

Submission to Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

Inquiry into
Transnational Repression and Foreign Interference

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Submitted by
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About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 10 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilise millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights.

We help to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws, and free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.

We are impartial and independent of any government, political persuasion or religious belief and do not receive funding from governments or political parties.

Amnesty International is a proud People Powered movement founded on the work of volunteers and activists all around the country. More than 500,000 Amnesty International supporters live in Australia.

1. Summary

1.1 Amnesty International Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee's Inquiry into Transnational Repression and Foreign Interference.

1.2 Transnational repression refers to actions by governments or their agents to intimidate, threaten, surveil, harass or otherwise silence people living overseas because of their dissent, criticism or human rights advocacy, in violation of their human rights. These actions include the unlawful transfer or removal of individuals from another country through expulsion, extradition or deportation, as well as the misuse of consular services. They also take the form of killings, abductions, enforced disappearances, intimidation, and surveillance and harassment - both online and offline.

1.3 Amnesty International has documented human rights violations amounting to transnational repression in many parts of the world, including acts committed, or suspected of being committed, by the governments of Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Laos, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, among others.

1.4 While transnational repression is perpetrated by numerous governments, China is a particularly significant actor. A series of global studies by Freedom House has identified the Chinese government as conducting “the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world”.[1]

1.5 Our submission focuses on China reflecting the scale, reach and impact of its transnational repression and our current work on this issue in Australia. However we emphasise that Australia's response must protect everyone at risk, regardless of which government is responsible.

1.6 In Australia, transnational repression linked to the Chinese government can affect academics, journalists, activists and others across the broader community, with particular implications for members of Tibetan, Uyghur, Hong Kong and Chinese diaspora communities. Those at risk include human rights defenders, students, journalists, activists and community members who peacefully speak out against human rights violations.

1.7 Reports of surveillance, intimidation, threats, and harassment, alongside fears that advocacy may expose family members overseas to reprisals, raise serious concerns about whether people can exercise their rights freely and safely in Australia.

1.8 The chilling effect can extend to Australian institutions, including universities and galleries, where concerns about potential repercussions lead to self-censorship or reluctance to engage with human rights issues relating to China.

1.9 Transnational repression violates the rights and freedoms that Australia is obliged to protect, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, privacy, cultural rights, and participation in public and civic life. It also threatens Australia’s sovereignty and democratic institutions when foreign governments intimidate people or interfere with lawful activities on Australian territory. The consequences reach well beyond the people directly targeted. They extend

[1] Collaboration and Resistance: Tracking Transnational Repression in 2025 | Freedom House

to families and communities, and to civil society, civic space, refugee protection, academic freedom,journalism,dia freedom.

1.10 Australia must ensure that its response addresses both the immediate harm to individuals and the broader impact in the Australian community. This requires a comprehensive, human rights-based approach that combines prevention, accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms, effective investigation and accountability, practical support for affected people, safeguards across public institutions, and cooperation with international partners. The response must also be informed by the experiences and expertise of affected communities themselves.

2. International human rights law

2.1 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights establish fundamental protections against repression and safeguard people's ability to participate freely and safely in public life.

2.2 Transnational repression can violate a range of human rights protected under international law, including the rights to:

- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief;
- Freedom of opinion and expression;
- Freedom of peaceful assembly and association;
- Education;
- Participation in cultural life;
- Privacy;
- Family life;
- Protection from attacks on honour and reputation;
- An effective remedy;
- Freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile;
- Seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries.

2.3 In September 2026, more than 130 UN Special Procedures mandate holders and members of UN treaty bodies issued a joint statement warning that “transnational repression represents a growing challenge to the international human rights system and to the principles of the Charter of the UN itself”.[2] The statement followed the UN Human Rights Council's first dedicated dialogue on transnational repression and arbitrary detention, amid growing concern about efforts to target people who engage with the UN human rights system.

[2] Joint Statement by United Nations Human Rights Experts on Transnational Repression | OHCHR

3. The nature, scale and methods of transnational repression

3.1 The accounts documented by Amnesty International and reported by affected communities and the media show that China's transnational repression in Australia takes multiple forms, targeting people because of their dissent, human rights advocacy or challenges to official narratives. Reported methods include surveillance of peaceful activities, harassment, physical intimidation, online abuse and death threats, coercion through threats against family members in China, including threats to their safety, employment, and the use of national security laws to punish activism beyond China's borders. Some people also report being questioned, denied entry or restricted in their contact with family when travelling to China because of their advocacy in Australia.

