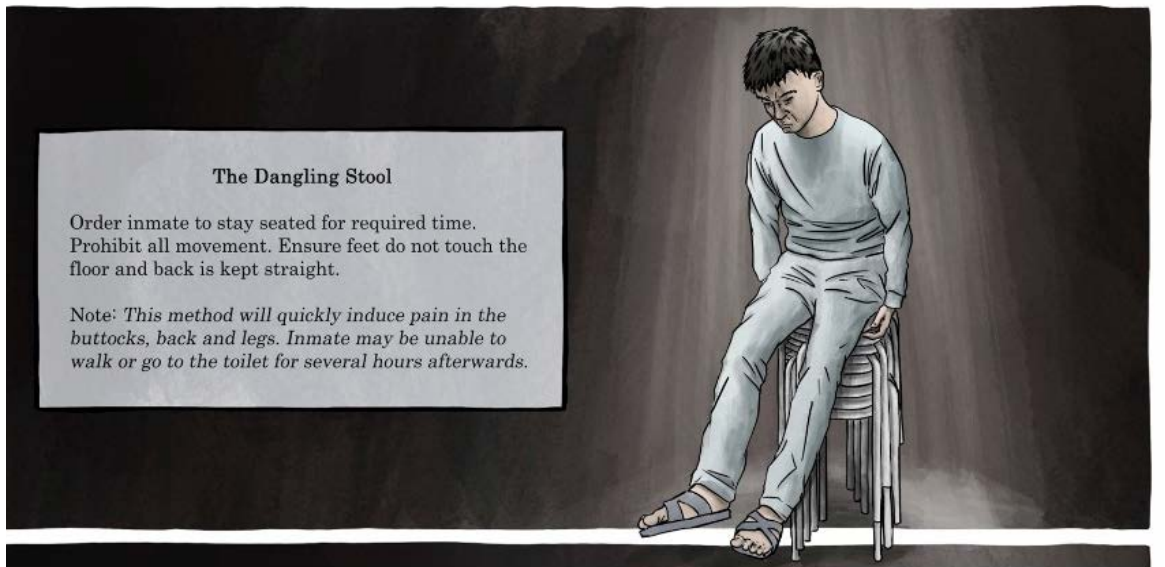


CHINA INSIDER

CHINA'S SECRET PRISON SYSTEM

BEIJING'S NETWORK OF EXTRA-JUDICIAL DETENTION SITES HAS CLAIMED 100,000 VICTIMS, RIGHTS GROUP SAYS

See Page 4



Unreported Deaths, Forced Child Separations Stir Outrage in Locked-Down Shanghai

EVA FU

In 20 days, she would turn 100. The family had been counting the days to bring the Shanghai woman in front of 100 small cakes, surrounded by sparkling candles and grandchildren who grew into adults under her loving care. Little did they know, that day would never come.

The woman tested positive for COVID-19 on March 26 and again two days later, and she was sent to the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center for treatment. During the following three days, staff from the hospital told relatives in multiple phone calls that they had “made arrangements” for the 99-year-old’s care, that she was in “pretty good shape,” and that they needn’t worry, a relative relayed in a social media post. Her test results came back negative on March 31.

Then, the family was told that she was dead—a result of organ failure caused by existing conditions and aggravated by the virus, according to the hospital.

The woman’s death is one case among many coming out of medical facilities in Shanghai, the affluent Chinese city of 26 million now undergoing a full-scale lockdown in the regime’s bid to gain an upper hand over the fast-spreading Omicron coronavirus variant.

While the causes of death differ, the opacity of the city’s authorities has frustrated locals, whose grievances have been quickly building as they struggle to survive under the regime’s heavy-handed “zero-COVID” policies.

The center is one of several hospitals seeing a surge in COVID-19 infections, according to interviews and online pleas from caretakers and distressed locals who have families in those facilities.

Nationwide, China’s official COVID-19 count has been surging at a pace unseen in the past two years since the regime said it had controlled the outbreak in Wuhan in 2020. Caseload on Wednesday hit over 20,000, nearly doubling that of the previous day, with Shanghai identified as the principal virus hotspot. Although residents and experts have consistently argued that Chinese officials have a pattern of underreporting numbers.

China only recorded five deaths since May 1, 2020, and so far, no deaths have been officially reported in the city nor anywhere else in China in the current virus wave. But accounts from locals—including claims of elderly deaths after contracting COVID-19 and dead bodies left outside hospital doors—paint a far grimmer picture.

“Zero deaths to date in this COVID outbreak in Shanghai?” wrote an incredulous user whose grandmother had died at one of the city’s largest elderly care facilities, Shanghai Donghai Elderly Care Hospital, less than a week after receiving a positive COVID-19 test. “Who is lying and who should be held accountable?”

The woman who shared about the loss of her 99-year-old grandmother in a widely shared post identified herself as the CEO of a film production company in Shanghai. She didn’t respond to inquiries from The Epoch Times.

The saddest and most unacceptable regret is that we weren’t able to see grandma one last time and couldn’t dress her in the burial clothes she wished,” she wrote in a lengthy post on April 5, using the moniker Ruru.

The hospital said the 99-year-old woman’s body would have to be cremated as with those who die of infection.

She also said that a 94-year-old grandmother of an acquaintance had died about a week earlier at Donghai Elderly Care Hos-



Health workers walk next to a residential compound during the second stage of a COVID-19 lockdown in Shanghai’s Jing’an district on April 1, 2022.

pital, which has been sealed off since early February. A woman surnamed Li wrote in another social media post that the same had happened to her 73-year-old father, who lived in the hospital for eight years and required constant care because of his paralysis. The man died on March 30, six days after the family was informed about his COVID-19 infection and subsequent quarantine.

Ruru said some dead bodies were laid on the streets in front of the Donghai Elderly Care Hospital because there were no relatives there to claim them. Meanwhile, doctors at the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center had pleaded with Ruru’s family to be patient when her grandmother first tested positive, saying that only five out of more than 20 of them were still healthy, according to Ruru.

The Epoch Times couldn’t independently verify these claims, but the allegations relating to the Donghai hospital align with an investigative report by Chinese media outlet Caixin. The now-deleted report cited a nurse who carried an 87-year-old’s body from a patient ward at 3 a.m. into the mortuary, where about 10 more bodies lay. Shanghai Pudong Funeral House confirmed receiving about a dozen bodies from the hospital on April 1, with some more going to other funeral homes, according to the report.

