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China Solar Panel Shipments Scrutinized over Forced Uyghur Labor

By Eric Revell, Fox Business, 2023.1.26

Imports to the U.S. from China's Xinjiang region are being scrutinized by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) under a recent law that aims to block goods made with Uyghur forced labor, and shipments of solar panels and related components have been the most commonly flagged product to date.

"Between June 2022 and January 2023, 2,692 shipments were identified as potentially violating the terms of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act," a spokesperson for CBP told FOX Business. "These shipments were valued at \$817,466,574."

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) took effect in June 2022 after it passed both chambers of Congress with bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Biden in December 2021.

Under the UFLPA, there is a rebuttable presumption that any goods made in Xinjiang, including supply chain components sent elsewhere for further assembly, are the product of forced labor and subject to import restrictions.

The rebuttable presumption allows companies whose goods were held for inspection to provide clear and convincing evidence that the imports weren't mined, produced or manufactured wholly or in part by forced labor. Importers can also request an applicability review and claim that their supply chain doesn't include components made with forced labor in Xinjiang so the UFLPA does not apply to their goods.

High-risk shipments

Nearly half of the shipments held for inspection by CBP since the UFLPA came into effect were solar panels or related

components that are used by the solar energy industry. About one-sixth of the goods held for inspection were categorized as apparel products. Roughly one-third of shipments flagged for inspection were released after inspection.

Solar panels and the raw materials used to make them are among the imports at the highest risk of being made with forced labor. In June 2021, one year before the UFLPA took effect, CBP issued a withhold release order for products made by Hoshine Silicon Industry Co. Ltd., a company located in Xinjiang, and its subsidiaries following an investigation that found information reasonably indicating that Hoshine uses forced labor in its manufacturing processes.

Withhold release orders require that goods are automatically detained upon their inspection by customs officials and are a longstanding tool used by CBP and the interagency Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF) to monitor and enforce the ban on imported goods made with forced labor. They can be used in conjunction with the UFLPA or separately from it.

CBP has issued other withhold release orders related to goods from Xinjiang, including cotton and cotton products from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region at large, in addition to shipments from the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corporation and its subsidiaries.

Persecution in Xinjiang

Since at least 2014, the People's Republic of China has allegedly been engaged in the systemic repression of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities in the western region of Xinjiang. The oppressed groups have been subject to mass detention, pervasive surveillance and other human rights abuses, including forced labor.

China claims that mass incarcerations and surveillance in Xinjiang are necessary for the purpose of counterterrorism and that detention camps in the region provide vocational training.

In the waning days of the Trump administration, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo designated the alleged crimes against humanity as a «genocide,» a designation current Secretary of State Antony Blinken affirmed during his Senate

Repression of Uyghurs Remains Unchanged: Interview with Xinjiang Victims Database Founder Gene Bunin

By Filip Noubel, Global Voices , 2023.1.26

Since 2018, scholar and advocate Gene Bunin has been the founder and curator of Shahit, the Xinjiang Victims Database, which seeks to document all known

victims of China's mass incarceration campaign and to dissect the various facets of its repressive policies against the Uyghur and other minority groups.



Previously, he was an independent scholar of math, sciences, and the Uyghur language, as well as a freelance translator and long-term Xinjiang resident. Global Voices conducted an interview with Gene to learn about his work, the context of oppression in China, and more.



Filip Noubel (FN): The wave of anti-Zero-Covid street demonstrations that swept China from late November to mid-December 2022 all started in Ürümqi, Xinjiang's capital. Can this be interpreted as a form of Han Chinese solidarity with Uyghurs?

Gene Bunin (GB): This is a difficult question and one that ultimately requires some sort of poll or social study of the Han Chinese who took part in the protests, since otherwise we're just left speculating. Trying to reason logically: far worse things have happened in Xinjiang over the past five years, without any protests following, so

it's unlikely that these protests were in solidarity and more likely that they were a result of pent-up frustration with the 'Zero-COVID' policy. The fact that the protests died out so quickly, while the fundamental issues in Xinjiang remain, would also push me to conclude that Uyghur/Xinjiang solidarity was not a key element here, though there are certainly pockets of the Han population that are unhappy with the Xinjiang policies and would certainly speak out against them if it were safe to do so.

FN: Has there been any evolution in 2022 around the situation in camps that detain and torture Uyghurs and other groups in Xinjiang? Is Beijing's policy worsening or changing in any way?

GB: There hasn't been much noticeable change since 2019, when many of the extrajudicial camps do appear to have been phased out, with many in them released or transferred into "softer" forms of detention (forced job placement, strict community surveillance). Those who were detained in 2017 and 2018 through the nominal judicial system and sentenced to long prison terms — probably half a million people — have continued to serve their terms with no news of anyone being pardoned or released ahead of schedule. International coverage has not focused sufficiently on this issue of mass sentencing and, consequently, the Chinese authorities have had no reason to make concessions. So, the people imprisoned remain imprisoned, with the average sentence length approaching

ten years. Those tens of thousands who were arrested in 2017 and sentenced to six years are theoretically scheduled for release this year. But the idea that the government was able to take six years of their lives this way and 'get away with it' is really painful for those of us who care about justice.

While there have been reports of continued arrests post-2019, with groups like Uyghur Hjelp (for the Uyghurs) and Atajurt (for the Kazakhs) being instrumental in bringing them to light, the magnitudes seem more comparable to the unwarranted arrests previously observed in 2016 and earlier, and are tiny in comparison to the mass detentions of 2017–2018. In other words, there doesn't seem to be a continued campaign of "detain all who ought to be detained" that terrorized the region in 2017-2018. This is probably the result of all the international action, coverage, and advocacy for the issue, in 2018 especially, and merits a pat on the back.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that things are significantly better now and that people can relax. Not only because of the hundreds of thousands who remain incarcerated and whose judicial processes remain inaccessible and unknown, but also because the region is still a vacuum. Furthermore, the accumulated negative social effects and mental health issues caused by family separation, continued internment, and unaddressed trauma will only continue to worsen with each year that passes. Because the fundamental

issues — masses incarcerated, lack of communications, and inability to come and go freely — all remain unresolved.

