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US Slaps Trade Curbs on 5 Chinese Firms Over Alleged Role in Uyghur Repression

By Reuters, 2023.3.29

The Biden administration on Tuesday imposed new trade restrictions on five Chinese companies for allegedly aiding in Beijing's repression of the Uyghur Muslim minority group.

According to Hikvision's 2021 half-year report, at least four of the companies facing new curbs belong to the Chinese surveillance camera maker including Luopu Haishi Dingxin Electronic Technology Co, Moyu Haishi Electronic Technology Co, Pishan Haishi Yong'an Electronic Technology Co and Urumqi Haishi Xin'an Electronic Technology Co.

Hikvision did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The companies "have been implicated in

human rights violations and abuses in the implementation of China's campaign of repression, mass arbitrary detention and high-technology surveillance against the Uyghur people and members of other Muslim minority groups," in Xinjiang, the Commerce Department said in a posting in the Federal Register.

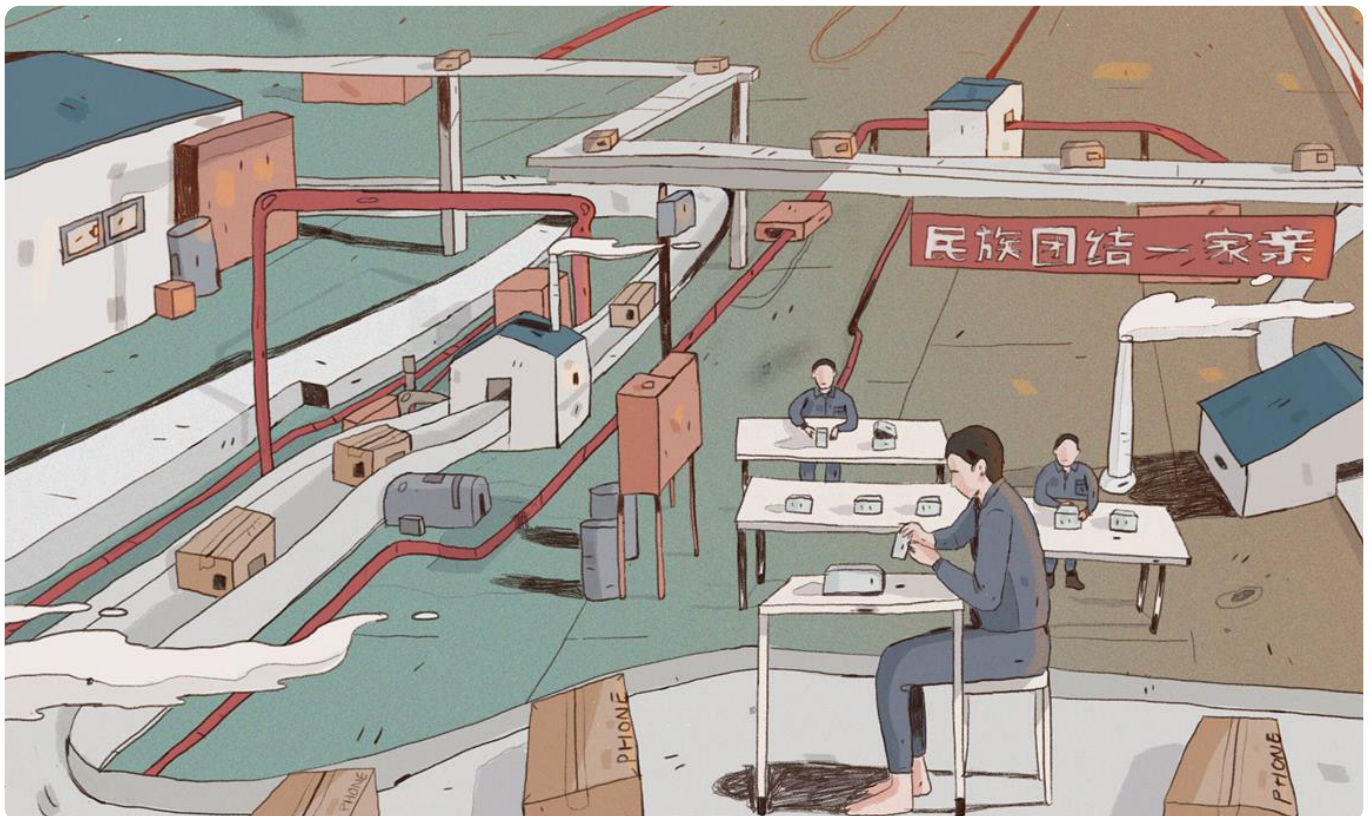
Being added to the entity list means U.S. suppliers must get a special and difficult-to-obtain license before shipping goods to the targeted companies. Washington has increasingly used the entity list to target Chinese firms.