Six orderlies from the elderly care facility had previously told The Wall Street Journal about witnessing the removal of bodies from the hospital, where they said at least 100 people had become infected.

Calls for help from hospital caretakers and staff members have also proliferated on the internet. Some said they weren’t told about outbreaks in the hospital when reporting for work and became trapped inside the sealed wards with the infected. Authorities also threatened to cut all their pay if they failed to show up, some said.

Ruru also reported receiving pressure from authorities regarding her online comments. She said she got several calls from two dif-

ferent local police stations to delete her post about the 94-year-old grandmother of an acquaintance, because it was “too negative” and “could be exploited by those with ulterior motives.”

A doctor from Shanghai’s Yangsi Hospital, when reached by phone on April 3, told The Epoch Times that she didn’t know how many COVID-19 patients there were at the hospital.

“It’s not proper for me to ask about these matters,” she said.

The doctor hung up when asked if anyone could confirm such numbers.

Wei Yan (pseudonym) had been video calling her 95-year-old grandmother regularly since the city’s Tongkang Hospital closed to the public late last year. Then, around March 26, she started noticing hazmat suits among caretakers in the background. Wei’s grandmother tested positive three days later. Doctors and nurses in chat groups wouldn’t answer any questions from relatives for the following three days.

More than 30 seniors had fallen sick with COVID-19 at the same facility as of April 1, Wei said.

Worried about her grandmother’s heart disease and high blood pressure, Wei had asked to go into the hospital to care for her, saying she would sign an agreement waiving the hospital’s responsibility. But the hospital “would not let us in no matter what,” she told The Epoch Times.

Zero deaths to date in this COVID outbreak in Shanghai? Who is lying and who should be held accountable?

Chinese netizen

“The hospital had told those inside not to reveal the situation to the outside,” she said. “Even caretakers have to rely on guesswork.”

Forced Child Separations

Public outrage hasn’t been confined to the issue of opacity surrounding deaths and infections.

Footage of toddlers at a Shanghai medical facility left crying without adults attending them set off a storm of outrage over the weekend.

One video shows a hospital room the size of a large conference hall, with long stretches of beds lined up from wall to wall, filled with children. Only a few adults are seen trying to soothe the wailing babies, who far outnumber them.

Shanghai has quarantined hundreds of children younger than 6 after they tested positive for COVID-19, even though most have shown no symptoms.

The accounts of forced separation have shocked the country, with families across China now worrying whether they’ll be the

next to go through such painful separations under the regime’s tough COVID-19 measures.

“May I ask who will not have a breakdown when they see this?” a mother surnamed Zhu, whose 2-year-old daughter was placed in the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center in Jinshan district, where the videos allegedly emerged, told The Epoch Times.

As of March 26, at least 305 children younger than 6 have been placed in government quarantine centers, with the great majority of them being asymptomatic, according to city health officials.

But the plight of the children in the videos is vastly different from the assurances given by authorities, who promised parents that their sick children taken for quarantine would be “well taken care of” in rooms decorated with cartoon designs along with toys and supplies for drawing and handicrafts.

One mother, using the alias Zhao Qian, told Chinese state-run magazine China Philanthropist that around 10 children are cared for by each nurse.

“How can they possibly manage such a workload?” Zhao asked, noting that a lack of transparency from the hospitals has been frustrating.

The government-affiliated Shanghai Women’s Federation told the magazine on April 2 that it was looking into the issue.

The hospital released a statement on April 2 in response to parents’ concerns following the viral videos. It said staff were in the process of transferring the children to an expanded facility that formerly provided emergency outpatient care.

A worker from the hospital who answered the phone on April 2 declined to say how many children were being quarantined at the center.

“The hospital has made a response. It will improve,” the worker told The Epoch Times.

She hung up when asked about the sanitation concerns and whether the separation of minors from their guardians constitutes a breach of law.

Western diplomats also weighed in on the growing concerns, with consulate officials from more than two dozen countries signing letters to Chinese authorities urging that “parents and children should never be separated regardless of the circumstances.”

Wu Qianyu, an official with the city’s health commission, said on April 4 that parents could only stay with their children if they were also infected. Children younger than 7 will stay in Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center—where the videos first emerged—if their parents don’t qualify to accompany them. Other children will be sent to centralized quarantine centers, she said, noting that the policies may be adjusted in the future.

Her comments brought objections from many parents on Chinese social media.

“I’m also a father, and every time I see this topic, I just want to cry,” one user wrote. “I’d rather get infected together, but I have to stay with my child.”

WANG ZHAO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang inspect honor guards during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Oct. 9, 2019.

OPINION

China Tries to Turn the Solomon Islands Into a Vassal State

America and allies should protect its democracy by getting tougher

ANDERS CORR



New documents show that China seeks to expand its influence and military deployments in the Asia-Pacific islands nearly to the point of making one country, the Solomon Islands, into a vassal state.

Yet proposed policies to oppose Beijing’s latest expansionism rely on the same old failed soft diplomacy, economic incentives, and non-confrontation that create perverse incentives and push countries into the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) orbit.

The draft Sino-Solomon documents, titled as a framework agreement on security cooperation, demonstrate Beijing’s interest in advance arrangements for snap insertion of its security forces, and the use of a string of deep seaports globally for its increasingly far-flung naval activities.

The draft shows that Beijing is closing in on a security pact that, according to the Financial Times, would allow armed Chinese troops and police in the Solomon Islands to quell unrest, where the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) could build a naval base in the South Pacific, about 900 miles northeast of Australia.

The PLA Navy (PLAN) ships that dock in the Solomons could then supposedly protect Chinese citizens and infrastructure projects, according to the document. Local Chinese security personnel could provide extraterritorial policing and quell “social unrest” domestically.

Beijing’s move to militarize and domestically control the Solomons is a direct threat to American and Australian attempts to foster small and independent democracies in the region.

Were the CCP to insert military forces into the Solomons, it would be hard to dislodge them, even if public sentiment were against the PLA, as Beijing has a public history of bribes to politicians that barely scratches the surface, according to my source with knowledge of the matter.

China’s cash for votes in the Solomons have allegedly reached as much as \$615,000 per parliamentarian, according to reporting.

The Solomons’ public is largely against Beijing’s influence in the country, to the point that in November, residents rioted against the government and burned down a police station and parts of Chinatown.

Sadly, recent Chinese immigrants and other local ethnic Chinese, including second-generation immigrants, are bearing the brunt of the CCP’s overweening attempts at influence. Three

charred bodies were found within one of the burned buildings in Chinatown following the November unrest.

