

Diplomatic Tensions Escalate as Canada and China Expel Each Other's Diplomats

In a retaliatory move, China expelled a Canadian diplomat from Shanghai on Tuesday, following Ottawa's decision to ask a Chinese diplomat to leave Toronto, which has further intensified the already tense relations between the two nations over concerns about Chinese influence in Canada.

The expulsion of Canadian diplomat, Michael Kovrig, comes after Canadian officials accused a Chinese diplomat, Zhao Wei, of targeting a Canadian lawmaker who criticized China's treatment of the Uyghur Muslim minority, and subsequently ordered his departure.

The diplomatic relations between the two nations have been strained since 2018 when Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was detained, and Beijing arrested two Canadians on spying charges. The trio was released in 2021.

In 2020, Beijing lifted the three-year ban on the import of canola, Canada's biggest crop, from the trading companies Richardson International and Viterra, citing concerns about pests, but the move was seen as a concession to ease tensions.

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) released a report in 2021 on Chinese influence in Canada, which revealed potential threats to Conservative Member of Parliament Michael Chong and his family. The intelligence report had information about China's efforts to target Chong, who sponsored a successful motion in 2021 declaring China's treatment of its Uyghur Muslim minority as genocide. The report was only made public on May 1 by The Globe and Mail newspaper.

Chong expressed his disappointment over the government's inaction and criticized them for not acting sooner. He repeatedly called for Zhao's expulsion since the Globe report was published.

Trudeau said that he only became aware of the intelligence report through the media, and has blamed the spy agency for not informing him earlier. As a result, the agency has now been directed to inform him immediately about threats to members of parliament and their families.

Canadian media outlets have reported several times on anonymous intelligence sources alleging Chinese interference in Canada's previous two elections. Beijing has denied these allegations, and Trudeau has appointed an independent special investigator to probe the allegations.

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