



House of Lords
House of Commons

Joint Committee on Human Rights

Transnational repression in the UK

Seventh Report of Session 2024–25 HC 681 / HL Paper 160

Joint Committee on Human Rights

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Summary

People from countries around the world come to the UK as a place of safety from repression. However, transnational repression (TNR) risks undermining the UK's ability to protect the human rights of its citizens and those who have sought safety within its borders.

It is deeply concerning to hear increasing reports of foreign governments moving beyond their own national borders to persecute people in the UK. The Committee received credible evidence that a number of states have engaged in acts of transnational repression on UK soil. These actions have a serious impact on those targeted, instilling fear, limiting their freedom of expression and movement, and undermining their sense of safety.

Despite the seriousness of the threat, the UK currently lacks a clear strategy to address TNR. There is no formal definition of transnational repression in the UK and the Government does not routinely collect data on TNR events. Understanding the scale and nature of the threat is essential to formulating effective and proportionate responses. We therefore recommend that the Government adopt a formal definition of TNR and establish data collection and monitoring mechanisms.

Police officers often lack the training necessary to respond effectively to TNR, resulting in inconsistent and ineffective support for TNR victims. We call for specialised training for police officers on the early warning signs of TNR and for the creation of a dedicated reporting line for TNR victims.

We are deeply concerned by the misuse of INTERPOL Red Notices¹ by certain member states. Refusal by the INTERPOL secretariat to acknowledge that there is a problem and to take remedial action poses a significant threat to the rights and freedoms of individuals targeted by authoritarian regimes and sends a message that this behaviour is acceptable. We call on the Government to put pressure on INTERPOL to reform procedures and call out serial abusers. We also propose that the Government consider introducing a formal mechanism by which the Home Office or the National Crime Agency could alert individuals to the existence of a Red Notice, where there is a strong basis to believe it has been politically motivated.

¹ An INTERPOL Red Notice is a request issued to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest an individual who is wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence.

Transnational repression is a serious and under-recognised threat that requires urgent and coordinated international action. Its impacts extend far beyond those directly targeted, creating a broader ‘chilling effect’² on entire communities and undermining fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association. We urge the Government to work with likeminded states to support efforts to elevate TNR as a priority issue on the UN agenda and to promote coordinated international action against its use by authoritarian regimes.

2 A ‘Chilling effect’ refers to individuals self-refraining from lawful expression or conduct due to the fear of legal penalties, sanctions, or other negative consequences.

1 Introduction

Background

1. There is currently no universally accepted definition of transnational repression (TNR).³ TNR is generally understood to refer to certain state-directed crimes or actions against individuals that take place outside the territory of the perpetrating state.⁴ TNR can take many forms and could include harassment, online disinformation campaigns, surveillance, stalking, physical violence, threats to family members, attempts to force individuals to return to their country of origin and even assassination attempts.⁵ TNR risks undermining the UK's ability to protect the human rights of its citizens and those who have sought safety within its borders.
2. TNR can violate numerous internationally recognised human rights, including the right to life, the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment, the right not to be subjected to interference with private and family life, and the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Contracting Parties to the ECHR also have positive obligations to protect people within their jurisdiction, in particular in relation to the right to life under Article 2, as well as obligations not to deport or extradite people to States where there is a real risk that they will be subjected to treatment which is contrary to the Convention.⁶
3. The Government states that TNR is “specific and targeted” and does not affect “large numbers” of people.⁷ However, whilst the number of recorded cases may appear low, the impact of TNR extends far beyond recorded cases. TNR can also have a wider ‘chilling effect’⁸ on freedom of expression

3 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, [Civic Space and Transnational Repression](#), (accessed 3 July 2025)

4 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, [Civic Space and Transnational Repression](#), (accessed 3 July 2025)

5 Home Office, [What to do if you think you are the victim of transnational repression](#), gov.uk, (accessed 1 July 2025)

6 Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights](#), Doc. 15787, 5 June 2023, paras. 52–60

7 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

8 A ‘chilling effect’ refers to individuals self-refraining from lawful expression or conduct due to the fear of legal penalties, sanctions, or other negative consequences.

across entire communities.⁹ The fear of retaliation can discourage individuals and groups from engaging in political discourse, participating in public life, or expressing dissenting views.¹⁰ We were told that:

Perpetrating states are acutely aware of this fear, which can spread through communities, so they need not commit flagrant and widespread TNR to achieve their desired impact.¹¹

Moreover, the true scale of TNR is likely underestimated due to high amounts of underreporting of TNR-related crimes and the often-covert nature of TNR activities.¹² Framing TNR as a marginal issue may risk overlooking its serious and far-reaching human rights implications.

4. TNR can have a profound and lasting impact on those targeted. Individuals with personal experience described how TNR effects every aspect of their lives. One individual told us that “this kind of repression doesn’t just control people; it isolates them. It breaks apart communities”.¹³ Chloe Cheung, a 19-year-old activist, bravely gave evidence to the Committee about her firsthand experiences of TNR:

It has affected me mentally, emotionally and physically in profound ways that I never expected ... The mental and emotional toll has been devastating. I now carry lots of self-protection devices with me. I am also extremely cautious of strangers approaching me. If someone suddenly tries to make friends with me or approaches me unexpectedly, my first thought is no longer trust but suspicion. I will ask myself, “Are they working for Chinese authorities, or are they trying to get intelligence or information about me?”¹⁴

9 [Q37](#); Sikh Federation (UK) ([TRUK0080](#)); The UK-EU committee of Assembly of Citizens’ Representatives, Hong Kong (ACRHK) ([TRUK0126](#)); Halkevi Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre, Kurdish People’s Democratic Assembly of Britain ([TRUK0140](#)); Independent Committee for Hong Kong Advocacy ([TRUK0141](#)); Tackling TNR in the UK Working Group ([TRUK0154](#)); Sir William Browder (Leader at Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign) ([TRUK0155](#)); BIRD Amnesty International, [Open letter: The EU must address the chilling effect of China’s transnational repression on freedom of expression and academic freedoms of Chinese students](#), (accessed 4 July 2025)

10 Hong Kong Aid, Independent Committee for Hong Kong Advocacy ([TRUK0141](#)); Human Rights Watch, [“We Will Find You” A Global Look at How Governments Repress Nationals Abroad](#), (accessed 13 June 2025)

11 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

12 [Q66](#)

13 Anonymous ([TRUK0028](#))

14 [Q18](#)

Our inquiry

5. The Committee launched its inquiry into Transnational Repression in the UK in response to increasing reports of foreign governments moving beyond their borders to persecute people in the UK. In the last year, the number of state-threat investigations run by MI5 jumped by 48%, and MI5 and CTP have dealt with more than 20 threat to life cases relating to Iran since the start of 2022.¹⁵ There have also been several recent high-profile TNR cases, including the issuance of bounties against Hong Kong pro-democracy activists and Iran's intimidation of UK-based journalists.¹⁶ At the same time, the Government has set out, for the first time, a strategic framework to address TNR, following a review of the UK's TNR approach by the Defending Democracy Taskforce.¹⁷
6. We received 181 written evidence submissions, 91 of which we were able to publish. Many submissions were from people with personal experience of transnational repression. Due to concerns about potential reprisals, many contributors requested that their evidence remain confidential. We were also unable to publish some submissions due to the sensitive nature of the evidence and the potential risks involved. We held four oral evidence sessions, where we heard from legal experts, academics, human rights advocates, journalists, and TNR victims. We also spoke privately with targeted individuals. We are deeply grateful to all those who contributed to this inquiry. We recognise that, for some, sharing their experiences involved considerable personal risk. We also acknowledge that there are many others who may have wished to come forward but did not feel safe to do so.
7. This report does not seek to provide a comprehensive account of every country's TNR record, nor does it aim to catalogue all tactics used by states perpetrating TNR. Rather, the focus is on understanding the impact of TNR in the UK and evaluating the adequacy of legal and policy responses. The following section summarises key concerns related to specific countries that were repeatedly raised in evidence submissions. The remainder of the report concentrates on identifying practical steps that the Government can take to strengthen its response to TNR and to better protect those at risk, regardless of the country responsible.

15 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#)); Security Service MI5, [Director General Ken McCallum gives latest threat update](#), (accessed 15 July)

16 HC Deb, 4 March 2025, [col 183](#); HC Debate, 20 February 2023, [col 49](#)

17 Transnational Repression Review, [UIN HCWS632](#), 14 May 2025

Country-specific evidence: countries of concern

8. Our inquiry received evidence alleging that many states had conducted TNR activities on UK soil. Multiple evidence submissions accused Bahrain, China, Egypt, Eritrea, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates of perpetrating TNR in the UK.¹⁸ A substantial number of submissions we received were personal accounts of TNR perpetrated by Eritrea.¹⁹ China, Russia and Iran were highlighted by witnesses as the three most flagrant TNR perpetrators in the UK.²⁰ Notably, all three of these countries have imposed sanctions on UK Parliamentarians, including two members of this Committee, in what appears to be a deliberate attempt to deter scrutiny and suppress criticism.
9. Witnesses described a broad range of tactics employed by China, including surveillance, online harassment, and threats to family members abroad.²¹ China has also placed ‘bounties’ on several individuals, including Chloe Cheung, offering \$HK1 million for information leading to their capture abroad.²² In some cases, threatening letters were reportedly sent to the neighbours of individuals who had bounties placed on them, in an apparent attempt to further isolate and intimidate them.²³ Concern was also raised about the operation of unofficial Chinese “police stations” in the UK, which were allegedly used to monitor and pressure members of the Chinese

18 [Q4](#), The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy; Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#)); The Citizen Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto ([TRUK0112](#)); The Rights Practice ([TRUK0136](#)); CSW, Human Rights Concern Eritrea ([TRUK0017](#)); Hong Kong Aid, Independent Committee for Hong Kong Advocacy ([TRUK0141](#)); Eritrean Coalition for Democratic Change ([TRUK0123](#)); Dr. Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker (Special Rapporteur on Eritrea at Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations) ([TRUK0174](#)); Sikhs for Justice ([TRUK0058](#)); Ms Julia Harris (Public Affairs Manager at BBC World Service) ([TRUK0171](#)); Negin Shiraghaei (Founder at Azadi Network) ([TRUK0167](#)); Tackling TNR in the UK Working Group ([TRUK0154](#)); The Citizen Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto ([TRUK0112](#)); Confidential written evidence

19 Anonymous ([TRUK0027](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0028](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0081](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0082](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0086](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0097](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0108](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0160](#)); Eritrea Focus ([TRUK0077](#)); CSW, Human Rights Concern Eritrea ([TRUK0017](#)); Confidential evidence

