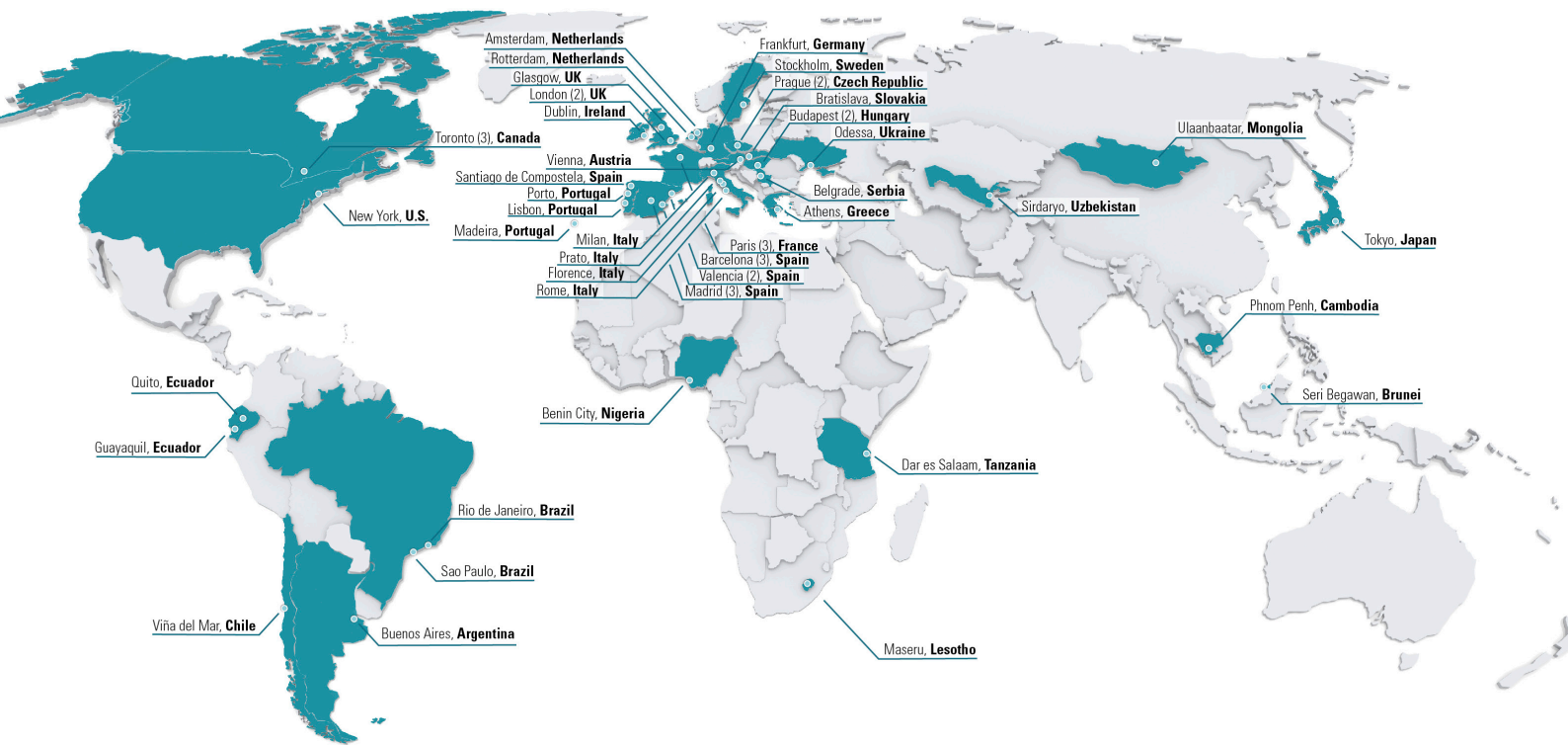


# 110 OVERSEAS

## Chinese Transnational Policing Gone Wild



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**110 is the Chinese emergency phone number for the Police.**

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# Introduction

As part of a massive nationwide campaign to combat the growing issue of fraud and telecommunication fraud by Chinese nationals living abroad, Chinese authorities claim that from April 2021 to July 2022, 230,000 nationals had been “persuaded to return” to face criminal proceedings in China.

This campaign, which started on a humble scale in 2018, has developed alongside the establishment of overseas Chinese police “service stations”; sometimes called “110 Overseas” after the national

police emergency phone number, now found in dozens of countries across five continents. This investigation looks into these two related and recent developments, especially in view of the expansion of other forms of long-arm policing and transnational repression by the PRC.

This investigation follows the release of new Chinese governmental data and is part of **Safeguard Defenders’ ongoing monitoring of China’s growing global transnational repression.**

## Summary of key points

- Faced with a growing issue of fraud and telecommunication fraud by Chinese nationals living abroad, China claims **230,000 suspects of fraud and telecom fraud were successfully “persuaded to return”** to China from April 2021 to July 2022.
- Official statements detail use of **depriving suspects’ children the right to education** back in China, as well as other actions against relatives and family members, in a full-on “guilt by association” campaign.
- China has **designated nine countries** as having serious fraud, telecom fraud and web crimes, and Chinese nationals are no longer allowed to stay in those countries without “good reason.”
- Rapidly emerging evidence points to extensive online campaigns and the use of **“Overseas Police Service Stations” being used in these operations on five continents**, often using local “Chinese Overseas Home Associations” linked to the CCP’s United Front Work.
- These operations eschew official bilateral police and judicial cooperation and **violate the international rule of law, and may violate the territorial integrity of third countries** involved in setting up a parallel policing mechanism using illegal methods.

# Background

## Persuasion to return and China's Involuntary Returns campaign

“Persuasion to return” is a key method within China's larger *Involuntary Return* operations (IR). Classified as primarily Type 1 (and occasionally Type 2) actions in Safeguard Defenders' [Involuntary Returns](#) report on the subject, overseas targets and/or their families back in China are approached directly to “encourage” the return of the target to China to face justice, “or else”.

In many cases identified in the *Involuntary Returns* report, methods used under IR Type 1 and Type 2 actions include:

- (1) The tracking down of the target's family in China in order to pressure them through means of intimidation, harassment, detention or imprisonment into persuading their family members to return “voluntarily”;
- (2) Direct approach of the target through online means or the deployment of – often undercover - agents and/or proxies abroad to threaten and harass the target into returning “voluntarily”.

The final *Involuntary Returns* category - Type 3 - involves direct kidnappings on foreign soil. As far as known at the time of reporting, this method has not been used in the operation described in this investigation.

