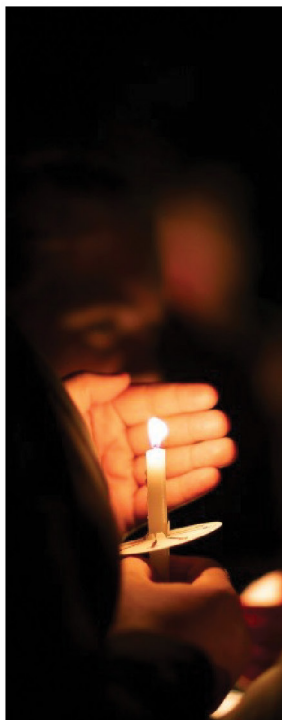




WORLD ANTI EXTREMISM
NETWORK
BUILDING A FREE WORLD



UNCENSORED WATCH

Defending Freedom, Challenging Extremism and Authoritarianism

Issue 19 | July 2026

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*Defending Freedom, Challenging Extremism and
Authoritarianism*

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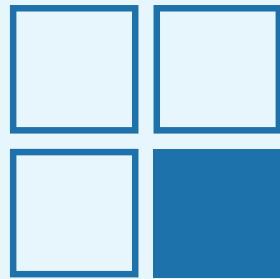
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SECTION-1

**Welcome to Uncensored Watch - A Project of
World Anti-Extremism Network**

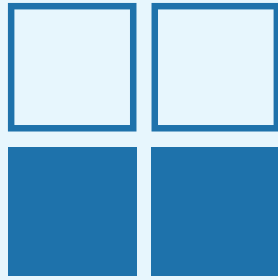
Welcome to Uncensored Watch - A Project of World Anti-Extremism Network

Dear Readers, welcome to the July edition of Uncensored Watch!

This month, we explore growing concerns over freedom of expression, the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, and efforts to seek accountability for human rights abuses. From student protests in India and publishing restrictions in Vietnam to refugee protection challenges in Thailand, Sweden, and the United States, these stories highlight the complex struggles shaping lives across the world. We also highlight the impact of Taliban policies on higher education in Afghanistan, and renewed calls for justice in long-standing disappearance cases in Kashmir. Additionally, we feature an article by Inès Mukandanga on ongoing human rights and political freedoms concerns in Burundi under CNDD-FDD rule.

Join us as we uncover the stories and perspectives driving today's human rights conversations.

Enjoy Reading!



SECTION-2

Global Crisis in Focus

Calls for Investigation After Delhi Student Protest Crackdown

Demands for accountability, employment opportunities, and government transparency brought thousands of young people to the streets of New Delhi in recent weeks. What began as frustration over alleged irregularities in medical entrance examinations gradually expanded into a wider youth-led movement that culminated in a planned march toward parliament on July 20. The demonstration, organized in part by the “Cockroach Janta Party,” drew national attention after the chief justice [equated unemployed](#) youth to cockroaches. Supporters described the march as a peaceful effort to voice concerns directly to elected representatives. Instead, the event ended in confrontations between protesters and security forces, leaving numerous people injured, including members of the police. Reports indicated that one female protester remained in critical condition.

[Human Rights Watch](#) has urged the Indian government to examine the conduct of law-enforcement agencies during the operation. According to the organization, witness testimony and video evidence raise questions about whether force used against demonstrators was necessary or proportionate. Authorities defended their response, arguing that some protesters engaged in violence, damaged property, and attacked officers. Police stated that their personnel were injured while attempting to maintain order. Video footage reviewed by researchers appeared to show at least one incident in which demonstrators physically assaulted a police officer. Many participants and observers, however, challenged the official narrative. Witnesses described scenes in which batons and tear gas were used against crowds that were largely nonviolent. Journalists and legal observers present during the demonstrations said they saw protesters struck while attempting to retreat or remain stationary.

Concerns also emerged regarding crowd-management tactics. Demonstrators reported being forced into congested areas near barricades, creating confusion and panic. Several witnesses said these conditions increased the danger of people falling or being trampled as crowds attempted to move away from advancing security personnel. The unrest followed weeks of demonstrations at [Jantar Mantar](#), a traditional venue for public protest in the capital. Tensions escalated further after activist Sonam Wangchuk, who had been conducting a hunger strike there, was removed from the site by authorities and taken to a public hospital days before the march. Rights advocates additionally raised concerns about accountability measures during the operation. Witnesses alleged that some officers did not display identification and that individuals dressed in civilian clothing appeared to participate in crowd-control activities alongside police personnel. Digital-rights groups also warned of possible surveillance through facial-recognition technology.

Political debate intensified after the events. Opposition figures condemned the government's handling of the demonstrations and condemned the police response. Several opposition leaders were later detained during a separate protest near the prime minister's residence. Efforts to seek judicial intervention were unsuccessful after the Supreme Court declined to hear a petition related to alleged police misconduct. Another source of criticism involved communications restrictions imposed during the demonstrations. Telecommunications providers allegedly received instructions to suspend mobile internet services in parts of central Delhi. Protesters said the disruption made it difficult to contact friends and family members amid the chaos. Critics argued that such measures undermine transparency and hinder independent reporting. International human rights standards recognize peaceful assembly as a protected right and require authorities to exercise restraint when managing public demonstrations. Human Rights Watch stated that any allegations of misconduct should be investigated independently and that those responsible for abuses should face appropriate legal consequences, regardless of their position.

