



Jubilee Campaign contribution to UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery call for input: the use of forced labor on detained faith minorities in China

Background

Since 2017, China has engaged in a campaign to predictively police and arbitrarily detain upwards of one million Uyghur Muslims in internment camps located throughout the Uyghur region on account of their ethnic and religious background. Uyghurs who are found engaging in behaviors perceived as potentially 'extremist' – but in reality are just manifestations of their religion and culture (i.e., growing beards, wearing hijabs, reading the Qur'an, and attending worship at mosques) – are rounded up and interned in what China claims are “vocational training centers” where they supposedly receive education and job training.¹ In reality, Uyghurs experience “prison-like conditions”, physical and sexual abuse, 24/7 surveillance, sleep deprivation, forced abortion and sterilization.² Dr. Adrian Zenz, director and senior researcher on China issues at Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, identifies two distinct but often overlapping forced labor systems - the aforementioned “Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers” (VSETC), and the “Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer Policy”. VSETCs are detention centers where Uyghurs serve out prison-sentences and are additionally forced to work; Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer Policy represents a “non-internment state-imposed forced labor mobilization system”.³

Conditions of Forced Labor Against Incarcerated Uyghurs

In 2020, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) released a groundbreaking report that exposes the harsh reality in which Uyghurs are forcibly transferred out their detention centers to factories throughout Xinjiang (hereinafter referred to as East Turkestan, the regional name preferred by Uyghurs) and the broader mainland to take part in coercive labor programs, all mandated by “military-style management”. During inhumanely long work hours, Uyghurs manufacture textiles and electronics, are subjected to poor working conditions, and suffer discriminatory behavior by Han Chinese colleagues and “predatory bosses”. Outside of work hours, they are required to attend Chinese language courses- all while being monitored by factory employers and local CCP authorities to ensure that they do not engage in religious worship or activity.⁴

Uyghurs and other minorities that are compelled into involuntary labor in China are subject to various forced labor indicators outlined by the International Labor Organization, including: “being subjected to intimidation and threats, such as the threat of arbitrary detention, and being monitored by security personnel and digital surveillance tools”; “being placed in a position of dependency and vulnerability, such as by threats to family members back in Xinjiang”; “having freedom of movement restricted, such as by fenced-in factories and high-tech surveillance”; and “isolation, such as living in segregated dormitories and being transported in dedicated trains.”⁵

In a concerning recent development, the China News Service, a state media agency operated by the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee's, reported a staggering 113% increase in foreign trade in East Turkestan's Kashgar prefecture. Such an exponential rise, according Dr. Zenz, implies an

¹ Isobel Cockerell, “China's oppression of Xinjiang's Uyghurs: a visual history”, Coda, 11 March 2020.

² Lindsay Maizland, “China's Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang”, Council on Foreign Relations, 30 June 2020.

³ Dr. Adrian Zenz, [Forced Labor in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region: Assessing the Continuation of Coercive Labor Transfers in 2023 and Early 2024](#), 14 February 2024.

⁴ Vicky Xiuzhong Xu, Danielle Cave, Dr. James Leibold, Kelsey Munro, & Nathan Ruser, [Uyghurs for sale: 'Re-education', forced labour and surveillance beyond Xinjiang](#), Australian Strategic Policy Institute- International Cyber Policy Centre, 13 August 2020.

⁵ *Ibid.*

increase in coerced labor. Dr. Zenz additionally concludes that “the labor-intensive products” were “the types of goods most at risk of involving forced Uyghur labor”.⁶