Hikvision was placed on the U.S. trade blacklist in 2019 for being implicated in human rights violations and abuses in the implementation

of China's campaign of repression, mass surveillance against Uyghurs and other arbitrary detention, and high-technology Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang.

Canada Announces Plans to Eradicate Forced Uyghur Labour From Supply Chains

By Middle East Monitor, 2023.3.29



Canada has announced its intention to introduce legislation to eradicate forced labour from its supply chains, sparked by China's ongoing persecution of its Uyghur Muslim population and the conditions in which they are forced to work.

In its Budget 2023 announcement this week, the Canadian government stated that it "is gravely concerned by the ongoing human rights violations against Uyghurs and Muslim minorities in China, as well as by the use of forced labour around the world. Given these concerns, it is important that importers address their supply chain vulnerabilities and

ensure their production promotes our shared Canadian values around the world."

It added that the country's Budget 2023 "announces the federal government's intention to introduce legislation by 2024 to eradicate forced labour from Canadian supply chains to strengthen the import ban on goods produced using forced labour. The government will also work to ensure existing legislation fits within the government's overall framework to safeguard our supply chains."

The planned legislation is one of many measures that Ottawa has announced in its



budget, elaborating in an impact assessment that “this measure will benefit people and workers subjected to and impacted by forced labour around the world. This includes Uyghurs and other minority groups impacted by forced labour, who face credible reports of

human rights violations, including widespread forced labour and gender-based violence.” It added that “Canadians will also benefit from supply chains that are better aligned with Canadian values”.

The Truly Revealing TikTok Hearing was The One That Featured Uyghurs

By Josh Rogin, The Washington Post, 2023.3.29

Critics of last week’s congressional hearing with TikTok chief executive Shou Zi Chew complained that it produced no new information. The witness was evasive and the lawmakers, ill-informed. True enough. But a separate hearing on Capitol Hill that day did provide useful testimony about the dangers of the Chinese social media platform.

At a meeting of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party on the subject of the ongoing genocide of Uyghur Muslims, Uyghurs with firsthand experience of Chinese technological repression testified about how TikTok and its parent company ByteDance pose a threat to Americans’ national security, privacy and human rights. Indeed, TikTok and ByteDance came up several times during this hearing because, as witnesses explained, the two issues are linked.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.), the committee chairman, pointed out that Chew, during his testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee, had declined four times to acknowledge that the Chinese government is persecuting Uyghurs. To some, Chew’s evasion might have seemed to be an innocent attempt to avoid wading into a

controversial matter.

But Nury Turkel, a Uyghur American lawyer who chairs the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, argued to the China committee that TikTok and ByteDance don’t criticize the Chinese government’s abuse of the Uyghurs because they are complicit.

“ByteDance has a strategic partnership with the Chinese Ministry of Public Security. That is part of their business conduct,” Turkel said. “This is what they do.”

For Uyghurs, ByteDance’s danger is not hypothetical. When Chinese authorities initially built the surveillance and monitoring system in Xinjiang that preceded the re-education camps, they relied on data from Chinese tech platforms including WeChat and Douyin, ByteDance’s local TikTok version.

Turkel also refuted Chew’s testimony that TikTok would never honor requests from any government to hand over user data or allow any government to direct its moderation. In China, tech companies work toward CCP objectives without being asked, he said, and Chinese business executives who don’t toe the party line quickly disappear or worse.



ByteDance has had a Chinese Communist Party committee housed inside its corporate bureaucracy since 2017, as part of President Xi Jinping's campaign to crack down on the independence of private tech companies. In 2018, after being scolded by the party, ByteDance CEO Zhang Yiming publicly pledged that his company would work to promote the party's interests and its propaganda.