20 [Q4](#), [Q20](#), [Q66](#), Home Office ([TRUK0181](#)), Security Service MI5, [Director General Ken McCallum gives latest threat update](#), (accessed 2 June 2025)

21 The Rights Practice ([TRUK0136](#)); Mr Allan Hogarth (Head of Government and Political Relations at Amnesty International UK) ([TRUK0170](#)); [Q16](#)

22 [Q18](#)

23 [Q19](#)

diaspora.²⁴ Similar concerns were expressed in relation to the proposed new Chinese embassy in London, with fears that it could serve as a base for further surveillance and intimidation activities.²⁵

10. In relation to Russia, the Committee received evidence related to the misuse of INTERPOL Red Notices and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation to intimidate and silence journalists, activists, and other critics.²⁶ Commentators also highlight that Russia has engaged in the most serious forms of transnational repression, including taking actions that pose a direct threat to life.²⁷ High-profile TNR incidents, such as the Salisbury nerve agent attack on Sergei and Yulia Skripal, can create a ‘chilling effect’ amongst critics of the Russian State.²⁸
11. Iran represents one of the highest kidnap and assassination state threats to the UK, with the Homeland Security Group describing the threat of physical attack on individuals in the UK as “the greatest level of threat we currently face from Iran”.²⁹ Tactics reportedly used by Iran include assassination plots, physical attacks, intimidation of family members, asset freezing, judicial proceedings, smear campaigns, online abuse, surveillance and digital attacks such as hacking, doxing³⁰ and impersonation.³¹ Both the Iranian Intelligence Services and proxy organisations conduct TNR on UK soil, with the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC) warning that “the use of a wide range of organisations means physical threat can manifest from a much broader pool of suspects, adding a further layer of unpredictability”.³² Hossein Abedini, Deputy Director of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, told the Committee that ‘cultural centres’ in the UK are used as fronts for surveillance operations targeting members of the Iranian diaspora.³³ The volume of transnational repression reports involving journalists covering Iran was also a particular cause for concern.³⁴ In addition to physical attacks on journalists, Reporters without Borders told us that:

24 [Q11](#)

25 Benedict Rogers (Co-founder at Hong Kong Watch) ([TRUK0020](#)); James Jennion ([TRUK0180](#))

26 [Q46](#); [Q29](#)

27 Freedom House, [Special Report 2021 Russia: Transnational Repression Origin Country Case Study](#), accessed 4 July 2025

28 Confidential written evidence

29 Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, [Iran](#), HC 1116, para 10

30 Doxing is the action or process of searching for and publishing private or identifying information about an individual on the internet, typically without consent and with malicious intent.

31 Reporters Without Borders ([TRUK0038](#))

32 Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, [Iran](#), HC 1116, para 172

33 [Q19](#)

34 Ms Julia Harris (Public Affairs Manager at BBC World Service) ([TRUK0171](#)); Reporters Without Borders ([TRUK0038](#)); Negin Shiraghaei (Founder at Azadi Network) ([TRUK0167](#))

Iranian women journalists have been subjected to gendered and sexualised abuse, including explicit threats of rape or sexual violence towards them or their families (including children), the circulation of fake stories designed to ruin their reputations and photoshopped pornographic images.³⁵

Recent increases in TNR activity by Iran, including a sharp rise in sophisticated and high-risk operations, have led the ISC to warn that the threat posed by Iran could “continue to increase rapidly if its intent or capability develops further”.³⁶

12. The Committee received a substantial number of submissions relating to Eritrea.³⁷ Martin Plaut, journalist and Visiting Senior Research Fellow at Kings College London, described how state-sponsored ‘festivals’ have been utilised as mechanisms to monitor, intimidate and exert control over members of the Eritrean diaspora.³⁸ We were also told that members of the Eritrean diaspora are subjected to coercion to force payment of a 2% ‘diaspora tax’ to the Eritrean government.³⁹ The UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea said that “those who refuse to contribute are considered government opponents and face harassment, intimidation and ultimately social isolation”.⁴⁰

35 Reporters Without Borders ([TRUK0038](#))

36 Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, [Iran](#), HC 1116, para 191

37 Anonymous ([TRUK0027](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0028](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0081](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0082](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0086](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0097](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0108](#)); Anonymous ([TRUK0160](#)); Eritrea Focus ([TRUK0077](#)); Human Rights Concern Eritrea ([TRUK0017](#)); Dr. Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker (Special Rapporteur on Eritrea at Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations) ([TRUK0174](#)); Mr Martin Plaut (Senior Research Fellow at Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London) ([TRUK0002](#)); Confidential evidence

38 [Q40](#)

39 [Q39](#)

40 Dr. Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker (Special Rapporteur on Eritrea at Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations) ([TRUK0174](#))

2 Definition and Legal Framework

Defining TNR

13. There is currently no universally accepted definition of TNR, and no formal definition has been adopted in the UK.⁴¹ Foreign governments, non-governmental organisations and multilateral organisations have adopted varying definitions of the term.⁴² Definitions vary not only in the types of activities included within their scope, but also in the categories of individuals considered to be affected, and in the motivations attributed to the perpetrating states.⁴³
14. Common elements identified across most definitions of TNR include the involvement of a foreign state actor and the act occurring outside of the territory of the perpetrating state.⁴⁴ Many definitions, including that adopted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), limit the scope of TNR to actions directed at individuals from diaspora or exile communities.⁴⁵ However, the Committee received evidence advising against adopting such a narrow interpretation of TNR.⁴⁶ Witnesses emphasised that many of those targeted by hostile states, such as journalists, lawyers, parliamentarians, and human rights defenders, could be excluded by a definition that focused solely on diaspora communities.⁴⁷

41 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#)); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, [Civic Space and Transnational Repression](#), (accessed 3 July 2025); Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights Council of Europe, [Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights](#), (accessed 15 April 2025)

42 FBI, [Transnational Repression](#), (accessed 4 July 2025); Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#)) Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights](#), (accessed 2 June 2025)

43 FBI, [Transnational Repression](#), (accessed 4 July 2025); Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#)) Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights](#), 05 June 2023

44 FBI, [Transnational Repression](#), (accessed 4 July 2025); Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#)) Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights](#), 05 June 2023

45 FBI, [Transnational Repression](#), (accessed 4 July 2025);

46 [Q1](#)

47 [Q1](#); [Q9](#); [Q63](#)

15. The UK Government has chosen not to adopt a formal definition of TNR, opting instead to describe it as “certain foreign state-directed crimes against individuals”.⁴⁸ The rationale given was that divergent international definitions may “unhelpfully confuse or hinder collaboration with partners”.⁴⁹ The Committee however has not received any evidence to suggest that divergent international definitions have, to date, constituted any impediment to international cooperation on TNR. States routinely operate within varying definitional and legal frameworks across various areas of international policy and nonetheless cooperate effectively.
16. A substantial number of submissions to the Committee called for the UK Government to adopt a formal definition of TNR.⁵⁰ The Council of Europe’s Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights has similarly recommended that all Member States establish an “official definition” to be used “by all government agencies”.⁵¹ Witnesses told us that a formal definition would ensure that all relevant bodies, including law enforcement, intelligence, migration, and asylum, were aligned in their understanding of what constitutes TNR and the appropriate mechanisms for addressing it.⁵²

Definition and Data Collection

17. Without a clear definition of what constitutes TNR, it is difficult to collect reliable data on the scale and nature of TNR activities. This includes data on TNR methods used, the actors involved, and the communities targeted. Data collection is also hindered by other factors, including underreporting and the failure of some incidents to meet the threshold for criminal investigation.⁵³ At present, most available data on TNR originates from non-governmental organisations that have undertaken efforts to monitor and document global incidents.⁵⁴ Several witnesses told the Committee that data collection is essential to understand the scale of the threat and to determine the most effective policy and operational responses.⁵⁵ James

48 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

49 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

50 Sara Elizabeth Dill (Partner at Anethum Global) ([TRUK0030](#)); State Capture: Research and Action, International Partnership for Human Rights ([TRUK0032](#)); Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation ([TRUK0035](#))

51 Council of Europe, [Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights](#), (accessed 15 April 2025)

52 [Q10](#)

53 [Q52](#)

54 Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#)); Dr John McDaniel (Lecturer in Law at Lancaster University) ([TRUK0149](#))

55 [Q48](#); [Q42](#); [Q50](#); The Rights Practice ([TRUK0136](#)); Tackling TNR in the UK Working Group ([TRUK0154](#))

Lynch, Co-Director at FairSquare, told us that “we are missing ... [a] big opportunity to properly monitor and analyse the trends and then develop a coherent strategy to tackle [TNR]”.⁵⁶

18. It appears that the Home Office does not currently collect, or require police forces to collect, data on TNR incidents taking place in the UK. Andrew Scurry, Director of the Homeland Security Group, Home Office told us that:

We are looking still with the police... at how best to gather data and more information, and indeed intelligence... It is an important, ongoing task to try to build up a much better picture of TNR, where it is manifesting and how it is manifesting in the UK so that we can of course design policies and operations to counter it most effectively.⁵⁷

19. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the Government’s decision to describe TNR in broad terms. This approach provides an important opportunity to ensure that all victims of TNR are recognised regardless of ethnicity, nationality or background.

20. **CONCLUSION**

However, we are concerned by the Government’s decision not to adopt a formal definition of TNR. Whilst we acknowledge the difficulties in adopting a single globally accepted definition, we are not persuaded that the existence of differing national definitions would hinder international cooperation on this issue. Adopting a formal UK definition of TNR would significantly enhance the UK’s ability to collect reliable data, monitor trends, and develop effective policy responses.

21. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the Government adopt a formal definition of transnational repression. This should be developed in consultation with law enforcement, civil society and affected communities. It should include, as core elements, the ‘involvement’ of a foreign state, and the targeting of individuals located outside that state’s jurisdiction. The definition should be sufficiently broad to encompass victims of TNR regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. In addition to adopting a legal definition, authorities should be equipped with clear guidance and explanatory materials outlining the various forms transnational repression can take.

56 [Q48](#) [James Lynch]

57 [Q77](#) [Andrew Scurry]

22.

RECOMMENDATION

Without clear data on the scale and nature of TNR events in the UK, it is difficult both to create effective policy responses and to judge the effectiveness of the Government's new TNR strategy. The Government should ask police forces to collect relevant data on the number and nature of TNR reports in the UK. This data should then be used to review the effectiveness of the new TNR strategy and to identify countries of concern. This approach will enhance the UK's capacity to identify patterns of state-linked harassment and coercion, and to respond more effectively to the evolving threat landscape. We recommend that, in cases where reports of TNR do not lead to prosecution or further action, law enforcement agencies should nonetheless record and retain relevant data, where appropriate, to support TNR trend analysis and future investigative efforts.

