



## China Reform Monitor No. 1440

October 27, 2020 **Joshua Eisenman**

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### **VATICAN EXTENDS APPOINTMENT DEAL WITH CHINA**

Despite Washington's entreaties, the Vatican has extended its agreement with Beijing over the appointment of bishops in China for another two years. Under the deal, China recognizes the Pope's authority within the Roman Catholic Church and his final say over the country's bishops. The Vatican, which for its part recognized the legitimacy of bishops previously appointed by Beijing, said that the deal's details would remain "confidential by mutual consent." But not all are satisfied by the arrangement. "My main objection to the agreement is we don't know what it is," said Cardinal Raymond Burke. Some fear the extension and continued meetings between the two sides as moving toward diplomatic relations that would require the Holy See to cut its ties with Taipei. Before negotiations over the agreement's renewal began this summer, hackers thought to be from China infiltrated the Vatican's computer networks. (*New York Times*, October 22, 2020)

### **ITALY ENDS BRI MEMBERSHIP AND SWEDEN SAYS NO TO HUAWEI**

Italy and Sweden are walking away from cooperation with China. "The MoU on the silk routes with China was a mistake. Xi's China is no longer what it used to be," said Vincenzo Amendola, Italy's minister for European affairs. Amendola was referring to the March 2019 BRI MoU agreement signed by his government. The blunt statement comes after Italy agreed to support the European Union's decision to toughen its common position on China. Amendola said European countries have failed for too long "to make reciprocity a priority [with China.] Italy is geared toward trade with everyone, but accords with China must today pass through a commitment of the 27, because foreign trade has to do with European sovereignty." Meanwhile, following reports by the Swedish armed forces and the Swedish Security Service, the country's regulators have decided to ban telecom equipment from Huawei and ZTE from their new 5G network. (*Economic Times*, October 22, 2020)

### **CHINA THREATENS NOT TO RECOGNIZE BRITISH PASSPORTS FOR HONG KONGERS**

"The British side violated its promises, insisted on going its own way and repeatedly played up the issue of British National Overseas passports (BNO) Passports. As the British side violated its commitment first, China will consider not recognizing the BNO Passport as a valid travel document, and reserves the right to take further measures," a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry has said. Back in May, London allowed BNO passport holders, who can apply for visas allowing them to live and work in the UK, to extend their stay and eventually apply for citizenship. Since Beijing imposed its new national security law in June, thousands of Hong Kong residents have renewed or applied for BNO passports. More than 300,000 of Hong Kong's 7 million people now hold BNO passports, double the number of four years earlier, and an estimated 2.9 million residents can now apply for one. (*Star Tribune*, October 23, 2020)

### **CHINA PREPARING TO AMEND NATIONAL DEFENSE LAW**

China is amending its National Defense Law to require all officials to "play leading roles in national defense education." Additional changes authorize Beijing to "use the armed forces to protect overseas Chinese citizens, organizations, units and facilities, thus safeguarding China's overseas interests." The new amendments also "safeguard activities, assets and other interests in other key security fields including outer space, electromagnetic space and networks" and ensure that "the flags and emblems of the PLA and the People's Armed Police Force must be respected." Official media outlets have cryptically reported that adjustments were also made "to the function and power of the State Council and the CMC," but gave no further details. (*Global Times*, October 22, 2020)

## **PHILIPPINE COMMUNIST PARTY ORDERS GUERRILLAS TO TARGET CHINESE FIRMS**

Last month, a Philippine presidential spokesman said it is in the "national interest" to allow those Chinese firms that are building artificial islands in contested waters to continue to work in the country. This week, the outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) announced that its armed wing will begin targeting them. "Some of these same Chinese companies are involved in some big-ticket infrastructure projects for the construction of mining roads and dams that are encroaching deeper and deeper into the ancestral lands of the national minorities and forests in various parts of the country. These infrastructure projects not only displace thousands of peasants and minorities from their lands, they also wreak havoc on the natural ecosystem of the country's remaining forests," said CPP spokesman Marco Valbuena. He said the party's fighters would go after those Chinese companies involved in "the plunder and destruction of Philippine marine resources in the West Philippine Sea, in violation of Philippine sovereignty." (BenarNews, October 14, 2020)