-were-likely-organised>>. Renowned expert on Canada-China relations Professor Charles Burton noted that while he did not have concrete evidence to substantiate his allegations, “the degree of response simultaneously suggests that it wasn’t a spontaneous action by a large group of unconnected individuals”, pointing to the UFWD as potential culprits, speculating that they likely communicated with Chinese students at the University of Toronto via WeChat, asking them to join the attack on Lhamo (likely with Chinese govt approval).

Since the initial backlash following her election, Lhamo has noticed increasing fear within the student body that she leads, remarking that many students are scared to hold events at the university that deal with China-related issues, essentially leading to a climate of self-censorship.¹⁵⁴ Lhamo has observed that many Chinese student groups appear to be watching her and monitoring her movements, including by taking photos of her while she is on campus. Despite remaining steadfast in her convictions, Lhamo has acknowledged that she is facing significant pressure to self-censor about human rights issues in China. Moving forward, Lhamo has stated that she hopes the University of Toronto, and the Canadian government more broadly, create a support plan for any Canadians going through similar experiences of harassment and intimidation and that such a plan will prioritize the voices of those being affected.¹⁵⁵

Tibetan Association of Canada: In April 2019, a new Canadian non-profit, known as the Tibetan Association of Canada and the Tibetan Canadian Friendship Association, circulated a letter of support for the organization from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau through traditional and social media. The Canadian government later confirmed the letter was fake.¹⁵⁶ The organization – which has been disavowed by 6 established Tibetan Canadian organizations as a front for Beijing interests and an attempt to mislead Canada’s government and the public – promotes the Chinese government’s policies and propaganda with relation to Tibet (for instance that China has improved Tibetans’ lives by bringing economic development and “bolstered their religious freedoms during 60 years of democratic reform”), and supporting calls for the “reunification of China”.¹⁵⁷ Notably, the organization succeeded in having Toronto City Councillor Jim Karygiannis and Ontario MPP Vincent Ke attend its inaugural event, where speakers stood in front of a row of Chinese and Canadian flags and stood for the Chinese national anthem.¹⁵⁸ The event was attended by members of pro-Beijing organizations (such as the Confederation of Toronto Chinese Canadian Organizations, which is known to work closely with the Chinese government), lending further credence to the allegations that the Tibetan Association of Canada is a Chinese government front organization.¹⁵⁹ The small number of Tibetans who attended the event are

¹⁵⁴ Chemi Lhamo, in-person testimony, November 2019 meeting.

¹⁵⁵ Correspondence with Chemi Lhamo, November 2019.

¹⁵⁶ Jenny Peng & Joanna Chiu, “Tibetan-Canadian coalition ‘appalled’ by fake letter from Trudeau promoting pro-China group”, *Toronto Star* (23 April 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2019/04/23/tibetan-canadian-coalition-appalled-by-fake-letter-from-trudeau-promoting-pro-china-group.html>>. An official letter from the Prime Minister’s Office addressed to Sonam Lankar and Tibet Groups in Canada confirmed that a letter of greeting was not sent from the office to the Tibetan Association of Canada, reiterating that the letter was fraudulent and that the positions highlighted in the letter are not in alignment with the Canadian government’s views.

¹⁵⁷ Tom Blackwell, “Activists say new Canadian group supporting China’s control over Tibet is a front for Beijing”, *National Post* (24 April 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/activists-say-new-canadian-group-supporting-chinas-control-of-tibet-is-a-front-for-beijing>>; Jenny Peng & Joanna Chiu, “Tibetan-Canadian coalition ‘appalled’ by fake letter from Trudeau promoting pro-China group”, *Toronto Star* (23 April 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2019/04/23/tibetan-canadian-coalition-appalled-by-fake-letter-from-trudeau-promoting-pro-china-group.html>>.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Brian Hioe, “Is China attempting to prop up fake Tibetan organizations in Canada?”, *New Bloom* (30 April 2019), online: <<https://newbloommag.net/2019/04/30/tibet-organizations-canada/>>.

known to be involved with China's UFWD, as well as Chinese consulates in New York and Canada.¹⁶⁰ A fake letter of support on behalf of former Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Ahmed Hussen was also circulated by Chinese-language media.¹⁶¹ The Tibetan Association of Canada has denied responsibility for the fake letters.

Co-opting influential politicians and public figures to lend credibility and legitimacy is a common modus operandi of the Chinese government's overseas organizations. In doing so, Chinese overseas organizations can extend their influence and share propaganda and disinformation to further Chinese interests and amplify Chinese talking points throughout Canadian society, in particular when it comes to sensitive issues (notably Tibet, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Uighur, Falun Gong and pro-democracy groups).¹⁶² The use of government-organized non-governmental organizations is a common practice employed by repressive states to spread misinformation and counter the voices of civil society and community level activists.¹⁶³

Shawn Zhang: In January 2018, a student at the University of British Columbia posted an image of the Tibetan flag on Twitter, with the words Free Tibet above it, on a satirical congratulatory post to the Marriott hotel chain for listing Tibet as a country. Zhang, who was studying in Canada on a student visa, quickly learned that Chinese authorities were putting pressure on his parents back in China to silence his online activity.¹⁶⁴ Zhang has also been active in researching and documenting the Chinese government's campaign of abuse, repression and internment of Uighurs in the Xinjiang region, which he is aware makes him a prime target for the Chinese regime.¹⁶⁵ Zhang refused to take down the post, and now expects that he will be unable to return to China after graduating from UBC.

UIGHURS

General harassment: The Uighur diaspora around the world has faced an incredibly distressing situation over the past few years, as the Chinese government has increased its campaign of severe repression and widespread human rights violations against Uighur and other minority populations, primarily in the

¹⁶⁰ International Campaign for Tibet, "Setting up astroturf 'Tibetan Associations' in the West is China's latest ploy to mislead the world in Tibet", (24 April 2019) online: <https://savetibet.org/setting-up-astroturf-tibetan-associations-in-the-west-is-chinas-latest-ploy-to-mislead-the-world-on-tibet/>.

¹⁶¹ Jenny Peng & Joanna Chiu, "Tibetan-Canadian coalition 'appalled' by fake letter from Trudeau promoting pro-China group", *Toronto Star* (23 April 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2019/04/23/tibetan-canadian-coalition-appalled-by-fake-letter-from-trudeau-promoting-pro-china-group.html>>.

