



[New Report Finds That Media Freedom in China is Declining Significantly](#)

A recent report released by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) has detailed the decline of media freedom in China, which has been taking place at "breakneck speed." The findings come just as China prepares to host the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics that are set to begin this Friday, and adds to the existing scrutiny over the state of human rights that the country was already facing. The Chinese government has long been accused of committing grave abuses against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang province and they have also drawn widespread criticism for their repressive crackdown in Hong Kong. The preceding weeks have seen several countries announce diplomatic boycotts of the Beijing Winter Olympics, including the United States under the Biden administration. Now, the latest FCCC report has highlighted the fact that many journalists are being subjected to increased harassment and intimidation tactics from the Chinese government as well, prompting some to leave mainland China and make emergency exit plans.

Chinese colleagues of foreign journalists have also reported harassment of their families by authorities. The harassment has even taken place online, especially on Twitter which is banned in China, indicating that the behavior is government-approved. There is evidence that the government is enlisting the public to keep tabs on foreign reporters too. The FCCC is considered an illegal organization in China, and the increase in media suppression of foreign correspondents in particular is expected to garner further criticism from democratic nations around the world.

The report details that foreign journalists experience many forms of harassment, and some of the especially common ones include online trolling, physical assaults, cyber hacking, and visa denials. According to the findings, legal threats have also grown in prevalence compared to years past. Foreigners facing legal action can be barred from leaving the country. Others are fortunate to have left China voluntarily, later telling of being victims of the often-seen government practice involving following journalists with plainclothes security personnel. Reporters such as Australian Cheng Lei and Chinese national Haze Fan have been detained arbitrarily for more than a year over bogus state security case allegations.

In recent history, China has been known for having a challenging landscape for journalists. Restrictions on access, blacklisting from events, and problems with press cards have been some of the major tactics used in the past. These forms of intimidation coupled with COVID-19 travel restrictions and staffing issues have greatly diminished the quality of reporting. Hong Kong, which used to be a haven for journalists, is also no longer a viable base of operation for journalists. After the implementation of the 2020 national security law, media freedom has become increasingly restricted there too, with foreign journalists being expelled and multiple news outlets shut down.

The FCCC report comes at a crucial time when the eyes of the world are on China during the upcoming Winter Olympics. Many activists argue that the world has an opportunity to challenge China's repressive practices, both against the media and with respect to its other forms of human rights violations. There is also a belief that the Chinese government's information control apparatus will likely be less heavy-handed while the games are ongoing. Something to watch during the course of the Olympics will be how they handle any international pushback, including the possibility of athletes themselves publicly voicing concerns about various human rights abuses.