“Persuasion to return” methods plays an integral part of China's *Fox Hunt* operation – run by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS) – which is one of several components of the wider *Sky Net* operation overseen by the National Supervision Commission (NSC). The *Fox Hunt / Sky Net* operations pursue higher value targets. Despite its global scale and an official claim of ensuring the return of at least 10,000 targets since the start of operations, it is much more modest in scale

than the campaign described here. However, as an example cited in this investigation shows, the networks set up to conduct the latter can and are being used within the *Fox Hunt* ambit as well.

These methods allow the CCP and their security organs to circumvent normal bilateral mechanisms of police and judicial cooperation, thereby severely undermining the international rule of law and territorial integrity of the third countries involved. In eschewing regular cooperation mechanisms, the CCP manages to avoid the growing scrutiny of its human rights record and the ensuing difficulties faced in obtaining the return of “fugitives” through legal proceedings such as formal extradition requests. It leaves legal Chinese residents abroad fully exposed to extra-legal targeting by the Chinese police, with little to none of the protection theoretically ensured under both national and international law.

Online fraud is, or has been, considered an endemic problem. News reporting in both China and Taiwan indicates that during the pandemic telecommunication fraud became even more widespread, with an [increasing number of reports surfacing on the luring and trafficking of individuals from the Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan to operate in such illegal “industries.”](#) However, the Chinese police recently claimed their campaign launched in 2018 had been so successful that online fraud had been contained.

While establishing these operations to hunt down those accused of fraud and telecommunications fraud, China identified nine countries particularly prone to hosting Chinese nationals engaging in such criminal activities, the “nine forbidden countries.” However, the setting up of overseas police “service stations” is a worldwide

phenomenon, with the majority of such being in western democratic nations, with a particular focus on Europe, and not in the “nine forbidden countries.” As documents identified by Safeguard Defenders show, such overseas police “service stations” have been used by police back in China to carry out such “persuasion to return” operations on foreign soil, including in Europe.

Abandoning any pretext of due process or the consideration of suspects’ innocence until proven guilty, targeting suspects’ children and relatives in China as “guilty by association” or “collateral damage,” and using threats and intimidation to target suspects abroad, **is now itself becoming an endemic problem.**

## Local Beginnings

After being listed by the inter-ministerial joint meeting of China’s State Council as a “Key Rectification Area of the Origins of Criminals Going Overseas for Fraud”, on 18 September 2018, the government of Anxi County, Fujian, held a “thousand person” conference and launched operation “Fighting Gangsters and Scammers Going Overseas from the Area Where They Come From” (扫黑除恶专项斗争暨赴境外诈骗流出地专项整治) to combat transnational telecom fraud.<sup>1</sup>

Under the campaign, Fujian province departments at all levels were instructed to carry out five measures against fraud suspects, actions to be taken before any suspect was taken before a court of law:

- (1) Demolish property built using illicit money and recover any illicit money;

- (2) Ban the children of suspects from studying in public schools;
- (3) Suspend all medical insurance subsidies and confiscate passports;
- (4) Ban “dishonest persons” from taking high-speed rail and planes or being accommodated in hotels;
- (5) Stop all applications for policy subsidies at the county level or above.

Additionally, the Anxi county government also required that local leaders in villages where there were more than two fraudsters should be “dismissed or mandated to resign” and that if one person were to be arrested for the crime of telecommunications fraud, the whole village (community) should be “notified and criticized.”<sup>2</sup>



Anxi “Thousand Person Conference”<sup>13</sup>

The Anxi County government's campaign launch was not without controversy. Since the targets are merely suspects, and the five punishments are all carried out before any guilt has been established, Xinhua Net in an article that same month opposed the measure of banning suspects' children's access to school, equating such action as guilt by association. While it stated that such actions were unfit for a modern society, it endorsed all other aspects of the campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Multiple domestic media reports of the meeting lauded the conference's launch of the "hundred-day battle" from 1 September to 31 December (2021). Later, similar operations were launched in some 10 provinces, on a pilot basis. The basis for this was the "National Supervision Work Plan for the Special Fight against Organized Crime" issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council.<sup>5</sup> These pilot projects were supervised by the Provincial-level Commissions for Discipline Inspection (CDI's) and was applauded for its success by the Supreme People's Court on 31 January 2019.<sup>6</sup>

As language from the Anxi county "thousand-person conference" demonstrates however, **the battle did not stop at home but needed to be taken overseas.** According to cited reports of the meeting, it was all hands on deck: a "commando team" composed by the Public Security Bureau and assisted by propaganda, procuratorial and local cadres, public security bodies were tasked with taking the lead in setting up "anti-fraud" assaults abroad. An overseas "strike headquarters" was set up in Yunnan to carry out "crackdown, persuasion, dispersion, control and publicity work," and a reported number of 70 people were sent directly overseas to conduct "foreign strike operations."<sup>7</sup>

There was no mincing of words on the methods to be employed either: **"A group of immediate family members of the Party members and cadres should be persuaded to return in an all-around way."** Those refusing or unable to cooperate in persuading suspects to return home would themselves be handed over to the County Commission for Discipline Inspection and the Supervisory Commission for investigation and punishment.<sup>8</sup>

## Going Global: "Catch them within and outside the borders"

On 14 April 2022, Vice-Minister of Public Security Du Hangwei revealed last year's nationwide achievements of crackdown on telecom fraud in a press conference, stating:

*"We persuaded 210,000 people to return in the last year [2021]..."<sup>9</sup> Additionally, on 17 August 2022, the Ministry of Public Security announced the total tally of those persuaded to return under this campaign alone from April 2021 to July 2022 stood at 230,000 individuals: "The number of cross-border telecom fraud cases targeting Chinese residents has been significantly decreased in China, with 230,000 telecom fraud suspects being educated and persuaded to return to China from overseas to confess crimes from April 2021 to July 2022 [...]"<sup>10</sup>*

This followed earlier actions to expand the campaign. One year before, on 26 January 2021, the Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Public Security issued a document, "Bulletin of the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the Ministry of Public Security Regarding Urging Criminal Suspects Involved in Cross-Border Gambling to Voluntarily Surrender Themselves" (最高人民法院最高人民检察院公安部关于敦促跨境赌博相关犯罪嫌疑人投案自首的通告), calling on the suspects of cross-border gambling to return to surrender in exchange for lighter punishments. The deadline given was 30 April 2021. The same notice also asked judicial organs to encourage individuals or organizations to persuade suspects to return.<sup>11</sup>

The Anti-Telecom and Online Fraud Law (ATOFL)<sup>12</sup>, passed 2 September 2022 and coming into effect 1 December includes extraterritoriality provisions for Chinese citizens. It states in article 3 that:

The Law shall apply to fighting the telecom and online fraud in China's territory, or telecom and online fraud **overseas committed by Chinese citizens**. It also stipulates that **overseas organizations or individuals engaging in or assisting in telecom and online fraud against people in China's territory** shall be held accountable.

