

Joint Statement in Support of Radio Free Asia

April 9, 2025

As organizations that work on issues relating to freedom and human rights in the People's Republic of China (PRC), we are writing to express our strong opposition to the Trump Administration's decision to terminate U.S. funding for Radio Free Asia (RFA). RFA serves as a critical source of information on the situation in the PRC and is an effective counter to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) aggression and malign influence in the Indo-Pacific region. We call on the Trump Administration and members of Congress to restore U.S. funding for RFA as soon as possible before irreparable harm is done.

Radio Free Asia and its digital brands provide independent and uncensored news to a weekly audience of nearly 60 million people in repressive countries in Asia, including an estimated 44 million in the PRC alone.ⁱ RFA reports on events and issues in China that are often underreported or censored by state-controlled media. RFA's reporting focuses on human rights, political repression, ethnic minority issues, censorship, and corruption. It should be noted that RFA's journalists and stringers do not report on U.S. politics or issues outside of their mandate, which is to report in places in Asia where press freedom is restricted by authoritarian governments.

Radio Free Asia has been effective in shining a bright light of transparency in some of the most closed and repressive regions of the PRC. The information the U.S. and the world receives from RFA is critical to policy making and efforts to push back against false CCP narratives and propaganda. It is one of the few media outlets with the capacity to break through China's "Great Firewall" and connect to people through its Mandarin, Cantonese, Tibetan, and Uyghur language services. Chinese officials are well aware of RFA's effectiveness and regularly denounce RFA's brave journalists. In fact, Chinese state media were so happy with the U.S. decision to terminate funding for RFA that they openly praised the decision.ⁱⁱ

Some key RFA initiatives include groundbreaking reporting on:

- **The genocide against the Uyghur people.** RFA first informed the world of mass internment camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), which later would be declared a genocide by both the Trump and Biden administrations;ⁱⁱⁱ
- **The COVID-19 coverup.** RFA was one of the first media outlets to report on the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, including the censorship of whistleblowers including Dr. Li Wenliang;^{iv}
- **Repression in Hong Kong.** RFA has provided in-depth coverage of the crackdown on the Hong Kong people, the implementation of the National Security Law, as well as the erosions of press freedom and the rule of law;

- **Human rights and religious freedom abuses against Tibetans.** RFA’s Tibetan-language service and short wave radio transmissions are a critical source of uncensored information for Tibetans inside and outside the region with original news on arbitrary arrests and torture, demolitions of religious sites, and self-immolation protests;
- **Suppression of Christianity.** RFA reports on religious persecution and efforts to “Sinicize” Christianity under the CCP, with government raids on house churches and the persecution of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu;^v
- **Arrests and harassment of Chinese journalists and civil society.** RFA closely monitors arrests and harassment of independent journalists who attempt to expose corruption, human rights abuses, and public protests, along with the detentions and prison sentences for those who report on topics deemed sensitive by the CCP; and
- **The crackdown on Chinese human rights lawyers and human rights defenders.** RFA closely reported on cases related to the systematic crackdown on human rights lawyers and human rights defenders such as 709 cases and the 1226 Xiamen gathering case.

For all of the above reasons and more, U.S. support for Radio Free Asia has been strong and bipartisan. RFA is established in statute and, every year, Republicans and Democrats in Congress request higher levels of funding for RFA in the annual State-Foreign Operations Appropriations bills which specifically direct funding to RFA and provide guidance for the implementation of those priorities. We call for U.S. funding for RFA to be restored as soon as possible.

Signed:

Alliance for Citizens’ Rights
 Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)
 Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong (CFHK) Foundation
 Hong Kong Watch (HKW)
 Human Rights in China (HRIC)
 Humanitarian China
 International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)
 Students for a Free Tibet (SFT)
 Uyghur American Association (UAA)
 Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP)
 Washingtonians Supporting Hong Kong (DC4HK)

ⁱ <https://www.usagm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-Audience-and-Impact-Report.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3302756/chinas-global-times-praises-trump-funding-cuts-voice-america-radio-free-asia>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/detentions-01222018171657.html>

^{iv} <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/wuhan-deaths-03272020182846.html>

^v <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/china-early-rain-covenant-church-09032024135837.html>