

China Slams Second Session of Uyghur Tribunal Investigating Xinjiang Human Rights Abuses

RFA, By Roseanne Gerin, 2021-09-09

The panel, which has no state backing, aims to galvanize international action to hold China accountable for alleged maltreatment of the minority group.

China has denounced the second round of a Uyghur Tribunal scheduled to begin Friday in London to investigate whether the government's alleged rights abuses targeting ethnic Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in its far-western Xinjiang region constitute genocide.

More than 30 witnesses and experts testified about torture, rape, and other human rights violations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) during the first set of hearings in early June. Uyghur exiles described forced abortions, arbitrary arrests, and forced labor, while international legal experts weighed in on the applicability of laws on genocide and other statutes.

Such evidence and other credible documentations of abuse have formed the basis of genocide accusations against Beijing laid by several Western governments and legislatures, including the United States. The allegations, if proved, could implicate China in a campaign to deliberately dest-

roy the Uyghurs, and constitute the commission of genocide as defined in Article 2 of the Genocide Convention of 1948.

The independent people's tribunal was set up because it is not possible to bring China before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Though China has signed and ratified the Genocide Convention, it has entered a reservation against ICJ jurisdiction.

Though the London panel has no state backing and any judgments will be nonbinding on any government, it aims to galvanize international action to hold China accountable for the abuse. Another group of witnesses and experts have been lined up to provide testimony during the second round of hearings on Sept. 10-13.

China has denied widespread and documented



Geoffrey Nice (C), chairman of the Uyghur Tribunal, gives the opening address on the first day of hearings investigating alleged abuses against Uyghurs in China, in London, June 4, 2021.

allegations that it has subjected Muslims living in the XUAR to severe rights abuses. As it did during the first session, Beijing has condemned the tribunal and smeared its participants ahead of the start of the second round. Responding to a question about the Uyghur Tribunal at a news conference in Beijing on Thursday, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian blasted the panel as a "kangaroo court" that "has nothing to do with law, justice or truth, and is just another farce staged to smear and attack Xinjiang."

Zhao noted that the tribunal is funded mostly by the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), which he said is an "organization dedicated to separating Xinjiang from China." The WUC is an international organization based in Germany that represents the collective interests of Uyghurs in the XUAR and abroad.

Zhao discredited WUC president Dolkun Isa as a "terrorist listed by the Chinese government" and prominent British lawyer Geoffrey Nice, who chairs the nine-member tribunal, as a "veteran British agent notorious around the world for filing frivolous lawsuits on human rights."

'Political farce,' 'pseudo-court'

The Foreign Ministry spokesman also took aim at Adrian Zenz, an independent researcher with the Washington D.C.-based nonprofit organization Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, branding him an "anti-China swindler."

Zenz testified at the first round of hearings about China's policy to reduce Uyghur population growth in the XUAR. He has also produced reports documenting China's use of birth control and population transfer policies to reduce the Uyghur population, the forced sterilization of Uyghur women, and the detainment of Uyghurs in internment camps in the XUAR.

The Uyghurs are a predominantly Muslim

group estimated at more than 12 million people in the XUAR. China has held up to 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in a network of detention camps since 2017, though Beijing says the facilities are vocational training centers meant to deter religious extremism and terrorism.

In a report published in August, Zenz concluded that China's plans to reduce the ethnic minority population may constitute genocide under the U.N. Genocide Convention by presenting empirical evidence that the Uyghurs are being destroyed as a people.

"These so-called 'Chair,' 'experts,' and 'witnesses' have deplorable track records and are habitual liars, who have become a laughing stock in the international community a long time ago," Wang said. He accused Zenz of hurling "absurd accusations" and fabricating "lies and rumors."

An article in China's state-owned newspaper Global Times on Thursday also took aim at the Uyghur Tribunal with a grim nod to the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the U.S.

"The political farce and the pseudo-court of the so-called Uyghur Tribunal will have its second 'hearing' starting Friday, just one day before September 11, a time which should be used to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the terror attacks in the U.S.," the article said.

Kristian Petersen, an assistant professor of



religious studies at Old Dominion University, who has written about Islam in China, wrote in an op-ed for Al Jazeera on Wednesday that the U.S. embrace of Chinese claims about Uyghur terrorism has facilitated the repression of the minority group.

Following the terrorist attacks, “the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) defined Uyghur resistance as part of the worldwide ‘terrorism’ emergency and not as a local issue of ‘separatism’ as it used to in the past,” he wrote.