Existing Law

23. The National Security Act 2023 created new offences relating to foreign interference in the UK. In particular, it is an offence for a person to engage in 'prohibited conduct', where the 'foreign power condition' in the Act is met, and where the person intends the prohibited conduct to have, or is reckless as to whether it has, an 'interference effect'.⁵⁸ The offence may be committed if the conduct in question takes place in the UK or elsewhere.⁵⁹ 'Prohibited conduct' covers conduct that constitutes an offence (or would if it took place in the UK), that involves coercion, or that involves making a misrepresentation.⁶⁰ The 'foreign power condition' is met if the conduct was carried out for, or on behalf of, a foreign power, and the person knew or ought to have known that this was the case.⁶¹ An 'interference effect' includes interfering with the exercise of a Convention right in the UK, affecting the exercise of public functions, interfering with participation in political or legal processes, or prejudicing the safety or interests of the UK.⁶² The Explanatory Notes accompanying the Act give examples of actions which would constitute an offence under section 13.⁶³
24. Many instances of transnational repression in the UK will also be covered by the general criminal law. Actions involving violence or threats of violence will generally constitute criminal offences. Actions involving harassment, stalking, or putting the victim in fear of violence, including through actions

58 [National Security Act 2023 Section 13\(1\) and \(2\)](#)

59 [National Security Act 2023 Section 13\(5\)](#)

60 [National Security Act 2023 Section 15](#)

61 [National Security Act 2023 Section 31](#)

62 [National Security Act 2023 Section 14](#)

63 [Explanatory Notes to the National Security Act 2023](#), paras.130–150

online, could also be criminal offences.⁶⁴ Under the Sentencing Code, it is an aggravating factor for all these offences that the ‘foreign power condition’ in the National Security Act 2023 is met.⁶⁵

25. The majority of submissions to this inquiry did not advocate for changes to existing criminal legislation. The Home Office told us that “the legislative tools available to combat all forms of TNR are wide-ranging and impose effective safeguards to ensure potential TNR perpetrators cannot act with impunity.”⁶⁶ However, some witnesses raised concerns that current legislation may struggle to keep pace with the evolving nature of transnational repression, particularly in relation to emerging digital threats, such as improved surveillance capabilities and the use of artificial intelligence to generate and disseminate disinformation.⁶⁷

26. **CONCLUSION**

The evidence we have received indicates that existing UK criminal legislation provides an effective framework for dealing with offences related to TNR. We have not identified any significant gaps in criminal law related to TNR. We agree that the creation of additional criminal offences is not necessary at this time to address the challenges posed by TNR.

27. **RECOMMENDATION**

However, we recognise the rapidly evolving nature of digital technologies and the increasing sophistication of methods used to conduct TNR. It is therefore essential that the legal framework remains agile and responsive to evolving threats. We recommend that the Government keeps relevant legislation under regular review to ensure it remains fit for purpose in addressing emerging threats, particularly those facilitated by advances in artificial intelligence and surveillance capabilities. The Government should write to this Committee annually to provide an update on the effectiveness of current legislation at addressing evolving digital forms of TNR.

64 For instance, under the [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#) or Part 10 of the [Online Safety Act 2023](#).

65 [Section 69A of the Sentencing Code](#), inserted by section 19 of the National Security Act 2023 in relation to England and Wales. See also sections 20–22 in relation to Northern Ireland, Scotland and the armed forces.

66 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

67 The Citizen Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto ([TRUK0112](#))

The Foreign Influence Registration Scheme

28. The National Security Act 2023 introduced the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS). The scheme is made up of a ‘political influence tier’ and an ‘enhanced tier’. The political influence tier requires individuals and organisations to register where they are directed by any foreign power to carry out, or arrange for someone else to carry out, political influence activities in the UK.⁶⁸ The enhanced tier requires individuals and organisations to register if they are directed by a foreign power to carry out, or arrange for someone else to carry out, “relevant activities” in the UK.⁶⁹ Those who fail to register these types of activities risk five years imprisonment and/or a fine.⁷⁰ The Government says that the enhanced tier will help to tackle TNR by providing “greater assurance around the activities of the foreign powers or entities which pose the greatest risk to the UK”.⁷¹
29. Given that the Government has recognised TNR as a “threat to our national security and sovereignty”, TNR activities are likely to be a key consideration for the Government in determining which states are specified under the enhanced tier of the FIRS.⁷² The foreign powers and organisations currently specified under the enhanced tier are Russia and Iran.⁷³ This tallies with evidence that we received highlighting the risks posed to the UK by the TNR activities of both of these countries.
30. While there had been speculation that China would be included in the enhanced tier, the UK government has not yet made any such announcement. When asked about the decision to exclude China, the Security Minister emphasised that considerations on designations under the scheme are ongoing.⁷⁴ He refused to speculate on whether China would be specified in the future and said that:

The Government, with the wider strategy we are pursuing on China, are taking a consistent, long-term and strategic approach to managing the UK’s relationship with China ... The Government’s policy is clear: we will co-operate where we can, compete where we need to and challenge where we must, including on issues of national security.⁷⁵

68 [National Security Act 2023](#) Sections 69–72

69 [National Security Act 2023](#) Sections 65–68. Under section 65(2), “relevant activities” by default means all activities, including but not limited to commercial activities, the provision of goods and services, research activities and attendance at events.

70 [National Security Act 2023](#) Section 80

71 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

72 Transnational Repression Review, [UIN HCWS632](#), 14 May 2025

73 Home Office, [UK launches Foreign Influence Registration Scheme](#), gov.uk, (accessed 4 July 2025)

74 HC Deb, 1 April 2025, [Col 196](#)

75 HC Deb, 1 April 2025, [Col 199](#)

31. We received a large amount of evidence recommending designating China under the enhanced tier of the FIRS scheme.⁷⁶ The Government's China audit also acknowledged the threat posed by China, including the transnational repression of Hong Kongers.⁷⁷ In December 2024, the Security Minister identified China, alongside Russia and Iran, as one of the three states posing the most serious and persistent threat to UK national security.⁷⁸ While Russia and Iran have since been specified under the enhanced tier, China has not. Witnesses expressed concern about the inconsistency of the current designations. Barrister Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC told us that:

We send such a terrible message if we have a situation where a diplomat can drag an activist by the hair into the Manchester consulate... [and actions] are taken against parliamentarians here, as well as so many others, with the bounties and the use of language such as calling individuals rats who need to be hunted down worldwide, and yet... China is not in the enhanced tier.⁷⁹

32. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the introduction of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS) as a tool to help strengthen the UK's ability to tackle transnational repression. The designation of Iran and Russia as countries listed on the enhanced tier of FIRS is consistent with the evidence presented to us regarding the threat posed by TNR originating from these states. However, we are concerned by the evidence we have received regarding transnational repression linked to China. The absence of China on the enhanced tier of FIRS is therefore notable.

76 Hong Kong Democracy Council ([TRUK0070](#)); Hong Kong Democracy Council ([TRUK0070](#)); Hong Kong Watch ([TRUK0125](#)); The Rights Practice ([TRUK0136](#)); Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation ([TRUK0035](#))

77 HC Deb, 24 June 2025, [Col 989](#)

78 HC Deb, 16 December 2024, [Col 24](#)

79 [Q17](#)

33.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should ensure that TNR is a high priority consideration when deciding which countries should be specified under the enhanced tier of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme. Decisions on which countries to specify under the enhanced tier of FIRS must be guided by objective assessments of threat, not influenced by broader foreign policy considerations. We recommend that the Government specify China under the enhanced tier of FIRS. China conducts the most comprehensive TNR campaign of any foreign state operating in the UK. Its omission from the enhanced tier risks undermining the credibility and coherence of FIRS. Any attempt to specify only isolated parts of the Chinese state in the FIRS would fail to reflect the true nature and complexity of the threat, as influence operations span all sectors of the economy and lack clear command-and-control structures.

34.

RECOMMENDATION

The Home Office and relevant enforcement bodies should develop clear guidance on how FIRS data can be used to support investigations into TNR, and regular reviews should be conducted to assess the scheme's effectiveness in this regard.

Strategic lawsuits against public participation

35. Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are legal actions usually brought with the intention of harassing, intimidating and financially or psychologically exhausting opponents via improper use of the legal system.⁸⁰ Most claims identified as SLAPPs are for defamation, although legal claims relating to privacy, copyright or data protection may also be relevant. SLAPPs are often characterised by large numbers of aggressive pre-action letters and claims being brought simultaneously in multiple jurisdictions.⁸¹ SLAPPs have been widely recognised as a growing threat to

80 Companies House, [Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act: strategic lawsuits against public participation \(SLAPPs\)](#), 1 March 2024

81 Policy Paper, [Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act: strategic lawsuits against public participation \(SLAPPs\)](#) - GOV.UK, accessed 2 July 2025; Ministry of Justice, [Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation \(SLAPPs\): Government response to call for evidence](#), accessed 4 July 2025

freedom of expression,⁸² particularly due to their potential ‘chilling effect’ which may deter individuals from publishing criticism or allegations of wrongdoing due to the threat of legal action.⁸³

36. Although SLAPPs are typically initiated by private individuals rather than states, we heard that they are still often used as a TNR tactic.⁸⁴ Susan Coughtrie, Director, Foreign Policy Centre told us that individuals “closely aligned with the state” are utilised to carry out TNR through legal harassment”.⁸⁵ She told us that:

Probably one of the most famous cases in the UK of SLAPPs... was the legal cases taken against Catherine Belton, the journalist and author who wrote the book *Putin’s People*. She was pursued originally by five oligarchs, including Roman Abramovich, but also Rosneft, which is the Russian state gas company, so there was a very direct link there... all those people and entities have been sanctioned for their connection and their political connections to the Russian state.⁸⁶

37. The previous Government introduced amendments to the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 aimed at addressing SLAPPs. The Act now sets out a statutory definition of a SLAPP and provides for a power to strike out claims at an early stage to protect the defendant from paying costs.⁸⁷ Due to the scope of the Act, these measures only apply to claims related to ‘economic crimes’, such as fraud. The Government said that these measures covered the “vast majority” of SLAPP cases, as around 70% of SLAPPs cases are connected to financial crime and corruption.⁸⁸
38. We were told that comprehensive anti SLAPP legislation was needed to address all types of SLAPPs cases and to prevent the ‘chilling effect’ they can have on journalists.⁸⁹ We heard there was still a significant number of cases that fell outside the scope of the measures introduced in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023. One example cited was the libel case brought against investigative journalist Eliot Higgins by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a sanctioned Russian oligarch and founder of the

