

Chinese, Uyghur, Tibetan, Hong Kong, and International NGOs Voice Joint Demands Ahead of UN High Commissioner Visit to China

By International Service for Human Rights, 2022-04-19

High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet must ensure her announced UN visit is credible, unfettered and meaningful, and that it is preceded by the prompt release of the much-awaited UN report on serious violations in Xinjiang, the Uyghur region.



*High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet Credits:
UN Photo / Jean Marc Ferré*

60 human rights organisations, including prominent Uyghur, Tibetan, Hong Kong, and mainland Chinese groups, published a joint statement laying out the main expectations and core preconditions to be met so that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet's announced visit to China can truly be considered credible.

On 8 March, Michelle Bachelet announced that she

had secured a visit 'foreseen to take place in May', while an 'advanced team' would go to China in April to prepare for it, 'including onsite visits to Xinjiang and other places'. Bachelet also said that 'preparations will have to take into account Covid-19 regulations.' The country, now facing its highest peak of infections ever, has put in place highly restrictive measures under its 'zero-Covid' policy, including localised and city-wide lockdowns implemented with little notice, and a 21-day quarantine for international visitors. The organisations urge the High Commissioner and her team to meet with and make inquiries about detained human rights defenders and victims to assess their well-being and the compliance of their detention with international standards.

In their statement, the groups also call on Bachelet to be transparent over steps taken to ensure access is unfettered, and over her planned response to any breach of agreement by the Chinese government.

Bachelet must be able to freely visit Uyghur and Tibetan areas, Hong Kong, and places where dissidents and activists are unjustly detained. She must do everything within her power to avoid any reprisals against those she meets with, and to freely inquire into possible atrocity crimes: this cannot be restricted under the guise of Covid-19 prevention or safeguarding national security.

Raphael Viana David, ISHR Acting Asia Programme Manager

Despite China's commitments, there remain significant concerns about the likelihood that conditions for unrestricted access, the details of which remain undisclosed, are effectively met. According to the Secretary-General, China ranks among the top perpetrators of reprisals against civil society actors who seek to cooperate with the UN. The 2016 visit of a UN poverty expert resulted in lawyer Jiang Tianyong's disappearance, while the UN expert reported being followed by police and prevented from meeting with civil society.

Human rights groups and those who have seen China's human rights crisis unfold can't help but welcome this visit with great scepticism. It is not simply 'because it's China', but because we have strong evidence of the extent to which the Chinese government is willing to go to avoid scrutiny.

Raphael Viana David, ISHR Acting Asia Programme Manager

Bachelet's 8 March announcement did not provide any update on the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) long-awaited report on serious human

rights violations in Xinjiang, the Uyghur region. In September 2021, Bachelet had confirmed her Office was 'finalising its assessment of the available information on allegations of serious human rights violations in [Xinjiang], with a view to making it public.' In December, an OHCHR spokesperson stated the report would be released 'in a matter of a few weeks.' There has been no mention of it ever since. Reliable diplomatic sources indicate the report has been ready since September 2021.

The lack of coherence in the High Commissioner's approach to addressing the human rights crisis in China poses a risk to the credibility of the UN human rights office, and its perceived ability to tackle serious allegations against a major power. The UN's Xinjiang report is fundamental to break geopolitical polarisation and bring the discussion back to objective human rights concerns.

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NGOs and UN experts have gathered a diverse body of information detailing grave human rights violations that could amount to atrocity crimes. In June 2020, over 50 UN independent experts called for 'decisive measures to protect fundamental freedoms in China', including the establishment by the Human Rights Council of 'an impartial and independent United Nations mechanisms to closely monitor, analyse and report annually on the human rights situation in China.' They reiterated grave concern about a range of issues, from the 'collective repression of the population, especially in Xinjiang and Tibet, to the detention of lawyers and prosecution and disappearances of human rights defenders across the country.'

NHS to Ban Products of Slavery after PPE Concerns

By BBC, James Landale, April 22, 2022



There were concerns that some of the billions spent on PPE may have paid factories using forced labour in China

The NHS in England will be barred from using goods and services linked to slavery or human trafficking under a law to be introduced by the government.

It would prevent the health service buying equipment worth billions from parts of China where it is claimed forced labour is used in supply chains.