3.2 Transnational repression can also involve public bounty announcements, reputational attacks and impersonation. Perceived security risks or pressure can lead cultural institutions to withdraw support from artists and events they consider politically sensitive. Fear of reprisals can deter people from joining protests, cultural activities, language classes and community organising. Suspicion and mistrust within diaspora communities can erode community cohesion and collective action.

3.3 A defining feature of these practices is the exploitation of family, cultural and social ties to extend pressure into Australia. Relatives who remain in China can become instruments of coercion, while uncertainty about surveillance and potential reprisals fosters fear and self-censorship, undermining the ability of affected communities to exercise their rights freely.

3a. The role of China's national security laws

3.4 China's expanding national security framework provides important context for understanding its transnational repression. Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, China has introduced or revised a series of laws that broaden the scope of activities that may be treated as threats to national security. These include the National Security Law (2015), the National Intelligence Law (2017), the Counter-Terrorism Law, the revised Counter-Espionage Law (2023) and legislation governing state secrets (2024), among others. Related regulations have also been used to target "ethnic minority" communities in Xinjiang and Tibet under the guise of national security.

3.5 Amnesty International has raised concerns that broadly defined or ambiguous national security offences are used to restrict peaceful expression, association and human rights work. Such laws can enable arbitrary enforcement and leave people uncertain about whether their activities, or those of their families, could lead to punishment.

3.6 In Hong Kong, the National Security Law imposed in 2020 and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance enacted in 2024 have further restricted fundamental freedoms. These laws can have consequences well beyond China and Hong Kong. People living in Australia may avoid public criticism, demonstrations or advocacy for fear of prosecution if they return home or reprisals against family members overseas.

3.7 China's Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress, in force since 1 July 2026, raises serious concerns for Uyghurs, Tibetans and other non-Han communities. It entrenches forced assimilation of these communities and uses broad, undefined restrictions on conduct that "undermines ethnic unity" that risk criminalising peaceful advocacy. Article 63 extends these concerns beyond China's borders by asserting jurisdiction over foreign organisations and individuals. In Australia, promoting

Tibetan and Uyghur language and culture and advocating for these rights could be portrayed by Chinese authorities as unlawful.[3]

3c. Digital repression and surveillance

3.8 Digital technologies including AI have expanded governments' ability to monitor, intimidate and silence people beyond their borders. A range of digital tactics are used in transnational repression, including online harassment, threats, disinformation, smear campaigns, spyware, phishing, unauthorised access to accounts and doxxing.

3.9 For people connected to China, digital communications create particular vulnerabilities. WeChat and other Chinese platforms are essential for keeping in touch with family and friends, but using them can come at a cost to personal safety. Concerns about surveillance and censorship discourage people from discussing political issues or expressing their views freely.

3d. Transnational repression affecting people in Australia

Chinese international students

3.10 Amnesty International's 2024 research documented how Chinese and Hong Kong students in Europe and North America experienced surveillance, intimidation and pressure on their families because of their peaceful activities overseas. We have heard similar accounts from students in Australia.[4] A 2021 Human Rights Watch report found that many Chinese students on Australian campuses self-censor criticism of the Chinese government for fear of being reported to authorities or harassed by peers.[5]

3.11 One student, who used the pseudonym Aaron, protested outside the University of Sydney in early 2023 dressed as Winnie the Pooh, a fictional character used to mock President Xi Jinping. He reported being harassed six times and physically attacked twice. NSW Police investigated but could not identify those responsible, and the investigation was suspended. He said Chinese authorities then visited his parents and threatened their employment and pension, and his relatives' future employment prospects, if he did not stop. In March 2024, his parents called him and, in what he described as a scripted conversation, told him not to attend or organise protests. His social media accounts were later banned, cutting him off from friends and family in China.[6]

3.12 Another student from the University of Sydney who returned to China in December 2024 was arrested and charged with secession for taking part in pro-democracy protests in Australia. He was allegedly sentenced to six years in prison.[7]