The draft agreement with Beijing includes a provision for extraterritorial policing by the regime in the Solomons. “The agreement included clauses that PLA vessels would be protected by Chinese security personnel when they docked in the Solomon Islands,” according to the Financial Times. “Chinese forces could also be called on to control ‘social unrest’ in the country and to protect Chinese personnel and projects.”

Beijing can point to precedent for inserting its security forces. In addition to over 100 Australian police and defense personnel, the Solomons’ government invited 10 police officers from China during the November riots.

Given the totalitarian nature of Beijing’s regime, the Solomons’ increasing security collaboration with the dictatorship should concern the United States and allies about Beijing’s growing influence in the Asia-Pacific. In 2019, the Solomons switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China, and the islands’ fall into Beijing’s orbit has since then only worsened.

Most Western analyses and reporting, other than in The New York Times, are rightly scathing in their assessment of the draft agreement, called symptomatic of “China’s Indo-Pacific empire” and its “Belt and Road colonialism,” by the chief of the Australian National University’s National Security College, Rory Medcalf, in the Financial Times.

Grant Newsham, a security expert who focuses on the Asia-Pacific, told The Wall Street Journal that the draft “is basically a treaty for a protectorate.”

Jonathan Pryke, at think tank Australia’s Lowy Institute, told the Journal, “It’s a pretty expansive security agreement that would be far greater than any agreement that China has made with any Pacific Island nation.”

The prime minister of the Solomons, Manasseh Sogavare, justified the agreement, which calls for secrecy between the two nations, saying that American and allied “liberal hegemony” has failed.

As liberal hegemony is a contradiction in terms, Sogavare misunderstands one or both concepts. Liberalism, as applied to international relations, supports a world of free and independent democracies without any hegemonic power.

As the United States has since World War I been the world’s most powerful liberal democracy, the burden of policing transgressions against the liberal world order has tended, unfairly, to fall on Washington. This includes fighting off Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Xi Jinping, and Vladimir Putin through-

out Europe and countries like Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, where the latter four dictators supported the illiberal expansion of authoritarian militaries.

Beijing supports its attempt to supplant the liberal world order with its own CCP hegemony by claiming that this costly responsibility borne by Washington is actually a form of hegemony or imperialism, which couldn’t be further from the truth.

The Solomons’ permanent secretary for the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services, Karen Galokale, tried to downplay the draft security agreement in a comment to the Journal, saying, “If ever there is any... such agreement, it will just be the same as what we have with countries like Australia.”

Beijing’s move to militarize and domestically control the Solomons is a direct threat to American and Australian attempts to foster small and independent democracies in the region.

But Galokale elides on the fact that any security arrangement with an aggressive totalitarian power is the opposite of a defensive agreement with a fellow democracy. Through security agreements with Beijing, the Solomon Islands government is setting itself against, rather than for, democracy. It is choosing sides, and that side is the CCP.

The United States and Australia are attempting to counter Beijing’s growing illiberal influence in the Solomons through an incentive-heavy approach to increasing economic activity regionally. The United States plans to open an embassy in the country, where currently there is only a consulate. The closest U.S. Embassy is presently in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, over 800 miles from the Solomons’ capital city of Honiara.

However, even these planned diplomatic and economic improvements, which are part of the Biden administration’s publicly ambiguous strategy of supposedly not asking countries to take sides against Beijing, have been too weak to stop the CCP’s growing regional and international influence.

Worse, increasing economic engagement with the Solomons awards bad behavior. Based on perverse short-term incentives, other countries will rationally conclude that negotiating a PLA base might also get them economic benefits from democracies.

Conversely, Beijing has a disincentive-heavy approach to international politics, sanctioning or even attacking countries that cross the CCP. In February, China’s navy shined a military-grade laser at an Australian surveillance plane over Australia’s own territorial waters.

Over the past five years, China has similarly attacked American planes. The lasers could damage the eyesight of pilots and are clear military provocations against the provision of global security that since the end of World War II has rightly been led by the democracies.

Beijing’s attempts at expanding its influence and military activities in the Solomons, or anywhere else, should be more vigorously opposed by the United States, Australia, Japan, and other democracies in the region, through sticks in addition to carrots. Doing so will require greater commitments by democratic leaders in the region to recognize Taiwan rather than Beijing. But it will also require a demand for more discipline among countries like the Solomon Islands, which should be expected to refuse any economic or military overtures from Beijing.

Those leaders and countries that do allow themselves to be used by totalitarian powers such as China should be voted out of power, with Western and allied encouragement, and economically sanctioned in order to guide their countries back to a path that is supportive of democracy on not just a local but a global level.

If the situation in the Solomons degrades to the level of a PLA military base close to a key democratic ally like Australia, those who believe in defending freedom should support a naval blockade of the island.

At some point, the gloves must come off against totalitarian powers like China, or they will just continue to expand geographically and militarily, to the detriment of democracy’s future.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

Anders Corr has a bachelor’s/master’s in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are “The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony” (2021) and “Great Powers, Grand Strategies: The New Game in the South China Sea” (2018).



A man stands behind barriers during lockdown, in Shanghai’s Jing’an district on March 31, 2022.

ANALYSIS

China's Legal System Steps Up Use of Secret Detentions

New revelations indicate China's system of secret RSDL jails reached 100,000 victims

PETER DAHLIN



On the eve of Jan. 11, former lawyer and human rights defender Xie Yang was on a video call with Lyndon Li, a Chinese law student in England, when police suddenly appeared at his home, and the call ended abruptly.

The news leaked out within a few days that Chinese authorities had taken Xie away—this was not the first time.

Xie shot to fame after spending six months inside China's system for secret jails or Residential Surveillance at Designated Location (RSDL). He described in detail to his lawyers the prolonged, severe physical and psychological torture he had experienced inside the system.

As Xie's testimony made headlines worldwide, China's RSDL was not widely known until that point. Many other lawyers, alongside Xie, who were also placed into the RSDL system around the same time, have helped to slowly expose it as more victims came forth willing to speak about the reality behind those four letters.

The Dual Rise of Xi Jinping and RSDL
The RSDL system was put into place as Xi Jinping took power, and it has expanded in scope and size alongside the leader's growing control over Chinese society.

RSDL allows the police to take any target(s) off the street, place them inside solitary confinement at secret locations, hold them incommunicado, and deny their family or anyone else knowledge of their whereabouts. It is essentially legalized kidnapping, and the United Nations has stated as much, if in more diplomatic language.