After the series of airline hijackings and suicide attacks committed in the U.S. in 2001 by militants linked to the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda, Chinese authorities increasingly portrayed its repression of Muslim minorities in the XUAR as part of the Global War on Terror to destroy terrorist groups.

Petersen cited the U.S. government’s addition of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) on its list of terrorist organizations in 2002 in exchange for Beijing’s support for efforts to overthrow the Taliban in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks by the Afghanistan-based militants.

“With official international support of ‘war on terror’ proponents, the legal and political apparatus had already been set in motion to frame and justify the CCP’s crackdown on any Uyghur dissent as an anti-terrorism effort,” Petersen wrote.

“The ETIM’s designation as a terrorist organization thus became the linchpin of U.S. complicity in the CCP’s oppression of Uyghurs.”

In October 2020, however, the U.S. State Department removed the ETIM from its designated terrorist list, with a U.S. official saying that there had been no credible evidence in a decade that the group still existed.

‘This brutal regime’

Dolkun Isa of WUC told RFA that the scheduling of the second round of Uyghur Tribunal hearings on the eve of the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks was profoundly significant because China used the tragedy as a pretext to launch a war on the Uyghurs “culminating with today’s genocide.”

“On the 20th anniversary of 9/11, the international community must understand that China hasn’t fought and isn’t fighting so-cal-



led terrorism in East Turkestan,” he said using the Uyghurs’ preferred name for Xinjiang.

“It’s eradicating an ancient people whose country was occupied and colonized by this brutal regime. The international community must show its political will and action to stop this ongoing Uyghur genocide,” he said.

The tribunal is expected to issue a final verdict on whether China is committing genocide or crimes against humanity in December.

Reporting and translation by Alim Seytoff of RFA’s Uyghur Service.

Taliban Tells China No Sign of Banned Uyghur Outfit in Afghanistan

RFA, By Roseanne Gerin, 2021-09-10



Geoffrey Nice (L), chairman of the Uyghur Tribunal, gives the opening address on the first day of hearings investigating alleged abuses against Uyghurs in China, in London, June 4, 2021.

A shadowy Uyghur Islamic group that China has used as justification for increasingly harsh rule over the Muslim ethnic minority in its far-western Xinjiang region is not present in Afghanistan and won't be allowed to return, a Taliban spokesman told Chinese state media.

China often brands Uyghur activists in exile as members of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and cites the threat of terrorism to discredit the minority group's campaign to raise awareness of widespread

rights abuses in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

The fall of the Afghan government last month to the Taliban militants following the pullout of U.S. forces has raised both concerns in Beijing about instability and fears among Uyghurs that China will add to harsh measures in the XUAR, where authorities are believed to have held up to 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in a vast network of internment camps since early 2017.

Taliban spokesperson Suhail Shaheen, however, said that ETIM members are no longer in Afghanistan because “the Taliban has categorically told them that there is no place for anyone to use Afghanistan against other countries, including its neighboring countries,” China’s state-run Global Times newspaper said in an account of an interview published Thursday.

The warning to the ETIM meant that those “who are intending to carry out sabotage activities in other countries or have their foreign agenda” would not be able to remain in the country, Shaheen was quoted as saying.

The Taliban’s statement on the ETIM follows the late 2020 reversal of a U.S. decision to place ETIM on the Treasury Department’s list of terrorist organizations. The listing on Sept. 3, 2002, about a year after the Sept. 11 attacks, was seen as a U.S. gesture to enlist Beijing in the Global War on Terror.

Early last November, then U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the ETIM had been removed from Terrorist Ex-

clusion List, ending a policy that has been criticized for providing cover for repressive Chinese policies in the XUAR and leading to the capture of innocent Uyghurs in Afghanistan. Washington now says there’s no evidence ETIM exists.