Hundreds of ByteDance employees have come from Chinese state media, including dozens of TikTok employees. When ByteDance began its formal relationship with the police in China, it pledged to promote their "influence and credibility" through its China-based apps, including Douyin. ByteDance has been repeatedly caught exporting this censorship via its U.S. apps as well.

Leaked company documents from 2019 revealed instructions for TikTok moderators to censor content related to Tibet, Tiananmen Square and other topics the Beijing government deems sensitive. Last year, former employees of the now-defunct ByteDance-owned news app TopBuzz claimed the app had for years promoted pro-CCP content to influence U.S. public opinion.

Turkel said Chew's equating TikTok's practices with those of American social media

companies doesn't hold water because U.S. firms don't work on behalf of a foreign government that has a record of stealing Americans' data. "People argue that our social media companies do it as well, but that's for a commercial purpose," he said. "[TikTok] is a spying tool for the Chinese state."

Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.) asked Turkel whether he agreed with TikTok's chief operating officer when he said that U.S. criticism of TikTok felt "rooted in xenophobia." Turkel noted that the Chinese Communist Party's strategy to counter critics of its human rights abuses is to falsely accuse them of racism.

It shouldn't be surprising that TikTok's CEO would not admit the threat his app poses to Americans. Nor that the Energy and Commerce Committee didn't understand the nuances of how the Chinese government and its tech companies work together. This is why the China committee was created.

Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (Ill.), the ranking Democrat on the China committee, said at the hearing, "Chinese high-tech companies work closely with Chinese officials to impose a pervasive and high-tech surveillance system that has been called an open-air prison. It matters for us because China's tech tools are being exported around the world."

Last week, the Chinese government undermined Chew's assertion that ByteDance is independent by announcing that it would not permit the company to sell TikTok to U.S. interests. The platform's claims to be immune from malign party influence are also well refuted by the testimony of Uyghurs and other victims of China's repression, who deserve more of the world's attention.



Malaysian Representative Urges UN to Act on Rights Violations

By Fernando Fong, The Rakyat Post, 2023.3.26

Malaysian rights activist Datuk Ahmad Azam Ab Rahman urges the world community to take action over the reported mistreatment of minorities around the world.

Ahmad Azam, who is also Commissioner to the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), said discrimination is not acceptable in today's world.

Ahmad Azam was speaking in response to the release of reports on rights violations including in Myanmar and China.

He addressed the UN Special Rapporteur on Minorities at the 52nd Session of the Human Rights Council in Switzerland recently.

"Hate speech, xenophobic rhetoric and incitement to violence against minorities are

growing around the world. In Europe and elsewhere, right wing populist and xenophobic propaganda are affecting the human rights of the Muslim minorities" Malaysian rights activist Datuk Ahmad Azam Ab Rahman on protection of minority rights.

He said IPHRC is concerned about the global rise in religious violence and the absence of an appropriate response by the UN to reverse this worrying trend.

Ahmad Azam cited examples such as the Rohingya minority and Uyghur Muslim minority in Xinjiang, China.

He added that the Muslim minority in India is at risk of becoming stateless is deeply concerning as there had been systematic discrimination against Muslims

At the same time, Ahmad Azam raised the issue of Islamophobia which he said is the biggest contemporary challenge to ensuring these rights.

The former Foreign Ministry special adviser on Afghanistan said the international recognition by the UN General Assembly of 15 March as

the international day to combat Islamophobia is a positive step in the right direction.

However, much more is needed to be done and he assures that IPHRC stands ready to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur and other UN mechanisms on minorities.

Nike Faces Shareholder Proposal on Human Rights

By Katherine Masters, Reuters, 2023.3.29

Activist shareholder platform Tulipshare is calling on Nike (NKE.N) to offer more transparency on working conditions in its supply chain.

In a shareholder proposal released Thursday, London-based Tulipshare requested a report from Nike on whether its policies effectively address its stated equity goals and human rights commitments.

The group, which owns 276 Nike shares and aims to help investors push for environmental and social commitments, asked Nike for information on the methodology and metrics used to track forced labor and wage theft risks.

The proposal also calls on Nike to consider implementing model supplier contracts developed by the American Bar Association and to assess whether its findings lead to changes in the company's policies or decision-making.