¹⁶² J. Michael Cole, "Pro-Beijing Tibetan Group Hints at China's Influence Operations in Canada", *Macdonald Laurier Institute* (26 April 2019), online: <<https://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/pro-beijing-tibetan-group-hints-chinas-influence-operations-canada-j-michael-cole-inside-policy/>>.

¹⁶³ Moises Naim, "What Is a GONGO?", *Foreign Policy* (13 October 2009), online: <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/13/what-is-a-gongo/>>.

¹⁶⁴ Terry Glavin, "How China's dictatorship reached a student in Vancouver", *Ottawa Citizen* (17 January 2018), online: <<https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/glavin-how-chinas-dictatorship-reached-a-student-in-vancouver>>.

¹⁶⁵ Ng Weng Hoong, "Uighur's visit may inflame Canada-China tensions", *Asia Times* (8 February 2019), online: <<https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/02/article/place-in-weekend-uyghur-leaders-ottawa-visit-set-to-further-inflame-canada-china-tensions/>>.

Xinjiang region of Western China. Of serious concern is the fact that the Chinese government has also made a concerted effort to target individuals living abroad. Amnesty International's research has documented harassment and intimidation experienced by diaspora communities of Uighurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in various countries, including intrusive surveillance, intimidating phone calls, and negative consequences for speaking out.¹⁶⁶ Amnesty's research found that: Chinese authorities, including consulates and embassies, targeted overseas Uighurs' family members in China to suppress their activism abroad; social messaging apps and phone calls were used to intimidate Uighurs living overseas and ask them for personal information; individuals were subject to death threats, were followed, and face informants spying on them. Uighur diaspora members overseas have generally been reluctant to talk about their detained or missing relatives in Xinjiang, fearing possible retaliation against either themselves or other relatives in Xinjiang. Several Uighur interviewees living overseas told Amnesty International that local authorities in Xinjiang had targeted their relatives as a way to suppress the activities of Uighur communities living abroad.¹⁶⁷

A prominent example of this trend of Chinese state harassment against diaspora members in Canada has been the widespread attempts by Chinese state agents to lure Uighurs living abroad back to the China. Uighur diaspora members have been denied extensions or renewals of their passports and travel documents, as well as birth certificates for their children, often in a nefarious attempt to force them to return to China, after which it becomes difficult or impossible to obtain news about their situation or whereabouts, and where they face inevitable detention and abuse.¹⁶⁸ On many occasions, Uighur individuals living in Canada have reported receiving messages and voicemails telling them that they have important documents that must be picked up at the Chinese consulate or embassy.¹⁶⁹ Members of the Uighur diaspora have expressed concern about the manner in which they are being targeted and what might transpire if they were to go to the consulate or embassy. Most individuals Amnesty spoke to were too afraid of the consequences and did not respond to these messages or overtures from the consulates and embassy.

Another significant form of harassment and intimidation levied by Chinese officials against Uighur diaspora members in Canada has been to threaten abuse against family members still living in China, to

¹⁶⁶ For more information, see Amnesty International's story page *Nowhere feels safe: Uyghurs living overseas tell of campaign of intimidation by Chinese authorities*, online: <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2020/02/china-uyghurs-abroad-living-in-fear/>>.

¹⁶⁷ Individuals reported being warned that family members would be detained if they did not return to Xinjiang or that they would not be able to see their family again if they refused to provide information about other Uighurs living in their communities.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Mehmet Tohti, Canadian representative for the World Uyghur Congress, July 2019.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Dilnür Enwer, Uighur asylum-seeker in Canada, 26 July 2019; Alexandra Ma, "Mysterious automated calls, vanished relatives, and sinister Facebook comments: How China intimidates Uighurs who don't even live in the country", *Business Insider* (9 December 2019), online: <<https://www.businessinsider.com/china-uyghurs-spooked-even-outside-country-2019-12>>. In some cases, individuals have been fighting back by calling to confront the embassy/consulate to inform them that they are Canadian citizens. In these situations, the embassy/consulate officials are often evasive and/or feign ignorance.

pressure Uighurs living abroad into becoming informants or ceasing their activism.¹⁷⁰ The Coalition has been in contact with several Uighur individuals living in Canada who have experienced this strategy first-hand.¹⁷¹ More generally, members of the Uighur diaspora living in Canada face serious distress and anguish in not knowing the fate of their relatives (in many cases all means of communications – phone, text, social media – have been cut off with parents, family members and loved ones back home), and fear being arrested, deported or retaliated against if they speak out or try to seek information about them.¹⁷²

Dilnur Kurban, a Uighur-Canadian living in Vancouver whose contact with her family living in Xinjiang has dwindled over the past years as Chinese state oppression and the risks to her family members have increased, has decried the lack of assistance she has received from politicians and government officials: “everywhere I’ve turned, I’ve found little support. I sought assistance from my local MP, and she was unhelpful at best ... I’ve been told that my family’s information has been submitted to Global Affairs Canada, but I haven’t heard anything yet”.¹⁷³

Dilnur Enwer, a Uighur asylum-seeker living in Montreal since January 2019, shared similar experiences about losing contact with family members living in Xinjiang as a result of dramatically worsening Chinese state oppression.¹⁷⁴ Enwer has 2 children in Xinjiang (aged 8 and 6), from whom she has no news, along with two children in Turkey (aged 10 and 3), for whom she has struggled to receive assistance from Canadian authorities in facilitating a reunion. Like many other members of the Uighur diaspora, Enwer has received a number of phone calls from Chinese embassy and consulate officials, pressuring her to pick up so-called ‘important travel documents’. Before contact with her relatives was cut off, a family member warned that the embassy would “catch” her and send her back to Xinjiang. Dilnur has been

¹⁷⁰ Amnesty International, “Families of missing Uighurs terrified to search for their loved ones”, (1 April 2019), online: <<https://www.amnesty.ca/blog/families-missing-uyghurs-terrified-search-their-loved-ones>>; Jacob Hoytema, “Uyghur students in Canada fear for their families in China – and their futures”, *Ottawa Citizen* (6 August 2019), online: <<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/uyghur-students-in-canada-fear-for-their-families-in-china-and-their-futures>>; Tahmina Aziz, “‘I don’t know if he’s alive or not’: Windsor Uighur woman fears brother is in a Chinese detention camp”, *CBC News* (12 July 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/uyghur-windsor-woman-brother-1.5207440>>; Alexandra Ma, “Mysterious automated calls, vanished relatives, and sinister Facebook comments: How China intimidates Uighurs who don’t even live in the country”, *Business Insider* (9 December 2019), online: <<https://www.businessinsider.com/china-uyghurs-spooked-even-outside-country-2019-12>>.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Mehmet Tohti, Canadian representative for the World Uyghur Congress, July 2019; Interview with Dilnür Enwer, Uighur asylum-seeker in Canada, 26 July 2019; Amnesty International, “Families of missing Uighurs terrified to search for their loved ones”, (1 April 2019), online: <<https://www.amnesty.ca/blog/families-missing-uyghurs-terrified-search-their-loved-ones>>.