The law also strengthen government regulation in fighting fraud, with article 6 empowering the State Council to establish an anti-telecom and online fraud work mechanism to coordinate the work. Local governments at all levels shall organize and lead the anti-telecom and online fraud work within their respective region. Article 25, which outlines the work to be undertaken against fraud, and activities to be considered criminal, includes an un-defined "other acts of providing support or assistance to telecom and online fraud activities".

# Nine forbidden countries

Shortly following the 26 January bulletin, on 4 April 2021, an annual session on combating telecom-related crimes was held (国打击治理电信网络新型违法犯罪工作会议), after which local governments all over the country, mainly on county but also on township and village levels issued various “return persuasion” announcements. According to an estimate by outlet Southern Weekend<sup>13</sup>, over 110 announcements were issued, with many from Hunan, Fujian and Sichuan. The majority of identified targets were located in northern Myanmar.

According to Wang Bo (pseudonym), a Hunan police official working on telecom fraud cited in Southern Weekend’s coverage, it was the first time a nationwide “persuasion to return” campaign had been initiated against telecom fraud suspects. Many of the policies employed were based on the Anxi government’s “hundred-day” pilot campaign in 2018.

Wang Bo told Southern Weekend that although **not all (Chinese) citizens staying in northern Myanmar were engaged in criminal activities, they would still be regarded as targets for persuasion**. Wang admitted that some suspects persuaded to return would only be imposed a fine for smuggling as the police held **no evidence of crimes**.<sup>14</sup>

On 17 September 2021, Director of the Criminal Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security Liu Zhongyi (刘忠义) disclosed that a total of **54,000** fraud suspects had been persuaded to return **solely from northern Myanmar** since the beginning of the year.<sup>15</sup> If the rate held steady for the full year of 2021, as many as 81,000 or more Chinese nationals may have been persuaded to return from northern Myanmar alone.

Solely in Wandong (晚町), a river port bordering Myanmar in Ruili city, Yunnan province, over 960 suspects of telecom fraud and over 100 suspects of cross-border gambling returned to China to

surrender between January and October 2021.<sup>16</sup>

In July 2022, the government of Wenchang City, Hainan province, issued a notice to disclose the names and pictures of those from Wenchang “illegally staying in northern Myanmar” and warned them to return. If they did not contact their local police stations by 10 August 2022:

- (1) Their spouses, parents and children would all be suspended from getting subsidies such as severe illness insurance and medical insurance subsidies;
- (2) **Their children would be disqualified to enter urban schools once the parents failed to show up together in the interviews for registrations or to apply for the admission jointly;**
- (3) Their immediate family would be blocked in principle from joining the Party and the military, and from taking the exams for becoming public servants or employees of state-owned companies;
- (4) Real estate purchased with their illicit money would be vacated and auctioned, any personnel settled in the property would be forcibly driven out, and houses built with stolen money would be demolished.<sup>17</sup>

Even though none of those targeted had been convicted of any crime and, notwithstanding Xinhua’s prior warnings that such actions would paint relatives, children and family members as guilty by association, collateral punishment continued to remain a key part of the “persuasion to return” operation.<sup>18</sup>

Similar notices giving deadlines for suspects to return “voluntarily” or else face a variety of punishments against their children or family members continued to pop up in various cities during 2021 and 2022.

In February 2022, the government of Laiyang city, Yantai, Shandong province, issued a notice to ask



those from Laiyang “illegally staying” in northern Myanmar to return by 31 March 2022. If they did not follow the notice, the bank accounts of their immediate family members and friends who engaged in financial transactions with the suspects would be controlled, restricted or even cancelled. The suspect’s children would also be moved back to their hometown for school. Moreover, if family members refused to cooperate with the authorities in persuading the suspects to return, they would see their policy benefits and subsidies suspended or cancelled.<sup>19</sup>

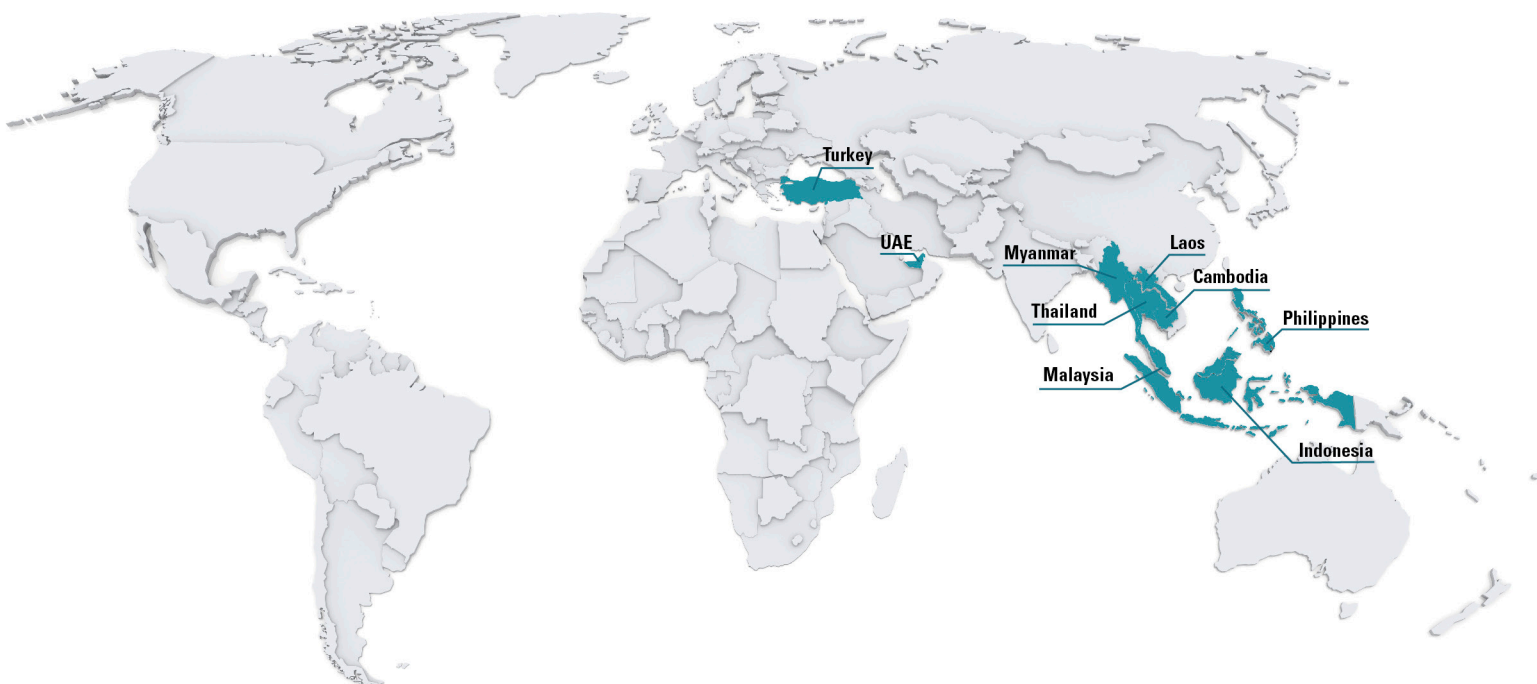
Local governments are not left to their own devices in setting out these operations, nor do announcements issued by local government authorities target only Myanmar. In addition to “persuasion to return” operations by local governments, the central Ministry of Public Security (MPS) sent multiple working groups to Cambodia, the UAE, northern Myanmar and other key countries and regions to carry out international law enforcement operations during 2021.<sup>20</sup>