82 [Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation \(SLAPPs\): Government response to call for evidence](#), accessed 4 July 2025; [European Parliament, The Use of SLAPPs to Silence Journalists, NGOs and Civil Society](#), accessed 2 June 2025; Commissioner for Human Rights, [Time to take action against SLAPPs - Commissioner for Human Rights](#), accessed 4 July 2025

83 The Law Society, [SLAPPs and reputational risks](#), 2 July 2025

84 [Q39](#)

85 [Q39](#)

86 [Q39](#)

87 [Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023](#) Sections 194–195

88 Ministry of Justice, [Crackdown on criminals silencing critics to be added to Economic Crime Bill](#) (Accessed 4 July 2025)

89 [Q46](#)

Wagner Group, after Higgins tweeted about Prigozhin's connections to Wagner.⁹⁰ Although the case was ultimately struck out, Higgins still incurred substantial legal costs.⁹¹

39. The previous Government said that it was considering future legislative options to introduce comprehensive anti-SLAPP measures as soon as parliamentary time allowed.⁹² However, other than a Private Member's Bill, there have been no further attempts to introduce comprehensive anti-SLAPP legislation. The Secretary of State for Justice acknowledged that "the issue around SLAPPs goes beyond economic crime".⁹³ However, she told us that the Government wanted to implement and evaluate the measures related to 'economic crime' before they "consider the next phase of changes that might be needed in future legislation."⁹⁴ The Government reiterated this position in a letter sent to us on Friday 4 July, reaffirming their intention to take further action on SLAPPs and stating that the implementation of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 "will inform our approach to comprehensively tackling all SLAPPs."⁹⁵

40. **CONCLUSION**

Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) are increasingly used as instruments of transnational repression. These lawsuits are designed to intimidate and silence individuals who expose or criticise the actions of authoritarian regimes. The evidence we have received demonstrates that journalists are at particular risk of TNR via the use of SLAPPs. Whilst the inclusion of SLAPP provisions in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 was a welcome first step towards tackling SLAPPs, the current framework is limited to measures related to economic crime and fails to address the broader use of SLAPPs as a tool of transnational repression. Expanding the scope of protections is essential to safeguarding freedom of expression and ensuring that the UK does not become a jurisdiction of choice for legal harassment.

90 [Q47](#)

91 [Q47](#)

92 UK Government Policy Paper, [Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act: strategic lawsuits against public participation \(SLAPPs\) - GOV.UK](#), accessed 2 July 2025

93 Oral evidence taken on Wednesday 30 April 2025, [Q16](#)

94 Oral evidence taken on Wednesday 30 April 2025, [Q16](#)

95 Letter from the Security Minister to the Chair regarding to transnational repression in the UK, [4th July 2025](#)

41.

RECOMMENDATION

In response to this report, the Government should provide this Committee with a clear timeline in which it plans to review the effectiveness of the SLAPPs provisions in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023. The Government should also set out the criteria it intends to use to assess whether these provisions have worked as intended. The Government should use the results of this review to inform the drafting of future legislation to address SLAPPs that are not related to economic crime.

3 Policing and Support for victims

Under-reporting and Outreach Programmes

42. Incidences of transnational repression are significantly underreported in the UK.⁹⁶ Witnesses highlighted a range of factors that lead to underreporting, including fear of retaliation against family members abroad, a lack of trust in UK authorities, and a limited awareness of what actions could constitute TNR.⁹⁷ Freedom House told us that:

Victims of transnational repression are often unsure who or where to go to in order to report the crimes committed against them. Further, because of prior profiling and historical racism, there can be suspicion among some diaspora communities [about engaging] with law enforcement.⁹⁸

43. Many submissions agreed that the UK Government needed to introduce an outreach programme targeted towards communities at high risk of TNR.⁹⁹ Canada was cited as an example of an effective outreach model, having established a National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator to engage with diaspora community groups in order to raise awareness of what TNR may look like in practice and encourage increased reporting.¹⁰⁰
44. The Government informed us that it does plan to conduct TNR outreach in the future. We were told that this would be incorporated into routine community engagement activities carried out by police forces.¹⁰¹

96 [Q52](#)

97 Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#))

98 Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#))

99 Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#)); Sir William Browder (Leader at Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign) ([TRUK0155](#)); Roshaan Khattak ([TRUK0166](#)); Mr Allan Hogarth (Head of Government and Political Relations at Amnesty International UK) ([TRUK0170](#)); Sikhs for Justice ([TRUK0058](#))

100 Sikhs for Justice ([TRUK0058](#))

101 [Q85](#); [Q52](#)

Commander Dominic Murphy of the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command told us that TNR outreach would require careful handling. He said that:

We want communities to be alert but not afraid. We risk causing significant fear for something that, from what we understand—at the moment, at least—remains relatively rare.¹⁰²

However, targeted groups told us that these concerns may be outweighed by the consequences of insufficient community engagement, which can leave individuals highly vulnerable, unaware of the risks they face and without access to vital information on how to protect themselves or where to seek support.

45.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Government develop and implement a proactive outreach strategy aimed at individuals and communities likely to be at high risk of TNR. This strategy should be developed within 12 months and include clear timelines for how engagement activities will be rolled out. The Government should engage with diaspora groups, civil society organisations, and community leaders to provide practical guidance on the methods and tactics commonly used in TNR, as well as the steps individuals can take to enhance their personal safety and access appropriate support and reporting mechanisms.

Guidance

46. Throughout our inquiry, NGOs and individuals affected by TNR consistently called for the Government to provide clearer guidance for victims, including signposting to available support. On the 14 May 2025, the UK Government published guidance entitled '*What to do if you think you are the victim of transnational repression*'.¹⁰³ This was the first publicly available guidance on TNR issued by the UK Government. The guidance includes cyber and personal security advice, as well as information on how to report incidents of TNR. NGO's have emphasised the importance of ensuring that outreach material is available in languages commonly spoken by targeted communities.¹⁰⁴ However, the TNR guidance is currently only available in English.

102 [Q52](#)

103 Home Office, [What to do if you think you are a victim of transnational repression](#), 12 June 2025

104 Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#))

47. The guidance currently published by the Government is general in nature and does not address the specific tactics employed by particular perpetrator states. It does not, for example, distinguish between the methods used by different foreign governments, such as digital surveillance, misuse of INTERPOL mechanisms, or threats to family members abroad, which vary significantly in form and impact. We heard that, without tailored country advice, victims may not recognise their experiences as part of a broader pattern of state-sponsored repression and may therefore be less likely to seek help or report incidences.¹⁰⁵ We are also not aware of any proactive attempts by the Home Office to advertise the existence of this guidance.

48. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the Government's publication of online guidance for people experiencing TNR. This is a positive step towards providing easily accessible information on TNR and helping victims understand avenues of support available to them.

49. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the content of this guidance be reviewed regularly, with input from victims, to ensure it is genuinely effective and helpful for victims and that it remains responsive to evolving TNR tactics. The Government should ensure that this guidance is made available in multiple languages within six months, this should include languages commonly spoken by affected communities. We further recommend that the Government take proactive steps to promote this existence of this guidance amongst communities at high risk of experiencing TNR.

Policing response

50. UK police forces have taken several steps to respond to reports of transnational repression, including initiating criminal investigations and prosecutions under the National Security Act 2023. However, policing TNR presents significant challenges. These include underreporting, a lack of trust in law enforcement by many TNR victims, the difficulty of gathering sufficient evidence to satisfy a court that a foreign state is involved and keeping pace with the evolving nature and scale of digital TNR.¹⁰⁶

51. TNR victims felt that the overall police response to TNR has been inconsistent. The Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation told us that "There is a fundamental lack of knowledge in law enforcement which

105 Confidential written evidence

106 [Qq52-53](#)

drives a lack of actions in cases of transnational repression”.¹⁰⁷ While some high-profile individuals reported receiving effective security advice, many affected individuals described limited awareness of TNR among frontline officers and a lack of clear referral pathways.¹⁰⁸ Some victims had even been advised to avoid political activity or self-censor, whilst others had been incorrectly referred to hate crime or diversity and equality officers.¹⁰⁹

- 52.** Witnesses also highlighted significant variation in responses between police forces across the country.¹¹⁰ Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC told us:

There is a total postcode lottery when people report incidents of even very grave transnational repression in police stations around the country. The response that you may get if you report to the Met is fundamentally different from the response that you may get if you report in Nottingham.¹¹¹

We were told that these inconsistencies meant that many individuals “do not bother to report abuse or threats, as they feel there is no point”.¹¹²

- 53.** We also received evidence describing an inconsistent approach to the circumstances under which intelligence services become involved in TNR cases. The Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation said that:

When the Hong Kong Government issued their third round of HK\$1 million bounties... there was a mixed response from law enforcement and the Intelligence Community. One recipient of this bounty was contacted by MI5, the Metropolitan police, and the local authorities.

The other three recipients were not contacted by MI5. Instead, the Metropolitan Police had to request contact details for the other affected individuals. This ad hoc and uncoordinated response highlights the urgent need for a standardised protocol in cases where UK residents are directly targeted by foreign state actors.

- 54.** We were told that these variations in practice were due to inadequate training provided for police officers on TNR.¹¹³ Until recently most police officers had not been provided with any training on TNR, resulting in disparities in how TNR cases were identified, assessed, and escalated. Counter Terrorism Policing and the College of Policing created and launched guidance and awareness modules on foreign interference, and the powers

107 Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation ([TRUK0035](#))

108 Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation ([TRUK0035](#))

109 Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation ([TRUK0035](#)); BIRD ([TRUK0168](#)); [Q39](#)

110 [Q13](#)

111 [Q13](#)

112 Reporters Without Borders ([TRUK0038](#))

113 Reporters Without Borders ([TRUK0038](#)); [Q5](#)

introduced in the National Security Act.¹¹⁴ This training is now available for all 45 territorial police forces in the UK. However, this training is only mandatory for counter terrorism officers.¹¹⁵ We were told that “CTP and the College of Policing continue to work with forces to encourage officers and staff to complete the modules and are providing a programme of bespoke briefings for forces across the country”.¹¹⁶

55. CONCLUSION

We welcome the development of new training materials for police forces on TNR. This represents a positive step toward improving frontline awareness and ensuring appropriate responses to TNR incidences. We welcome the decision to make this training mandatory for counter-terrorism officers. However, it is equally important that the training is rolled out more broadly across police forces, ensuring that officers in all relevant roles are equipped to recognise and respond to transnational repression.

56. RECOMMENDATION

The Government should regularly evaluate the uptake of the new police training on transnational repression. Updates on participation rates should be provided to the Committee every six months. If uptake remains limited, serious consideration should be given to making this training mandatory for all police officers. Police should also be given training on early warning signs of TNR-related risks, such as intimidation of friends and family members abroad.