Behind the scenes of the Delhi protests are young people who feel unheard about issues affecting their future. The demonstrations reflected not only anger over a specific controversy but also deeper frustrations about opportunities, representation, and accountability. The reported clashes serve as a reminder that public trust is strengthened when concerns are met with dialogue rather than confrontation. Ensuring transparency and accountability will be important in easing tensions and rebuilding confidence.



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Deadly Attack at Berlin Pride Under Investigation as Suspected Extremist Incident



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German authorities have launched a large-scale search following a [deadly attack near Berlin Pride](#) that left one person dead and dozens injured. Officials believe the incident was motivated by Islamist extremism. According to investigators, a van drove into a crowd gathered near Tiergarten Park on Saturday evening, close to celebrations associated

with Berlin's annual Pride events. Authorities said the suspect later used a bladed weapon to attack additional people before fleeing the scene. German Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt stated that 29 people were injured, some seriously. He identified the suspect as a 21-year-old German citizen of Lebanese descent who was reportedly known to law enforcement through contacts linked to Islamist circles in Berlin.

Police said the vehicle was later discovered abandoned after crashing into a tree. Officers believe the attacker may have left the scene on foot, prompting an extensive manhunt across the city. Witnesses described a sudden shift from celebration to panic. Many initially mistook the sounds and screams for part of the festivities before realizing an attack had occurred. Emergency services quickly responded, while police evacuated the area and urged attendees to leave for safety reasons. The assault occurred after a day of largely peaceful Pride celebrations that drew large crowds from across Germany and abroad. Berlin Pride, also known as Christopher Street Day, is one of Europe's largest LGBTQ+ events and attracts hundreds of thousands of participants each year.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz condemned the violence, calling it a serious attack on the values of an open and democratic society. He pledged a thorough investigation and promised that those responsible would face the full force of the law. Berlin Mayor Kai Wegner also expressed shock, describing the incident as an attack on a city known for diversity, tolerance, and freedom. [LGBTQ+ community members](#) and supporters across

Berlin shared their pain and frustration while standing in support of the victims and reaffirming the importance of acceptance and equality. In response to the tragedy, city authorities activated support services for people searching for missing relatives or friends. More than 2,200 police officers had already been deployed across Berlin to provide security for Pride-related events, and additional resources were mobilized following the attack. The investigation remains ongoing as authorities work to locate the suspect and determine the full circumstances surrounding the assault.

The attack on Berlin Pride is a painful reminder that public spaces built around inclusion and acceptance can also become targets of hatred and violence. Beyond the immediate loss and fear, the incident highlights the importance of protecting marginalized communities while ensuring that acts of extremism do not undermine the values of equality and freedom they represent.

Rights Advocates Warn Japan's New Flag Law Could Restrict Free Expression

A recently approved law in Japan that criminalizes certain acts involving the national flag has sparked criticism from human rights advocates, who argue that the measure threatens freedom of expression and could be used to discourage political dissent. The legislation was passed by the Japanese Diet on July 17, 2026, after clearing the lower house on June 30. Support for the bill came from the governing Liberal Democratic Party, its coalition partner the Japan Innovation Party, and several opposition parties.

Under the new rules, individuals may face up to two years in prison or a fine of 200,000 yen (about US\$1,250) for publicly damaging, removing, or altering Japan's flag in a manner deemed likely to cause strong public offense or disgust. The penalties are equivalent to those already imposed under Japanese law for desecrating

foreign national flags. [Human Rights Watch](#) condemned the measure, arguing that it weakens protections for free speech. The organization warned that symbolic forms of expression, including actions involving national symbols, are protected under international human rights standards and should not be criminalized simply because they offend public sentiment.

Japan is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees the right to freedom of expression. While governments may impose restrictions in limited circumstances, international law requires such measures to be necessary, proportionate, and justified by legitimate concerns such as public safety or national security. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has repeatedly stated that expressions considered offensive to patriotic feelings should not automatically

be [subject to criminal penalties](#).

It has previously voiced concern about laws that punish conduct involving national symbols, including flags. Opposition to the bill emerged from within Japan's legal community even before its adoption. During a Diet session held on June 25, constitutional scholar Yoko Shida argued that the legislation's broad wording could place it at odds with constitutional protections and make it vulnerable to legal challenges. She warned that the measure could have consequences beyond flag-related cases by limiting a wider range of protected rights.

Similar concerns were raised by criminal law expert Hisashi Sonoda, who maintained that punishing conduct because it causes discomfort to others undermines constitutional guarantees of free expression. Nearly [150 criminal law scholars](#), along with several bar associations, also voiced objections to the proposal.