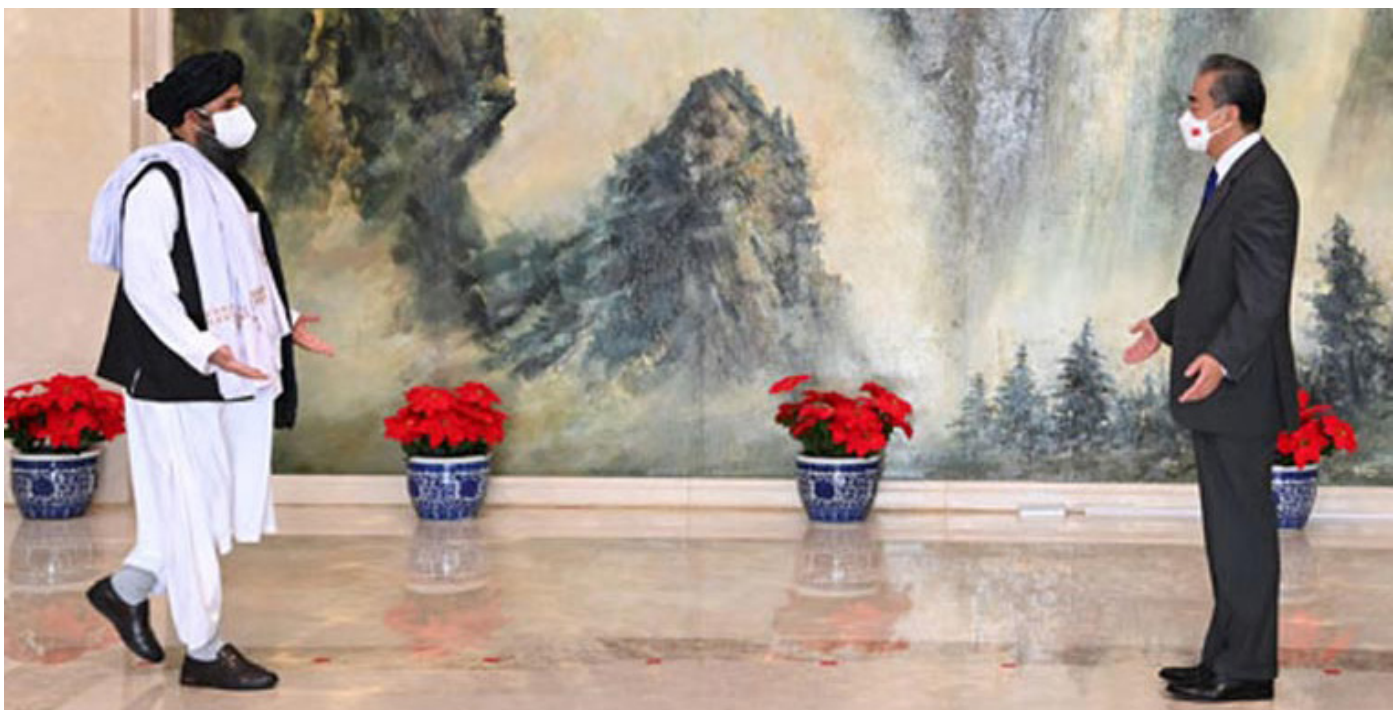
There was no immediate Chinese reaction to the Taliban spokesman’s comments, which came as lawyers, academics, and rights experts began a second round of hearings at the Uyghur Tribunal in London. The four-day session is weighing the proposition that China’s repressive policies in the XUAR constitute crimes against humanity or genocide.

‘A feeling of fear’

While the Uyghur Tribunal has no state backing and no power to enforce its determinations, it aims to compel international action to hold China accountable for alleged maltreatment of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Turkic Muslim populations in the XUAR.

Eight people, including two Uyghurs, provided testimony on Friday.

Mehray Mezensof, 27, told the panel how



authorities detained her husband, now 30 years old, two days before the couple was due to move to Australia in April 2017.

During a police interrogation about his previous travel to Turkey, Mirzat Taher was confined at times to a tiger chair to restrict his movement and subjected to psychological torture.

“During these three days he was forced to sit in a tiger chair throughout the interrogation and he was deprived of sleep,” Mehray said. “He said the questioning took place at night and the police officers took turns interrogating him and they repeatedly asked the same questions over and over again.”

Mirzat was taken to a detention facility and later transferred to a re-education camp, she said. He eventually was released, but police continued to harass him and rearrested him two more times, she said.

Mehray lost contact with her husband on September 2020, she told the panel.

Khalmat Rozakhon, a Uyghur who lives and works in Japan, told the tribunal how authorities intimidated and threatened his relatives in Xinjiang because he decided to remain abroad when the situation at home deteriorated.

During a video call with his brother in May 2020, Khalmat said his sibling appeared physically diminished.

“When he lifted his face mask, I noticed his neck was swollen, then I desperately intended to have that conversation recorded from a close angle,” he said.

The brother told Khalmat not to protest against China and said that Chinese President Xi Jinping and China’s policies were good.

During the call, Khalmat saw security agents surrounding his brother. They later showed themselves and tried to intimidate Khalmat. “They uttered my name in Chinese, Halima-

ite, and it was a feeling of fear and to be frank, I could have killed them if I could,” he said. “But as my brother was in their hands, I tried calm myself and kept recording the conversation.”

