

Joint Statement calling for Xinjiang Resolution at the United Nations Human Rights Council February 2019

We, a diverse set of human rights and civil society organizations, urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to urgently adopt a resolution establishing an international fact-finding mission to investigate credible allegations that up to one million Turkic Muslims are being arbitrarily detained in “political education” camps across Xinjiang, a region in northwest China.

Over recent months, UN officials, human rights organizations, and independent journalists have painted an alarming picture of the conditions endured by ethnic Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang. According to these reports, the Chinese authorities have detained people outside any legal process in “political education” camps for their perceived disloyalty to the government and Chinese Communist Party. In these camps they are subjected to forced political indoctrination, renunciation of their faith, mistreatment, and in some cases torture. They are denied contact with family members.

The Chinese government claims that its “Strike Hard Campaign” in Xinjiang counters extremism and terrorism, but the seeming objective of this sweeping crackdown is to eradicate Muslims’ distinct identity and to ensure their loyalty to the government and Chinese Communist Party. Outside the camps, Xinjiang authorities surveil and control every aspect of life in Xinjiang, including by imposing severe restrictions on the practice of religion, and freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and movement. These recent developments follow two decades of documented systematic discrimination, torture and enforced disappearances in Xinjiang, and Chinese government harassment of Turkic Muslim diasporas around the world.

In August 2018, Xinjiang was described as a “rights-free zone” at the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In her first address to the Human Rights Council in September, the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern at “deeply disturbing allegations of large-scale arbitrary detentions of Uyghurs and other Muslim communities, in so-called re-education camps across Xinjiang.” At China’s November 2018 Universal Periodic

Review, numerous governments explicitly called for China to provide independent monitors with access to Xinjiang to assess the scope of abuses.

After initially denying the existence of the camps, Chinese authorities now contend that national security considerations require “correcting the thinking” of the region’s ethnic minorities and that people enter the camps voluntarily for “vocational training.”

An international fact-finding mission mandated by the Human Rights Council is needed to uncover the truth. China’s membership in the Human Rights Council does not exempt it from scrutiny in the face of serious allegations, but instead obliges it to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. These reports of sweeping violations against Uyghur and other Muslim communities, taking place against a backdrop of China’s systematic suppression of dissenting voices, require immediate and urgent attention.

We look to states who take their human rights responsibilities seriously to act to ensure that the Human Rights Council is provided with an independent assessment by an international fact-finding mission, so that it can consider the allegations of widespread violations in Xinjiang and take appropriate next steps.

Signatories:

Amnesty International
Chinese Human Rights Defenders
Christian Solidarity Worldwide
Citizen Power Initiatives for China
Freedom House
Human Rights in China
Human Rights Watch
International Campaign for Tibet
International Federation for Human Rights - FIDH
International Service for Human Rights
International Tibet Network
PEN America
Rights Practice
Safeguard Defenders
Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
The Uyghur American Association

Uyghur Entrepreneurs Network
Uyghur Human Rights Project
World Uyghur Congress