Dedicated reporting line

- 57.** At present, victims of transnational repression are advised to report incidents through standard policing channels, for example by calling 999 or 101, or by attending their local police station. The Home Office informed us that, following the Defending Democracy review, it concluded that a dedicated TNR helpline was not necessary.¹¹⁷ Andrew Scurry, Director, Homeland Security Group, discussed the factors behind this decision:

114 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

115 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

116 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

117 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

[current reporting mechanisms] allow the police to triage cases rather than the public triaging the cases... in an emergency it allows police resources to be deployed straight away, 24/7. If someone is at imminent physical threat, for example.¹¹⁸

- 58.** However, we received many submissions recommending that the Government establish a dedicated reporting hotline.¹¹⁹ The FBI's TNR hotline was cited as a positive model.¹²⁰ The hotline has a dedicated TNR number and email address, which is accessible to all residents regardless of citizenship. The Tackling TNR in the UK working group told us that:

The Home Office's reliance on existing reporting methods (999, 101, or local police stations) fails to address the lack of specialised training and coordination required to recognise and respond effectively to these threats.¹²¹

Laura Harth, China in the World Director at Safeguard Defenders, further argued that existing reported methods fail to recognise that:

In a lot of the instances of transnational repression ... the first signs are often not criminal offences in and of themselves. There are early indicators: "I was at a protest yesterday and later that day my family back in China received a police visit saying, 'We know your son or your daughter was participating in this protest in front of the embassy in London. What were they doing there?'".¹²²

We were told that these early warning signs could be more effectively identified and addressed through a dedicated reporting hotline.¹²³ In addition to offering support to victims, data collected through the hotline could play a valuable role in shaping TNR policy responses.

- 59.** The UK has previously established dedicated hotlines to address specific national security threats, for example the Anti-Terrorism hotline.¹²⁴ Laura Harth argued that:

118 [Q83](#)

119 Hong Kong Watch ([TRUK0125](#)); Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation ([TRUK0035](#)); Tackling TNR in the UK Working Group ([TRUK0154](#)); Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#)); Index on Censorship ([TRUK0130](#))

120 Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation ([TRUK0035](#)); Amnesty International UK ([TRUK0170](#))

121 Tackling TNR in the UK Working Group ([TRUK0154](#))

122 [Q5](#)

123 Hong Kong Watch ([TRUK0125](#)); Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation ([TRUK0035](#)); [Q5](#)

124 Metropolitan Police, [How to report possible terrorist activity](#), (accessed 4 July 2025)

It is interesting to note that there is an outreach number and a reporting line for people who represent a business to go to if they feel that they have been approached by agents of a foreign state or by a foreign state that wants them to do certain things. We do not have that kind of mechanism or outreach available for targeted communities or people who become victims of transnational repression.¹²⁵

60. CONCLUSION

We heard consistent evidence highlighting the absence of an effective mechanism for reporting suspected incidents of TNR. This gap not only leaves victims without adequate support but also significantly undermines the UK's capacity to monitor, assess, and respond to such threats. There is little consistency in the way police forces deal with reported TNR cases. Individuals seeking to report incidences of TNR are often referred to police departments unfamiliar with the nature and tactics of TNR, resulting in delays and inaction.

61. CONCLUSION

Victims of TNR often take considerable personal risk in reporting TNR related crimes. Many choose not to come forward due to a lack of confidence in existing reporting systems, concerns that have often been shaped by previous negative experiences. Establishing a dedicated reporting mechanism could play a vital role in building trust within affected communities. If individuals knew their reports would be handled by trained, sensitive personnel who understand TNR and the potential risks victims face even in coming forward to report it, more victims may feel safe and supported enough to seek help.

62. RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Government establish a dedicated national reporting hotline for individuals who experience TNR to enhance victim support, improve data collection, and facilitate timely referrals to the appropriate personnel. The reporting hotline should be established within one year of the publication of this report. It should be staffed by personnel specifically trained to identify and respond to TNR, with a clear understanding of the tactics employed by particular state actors and established referral pathways to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. The service should be supported by a multilingual provision, including translated materials and guidance, as well as access to interpreters who can assist callers in their preferred language.

63.

RECOMMENDATION

We further recommend that data collected through the hotline be anonymised and recorded to inform policy development and threat assessments.

4 INTERPOL and visa applications

The International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL)

64. INTERPOL's Notice¹²⁶ and Diffusion¹²⁷ mechanisms are vital tools for global safety.¹²⁸ Yet, despite INTERPOL's constitutional prohibition on politically motivated Notices, these mechanisms are being systematically exploited by authoritarian states as TNR tools.¹²⁹ Red Notices¹³⁰ are routinely used to pursue political opponents, human rights defenders, and journalists beyond national borders.¹³¹ We heard Red Notices likened to "the sniper rifle of autocrats... long-distance, targeted, and highly effective".¹³² States also often coordinate their efforts, with multiple countries supporting each other's abusive requests.¹³³ Currently there is no requirement or mechanism

126 INTERPOL Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information. These include various colour-coded Notices such as Red (wanted persons), Blue (additional information), Green (warnings and intelligence), Yellow (missing persons), and others.

127 Member countries may also request cooperation from each other through another mechanism known as a 'Diffusion'. Rather than being circulated by INTERPOL itself, Diffusions are circulated directly by a member country's National Central Bureau to all or some other member countries.

128 INTERPOL ([MU00032](#))

129 [Q24](#)

130 A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action. It is based on an arrest warrant or court order issued by the judicial authorities in the requesting country. Red Notices are published by INTERPOL at the request of a member country and are required to comply with INTERPOL's Constitution and Rules.

While some politically motivated Notices may be recognised and disregarded, particularly when the requesting state is known to abuse the system, this is not guaranteed. Responses vary by case and jurisdiction. Politically motivated Red Notices may be acted upon due to a lack of awareness or political alignment with the requesting state.

131 [Q24](#)

132 [Q24](#)

133 International Human Rights Advisors ([TRUK0119](#))

for INTERPOL or the Home Office to alert people at risk of politically motivated reprisals by foreign governments of a Red Notice being issued against them.¹³⁴

65. Politically motivated Red Notices have a profound and far-reaching impact on the individuals targeted.¹³⁵ Such Notices may severely restrict a person's ability to travel, access financial services or maintain legal residency abroad. Rhys Davies, Barrister, Temple Garden Chambers, told us that a Red Notice:

Can ruin your life... You will be in constant fear that, if you were to go on holiday to Spain, an overzealous passport control officer might think they have an international super-criminal... and will detain you. There is no aspect of your life that this will not touch upon.¹³⁶

There is often no way for an individual to know whether they are subject to a Red Notice. Individuals are often required to make direct enquiries to INTERPOL to determine whether they are subject to a Red Notice, a process that can take several months. This lack of transparency can leave individuals uncertain as to whether they can travel safely without risking detention.¹³⁷

66. The Committee received evidence on the conduct of individual member states alleged to have engaged in systematic misuse of INTERPOL mechanisms. We were told that misuse of INTERPOL Notices was widespread, but that China, Russia, and Turkey were the most prolific abusers of INTERPOL's Notice system.¹³⁸ China was said to employ a distinct strategy, using INTERPOL Notices to locate individuals and then applying coercive pressure, through threats to family members, to compel their return. The Committee also heard that Turkey had begun to misuse Interpol's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database by falsely reporting documents as stolen, thereby facilitating the return of targeted individuals.
67. In recent years, INTERPOL has undertaken a number of measures to strengthen the integrity of its systems. Despite confidence by the organisation that these measures work,¹³⁹ attempted Red Notice abuse continues. In 2016, a dedicated Notices & Diffusions Task Force (NDTF)

134 Sir William Browder (Leader at Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign) ([TRUK0155](#))

135 Sir William Browder (Leader at Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign) ([TRUK0155](#)); [Q24](#)

136 [Q27](#)

137 Tackling TNR in the UK Working Group ([TRUK0154](#))

138 The Committee also heard allegations of misuse by Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, UAE, Ukraine and Venezuela. [Q24](#) [Ben Keith]; Written evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, Fair Trials ([MUO0023](#)) para 24; Peters and Peters LLP ([MUO0024](#)) para 3; William Browder ([MUO0011](#))

139 See, for example, Written evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee INTERPOL ([MUO0032](#)) paras 11–15; Interpol ([TRUK0178](#))

was created within INTERPOL's General Secretariat, with responsibility for conducting a robust quality and legal compliance review for all incoming Notices and Diffusions prior to their publication. The Government has also seconded two individuals to the NDTF.¹⁴⁰ A Home Office official told us that this is "an effective way of helping to ensure that Interpol's processes and safeguards are properly adhered to".¹⁴¹ However, we were told that despite the creation of the NDTF very few Red Notices (around 6%) are refused in the first instance.¹⁴²

68. INTERPOL has also set up a Commission for the Control of Interpol's Files (CCF), an independent body which is responsible for deciding on a request for deletion and/or correction of data related to an INTERPOL Notice. However, the CCF has been "experiencing delays in meeting its deadlines due to increases in [its workload]". In addition to managing this increase, the CCF faces the task of clearing its backlog of cases.¹⁴³ We were told that this means it can take "years" for politically motivated Red Notices to be removed,¹⁴⁴ during which time these individuals face severe restrictions on travel and are at risk of detention.¹⁴⁵
69. The Home Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) often work closely together on lobbying and diplomatic engagement. However, we were unable to establish in any detail how coordination is conducted on INTERPOL related issues and no details were given on how individuals who have been subject to a politically motivated Red Notice might be supported by the Government. Whilst there may be many legitimate reasons why some individuals should not be informed of the existence of Red Notices against them, we were told that there may be some circumstances where the Government should consider making exceptions to the rule of non-disclosure. Rhys Davies told us:

There must be a way to devise appropriate checks and balances—such as enabling a judge to scrutinise which Red Notices are extant against British nationals and say whether those could be disclosed.¹⁴⁶

70. International human rights lawyers Ben Keith and Rhys Davies told us that the UK could help prevent abuse of INTERPOL mechanisms by engaging more proactively with INTERPOL and advocating for reform.¹⁴⁷ While the UK has previously demonstrated its diplomatic influence and lobbying

140 [Q86](#)

141 [Q86](#)

142 [Q25](#) [Rhys Davies]

143 INTERPOL, [CCF sessions and decisions](#), (accessed 1 July 2025)

144 [Q27](#)

145 International Human Rights Advisors ([TRUK0119](#))

146 [Q33](#)

147 Freedom House ([TRUK0045](#))

ability, working alongside its ‘Five Eyes’ partners¹⁴⁸ to block the election of controversial candidates to the role of INTERPOL President, witnesses expressed concern that the UK’s role in shaping INTERPOL’s strategic direction remains limited.¹⁴⁹ Rhys Davies told us that when it comes to international leadership on INTERPOL, often “the ship is being steered by others’, with the UK’s role in shaping INTERPOL’s strategic direction appearing limited.¹⁵⁰

71.

