



[The United States Imposes a Wave of Human Rights-Related Sanctions on China, Myanmar, and Others](#)

Dozens of individuals and entities in China, Myanmar, and North Korea, among others, have been targeted in a major wave of human rights-related sanctions. The United States imposed the punitive measures in conjunction with the commemoration of Human Rights Day, and U.S. officials expressed that the sanctions are intended to serve as a message to the world that democracies will act against countries who abuse government power to oppress and harm their own citizens. The timing of the actions was also coordinated to coincide with U.S. President Biden's virtual Summit for Democracy – a gathering aimed at advancing respect for human rights, combating corruption, and defending against authoritarianism. During the course of the two-day meeting, more than 100 world leaders, including President Biden, made commitments to challenge the rise of autocracy in the world and promote the protection of human rights. China in particular has come under increased criticism for its array of human rights violations, such as the mistreatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and repressive and intrusive policies in Hong Kong. The U.S. government, rights groups, independent tribunals, and others have all tried to maintain focus on the crimes against humanity taking place in the countries hit with this recent slew of sanctions.

One specific entity targeted by these new sanctions is a Chinese artificial intelligence (AI) company, SenseTime. The organization has developed AI facial recognition programs that can determine ethnicity and has been used to identify persecuted minority groups like the Uyghurs. The company was due to sell shares in an initial public offering (IPO) valued at \$767 million, but this has now been delayed because of the investment ban levied on it through the United States-imposed sanctions. The U.S. Treasury Department has said that through this particular company, China has become much more efficient in its efforts to locate ethnic minorities such as the Uyghurs in Xinjiang province and subject them to torture, forced sterilization, and killing. A spokesman for China's foreign ministry attempted to dismiss the punitive measures by proclaiming that "Xinjiang-related affairs are purely China's internal affairs," a common sentiment expressed by the Chinese Communist Party when many of its various policies are rightfully scrutinized.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is due to release an anticipated report that is expected to show consistent patterns of human rights violations by the Chinese government. The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michele Bachelet, has requested access to investigate accusations of forced disappearances, illegal imprisonment, constraints on the practice of Islam, torture, and killing, but has repeatedly been denied access by Chinese authorities. Human rights lawyers in China have frequently been hindered when it comes to freedom of movement, the ability to meet with their clients, and access to evidence, and rights activists have endured persistent surveillance and arbitrary detention. The OHCHR has said that these individuals are often detained and held at designated locations without access to legal representation or their families. Back in October of 2020, 39 U.N. member states issued a joint statement about the disturbing reports of human rights abuses in both Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

In Myanmar, four military entities and four regional chief ministers, including a minister who leads the junta's administration in a region where 82 people were killed in a single day earlier this year in April, are the target of U.S., U.K., and Canadian sanctions. Since the military coup in February, the junta has killed more than 1300 people, with the whereabouts of many others unknown. Charity workers and members of Myanmar's civil society have also been targeted by the military throughout the course of its repressive crackdown in the aftermath of the coup.