FN: What is your view on Kazakhstan's policies and decisions about ethnic Uyghurs and Kazakhs caught in the repression in China?

GB: Although I'm not privy to the internal processes, I think it is important to give the Kazakhstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs credit for working with both local groups in Kazakhstan and the authorities on the Chinese side, in 2018 especially, which did result in thousands of Chinese citizens being able to leave Xinjiang in early 2019, including hundreds of former detainees. I remain convinced that this would have never happened without the significant local grassroots pressure created by Atajurt's work specifically, but the Kazakh MFA still did do something and this should be recognized.

This aside, much of Kazakhstan's actions, official and not, have been a great source of disappointment and, as one would say in Kazakh, 'masqara' (shame). There is, of course, the recent vote on having a debate regarding Xinjiang in the United Nations, which never took place because Kazakhstan was one of the states that voted against it. For close to two years, Kazakh relatives of those still interned or missing in Xinjiang have been protesting outside the Chinese consulate and embassy, and have been met with arrests, police brutality, and astronomical fines. The Kazakhstan government has neither recognized as victims those who were

interned in Xinjiang and managed to return nor offered them assistance, with some reporting pressure instead. When the three eyewitnesses from Kazakhstan

police did not pursue the case and even suggested that she faked the incident herself). I am also now banned from entering Kazakhstan for five years, on



who testified at the UK-based Uyghur Tribunal tried to leave the country, they were blocked, and had to drive to Kyrgyzstan and fly out from there.

In 2019 and 2020, the government essentially crushed Atajurt, which had been an unprecedented and lively hub for Xinjiang witnesses and reporting, arresting its leader, Serikjan Bilash, and putting him on trial, before forcing him out of the country. Refugees who crossed illegally, like Qaisha Aqan, have essentially been forced to live in limbo — the government denying them permission to travel abroad and seek asylum elsewhere while themselves not issuing permanent residence permits, with reports of harassment and surveillance also present (when Qaisha was physically assaulted, the

grounds that national security refuses to disclose, citing a circular argument that my case belongs to those cases for which information cannot be disclosed.

So, naturally, I have little good to say about Kazakhstan's actions with regard to Xinjiang. Masqara.

FN: A number of Muslim countries have bowed to Beijing's pressure when it comes to forcefully repatriating Uyghur refugees living on their soil. What can be done to prevent such decisions?

GB: I want to be careful here as we don't document deportation cases so closely unless the person in question actually gets deported, and the general perception from my side is that summary deportations — at least of people whose cases are public — seem to have been relatively rare since the Xinjiang issue

rose to international prominence. That being said, a lot of people are detained and taken to deportation centers, sometimes for months or even years.

While it's easy to blame the — often autocratic — countries that do this, there is also much to say about the hypocrisy on the side of the non-autocratic countries that condemn what China is doing but do not provide easy corridors for refugees or documented victims. Given the relatively low number of undocumented migrants, incarceration survivors, or people at

immediate risk (likely a few thousand at most), it remains inconceivable for me how a developed nation can decry China's policies but not simultaneously create programs that allow for those at risk fast-track access to safer living spaces. I cannot believe it to be an issue of resources, which suggests it to be a lack of political will. So, the countries that make genocide accusations should get their acts together and be consistent in this regard.

Cambridge Tied with Chinese University Linked to Human Rights Abuses

By Varsity, 2023.1.20



Cambridge's ties with Tsinghua University have come under scrutiny due to the latter's links with several cases of human rights abuses, including the genocide of Uyghurs

and other ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang.

Tsinghua University's laboratory is partnered with iFlytek, a voice recognition



and AI company whose technology has been linked to the surveillance and oppression of Uyghur minorities within China's Xinjiang province. The company was one of six AI companies banned by the US government in 2019 from conducting business with American firms, citing this oppression. The companies ties with MIT were cut amid similar concerns in 2020.

The Director of Tsinghua's Institute for Contemporary China Studies and a Tsinghua academic co-authored a paper which addressed the benefits of a single-race system, claiming that such a system formed the foundation of a "nation's long-term peace and stability". Their ideas are reported to have influenced the policy of the Chinese state in concentrating Uyghur Muslims in what the state calls "re-education camps".

Cambridge has held ties with the Tsinghua University for many years, including running a joint engineering forum since 2013. Tsinghua helped fund a £200 million Bioinformation centre in the Trinity College owned Cambridge Science Park that opened in 2019. In that same year the university committed to a "joint research initiative" with Tsinghua, when

the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Institutional and International Relations Eilis Ferran said that the university was "delighted to enter into this joint research initiative with Tsinghua University".

Jesus College had also accepted £20,000 in funding from Tsinghua for background research on foreign business involvement in China's Belt and Road Initiative in 2019. The college's China Forum has come under fire previously for the "avoidance of controversial topics" including the political situation in Hong Kong and the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

The ongoing scrutiny follows a recent Times investigation, which highlighted the links between 42 British universities and "bodies in China connected to the Uyghur genocide, nuclear weapons development, espionage, defence research or hacking".

The Times contacted the university, who "pointed to its policies of managing risk and protecting intellectual property".

Many experts have condemned the links identified in the Times investigation. Robert Clark, the director of the defence and security unit at Civitas called such relations "morally reprehensible".



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