CONCLUSION

We are deeply concerned by the misuse of INTERPOL Red Notices by certain member states. Refusal by the INTERPOL secretariat to acknowledge that there is a problem and to take remedial action poses a significant threat to the rights and freedoms of individuals targeted by authoritarian regimes and sends a message that this behaviour is acceptable.

72.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend the Government works with ‘Five Eyes’ and other partners to track and expose malicious, vexatious, and politically motivated use of Red Notices by member states. In doing so, the Government should advocate for greater transparency and accountability within INTERPOL’s procedures and advocate for the use of corrective measures and suspensions for systematic abusers of INTERPOL mechanisms.

73.

CONCLUSION

Currently there is no requirement for INTERPOL to alert people at risk of politically motivated reprisals by foreign governments of a Notice being issued against them. This lack of transparency is particularly problematic in cases where individuals face credible risk of TNR, effectively restricting their ability to travel freely. Whilst there may be many legitimate reasons why some individuals should not be informed of the existence of Red Notices against them, we see a need for greater support for those whose lives are impacted by attempts to use this system maliciously.

148 Five eyes consists of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand

149 Oral Evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, [Q195](#) ; [Q31](#)

150 [Q31](#)

74.

RECOMMENDATION

While the option exists for individuals to request access to or removal of their data via INTERPOL's independent oversight body, the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files, this process is often significantly delayed and may not offer timely protection to those at immediate risk. The Government should undertake a review of existing procedures to consider whether it is possible to introduce a formal mechanism by which the Home Office or the National Crime Agency (NCA) may alert individuals of the existence of a Red Notice or Diffusion where there is a strong basis to believe it has been politically motivated.

75.

RECOMMENDATION

In addition, the Government should take proactive steps to protect individuals facing an extradition risk due to a politically motivated Red Notice. A voluntary mechanism should be introduced to allow targeted British Nationals to notify the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of planned travel to high-risk countries. This would give UK missions advance notice and allow them to prepare for early intervention if needed.

Impact on visa applications

76. INTERPOL Red Notices can have a significant impact on immigration and asylum applications. The presence of a politically motivated Red Notice may lead to an automatic presumption of criminality, resulting in the refusal of applications for asylum or citizenship. The Government told the Committee that:

There are clear procedures in place to ensure that INTERPOL notices do not unfairly influence immigration decisions. Where an asylum claim is refused and the Notice comes from the applicant's country of origin, the case may be referred to the National Crime Agency (NCA) or extradition authorities.¹⁵¹

77. However, witnesses argued that there was a need for enhanced training for Home Office officials on the use and implications of politically motivated INTERPOL Red Notices in asylum and immigration cases. Ben Keith, Barrister at 5 St Andrew's Hill, said that:

If somebody applies for a visa to come to the United Kingdom with a Red Notice against them, you might assume they were a criminal. It might be from Russia; it might be from another state.

151 Letter from the Security Minister to the Chair regarding to transnational repression in the UK, [4th July 2025](#)

They might have been a former politician. There is a significant lack of education [in the Civil Service] about trying to analyse whether a Red Notice is in fact genuine.¹⁵²

Country Policy and Information Notes, used in assessing asylum claims, do not contain specific information on threats related to TNR.¹⁵³ We heard that once a Red Notice was in place, it required significant funding, expertise and time to properly to challenge it in relation to an immigration or asylum decision.

78. CONCLUSION

The presence of a politically motivated INTERPOL Red Notice can have serious implications for individuals seeking asylum or applying for visas, often resulting in automatic refusal without due consideration of the underlying political context.

79. RECOMMENDATION

The Home Office should ensure that all relevant immigration staff are adequately trained and informed about the potential misuse of Red Notices. In addition, the Country Policy and Information Notes used in assessing asylum claims should be revised to explicitly address the threat of transnational repression. The Government should update the Committee within six months, outlining what specific steps it has taken to improve training for Home Office staff around politically motivated Red Notices.

¹⁵² [Q27](#)

¹⁵³ Dr John McDaniel (Lecturer in Law at Lancaster University) ([TRUK0149](#))

5 Departmental Coordination and Diplomatic Policy

80. In the diplomatic space, the FCDO uses tools to target TNR that largely align with those used to address other foreign policy challenges.¹⁵⁴ These include private engagement with foreign governments, issuing a demarche, terminating privileges and immunities, reducing official or ministerial contact, denying diplomatic visas, imposing sanctions or asking for diplomats to be withdrawn or expelled.¹⁵⁵ The Government told us that the thresholds for deploying these tools in relation to TNR were “context specific”, dependent on factors such as:

International commitments, the likelihood and impact of reciprocal actions, and whether deploying the tool would achieve the desired effect, such as deterrence, promoting human rights, or safeguarding media freedoms.¹⁵⁶

81. However, the Committee received multiple submissions arguing that TNR was not given sufficient weight in the formulation of UK foreign policy.¹⁵⁷ Several submissions suggested that TNR events should be explicitly referenced in both the annual human rights and democracy reports and the overseas security and justice assistance guidance produced by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.¹⁵⁸ TNR victims argued that the UK’s diplomatic representations often lacked follow-through and failed to result in meaningful consequences for perpetrating states.¹⁵⁹ For instance, we were told that:

The failure to expel consular officials responsible for past incidents of transnational repression, such as in the case of the Hong Konger who was dragged into the Manchester consulate, has sent a wrong signal.¹⁶⁰

154 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

155 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

156 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

157 BIRD ([TRUK0168](#)); Dr Enver Bughda ([TRUK0014](#)); [Q13](#)

158 Confidential written evidence

159 [Q23](#)

160 [Q23](#)

The recent visit to the UK by Liu Jianchao, who until recently led the Chinese Communist Party's principal TNR operations, Operation Fox Hunt and SkyNet, illustrates this concern. Despite his record, Liu was welcomed to the UK to meet with Ministers.¹⁶¹

- 82.** Witnesses expressed concern that broader trade and diplomatic priorities often took precedence over holding perpetrating states accountable for TNR.¹⁶² Furthermore, evidence presented to the Committee suggested that the UK's continued reliance on quiet diplomacy and case-by-case interventions may have inadvertently emboldened repressive regimes.¹⁶³ Witnesses emphasised that the failure to publicly call out states following incidents of transnational repression risks sending a message that perpetrating states can operate with impunity.

Sanctions

- 83.** The Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020, made under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018, give the Secretary of State the power to designate individuals for the purpose of imposing sanctions on them.¹⁶⁴ The Secretary of State has to consider that the designation is appropriate, and must have reasonable grounds to suspect that the person is or has been involved in an activity which, if carried out by a state, would amount to a serious violation of a person's right to life, right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or right to be free from slavery.¹⁶⁵ Activities in the UK are covered if they are carried out by someone who is not a UK national.¹⁶⁶
- 84.** Some TNR conduct may fall under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020 (if it amounts to a serious violation of the right to life or the right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment).¹⁶⁷ However, much TNR conduct, including even violence, intimidation, harassment, illegal deportations, abductions and Interpol and extradition abuse would fall outside the scope of the Regulations. NGO State Capture told us that this meant "The current UK sanctions framework

¹⁶¹ HC Deb, 24 June 2025, [Col 998](#)

¹⁶² [Q20](#); [Q45](#) [Martin Plaut]; Confidential written evidence; Fair Square, [Addressing the challenge of transnational human rights violations in the UK](#), (accessed 10 July)

¹⁶³ [Q23](#); Confidential written evidence; [Q45](#)

¹⁶⁴ [Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020](#), Regulation 5–6

¹⁶⁵ [Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020](#), Regulation 4(2)

¹⁶⁶ [Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020](#), Regulation 4(3)(b). See also section 21 of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018

¹⁶⁷ [Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020](#),

is not suited to tackling TNR”.¹⁶⁸ Dr Andrew Chubb, Senior Lecturer in Chinese Politics and International Relations, Lancaster University, similarly told us that:

There are no examples of them [Magnitsky Sanctions] being successfully deployed as a penalty for acts of transnational repression. One possible problem is that the threshold for the application of Magnitsky sanctions is very high, such that the routine acts of transnational repression that generate these repressive effects here in the UK would very often not rise to that threshold.¹⁶⁹

85. Witnesses expressed concern that the UK has not demonstrated global leadership in the application of sanctions policy.¹⁷⁰ Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC said that:

Under successive Governments, we have tended to see Magnitsky sanctions used in the UK quite late in the piece ... You will see that it is only when other states, such as the US or Canada, have dealt with an issue and when it has become, essentially, unassailable... that the UK will join the bandwagon.¹⁷¹

86. **CONCLUSION**

TNR represents a growing threat to democratic values, the rule of law, and freedom of expression. We are concerned that foreign policy decisions and international trade partnerships are often made without sufficient consideration of the TNR record of perpetrator states. A failure to acknowledge and respond to instances of TNR as part of the UK’s diplomatic relations with perpetrator countries risks undermining the UK’s credibility as a leader on global human rights issues and emboldening authoritarian regimes to escalate TNR activities. Recognising TNR as a foreign policy concern will help to ensure a more coherent and principled approach to the UK’s TNR policies.

168 State Capture: Research and Action, International Partnership for Human Rights ([TRUK0032](#))

169 [Q16](#) [Dr Andrew Chubb]

170 [Q16](#) [Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC]

171 [Q16](#) [Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC]

87.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Government explicitly incorporate transnational repression into the UK's human rights reporting frameworks. In particular, references to TNR should be included in the next iterations of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's annual Human Rights and Democracy Report and in the Overseas Security and Justice Assistance Guidance. The UK should also ensure that diplomatic responses, such as the expulsion of officials, public demarches, and the imposition of sanctions, are not only available in principle but are actively and visibly deployed in response to serious incidents.

88.

CONCLUSION

The Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020 do not capture the full range of TNR tactics, including violence, intimidation, harassment, illegal deportations, abductions and abuse of international mechanisms such as INTERPOL.

89.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends that the Government review the scope of the UK's sanctions framework to assess the feasibility of introducing specific TNR sanctions. The UK should also adopt a more proactive approach to sanctions, particularly in cases where UK nationals and residents are directly affected. This should include the timely designation of perpetrators and state actors responsible for systematic TNR in appropriate cases, even in the absence of prior action by international partners.

90.

RECOMMENDATION

Due to the national security sensitivities and the need for swift action, there are limited opportunities for Parliament to scrutinise sanctions policy. We recommend that the Government provide regular confidential updates to the Intelligence and Security Committee, outlining the rationale for imposing, or not imposing sanctions, in relevant cases.