Human Rights Watch further noted

that laws protecting national symbols have been used in other jurisdictions to suppress criticism of the government. The organization cited Hong Kong, where authorities have enforced flag-protection laws against democracy activists and protesters in recent years. Individuals have faced arrest, probation, and imprisonment for actions involving Chinese national flags during pro-democracy demonstrations, while veteran activist [Koo Sze-yiu](#) was repeatedly prosecuted under similar provisions.

Critics fear that Japan's new legislation could create a comparable tool for future administrations seeking to restrict protest or political expression. Human Rights Watch urged the government to repeal the law, arguing that democratic societies should be capable of tolerating peaceful dissent, even when it takes symbolic or controversial forms.



Photo by Fumiaki Hayashi on Unsplash

According to rights advocates, protecting freedom of expression requires allowing views that may be unpopular, provocative, or offensive. They contend that criminal penalties for acts involving national symbols risk narrowing the space for legitimate political speech and public criticism.

The debate surrounding Japan's new flag desecration law goes beyond the protection of a national symbol. Critics argue that the real concern is whether governments should have the power to criminalize symbolic forms of protest, even when they are offensive or unpopular. While supporters view the law as a way to uphold respect for the national flag, opponents fear it could gradually narrow the space for dissent and political expression. The controversy highlights a broader challenge faced by democracies: balancing national sentiment with the protection of fundamental freedoms.

Freedom of Expression Under Threat as Vietnam Arrests Five Over Publication

[Vietnamese authorities](#) have detained five individuals in connection with the publication and promotion of a book examining the life and legacy of Ho Chi Minh, drawing criticism from Human Rights Watch and raising concerns about freedom of expression in the country. The arrests, carried out between late June and mid-July 2026, targeted author Nguyen Thanh Nam along with Tran Viet Anh, Nguyen Thuy Hang, Dao Ba Doan, and Nguyen Van Yen. Authorities accused them of spreading anti-state propaganda under article 117 of Vietnam's penal code, a national security provision that has frequently been used against critics and activists. If found guilty, the five could face prison terms of up to 20 years.

Human Rights Watch called for the charges to be withdrawn and urged the government to release all five detainees. The organization also criticized authorities for publicly disclosing the [accused individuals' home addresses](#), arguing that doing so infringed upon the privacy rights of their families. The case centers on *In Conversation with Thanh: A New Account of the Light*, a book published in Hanoi in April by the Writers' Association Publishing House. Written by technology entrepreneur Nguyen Thanh Nam, the work presents Ho Chi Minh's life and revolutionary activities through conversations between a teacher and a student. The author used modern language and a more accessible style in an effort to connect younger generations with the historical figure and his ideas.

Authorities took a sharply different view. [A police-affiliated newspaper alleged](#) that the publication misrepresented historical events, contradicted official state policies, and disrespected prominent national figures, including Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap. When the book first appeared, it received favorable attention and was



Photo by Nguyen Huong on Unsplash

promoted by several media outlets, including state-run publications. The situation changed in June after Phan Trung Can, a retired Communist Party official, publicly criticized the work online. He argued that the book treated Ho Chi Minh in an insufficiently respectful manner and objected to its use of contemporary language. His comments were followed by broader online campaigns demanding action against those involved in writing, publishing, and promoting the book.

Soon afterward, media coverage praising the publication disappeared. The Writers' Association Publishing House issued a public apology and recalled copies of the book.

Government agencies then imposed administrative penalties, including a two-

months suspension of the publisher's operations and a fine of 100 million dong (approximately \$3,800). Additional sanctions followed in July, when authorities [fined 23 newspapers](#) that had promoted the publication. More than a dozen journalists reportedly faced disciplinary measures ranging from warnings to suspension or dismissal. Nguyen Thanh Nam, 65, was arrested on June 27. He is a well-known Vietnamese technology entrepreneur who helped found FPT Corporation and later launched FUNiX, an online software-learning platform. In previous years, Vietnamese authorities had publicly recognized his contributions, including his efforts to promote the study of Ho Chi Minh's ideology.

Nam later taught courses on Ho Chi Minh's thought at VinUniversity, a private institution founded by VinGroup. The book reportedly grew out of materials he developed for those classes. Another detainee, Tran Viet Anh, 33, was accused of helping promote the publication.

He founded Spiderum, a popular online discussion platform launched in 2016 that attracted a large youth audience. By July 2026, Spiderum's YouTube channel had amassed more than one million subscribers. Following the arrests, the platform was suspended. Police subsequently detained three senior officials from the Writers' Association Publishing House: director Nguyen Thuy Hang, chief editor Dao Ba Doan, and editor Nguyen Van Yen. Authorities stated that the three were involved in reviewing, preparing, publishing, and publicizing the book.

This case highlights how tightly controlled discussions of history remain in Vietnam, even when they involve figures central to the country's official narrative. The arrests suggest that authorities are less concerned with the subject of the book itself than with maintaining control over how historical figures and events are portrayed. For many writers, publishers, and journalists, the crackdown may reinforce fears that even moderate or well-intentioned interpretations of history can carry serious legal risks.

