

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2026

Steven Cheung
Assistant to the President for Communications
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Cheung,

We write to express serious concern regarding reports that American media outlets were denied entry onto White House grounds to cover the state dinner with General Secretary Xi Jinping. If true, these restrictions on press freedom present troubling parallels to authoritarian practices used by the People's Republic of China (PRC).

On September 18, President Trump announced a ban on three media outlets—CNN, MS NOW, and Politico—from access to White House grounds.¹ On September 24, a federal judge ordered the White House to immediately restore press credentials for their reporters pending further proceedings, finding that the outlets' challenge to the revocation was likely to ultimately succeed.²

Nevertheless, according to numerous media outlets, journalists from CNN and MS NOW were denied access to cover Xi Jinping's arrival for a state dinner at the White House.³ CNN reported that a producer and reporter were blocked from the event, and MS NOW reported its White House reporter, Laura Barrón-López, was denied entry.⁴ These reports are deeply troubling not only given the context of the court's temporary restraining order and First Amendment press freedom but also as a sign of the President's use of anti-democratic tactics perfected by the very guest hosted at the White House.

The PRC is ranked 178 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index and is deemed "the world's largest prison for journalists."⁵ Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) systematically censors unfavorable coverage and wholesale bans independent media. Pro-CCP authorities in Hong Kong have used the so-called National Security Law to destroy the city's once-thriving media environment, weaponizing "national security" and "sedition" justifications to close major outlets, criminalize independent journalism, and expel international media. In a matter of twenty years since handover to the PRC, Hong Kong's press freedom ranking plunged from 18th to 148th. The apparent fact that this Administration is attempting to crack down on U.S. media is deeply distressing.

It is also troubling that, as American outlets like CNN and MS NOW were blocked from access to cover the state dinner, PRC state-run media organizations like Xinhua faced no such

obstacles.⁶ Xinhua reports directly to the CCP's Central Propaganda Department and owe complete allegiance to the Party, according to CCP doctrine. In fact, Mao Ning, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was herself invited to attend the state dinner.⁷ She leads China's public-facing propaganda efforts within the PRC. In 2023, Mao Ning stated, "It's public knowledge that Jimmy Lai is one of the most notorious anti-China elements bent on destabilizing Hong Kong and a mastermind of the riots that took place in Hong Kong," in response to his independent coverage of pro-democracy protests.

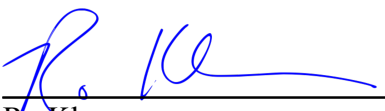
In no way should a U.S. president or any other official attempt to squash the freedoms of American media outlets at a time when we should be condemning the limitations on the freedom of the press that the CCP supports at home and around the world. Our Constitution ensures the freedom of the press and forbids treating media outlets differently based on their viewpoint. As expounded by Judge Timothy Kelly, the free press "stands as one of the great interpreters between the government and the people."⁸ Upholding this Constitutional principle distinguishes the United States' rule of law from the rule-by-law authoritarianism used by the CCP.

Therefore, we request your prompt responses to the following questions:

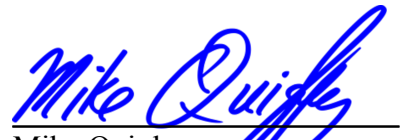
1. On what grounds did the President, you, or the White House Office of the Press Secretary deny access to CNN and MS NOW reporters or producers at last week's state dinner?
2. What background checks and procedures were implemented to screen PRC state-run media outlets' access to last week's bilateral meetings between yourself and Xi Jinping?
3. What is the Trump Administration's strategy to hold the PRC and Xi Jinping accountable for their violations of basic human rights, including freedoms of speech, opinion, and expression?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

¹ Donald Trump [@realDonaldTrump], Truth Social post, September 18, 2026, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/117293599348325006>.

² Zach Schonfeld, "Judge orders White House to immediately restore access to CNN, MS NOW, Politico," The Hill, September 24, 2026, <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/6108012-judge-orders-white-house-to-immediately-restore-access-to-cnn-ms-now-politico/>.

³ Antonio Pequeño IV, "CNN And MS NOW Barred From White House State Dinner Despite Judge Lifting Ban," Forbes, September 24, 2026, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/antoniopequenoiv/2026/09/24/cnn-and-ms-now-barred-from-white-house-state-dinner-despite-judge-lifting-ban/>.

⁴ Scott Nover and Victoria Craw, "CNN, MS NOW access unresolved as White House bars some journalists from state dinner event," Washington Post, September 25, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2026/09/24/judge-blocks-trumps-white-house-ban-cnn-politico-ms-now/>.

⁵ Reporters Without Borders, "China," accessed September 25, 2026, <https://rsf.org/en/country/china>.

⁶ "Xi attends state dinner held by Trump," Xinhua, September 25, 2026, <https://english.news.cn/20260925/22e4778526644072827de431afa75e46/c.html>.

⁷ "Full Guest List for Trump's State Dinner With Xi," New York Times, September 24, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/24/us/politics/full-guest-list-trump-state-dinner-xi.html>.

⁸ United States District Judge Timothy J. Kelly, "Temporary Restraining Order," United States District Court for the District of Columbia, September 24, 2026, https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.dcd.296754/gov.uscourts.dcd.296754.24.0_1.pdf.