¹⁷² “Uighurs in Canada fear deportation after China’s crackdown on Turkic Muslims”, *CBC Radio* (13 September 2018), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-september-13-2018-1.4821663/uyghurs-in-canada-fear-deportation-after-china-s-crackdown-on-turkic-muslims-1.4821690>>; “Vancouver woman tries to come to grips with losing all communication with her family in China”, *CBC Radio* (25 October 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/outintheopen/silence-yourself-1.5333234/vancouver-woman-tries-to-come-to-grips-with-losing-all-communication-with-her-family-in-china-1.5333238>>.

¹⁷³ Dilnur Kurban, “My Uyghur family is quietly living in fear. This is how we become lost”, *Globe and Mail* (27 July 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-my-uyghur-family-is-quietly-living-in-fear-this-is-how-we-become-lost/>>.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Dilnür Enwer, Uighur asylum-seeker in Canada, 26 July 2019.

afraid to speak of her parents' detention in April 2017 out of fears for her own safety and the safety of her other relatives back in Xinjiang.

Bahtiyar Semseddin, a Uighur activist living in Montreal since 2008, has not had heard directly from his family since 2017, facing complete silence across different lines of communication.¹⁷⁵ In April 2019, Semseddin received unusual messages from an unknown Uighur woman (purportedly living in Turkey), who informed him that the Chinese government had arrested and detained all members of his family in internment camps.¹⁷⁶ In August 2019, Semseddin received word that his mother had suffered a heart attack and was being kept at home under constant surveillance, while his father had passed away and was permitted no family members at his funeral.¹⁷⁷ As a member of the World Uyghur Congress, Semseddin has been advocating for the Canadian government to do more to address the situation of Uighurs in Xinjiang and their family members living abroad, including, most notably, by urging that the Canadian government work with international partners to ensure that an independent investigation or fact-finding mission takes place into alleged human rights violations in the region.

This situation of harassment against Uighurs living in Canada was amply detailed in and corroborated by testimony provided to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in December 2018.¹⁷⁸ Summary of evidence provided to the Committee on the harassment of Uighurs living overseas concludes quite clearly that members of the Uighur diaspora, including more than 2,000 individuals in Canada, are being targeted by the Chinese government. The Committee heard that the Chinese government does not want Uighurs outside of the country to speak out about the surveillance, oppression, mass detention, and human rights abuses going on in Xinjiang. The Committee's findings confirmed that Uighurs outside of China are blocked from having their passports renewed, refused identity documentation, and are actively monitored by the Chinese government. Witnesses showed that efforts were made to convince Uighurs living abroad to "collaborate in monitoring activities, to extract detailed information on their lives, or to pressure them to return to China," and that many members of the Uighur community in Canada had experienced such harassment. Chinese authorities hold family members who remain in Xinjiang "hostage" by threatening their detention. Family members in China have been contacted by police if Uighurs outside of China are seen protesting or speaking out. A Global Affairs official told the Committee that the government is aware of such cases of harassment, encouraging victims to report to local police and indicating that GAC has raised these issues with Chinese authorities.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Bahtiyar Semseddin, Uighur activist in Canada, 19 February 2020.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* It was unclear to Semseddin how this woman obtained this information, but he considered it to be credible and trustworthy.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Karine Azoulay & Brendan Naef, "What We Heard: A Summary of Testimony on the Human Rights Situation of Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims", Library of Parliament (Prepared for the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development), 19 December 2018, online:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/content/Committee/421/SDIR/WebDoc/WD10277108/421_SDIR_reldoc_PDF/SDIR-Uyghurs-SummaryofEvidence-e.pdf>.

The Committee also heard evidence that Chinese authorities have applied pressure on other governments to forcibly return Uighurs/Turkic Muslims to China—where they are immediately arrested and detained on arrival (they are sent to re-education camps or prison or disappeared altogether). Some European countries (such as Sweden and Germany) have taken steps to expedite the asylum process for Uighurs and Kazakhs and are suspending removals of Uighurs to China. Witnesses urged Canada to do the same.

In January 2020, Radio-Canada reported on the issue of harassment and intimidation of Uighurs living in Montreal, obtaining first-hand testimony from many individuals whose contact with family members in Xinjiang had been completely cut off in the past few years, and whose concern for the safety and well-being of family members continues to mount.¹⁷⁹ Notably, the report included audio of robocalls received by many Uighurs living in Canada, purportedly from Chinese government officials, requesting that they immediately present themselves to the embassy or consulate to pick up ‘important documents’. The report noted that many complaints have been submitted to the RCMP with respect to these calls, but that the RCMP has provided little to no follow-up.

Reports from many sources, including research from Reporters Without Borders, has found that surveillance technologies, including the development of urban surveillance services by Huawei known as “Safe City Solution” (which monitors the public through a network of high-tech cameras, sensors and the use of artificial intelligence and facial recognition), are being employed to monitor and oppress the Uighur population, both in Xinjiang and abroad.¹⁸⁰ Reporters Without Borders also emphasized a practice which has been noticed by many members of the Uighur diaspora, including individuals living in Canada, of personal devices like smartphones being co-opted by Chinese state agents to track and listen to conversations between activists/potential dissidents.¹⁸¹ Both Huawei and the Chinese Communist Party have consistently denied all such allegations.

McMaster University: Rukiye Turdush, a Uighur activist, delivered a lecture on February 11, 2019 at McMaster University regarding the Chinese government’s treatment of the Uighur minority in China, which was condemned and protested by five Chinese student groups.¹⁸² While delivering her lecture,

¹⁷⁹ Frank Desoer, “Les Ouigours de Montréal sous pression”, *Radio-Canada* (26 January 2020), online: <<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/desautels-le-dimanche/segments/reportage/152518/les-ouigours-de-montreal-sous-pression-frank-desoer>>.