Rights Group Urges Thailand Not to Deport Chinese Refugees

Human Rights Watch has called on Thailand to halt any plans to deport four Chinese dissidents currently held in immigration detention, warning that their return could expose them to persecution and other serious abuses in China. The appeal comes as [Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul](#) prepares for an official visit to China from July 16–20, 2026. According to Human Rights Watch, Beijing has intensified pressure on Thai authorities regarding Chinese nationals who have sought refuge abroad.

Among those at risk are journalist Bai Zhaodong, democracy advocate Zhou Junyi, Falun Gong practitioner Zhang Xinyan, and activist Tan Yixiang, who has spoken publicly about the rights of Tibetans and Uyghurs. All four have been recognized as refugees by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), yet they remain vulnerable to removal from Thailand. Bai Zhaodong previously worked as an investigative reporter for Caixin, where he became known for reporting on corruption and poverty-related issues in China. Zhou Junyi is affiliated with the banned China Democracy Party and has lived in Thailand since 2015. Zhang Xinyan fled China more than a decade ago and later became involved in activism linked to the overseas Hong Kong democracy movement. Tan Yixiang entered Thailand in 2022 and was later detained by Thai authorities.

Human Rights Watch expressed particular concern about Zhang's case, noting that Thai authorities reportedly prevented her from boarding a flight to Canada for resettlement



Photo by Joshua Fernandez on Unsplash

earlier this month despite ongoing efforts to secure protection abroad. The organization argued that Thailand has repeatedly returned Chinese nationals despite concerns for their safety. In recent years, authorities have deported Uyghurs and political dissidents to China, actions that drew criticism from international rights groups. Many of [those returned](#) disappeared from public view or faced prosecution after their arrival. Past cases have fueled fears among refugee communities. In 2015, [activists](#) Dong Guangping and Jiang Yefei were sent back to China even though they had already been recognized as refugees and were awaiting relocation to Canada. Both were later imprisoned. Another activist, Jian Xing, avoided deportation after being allowed to resettle in New Zealand in 2020.

[Chinese dissidents living](#) in Thailand have also reported growing pressure from authorities. Refugees have described increased scrutiny and repeated encounters with immigration officials, which some attribute to Beijing's influence over regional governments. Although Thailand has not joined the 1951 Refugee Convention and lacks a formal asylum system, it remains bound by the international principle of non-refoulement. This principle prohibits governments from sending individuals to countries where they face a credible risk of persecution, torture, or other grave human rights violations. Similar protections are reflected in Thailand's domestic legislation addressing torture and enforced disappearances.

The issue may receive additional international attention later this year when Thailand's human rights record is reviewed at the United Nations Human Rights Council. During previous reviews, Thai authorities supported recommendations aimed at strengthening protections for refugees and asylum seekers. The case highlights the increasingly difficult environment facing Chinese dissidents in Southeast Asia, where even recognized refugees can remain vulnerable to detention and deportation. Thailand's response will not only affect the safety of the individuals involved but may also serve as an indicator of how the country balances its international human rights commitments against growing political and diplomatic pressure from Beijing.

Rights Group Warns Sweden's Deportation Policy Puts Young Women at Risk



Photo by mostafa meraji on Unsplash

Human Rights Watch has criticized Sweden's deportation practices, arguing that some young women are being returned to countries where they may face serious discrimination, restricted freedoms, and gender-based abuses. The organization urged Swedish authorities to reassess such cases and ensure that international human rights obligations are fully respected. According to reports, dozens of young adults who spent much of their lives in Sweden have been ordered to leave the country after losing eligibility for residence permits upon reaching adulthood. Many had lived in Sweden for years with their families and expected to remain permanently, but administrative delays and [changes in immigration rules](#) left them without secure legal status.

[Human Rights Watch](#) expressed particular concern for young women being sent to countries where social norms, legal systems, and institutional practices significantly limit women's independence and opportunities. The organization argued that return decisions often fail to

adequately consider the gender-specific dangers these individuals may encounter. The policy has also resulted in family separation, with some young adults facing removal while parents or siblings continue to live legally in Sweden. Rights advocates contend that these outcomes disrupt family life and force young people to leave the only home many have known just as they begin building independent lives.

Several recent cases highlight these concerns. Iranian sisters Darya Javid Gonbadi and Donya Javid Gonbadi were [deported in 2025](#) after spending years in Sweden, while close family members remained in the country. Another young woman, Ayla Rostamil, also faces removal to Iran despite having lived in Sweden for several years. [Her case](#) has been temporarily suspended due to ongoing instability in the region. Human Rights Watch noted that women in Iran continue to face extensive legal and social restrictions. International investigators have documented discriminatory laws affecting areas such as family rights, inheritance, and personal autonomy. Women who challenge these restrictions or participate in protests have reportedly faced arrest, detention, mistreatment, and other forms of punishment.

