

Is China leading the way in cracking down on NGO freedom...

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As [the FT reports today](#):

Overseas charities and other non-profit groups in China are preparing to reduce their activities when a new law giving police sweeping powers over their operations comes into effect on Sunday, after officials said there would be no “grace-period” for enforcement.

The legislation requiring the China offices of charities and foundations to find an official sponsor and file regular and detailed activity plans to the police is seen as one of the ways the ruling Communist party intends to cement its rule by asserting control over a burgeoning civil society.

China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) waited until last week to publish a list of eligible sponsors, meaning that almost none of the thousands of foreign non-profits in China - ranging from charities such as Greenpeace and Oxfam to funds such as the Ford Foundation - will meet the law's conditions before the January 1 deadline.

In effect NGO activity in China will now take place subject to the explicit consent of the Chinese government which is not going to be easily secured.

I wish I could say that I felt that this was something that we could easily dismiss as a purely Chinese phenomena, but I can't. The UK's gagging laws and tough new attitudes towards what charities may do, which increasingly look like an attempt to stop them asking why the problems they are tackling really occur, suggest that whilst we have not reached the same sorry state as China we are headed in the same direction. It's another concern to add to the list for 2017.