The government said it wanted to use the NHS's buying power to help "eradicate modern slavery".

MPs are expected to hold a vote on the measure and pass it next week.

Health Secretary Sajid Javid is due to introduce the new law as an amendment to the Health and Social Care Bill on Friday, after coming under cross-party pressure.

The amendment says the health secretary must make regulations to "eradicate" the use of goods and services in the health service in England that are "tainted" by slavery and human trafficking.

The change comes after Britain bought billions of pounds of protective health equipment during the Covid pandemic. Some of which was allegedly manufactured by forced labour in China.

The government revealed in February that the UK had bought £5.8bn worth of lateral flow tests from China.

There have particularly been concerns about the use of forced labour in the Xinjiang province of western China. Reports have documented the detention of many thousands of people - mostly the largely Muslim Uyghur minority - in camps the authorities insist are for the re-education of extremists.

Details of the new law have still to be worked out but the regulations are expected to set out the steps the NHS should take to assess the risks associated with individual suppliers and the basis on which they should be excluded from any tendering process.

Campaigners say this would effectively create a blacklist of companies banned from providing goods and services to the NHS - including medical equipment, security technology and basic infrastructure.

A senior government source said the amendment would help ensure the NHS was not buying or using goods or services involving any kind of slave labour.

"It's absolutely right that we use the NHS - a huge procurer of all sorts of goods and services - to help eradicate modern slavery around the world," the source said.

'Root out slavery completely'

Liberal Democrat foreign affairs spokesperson Layla Moran said: "This is long overdue. It should not have taken a pandemic to shine a light on the hugely concerning links between supply chains involving forced labour

- including those in Xinjiang - and PPE and other items used in our healthcare sector."

She said the government should not stop here and should make a "concerted effort" to tackle modern slavery in all UK supply chains, as well as banning goods from Xinjiang altogether.

Iain Duncan Smith, the former Conservative leader, said it was a "significant move" that came after MPs had campaigned hard.

He urged all other government departments to introduce the same regulations, saying: "We will be sending the most powerful signal to those around the world that exploit and terrorise those weaker than themselves that the swords of justice are on their trail."

Luke de Pulford, chief executive of anti-slavery campaign group Arise, which pushed for the change, said: "This is easily the most significant advance in supply chain regulation since the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, and in many ways goes much further."

"I know all in the anti-slavery movement hope that the rest of government follows the health secretary's lead on this, and roots out slavery from our supply chains completely."



US, Chinese Diplomats Square Off on Twitter over Human Rights, Jailed Uyghur

By JAlim Seytoff and Roseanne Gerin, 2022.04.21

The State Department's latest human rights report on China, which includes the country's treatment of Uyghurs referred to as genocide, has been welcomed by human rights organisations.

The annual US State Department's human rights report on China, which includes documentation of genocide of the Uyghur community, was welcomed this week by Uyghur and Muslim advocacy groups.

The 90-page report, China 2021 Human Rights Report, part of its annual report on human rights across the world, which includes Hong Kong, Macau and Tibet, as well as the Xinjiang historical Uyghur region, provides important information on rights abuses.

"Genocide and crimes against humanity occurred during the year against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang," read the report by the State Department, which last year designated as genocide China's treatment of the Uyghurs, following years of documented abuses and efforts by activists to raise awareness of the situation. The report went on to point out examples of human rights abuses, noting the prevalence of "arbitrary imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty of more than one million civilians; forced sterilization, coerced abortions, and more restrictive application of the country's birth control policies; rape; torture of a large number of those ar



US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield speaks to reporters during a news conference at UN headquarters in New York, March 1, 2021.

The sniping began when US Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield called for the issuance of a report on abuses in Xinjiang.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield sparked a social media spat with her Chinese counterpart on Wednesday after she called on the head of the U.N. Human Rights Council to release an overdue report on rights abuses in China's Xinjiang region.

In a tweet, Thomas-Greenfield urged Michelle Bachelet, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, to release the report on Xinjiang, which Bachelet previously said would be finished in September 2021.

"And let's be clear: any visit by the High Commissioner to China must have unhindered

and unfettered access,” Thomas-Greenfield tweeted, referring to Bachelet’s upcoming visit to China.