Around the time of the Winter Olympics in Beijing this year, court data (some of which are available online in a database hosted by China's Supreme Court) revealed that RSDL remains extensively used. During the pandemic, against all odds, its use increased even more. The RSDL may now have claimed as many as 100,000 victims, the equivalent of 150 Guantanamo Bays.

The first known victim, Zhu Chengzhi, was put in the RSDL on Jan. 4, 2013, within the first three days the system was first put into use. Zhu happens to be from the same province as Mao Zedong, a man to whom Xi is often compared. Zhu would later claim another distinction; in mid-2018, he became the first known victim to be placed into the system a second time.

It wasn't always like that. In the same year that Zhu became RSDL's first victim, there were close to 1,000 victims nationwide. At the time, RSDL was primarily used in exceptional circumstances; for example, when an individual couldn't be arrested due to illness or detention made it challenging to carry out an investigation. But gradually, the lack of oversight allowed the Chinese police to abuse the RSDL system.

By the time the "709" crackdown started in 2015, a nationwide campaign



Lawyer Xie Yang (center) accompanied his client Xu Yan (right), wife of human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng, are trying to meet with Yu in person outside the Xuzhou Intermediate Court in Xuzhou in eastern China's Jiangsu Province on Oct. 31, 2019.

A young man from northeastern Dongbei—China's rust belt—said he was stripped naked in his cold cell, with extra guards brought into the room, and then told to stand on one leg and sing the Chinese national anthem.

that targeted human rights lawyers, the use of RSDL had grown significantly. A year or two later, sources showed that local police started using the system indiscriminately against those charged with minor and regular crimes.

With RSDL, the Chinese police have expanded their power significantly and in a way that undermines more or less every basic rights one has come to expect. Those placed into RSDL cannot be held in detention centers, police stations, or anything deemed a "case-handling area." Instead, police can use either custom-built facilities, for example, secret jails and renovated rooms in controlled facilities such as guest houses, training centers, etc.

Once taken into RSDL, one simply disappears. To make matters worse, a victim can be held under the system for six months. Once inside the RSDL, the law states that individuals must be kept in solitary confinement and in facilities designed to protect them from self-harm. In short, suicide-padded, solitary confinement cells.

This absolute power that RSDL affords police over its victims has not been lost on local police forces, who have taken up the use of RSDL with enthusiasm, which would explain its rapidly expanding deployment in recent years.

How One Man's Testimony Exposed the Realities of RSDL

Xie's testimony was the first detailed account of what goes on inside RSDL and revealed why it had become the preferred tool of the Chinese authorities. Why detain (bound by supervision and regulation) an individual when they can instead disappear (and act with impunity)?

For Xie, it began like many other days. One morning, he had left to travel out of town to represent a group of farmers over a land dispute.

"There was nothing different about this time. Like before, he left for work," his wife, Chen Guiqiu, told this author.

Two days later, while he stayed at a hotel out of town, he was awoken before daybreak by a large group of both plain-clothed and uniformed officers who took him away. Within 24 hours, Xie was officially placed under RSDL, and authorities told him: "Your only right is to obey," according to author Michael Caster.

In reality, the police can do anything under RSDL, short of killing a person, as they have six months of total control over their victim.

A doctor attending to those who disappeared under RSDL put it plainly once: "Don't let them die. A dead person would create big problems. Someone who

is only injured doesn't matter," according to a report by Human Rights Watch.

Six months of torture would follow. Through it all, interrogations, which often occurred while the victim was shackled to a tiger chair, would happen frequently. At some point, Xie thought some 40 different people had interrogated him. He was deprived of sleep and spent up to 20 hours a day on the "dangling stool." It is a small, narrow, high stool where the victim's legs cannot reach the floor. Slowly, over hours, blood gets cut off from the legs, causing intense, crippling pain. This would be alternated with being kicked, kneed, punched, or hung from the ceiling and beaten unconscious.

Death threats were common. According to Caster, one person, a middle-class, white-collar IT engineer, was threatened before even arriving at the custom-built RSDL facility in southern Beijing. He was told: "We are crossing the mountains. If you want to come back alive, you should think well about what you tell us."

Of course, not everyone suffers the same abuses. A young man from northeastern Dongbei—China's rust belt—said he was stripped naked in his cold cell, with extra guards brought into the room, and then told to stand on one leg and sing the Chinese national anthem.

Xie might have avoided the same fate as Zhu, who was taken into RSDL a second time, but that is precisely what happened to fellow lawyer Chang Weiping not long before the police took Xie away.

Chang spent nearly half a year inside RSDL before being arrested; he is now awaiting trial. So far, no one knows what Chang has had to go through.

Raising Awareness of RSDL

Many lawyers, journalists, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, and others who work in sensitive fields and are often targeted by authorities were oblivious to the system for quite some time. Those who heard about RSDL often thought it was a mild form of detention, something less severe.

When co-workers of Wang Quanzhang, another well-known rights lawyer, learned that he had been placed into RSDL instead of being arrested, they felt relief and thought it was a good sign. I was one of those colleagues with that very same thought.

For better or worse, those days are long gone within China's rights defense community. RSDL has become as feared a tool as they come. As what goes on inside leaks out, the community has been given a wake-up call. The worse the stories that leak out, the more RSDL terrifies the larger community. It has, in effect, become a tool of political terror.

Wang Yu, a lawyer, didn't know much about RSDL until she was held in a secret jail for six months. Her husband, Bao, a local activist, went through the same ordeal. But torture wasn't enough to break them.

