

# Open Letter on Stopping Transnational Repression

November 15, 2023

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate,

The Renew Democracy Initiative calls on Congress to pass the bipartisan, comprehensive Transnational Repression Policy Act (S831).

[Transnational repression](#) is the act of “governments reaching across borders to silence dissent among diasporas and exiles, including through assassinations, illegal deportations, abductions, digital threats, Interpol abuse, and family intimidation.” While the United States has long served as a refuge for those fleeing oppressive regimes, foreign agents and new digital tools threaten this country’s ability to protect individuals’ freedom.

The Transnational Repression Policy Act was introduced by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Ben Cardin (D-MD), and Bill Hagerty (R-TN) in March of 2023 to hold foreign governments accountable for the abuses they commit and elevate transnational repression as a foreign policy priority for the United States.

According to a [summary document](#) from the office of Senator Merkley, the bill would:

- Include a transnational repression-specific section within the State Department’s Annual Human Rights Report.
- Require the Secretary of State along with other relevant heads of Federal departments and agencies to present a report to Congress on a U.S. strategy to address transnational repression and enhance international awareness of it.
- Require the Departments of State and Justice to work with civil society and the private sector on training for U.S. diplomatic personnel and domestic federal employees, respectively, on identifying and understanding transnational repression.
  - Authorize funding for each Fiscal Year from 2024 to 2027 to develop curriculum for diplomatic personnel and domestic federal employees, respectively.
- Instruct the intelligence community to identify perpetrators of transnational repression and their tools, and share relevant information with like-minded partners.
- Dedicate resources to ensure a tip line for victims and witnesses of transnational repression is tailored to meet the needs of at-risk communities and to identify specific tactics.
- Require the President submit a list to Congress of foreign individuals who should have sanctions imposed on them because they, knowingly and unknowingly, directly engaged in transnational repression.

Our organization recently held a conference on transnational repression. In attendance were a broad coalition of nonprofit organizations and political dissidents. The message we received was overwhelming: there is no time to wait to pass this legislation to protect and uphold the freedoms of those targeted by oppressive regimes while residing in the United States. The United States must continue to lead the world in resisting foreign authoritarian influence through passing the Transnational Repression Policy Act.

Sincerely,

**Renew Democracy Initiative**