Bachelet announced in March that she had reached an agreement with the Chinese government for a visit “foreseen to take place in May” to China, including the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). No dates have been announced.

In response, the spokesperson of Chinese mission to the U.N. tweeted that, “China welcomes the visit by @mbachele including a trip to Xinjiang. This is a normal exchange between two sides. There is no place for political manipulation and malicious pressure. Such indiscreet remarks only reveal the US intention to set up obstacles to disrupt the visit.”

A second tweet said, “To some U.S. politicians who are obsessed with making lies: STOP turning a blind eye to the human rights violations in your own country. Save your own people from desperate racism, violence and inequality. Smearing and defaming China cannot cover or divert your failure.”

Bachelet first announced that her office sought an unfettered access to the Uyghur region in September 2018, shortly after she became the U.N.’s top human rights official. But the trip has been delayed over questions about her freedom of movement through the region.

International rights groups have said that Bachelet’s visit to Xinjiang must be independent and unhindered to be credible.

Bachelet’s office is under pressure from rights activists to issue the overdue report on alleged serious rights violations by Chinese authorities who target Uyghurs and other Turkic communities in the XUAR.

In March, about 200 human rights groups urged Bachelet to make the report public without delay.

Up to 1.8 million Uyghurs and others have

been held in a vast network of internment camps operated by the Chinese government under the pretext of preventing religious extremism and terrorism among the mostly Muslim groups.

The U.S. government and the legislatures of several Western countries have declared that China’s maltreatment of the Uyghurs and other minority Muslims in Xinjiang constitutes genocide and crimes against humanity.

‘A political pawn’

Thomas-Greenfield’s tweet followed a meeting on Wednesday with the family Gulshan Abbas, a Uyghur physician detained for more than three years in an internment camp in northwestern China’s Xinjiang region.

“Just met with the family of Dr. Gulshan Abbas, a Uyghur medical doctor who’s been unjustly detained in China,” Thomas-Greenfield tweeted. “The U.S. will continue to push for her safety and release — and speak out against PRC [People’s Republic of China] atrocities toward Uyghurs and other members of ethnic and religious minority groups.”

On Sept. 11, 2018, Chinese police took Gulshan Abbas, now 59, from her home to one of the region’s camps. Her family, including her sister, Rushan Abbas, a Uyghur American activist who is the founder and executive director of the nonprofit Campaign for Uyghurs based in Washington, D.C., later learned that



Gulshan had been sentenced in March 2019 to 20 years in prison on false charges.

Rushan has said that her sister was detained on trumped-up “terrorism” charges after she spoke out against the Chinese Communist Party (CPP).

Gulshan’s daughter, Ziba Murat, told RFA on Thursday that her mother was a “nonpolitical, kind, generous person and gentle grandmother” with chronic health issues.

“As a health care provider, she devoted her life providing medical treatments for people suffering from illnesses/disease,” Murat said. “The CCP defiled my mother’s name as if she is a political pawn. My mother is a law-abiding and caring human being, deserving of dignity.”

In response to the Thomas-Greenfield’s tweet, the Chinese mission account tweeted: “Q: Who is Gulshan Abbas? A: a criminal sentenced to jail for crimes of participating in a terrorist organization, aiding terrorist activities. It is common sense to respect the rule of law. Time to stop making yourself a laughing stock.”

That prompted Rushan Abbas to join in the exchange: “Did I make my sister up or is she in prison? Your claims have 0 credibility. 1st #China denied the existence of my sister (see) & called me a liar, saying I stole images of others. Now they falsely link her to ‘terrorism.’”

In reference to the upcoming visit to China by Bachelet of the U.N., 56 civil society organizations on Tuesday issued a statement laying out certain conditions that must be met in order for the visit to be credible, including the release of the overdue report on serious human rights violations in Xinjiang.

They also demanded that Bachelet meet with independent civil society groups, human rights defenders and diaspora groups before leaving for China and to set up unsupervised

meetings with human rights defenders and others who have been forcibly disappeared or who have been arbitrarily detained.

The groups also said they were concerned that Bachelet has remained silent on the human rights crisis in Tibet, in contrast with her predecessors.

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC), a Germany-based Uyghur activist group that signed on to the statement, said Bachelet also has a responsibility to meet with Uyghur groups and survivors to hear directly from them before her visit to China.