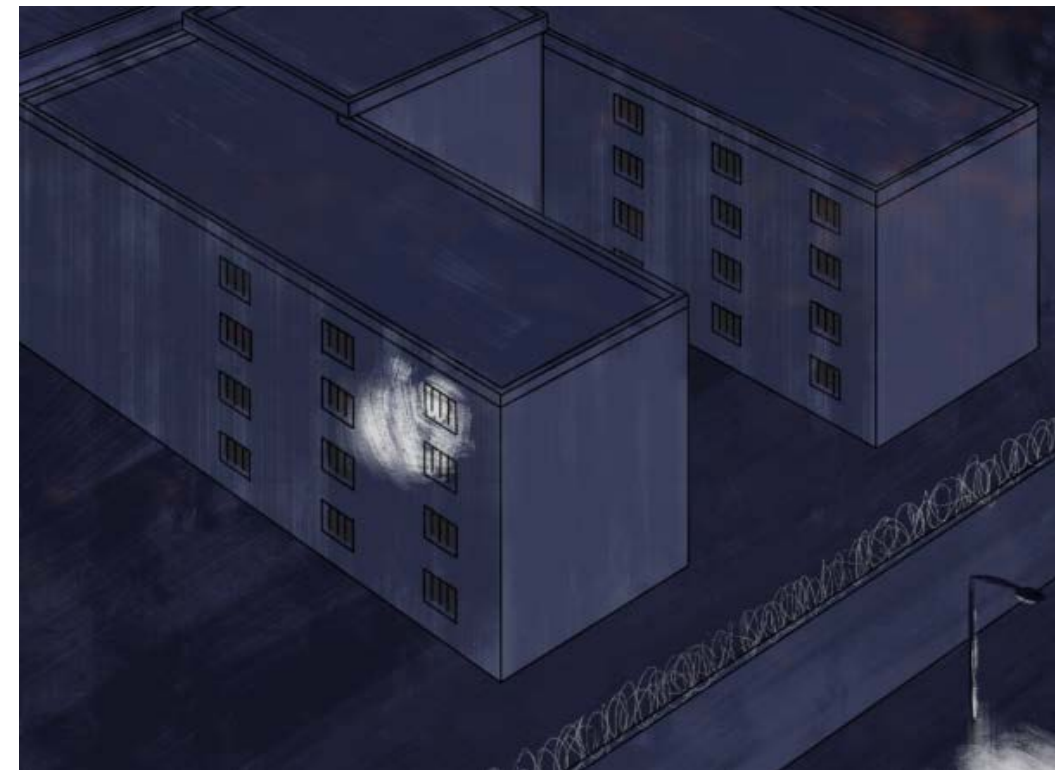
Police went further and threatened to arrest the couple's then-teenage son, Bao Mengmeng. He made headlines worldwide when he was captured by Chinese police inside Burma (commonly known as Myanmar), alongside two activists trying to smuggle him out of China after his parents had been disappeared. Those two activists were taken back to China and likely placed into RSDL, while Mengmeng spent about two years under police custody until 2018.

The True Scope of China's Use of Disappearances via RSDL

In 2018, the United Nations Human Rights Council condemned China's RSDL system and called for its complete abolishment. However, until early 2020, there had been no attempts to figure out the extent to which the system was used. That changed with a small report, a data analysis from the NGO Safeguard Defenders, which showed how it is possible to track the use of the system—by using China's public database on verdicts.

Now, some two years later and after a new round of research from the database China Judgments Online, more information on the scope and scale of the system can be presented—and it is grim reading. As with any statistics in China, the data is flawed at best. In addition, thousands of verdicts mentioning RSDL use have been removed from the database, and more are disappearing almost every day as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tries to hide such information.

Despite that, and using knowledge de-



An illustration of an RSDL facility in southern Beijing.



An illustration of police raiding a victim's home and taking him into residential surveillance at a designated location.

rived from detailed studies on how RSDL cases are published, or not published, even such studies carried out by pro-CCP legal scholars in China, one can get a strong idea of how the RSDL system has developed.

As clearly indicated by the U.N. in its condemnation of the RSDL system, its use often constitutes enforced disappearances, as the location of the victim is kept secret. Torture is rampant, and in addition, using solitary confinement for prolonged periods for interrogation purposes is in itself an act of torture.

This qualifies China's use of RSDL as a crime against humanity on at least two points, if proven to be systematic or widespread, according to the aforementioned author Michael Caster, who is also an international law analyst and co-founder of Safeguard Defenders.

Furthermore, the consistent year-by-year data available on RSDL use, Safeguard Defenders spokesperson Laura Harth says, shows beyond doubt that it is both systematic and widespread.

For 2020, the last year for which more complete data exists, the RSDL system reached new heights, with some 15,000 new victims that year alone. For 2021, the figure remains high, at over 10,000, yet it may be too early to properly assess the data. By now, the system is likely to have seen anywhere from 85,000 to 115,000 victims.

The real problem with the aforementioned data is that they only scratch the surface. Many of those named in this article did not go on trial and were released often "under bail." Such cases simply won't show up in the database or anywhere else. It is impossible to know how much of the iceberg we are seeing in the data above, but most likely a big part is underwater.

RSDL Is Here to Stay, May Expand Beyond China's Borders

The growing awareness of the CCP's use of "hostage diplomacy" has centered on RSDL. Just like families are denied knowledge of victims' whereabouts, so are foreign governments when their citizens are placed into the system. Whether it is British Lee Bo who was kidnapped in Hong Kong, Swede Gui Minhai who was kidnapped in Thailand, Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, or American basketball player Jeff Harper, among others, they were all quickly placed into the RSDL system.

With a more aggressive communist China—more willing to detain foreign citizens to get what it wants—every indicator points toward foreigners becoming a more common target for RSDL. Worse yet, according to Harth, is "the

deafening silence from Western governments about the system and its rapid expansion. ... The complete lack of any political cost imposed on the Chinese Communist Party for engaging in what is clearly yet another crime against humanity sends a clear-cut message to other authoritarian governments, especially in Southeast and Central Asia" and "who study China's methods to silence dissent," that may adopt similar "legalized" forms of disappearances.

Even though disappearances never went away, since its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, it has become an anomaly and was used mostly on an ad-hoc basis, as it had become a crime, like torture, considered so heinous that even the worst dictatorships at least pretended to not engage in it.

With China's "legalization" of disappearances and normalizing it by expanding its use to mass scale, the international human rights system stands before yet another challenge: how to fight back against such normalization.

"How many other countries can adopt similar systems until the norm is broken?" said Caster. "Will we see it spreading to other parts of the world, moving from authoritarian to authoritarian-leaning or 'illiberal democracies'?" There is far more at stake here than "merely" the abusive treatment of Chinese human rights activists.

With stronger pressure from the central government to maintain stability, lawyer Wang Quanzhang believes local governments are encouraged to use any means necessary, and RSDL is an easy, yet very powerful tool for just that purpose. It took a long time and ever-mounting criticism to get the CCP to abolish the reeducation through labor system. But it may take a lot more to get the CCP to abolish the RSDL system.