Corporate Complicity in Human Rights Violations and Uyghur Labor Exploitation

Reprehensibly, ASPI identified no fewer than 83 highly regarded international companies, predominantly clothing brands and technology corporations, which had profited from Uyghurs' coercive labor, including, but not limited to; Abercrombie & Fitch; Adidas; Amazon; Apple; BMW; Fila; H&M; Nike; Puma; and Samsung. Qingdao Taekwang Shoes Co Ltd. a corporation whose primary purchaser is Nike, 'hired' upwards of 600 minorities from East Turkestan, including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz. One major Chinese contractor is O-Film Technology Co. Ltd, a business whose Nanchang, Jiangxi province factory has received somewhere between 700 and 1,000 Uyghurs through forcible transfer, and who supplies technological parts to Apple Inc., Sony Corporation, Samsung, Dell, HP, Amazon, LG, Lenovo, Microsoft, and other international conglomerates. Hubei Yihong Precision Manufacturing Co. Ltd, who received upwards of 100 Uyghur laborers in 2018, is a company low on the supply chain for Toshiba, Cisco, General Electric, Panasonic, Nintendo, and Mitsubishi.

Since 2021, some companies have made public statements committing to eradicating forced labor in their supply chains, such as by severing ties with factories in East Turkestan. H&M and Nike announced that they would stop sourcing cotton from East Turkestan due to forced labor concerns, prompting celebration among human rights activists but simultaneously drawing condemnation by globally famous Chinese celebrities.⁷

Notwithstanding the progress some international companies have made in recommitting to human rights, many more brands have been identified in the past three years. In 2023, it was reported that the seafood industry in the United States has been tainted by Uyghur forced labor, which was difficult to track due to “the many handoffs between fishing boats, processing plants, and exporters”, obfuscating the origin of the products. The New Yorker recruited investigative journalists, reviewed satellite imagery, and analyzed companies' internal records to find that upwards of one thousand Uyghurs have been rounded up, often “door-to-door” and transported to Shandong Province for work in seafood factories; those who refuse are often detained.⁸

In July 2023, Sheffield Hallam University reported that in the two years since the connection between Uyghur forced labor and the world's solar power industry was uncovered, manufacturers claimed to have adjusted their sources of polysilicon to exclude receiving supplies directly from the East Turkestan region, where 35% of the world's polysilicon is made. However, many of these companies “continue to source from suppliers or sub-suppliers that have exposure to the Uyghur region”.⁹ Months later in October 2023, C4ADS analyzed public mining licenses and discovered that United States conglomerates including Mattel, Macy's, Tesla, and Apple have either directly or indirectly been “exposed to suppliers that source gold from companies with XUAR- [East Turkestan-] based mines that exhibit risk indicators of forced labor”.¹⁰

As recently as February 2024, Human Rights Watch published research finding beyond reasonable doubt that in China - last year's number one country for car exports - Uyghurs have been targeted by the “government-backed labor transfer programs” to work in aluminum factories which supply automotive parts to companies including General Motors, Tesla, Toyota, Volkswagen, and BYD. Human Right Watch reveals that the region of East Turkestan alone “produces more aluminum than any country”.¹¹

In April 2024, human rights organizations including Justice for All and Save Uyghur campaign called for a global boycott of fast fashion brand SHEIN, the latter of which noted in a Tweet that “it is disappointing to see thousands of Muslim women/girls by jilbabs from SHEIN despite widespread knowledge of their use of #UyghurForcedLabor”. SHEIN, despite claims to abide by human rights obligations in the supply and production of its clothing, was exposed in 2022 for selling products containing cotton fibers discovered by laboratory tests to originate from East Turkestan.¹² Similarly, Chinese-operated online marketplace Temu has exploited loopholes in countries' import rules, “dodging import taxes and evading scrutiny on the millions of goods they sell....”¹³

Country Complicity in Human Rights Violations and Uyghur Labor Exploitation

⁶ Ruth Ingram, “[Business is Booming in Northwest China - So is Uyghur Slave Labor](#)”, *Bitter Winter*, 29 November 2023.

⁷ Casey Hall, “[More Than 50 Chinese Celebrities End Brand Partnerships in Xinjiang Row](#)”, *Business of Fashion*, 26 March 2021. ; Chase Chê, “[Wang Yibo and Tan Songyun Cut Ties with Nike. Chinese Celebs Show Support for Xinjiang Cotton as More Brands Face Backlash](#)”, *Drama Panda*, 25 March 2021.