Chinese-Australian artist Badiucao and journalist Cheng Lei

3.13 Artists and journalists who use their platforms to challenge official narratives become targets of transnational repression. Chinese-Australian political cartoonist Badiucao concealed his identity

[3] Behind the language of "unity" and "progress," China's new law is about more control and assimilation in Tibet and Xinjiang - Amnesty International Australia
[4] China: "On my campus, I am afraid": China's targeting of overseas students stifles rights - Amnesty International
[5] "They Don't Understand the Fear We Have": How China's Long Reach of Repression Undermines Academic Freedom at Australia's Universities | HRW
[6] Chinese international students under surveillance in Sydney
[7] Student allegedly jailed in China for six years after taking part in pro-democracy protests in Australia | Australia news | The Guardian

during the early years of his artistic career in Australia to protect himself and his family. In 2018, Chinese police detained his relatives in China as he prepared for an art exhibition in Hong Kong, supported by Amnesty International. They warned that national security police would be sent to Hong Kong to stop the planned exhibition, forcing its cancellation. In 2019, he revealed his identity in an ABC documentary as an act of resistance to threats from the Chinese government.

3.14 Badiucao has reported ongoing harassment and intimidation, including online abuse, blocked internet access, and being followed in public. On one occasion in Melbourne, four men wearing matching earpieces followed him on a bus and he believed they were agents of the Chinese government. He regularly receives death threats, including a video of a man waving an Australian passport and threatening to hospitalise him. An Australian government agency has warned him of the risk of kidnapping when choosing flight stopovers. He had reported incidents to the Australian Federal Police and ASIO, but Victoria Police reportedly told him they could only act once something had happened. In June 2024, a person posing as Badiucao attended an event for the Chinese dissident community in Melbourne and spent much of the evening with journalist Cheng Lei. Badiucao did not know the person's identity or whether they were linked to the Chinese government.[8]

3.15 Transnational repression can also constrain artists' and journalists' ability to work and participate in public life. Badiucao reported that venues in Melbourne, including the National Gallery of Victoria, declined to host a 2019 event featuring Hong Kong activist Denise Ho, citing security concerns. A Sydney gallery removed his work from a group exhibition, while other galleries have told him that hosting him would be too risky. Despite his international profile, he says no major public or commercial gallery in Australia has been willing to host an exhibition of his work.

3.16 All this shows that the effects of transnational repression are not limited to direct threats or intimidation. Fear of repercussions can also influence institutional decisions. Regardless of whether there are direct pressures from a foreign government or its agents, the broader climate of fear lead institutions to avoid what they consider politically sensitive subjects, restricting freedom of expression and public debate.

3.17 The removal of journalist Cheng Lei's play from Melbourne's Rising Festival raises similar concerns. Cheng Lei was detained in China for three years before her release in October 2023. The festival dropped her play about her wrongful imprisonment from its program shortly before its premiere. "I feel like I am back in China," she said.[9]

Hong Kong activists: Kevin Yam and Ted Hui

3.18 Hong Kong activists in Australia face particular risks following the imposition of the National Security Law and the expansion of national security measures in Hong Kong. Two notable examples are Kevin Yam, a Melbourne-based lawyer, academic and activist, and Ted Hui, a former Hong Kong legislator now living in Adelaide. In July 2023, both were among eight overseas activists wanted by the Hong Kong Police Force, which announced a bounty of HK$1 million for each.10

3.19 In March 2025, Melbourne homes received anonymous letters purporting to offer a police bounty of about $203,000 for information about Yam.[11] Hui has also been targeted. Fake pamphlets falsely portraying him as a pro-Israel lawyer were allegedly mailed to mosques in Adelaide, in an

[8] Badiucao: Melbourne cartoonist, China dissident tells story of impostor
[9] Cheng Lei accuses Rising arts festival of censorship
[10] Australian-based activists Ted Hui and Kevin Yam slam Hong Kong arrest warrants - ABC News
[11] Melbourne residents receive letter offering $200k for information on Hong Kong pro-democracy activist | Hong Kong | The Guardian

apparent attempt to intimidate him and undermine social cohesion. Hui said the claims were untrue and that the pamphlets were designed to stir conflict among ethnic communities.[12]

3.20 The Hong Kong government has also cancelled the passports of numerous overseas residents, as well as limiting access to insurance and superannuation funds.