¹⁸⁰ Perrin Grauer, “Canada tainted by Huawei’s human rights abuses, researcher suggests”, *The Star* (27 March 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/news/huawei/2019/03/27/canadas-partnership-with-huawei-immoral-as-well-as-risky-researcher-suggests-as-report-calls-out-human-rights-abuses.html>>.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Tom Blackwell, “Uyghur activist who sparked Chinese-student protest at McMaster worried about message targeting her son”, *National Post* (15 February 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/uyghur-activist-who-sparked-chinese-student-protest-at-mcmaster-worried-about-message-targeting-her-son>>; “Chinese students in Canada report Uyghur activist’s talk to consulate”, *South China Morning Post* (15 February 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2186263/chinese-students-canada-report-uyghur-activists-talk-consulate>>.

Turdush was filmed and her talk was disrupted by a student who verbally assaulted her.¹⁸³ Protesters alleged that the presentation promoted ‘hatred’ against China, while written communications via WeChat demonstrated that the protest had been a coordinated effort between students who had been in contact with the Chinese consulate in Toronto, to ‘notify’ them of the situation.¹⁸⁴ Students exchanged messages over WeChat about watching to see if any university officials were present, as well as suggesting that photos of the event should be sent to Chinese officials.¹⁸⁵ In the aftermath of her speech, Turdush also received messages which seemingly targeted and threatened her son, who is also a student at McMaster University.¹⁸⁶

Turdush alleges that she was targeted for harassment as part of a campaign likely orchestrated by the Chinese government to suppress dissenting views, highlighting the evidence of strong connections between the Chinese students in question and the Chinese consulate.¹⁸⁷ Although the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa claimed that the event’s disruption and the protests “had nothing to do with the Chinese Embassy and Chinese Consulate General” in Toronto, it nevertheless released a public statement in which it expressed strong support for the “just and patriotic actions of Chinese students”.¹⁸⁸ One of the students involved in the protest denied having been directed by the Chinese government, claiming that

¹⁸³ Jennifer Creery, “Don’t mind the haters: Tibetan-Canadian student Chemi Lhamo brushes off pro-China cyberbullying campaign”, *Hong Kong Free Press* (31 March 2019), online: <<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/03/31/dont-mind-haters-tibetan-canadian-student-chemi-lhamo-brushes-off-pro-china-cyberbullying-campaign/>>.

¹⁸⁴ Ryan Tse, “McMaster clubs call for investigation of Chinese government interference on campus”, *The Silhouette* (12 March 2019), online: <<https://www.thesil.ca/mcmaster-clubs-call-for-investigation-of-chinese-government-interference-on-campus>>; “Chinese students in Canada report Uyghur activist’s talk to consulate”, *South China Morning Post* (15 February 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2186263/chinese-students-canada-report-uyghur-activists-talk-consulate>>.

¹⁸⁵ “Chinese students in Canada report Uyghur activist’s talk to consulate”, *South China Morning Post* (15 February 2019), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2186263/chinese-students-canada-report-uyghur-activists-talk-consulate>>.

¹⁸⁶ Tom Blackwell, “Uyghur activist who sparked Chinese-student protest at McMaster worried about message targeting her son”, *National Post* (15 February 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/uyghur-activist-who-sparked-chinese-student-protest-at-mcmaster-worried-about-message-targeting-her-son>>.

¹⁸⁷ Ryan Tse, “McMaster clubs call for investigation of Chinese government interference on campus”, *The Silhouette* (12 March 2019), online: <<https://www.thesil.ca/mcmaster-clubs-call-for-investigation-of-chinese-government-interference-on-campus>>; Tom Blackwell, “Student groups call for government to investigate alleged interference by Chinese officials on Canadian campuses”, *Ottawa Citizen* (21 February 2019), online: <<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/student-groups-call-for-ottawa-to-investigate-alleged-interference-by-chinese-officials-on-canadian-campuses/wcm/af49ff4d-bff4-42bb-bf53-1cf76b2736d5>>. On February 20, 2019, two McMaster student groups (McMaster Muslims for Peace and Justice & McMaster Muslim Students Association), alongside Students for a Free Tibet (advocating on behalf of Chemi Lhamo), sent letters to Canadian government ministers Chrystia Freeland (in her role at the time as Foreign Minister), Ralph Goodale (in his role at the time as Minister of Public Safety), and Kirsty Duncan (in her role at the time as Minister responsible for universities), requesting government investigations into the Chinese state’s role in coordinating Chinese student-led interference and intimidation of human rights activists on campus.

¹⁸⁸ “China denies role in disrupting McMaster speech but praises ‘patriotic’ actions”, *CBC News* (19 February 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/china-denies-role-in-disrupting-mcmaster-speech-but-praises-patriotic-actions-1.5025212>>.

they were study-abroad students who were acting to further their ‘personal interest’ and their ‘sense of belonging to [their] nation’.¹⁸⁹

The Chinese Students and Scholars Association, one of the student groups that had condemned the event and that is linked to the UFWD,¹⁹⁰ was later de-ratified (i.e. had their official club status suspended for one year) by the Student Union at McMaster University for having coordinated the disruption of the event and threatening Turdush’s son.¹⁹¹ Following this decision, questions were raised by Professor Charles Burton, expert on Canada-China relations, about whether and to what extent Chinese students operating in Canadian universities in a manner that furthered the goals of China’s government were doing so in response to pressure and direction from embassies or consulates, or were doing so of their own volition.¹⁹² As Professor Burton learned from interviewing Chinese students in Canada, many individuals act out of a sense of patriotic duty towards their homeland of China, rather than in response to any threats, coercion or incentives.¹⁹³

Dolkun Isa: In April 2019, the President of the World Congress of Uighurs, Dolkun Isa, gave a talk about Chinese repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang at the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University, which the Chinese consulate repeatedly attempted to have cancelled.¹⁹⁴ The consulate contacted the organizers, the executive director of the MIGS, the university and even the mayor of Montreal, claiming that Isa was a terrorist and that his event should be shut down.

Kyle Matthews, executive director of the MIGS, linked the incident to a larger pattern that was emerging among Canadian universities, in which speakers and events which are critical of Chinese policies face pressure and backlash from Chinese students who have been directed and/or had their campaigns coordinated by Chinese embassy or consulate officials.¹⁹⁵

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¹⁸⁹ Tom Blackwell, “Uyghur activist who sparked Chinese-student protest at McMaster worried about message targeting her son”, *National Post* (15 February 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/uyghur-activist-who-sparked-chinese-student-protest-at-mcmaster-worried-about-message-targeting-her-son>>.