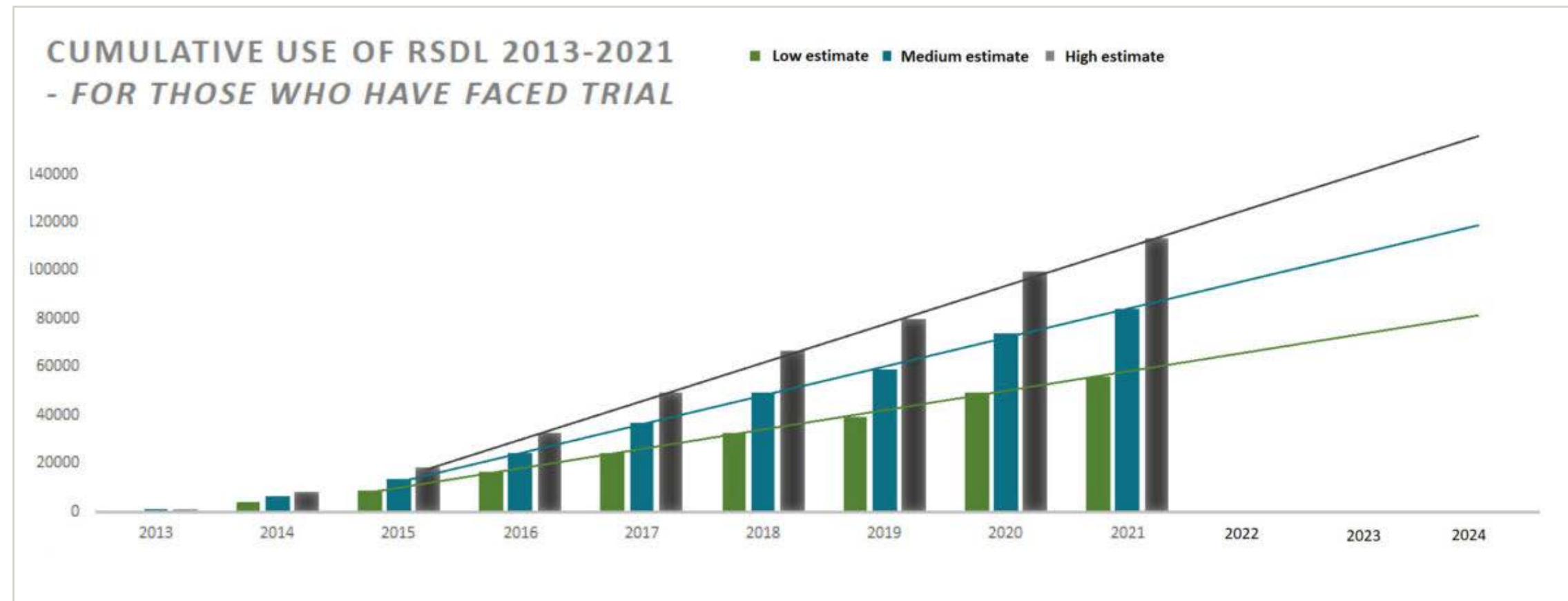
Until then, RSDL will continue to expand. It will be used to destroy Chinese civil society and, sooner or later, start spreading beyond China's own borders.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

Peter Dahlin is the founder of the NGO Safeguard Defenders and the co-founder of the Beijing-based Chinese NGO China Action (2007-2016). He is the author of "Trial By Media," and contributor to "The People's Republic of the Disappeared." He lived in Beijing from 2007, until detained and placed in a secret jail in 2016, subsequently deported and banned. Prior to living in China, he worked for the Swedish government with gender equality issues, and now lives in Madrid, Spain.



Members of the pro-democracy Civic Party carry a portrait of Gui Minhai (L) and Lee Bo during a protest outside the Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong on Jan. 19, 2016.



NEWS ANALYSIS

The Washington Post Accepts Hunter Biden Laptop Story

Dems in disarray leading into midterm and presidential elections

ANDERS CORR

The Hunter Biden laptop story has just blown up from the New York Post, which broke the story to the mainstream liberal media.

Almost two years later, the media finally accessed a copy of the purported laptop and expertly verified the authenticity of much of its most important material, including evidence of millions of dollars in payments to the Biden family from a Chinese conglomerate and the apparent involvement of President Joe Biden himself in some of Hunter Biden's foreign business maneuvers.

According to two March 30 Washington Post articles on the laptop, which reported the verification of 22,000 emails and newly discovered financial and government documents, CEFC China Energy and its executives "paid \$4.8 million to entities controlled by Hunter Biden and his uncle [James Biden]."

The laptop only "purportedly" belonged to Hunter Biden because The Washington Post's expert authenticators couldn't verify all data on the laptop copy and claimed that some of it appeared irregular.

"In their examinations," according to The Washington Post, the two experts "found evidence that people other than Hunter Biden had accessed the drive and written files to it, both before and after the initial stories in the New York Post and long after the laptop itself had been turned over to the FBI."

Nevertheless, the New York Post is legitimately cross that The Washington Post and The New York Times took so long to access and verify the email data. The closely fought presidential election was likely thrown to Joe Biden because these pro-Democrat outlets—plus Twitter, Facebook, and dozens of former intelligence officials—downplayed the original reporting, including calling it "Russian disinformation."

Now they are mostly admitting, one by one, to the legitimacy of the main outline of the story.

The Times buried its reporting of the authentication of the emails within a long story whose headline provides information that could bias jurors against any future conviction of Hunter Biden on tax-related criminal offenses.

That is, that after a reported failure to pay all his taxes, Hunter Biden did, in fact, pay—which wouldn't change any actual fraud. Any competent prosecution of Hunter Biden would try to keep his later payment, likely seen as exculpatory by average citizens, from the jurors.

As noted by the New York Post on March 30, "The Times buried its verification of the emails in the 24th paragraph of a 38-paragraph story that said Hunter Biden had paid off a significant tax debt to the IRS, potentially making it harder for prosecutors to win a conviction or a long sentence against him for tax fraud."



Hunter Biden arrives at the inauguration of Joe Biden on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Jan. 20, 2021.

The closely fought presidential election was likely thrown to Joe Biden because these pro-Democrat outlets—plus Twitter, Facebook, and dozens of former intelligence officials—downplayed the original reporting, including calling it 'Russian disinformation.'

That the Times and Washington Post are addressing the issue at all, however, especially when the president had a record-low approval rating of just 40 percent on March 27, does not augur well for a second term.

Fifty-one percent of Democrats in a recent CNN poll prefer a different candidate than Joe Biden for their party in 2024. Of those, 72 percent wanted anyone other than Joe Biden, while those potential candidates most frequently named were Bernie Sanders (5 percent), Michelle Obama (4 percent), Pete Buttigieg (2 percent), and Kamala Harris (2 percent).