3.21 These cases illustrate how legal threats, bounty announcements, reputational attacks and financial actions can be used to deter activism, and the danger of foreign governments extending the practical effects of their national security laws into Australia.

Tibetans in Australia

3.22 Australia is home to a few thousand Tibetans who fled political persecution, including former political prisoners who resettled through the Australian government's humanitarian program. With many of their family members still in Tibet, they are particularly vulnerable to transnational repression through threats, intimidation and pressure directed at their relatives.

3.23 They reported that their participation in protests, lobby meetings with MPs and other activities is monitored, and that they receive threatening calls from the Chinese diplomatic personnel warning them to stop their activism or their families in Tibet will face consequences. Some have reduced or cut off contact with relatives because the risks are so serious. Although physically safe in Australia, they feel unable to communicate freely with the people they have left behind.

3.24 Members of the local community have voiced concern about a July 2025 meeting between Newcastle's Lord Mayor Dr Ross Kerridge and China's Consul General Wang Yu, which the Newcastle Herald covered. Described as an informal "meet and greet", the meeting reportedly moved onto foreign policy issues. Minutes shared with councillors record that the visiting delegation set out China's positions on Tibet and Taiwan and enquired about Newcastle's Tibetan community. The mayor later said these topics caught him off guard and that he would have sought advice beforehand had he known they would arise.[13] The delegation is also reported to have raised the Tibetan community at a lunch with a union body in the Hunter region the same day, asking whether those present knew any of the Tibetan community members. Such events have heightened Tibetan-Australians' fears about the monitoring of their communities in Australia.[14]

3.25 The introduction of a 30-day visa-free travel to China for Australian visitors in 2024 raised hopes among many Tibetans in Australia of reuniting with family members after years of separation and previous visa refusals. However, some Tibetans who travelled to China report being questioned for extended periods at Chengdu Airport about their participation in protests and cultural events in Australia, including activities dating back many years. Some were eventually allowed to enter, while others were turned away, leaving parents and relatives who had been waiting outside the airport without the reunion they had hoped for after decades apart. Those who were turned back at the border have declined media coverage of their ordeal.

3.26 Those permitted to enter China report restrictions on what they can discuss with relatives and where they can travel. Many Tibetans with family in Central Tibet, within the Tibet Autonomous Region, have been unable to visit their home region and have instead met relatives in Chengdu,

[12] Fake pamphlets accusing former Hong Kong legislator of being a pro-Israel lawyer sent to Adelaide mosques | Adelaide | The Guardian
[13] Newcastle Lord Mayor surprised Tibet, Taiwan and nuclear subs were raised during meeting with Chinese Consul General | Newcastle Herald | Newcastle, NSW
[14] Hunter Tibetans raise safety concerns during trip to Canberra | Newcastle Herald | Newcastle, NSW

renting hotel rooms for weeks to spend time together. Access to Tibet remains highly restricted for foreign visitors, journalists and NGO representatives. Those who did get in obtained visas only after strict vetting, in which family members in Tibet had to guarantee that the visitors would not undertake any political activities.

Uyghurs in Australia

3.27 Many Uyghur Australians remain separated from family members in Xinjiang and fear for their safety. Some have had no contact for years, and some community members learned of relatives' deaths only many months afterwards. Many have family members who have faced mass arbitrary detention, surveillance and forced labour, including detention in internment camps.

3.28 Community members have described threatening calls, reportedly from the Chinese consulate, warning them to stop their activism or risk consequences for their families. Some have been pressured to end their advocacy in the hope that doing so will secure a detained relative's release. As a result, fear remains a significant barrier to advocacy. People worry about being photographed, monitored, misrepresented online or identified to Chinese authorities, and many believe that attending public events or speaking out will expose their families to reprisals.

3.29 Human Rights Watch reported that, under the 30-day visa-free program, China has permitted some Uyghur Australians to make restricted visits to Xinjiang. These visits allowed authorities to question visitors and monitor their movements. Visitors must pass strict vetting to obtain permission to travel to Xinjiang. Three community members who travelled under this program reported having to stay in government-designated hotels rather than with family, report their daily activities to authorities, and endure heavy surveillance.[15]

3.30 Fear of surveillance and reprisals also discourages participation in cultural life, including language education and community events. The closure of a Uyghur language school due to insufficient enrolments illustrates the difficulty of preserving language and culture in the diaspora. Human Rights Watch described how Chinese authorities have questioned visiting Uyghur Australians about these schools, undermining their language and cultural rights at a time when authorities in Xinjiang are working to erase Uyghur language and culture.

