

EDWARD J. MARKEY  
MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEES:  
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

FOREIGN RELATIONS

RANKING MEMBER:

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIA, THE PACIFIC,  
AND INTERNATIONAL CYBERSECURITY POLICY

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

RANKING MEMBER:

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SECURITY

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

CHAIRMAN:

U.S. SENATE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK FORCE

## United States Senate

June 5, 2019

SUITE SD-255  
DIRKSEN BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2107  
202-224-2742

975 JFK FEDERAL BUILDING  
15 NEW SUDBURY STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02203  
617-565-8519

222 MILLIKEN BOULEVARD, SUITE 312  
FALL RIVER, MA 02721  
508-677-0523

1550 MAIN STREET, 4TH FLOOR  
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103  
413-785-4610

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to request that the State Department explain its strategy for countering China's export of surveillance technologies and associated practices to foreign governments whose leaders look not with revulsion but with envy at China's authoritarian control at home.

On April 24, 2019, the *New York Times* highlighted Ecuador to illustrate how other governments are now applying and abusing "technology built for China's political system."<sup>1</sup> Ecuador is one of eighteen countries that the independent watchdog Freedom House has identified as using Chinese-made intelligent monitoring systems and facial recognition technology.<sup>2</sup> Ecuador's system consists of 4,300 high-powered cameras that send footage to 16 monitoring centers employing more than 3,000 police officers, who manually review collected footage. The footage is also sent to a domestic intelligence agency that has long intimidated and attacked political opponents.<sup>3</sup> China has provided not only the technology but also the training necessary for Ecuadorean officials to use the system in a manner at odds with democratic values and internationally guaranteed rights to privacy and freedom of movement.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, a May 1, 2019 report by Human Rights Watch illustrated that the most intrusive of China's exports may be yet to come. Human Rights Watch reverse engineered a mobile application used by Chinese authorities involved in the repression of Uighur and Central Asian minorities in Xinjiang. This enabled Human Rights Watch to identify the type of information that feeds into one of China's main mass surveillance systems, called the Integrated Joint

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Mozur, Jonah M. Kessel, and Melissa Chan, *Made in China, Exported to the World: The Surveillance State*, N.Y. Times (April 24, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/24/technology/ecuador-surveillance-cameras-police-government.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Adrian Shahbaz, *Freedom on the Net 2018: The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism* (Oct. 2018), [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTN\\_2018\\_Final.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTN_2018_Final.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Mozur, Jonah M. Kessel, and Melissa Chan, *Made in China, Exported to the World: The Surveillance State*, N.Y. Times (April 24, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/24/technology/ecuador-surveillance-cameras-police-government.html>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

Operations Platform (IJOP).<sup>5</sup> The system monitors and flags individuals engaged in supposedly suspicious activities such as not socializing with neighbors, avoiding use of the front door, and employing encrypted communication tools (i.e., WhatsApp and Viber). Among other functions, the system scores government officials on their performance in carrying out repressive orders from higher-ranking officials, serving as a tool to control government employees. Human Rights Watch assesses that the Chinese government believes that its “dystopian projects are bearing fruit, as these mass surveillance systems have woven an ever-tightening net around people across the country.”<sup>6</sup>

The spread of sophisticated and authoritarian mass surveillance within China in itself is problematic, but its export to other governments poses a worldwide threat of repression. On May 19, 2019, multiple Sri Lankan news sources reported that China will provide high-tech surveillance equipment along with trainers to help Sri Lanka trace individuals who are “promoting terrorism” and “spreading false information.”<sup>7</sup> At an April 9, 2019 hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy, Tun Khin of the Burmese Rohingya Organization UK noted to Senator Markey his fear that China could export to Burma the same advanced technologies that China currently uses to oppress the Uighur community.<sup>8</sup>

It is clear that China is enabling authoritarianism even where foreign leaders are uninspired by the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. Beijing is actively exporting methods of control that any authoritarian can implement, eroding freedom in every recipient country and undermining an international order built on open societies. While the United States is rightfully examining China’s potential exploitation of telecommunications infrastructure through the activities of Huawei and other Chinese firms, such a focus overlooks the challenges posed by China’s exports of capabilities and techniques explicitly aimed at video, internet, and financial surveillance.

To better understand the State Department’s strategy for countering China’s exports of authoritarian surveillance technologies and practices, we respectfully request a written response to the following questions no later than June 26, 2019:

- 1) What tools is the State Department using to push back against the spread of China’s surveillance practices?

---

<sup>5</sup> Maya Wang, *China’s Algorithm of Repression*, Human Rights Watch (May 1, 2019), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/05/01/chinas-algorithms-repression/reverse-engineering-xinjiang-police-mass-surveillance>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Sri Lanka caught in the big power conflicts*, The Sunday Times (May 19, 2019), <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/190519/columns/sri-lanka-caught-in-the-big-power-conflicts-349932.html>. See also Santhush Fernando, *China-style Mass Online Surveillance*, The Morning (May 19, 2019), <http://www.themorning.lk/china-styled-mass-online-surveillance/>.

<sup>8</sup> ARIA in Action, Part 1: Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy of the S. Comm. On Foreign Relations, 116<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2019) (statement of Mr. Tun Khin).

- (a) Do you regularly raise this topic at high levels when meeting with foreign counterparts? If so, please provide documentation to support. If not, why not?
- (b) Is the topic regularly on the agenda for bilateral discussions? If so, please provide documentation to support. If not, why not?
- 2) What metrics does the State Department use to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts to counter the spread of Chinese surveillance tactics?
- 3) To what degree is the Bureau of Democracy, Rights, and Labor (DRL) focused on the spread of Chinese surveillance tactics? Is DRL helping civil society to understand the implications of mass surveillance and to push back against such technology where it is abused?
- 4) Given China's efforts to propagandize mass surveillance as a benign tool for maintaining order, how does the Global Engagement Center (GEC) prioritize this issue? What metrics does GEC use to evaluate the effectiveness of any efforts?
- 5) The Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018 (ARIA) highlights China's "invasive and omnipresent surveillance." How is the State Department following through on Section 404 of that legislation, which calls for appropriate personnel and resources to advance United States democracy, human rights, labor, anti-corruption, and good governance policy interests in the Indo-Pacific region (notwithstanding the fact that this is a global issue)?
- 6) How do the administration's proposed cuts in the FY 2020 budget request help the United States address this challenge? Please address, in particular, funding cuts for civil society organizations that promote human rights and the rule of law as well as cuts to public diplomacy and exchange programs that advance democracy and good governance.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Should you have any questions about this request, please contact Omar Bashir of my staff at 202-224-2742.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator