

BRIEF PREPARED BY GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA FOR SDIR: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF THE UYGHURS

ISSUE:

Canada is deeply concerned about the nature and scale of human rights violations against Uyghurs by Chinese authorities under the pretext of countering extremism in Xinjiang.

BACKGROUND:

Canada is alarmed by the reports of mass arbitrary detentions, repressive surveillance, and allegations of torture, mistreatment, forced labour, forced sterilization and mass arbitrary separation of children from their parents. An August 2018 report by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination raised alarm on the human rights situation of Uyghurs in China. At that time, the Committee regretted the lack of official data on how many people are in long-term detention or forced to spend varying periods in political “re-education camps” (referred to by Chinese interlocutors as vocational training centres). The Committee noted that estimates have put the number of people detained at anywhere between tens of thousands to over a million. Evidence of a concerted campaign to repress Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities continues to mount. Two separate leaks of Chinese government documents have demonstrated a campaign of surveillance, mass detention and other violations led by senior members of the Chinese Communist Party. Reports continue to emerge regarding practices of forced labour of Uyghurs and forced sterilization and other coercive birth control measures.

In detention, Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims face obligatory patriotic and cultural education. Family members of Canadian citizens have disappeared. Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang also face deeply repressive security and mass surveillance practices, including the mass collection of biometric data, coercive police actions, and severe restrictions on movement, with travel documents having been confiscated by the authorities.

UN Human Rights experts have also raised concerns over the situation in Xinjiang, including recently with 50 UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders raising concerns in a joint news release on June 26th 2020 calling for decisive measures to protect fundamental freedoms in China, with grave concerns on the “collective repression of the population, especially religious and ethnic minorities, in [Xinjiang](#)”.

The Government of Canada has raised human rights concerns directly to Chinese authorities on numerous occasions. These concerns were discussed with the Government of China at the highest levels, including during the visit of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to Canada in September 2016, the Prime Minister’s visits to China in August 2016 and in December 2017, the Governor General’s visit to China in July 2017, and during a visit of Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister to China in August 2017. The Prime Minister and Premier Li also had a frank and open discussion on human rights, freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief as part of the third Canada-China Annual Leaders’ Dialogue in November 2018. At the G20 Foreign Minister’s meeting in Japan in November 2019, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada raised the human rights situation in China directly with his Chinese counterpart during a bilateral meeting.

Canada has made several statements on the human rights situation in China at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva including specific statements referring to the human rights situation in Xinjiang in March and September 2018, and March 2019. Canada also made public recommendations to China on human rights as part of China's Universal Periodic Review at the HRC in November 2018. Canada called on China to release Uyghurs and other Muslims who have been detained arbitrarily and without due process because of their ethnicity or religion/to end the prosecution and persecution on the basis of religion or belief, including for Muslims, Christians, Tibetan Buddhists and Falun Gong.

In July 2019, during the 41st session of the Human Rights Council, Canada co-signed a letter addressed to the President of the UN Human Rights Council in which representatives from over 20 countries raised concerns over the situation of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. Canada also co-sponsored side events addressing human rights in Xinjiang on the margins of the HRC's 40th session in Geneva (March 2019) and on the margins of the UN General Assembly 74th session in New York (September 2019).

Canada co-signed, along with 22 other countries, a joint statement on the human rights situation in Xinjiang during the UN General Assembly's Third Committee dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which took place in New York in October 2019. In June 2020, during the 44th session of the HRC, Canada and 26 other countries signed a joint statement on the human rights situations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. As part of these joint communications, Canada and other countries have consistently called on China to allow unfettered access to Xinjiang to the UN and the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights.

Huseyin Celil, a Canadian citizen, has been in detention in Xinjiang since 2006. Canadian consular officials have been denied access to Mr. Celil. Officials remain concerned about his well-being and will continue to seek access.

Civil society members from the Uyghur community in Canada have publicly raised allegations of harassment and intimidation by Chinese authorities. These are detailed in report by the Canadian Coalition for Human Rights in China that was publicly released in May 2020. A statement to media by the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the government welcomed the report and would study its recommendations closely.

CANADIAN POSITION:

- Canada is deeply concerned about human rights violations against Uyghurs by Chinese authorities under the pretext of countering extremism in Xinjiang - these concerns continue to be reinforced by ongoing public reports detailing the repression.
- China's actions are not consistent with its international human rights obligations, as well as the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.
- Canada urges Chinese authorities to release Uyghurs and other Muslims who have been detained arbitrarily –based on their ethnicity and religion.
- Leaks of Chinese government internal documents detailing the organized repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang are particularly troubling. Recent reports regarding forced labour as well as violations by authorities regarding the reproductive rights of Uyghurs are troubling.
- Reports of harassment and intimidation of Uyghurs in Canada are deeply troubling and allegations of such acts being carried out by foreign agents in Canada are taken very seriously. Chinese government

representatives in Canada, like all foreign government representatives in Canada, have a duty under international law to respect the laws and regulations of Canada

- Publicly and privately, in multilateral fora as well as in bilateral dialogues, Canada has consistently called on the Chinese government to address the repression in Xinjiang.
- Canada, along with several other countries continues to call on the Chinese government to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures immediate unfettered, meaningful access to Xinjiang.