3.31 The effects extend to community cohesion as well. Members described suspicion and mistrust within the diaspora, which they say weakens unity and collective advocacy, and they fear the Chinese government may have gone to considerable lengths to fracture the community.

[15] Australia: Chinese Government Menaces Uyghur Diaspora | Human Rights Watch

4. The impact on diaspora communities, democratic engagement and public advocacy of transnational repression

4.1 Amnesty's consultations with community members showed that transnational repression affects both the individuals targeted and their broader communities. A key impact is a climate of fear and self-censorship. When people believe they are being monitored, or that their family members' jobs and safety are at risk, they change their behaviour. Community members described avoiding protests, reducing contact with relatives, withdrawing from advocacy, declining media interviews and staying away from community events. While some of these choices are made out of concern for loved ones overseas, others reflect a sense of being unsafe from surveillance, even while living in Australia. By making the exercise of rights feel costly or dangerous, transnational repression silences individuals and deter others, without any need for direct pressure. This undermines the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

4.3 Transnational repression affects how the Australian public understands and engages with human rights issues in China. When people who criticise the Chinese government's human rights record are deterred from speaking publicly, the views that prevail may not be a reliable picture of opinion within diaspora communities, particularly the Chinese community. Community members said this distorts Australian public understanding of China and marginalises the very people best placed to speak about it: those with lived experience of human rights violations.

4.4 Pressure on cultural and educational institutions can have a similar effect. These institutions are often important venues for advocacy and public discussion. When they come under pressure to avoid what they consider sensitive topics, cancel events or distance themselves from critics, the space for peaceful criticism narrows. The result is a weaker public understanding of human rights violations in China, Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and fewer opportunities for Australians to hear directly from affected communities.

4.5 Criticism of the Chinese government must not be conflated with hostility towards Chinese people. Many members of the Chinese diaspora are themselves affected by transnational repression. Amnesty International Australia emphasises that protecting people from transnational repression must go hand in hand with opposing racism and discrimination. People from affected communities must be able to express diverse political views, including critical ones, without being stereotyped, treated with suspicion or held responsible for the actions of a foreign government.

4.6 We have also seen the impact on academic freedom. Amnesty International's 2024 research found that universities in Europe and North America were often unaware of, or ill-equipped to address, the threats and chilling effects experienced by Chinese and Hong Kong students. Our consultation with Chinese students in Sydney raised similar concerns. Human Rights Watch's 2021 research on Australian universities found that Chinese international students felt their universities were not doing enough to protect them and their academic freedom. Some feared their universities would not take threats seriously or would put relationships with the Chinese government ahead of student safety. Academic staff shared these concerns. It reported that some academics self-censored on politically sensitive topics relating to China because they doubted their universities would support them. It also found that universities had failed to recognise this self-censorship or adopt policies to address it, even when staff raised concerns with their supervisors.

4.7 Censorship of discussion about China at Australian universities is not new. In 2013, the University of Sydney cancelled a planned talk by the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, amid pressure from the Chinese government.[16] The incident showed how external pressure could shape decisions about who is given a platform on Australian campuses, and it raised concerns about academic freedom and institutional independence.

4.8 Transnational repression can cause serious psychological, social and economic harm. People who fear for relatives overseas described anxiety, guilt and distress, particularly when they believe their advocacy could jeopardise their families' safety and livelihoods. Some reduce or end contact with relatives, losing an important source of emotional support.

4.9 Surveillance, intimidation and uncertainty also erode trust within diaspora communities. Community members fear that information shared in confidence will be disclosed, or that taking part in community organisations could expose them or their families to harm. This weakens support networks, discourages collective advocacy and makes people reluctant to seek help from Australian authorities or civil society organisations.

4.10 Transnational repression is a threat to Australia's sovereignty and democratic principles. It occurs when a foreign government uses surveillance, intimidation or threats against relatives to influence what people in Australia say, whom they support or which demonstrations and cultural activities they join. Australia's democratic values are undermined when activists withdraw, students avoid political discussion or cultural institutions cancel events.

