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US Seeks to Sanction More Companies for Using Forced Labor in China, Says Official

By VOA, 2023.3.17

One of the top priorities for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security this year is to add more companies to a sanctions list for using forced labor in China's Xinjiang region, a senior DHS official said on Friday.

Robert Silvers, DHS undersecretary for strategy, policy and plans, said another priority this year was to work to persuade like-minded countries in Europe, as well as Japan, Australia, India and others, to pursue enforcement regimes similar to those of the United States.

The department was assigned by the U.S. Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act to create a sanctions list for companies known to traffic in forced labor.

"One of our highest priorities for 2023 is to add additional entities to that list," Silvers told an

event at the Hudson Institute in Washington.

"We are very aware based on credible reporting from the NGO and other communities that there's a significant number of companies that are operating in Xinjiang or around Xinjiang that are engaging in these abhorrent practices, and we want to name them, and we want to ensure that their goods do not come into this country," he said.

Beijing denies any abuses and rejects allegations by rights groups and governments of forced labor and internment of Uyghurs, a mainly Muslim ethnic minority of around 10 million people in the western region of Xinjiang. The United States has accused China of genocide in Xinjiang.

"We've seen darkness in Xinjiang province. We continue to see darkness," Silvers said,

adding that DHS was in a position to step up the pace of imposition of sanctions.

It is also possible to remove companies from the entities list if they prove they have

“cleaned up” their act, Silvers said. DHS is very interested in using technology, such as DNA testing, to determine whether cotton products came from Xinjiang, he said.

US Policy of ‘War on Terror’ Exports Islamophobia Globally

By Gulcin Kazan Doger, AA, 2023.3.14

US has exported Islamophobia globally, and now China practices the most horrific forms of it, such as concentration camps and ethnic cleansing, academic says.

An academic and an author researching Islamophobia in the US, Khaled Ali Beydoun spoke to Anadolu on Tuesday, pointing to the role of the US in the increasing globalization of anti-Islam protests in Asia and Europe.

“The US has exported Islamophobia to Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and beyond, in a destructive way,” Beydoun said.

The professor at the Wayne State University

School of Law also said the US administration laid out a new framework for the Muslim identity with the rhetoric of “war on terror” after the Sept. 11 attacks, as March 15 International Day for the Elimination of Islamophobia draws close.

“The more Muslims appeared more like Muslims, the more they were suspected of being involved in terrorism,” he said.

“United States provided a new language of counterterrorism. In addition to that, there was a new legal and policing architecture that came into play that the United States sort of engineered, and governments across





the world adopted, specifically governments that had a vested interest in persecuting Muslims adopted this new American language and adopted this new American policing paradigm to crack down on their own Muslim populations.”

Pointing out that the “war on terror” campaign of the US is effective in a wide area from Asia to Europe, Beydoun said: “Before 9/11, Uyghurs living in China were not defined as terrorists, extremists, or those affiliated with transnational terrorist networks.”

“Uyghurs were more often described as ‘separatists, subversive, rogue, and criminal,’ but this new American language of terrorism has equipped the Chinese government with unlimited power to neutralize the Uyghurs as if they were terrorists. The same applies to India, Myanmar, Sweden, France, UK, and the whole world,” he said.

5 countries with most Islamophobia: China, India, France, US, Myanmar

Citing his studies, Beydoun also said: “First of all, I can say that China is the worst because China is an authoritarian government that practices the most horrific forms of Islamophobia, such as concentration camps and ethnic cleansing. Focusing on Islam, it is a kind of ethnic cleansing aimed to destroy the Uyghur people through genocide.”

Noting that India ranks second in anti-Muslim sentiments, Beydoun said: “In India, which has the second-largest Muslim population in the world, (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi regime and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are using Hindu supremacy as a tool to destroy Muslims in the country. And it does this in very horrific ways, using the Law of Citizenship

(which excludes Muslims), the headscarf bans in the states, or the usurpation of the citizenship of Muslims.”

Putting France in third place, Beydoun noted: “I would say France is number three because France has set sort of set forth the template like it’s become like the Western model for how to crack down and marginalize Muslims by way of law. We see this most strikingly in policies such as the headscarf ban. France promotes Muslims’ freedom of religion, erodes with expanded policies, including the veil.”

The professor also said that after France, the country where anti-Muslim sentiment is felt the most is the US.

“The US is the catalyst for the ‘global war on terror’ that spreads and globalizes Islamophobia with anti-Muslim language, perhaps even more powerfully than any other government in the world. Because the US is a superpower, isn’t it? It’s the most powerful country and government in the world, claiming to be a democracy. The US has exported Islamophobia to Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and beyond in a devastating way,” he said.

Referring to the situation of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, Beydoun said: “We cannot ignore what is happening in Myanmar. Tens of thousands of Rohingya have been killed and hundreds of thousands of them have been displaced by ethnic cleansing in the country. All Muslim villages, towns, and communities have been destroyed by a militant Buddhist government.”

Media as ‘the enabler of Islamophobia’

Speaking about the role of law and the media in the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment in recent

Before



After



years, Beydoun said: “As a law professor, I observe that law is always the most effective way to advance and expand Islamophobia. Like the headscarf law in France, the Citizenship Law in India.

“Secondly, the media. Media immortalizes Islamophobia by spreading negative ideas, negative stories, negative stereotypes,” he said, adding that the media is the enabler of Islamophobia.

Pointing out that Muslims who are discriminated against, marginalized, or killed due to anti-Muslim laws are not sufficiently covered in the media, Beydoun said: “In my first book, I wrote that Muslims are newsworthy only when they are the bad guys, not when they are the victims. After all, there is a Muslim terrorist that every media organization talks about. Isn’t that so? Few media outlets talk about it when Muslims are the victims of the horrific state-sponsored terrorism in China.