International coordination

91. Witnesses emphasised the importance of the UK adopting a leadership role in shaping global norms and responses to TNR, particularly through multilateral fora.¹⁷² There has been recent international momentum in relation to TNR. A G7 Leaders' Statement on Transnational Repression

172 [Q17](#) [Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC]

was issued in June 2024, which condemned all acts of TNR and affirmed a collective commitment to countering TNR through coordinated international action.¹⁷³ The statement also committed to establishing a ‘Digital TNR Detection Academy’ through the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism to build collective capacity to detect TNR online.¹⁷⁴ A US-chaired Working Group on TNR has also been created to promote international cooperation amongst democracies.¹⁷⁵

92.

RECOMMENDATION

The UK should support efforts to elevate TNR as a priority on the UN agenda and promote coordinated international action against its use by authoritarian regimes. The Government should also ensure that information and data on TNR is shared with likeminded countries through fora such as the Council of Europe, INTERPOL, the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, OSCE and UN, to help combat TNR at a global level.

93.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Government work closely with Canada to strengthen international collaboration on countering TNR during Canada’s 2025 G7 Presidency. As part of this effort, the UK should play a leading role in the launch and development of the proposed Digital TNR Detection Academy under the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism. This initiative will enhance collective capacity to detect and respond to online forms of TNR by equipping G7 members and partners with the technical skills and tools needed to identify and counter emerging technology-enabled threats.

94.

RECOMMENDATION

The UK should seek to play a leading and proactive role in shaping the Global response to TNR as part of the US chaired Working Group on Transnational Repression. The Government should also raise the issue at the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, scheduled to take place in 2026 in Antigua and Barbuda.

Departmental coordination on TNR

95. The UK’s response to TNR currently involves multiple departments and agencies, including the Home Office, the FCDO, the National Crime Agency, the police and the intelligence and security services. Evidence submitted

173 G7 Canada, [G7 Leaders’ Statement on Transnational Repression](#), 17 June 2025

174 G7 Canada, [G7 Leaders’ Statement on Transnational Repression](#), 17 June 2025

175 Home Office ([TRUK0181](#))

to the Committee highlighted that the absence of a formalised mechanism for cross-government coordination can result in inconsistent responses and gaps in support for individuals at risk.¹⁷⁶ The recent announcement of the State Threats Joint Unit, intended to enhance the UK's capacity to respond to hostile state activity, represents a potential opportunity to improve coherence and strategic alignment across intelligence, law enforcement, and policy functions in addressing TNR.¹⁷⁷

96.

CONCLUSION

The UK's response to TNR would benefit significantly from more structured and consistent coordination across government departments. Currently, responsibilities related to TNR are dispersed across the Home Office, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the National Crime Agency (NCA), and the intelligence and security services. While each plays a vital role, the absence of a formalised mechanism for collaboration can lead to inconsistent responses and support for individuals at risk. We welcome the recent announcement of the State Threats Joint Unit, which is intended to enhance the UK's capacity to respond to hostile state activity.

97.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend this new unit has a central role in coordinating the UK's response to TNR, ensuring that intelligence, law enforcement, and policy functions are aligned and responsive to emerging threats. We recommend the appointment of a dedicated lead for transnational repression within the unit, responsible for driving cross-government coordination.

176 [Q17](#)

177 HC Deb, [19 May 2025](#), col 760

Conclusions and recommendations

Definition and Legal Framework

1. We welcome the Government's decision to describe TNR in broad terms. This approach provides an important opportunity to ensure that all victims of TNR are recognised regardless of ethnicity, nationality or background. (Conclusion, Paragraph 19)
2. However, we are concerned by the Government's decision not to adopt a formal definition of TNR. Whilst we acknowledge the difficulties in adopting a single globally accepted definition, we are not persuaded that the existence of differing national definitions would hinder international cooperation on this issue. Adopting a formal UK definition of TNR would significantly enhance the UK's ability to collect reliable data, monitor trends, and develop effective policy responses. (Conclusion, Paragraph 20)
3. We recommend that the Government adopt a formal definition of transnational repression. This should be developed in consultation with law enforcement, civil society and affected communities. It should include, as core elements, the 'involvement' of a foreign state, and the targeting of individuals located outside that state's jurisdiction. The definition should be sufficiently broad to encompass victims of TNR regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. In addition to adopting a legal definition, authorities should be equipped with clear guidance and explanatory materials outlining the various forms transnational repression can take. (Recommendation, Paragraph 21)
4. Without clear data on the scale and nature of TNR events in the UK, it is difficult both to create effective policy responses and to judge the effectiveness of the Government's new TNR strategy. The Government should ask police forces to collect relevant data on the number and nature of TNR reports in the UK. This data should then be used to review the effectiveness of the new TNR strategy and to identify countries of concern. This approach will enhance the UK's capacity to identify patterns of state-linked harassment and coercion, and to respond more effectively to the evolving threat landscape. We recommend that, in cases where reports of TNR do not lead to prosecution or further action, law enforcement

agencies should nonetheless record and retain relevant data, where appropriate, to support TNR trend analysis and future investigative efforts. (Recommendation, Paragraph 22)

5. The evidence we have received indicates that existing UK criminal legislation provides an effective framework for dealing with offences related to TNR. We have not identified any significant gaps in criminal law related to TNR. We agree that the creation of additional criminal offences is not necessary at this time to address the challenges posed by TNR. (Conclusion, Paragraph 26)
6. However, we recognise the rapidly evolving nature of digital technologies and the increasing sophistication of methods used to conduct TNR. It is therefore essential that the legal framework remains agile and responsive to evolving threats. We recommend that the Government keeps relevant legislation under regular review to ensure it remains fit for purpose in addressing emerging threats, particularly those facilitated by advances in artificial intelligence and surveillance capabilities. The Government should write to this Committee annually to provide an update on the effectiveness of current legislation at addressing evolving digital forms of TNR. (Recommendation, Paragraph 27)
7. We welcome the introduction of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS) as a tool to help strengthen the UK's ability to tackle transnational repression. The designation of Iran and Russia as countries listed on the enhanced tier of FIRS is consistent with the evidence presented to us regarding the threat posed by TNR originating from these states. However, we are concerned by the evidence we have received regarding transnational repression linked to China. The absence of China on the enhanced tier of FIRS is therefore notable. (Conclusion, Paragraph 32)
8. The Government should ensure that TNR is a high priority consideration when deciding which countries should be specified under the enhanced tier of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme. Decisions on which countries to specify under the enhanced tier of FIRS must be guided by objective assessments of threat, not influenced by broader foreign policy considerations. We recommend that the Government specify China under the enhanced tier of FIRS. China conducts the most comprehensive TNR campaign of any foreign state operating in the UK. Its omission from the enhanced tier risks undermining the credibility and coherence of FIRS. Any attempt to specify only isolated parts of the Chinese state in the FIRS would fail to reflect the true nature and complexity of the threat, as influence operations span all sectors of the economy and lack clear command-and-control structures. (Recommendation, Paragraph 33)

9. The Home Office and relevant enforcement bodies should develop clear guidance on how FIRS data can be used to support investigations into TNR, and regular reviews should be conducted to assess the scheme's effectiveness in this regard. (Recommendation, Paragraph 34)
10. Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) are increasingly used as instruments of transnational repression. These lawsuits are designed to intimidate and silence individuals who expose or criticise the actions of authoritarian regimes. The evidence we have received demonstrates that journalists are at particular risk of TNR via the use of SLAPPs. Whilst the inclusion of SLAPP provisions in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 was a welcome first step towards tackling SLAPPs, the current framework is limited to measures related to economic crime and fails to address the broader use of SLAPPs as a tool of transnational repression. Expanding the scope of protections is essential to safeguarding freedom of expression and ensuring that the UK does not become a jurisdiction of choice for legal harassment. (Conclusion, Paragraph 40)
11. In response to this report, the Government should provide this Committee with a clear timeline in which it plans to review the effectiveness of the SLAPPs provisions in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023. The Government should also set out the criteria it intends to use to assess whether these provisions have worked as intended. The Government should use the results of this review to inform the drafting of future legislation to address SLAPPs that are not related to economic crime. (Recommendation, Paragraph 41)

Policing and Support for victims

12. We recommend that the Government develop and implement a proactive outreach strategy aimed at individuals and communities likely to be at high risk of TNR. This strategy should be developed within 12 months and include clear timelines for how engagement activities will be rolled out. The Government should engage with diaspora groups, civil society organisations, and community leaders to provide practical guidance on the methods and tactics commonly used in TNR, as well as the steps individuals can take to enhance their personal safety and access appropriate support and reporting mechanisms. (Recommendation, Paragraph 45)
13. We welcome the Government's publication of online guidance for people experiencing TNR. This is a positive step towards providing easily accessible information on TNR and helping victims understand avenues of support available to them. (Conclusion, Paragraph 48)

14. We recommend that the content of this guidance be reviewed regularly, with input from victims, to ensure it is genuinely effective and helpful for victims and that it remains responsive to evolving TNR tactics. The Government should ensure that this guidance is made available in multiple languages within six months, this should include languages commonly spoken by affected communities. We further recommend that the Government take proactive steps to promote this existence of this guidance amongst communities at high risk of experiencing TNR. (Recommendation, Paragraph 49)
15. We welcome the development of new training materials for police forces on TNR. This represents a positive step toward improving frontline awareness and ensuring appropriate responses to TNR incidences. We welcome the decision to make this training mandatory for counter-terrorism officers. However, it is equally important that the training is rolled out more broadly across police forces, ensuring that officers in all relevant roles are equipped to recognise and respond to transnational repression. (Conclusion, Paragraph 55)
16. The Government should regularly evaluate the uptake of the new police training on transnational repression. Updates on participation rates should be provided to the Committee every six months. If uptake remains limited, serious consideration should be given to making this training mandatory for all police officers. Police should also be given training on early warning signs of TNR-related risks, such as intimidation of friends and family members abroad. (Recommendation, Paragraph 56)
17. We heard consistent evidence highlighting the absence of an effective mechanism for reporting suspected incidents of TNR. This gap not only leaves victims without adequate support but also significantly undermines the UK's capacity to monitor, assess, and respond to such threats. There is little consistency in the way police forces deal with reported TNR cases. Individuals seeking to report incidences of TNR are often referred to police departments unfamiliar with the nature and tactics of TNR, resulting in delays and inaction. (Conclusion, Paragraph 60)
18. Victims of TNR often take considerable personal risk in reporting TNR related crimes. Many choose not to come forward due to a lack of confidence in existing reporting systems, concerns that have often been shaped by previous negative experiences. Establishing a dedicated reporting mechanism could play a vital role in building trust within affected communities. If individuals knew their reports would be handled by trained, sensitive personnel who understand TNR and the potential risks victims face even in coming forward to report it, more victims may feel safe and supported enough to seek help. (Conclusion, Paragraph 61)