[16] Uni under fire for pulling pin on Dalai Lama event - ABC News

5. Adequacy of Australia's legislative and institutional frameworks

5.1 Our assessment draws on Freedom House's report that looks at Australia's response to transnational repression[17] as well as on our consultations with affected communities in Australia.

5.2 Australia has established legislative, institutional and policy mechanisms to counter foreign interference. It has raised public awareness, introduced law enforcement responses and strengthened international cooperation. The Espionage and Foreign Interference (EFI) Act and the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme (FITS) Act were passed by the Turnbull Government in response to "disturbing reports of Chinese influence". The government has also acknowledged that foreign interference can undermine democratic participation and rights. Yet significant gaps remain between these commitments and the protection and support actually available to people targeted by transnational repression.

5.3 In Australia, transnational repression is largely handled as a matter of national security and foreign interference. That approach has value, but it focuses on threats to the state rather than on what individuals and communities actually experience at the hands of foreign governments. As a result, the human rights dimension can be overlooked, as can the particular vulnerabilities of affected groups, including non-citizens who may fall outside existing protections.

5.4 Community representatives report receiving little feedback on incidents they raise, being unsure what action authorities have taken, and finding no clear pathway to address conduct such as the coercion of family members overseas. Awareness and training among state and local police are inconsistent, which undermines responses where intimidation is non-physical, involves digital surveillance, or is carried out through third parties. For instance, while the federal police has more training, expertise and focus on transnational repression, they lack jurisdiction to respond to everyday issues which are the responsibility of local police. There needs to be greater transparency about what type of support and protection can be provided. Building trust and ensuring that reports are taken seriously will require appropriate follow-up and stronger coordination across jurisdictions.

5.5 Australia's legislative framework should be reviewed to ensure it protects everyone affected. Existing foreign interference offences do not cover the full range of conduct involved. Protections tied to the exercise of Australian democratic rights may also leave some people, including non-citizens, without adequate protection.

5.6 Australia has backed multilateral initiatives on transnational repression and joined efforts to counter malicious cyber activity and the misuse of commercial spyware. However, it has not matched this engagement with a consistent, transparent approach to holding perpetrators to account. Limited use of targeted measures and the lack of a clearly demonstrated foreign policy response weaken Australia's commitments.

[17] More Action Needed to Ensure Safety: Combating Transnational Repression in Australia | Freedom House

6. Recommendations

6.1 Amnesty International Australia recommends that the Australian government implements the following recommendations. They are grounded in Australia's obligations under international human rights law, including the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, privacy, equality and non-discrimination, and an effective remedy, and the prohibition on refoulement.

- Recognise and define transnational repression as a human rights violation. Introduce a stand-alone legislation on transnational repression, in consultation with affected communities. Foreign interference laws were not built to address the full scope of this conduct. The new framework should comply with international human rights standards and capture all forms of transnational repression. We note that Human Rights Watch makes a similar recommendation in its report.
- Set up a central coordination and reporting service. Create one national point of contact to receive reports and make clear which federal, state and territory agencies are responsible for what. People should be able to be referred to police, legal help and counselling. The service should protect confidentiality and safety.
- Design support with affected communities, covering legal help, safety planning, digital security, counselling and protection from transnational repression.
- Invest in more training for police, policymakers and diplomats. Training should help them spot patterns that build up over time and handle all kinds of tactics.
- Ensure that the current foreign interference and espionage laws are consistent with human rights protections. State clearly that foreign laws, arrest warrants and bounties claiming authority over human rights advocacy in Australia have no legal effect here, no matter which government issues them. Examples include Article 63 of China's Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress, and Hong Kong's overseas arrest warrants and cash rewards.
- Investigate credible allegations promptly and thoroughly, publish findings where it is safe to do so and hold perpetrators to account through targeted measures. Publicly condemn incidents where this will not put victims at risk.
- Partner with universities, employers, cultural institutions and local government to set clear policies, offer confidential reporting and provide training. Protect academic freedom and the rights to free expression, assembly and association for everyone in Australia.
- Uphold the right to seek asylum, and make sure decision-makers consider the risk of transnational repression in asylum and immigration cases.