

For true liberation of LGBTQI people in China

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In May, a Chinese non-profit organization the Beijing LGBT Center made a sudden statement: “We very regretfully announce, due to forces beyond our control, the Beijing LGBT Center will stop operating today”. And the organization was forced to suspend its activities under pressure from the Chinese authorities. [1] The organization was founded in 2008, and until its closure in 2023, provided resources such as low-cost counseling and a crisis hotline under censorship and pressure from Chinese authorities. And it had physical offices for film screenings and discussion groups.

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The center is neither the first nor the largest organization for sexual minorities in China. But it represented China’s LGBTQI movement in the political, economic and cultural center of the country. The center continued to advocate rights for LGBTQI people, including same-sex marriage even after a nationwide crackdown on human rights lawyers and activists that began in 2015.

On the other hand, its activities had been scaled back in the past few years. In recent years, Xi Jinping has seen the rights of LGBTQI people as “western values” and has detained activists. The oppressions are in stark contrast to neighboring Taiwan, which became the first country in Asia to recognize same-sex marriage in 2019. [1]

Past oppression of LGBTQI people

Originally, LGBTQI people in China has never been explicitly protected from discrimination. Also, the Chinese government had shown an ambivalent and fickle attitude toward the topic. The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China provides for equality under the law. But this is no explicit mention of sexual orientation or gender identity. And there is no anti-discrimination provision for sexual orientation or gender identity under Chinese labor law. It was not something that happened just recently. And the ambivalent and fickle attitude of the government sometimes had changed to full disapproval.

Oppression of LGBTQI people has escalated since Xi Jinping was elected president of China by the National People’s Congress in 2013. Three months after the election of Xi Jinping, officials were arrested at the Beijing Queer Film Festival. And two months later, the Beijing Independent Film Festival was obstructed by Chinese authorities and canceled. The Independent Film Festival, then in its 11th year, had been obstructed by the authorities before. However, it was the first time that it was forced to be cancelled. In 2020, Shanghai PRIDE was forced to end its activities. It is one of the

longest-running gay pride groups in China and had been operating for about 11 years. The [official website of the Beijing Queer Choir](#) existed around October last year. But it is closed at the time of writing. The Beijing Queer Choir was founded in 2008, the same year that the Beijing LGBT Center was founded. It was as if Xi Jinping has been in line with Putin's policies. Since last year, Putin has repeatedly made discriminatory remarks that appear to be aimed at sexual minorities in speeches related to the invasion of Ukraine. Russia and China currently stand together against the "common enemies".

Xi Jinping wary of "western values"

The "common enemies" of Chinese and Russian dictators are "western values". In China, tightened surveillance and censorship of the people have forced multiple LGBTQI-related organizations to shut down and the events to cancel under the pretext of "national security". [2] And political pressure also extended to social media. In July 2021, many WeChat accounts associated with LGBTQI movements attended by university students were blocked and then deleted without warning. The accounts were deleted unilaterally while the students were exercising their right to freedom of expression and freedom of speech. [3] Social networking services such as LINE, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, which are commonly used in other countries, cannot be used or strictly restricted in China except when using overseas roaming or VPN services. It is due to the very strict internet censorship system known as the "Great Firewall". In effect, people in China are being forced to use WeChat, Weibo, Renrenwan, and Oasis instead of LINE, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram respectively. State surveillance and intelligence gathering by Chinese authorities are conducted not only in mainland China but also in other countries. When a friend of the present writer who lives in the country other than China criticized the Chinese government on WeChat, he received a warning call from a Chinese public security officer the next day.

The only way to win true liberation

The Chinese government has achieved certain results in "people control" aiming at "national security". In recent years, the Chinese government has succeeded in monitoring the conversations, behavior, and purchase history of all Chinese citizens by using exclusive Chinese social media. It shows Xi Jinping's strong sense of unease, which is overly wary of the influence and values of foreign countries. At the same time, there is a "consideration of what Xi Jinping wants" in the name of loyalty by the "national security faction" that increases power and interests within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Especially during the pandemic, the Chinese government has continued privatization of public social services. [4] It has exposed women and other marginalized groups to further precarious conditions and exploitation. Against this, feminist and LGBTQI activists have led local and overseas struggles against gender-based violence. Also, the people in China launched a massive struggle across the country.

As a result, the people won their first battle against long-term pandemic policies of the country last year. The struggle across China made the Xi Jinping regime back down from its dictatorial policies to some extent. The oppressed proletariat has no country. We socialists should strongly support and empower their struggles for their basic human rights of the oppressed. Our horizon is international solidarity to overthrow the Chinese bureaucratic capitalist system and also to abolition of Xi Jinping's dictatorial rule from which the political regime draws its power. [5] We are the class that does the work of the world, and can revolutionize it. We can win true liberation. [6] It is the only way to fulfill the demands of oppressed people joining ongoing struggles for democratic reforms and revolutionary socialism.

Footnotes

[1] In Taiwan at the time, not only democratic movements but also the feminist movements, labor movements, and social movements were growing nationwide, which allowed abolition of the traditional constraints of then-Taiwan society.

[2] At the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party of October 2022, Xi Jinping used “security” 91 times and “national security” 29 times in his political report. On the other hand, “reform” which has been used frequently in the past political speeches of the CCP was only 51 times. China has shifted from the era of “reform and opening up” to the era of “national security.”

[3] Because of WeChat’s popularity, the Chinese government uses the application as a data source to conduct mass surveillance in China.

[4] Fourth International Bureau, 22 December 2022, [“Solidarity with the mass movement for democracy in China”](#).

[5] After Beijing Sitong Bridge protest of October 2022 [“Solidarité avec Lambdaistanbul”](#), protesters wearing full-body protective gear organized an action with the slogans of the Sitong Bridge protest (following) in front of the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo:
We don’t want nucleic acid testing, we want food to eat.
We don’t want lockdowns, we want freedom.
We don’t want Cultural Revolution, we want reform.
We don’t want dictatorial leaders.

[6] Quoted from the end of Leslie Feinberg’s book [Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come](#), (1992).