‘Islamophobia is combination of fear and hatred’

Emphasizing that the “fear of Islam” is deliberately produced by politicians in societies, Beydoun continued:

“Islamophobia is a combination of fear and hatred. Politicians want to advance their own political, economic, and geopolitical interests by using Islamophobia as a tool. Governments know what they are doing. Politicians know what they are doing when they use Islamophobia as a weapon to support them. For example, former US President Donald Trump has declared Islamophobia as a weapon. He knew that if he used it as a campaign tactic, it would mobilize his base and get more support for his campaign.”

Beydoun also said Western society is afraid of Islam, the essence of which it did not know, and added: “They hate Islam because they don’t know anything about it. There are ideas that Islam is associated with terrorism, that Muslims want to conquer and change European culture, that Muslims oppress



women, and that Muslims have no desire to fit into the society they enter. I think that's why ordinary citizens, it's France, UK, Spain, Italy,

and other countries, hate and fear Muslims they know little about."

Gulchehra Hoja was A Uyghur TV Star in China. Now She's A Journalist in Exile

By Jonathan Ore, CBC, 2023.3.19



One night in 2018, 24 members of Gulchehra Hoja's family, including her parents, were arrested by Chinese authorities.

But the Uyghur-American journalist didn't hear about it until two days later, when a friend called with a question: Did she know her parents had been arrested because of her?

"That was the hardest day in my life," Hoja told The Sunday Magazine's Piya Chattopadhyay.

Uyghurs are a majority Muslim ethnic minority primarily based in China's ~~Xinjiang~~ Uyghur Autonomous Region. Hoja and other Uyghurs often refer to the approximate region as East Turkistan.

Human rights organizations estimate that more than one million Uyghurs are being held in Chinese detention camps. The United Nations has reported allegations of torture and abuse taking place in these camps; Chinese authorities have repeatedly denied the allegations, referring to the locations as "vocational education centres."

Hoja fled ~~Xinjiang~~ to the U.S. in 2001, and has been reporting on human rights abuses in China, including of the Uyghurs, for Radio Free Asia.

But before that, she was one of China's most prized propaganda tools, appearing on educational programs for Uyghur children

and youth on state television.

She describes the complicated path of her life experiences in her new memoir *A Stone Is Most Precious Where It Belongs*.

Propaganda tools

Hoja said she was largely unaware of the plight of the Uyghur people when she was a child, as many children are of geopolitical issues.

In the late '90s, while working for local *Xinjiang* television, she pitched a children's program to teach kids about Uyghur language and history.

"It's really, really important for anybody to know who they are; not only Uyghur, but all the children who would have the opportunity to learn and accept who they are, through [their] identity," she explained.

As a host and entertainer, she was one of the Chinese government's faces of the Uyghur people — even as the population faced persecution then unseen by the wider public. Slowly, though, things changed. State

television's mandate phased out Uyghur lessons, replacing it with Han Chinese content.

"Any media in China is a propaganda tool for the CCP. ... I learned day by day, it's not the journalism I was dreaming for," Hoja said.

While on a trip to Europe in 2001, she heard Radio Free Asia reports for the first time, and also witnessed protests against the Chinese government over human rights abuses against the Uyghurs.

"I was hearing the protesters saying, 'Get out from East Turkistan. Free East Turkistan. Free Uyghurs,'" she recalled.

"I was like, oh my gosh, they can say [those] words? It's unbelievable for me."

Later that year, she fled her home in *Xinjiang*, and became a reporter for Free Radio Asia herself. She's now based in the U.S.

Brutal conditions in prison

Hoja says her family still living in China were almost immediately threatened by local government officials after she started working





abroad. In 2017, Hoja and her father were labelled terrorists.

In 2017, her brother was arrested and detained. The next year, her mother was arrested as well, during a visit to a police station where she thought her son — Hoja's brother — would be released.

Hoja says she learned later that her mother, then 72 years old, was held in a Uyghur detention centre. For the first nine days, she was shackled and given no water and very little food. She was only moved to another part of the detention centre after passing out, requiring medical attention.

Hoja would learn of her mother's arrest — along with those of more than 20 other family members — from that fateful phone call.

She immediately appealed to U.S. officials to pressure the Chinese government for their release.

Her mother was released on March 10, 2018 — 40 days after she was detained. Hoja's brother and other family members would soon follow. But now she says they are under house arrest.

Hoja says she doesn't maintain regular contact with her family out of fear for their safety. They talk on the phone very occasionally, but speak about very little as authorities are likely listening in.

In 2019, the Chinese government released a video of Hoja's parents and brother

denouncing her work.

She says it was "heartbreaking" to see the video, and believes they were forced to speak against their wills. But she was happy to see their faces after several years.

"But the feeling of guilt in this was very strong," she said. "They seemed changed a lot. And my mother [looked] much older than what I was expecting."

'We don't have much time'

Hoja wants the world to know the beauty of her people's homeland and culture while also speaking out against their mistreatment.

"I [am] so proud to be Uyghur. I love every aspect about Uyghurs: our clothes, our music, our culture, our food language and our landscape, our weather even," she said.

Earlier this year, Canada's House of Commons unanimously approved a non-binding private member's bill to bring 10,000 Uyghurs and other Muslims of Turkic origin to Canada.

Hoja called this and other initiatives "the biggest hope" for the survival of her people.

"We are just desperately fighting for existence. So anything [that] could help us keep our language, keep our culture alive — please, anything you can do," she said.

"We don't have much time. We don't have much opportunity to save our nation, save our dreams, save our hope."



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