Cambodia has become so popular for Chinese anti-fraud operations that in 2019 Chinese police moved to set up a joint law enforcement office

with its Cambodian counterparts in the capital of Phnom Penh. In 2021, at least 610 Chinese nationals suspected of online fraud were repatriated to China: none of them via formal extradition procedures, but simply deported with the direct cooperation from the Cambodian authorities. As of July 2022, one report notes that four mass deportations had occurred over the last year.<sup>21</sup> Cambodia is one of many countries around Asia with a ratified bilateral extradition treaty with the PRC, but these are rarely – or in some cases, never – used as authorities instead rely on the faster, smoother and easier method of having people deported – thus depriving them of any chance of due process to fight accusations of criminal behavior.

Similar stories of often young people being lured to other countries only to be held hostage and forced to engage in online scams are not limited to Cambodia. One report identifies Myanmar as another hotspot for such actions, where people are often promised well paid positions to lure them, while others end up being forced into prostitution.<sup>22</sup> Another report from Phoenix Weekly cited a police source stating that over 100,000 Chinese people in Myanmar alone were engaged in telecom fraud.

## The nine fraud-related countries



In Yunnan province, some 13,380 people were detained for illegal border crossings in 2020, a major increase from the year before.<sup>23</sup>

Reports cited above indicates that among suspected criminals there are also entirely innocent people simply living in the wrong country, as well as victims themselves who have been forced into such illegal acts through threats, smuggling and intimidation.

Since the end of November 2021, many notices have been issued to warn the Chinese public **not to travel to nine countries** with serious telecom and web crimes: Cambodia, the UAE, the Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Malaysia, Turkey and Indonesia. **People who have no "strict necessity" or "emergency reason" to travel to or stay in those countries are required to return to China** as soon as possible.<sup>24</sup>

## Attacking non-suspects abroad

On 11 March 2022, Li Qingqing (pseudonym), a woman from Yuanzhuang township, Xianyou County, Fujian province, who currently runs a restaurant in Phnom Penh, was asked by the Yuanzhuang police to return. She argued that she is not a suspect of any crime and is just doing business in Cambodia. The police told her that according to China's policy, Chinese citizens staying in the nine fraud-related countries are required to return unconditionally. After that, she continually received messages from the local police asking her to return.

On 5 May, **police informed her she had been put on the telecom suspect list and warned her that her**

**mother's house would be cut off from power and water supplies.** Her mother's house was later spray-painted with the words "House of Telecom Fraud" and a policy notice was posted next to the spray-painting. Her mother was then called to the village committee and asked to persuade her daughter to return by 31 May.<sup>25</sup> Li's current fate and whether she has or has not returned is unknown.

Li's is not the only case. As early as 2021, Chinese media reported on how local police went around to fraud suspects' hometowns and sprayed "shameful fraud" on a relative's house and cut off power supply.<sup>26</sup>

## "110 Overseas": Widening the net?

"Foreign strike operations" are not limited to the nine forbidden countries as the Fujian pilot origins demonstrate. While many of the publicly reported operations appear to have been conducted mainly through online means, on 22 January 2022, Liu Rongyan, Director of the Overseas Chinese Police

Office of the Public Security Bureau in Fuzhou City, Fujian Province, announced that the Fuzhou Public Security Bureau had opened its "first batch" of 30 overseas police service stations in 25 cities in 21 countries.

110 is the emergency phone number in China, much like 911 and 112 in the US and EU respectively. The Fuzhou city police operation out of Fujian province uses the name "110 Overseas" for its campaign, while other police jurisdictions uses different names.

The list of thirty initial Fuzhou “110 Overseas” offices is clearly expanding rapidly, as an announcement on the joint launch with the Fuzhou Public Security Bureau from the Fujian Overseas Chinese Hometown Association in Prato, Italy, from 30 March demonstrates<sup>27</sup>, with the reported tally on 21 June standing at 38 stations across five continents.<sup>28</sup>

There is no complete list of such “110 Overseas” police service stations available, but the initial list, along with further stations identified by Safeguard Defenders via government announcement, provides a clue to how it looks worldwide, even though the number is undoubtedly larger and such stations more widespread. The list herein presented are the service stations run by Fuzhou city and Qingtian city police, while a government announcement earlier<sup>29</sup> stated that such work had begun in ten provinces, and hence one can assume the list of such stations goes far beyond what can be presented here.