¹⁹⁰ Tom Blackwell, “How China uses shadowy United Front as ‘magic weapon’ to try to extend its influence in Canada”, *National Post* (28 January 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/how-china-uses-shadowy-united-front-as-magic-weapon-to-try-to-extend-its-influence-in-canada>>.

¹⁹¹ Charles Burton, “Can we do better by Chinese students in Canada?”, Macdonald Laurier Institute, 9 October 2019, online: <<https://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/can-better-chinese-students-canada-charles-burton-inside-policy/>>; Justin Mowat, “McMaster student government bans Chinese student group from campus”, *CBC News* (26 September 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/mcmaster-china-student-association-ban-1.5298882>>.

¹⁹² Burton, *ibid.*

¹⁹³ Burton does however note that many students do feel coerced by threats to their future and families.

¹⁹⁴ Levon Sevunts, “Chinese officials pressured Concordia University to cancel event with Uighur activist”, *CBC News* (27 March 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/chinese-officials-concordia-university-cancel-event-with-uighur-activist-1.5074423>>.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Dragon Boat Festival: On June 22, 2019, Falun Gong practitioner Gerry Smith accompanied a friend's young son to the annual Dragon Boat Festival being held in a public park in Ottawa, in order to buy him some food. According to Smith, as he and the boy sat down at a picnic table, the festival's CEO ordered him to take off a shirt that he was wearing with the words 'Falun Dafa' (another name for Falun Gong) and the principles of the spiritual practice: 'Truthfulness, Benevolence, Forbearance'.¹⁹⁶ Smith maintains that he was told by the CEO that the Chinese Embassy was a sponsor of the festival and that his shirt was an "inappropriate political statement". The CEO allegedly told Smith that 7 to 8 fellow Falun Gong practitioners who were doing meditation exercises in the same park, some distance from the festival site, would also have to leave the park or be removed by security.¹⁹⁷

The Chinese government has long attempted to justify its persecution of the Falun Gong by vilifying the non-political spiritual practice as a 'political movement'.¹⁹⁸ Many photos from the day clearly demonstrate that the Falun Gong practitioners present at the park were not engaging in any form of political protest or demonstration (i.e. no banners or speakers), and that they were simply practicing meditation exercises.¹⁹⁹

The Festival CEO has denied that Mr. Smith was ordered to remove his shirt but rather that he was told it would be "helpful" if he did so. The CEO describes Mr. Smith as having been assertive in wanting to discuss Chinese political issues and claims that he told him that while he could call security, he would not do so, "out of respect". The CEO denies that he ordered any Falun Gong practitioners to stop distributing materials outside the festival site. He also denies feeling any pressure from the Chinese Embassy whose sponsorship, he indicates, amounts to only 1% of the festival's budget.

Gerry Smith complained to the City of Ottawa, which referred his complaint to police, who advised him that he had no obligation to comply with instructions to remove his t-shirt, but ultimately concluded it was not a criminal matter.²⁰⁰ The Ottawa Falun Gong group has written to the Ottawa mayor, to city councillors and to the city's General Manager of Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services on several occasions, but has been dissatisfied with what it considers to be a lack of accountability for the

¹⁹⁶ Tom Blackwell, "Ottawa man says dragon boat festival CEO ordered him to remove Falun Gong shirt, citing Chinese sponsorship", *National Post* (16 July 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/ottawa-man-says-dragon-boat-festival-ceo-ordered-him-to-remove-falun-gong-shirt-citing-chinese-sponsorship>>. See also, July 16, 2019 press release from Grace Wollensak of the Falun Dafa Association of Canada; In a witness statement provided for proceedings before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, the young boy corroborated Smith's account of the events.

¹⁹⁷ Gerry Smith, submissions to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

¹⁹⁸ It is worth noting that the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario has previously determined that Falun Gong is a spiritual group and a religious practice, not a political organization, which benefits from protection under Ontario's human rights legislation against discrimination on the basis of creed, see: *Huang v. Ottawa Senior Chinese Cultural Association*, 2006 HRTO 1.

¹⁹⁹ The practitioners maintain that they have been practicing meditation exercises in this park for over 15 years.

²⁰⁰ Tom Blackwell, "Ottawa man says dragon boat festival CEO ordered him to remove Falun Gong shirt, citing Chinese sponsorship", *National Post* (16 July 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/ottawa-man-says-dragon-boat-festival-ceo-ordered-him-to-remove-falun-gong-shirt-citing-chinese-sponsorship>>.

discrimination that Smith says he suffered at the festival.²⁰¹ Smith eventually filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal in October 2019. As of March 2020, the complaint is still making its way through the system.

Grace Wollensak, on behalf of the Falun Dafa group in Ottawa, denounced the festival's handling of the incident.²⁰² She highlighted that this was not an isolated case, but part of a context of 20 years of persecution of Falun Gong by the Chinese state apparatus, including through its consulates and embassies, which "have resorted to means of all kinds to influence or coerce overseas organizations and governments to stifle support for Falun Gong and marginalize the Falun Gong group".²⁰³ It is also worth noting that a Chinese-language article about the incident was posted on many Chinese websites inside China, characterizing Falun Gong practices as being political and unwelcome at an event in Canada, citing the Festival CEO and repeating anti-Falun Gong propaganda.

The Chinese Embassy told journalists it was unaware of the incident, but echoed comments made about keeping the event non-political.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, the festival claimed that it was not specifically or solely targeting the Falun Gong practitioners, but rather took issue with allowing space for any political protesting of any kind at the festival.

Winnipeg Incident: In August 2018, two Falun Gong practitioners (Weiwei Jiang and Song Liu) were exercising in a Winnipeg park when they were approached by a stranger who spoke Mandarin to them. After the two practitioners invited the stranger to join them, he reportedly got angry, swore at them, started filming them and threatened to beat them to death.²⁰⁵ Jiang and Liu reported the incident to police, but decided not to pursue charges, as they did not want the man to be punished, and were satisfied that authorities had taken steps to speak with the man about his actions.

²⁰¹ Submissions to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. The only response received from city officials has been that they would be conducting a "post-event review" with the festival organizers to guide future events by reviewing the terms and conditions for the use of City parks under rental contracts. The Ottawa Falun Dafa group maintains that the Festival acted in contravention of its contract with the City, which requires respect for human rights legislation, including prohibiting discriminatory practices.

²⁰² Letter sent by Grace Wollensak to John Brooman and the Board of Directors of the Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival, July 5 2019 ("Re: Seeking an apology from the Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival for your discriminatory action against a local Falun Gong practitioner").