“The last 30 minutes of that call made me feel like being burned in hell fire.” Khalmat said. “They held my brother and demanded that I follow their instructions.”

‘Why governments must act’

The Communist Party sees the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples as a threat to its political stability so they use the excuses of fighting terrorism, extremism, and separatism as justification for the crackdown, said Teng Biao, a Chinese human right lawyer in the U.S. who appeared as an expert witness.

“They use collective punishment, and the government can silence their family members and use them as hostages,” he said.

Omer Kanat, executive director of the Uyghur Human Rights Project, said that the experts’ testimony at the hearing was compelling, while the Uyghur survivors’ eyewitness testimony was devastating.

“Anyone who hears it understands why governments must act,” he said in a statement issued Friday.

On Thursday, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian dismissed the panel as a “kangaroo court” that “has nothing to do with law, justice or truth, and is just another farce staged to smear and attack Xinjiang.” During the first round of the Uyghur Tribunal on June 4-7, witnesses gave grim accounts of torture, sexual assault, coercive birth control, forced labor, and the destruction of Uyghur cultural heritage.

The tribunal is expected to issue a final verdict on whether China is committing genocide or crimes against humanity in December.

Human rights groups call on broadcasters to cancel planned coverage of Beijing Olympics

By DOMINICK MASTRANGELO - 09/08/21

A coalition of human rights groups is urging major broadcasters across the world, including NBC, to cancel plans to cover the 2022 Olympics in Beijing over reported human rights abuses in China.

In a joint letter to NBC Chief Operating Officer Jeff Shell and executives at other networks, the groups said outlets “are at serious risk of being complicit in China’s plan to ‘sport wash’ the severe and worsening human rights abuses and embolden the actions of the Chinese authorities.”

By broadcasting Beijing 2022, media outlets will “legitimize these abuses and promote what is being widely described as the ‘Genocide Games,’ “ the groups claimed in their letter, which was first obtained by The Associated Press.

NBC Universal did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In 2014, NBC inked a deal to pay \$7.75 billion for the rights to the Olympics through 2032.

China’s foreign ministry has repeatedly denied accusations of oppression of ethnic minorities and other human rights abuses.

“Genocide must be a red line that cannot be crossed, no matter the cost,” the groups wrote in their letter.

Lhadon Tethong, co-chair of the International Tibet Network, called out broadcasters like Canada’s CBC, Britain’s BBC and ARD in Germany as media outlets that receive public money and should not cover the Games.

“It is unconscionable that NBC, CBC and other broadcasters plan to help Chinese leaders project a rosy image of an ‘Olympic Games as usual’ while they are carrying out genocide against the Uyghurs, and engaging in a massive campaign of repression against Tibetans and so many others,” Tethong told the AP.

The Beijing Games are slated to begin in February.



Rights group files complaint against German retailers over Chinese textiles Olympics

BERLIN, Sept 6 (Reuters) - A human rights group filed a complaint to German prosecutors on Monday alleging that several fashion retailers profited from forced labour in China's Xinjiang region.

The Berlin-based European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) accuses Lidl, Hugo Boss (BOSSn.DE) and other retailers of abetting and profiting directly or indirectly from forced labour in Xinjiang's cotton industry, according to the 96-page complaint received by prosecutors in the Karlsruhe federal court.

China denies Western countries' accusations that it mistreats minority Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, or that forced labour is carried out there. A spokesperson at the Chinese embassy in Berlin was not immediately available to comment.

"It is unacceptable that European governments criticize China for human rights violations, while European companies may be profiting from the exploitation of the Uyghur population," said Miriam Saage-Maass, head of ECCHR's Business and Human Rights program.

"It is high time that those responsible in the companies are held accountable if suspicions of forced labour are confirmed."

The filing aims to convince the prosecutor to open an inquiry that, its authors say, could hold management of the retailers to account and make customers more aware of abuses in their supply chains.



A worker moves freshly harvested cotton at a processing plant in Aksu, East Turkistan Region, December 1, 2015. REUTERS/Dominique Patton

A Lidl spokesperson said allegations relating to the company were "based on old supplier lists and relate to past orders or periods of time". The company has a "zero tolerance" policy towards forced labour and child labour, obliging contractors along the supply chain to adhere to social standards.

"If we become aware of concrete facts regarding violations of these provisions, we will investigate and take appropriate steps. In this context, production facilities have been closed," the Lidl spokesperson said.

