

China

China, the world's most populous country with about 1.3 billion inhabitants, has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It has remained under Communist one-party rule since 1949, but has embraced capitalism in recent decades. Although now less extreme than in the Maoist years, the ruling party maintains a tight grip on the population and regularly suppresses free speech and dissent. Surveys have found it to be the most atheist country in the world, yet its rulers lack respect for basic human rights. In 2014 authorities exerted mainland pressure on a youth-led movement in Hong Kong, demonstrating against undemocratic restrictions on election candidates.

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>Quasi-divine veneration of a ruling elite is enforced, or a single-party regime holds uncontested power, subject to severe punishment</u>		<u>It is illegal to register an explicitly Humanist, atheist, secularist or other non-religious NGO or other human rights organization, or such groups are persecuted by authorities</u>	<u>Expression of core Humanist principles on democracy, freedom and human rights is brutally repressed</u>
		<u>Government authorities push a socially conservative, religiously or ideologically inspired agenda, without regard to the rights of those with progressive views</u>	
	<u>Religious or ideological instruction is mandatory in at least some public schools (without secular or humanist alternatives) Some concerns about children's right to specifically religious freedom</u>		
			<u>Concerns that secular or religious authorities interfere in specifically religious freedoms</u>

Legend

Constitution and government

The Constitution states that citizens enjoy “freedom of religious belief”, but this is not protected in practice. Those who do profess religion can only worship one of the five state-sanctioned religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. Only these five religions are allowed to legally hold worship services, and any religious worship is limited to “normal religious activities” – of which ‘normal’ is never defined.

Narrowing and restricting specifically religious freedoms

The Chinese Communist Party, to which almost all holders of public office belong, requires its members to be atheists. People can and have been expelled from the party if they practiced any form of religion.

In some parts of the country, local authorities pressured non-affiliated religious groups to register with one of the five, and arbitrarily detaining members until they registered. People are allowed to worship at home, although there are still reports of authorities harassing and detaining groups worshipping in private.

<state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222123>

There is significant religious discrimination, notably of the Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang region and of the Falun Gong group. The religious freedoms of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang are systematically proscribed, as part of a strategy to conflate their religious practices with the area’s separatist movement. Muslim officials working for Chinese government departments have been forbidden from fasting for Ramadan, and more broadly China has expanded its definition of “terrorism” to include any public gatherings which “disturb the social order.”

<theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/06/chinese-city-bans-islamic-beards-headwear-and-clothing-on-buses>

In early 2014 the government launched a programme of removing unauthorised Christian churches in the Zhejiang province – resulting in more than 230 being demolished and even more having their Crosses removed.

Education and children’s rights

There are no faith-based primary or secondary schools, or any form of religious education for primary or secondary school children. The teaching of atheism in schools is mandatory, and a Communist party directive gives guidance to universities on how to prevent the ‘foreign conversion’ of students.

The Community Youth League, the Chinese Communist Party’s youth wing, promotes atheist content to its members and online in accordance with the doctrine of the Party.

<youtube.com/watch?v=t0kPxXhd6w4>

“Sinicisation” and the limiting of specifically religious education

Religious activity is highly discouraged on university campuses. In 2018, a University in Northwest China’s Gansu Province stressed a ban on religious activities on campus during the month of Ramadan. The head of the university highlighted the principle of separation between education and religion.

<en.people.cn/n3/2018/0523/c90000-9462972.html>

Religious groups may apply to setup faith-based universities and colleges for over-18-year-olds, but only if they are one of the five major regulated religions. According to figures from the State Administration of Religious Affairs there were 92 such schools in operation in China, as of 2017. <state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm>

The state limits the number of such religious institutions, as well as their size and what content is allowed to be taught. It controls religious groups by intervening in the training of their leaders and the level of education of their members. Each faith-based institution is required to include government classes in its curriculum. For example, at Jianzhen Buddhist University students are expected to complete eight politics courses such as “An introduction to Religious Policy and Regulations”, “Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” or “Current Politics and Theories”, which has to be taken each year during the course of the four-year degree.

Under regulation, parents are permitted to instruct children in the beliefs of officially recognised religions and children may participate in religious activities. In Xinjiang, however, where there is a large base of Muslims, officials require minors to complete nine years of compulsory education before they can receive religious education outside of school, a measure which appears to be part of efforts to achieve the “Sinicisation” of Muslims in the province.

Students have limited access to printed materials for their studies. In the Buddhist Academy of China, neither of the two textbooks required for the course on the History of Buddhism in China address the development of Buddhism since 1949.

In addition, budgetary constraints due to inadequate state subsidies and insufficient private donations make it difficult for such religious institutions to accommodate a large number applicants. <forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1835>

Domestic corporal punishment

Although corporal punishment in schools was banned in 1986, it continues to be considered an acceptable behavior when exercised by a parent. According to the All-China Women’s Federation, around 43 percent of children between the age of 11 and 17 suffered abuse from one or both parents in the form of physical or psychological abuses.