²⁰³ See July 16, 2019 press release from Grace Wollensak of the Falun Dafa Association of Canada. Examples of interference with Falun Gong events in Canada include: May 2008 Ottawa tulip festival, where a performance by a Falun Gong band was cancelled last minute because organizers were concerned that their presence might upset the Chinese embassy (one of the event sponsors). The organizer later made a public apology and invited the band to play at the festival on later dates. See: "Ottawa's Tulip Festival apologizes for barring Falun Gong band", *CBC News* (14 May 2008), online: < <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-s-tulip-festival-apologizes-for-barring-falun-gong-band-1.769548>>.

²⁰⁴ Tom Blackwell, "Ottawa man says dragon boat festival CEO ordered him to remove Falun Gong shirt, citing Chinese sponsorship", *National Post* (16 July 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/ottawa-man-says-dragon-boat-festival-ceo-ordered-him-to-remove-falun-gong-shirt-citing-chinese-sponsorship>>.

²⁰⁵ Carol Sanders, "Falun Gong practitioners threatened", *Winnipeg Free Press* (8 October 2018), online: <<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/falun-gong-practitioners-threatened-490530901.html>>; Corroborated by information provided by Grace Wollensak, Falun Dafa Association of Canada.

Calgary Incidents: Falun Gong practitioners have continued to face incidents of harassment across major Canadian cities over the past three years. In August 2017, two men disrupted Falun Gong practitioners rallying in front of the Chinese consulate in Calgary, ripping off their event banner and swearing at them.²⁰⁶ Witnesses claimed that after the confrontation had subsided, two individuals came out of the Chinese consulate to talk to one of the disrupters, inciting suspicion that they had directed them to interrupt the demonstration.

Jeff Yang, a local Falun Gong group coordinator in Calgary, also described persistent harassment and insults over the past few years (as recently as June 2019) against Falun Gong practitioners by a man of Chinese origin.²⁰⁷ The man allegedly drew graffiti and made signs with slanderous messages against the Falun Gong, verbally harassed practitioners, and was even arrested after hitting a female practitioner in May 2015 (he was released by police due to suspected mental health issues).

Fake Letters & Emails: The use of fake letters and emails has long been a hallmark of the Chinese Communist Party's overseas campaign against Falun Gong practitioners, to disparage them and to undermine their reputation.²⁰⁸ This practice against Falun Gong practitioners has continued since 2017. Bizarre, offensive, and sometimes threatening letters and emails have been sent in their name, including to politicians like Judy Sgro (Liberal MP – December 2017) and Peter Julian (NDP MP – March 2019), in an apparent effort to discredit the Falun Gong and hurt their relationships with recipients,.

Ivy* case: Many Falun Gong practitioners living in Canada are wary to travel to China, as there have been several reported cases of individuals being arrested and incarcerated upon return. A Falun Gong practitioner from Toronto, Ivy*, who is a permanent resident of Canada and mother of a Canadian citizen, went back to China in 2012 and was arrested on August 30, 2015 for posting Falun Gong flyers on city walls.²⁰⁹ Following a hasty and unjust trial, Ivy was jailed for 3 years, on charges of “disturbing the social order”, in horrendous conditions, allegedly suffering 6 months of solitary confinement, mistreatment, forced labour, unhygienic conditions of detention, and various methods of torture (including sleep deprivation, beatings, being deprived of toilet access, being kept in painful stress

²⁰⁶ Information provided by Grace Wollensak, Falun Dafa Association of Canada & Jeff Yang, Falun Gong organizer from Calgary.

²⁰⁷ Information provided by Grace Wollensak, Falun Dafa Association of Canada & Jeff Yang, Falun Gong organizer from Calgary.

²⁰⁸ Limin Zhou, “Fake Letter Sent in Trudeau’s Name Not Isolated Case in China’s Disinformation Campaign”, *Epoch Times* (7 May 2019), online: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/fake-letter-sent-in-trudeaus-name-not-isolated-case-in-chinas-disinformation-campaign_2909445.html> ; Tom Blackwell, “‘Don’t step out of line’: Confidential report reveals how Chinese officials harass activists in Canada”, *National Post* (5 January 2018), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/world/confidential-report-reveals-how-chinese-officials-harass-activists-in-canada-there-is-a-consistent-pattern>>.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Ivy* on March 4, 2020. The Coalition has confirmed that Ivy’s case has received coverage by a website which reports on the Falun Gong community worldwide, which broadly corroborates her account of events. Ivy requested anonymity for this report, due to fears of potential retaliation for speaking out. Certain identifying characteristics, including the city in China where she was arrested, have been removed to ensure her anonymity. Ivy explained that she returned to China in 2012 for family reasons, but that she remained in hiding to evade authorities who had previously detained her for her Falun Gong activities from 2001-2004. It was only in August 2015 that she was arrested after being caught on surveillance cameras posting Falun Gong content on city walls.

positions, force feeding and being forced to take unknown psychiatric drugs), all of which left her with severe physical and psychological consequences. Ivy was released in August 2018 and came back to Toronto in December 2018. Even in Canada she is reluctant to come forward with her story, fearing potential retaliation against family members back in China, who have previously received calls from the authorities warning her to stay quiet after she made short public remarks about her ordeal.²¹⁰

Anastasia Lin case: Anastasia Lin, a prominent Falun Gong practitioner and past Miss World Canada titleholder, has faced multiple instances of harassment for her advocacy work related to human rights in China and the overseas activities of the Chinese Communist Party. Apart from being prevented from attending the Miss World pageant in China due to her activism, Lin has also faced intimidation from Chinese state agents acting via her father and grandparents, giving them warnings that if she did not stop her human rights work she would risk turning her family against each other.²¹¹ Lin's case is emblematic of a common strategy used by the Chinese government against outspoken diaspora members to pressure them through harassment of family members living in China. Lin also reported facing ostracism from parts of the Canadian Chinese community, segments of which stopped inviting her to events that were linked to the Chinese embassy or consulate. Lin also suspects that she has been monitored at community events that she is invited to and that her phone is being tapped by Chinese authorities. Lin has also faced issues related to self-censorship by media and public organizations abroad, for instance having an interview cancelled with an Australian publicly-funded broadcaster on account of her unspecified 'affiliations', as well as attempts from the Chinese embassy in London to cancel a speaking engagement by Lin at Durham University, due to Lin 'not being friendly to the Chinese government'.²¹² Lin has stated that the Canadian government has not made meaningful efforts to assist her, stating that it was complex and that they would simply "monitor" the case, as they claim they have no responsibility to intervene.²¹³

OTHER CASES

Port Coquitlam, British Columbia: Dozens of Chinese-Canadian residents of Port Coquitlam, BC have reported to mayor Brad West that they or their family members have received home visits or phone calls from Chinese officials regarding their social media posts, and participation in protests or events.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Interview with Ivy on March 4, 2020. Ivy recounted that her family in China is regularly harassed by the authorities about her whereabouts, and that they received a call shortly after she spoke to media in Canada, leading her to believe that her activities continue to be monitored by Chinese authorities.