"We now want Nike to be an industry leader and collaborate with their investors and stakeholders in identifying, assessing and

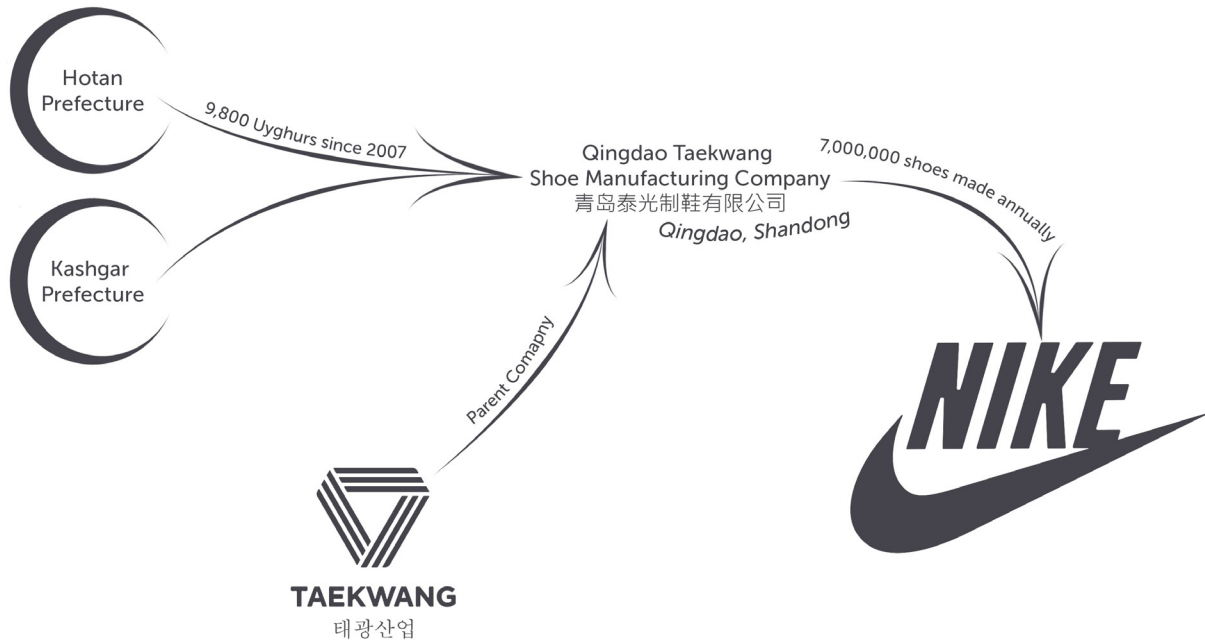
avoiding actual or potential human rights abuses that may significantly disrupt their business, competitive advantage and the livelihoods of many workers," a spokesperson for Tulipshare said in a statement.

Tulipshare said it submitted its proposal to Nike and the company confirmed receipt. A representative for Nike did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The company's most recently available impact report from fiscal 2021 cites forced labor, supply chain transparency and labor rights as some of its essential priorities.

The report states that 85% of facilities in Nike's extended supply chain met its foundational labor, health, safety and environmental standards and the company now expects suppliers to develop and share internal codes of conduct.

Tulipshare, though, said Nike has failed to adequately disclose how it assesses the risk of Uyghur forced labor within its supply chain and cited ongoing labor complaints against the company.



A coalition of international garment worker unions and labor rights groups filed a complaint against Nike with the U.S. State Department in February, alleging that Nike violated guidelines from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development by triggering layoffs and pay cuts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Nike did not engage with garment worker unions representing Nike supply chain workers about those impacts, despite the OECD Guidelines’ expectation that multinational enterprises do so and despite unions’ requests for dialogue,” the complaint states.

A representative for Nike did not respond to a request for comment about the allegations. However, the company has previously stated that it does not source products from China’s Xinjiang region, where the Chinese government is reported to have established labor camps for ethnic Uyghur and other Muslim groups.

In a fiscal 2022 statement on forced labor, Nike said it is growing its business “through long-term relationships with suppliers that are committed to our strict standards of sustainability and human rights, product excellence and compliance with local laws.”



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