Concerns have also been raised regarding deportations to Egypt. Nardine Rael Awad, a 21-year-old woman who was removed from Sweden in May 2026, described difficulties adjusting to life alone after her return. [She](#)

[expressed fears](#) related to personal safety and said that social expectations and gender norms had sharply limited her freedom compared to her life in Sweden. Previous Human Rights Watch research found that women in Egypt often face barriers to independent living and mobility. The organization also pointed to persistent problems involving harassment, gender-based violence, and legal inequalities affecting matters such as divorce, inheritance, and child custody. Another widely discussed case involves sisters Diya Hassan and Kani Hassan, who arrived in Sweden as children and later completed their education and entered the workforce. Although their family applied together for permanent residency, long processing delays meant the sisters became adults before a decision was issued. Their parents and younger brother received permission to remain, while the sisters were instead issued deportation orders. The two women now face possible removal to Iraq, where they say they have no meaningful support network.

Human Rights Watch noted that women's rights protections in Iraq remain limited and that concerns persist regarding domestic violence, legal discrimination, and reduced accountability for crimes committed in the name of so-called family honor. Rights advocates argue that Sweden's migration policies increasingly conflict with its longstanding reputation as a supporter of gender equality. Although the government has introduced measures allowing some young adults to seek residency through their parents until age 21, Human Rights Watch said these changes do not fully address the underlying problem. In its view, extending eligibility deadlines merely postpones decisions rather than resolving concerns about the risks individuals may face after deportation.

The organization also questioned whether authorities are giving sufficient weight to international legal protections that prohibit returning people to situations where they may face persecution, serious abuse, or degrading treatment. Such obligations are reflected in several international and European human rights instruments binding on Sweden. These deportations raise concerns about the safety and future of young women who have built their lives in Sweden but now face return to countries where they may encounter significant barriers to their rights and independence. Migration decisions should better account for these gender-specific risks and the impact of family separation.

Alleged RSF Crimes Against Humanity Reported in El Fasher



Photo by Odette Cattryse on Unsplash

Amnesty International has accused Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of committing crimes against humanity during its offensive in El Fasher, alleging that civilians were subjected to widespread abuses throughout the conflict. [In a report](#) released on Wednesday, the rights organization said RSF fighters carried out killings, torture, rape, sexual enslavement, and other serious violations as part of a large-scale and organized campaign against the civilian population. Amnesty also alleged that children were deliberately targeted during some attacks. El Fasher, the final Sudanese army stronghold in the Darfur region, fell to the RSF in October after an 18-month siege. The takeover was accompanied by extensive violence that reportedly left [tens of thousands dead](#) and forced large numbers of residents to flee.

The findings add to growing international concern over events in Darfur. Earlier this year, a United Nations fact-finding mission stated that the capture of El Fasher displayed indicators consistent with genocide against non-Arab communities. To compile its report, Amnesty International interviewed hundreds of people affected by the conflict, including survivors from El Fasher and nearby areas. Researchers also reviewed videos, documents, satellite imagery, and other evidence relating to events in North Darfur. According to the organization, abuses committed between mid-2024 and late 2025 amounted to war crimes and, in some cases, crimes against humanity. Amnesty concluded that non-Arab communities were frequently singled out and that attacks were often accompanied by discriminatory and dehumanizing rhetoric. The group stated that these actions constituted persecution based on ethnicity.

The report further alleged that the destruction of several towns and villages, including the predominantly non-Arab community of Abu Zerega, reflected a pattern of ethnic cleansing. [Amnesty said](#) entire communities were uprooted as homes and civilian infrastructure were devastated. Beyond the immediate violence, the organization highlighted the severe humanitarian consequences of the conflict. Countless children reportedly lost parents, while hundreds of thousands of people were displaced, exposing them to further danger, injury, and deprivation. Amnesty identified three RSF commanders it said were linked to serious violations of international law: Maj. Gen. Gedo Hamdan Ahmed Mohamed, known as Abu Shok; Lt. Col. Abbas Khater Bakhit; and Al-Fateh Abdullah Idris, also known as Abu Lulu.

Sudan's conflict began in April 2023 when tensions between the Sudanese Armed Forces, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF under Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti, escalated into open warfare in Khartoum. Since then, the fighting has caused massive loss of life and displacement across the country. The reported abuses in El Fasher are a stark reminder that ordinary people often bear the greatest burden of war. Behind every statistic are families grieving loved ones, children separated from their parents, and communities struggling to rebuild their lives, underscoring the need for urgent humanitarian support, civilian protection, and meaningful accountability for those responsible for serious violations.

Chinese Human Rights Lawyer Detained by US Immigration Authorities

[The detention of a Chinese human rights lawyer](#) by US immigration authorities has sparked concern among activists and supporters, who fear he could ultimately be returned to China despite his pending asylum application. Wu Shaoping, a lawyer known for his involvement in sensitive human rights cases, left China in late 2019 during a period of increasing pressure on lawyers, activists, and reform advocates. After arriving in the United States on a tourist visa, he applied for asylum in 2020 and has been waiting for a decision ever since. While living in the US, Wu supported himself through delivery work while continuing to engage with Chinese democracy and human rights initiatives abroad.

According to friends, Wu was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers on Wednesday while delivering packages in Mount Holly Springs, Pennsylvania. A friend who later spoke with him said officers requested documentation regarding his immigration status. Wu reportedly presented evidence showing that he had entered the country legally and that his asylum case remained under review. Despite this, authorities took him into custody and transferred him to an immigration detention facility in Pennsylvania. At the time of reporting, officials had not publicly commented on the circumstances surrounding the arrest. The case has drawn attention from members of the Chinese exile community and rights advocates, many of whom fear that deportation could place Wu at serious risk if returned to China.