²¹¹ "Canada's Miss World finalist Anastasia Lin comes out as a Falun Gong practitioner", *South China Morning Post* (28 August 2015), online: <<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/article/1853314/canadas-miss-world-finalist-anastasia-lin-comes-out-falun-gong>>.

²¹² Information provided by Anastasia Lin; Tara Francis Chan, "Australia's public broadcaster canned an interview with a campaigner for human rights in China and she says it was because of her 'affiliations'", *Business Insider* (7 June 2018), online: <<https://www.businessinsider.com/abc-cancelled-interview-with-miss-world-canada-anastasia-lin-2018-6>>.

²¹³ Robin V. Sears, "Should Canada get tough with China?", *Toronto Star* (23 July 2019), online: <<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/thebigdebate/2019/07/23/should-canada-get-tough-with-china.html>>.

²¹⁴ Joanna Chiu, "They're that fearful: Why this B.C. mayor is talking about the harassment of Chinese Canadians in Metro Vancouver", *Toronto Star* (15 November 2019), online:

Mayor West stated that officials from the Chinese government are getting in touch with residents, particularly in relation to Hong Kong protests. He says, “what’s equally shocking is how fearful they are. When we meet in my office, they want the blinds closed. They’re that fearful.” He said they are “subject to forms of persecution and harassment that no Canadian would tolerate or find acceptable,” but did not give details for confidentiality reasons.²¹⁵

Confucius Institutes: The Minister of Education in New Brunswick announced in February 2019 that the province would put an end to all existing agreements between Confucius Institutes and roughly 20 secondary schools in the province.²¹⁶ The Minister claimed that these institutes are agents of the Chinese government, whose activities are a threat to academic freedom and involve spreading propaganda to change Canadians’ views about China. The Minister also cited a growing number of reports from parents that described attempts at restricting speech and discussion of sensitive issues, including with respect to Taiwan and the Tiananmen Square massacre.²¹⁷

The government partially walked back its decision in August 2019, announcing it would respect its existing contract with the Institutes, given that breaking the contract with China could have resulted in severe financial penalties for New Brunswick. Consequently, only the Chinese culture program was discontinued, while the Mandarin language training program was maintained.²¹⁸

New Brunswick’s decision followed a similar move by McMaster University, which had cancelled its own partnership with the Confucius Institute in 2013, on account of its discriminatory hiring practices with relation to Falun Gong practitioners.²¹⁹ McGill University rejected a proposed agreement with a

<<https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2019/11/15/theyre-that-fearful-why-this-bc-mayor-is-talking-about-the-harassment-of-chinese-canadians-in-metro-vancouver.html>>.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Shane Fowler, “Education minister pulling plug on Chinese education program in schools”, *CBC News* (21 February 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/education-minister-pulling-plug-confucius-institute-new-brunswick-1.5028098>>. Confucius Institutes remain open in a number of Canadian institutions of higher education – including Dawson College (Montreal), Seneca College (Toronto), Carleton University (Ottawa), Brock University (St Catharines), University of Waterloo (Waterloo, ON), University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, SK), University of Regina (Regina, SK), St. Mary’s University (Halifax, NS). Also present in Coquitlam School District (British Columbia) and the Edmonton Public School Board (Alberta).

²¹⁷ Tom Blackwell, “New Brunswick turfs China backed Confucius Institute out of elementary schools to curb Beijing’s influence”, *National Post* (27 August 2019), online: <<https://nationalpost.com/news/new-brunswick-turfs-china-backed-confucius-institute-out-of-elementary-schools-to-curb-beijings-influence/>>; In Ontario, a Tibetan student at Brock University was discouraged from bringing her flag to a multicultural festival event by university representatives, allegedly as a result of the influence of the Confucius Institute on campus. Interview with Chemi Lhamo, President of the University of Toronto (Scarborough Campus) Student Union, 24 July 2019 ; Doris Liu & David Kilgour, “The Confucius Institute quandary”, *Diplomat & International Canada* (30 September 2017), online: <<http://diplomatonline.com/mag/2017/09/the-confucius-institute-quandary/>>; (As seen in the documentary ‘In the Name of Confucius’: <https://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/>).

²¹⁸ “Chinese culture program removed from 18 New Brunswick schools”, *CBC News* (26 August 2019), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/confucius-institute-programs-china-school-1.5259963>>.

²¹⁹ James Bradshaw & Colin Freeze, “McMaster closing Confucius institute over hiring issues”, *Globe and Mail* 7 February 2013 (Updated 11 May 2018), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/mcmaster-closing-confucius-institute-over-hiring-issues/article8372894/>>.

Confucius Institute because of too much external or attempted external control by Chinese government authorities and insufficient safeguards to ensure McGill's autonomy over its academic program and its principles of academic freedom. The University of Manitoba had also rejected proposals to host a Confucius Institute due to censorship concerns. The University of Sherbrooke and the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) have both ended partnerships with Confucius Institutes, in BCIT's case citing negative press and declining demand. The Toronto Public School Board (TPSB) also ended a planned relationship with the Confucius Institute in 2014. Public debate over the closure of the Confucius Institute at the TPSB was marred by a rally held on October 29th 2014 in which members of the Confederation of Toronto Chinese Canadian Organizations allegedly chanted messages of hatred, and incited hatred against identifiable groups, including the Falun Gong.²²⁰

Human Rights Watch Report: Human Rights Watch found, through interviews between 2015 and 2018 in Canada, Australia, France, UK and the US, that there were various threats to academic freedom resulting from Chinese government pressure, through monitoring and surveillance on students and academics from China (and those studying in China).²²¹ The report described threats to families in China based on what students had said in a classroom, professors being directly threatened by Chinese officials to stop criticizing the Chinese government in lectures, Chinese students remaining silent due to a fear of monitoring and surveillance, and other general censorship and self-censorship concerns (e.g. students modifying their remarks in class due to fear of being denied access to China, funding sources and threats to family members). Consequently, academic freedom and freedom of expression of university students in Canada speaking out on China has been increasingly stifled, as many individuals fear that Chinese government or consular agents are monitoring their speech or their activities.²²²

²²⁰ Raffy Boudjikianian, "Local Chinese school visited by CSIS, director says", *CBC News* (8 September 2014), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/local-chinese-school-visited-by-csis-director-says-1.2759399>>.

