

The Tackling Transnational Repression in the UK Working Group welcomes the JCHR report on transnational repression as an important step forward and calls on the UK Government to act swiftly on the Committee's recommendations.

On Wednesday 30 July, the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) published its [report on transnational repression \(TNR\) in the UK](#). This followed a public inquiry that received 181 written submissions and gave an unprecedented insight into how states or their proxies have crossed state borders to target protected speech and attempt to threaten many groups into silence.

The Tackling TNR in the UK Working Group, an informal coalition of individuals and organisations working to address TNR in the UK that submitted written evidence to the inquiry, today said:

“The public inquiry was a unique opportunity to bring together experts, diaspora communities and targets to look at how we can protect those who speak out against repression or carry out important democratic functions such as journalists, lawyers, academics and human rights defenders. Public bodies, Parliament and civil society all have a key role to play in making certain the Government remains committed to tackling TNR. The report is an important call to action for the Government to do more to protect those in the crosshairs and bring TNR to an end in the UK.”

The report highlights a number of points that the Working Group has long identified. At the centre of the report is an important acknowledgement of the scale of the issue and that “[f]raming TNR as a marginal issue may risk overlooking its serious and far-reaching human rights implications”. It also correctly identifies the “chilling effect” of TNR, which can impact “freedom of expression across entire communities”, demonstrating the wider importance of a robust and urgent response and the need for TNR-targeted individuals and communities to play a prominent and meaningful role.

It includes a number of welcome and practical steps the UK Government should take with a matter of urgency. These include greater coordination between state agencies and public bodies, an accessible hotline for TNR targets, mandatory training for police that is not restricted to counter-terrorism officers, as well as dedicated and tailored guidance and resources for targets available in multiple languages.

Further to this, the Committee is “concerned by the Government’s decision not to adopt a formal definition of TNR” and states that “[a]dopting a formal UK definition of TNR would significantly enhance the UK’s ability to collect reliable data, monitor trends and develop effective policy responses”. These are serious points that the Government must respond to.

While the report is a strong call to action, there are aspects where further clarity is needed. For instance, the committee has “not identified any significant gaps in criminal law related to TNR”. At the same time, the existing policing response has been identified as “inconsistent” by TNR targets. Criminal laws are only effective to the extent they can be enforced. Meanwhile, law enforcement provides little recourse for many of the most marginalised communities and individuals, including the Uighur diaspora and Chinese dissidents who are widely targeted through threats to family members overseas. The report falls short of

recommending meaningful rights-oriented measures to support targets whose TNR experiences are not captured by law enforcement frameworks .

While the report is an important starting point, the Government cannot let momentum drop. Throughout the report, the Committee recommends specific timeframes for the development of a public outreach strategy, reporting cycles and the provision of resources and training. These cannot be ignored nor can public bodies be expected to meet these targets without meaningful and dedicated funding. At a time of increased pressure on public spending, the Government must work to ensure that all public bodies have the funding, resources and support they need to effectively respond to this challenge.

In its [submission](#) to the Committee, the Tackling TNR in the UK Working Group stated “The UK’s responses to TNR to date have been sparse, incoherent and largely inaccessible to targeted communities and individuals. ... TNR has a negative impact at every level of UK society, from individuals to communities, democratic institutions and national security. Responses must be similarly multi-layered and comprehensive.” Evidence presented to the Committee and highlighted in the report demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the UK’s existing response to TNR as the “UK’s continued reliance on quiet diplomacy and case-by-case interventions may have inadvertently emboldened repressive regimes”.

This report is an important step towards ensuring the UK can respond adequately to TNR. The scale and breadth of the evidence provided to the inquiry highlighting TNR directed by states including Bahrain, China, Egypt, Eritrea, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates lays bare the scale of the issue. Following the publication of the report, the Working Group renews its calls for an ambitious, meaningful and principled strategy, with TNR-targeted individuals and communities at its heart.