⁸ Ian Urbina, “[The UYghurs Forced to Process the World's Fish](#)”, *The New Yorker*, 9 October 2023.

⁹ Alan Crawford & Laura T. Murphy, “[Over-Exposed: Uyghur Region Exposure Assessment for Solar Industry Sourcing](#)”, July 2023.

¹⁰ C4ADS, “[Fractured Veins: The World's Reliance on Minerals from the Uyghur Region](#)”, 11 October 2023.

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, “[Asleep at the Wheel: Car Companies' Complicity in Forced Labor in China](#)”, 1 February 2024.

¹² Kasim Kashgar, “[Fashion retailer faces boycott amid allegations of Uyghur forced labor in China](#)”, *Voice of America*, 10 April 2024.

¹³ Ana Swanson & Claire Fu, “[Congress Spotlights 'Serious' Forced Labor Concerns With Chinese Shopping Sites](#)”, *The New York Times*, 22 June 2023.

The United States Senate and House of Representatives have introduced numerous policies designed to impose sanctions against Chinese state actors responsible for human rights abuses; block imports of goods polluted with Uyghur forced labor; and sanction foreign companies that conduct business transactions with entities in China which solicit Uyghur forced labor. These include the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act (became law in 2020); Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (became law in 2021); Sanctioning Supporters of Slave Labor Act (introduced in 2023 but not passed); the Uyghur Policy Act (passed by House in 2024 and awaiting review in Senate Foreign Relations Committee); and the No Dollars to Uyghur Forced Labor Act (passed by House in 2024; awaiting review in Senate Foreign Relations Committee).

Other countries have similar bills which, though not directly targeting Uyghur forced labor, are applicable to the human rights violations in East Turkestan: the United Kingdom Modern Slavery Act; the Germany Supply Chain Due Diligence Act; the Canada Modern Slavery Act; the EU Forced Labor Ban; and the Australia Modern Slavery Act.¹⁴ In March 2024 the European Union (EU) and European Parliament agreed on a draft bill prohibiting the import of goods made with forced labor.¹⁵

Despite these laws designed to prevent the entry of products tainted by coercive labor and hold perpetrators and complicit companies accountable, obstacles remain. In December 2023, the EU found that “a substantial volume of apparel tainted by Uyghur forced labor is moving into the EU without restriction”.¹⁶ In January 2024, Uyghur Human Rights Project published a report identifying 18 European companies - based in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the Netherlands - offering tours to East Turkestan despite mounting evidence of crimes against humanity and human rights violations in the region.¹⁷

Conclusion and Recommendations

We urge the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and UN Member States to take the following actions:

- Collectively and unequivocally condemn China's actions against the Uyghur population through official statements and diplomatic channels;
- Consider imposing targeted sanctions on Chinese officials and entities involved in human rights abuses and labor coercion and exploitation in East Turkestan;
- Encourage international brands and conglomerates to eliminate all traces of forced transfer and coercive labor in their supply chains, and hold them accountable to the highest human and labor rights standards;
- Support visits by the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, in order to assess and report the situation and provide recommendations;
- Enact legislation aimed at preventing the importation of goods produced with forced labor, similar to the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act. This includes robust due diligence requirements for companies to ensure their supply chains are free from forced labor;
- Raise awareness among citizens and businesses about the issue of forced labor in East Turkestan, the complicity of certain companies, and the industries which are prone to infiltration of unethical labor exploitation and coercion;

¹⁴ Sayari, “[5 Global Forced Labor Laws Multinationals Should Know](#)”, 21 September 2023.

¹⁵ European Council, “[Council and Parliament strike a deal to ban products made with forced labour](#)”, 5 March 2024.

¹⁶ Le Monde, “[Europe still buying products made with Uyghur forced labor, says study](#)”, 6 December 2023.

¹⁷ Uyghur Human Rights Project, [Genocide Tours: European Travel Companies in East Turkistan](#), 17 January 2024.