The Democrats are not expected to do well during the midterms. They could easily lose the presidency in 2024 to Donald Trump if he decides to run or someone that Trump anoints during the 2024 Republican Convention. Fifty percent of Republican respondents in the CNN poll preferred Trump as the presidential nominee for 2024, while 49 percent preferred someone else.

Of the latter category, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis got the most support (21 percent), with most other potential candidates getting just 1 percent, including top-runners Donald Trump Jr., Dan Crenshaw, and Rand Paul.

While DeSantis has not been as tough on China as other leading Republicans, including Mike Pompeo and Marco Rubio, he has supported decoupling from China and reshoring American jobs.

On March 29, DeSantis counterattacked Disney, which criticized Florida's

new law against teaching sexual orientation and gender identity in the classroom, by pointing out that the California-based company self-censors for China and has not condemned the Uyghur genocide.

Democrats are finally recognizing the authenticity of the most important China-related parts of the Hunter Biden laptop story. We need better protection against the foreign influence of our high-end politicians, including through their families. But we already knew that.

It also suggests that coming into the 2022 midterm elections and 2024 presidential elections, the Democrats are entirely disorganized. Based on what the presidential field looks like today, both Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis have a good shot at being our next American president.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

HUMAN RIGHTS

'World Needs to Wake Up': Kanter Freedom Calls for 'Solid Actions' to Punish Communist China for Abuses

EVA FU

Professional basketball player Enes Kanter Freedom says it's time for the world to "wake up" and take action against a belligerent Chinese communist regime that's persecuting its own people and exporting its abuses to other parts of the world.

"We need to wake up, the world needs to wake up," he told NTD, which is part of the Epoch Media Group. "And I feel like condemning is not good enough—we need to take some solid actions."

Freedom made the remarks after a roundtable hosted by Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.) in Washington on March 29, when Simon Zhang, an adherent of the spiritual practice Falun Gong, spoke about the recent death of his mother at the hands of the regime because of her faith.

Zhang's mother, Ji Yunzhi from Inner Mongolia, had been detained previously in 2001 and again in 2008—the year Beijing hosted the Summer Olympic Games—narrowly escaping death in forced labor camps.

However, during her third detention, the 65-year-old died on March 21 after being subjected to torture; her death occurred less than 50 days after she was locked up solely because of her belief in Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa.

We need some fearless heroes to just come out there and not think about their next contract or not to think about their shoe deals or who they can sign with.

Enes Kanter Freedom, basketball player

The spiritual discipline, which is based on the core tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, as well as a set of meditative exercises, was hugely popular in China during the 1990s. Deeming that popularity a threat, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) initiated a nationwide elimination campaign in 1999. Since then, adherents have been heavily persecuted, with millions being thrown into various detention facilities.

Family members were denied access to Ji's body after her death, but they were able to briefly observe that her throat was cut open and that there were bloodstains on her face and shoulders, according to Minghui, a U.S.-based clearinghouse for firsthand accounts of the persecution.

Her relatives believe that authorities deliberately prevented access to Ji's body to cover up their abuses. Such treatment is a common occurrence for relatives of persecuted Falun Gong practitioners, according to Minghui accounts.

"If I end up dead, I must have died from persecution," Ji was quoted in a Minghui report as telling her cellmates.

Zhang, a New York architect, struggled to put his feelings into words after learning of the death of his mother, whom he hadn't seen in 19 years.

"I had hoped we would reunite here in America," Zhang told The Epoch Times.

Ji had twice attempted to apply for a passport, but both applications were denied because of her detention records, Zhang said.

"I never knew that we'd never have another chance to see each other," he said.



Simon Zhang and his mother Ji Yunzhi during a trip to Hangzhou city in Zhejiang Province, China, in 2012.

Speaking Up

Freedom was recently left without a team in the NBA after being traded by the Boston Celtics and then released by the Houston Rockets, which he has attributed to his outspokenness against the CCP.

He has been fiercely critical of the regime since last summer, when one of the parents of a young Muslim participant at a basketball camp called his attention to Beijing's rights violations. The parents told him, "How can you call yourself a human rights activist when your Muslim brothers and sisters are getting tortured and raped every day in concentration camps in China?"

Freedom, who had principally focused on rights issues in his home country of Turkey in the past decade, said that question stunned him and compelled him to do research.

"I was very frustrated with myself, and I was like, 'Whatever it takes, I'm just going to go out there and try to bring awareness,'" he said at the roundtable event.

The athlete has since called out the regime for a range of abuses, including those committed in Tibet and Xinjiang, as well as its practice of live organ harvesting, an atrocity that has killed an untold number of detained Falun Gong practitioners.

"What [Chinese leader] Xi Jinping is doing, and what the CCP is doing, is one of the biggest human rights abuses in the world, and they need to be punished," he told NTD.

But to his great frustration, his advocacy set off alarms within the NBA organization, which has ties with the regime.

"Once there's lots of money and business involved, obviously, people are going to get really uncomfortable," he said.

"When I talked about the problems that happened in Turkey in the last 10 years, I did not get one phone call, but when I started to talk about the problems that happened in China, my phone was ringing once every hour.

"They were calling me from the NBA and the player's association, and saying: 'Listen, you know this is going to bring a lot of impact, but just be careful.'"

The warning from his agent was even more direct, he said.

"He was telling me: 'Listen, I think if you stop say[ing] a word and don't talk about this ever again, people are going to forget about this. But if you keep talking about these issues, then you're not going to get another contract.'"

He also previously said that the NBA had made him unavailable for media interviews for two weeks in late 2019, when the then-general manager of the Houston Rockets organization provoked Beijing's wrath over a pro-Hong Kong tweet.