A Hugo Boss spokesperson said: "We assume that our values and standards have been complied with in the manufacture of our goods and that there are no legal violations. We therefore reject any other assertions made by ECCHR."

"We do not tolerate any form of forced or compulsory labour or any form of modern

slavery,” the spokesperson said, adding that it requires contractors to confirm that human rights and fair working conditions are observed along the supply chain.

The United Nations cites what it says are credible reports that 1 million Muslims held in camps have been put to work in Xinjiang. China initially denied the camps existed, but has since said they are vocational centres designed to combat extremism. In late 2019, China said all people in the camps had “graduated”. In July, French prosecutors launched an inquiry into four fashion retailers suspected of concealing crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, according to a source. The case involves the Uniqlo France unit of Japan’s Fast Retailing, Zara owner Inditex (ITX.MC), France’s SMCP and Skechers. [read more](#)

In January, the United States announced an import ban on all cotton and tomato products from Xinjiang over allegations that they are made with forced labour by Uyghurs. [read more](#)

Several Western brands including H&M (HMB.ST), Burberry (BRBY.L) and Nike (NKE.N) have been hit by consumer boycotts in China after raising concerns about suspected forced labour in Xinjiang. China holds roughly 20% of the world’s cotton market and 85% of its cotton comes from Xinjiang.

Uyghur Man Draws 15-Year Prison Term for Contacting Uncles Overseas

RFA, 2021-09-08

Eli Juma’s detention in a reeducation camp and later prison sentence contradict China’s claims that Uyghurs living in Xinjiang and abroad can maintain ‘normal’ contacts with each other.

A Uyghur man living in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) was sent to an internment camp four years ago for the crime of speaking to relatives overseas, contradicting Chinese claims that Uyghur residents of the region are free to keep in touch with family members abroad, RFA has learned.

Eli Juma, a resident of the No. 5 Village of Imamlirim township in Aksu (in Chinese, Akesu) prefecture’s Uchturpan (Wushi) county,



A guard tower rises along the perimeter fence of an internment camp in East Turkistan Region in a file photo.

was detained and sent to a camp in early 2017 for speaking to his uncles Jelil Juma and Helil Juma, both of them living outside China, three years before.

“Yes, he was in contact with his uncles, in contact with his relatives,” a village police officer in Uchturpan confirmed to RFA in a recent interview. “He spoke to them on the phone. I believe it was in 2014,” the officer added, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

Details of where Juma’s uncles now live were not immediately available, though RFA’s source said that one or both of the men were believed to have previously owned a corner store in Uchturpan.

Word of Juma’s confinement in a camp was shared with community members at a meeting of the Imamlirim village committee in December 2018, the police officer said, adding that Juma—a farmer and volleyball enthusiast believed to be in his late 30s—was later sentenced to 15 years in prison after spending two years in the camp.

Juma’s jailing for the crime of speaking to relatives overseas contradicts Chinese claims that Uyghurs living in the XUAR and abroad are free to contact each other.

Speaking in January at a press conference, official XUAR spokesperson Zulhayat Ismail said that Uyghurs living in the region maintain normal contact with family members living outside China, and that only a small group of Uyghurs living in Xinjiang have decided to cut off contact with what he called “separatist” relatives overseas.

Challenged by foreign reporters, Ismail said however that some Uyghurs living abroad may have forgotten the phone numbers of their relatives in the XUAR and thus been unable to get in touch with them.

‘Anti-state sentiment’

Speaking to RFA in an earlier report, a village-level security director in Korla in the XUAR’s Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture said that Uyghurs who had previously traveled abroad were being brought into camps to be “reeducated,” as contact with foreigners may have allowed anti-state sentiment to grow in their minds.

Detainees would not be allowed to leave the camps until they had expressed sincere regret for their actions, he said.

Since early 2017, Chinese authorities have put an estimated 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the XUAR into political reeducation camps that Beijing says conduct vocational training to combat extremism.

But reporting by RFA and other media outlets indicate that those in the camps are detained against their will, subjected to political indoctrination, and endure poor diets and unhygienic conditions in the often overcrowded facilities.

Former detainees have also described being subjected to torture, rape, sterilization, and other abuses while in custody.

Parliaments in Canada, The Netherlands, the U.K., and Lithuania, and the U.S. State Department have described China’s actions in the region as “genocide,” while the New York-based group Human Rights Watch says they constitute crimes against humanity.

Reported by Shohret Hoshur for RFA’s Uyghur Service. Translated by the Uyghur Service. Written in English by Richard Finney.



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