Before entering the field of human rights, Wu worked primarily as a commercial lawyer. Over time, however, he became involved in legal and civic reform efforts and represented individuals connected to politically sensitive causes, including religious groups and government critics. Lawyers involved in such cases have frequently faced professional sanctions, surveillance, or other forms of pressure in China. His wife, Li Caoliu, said Wu was motivated by a belief that Chinese citizens should enjoy greater freedoms and legal protections. She described his commitment to defending the rights of ordinary people despite the risks associated with that work. A turning point came in December 2019 when Wu attended a gathering of activists and legal advocates in the city of Xiamen. Authorities later launched a broad crackdown against several participants, including well-known rights lawyers [Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong](#), who were subsequently convicted on national security-related charges and remain imprisoned. Following those developments, Wu left China.

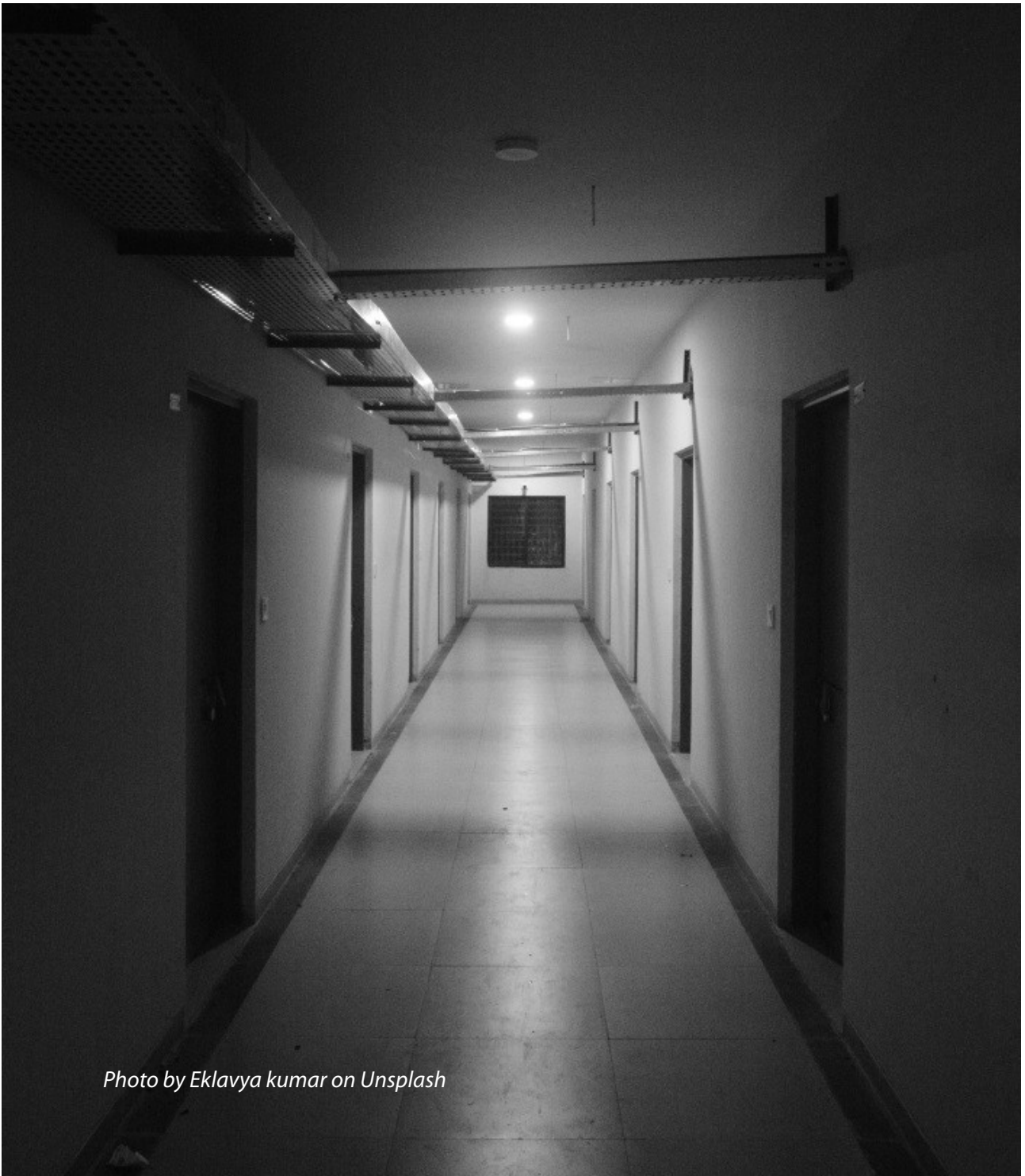


Photo by Eklavya kumar on Unsplash

The arrest has alarmed other Chinese dissidents living overseas. Zhou Fengsuo, a former student leader from the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement who now resides in the United States, said the detention has heightened anxiety among exiled activists who sought refuge abroad after fleeing political repression. Friends who have spoken with Wu since his detention said he remains hopeful about the outcome of his asylum case but believes he should not have been taken into custody while awaiting a legal decision. His immigration hearing is scheduled for July 27. Supporters argue that a return to China could expose Wu to detention or prosecution because of his past activism and legal work. These concerns have been echoed by fellow activists familiar with China's treatment of government critics and human rights defenders.