The Chinese government has been working to improve children’s social security, safety and psychological issues. In March 2016, the first Anti-Domestic Violence Law became effective. <asiafoundation.org/2017/03/01/safeguarding-children-domestic-violence-china/>

Family, community and society

“Foreign NGO Law”

On 1 January 2017, a new law on the “Management of Domestic Activities of Overseas Non-governmental Organizations” entered into force. In order to keep working in China, Foreign NGOs must submit themselves to greater government control including finding government sponsors, registering with the police, and submitting annual reports on their financing. In addition, the law prohibits unregistered foreign groups from funding local counterparts. Any violation of these requirements could potentially result in asset confiscations or deportation.

According to Chinese officials, roughly 7000 NGOs are present in the country. NGOs working in fields such as human rights and the rule of law are likely targets of the new law and there are concerns that some may be forced to abandon China altogether.

The American Bar Association (ABA), which provides legal training and promotes the rule of law, has closed its office in Beijing. In July 2016, ABA had declared the Chinese lawyer Wang Yu the winner of its International Human Rights Award. The lawyer was arrested with over 100 human rights lawyers nationwide and faced 12 months of detention. In a videotaped message from detention which echoed the government line against foreign NGOs, and which human rights campaigners believe was a forced confession, Wang Yu denounced the award as “Another way for (foreign forces) to use me to attack and smear the Chinese government”.

<qz.com/873489/ngos-are-trying-to-stay-alive-in-chinas-latest-crackdown-against-foreign-forces/>
<brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2016/12/15/the-state-of-ngos-in-china-today/>

Gender equality

Although the Chinese Communist Party has consistently declared its commitment to equality between women and men (as Mao’s quote: “Women hold up half of the sky” suggests) in practice the country has prioritized men’s interests over women’s.

The state often encourages women to prioritize the domestic realm over career. In 2015, the state-led Women’s Federation launched a campaign aimed at successful professional women, to warn them that they would soon become “leftovers” if they did not marry and procreate before their mid-twenties.

<theconversation.com/inequality-in-china-and-the-impact-on-womens-rights-38744>

The gender wage gap has widened since 1988: on average women earn 69 percent the salary of men. Women are required to retire between the age of 50 and 55, whereas the retirement age for men is 60.

<theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/apr/17/chinas-feminist-five-this-is-the-worst-crackdown-on-lawyers-activists-and-scholars-in-decades>

Although a law to prevent sexual harassment came into force in 2006, it remains rampant in China. A survey conducted by a Chinese NGO reported that 70 percent of the women surveyed faced some form of harassment with 15 percent stating that they previously had left a job because of it.

<asafeworldforwomen.org/global-news/asia/china/4898-challenges-to-womens-rights.html>

A survey which was conducted in 2002, showed that 31 percent of the 2002 women surveyed by the Social Survey Center in China experienced sexual harassment. (there was no date for the report included in the paragraph above so I included this one as an option).

<theasiadialogue.com/2018/01/29/sexual-harassment-in-china/>

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

China continues to subdue any individuals or organizations which advocate democratic reform.

All media outlets remain owned by the state, resulting in substantially biased media coverage. Internet content is heavily censored.

Select cases of state intolerance to activism and dissent

Famously, Liu Xiaobo, writer and activist, was imprisoned multiple times accused of “inciting subversion of state power”. Among other work, he co-authoring Charter 08, a document calling for democratic reforms in China. During his fourth prison term, Liu was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for “his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China”. He incarceration in Jinzhou, Liaoning meant he was recognised internationally as political prisoner. On

26 June 2017, he was granted medical parole after being diagnosed with liver cancer and he died on 13 July 2017.

In November 2016 there was a political crisis in Hong Kong, following the banning by Beijing of two pro-independence politicians from taking office, after they lashed out at China during their oath-taking ceremony. 2000 lawyers and activists staged a silent demonstration in protest. Protests and dissent remain prominent in Hong Kong.

<[theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/08/hundreds-silently-march-in-hong-kong-in-protest-at-beijing-meddling](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/08/hundreds-silently-march-in-hong-kong-in-protest-at-beijing-meddling)>

On 8 March 2015, five Chinese feminists were detained for campaigning against sexual harassment on International Women's Day. They were accused of "picking quarrels and creating a disturbance". The women were released on bail on 14 April 2015, but remained under surveillance.

Since June 2019, increasingly disruptive protests - including clashes with the police and casualties - have taken place in Hong Kong. The protests were initiated over an extradition bill introduced in April 2019 which would have allowed for criminal suspects to be extradited to mainland China under certain circumstances. Protesters demanded the bill be withdrawn as they feared it would expose Hongkongers to unfair trial and violent treatment. After weeks of protests, City leader Carrie Lam decided to suspend the bill indefinitely, but the protests continued and have developed to include demands for full democracy and an inquiry into police actions. Some protesters have adopted the motto: "Five demands, not one less!", with the demands being "for the protests not to be characterised as a "riot"; amnesty for arrested protesters; an independent inquiry into alleged police brutality; implementation of complete universal suffrage" and the withdrawal of the extradition bill. While the last demand was eventually met in September, 2019 the others remain so far unmet as of October 2019.

<[bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-49317695](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-49317695)>