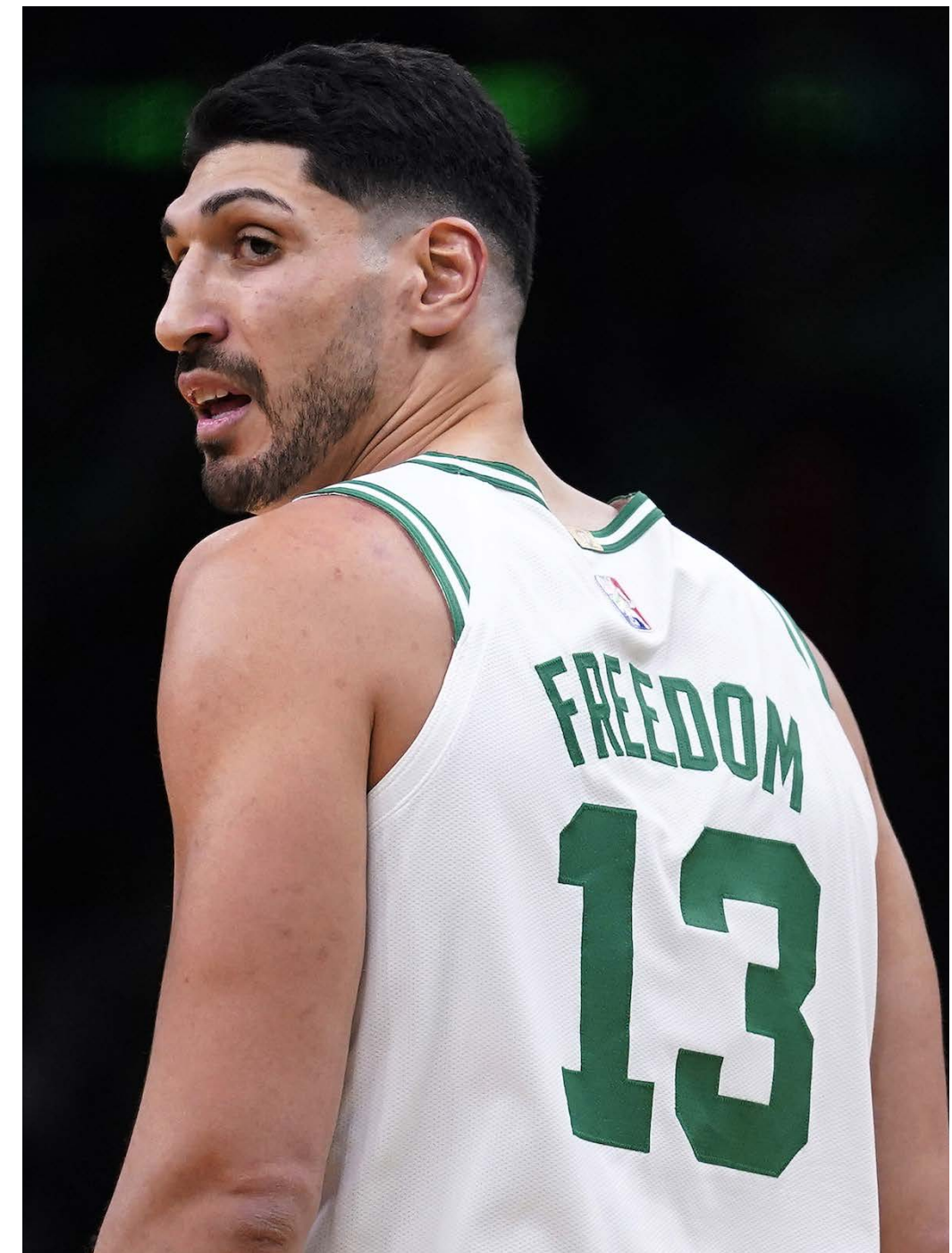
In a previous statement to The Epoch Times, the NBA denied pressuring Freedom over his activism. The league pointed to a media statement from its spokesman, Mike Bass, who said they "continue to support Enes Kanter Freedom expressing his views on matters that are important to him as we do for all members of the NBA family."

Freedom said he believes that he has a duty to speak out.

"This platform is given to me by God, and I feel like I need to use it to do God's work," he said.

"We need some fearless heroes to just come out there and not think about their next contract or not to think about their shoe deals or who they can sign with."

"This is bigger than everything because, in the end, people's life depends on this."



Boston Celtics center Enes Kanter Freedom, looks toward his team's bench, in Boston on Dec. 1, 2021.

THE EPOCH TIMES

The Book You've Been Waiting for...



NOW BIGGER SIZE, EASIER TO READ FORMAT

"Extremely well researched and true."

"The Truth, as horrifying as it is, shall set us free. This should be on this country's academia's list of required reading."

HOW THE SPECTER OF COMMUNISM IS RULING OUR WORLD

The specter of communism did not disappear with the disintegration of the Communist Party in Eastern Europe

ORDER NOW!

Available at
amazon

EpochShop.com

THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH and TRADITION

READ WHAT OTHERS WON'T REPORT

SUBSCRIBE TODAY ReadEpoch.com



[The Epoch Times is] a great paper beyond current events—the arts [section] is awesome (and my favorite). I read mine and leave it at the coffee house or other places for others to enjoy. **When I share it, people love it.**

— DONNA LEE NYZIO

7 Ways to Share The Epoch Times With Your Friends and Family



Like us, you're probably a fan of fact-based journalism that lets you make up your own mind. If you think we do a good job, please help spread the word to the Americans who still remember a time when newspapers were just about the facts. Your words and actions may be just what they've been waiting for.

1 PASS ON THE EPOCH TIMES

Done with your weekly paper? Pass it along to a friend, family member, neighbor, or coworker who could use honest news.

2 LEAVE BEHIND THE EPOCH TIMES

Leave your copy of The Epoch Times in a coffee shop, waiting room, barbershop, or any other place with reading material after you're done with it.

3 TALK ABOUT THE EPOCH TIMES

Tell your friends and family about The Epoch Times—in a time when many people don't know what to trust anymore, a recommendation from someone they trust can go a long way.

4 REPRESENT* THE EPOCH TIMES

Our posters and bumper stickers are available for purchase at EpochShop.com, so you can be loud and proud about your support for Truth and Tradition.

5 FORWARD THE EPOCH TIMES

Did you know that all articles in our Morning Brief email can be read by non-subscribers too? It's our way of making sure crucial information gets to the public, whether they're a subscriber or not. Forwarding our Morning Brief** email can help reach people who have to "see it to believe it." You can also share our posts on Facebook and YouTube with your social network to spread the word, when possible.

6 GIVE THE EPOCH TIMES

Epoch Times gift subscriptions are a thoughtful present for the man or woman who has everything but a reliable source of information.
ReadEpoch.com/gift

7 REQUEST THE EPOCH TIMES

For those folks who need to try before they buy (or those who just like newspaper smell), we've got you covered. Give us the name and shipping address of your friends or family members, and we'll mail a sample copy to their doorstep at no cost to you or them.

* (1) Please log into your account at TheEpochTimes.com (2) Click your name to manage your account (3) Click "Request Free Papers" on the left menu bar and follow steps
** Your friends and family can read the articles in MORNING BRIEF for FREE. They may meet different paywalls if they read other articles, which are not listed in MORNING BRIEF.

Not a subscriber yet? Visit ReadEpoch.com to learn more.



THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION