

DEMOCRACY & HUMAN RIGHTS

Transnational Repression: Trends, Tactics, and Policy Recommendations

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Today, at least 38 countries employ tactics of transnational repression in as many as 91 host states. In what can be called the “toolkit” of authoritarian control, the hydra-heads of transnational repression encompass tactics ranging from surveillance to harassment and intimidation, use of state media, assassinations, spyware, physical violence, abduction, rendition, forcible return, conspiracy, and collaboration with actors in the host country.

A pattern of cooperation with the host country’s government emerges with most of the disappearances, extraditions, renditions, and forcible returns. These tactics may take advantage of the absence of the rule of law and political rights or lack of awareness about the extent of the problem in the host country.

While an authoritarian regime may be intent on imposing its own standards on its citizens, few countries do this on their own. Collaboration and collusion between the state of origin and the so-called host country are uppermost in the toolkit of transnational repression.