While not the object of this investigation, at first glance at least some of the associations abroad are tied to the United Front system, such as the French Fujian Federation of Industry and Commerce and the Shiyi Hometown Association in Fuzhou, France<sup>30</sup>, cited among the first overseas service stations for Fuzhou police overseas Chinese affairs established by the Fuzhou Public Security Bureau.<sup>31</sup>

序号	国家	城市	海外站点地址	海外当地电话
1	法国	巴黎	19 Avenue de Choisy 75013 PARIS FRANCE	0783316666 0783725555
2	法国	巴黎	26Bue du ballon Noisy Le Grand	69819872
3	西班牙	马德里	calle Anor Herasoo 30 bis, 28026 Madrid Spain	+34646606919 +34688178178
4	西班牙	马德里	C/BACO 7 PBI TORREJON DE ARDOZ MADRID	0034-698783555
5	西班牙	巴塞罗那	INDUSTRIA 79 08025 BARCELONA SPAIN	0034+696070988
6	西班牙	瓦伦西亚	C/Pelayo 16 1-2 46007 Valencia Spain (商会办公室)	962507368 650486098
7	加拿大	多伦多	2537 Warden Ave Scarborough ON Canada M1W 2M5	64773511002
8	加拿大	多伦多	1/2 unit, 220 Royal Crest Ct, Markham, Ontario	6477037666
9	加拿大	多伦多	96LACROIX RD UNIT 10, ONTARIO	6472893333
10	巴西	圣保罗	Rua carnot 549 ,Canindé 2 楼4号	005511 977777190
11	阿根廷	布宜诺斯艾利斯	CARRERA MISTRAL 5452	1124649998
12	美国	纽约	107 E Broadway #3A New York N.Y.10002	1917379023 212-966-9977
13	美国	伦敦	3rd Floor 2 The Arcade 32-34 High Street London E20 1YE	0044-7999319999
14	美国	伦敦	49 Watford Way, London, W14 3TE U.K.	02070606999
15	美国	格拉斯哥	417 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, G2 3LG, Glasgow, U.K.	7833224886
16	匈牙利	布达佩斯	Bungary Budapest 1105, cserkezz Utc37.	15980648361
17	希腊	雅典	AGISSLION 29-ATHENS-GREECE	0030693930888
18	柬埔寨	马普卢	MAPOYE 1, TIKOE AREA WASEBU 100, LEKTOBO	002656757777 +26657870887
19	尼日利亚	贝宁城	Fongins Steel Co.Ltd.Opus Community, off Sapele Road Bypass, pipe line Road, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria	08156566666 08156658888
20	乌兹别克斯坦	锡尔河	Sirdaryo tumani Sirdaryo shaxri Buryodkor maxalasi O'qituvchilar kochasi 58 uy	998999168888
21	捷克	布拉格	Lipova 8, Praha 2	222543589
22	蒙古国	乌兰巴托	蒙古国乌兰巴托成吉思汗19区工厂街拉河街370-3号	99975866
23	智利	比亚德里尔玛	Von Schroeders 403, Villa Del Mar, Chile	0056-999-666666
24	葡萄牙	波尔图	AREA F LOTE 12A ZONA ZONA INDUSTRIAL DE AVOROE 4480/623 VILA DO COMEIO PORTO PORTUGAL	965625197
25	葡萄牙	马德拉群岛	Rua Comandante Comacho del S. 8350-208rbeira brava	929165908
26	厄瓜多尔	基多	AV. GONZALEZ SUAREZ N27-142 QUITO ECUADOR	0999161065
27	文莱	斯里巴加湾	ground floor, the crowne princess complex, lorong 1, jalan laksaan Abdul razak, bandar seri begawan BAIT2, Brunel Darussalam	13923197181
28	日本	东京	F101-0024 日本東京都千代田区神田和泉町2-27 十国会館	0081-80-7202-8899
29	荷兰	鹿特丹	Van der Sijzstraet 370, Rotterdam	+31611333666

List of the “first batch of Fuzhou county overseas police service stations”<sup>32</sup>

The United Front system (United FrontWork) is the work of Chinese Communist Party agencies seeking to co-opt and influence ‘representative figures’ and groups inside and outside China, with a particular focus on religious, ethnic minority and diaspora communities.

Overseas hometown associations, while often providing genuine services to the community, have by now become overwhelmingly co-opted by the CCP’s United Front organizations, which seek to increasingly control the Chinese diaspora. Leaders of hometown associations are frequently rewarded with meetings with CCP officials, participation in party-organised events and symbolic appointments to party-controlled bodies in China. In return, they are expected to assist the party in its propaganda and political influence activities, such as promoting China’s invasion (under the propaganda guise of “peaceful reunification”) of Taiwan.<sup>33</sup> This has

become an even more emphatic feature following Xi Jinping’s latest assertions on the importance of the United FrontWork in the summer of 2022:

*“Xi said that as China is striving to build itself into a modern socialist country and realize national rejuvenation, the United Front plays a more important role in gathering broad support to concentrate on the central tasks and serve the overall interests of the country. [...] He also underlined the need to foster overseas patriotic elements and enhance United Front work online.”<sup>34</sup>*