“Engagement with the affected communities must be a priority for her and her office,” WUC president Dolkun Isa said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China on Thursday issued a letter to Claude Heller, chair of the U.N. Committee Against Torture, urging him to release a review of China’s actions.

“The human rights situation in China has demonstrably worsened since the committee’s last review in 2015, particularly in the XUAR, which prompted the United States government and policymakers of multiple countries to determine that Chinese authorities have committed genocide or crimes against humanity against Turkic Muslim and other minorities in the region,” the letter says.



Uyghur Lecturer Sentenced to 13 years, Allegedly for Writings, Foreign Connections

By RFA, Shohret Hoshur, 2022.04.22

Ababekri Abdureshid was arrested in early 2018 after returning to Xinjiang.

A Uyghur academic who studied in Germany has been sentenced to 13 years in prison in northwestern China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, according to a security officer at a university where the man worked.

The officer who spoke with RFA did not give the reason for the imprisonment of Ababekri Abdureshid, a lecturer at Xinjiang Normal University in Urumqi (in Chinese, Wulumuqi).

"He was sentenced for 13 years in prison, I believe," the security officer said, adding that Abdureshid's family would know the reasons behind his arrest and imprisonment. "We don't know anything about this man's case," he said.

The scholar, who studied for a year as a visiting scholar in Germany in 2012, was apprehended in early 2018 after returning to Xinjiang, according to his friend and former colleague, Husenjan, who now lives in exile in Norway.

Husenjan said he heard through social media from sources in Xinjiang that Abdureshid had been sentenced.

"I got the news from a very close colleague of Ababekri Abdureshid that he was sentenced to over 10 years in prison," Husenjan told RFA. "[He] published academic articles



Uyghur scholar Ababekri Abdureshid in an undated photo. Photo courtesy of Husenjan

on Uyghur culture and literature in both regional and national magazines."

Abdureshid, a university lecturer on philology, the study of languages, faced a difficult choice between staying in Germany or returning to Xinjiang. He decided to return home even though Uyghur higher education had been deteriorating, Husenjan said.

When RFA contacted officials at Xinjiang's Education Bureau for information about Abdureshid's incarceration, they suggested calling judicial authorities.

In an earlier report, RFA confirmed Abdureshid, who had been missing since 2018, was in captivity, although it was unknown whether he had been sentenced to prison.

Abdureshid was born in 1981 in Qaraqash (Moyu) county, Hotan (Hetian) prefecture, the second-largest county in Xinjiang by po-

pulation with more than half a million Uyghurs. He was admitted to the Xinjiang University in 2006 to pursue a master's degree in modern Uyghur literature.

From 2009 to 2012, Abdureshid studied for a doctorate at Minzu University of China in Beijing. During this time, he was a visiting scholar in Germany for a year.

While in Germany, Abdureshid once visited Turkey and met with colleagues there to exchange views on research topics, according to Husenjan, who added that the scholar's connections to colleagues and friends in Germany and Turkey were a further reason for his detention by authorities in Xinjiang. Officials at Xinjiang Normal University have consistently refused to comment on Abdureshid's imprisonment when contacted by RFA.

But a Chinese judicial official in Korla (Kuerle), capital of Bayin'gholin Mongol (Bayingoleng Menggu) Autonomous Prefecture, told RFA that the Chinese government had sent people who returned from studies in foreign countries to "re-education centers." After he had returned to Xinjiang, Abdureshid married and began working at the

university in 2013. He was interrogated by Chinese police multiple times for refusing to drink alcohol.

Chinese authorities have arrested numerous Uyghur intellectuals, businessmen, and cultural and religious figures in Xinjiang as part of a campaign to control members of the mostly Muslim minority group and, purportedly, to prevent religious extremism and terrorist activities.

More than 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities are believed to have been held in a network of detention camps in Xinjiang since 2017. Beijing has said that the camps are vocational training centers and has denied widespread and documented allegations that it has mistreated Muslims living in the region.

The purges are among the abusive and repressive Chinese government policies that have been determined by the United States and some legislatures of Western countries as constituting genocide and crimes against humanity against the Uyghurs.

Translated by RFA's Uyghur Service. Written in English by Roseanne Gerin.



China is trying to take away the East Turkistan issue from the global agenda through its propaganda.



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