Earlier this month, Wu participated in an event marking the anniversary of the [nationwide crackdown](#) on Chinese human rights lawyers that began in July 2015. Speaking at the gathering, he emphasized that human rights advocacy is not a symbolic gesture but a responsibility carried out on behalf of those who have been silenced or imprisoned. He also expressed solidarity with lawyers and activists who remain behind bars in China. Wu Shaoping's case is a reminder that seeking refuge does not always bring an immediate sense of safety or certainty. For many activists and human rights defenders who have fled persecution, the fear of being sent back to the very conditions they escaped can remain a constant reality. His detention has also renewed concerns about the protection of vulnerable asylum seekers and the challenges they face while waiting for their cases to be resolved.

Taliban Policies Deepen Crisis in Afghanistan's Higher Education

[Five years after the Taliban](#) regained power, students across Afghanistan say the country's higher-education system is increasingly shaped by ideological restrictions, weaker academic standards, and growing uncertainty about the future. Male students report being required to follow strict dress and appearance rules, attend mandatory religious lectures, and participate in public prayers. According to several students, these activities often take priority over regular coursework and leave less time for academic learning. Students from multiple provinces told media outlets that universities have become less focused on critical thinking and open discussion. Many described classrooms where questioning is discouraged and obedience is emphasized over intellectual inquiry.

A major concern is the decline in teaching quality. Students say many experienced professors have left the country or stopped teaching, while some replacements lack the qualifications or expertise needed for university-level instruction. Several reported that

lecturers frequently rely on outdated materials and struggle to engage with modern subjects. [UNESCO data](#) reflects the broader decline. Female enrollment has dropped to zero following the ban on women attending universities, while male enrollment has also fallen significantly in recent years. Although campuses remain open and degrees continue to be awarded, many students believe universities no longer offer the opportunities they once did. The weakening job market and shrinking professional sectors have left some questioning whether higher education can still provide a pathway to stable employment.

Journalism students expressed particular concern, noting that restrictions on media have reduced career prospects in the field. Others said younger relatives have abandoned their studies altogether because they no longer see education as a route to a better future. Students interviewed across different regions described a similar reality: declining academic standards, increased ideological influence, and fading confidence in the value of a university degree. While many continue their studies, some say they do so out of obligation rather than belief that education will improve their lives. The accounts from students suggest that Afghanistan's education crisis extends beyond the exclusion of women, affecting the quality of learning and future prospects for many young men as well. For students who once saw university as a path to opportunity, the growing sense of uncertainty and disillusionment reflects a deeper loss of hope about what education can achieve.

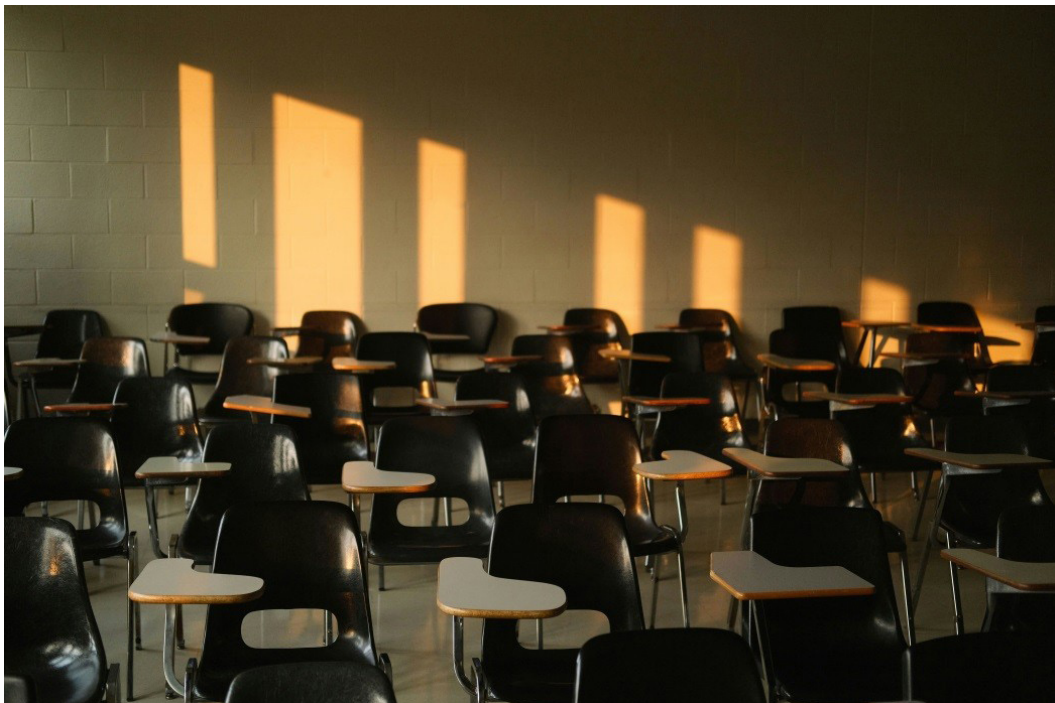


Photo by Allen Y on Unsplash

Court Ruling on Missing Kashmiri Man Revives Long-standing Questions Over Enforced Disappearances