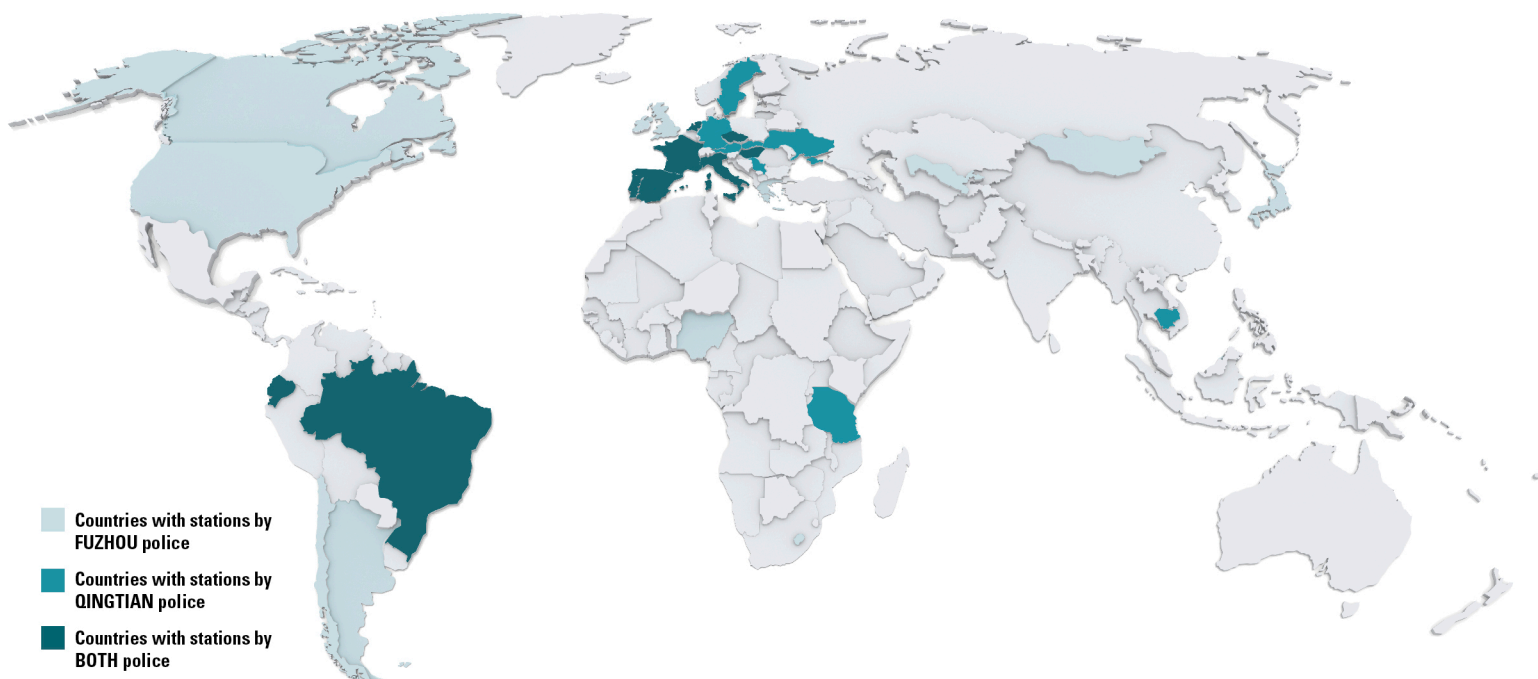


Fuzhou public security overseas police service station, Prato, Italy<sup>35</sup>

Openly labeled as overseas police service stations to accommodate the growing administrative needs of Fuzhou residents abroad – for example in renewing Chinese driver's licenses remotely and other tasks traditionally considered of a consular nature – the “110 Overseas stations”, both in their online and physical overseas form, also serve a more sinister goal as they contribute to “*resolutely cracking down on all kinds of illegal and criminal activities involving overseas Chinese.*”<sup>36</sup>

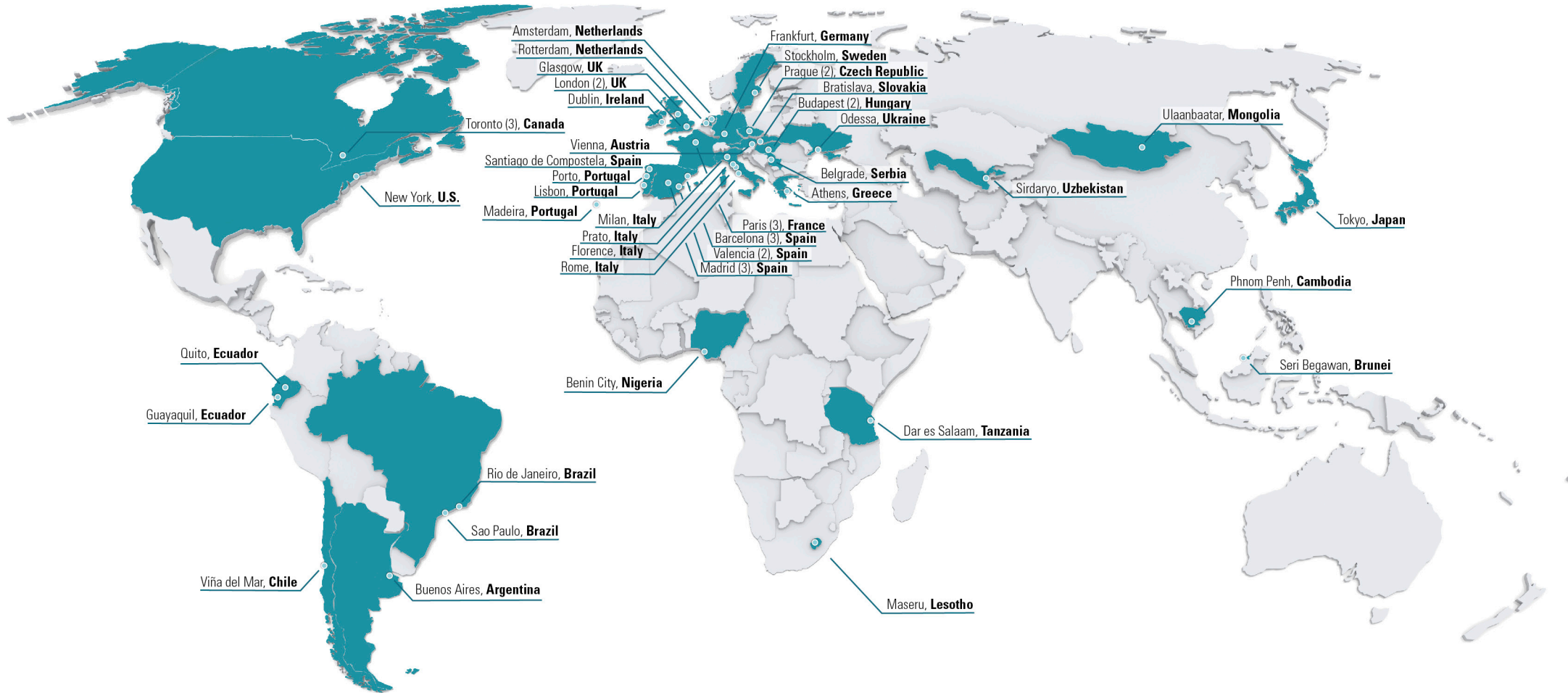
In one account provided by the authorities themselves, we find direct **evidence of their role in the “persuade to return” method abroad:** On April 11, 2022, an “110 Overseas” notice was received from Mozambique by the Yangxia Police Station, with a businessman reporting that one of his employees had stolen a large amount of cash

from the company before fleeing back to China in 2020. Upon receiving the notice, the police station immediately took to investigate and arrested the suspect on 18 May. When the suspect confessed to the existence of an accomplice, “Yu”, the “*police quickly identified Yu and immediately mobilized to persuade him (to return) after confirming that he was still in Mozambique. After being persuaded to return, [Yu] decided to cooperate with the police and fly back to China from Mozambique.*”<sup>37</sup> According to another official source on this case, the local police “*contacted Yu’s relatives back in China and urged them to persuade Yu to surrender as soon as possible*” and meanwhile “*directly got in touch with Yu and told him relevant laws and policies*”, making Yu give in.<sup>38</sup>



