

Chinese politics & policy

China expels Canadian diplomat in retaliatory move as tensions deepen

Beijing's move comes after Ottawa's expulsion of a Chinese diplomat for allegedly targeting a Canadian lawmaker



The Canadian embassy in Beijing. China's foreign ministry said the Canadian consul in Shanghai must leave the country by Saturday
© Greg Baker/AFP/Getty Images

Thomas Hale in Shanghai 3 HOURS AGO

China has retaliated against the expulsion of one of its diplomats in Toronto by demanding that a senior Canadian diplomat leave the country, escalating a dispute that has highlighted the recent deterioration in relations between Beijing and the west.

In a statement on Tuesday, China's foreign ministry said Jennifer Lynn Lalonde, consul of the Shanghai consulate, had until May 13 to leave the country. It also confirmed that the decision was a "reciprocal countermeasure" after Canada's [expulsion of diplomat Zhao Wei](#) — the first of its kind in decades — was confirmed just hours earlier.

The Canadian embassy did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The tit-for-tat moves were the latest indication of increasingly fraught relations between [China](#) and western countries. US lawmakers have ratcheted up criticism of the Chinese Communist party and imposed increasingly sweeping measures to curb China's development of advanced semiconductor technology, while Canada has stepped up accusations of surveillance and electoral interference.

Foreign businesses operating in China have sought to keep a low profile to avoid the

impact of the tensions but Beijing has recently authorised [raids of consultancies](#), including Capvision. China also unveiled an anti-espionage law that stands to further chill the domestic environment for foreigners.

It also responded to US measures, in co-ordination with Japan and the Netherlands, to cut off access to semiconductor technology with an [investigation into US group Micron](#) on national security grounds.

Zhao, who was posted to the Chinese consulate in Toronto, was given five days to leave [Canada](#) late on Monday. His expulsion followed a Canadian Security Intelligence Service report that he targeted Canadian lawmaker Michael Chong, who sponsored a 2021 resolution accusing Beijing of genocide in the north-western province of Xinjiang.

China's foreign ministry said it "strongly condemns and firmly opposes" Zhao's expulsion and lodged a "strong protest to Canada". The Chinese embassy in Canada also lambasted Ottawa for its decision.

In a statement on Twitter regarding Zhao's expulsion, Canada's foreign minister Mélanie Joly said Ottawa "will not tolerate any form of foreign interference in our internal affairs".

"Diplomats in Canada have been warned that if they engage in this kind of behaviour, they will be sent home," she added.

Relations between Canada and China have been strained in recent years. Ottawa late last year ordered three Chinese groups to [divest their stakes](#) in Canadian critical mineral companies, which it had concluded constituted a national security threat.

The countries were also locked in a high-profile case of hostage diplomacy. Huawei's chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou was detained in Vancouver in late 2018 on an extradition request from US law enforcement over alleged sanctions violations.

Weeks later, Canadian nationals Michael Kovrig, a former diplomat, and Michael Spavor were arrested in China on national security charges, though Chinese officials denied any connection between the cases. The "two Michaels", as they were known, were released in 2021 following Meng's return to China.

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2023. All rights reserved.