Nearly three decades after Abdul Rashid Wani disappeared in Indian-administered Kashmir, a court has officially declared him dead, offering [rare legal recognition](#) in a region where thousands of families continue to search for missing relatives. Wani, a timber trader from Srinagar, vanished in July 1997 after allegedly being taken into military custody while traveling to pay suppliers. In an April ruling, a judge ordered the issuance of a death certificate and referenced an investigation that identified an army officer linked to his detention. The court concluded that Wani was killed while in custody, although his remains have never been found. For his family, the decision brought long-awaited acknowledgment but few answers. Wani's son, Junaid Rashid, was only five years old when his father disappeared.



Photo by Carly Hendrickson on Unsplash

After years of legal proceedings and efforts to locate him, the family says the ruling confirms what they had long feared while leaving unresolved questions about where his body is buried.

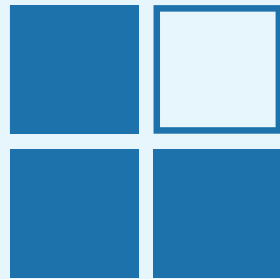
The case has renewed attention on the issue of [enforced disappearances](#) in Kashmir, where human rights groups estimate that thousands of people went missing during

decades of conflict. While some are believed to have been taken by security forces, others may have disappeared at the hands of armed groups operating in the region. Kashmir has remained at the center of a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan since 1947. Following the outbreak of an armed insurgency in 1989, the region became heavily militarized, leading to years of violence that claimed tens of thousands of lives. Although militant activity has declined, the legacy of the conflict continues to affect many families.

Advocacy groups argue that Wani's case reflects a broader pattern of [unresolved disappearances](#). The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) has estimated that as many as 8,000 people may have gone missing over the years. The organization has also documented thousands of unmarked graves in remote areas of the region, raising concerns that some could contain the remains of those who vanished during the conflict. In 2011, Kashmir's State Human Rights Commission reported that authorities could identify only a small fraction of the bodies buried at sites examined during its investigation. The commission suggested that some of the unidentified remains could belong to missing persons and called for DNA testing, a process that was never fully carried out. Families searching for answers often describe years of uncertainty, financial hardship, and

emotional distress. Many pursued court cases, filed complaints, and repeatedly approached authorities in hopes of learning what happened to their loved ones. Some say they were privately informed that relatives had died but were never given official confirmation or details about their fate.

One such case is that of Manzoor Ahmed Dar, who was taken from his home during a late-night security operation in 2002 and never returned. Despite years of legal efforts, his family says they still do not know what happened to him. After being told unofficially that he had died in custody, relatives eventually held symbolic funeral rites while continuing to seek answers. For many families, the greatest pain is not only the loss itself but the absence of closure. While the court's decision in Wani's case is being viewed as a significant development, relatives of the disappeared continue to call for transparency, accountability, and information about the fate of those who never came home.



SECTION-3

**Multimedia Update: Voices Against
Authoritarianism**

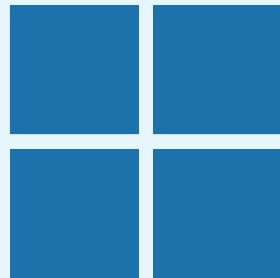
Write-up by an International Human Rights Certificate Program Participant

This July, we are pleased to share the work of a graduate from the International Human Rights Certificate Program. This article explores ongoing human rights concerns in Burundi after two decades of CNDD-FDD rule, highlighting challenges related to media freedom, political repression, accountability, and the protection of fundamental rights.

Persistent Human Rights Challenges in Burundi After Two Decades of CNDD-FDD Rule by Inès Mukandanga

Since the CNDD-FDD came to power following Burundi's post-conflict transition, the country has experienced persistent concerns regarding human rights and democratic governance. While the ruling party emerged from a movement that sought to address historical grievances and political exclusion, national and international organizations continue to document allegations of human rights violations, restrictions on civil liberties, and limited accountability for abuses.

In this insightful [article](#), Inès Mukandanga, a graduate of the International Human Rights Certificate Program, examines key human rights challenges in Burundi under two decades of CNDD-FDD rule. The article explores restrictions on media freedom and freedom of expression, allegations of abuses linked to the Imbonerakure youth wing, concerns regarding property rights and expropriation, pressure on journalists and human rights defenders, and reports of transnational surveillance targeting dissidents abroad. It also analyzes the broader implications of these issues for accountability, democratic participation, and the protection of fundamental freedoms in Burundi. To learn more about these developments in depth, read the latest publication on our [website](#).



SECTION-4

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