FUZHOU-RUN OVERSEAS POLICE "SERVICE STATIONS"		QINGTIAN-RUN OVERSEAS POLICE "SERVICE STATIONS"	
Country	City	Country	City
<b>EUROPE</b>			
Ireland	Dublin		
The Netherlands	Rotterdam	The Netherlands	Amsterdam
Portugal	Porto		
Portugal	Madeira	Portugal	Lisbon
Czech Republic	Prague	Czech Republic	Prague
Hungary	Budapest	Hungary	Budapest
		Slovakia	Bratislava
		Germany	Frankfurt
Italy	Prato	Italy	Rome
		Italy	Milan
		Italy	Florence
France	Paris (x2)	France	Paris
Spain	Madrid (x2)	Spain	Madrid
Spain	Barcelona (x2)	Spain	Barcelona
Spain	Valencia	Spain	Santiago de Compostela
		Spain	Valencia
UK	London (x2)		
UK	Glasgow		
Greece	Athens		
		Sweden	Stockholm
		Austria	Vienna
		Ukraine	Odessa
		Serbia	Belgrade
<b>AMERICAS</b>			
Canada	Toronto (x3)		
U.S.	New York		
Brazil	Sao Paulo	Brazil	Rio de Janeiro
Argentina	Buenos Aires		
Chile	Viña del Mar		
Ecuador	Quito	Ecuador	Guayaquil
<b>ASIA</b>			
Uzbekistan	Sirdaryo		
Mongolia	Ulaanbaatar		
Brunei	Seri Begawan		
Japan	Tokyo		
		Cambodia	Phnom Penh
<b>AFRICA</b>			
Nigeria	Benin City		
Lesotho	Maseru		
		Tanzania	Dar es Salaam

# Map of publicly documented Overseas Police Service Centers from Fuzhou County and Qingtian County<sup>39</sup>



In another account, the authorities touted their ability to “carry out systematic inspections” and in visits to “ensure” the suspect’s “return to China and smooth surrender”<sup>40</sup>.

Even publicly available stories on the use of the “hardcore operations of 110 Overseas”, by victims of what appears to be a growing ring of trafficking and luring of individuals by scammers abroad, highlight the centrality of the public security and “persuade to return” methods for prosecution:

*“Comrade police, help me!” At about 10:00 on May 13, the Lianjiang County Public Security Bureau received a “special” alarm call from the 110 Overseas alarm service desk of the Municipal Bureau. The caller was Yang Moudong, a villager from Huangqi Town. He claimed that he had been deceived into engaging in illegal online gambling activities abroad and hoped to return to China to surrender. Managing to escape his captors, Yang Moudong dialed the Fuzhou Public Security “110 Overseas” alarm number, leading to a coordinated effort between the*

*Lianjiang County Public Security Bureau, the Huangqi police station and criminal investigation brigade, and the (provincial) foreign affairs department of the Ministry of Public Security to carry out systematic verification, visit and investigation to ensure that Yang Moudong can return to China smoothly and surrender. According to the report’s conclusion, since his return to China, the public security organs are seriously dealing with his criminal acts in accordance with the law. At present, the case is pending trial.*<sup>41</sup>



Fuzhou public security “110 Overseas” opens Nigeria, Benin City service station

## “Extending the prosecutor's service tentacles overseas”

*“The procuratorial work involving overseas Chinese is long-term. The procuratorial and overseas Chinese should cooperate closely and strengthen interaction to normalize the mechanisms such as information exchange, legal publicity, joint visits and joint meetings. They should give full play to the ‘four major procuratorial’ functions of the procuratorial organs in criminal, civil, administrative and public interest litigation [...]”*

Li Riqin, Minqing County Procuratorate, Fujian<sup>42</sup>

Whereas the Fujian “overseas police service station” presents direct links with the local Public Security Bureau, additional close ties appear between the prosecutorial work by the Fujian Provincial People’s Procuratorate and “procuratorates and overseas Chinese communication stations” (检侨联络站); or as one article puts it: “extending the prosecutor’s

*service tentacles to overseas Chinese-related and Taiwan-related procuratorial work”<sup>43</sup>, in which “cooperation between procuratorates and overseas Chinese (检侨合作)” is gradually being rolled out in various places, with “overseas contact points in Italy, Germany and other countries to carry out overseas Chinese-related prosecution work such as transoceanic mediation, cross-border inquiries, video reports and complaints.”<sup>44</sup>*

According to a July 2022<sup>45</sup> People’s Daily report, the Fujian Provincial People’s Procuratorate and the Provincial Overseas Chinese Federation in April jointly issued their “Opinions on Strengthening the Procuratorial Work of Overseas Chinese Involved in the New Era to Protect the Legitimate Rights and Interests of Returned Overseas Chinese and Overseas Chinese in Accordance with the Law”. While Safeguard Defenders was unable to retrieve

the cited "Opinions", an article explaining the content of a similar opinion issued by Zhejiang Province and the Provincial Overseas Chinese Federation provides further confirmation of the strong links between the prosecutorial functions and overseas stations:

*"According to the 'Opinions', the provincial procuratorate will set up a special department dedicated to guiding and coordinating the procuratorial work related to overseas Chinese [...] the provincial procuratorial organ will strengthen communication and cooperation with the overseas Chinese work department, and establish mechanisms such as joint meetings, work reports, supervision and case handling."<sup>46</sup>*

It must be noted that the wording used in the document – "Qiao (侨)" – is used to refer to both Chinese currently overseas as well as ethnic Chinese who have returned from overseas. In some cases therefore, the overseas related tasks of the police and/or procuratorate actually refer to the domestic affairs of Chinese currently living inside China following their return from abroad.