²²¹ Human Rights Watch, "China: Government Threats to Academic Freedom Abroad", 21 March 2019, online: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/21/china-government-threats-academic-freedom-abroad>.

²²² Yaqiu Wang, "Why some Chinese immigrants living in Canada live in silent fear", *Globe and Mail* (25 February 2019), online: <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-why-some-chinese-immigrants-living-in-canada-live-in-silent-fear/>>. A student at UBC told a Human Rights Watch researcher that during a public talk on environmental issues in China, she refrained from asking questions because she was afraid that Chinese agents were watching. The article also recounts that individuals are choosing not to attend Canadian commemorations of the Tiananmen Square massacre for fear of being identified by Chinese agents. The article also cites the case of a Toronto journalist who stopped writing stories critical of the Chinese government after Chinese police started harassing her parents in China.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS BY THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

The incidents of harassment and intimidation outlined in this report are not novel; they are part of a longstanding trend of incidents that are consistent with a Chinese state-sponsored campaign, and which have plagued communities of Tibetan-Canadians, Uighur-Canadians, Falun Gong practitioners, Hong Kong-Canadians, pro-democracy activists, and other human rights defenders working on China-related human rights issues for years.

The Canadian government, its intelligence agencies, and many of its law enforcement bodies, have been aware of these issues for many years – this Coalition brought heightened attention to these problems less than 3 years ago. And yet, since then, the situation has not improved for the activists, diaspora communities and front-line communities in Canada that are working on China-related human rights issues. If anything, this report demonstrates that the situation is worsening, as Chinese actors have arguably become emboldened by the inadequate response from Canadian officials (and other governments): incidents of interference have become increasingly pervasive across different spheres of society, including a growing array of tactics and have expanded beyond traditional targets.

Consequently, the Coalition is reiterating the necessity for the Canadian government to treat these issues with urgency. Canadian citizens, permanent residents and other individuals present in Canada are experiencing a chilling effect on the exercise of their civil liberties and fundamental freedoms, due to the actions of a foreign government. Clearly it is entirely unacceptable for human rights defenders, activists and dissidents to experience such treatment.

The Coalition also reiterates that individuals who experience threats, intimidation and interference continue to face a lack of a coordinated, comprehensive approach on the part of Canadian authorities. Instead, individuals facing this kind of harassment and intimidation find themselves fearful, lacking support and unaware as to where to turn for recourse in these situations. Affected individuals are not aware as to whether they should be contacting local law enforcement officials, the RCMP, their elected representatives at the municipal, provincial or federal levels, government ministries, departments or agencies (Public Safety, Global Affairs, Justice, CSIS), or the media, in order to feel that their concerns are being heard and taken seriously.

As it currently stands, the responses from officials and authorities have been piecemeal at best and, more often, unsatisfactory and ineffective at identifying and addressing the sources of these violations. In many cases, individuals have not reported the harassment or intimidation that they have suffered to Canadian authorities, due to the belief that reporting incidents will not help or solve the situation, and may actually make it worse if the Chinese government were to find out.

The Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China urges the Canadian government to undertake the following steps to address this situation:

- Appoint a point-person, or a centralized focal point within government, which would act as the front-line contact for all individuals and groups facing harassment, intimidation and interference in Canada, in relation to their advocacy and activism on human rights issues in China.
 - This would include establishing a complaint mechanism or “hotline” to:
 - collect data and information about specific incidents, allowing for detailed analysis of trends and better understanding of patterns of abuse;
 - coordinate an inter-departmental and inter-governmental response to instances of harassment and intimidation; and
 - take appropriate action on individual complaints, in line with procedural fairness guarantees, including:
 - referral to law enforcement where necessary and appropriate in cases of possible criminal activity; and
 - declaring select Chinese diplomats to be *persona non grata* or considering the possibility of imposing sanctions against them or other government officials under the *Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act* (the *Magnitsky Act*) if evidence substantiates allegations of involvement in harassment and intimidation.
- Maintain high-level diplomatic engagement with Chinese authorities on the overall issue of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders and other individuals in Canada working on China-related issues, including by raising individual cases when there is consent to do so.
- Ensure that Canada clearly and forcefully affirms that it will not tolerate gross violations of normal diplomatic practice and interference with the human rights of people on its territory.
- Work with other governments, including within multi-lateral fora such as the UN Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures, to raise concerns about Chinese extra-territorial human rights violations and exert pressure on Chinese government to refrain from such activities.
- Pursue an independent public inquiry or investigation into methods and incidents of interference, intimidation and harassment specific to the education sector, as well as the alleged instrumentalization of Chinese international students by Chinese consular officials in Canadian universities towards these ends.

- Reassess broader economic and trade ties with China on an ongoing basis to ensure that speaking out on persistent human rights concerns is a priority in the bilateral relationship and that ties between the countries pertaining to technology research and development initiatives do not make Canadian public institutions, organizations, or private entities complicit in Chinese human rights violations.
- Examine legislation and rules adopted to counter covert Chinese government interference in other jurisdictions, such as in Australia²²³ and in the United States²²⁴, in the context of considering the feasibility and desirability of enacting comparable legislation and/or rules in Canada.

²²³ Damien Cave & Jacqueline Williams, “Australian Law Targets Foreign Interference. China Is Not Pleased”, *New York Times* (28 June 2018), online: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/world/australia/australia-security-laws-foreign-interference.html>>; Library of Congress, “Australia: Bills Containing New Espionage, Foreign Interference Offenses, and Establishing Foreign Agent Registry Enacted”, 21 August 2018, online: <https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/australia-bills-containing-new-espionage-foreign-interference-offenses-and-establishing-foreign-agent-registry-enacted/>. Australia’s law has faced criticism for being too wide-ranging, e.g. encompassing collaboration between Australian and Chinese democracy activist groups; using overly broad definitions of ‘national security’.

²²⁴ “US tightens rules on Chinese state media over ‘propaganda’ concerns”, *The Guardian* (18 February 2020), online: <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/feb/18/us-chinese-media-propaganda-state-department>>.