- 19.** We recommend that the Government establish a dedicated national reporting hotline for individuals who experience TNR to enhance victim support, improve data collection, and facilitate timely referrals to the appropriate personnel. The reporting hotline should be established within one year of the publication of this report. It should be staffed by personnel specifically trained to identify and respond to TNR, with a clear understanding of the tactics employed by particular state actors and established referral pathways to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. The service should be supported by a multilingual provision, including translated materials and guidance, as well as access to interpreters who can assist callers in their preferred language. (Recommendation, Paragraph 62)
- 20.** We further recommend that data collected through the hotline be anonymised and recorded to inform policy development and threat assessments. (Recommendation, Paragraph 63)

INTERPOL and visa applications

- 21.** We are deeply concerned by the misuse of INTERPOL Red Notices by certain member states. Refusal by the INTERPOL secretariat to acknowledge that there is a problem and to take remedial action poses a significant threat to the rights and freedoms of individuals targeted by authoritarian regimes and sends a message that this behaviour is acceptable. (Conclusion, Paragraph 71)
- 22.** We recommend the Government works with ‘Five Eyes’ and other partners to track and expose malicious, vexatious, and politically motivated use of Red Notices by member states. In doing so, the Government should advocate for greater transparency and accountability within INTERPOL’s procedures and advocate for the use of corrective measures and suspensions for systematic abusers of INTERPOL mechanisms. (Recommendation, Paragraph 72)
- 23.** Currently there is no requirement for INTERPOL to alert people at risk of politically motivated reprisals by foreign governments of a Notice being issued against them. This lack of transparency is particularly problematic in cases where individuals face credible risk of TNR, effectively restricting their ability to travel freely. Whilst there may be many legitimate reasons why some individuals should not be informed of the existence of Red Notices against them, we see a need for greater support for those whose lives are impacted by attempts to use this system maliciously. (Conclusion, Paragraph 73)

24. While the option exists for individuals to request access to or removal of their data via INTERPOL's independent oversight body, the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files, this process is often significantly delayed and may not offer timely protection to those at immediate risk. The Government should undertake a review of existing procedures to consider whether it is possible to introduce a formal mechanism by which the Home Office or the National Crime Agency (NCA) may alert individuals of the existence of a Red Notice or Diffusion where there is a strong basis to believe it has been politically motivated. (Recommendation, Paragraph 74)
25. In addition, the Government should take proactive steps to protect individuals facing an extradition risk due to a politically motivated Red Notice. A voluntary mechanism should be introduced to allow targeted British Nationals to notify the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of planned travel to high-risk countries. This would give UK missions advance notice and allow them to prepare for early intervention if needed. (Recommendation, Paragraph 75)
26. The presence of a politically motivated INTERPOL Red Notice can have serious implications for individuals seeking asylum or applying for visas, often resulting in automatic refusal without due consideration of the underlying political context. (Conclusion, Paragraph 78)
27. The Home Office should ensure that all relevant immigration staff are adequately trained and informed about the potential misuse of Red Notices. In addition, the Country Policy and Information Notes used in assessing asylum claims should be revised to explicitly address the threat of transnational repression. The Government should update the Committee within six months, outlining what specific steps it has taken to improve training for Home Office staff around politically motivated Red Notices. (Recommendation, Paragraph 79)

Departmental Coordination and Diplomatic Policy

28. TNR represents a growing threat to democratic values, the rule of law, and freedom of expression. We are concerned that foreign policy decisions and international trade partnerships are often made without sufficient consideration of the TNR record of perpetrator states. A failure to acknowledge and respond to instances of TNR as part of the UK's diplomatic relations with perpetrator countries risks undermining the UK's credibility as a leader on global human rights issues and emboldening authoritarian

regimes to escalate TNR activities. Recognising TNR as a foreign policy concern will help to ensure a more coherent and principled approach to the UK's TNR policies. (Conclusion, Paragraph 86)

29. We recommend that the Government explicitly incorporate transnational repression into the UK's human rights reporting frameworks. In particular, references to TNR should be included in the next iterations of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's annual Human Rights and Democracy Report and in the Overseas Security and Justice Assistance Guidance. The UK should also ensure that diplomatic responses, such as the expulsion of officials, public demarches, and the imposition of sanctions, are not only available in principle but are actively and visibly deployed in response to serious incidents. (Recommendation, Paragraph 87)
30. The Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020 do not capture the full range of TNR tactics, including violence, intimidation, harassment, illegal deportations, abductions and abuse of international mechanisms such as INTERPOL. (Conclusion, Paragraph 88)
31. The Committee recommends that the Government review the scope of the UK's sanctions framework to assess the feasibility of introducing specific TNR sanctions. The UK should also adopt a more proactive approach to sanctions, particularly in cases where UK nationals and residents are directly affected. This should include the timely designation of perpetrators and state actors responsible for systematic TNR in appropriate cases, even in the absence of prior action by international partners. (Recommendation, Paragraph 89)
32. Due to the national security sensitivities and the need for swift action, there are limited opportunities for Parliament to scrutinise sanctions policy. We recommend that the Government provide regular confidential updates to the Intelligence and Security Committee, outlining the rationale for imposing, or not imposing sanctions, in relevant cases. (Recommendation, Paragraph 90)
33. The UK should support efforts to elevate TNR as a priority on the UN agenda and promote coordinated international action against its use by authoritarian regimes. The Government should also ensure that information and data on TNR is shared with likeminded countries through fora such as the Council of Europe, INTERPOL, the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, OSCE and UN, to help combat TNR at a global level. (Recommendation, Paragraph 92)
34. We recommend that the Government work closely with Canada to strengthen international collaboration on countering TNR during Canada's 2025 G7 Presidency. As part of this effort, the UK should play a leading role in the launch and development of the proposed Digital TNR Detection

Academy under the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism. This initiative will enhance collective capacity to detect and respond to online forms of TNR by equipping G7 members and partners with the technical skills and tools needed to identify and counter emerging technology-enabled threats. (Recommendation, Paragraph 93)

35. The UK should seek to play a leading and proactive role in shaping the Global response to TNR as part of the US chaired Working Group on Transnational Repression. The Government should also raise the issue at the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, scheduled to take place in 2026 in Antigua and Barbuda. (Recommendation, Paragraph 94)
36. The UK's response to TNR would benefit significantly from more structured and consistent coordination across government departments. Currently, responsibilities related to TNR are dispersed across the Home Office, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the National Crime Agency (NCA), and the intelligence and security services. While each plays a vital role, the absence of a formalised mechanism for collaboration can lead to consistent responses and support for individuals at risk. We welcome the recent announcement of the State Threats Joint Unit, which is intended to enhance the UK's capacity to respond to hostile state activity. (Conclusion, Paragraph 96)
37. We recommend this new unit has a central role in coordinating the UK's response to TNR, ensuring that intelligence, law enforcement, and policy functions are aligned and responsive to emerging threats. We recommend the appointment of a dedicated lead for transnational repression within the unit, responsible for driving cross-government coordination. (Recommendation, Paragraph 97)

Formal minutes

Wednesday 16 July 2025

Members present:

Lord Alton of Liverpool (Chair)

Juliet Campbell

Lord Dholakia

Tom Gordon

Afzal Khan

Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws

Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon

Lord Murray of Blidworth

Lord Sewell of Sanderstead

Alex Sobel

Peter Swallow

Sir Desmond Swayne

Transnational Repression in the UK

Draft Report (*Transnational Repression in the UK*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 97 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Seventh Report of the Committee to the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House of Lords and that Sir Desmond Swayne make the Report to the House of Commons.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned until 2.00pm on Wednesday 3 September.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 5 February 2025

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, Barrister, Doughty Street Chambers; **Dr Andrew Chubb**, Senior Lecturer in Chinese Politics and International Relations, Lancaster University; **Laura Harth**, China in the World Director, Safeguard Defenders [Q1-17](#)

Wednesday 12 March 2025

Chloe Cheung; **Mr Hossein Abedini**, Deputy director, National Council of Resistance of Iran [Q18-23](#)

Rhys Davies, Barrister, Temple Garden Chambers; **Mr Ben Keith**, Barrister, 5 St Andrews Hill [Q24-35](#)

Wednesday 26 March 2025

Mr Martin Plaut, Journalist and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Kings College London; **Mr James Lynch**, Co-Director, Fair Square; **Susan Coughtrie**, Director, Foreign Policy Centre [Q36-48](#)

Wednesday 21 May 2025

Commander Dominic Murphy, Head of Counter Terrorism Policing, Metropolitan Police [Q49-59](#)

Dan Jarvis MP, Minister for Security, Home Office; **Andrew Scurry**, Director, Homeland Security Group, Home Office; **Grace Lucas**, Deputy Director, Home Office [Q60-75](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

TRUK numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Alem, Mr Daebas	TRUK0052
2	Almasarir, Mr Ghanem	TRUK0012
3	Amnesty International UK	TRUK0170
4	Anonymised	TRUK0053
5	Anonymised	TRUK0115
6	Anonymised	TRUK0114
7	Anonymised	TRUK0160
8	Anonymised	TRUK0137
9	Anonymised	TRUK0133
10	Anonymised	TRUK0124
11	Anonymised	TRUK0108
12	Anonymised	TRUK0097
13	Anonymised	TRUK0086
14	Anonymised	TRUK0082
15	Anonymised	TRUK0081
16	Anonymised	TRUK0066
17	Anonymised	TRUK0065
18	Anonymised	TRUK0062
19	Anonymised	TRUK0060
20	Anonymised	TRUK0059
21	Anonymised	TRUK0056
22	Anonymised	TRUK0055
23	Anonymised	TRUK0054
24	Anonymised	TRUK0051

25	Anonymised	TRUK0047
26	Anonymised	TRUK0046
27	Anonymised	TRUK0039
28	Anonymised	TRUK0028
29	Anonymised	TRUK0027
30	Anonymised	TRUK0173
31	Anonymised	TRUK0153
32	Anonymised	TRUK0129
33	Anonymised	TRUK0037
34	Anonymised	TRUK0034
35	Anonymised	TRUK0033
36	Anonymised	TRUK0025
37	Azadi Network	TRUK0167
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41	Blue revolution	TRUK0121
42	British Sikh Activists; and British Sikh Activists	TRUK0021
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44	Bughda, Dr Enver	TRUK0014
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52	Falun Dafa Association UK	TRUK0122
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84	The Sikh Press Association	<u>TRUK0113</u>
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