It is not immediately clear whether the before-cited "overseas service stations" tied to the Public Security Bureau and the "procuratorates and overseas Chinese communication stations" linked to the Procuratorates overlap completely. Yet both the methods employed and the use of "hometown associations" abroad appear identical. The Zhejiang Province example provides further direct evidence from one of its counties, Qingtian:



Qingtian County Public Security Bureau sets up Overseas Police Service centers.<sup>47</sup>

On 23 May 2019, People's Public Security News published the article 《探索爱侨护侨助侨机制，设立警侨驿站海外服务中心 青田警方积极打造“枫桥经验”海外版》<sup>48</sup> on the Qingtian County Public Security Bureau's "innovative set up of Overseas Police Service Centers" providing "convenient services for the vast number of overseas Chinese" in a cited 21 cities in 15 countries, including Rome, Milan, Paris, Vienna, Austria, etc., "hiring 135 Qingtian-born overseas Chinese leaders and leaders of overseas Chinese groups" and "establishing a team of more than 1,000 overseas grid service information personnel"; coordinated by a "domestic liaison center":

Beyond listing the performance of objectively useful services to the Qingtian overseas community of a cited 330,000 individuals in over 120 countries such as the renewal of passports, the article expressly references the overseas centers' role in the "collection of overseas Chinese sentiments, public opinions and policy information push," as well as its global policing efforts under Operation Fox Hunt<sup>49</sup>:

*"Through the establishment of overseas service centers, Qingtian County Police has made breakthroughs in its overseas pursuit of fugitives. Since 2018, the Qingtian police have detected and solved six criminal cases related to overseas Chinese, successfully arrested a red notice fugitive, and persuaded two suspects to surrender under the assistance from the Overseas centers."<sup>50</sup>*

The article goes on to provide a case example of the overseas center's role in the successful "persuade to return" of Fox Hunt target Xia, who was accused of theft and fled to Serbia. "Through lots of efforts on investigation, the police found the location where Xia was hiding in Belgrade. After successfully getting in touch with Xia through the overseas service center, the Qingtian police worked jointly with the staff members of the overseas service center to carry out the persuasion to return through WeChat audio and video communication."<sup>51</sup>

In another reported example from 2020 of a suspect wanted for environmental pollution in China, the County Procuratorate in Qingtian, Zhejiang Province, joined efforts with the Qingtian Hometown Association of Spain - through the County Overseas Chinese Federation -, following an



investigation by the Qingtian County Public Security Bureau and an “online chase” of the suspect that had failed to yield the desired result. In the end, “with the efforts of all parties, Liu began to have the idea of returning to China to surrender [...]” and according to the report shortly thereafter did surrender in Qingtian. Following the success of the operation, JiYongjun, a full-time member of the Procuratorate Committee of Qingtian County Procuratorate and chairman of the Overseas Chinese Federation was quoted to have said that “the procuratorate will launch a quick mechanism for handling cases involving overseas Chinese”.<sup>52</sup>

### 从西班牙马德里到青田“检侨之家”劝返追逃嫌疑人

数字信息网 2020-01-18 41663



“From Madrid, Spain, to Qingtian's 'Home for Overseas Chinese Inspection': Fugitive persuaded to return.”<sup>53</sup>

# Conclusion

## Worrying Growth of China's Transnational Repression

The scourge of fraud and online fraud has become endemic in China, both within its borders and outside. Police reported in April 2022 that they had resolved 394,000 cases and arrested 634,000 suspects in 2021 – an increase of 28.5% and 76.6% respectively – while also stating that the successful campaign had effectively curbed the growth of online fraud crimes.<sup>54</sup> A big part of this campaign has been to effectively target those suspected of fraud, as well as related cases of human trafficking, abroad. Vice-Minister Du of the Ministry of Public Security indicated that the focus on fraudsters abroad has been an important part of the campaign, and China Daily reported *“the number of people who committed crimes against Chinese people from abroad has significantly decreased”*<sup>55</sup>.

However, nothing indicates this campaign is about to slow down. Liu Zhongyi, head of the criminal investigation bureau of the Ministry of Public Security, said: *“The rapid rise in cases has been effectively curbed, but the telecom fraud crime situation remains grim and complex, and the intensified crackdown and comprehensive governance should remain.”*<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, the transnational mechanisms set up under this campaign may well serve other overseas policing purposes as well, as some cited examples already indicate. Much of the information contained in this brief investigation is very recent, making it difficult to fully capture the picture of how these mechanisms interact and/or overlap. China's growing campaign to police Chinese nationals abroad has gone hand in hand with its expanded “anti-corruption” campaign domestically, but it is rare to get insight into the true scope of its action. While it was known that lower value targets are often pursued via “persuaded to return” tactics, the

data presented in this brief are the first to provide some insight into the scope and methodology of this specific campaign... one among many.

Safeguard Defenders research into the methods of Involuntary Returns showed that the Sky Net campaign – which includes operation Fox Hunt targeting higher value suspects – surpassed 10,000 successful returns by Christmas 2021, from 120 different countries. Our deep-dive into individual cases also demonstrated how only about 50% of those reported were successful, and how most involved dissidents or individuals that had fled religious and/or ethnic persecution. As [announced in March](#) 2022, Sky Net and Fox Hunt are set to expand. [Another report](#) showed how China, tied to Xi Jinping's signature “anti-corruption” campaign, have significantly expanded its use of INTERPOL.

Whether the targets are dissidents, corrupt officials or low-level criminals, the problem remains the same: The use of irregular methods – often combining carrots with sticks – against the targeted individual or their family members in China undermines any due process and the most basic rights of suspects. The described treatment of targets, their families and even wider community as suspected criminals – in some cases even in the absence of any factual accusation as emerges from the “nine forbidden countries” – further deprives them of the right to be considered innocent until proven otherwise and the right to a fair trial, and also institutes a far-reaching “guilt by association” paradigm.

Furthermore, the disregard for the use of proper channels and processes in international relations is blatant. Despite China's insistence on the establishment of bilateral extradition treaties

or other mechanisms of judicial cooperation – which serve both a specific propaganda purpose in legitimizing the Chinese Communist Party-controlled judicial system, as well as nurturing a *chilling effect* for the rapidly growing number of individuals fleeing China – it rarely uses these legal international procedures. Rather than cooperating with local authorities in the full respect of territorial sovereignty, it prefers – as reiterated frequently in the articles cited in this investigation – to cooperate with (United Front-linked) overseas “NGOs” or “civil society associations” across the five continents, setting up an alternative policing and judicial system within third countries, and directly implicating those organizations in the illegal methods employed to pursue “fugitives”

This methodology further allows them to circumvent firmly-set international principles such as the non-derogatory principle of non-refoulement

under the United Nations Convention Against Torture and the UN Convention on the Protection of Refugees, or the guarantees established under international mechanisms such as the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto.<sup>57</sup>

As these operations continue to develop and new mechanisms are set up, it is evident that countries governed by the standards set by universal human rights and the rule of law urgently need to investigate these practices to identify the (local) actors at work, mitigate the risks and effectively protect the growing number of those targeted.

For a further set of recommended actions in and by democratic countries, find Safeguard Defenders’ [factsheet on countering extraditions](#), report on [Involuntary Returns](#) and manual on dealing with extraditions to China, [Hide and Seek](#).

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