

# Uyghur Tribunal Wraps up in London With Eye on December Ruling on Genocide Allegations

RFA, By Roseanne Gerin, 2021-09-13

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*The hearings in London aim to determine if abuses of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims amount to genocide.*

*The final round of a tribunal investigating whether China's treatment of its ethnic Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims constitutes genocide ended in London Monday after four days of hearings and testimony provided by nearly 40 witnesses and experts, with a nonbinding verdict expected at the end of the year.*

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The nine-member tribunal chaired by prominent British lawyer Geoffrey Nice conducted the first set of hearings in London known as the Uyghur Tribunal in early June, during which the panelists heard accounts from internment camp survivors describing abuses such as systematic rape, other forms of gender-based violence, torture,



*Members of the Uyghur Tribunal, a panel of UK-based lawyers, academics, rights experts, and business practitioners investigating alleged human rights violations and reports of genocide targeting Uyghurs in East Turkistan region, hear testimony from witnesses, in London, Sept. 13, 2021.*

and killings.

During the second round of hearings from Sept. 10-13, nine witnesses and 28 experts testified about their experiences with and research findings on the Uyghur crackdown. The tribunal has no state backing or powers of sanction or enforcement, and any judgments issued are nonbinding on any government.

China has come under criticism for heavy-handed policies targeting the 12 million predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in the far-western Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

Alleged abuses include the demolition of mosques; the imprisonment of Uyghur intellectuals, artists and business leaders; the replacement of Uyghur

with Chinese as the main language in schools; the use of a pervasive and intrusive surveillance system to monitor Uyghurs' move; forced labor at factories and farms; and forced birth control and the sterilization of Uyghur women.

China has held up to 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in a network of detention camps 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 Xinjiang.

The U.S. and the legislatures in several European countries have deemed the treatment of Uyghurs and others in the XUAR as constituting genocide and crimes against humanity.

### **Intimidation of Uyghurs abroad**

During the final day of the session, Laura Harth, campaign director for Spain-based Safeguard Defenders, focused in her remarks to the panel on Beijing's public campaign to intimidate Uyghurs living abroad to prevent them from speaking out on alleged abuses in Xinjiang.

"The so-called counter-evidence that Beijing and local authorities have sought to posit to the world over the past years bear all the hallmarks of yet more human rights violations and seemed to have the sole purpose of intimidating, discrediting, and silencing individual witnesses overseas," she said.

Barrister Rodney Dixon told the panel that he and two colleagues had submitted a report on crimes committed against Uyghurs in Xinjiang to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague on behalf of the East Turkestan government in exile and the Uyghur people. They gathered evidence about Uyghurs being targeted by Chinese authorities in ICC member states, such as Tajikistan and Cambodia, "in order to arrest them and bring them back

into China where they are never heard from again and where they are effectively disappeared," Dixon said.

The report urges the ICC to open a full investigation of the crimes, he said. The ICC can investigate and prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and the crime of aggression.

Though China has not joined the ICC, the court has jurisdiction to prosecute crimes committed on the territory of member states, even if those responsible are citizens of a country that is not a member of the court.

The tribunal also heard testimony from ethnic Kazakh Gulzire Alwuqanqizi, who was arrested in July 2017 when she entered Xinjiang from Kazakhstan at the Khorgas border checkpoint with the Kazakh equivalent of a green card and a Chinese passport.

Subsequently interned in four different facilities in Xinjiang over more than 14 months, Gulzire was made to take pills, give blood samples, have medical checks, including ultrasounds, and be injected with what she was told was a flu shot, leaving her unable to have children, she said.

Gulzire told the panel she had been kept in shackles for six months at one camp and had to work as a cleaner, bathing female detainees who had been tied to a bed and raped violently by Han Chinese men. She then had to mop up the floor after the sexual assaults took place.



*"I saw that Uyghur women were brought to that room, and they were raped, and I had to wash them afterwards," she said through a translator.*

*"I would hear them scream and shout and beg for help, but no one would do so," said Gulzire, who testified that one of the men told her he had paid money to assault Uyghur women.*

### **Involvement of central government organs**

Adrien Zenz, a German researcher whose work first brought worldwide attention to the internment camp system, presented the panel with a new report detailing the strong involvement of China's central government institutions in the mass incarcerations that began in Xinjiang in 2017.

New evidence shows that "three very important central government organs" — the Central Committee Xinjiang Work Coordination Small Group, the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in Beijing, and the State Administration for Religious Affairs — were involved in the drafting of a March 2017 regulation that laid the foundation for the vocational skills education training centers in Xinjiang.

Those groups also helped pass revisions to regulations in October 2018 to fully legitimize the "re-education institutions," said Zenz, whose new report will be released by the Washington-based think tank Jamestown Foundation on Tuesday.

*Chen Quanguo, who has been Communist Party chief in Xinjiang since August 2016 and is considered the architect of the crackdown on Uyghurs, "was likely brought in as a ruthless and efficient implementer of a hatched plan that was outlined and approved by the central government," Zenz told the panel.*

Zenz previously issued reports on China's internment camps in Xinjiang, the forced sterilization of detained Uyghur women, efforts to reduce population growth in Xinjiang thorough birth control and population transfer policies, and "population optimization strategy" to dilute the Uyghur majority in southern Xinjiang by raising the proportion of Han Chinese.

Chinese state media has vilified Zenz for his research. In March, he was one of 10 Europe-



an individuals and four entities hit with travel and other sanctions by China in response to European Union penalties imposes on XUAR officials for abuses of Uyghurs.

There was no immediate comment from the Chinese government on the final day of the hearings.

A day before the second session of the tribunal began, the Chinese government asked UK officials to stop the event organizers from conducting the hearings, but to no avail.

"We were told by the British government that it is not part of the 'tribunal,' that the 'tribunal' is a nongovernmental entity, and that the organization has no legal authority," said Zheng Zeguang, China's ambassador to the UK, at a news conference on Sept. 9.

"But the point here is, you should not allow these people to continue to spread rumors about China, because when they do so, they are undermining the good will and trust between the peoples of our two countries," Zheng told journalists.



The envoy condemned the panel as a “political manipulation aimed at discrediting China.”

“It is a nongovernmental entity funded by anti-China forces,” he said. “It is a fake and

has no legal basis or validity whatsoever.”

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

## U.N. Rights Chief Regrets Lack of Access to Xinjiang

Reuters, Emma Farge, September 13, 2021



Security guards stand at the gates of what is officially known as a vocational skills education center in Huocheng County in East Turkistan Region, September 3, 2018.

REUTERS  
/Thomas Peter  
/File Photo

**GENEVA, Sept 13 (Reuters) - The United Nations' rights chief lamented on Monday that efforts to gain access to China's Xinjiang region to probe reports of serious violations against Muslim Uyghurs have not succeeded, adding that she was finalising a report on the situation.**

“I regret that I am not able to report progress on my efforts to seek meaningful access to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,” Michelle Bachelet said at the opening of the Human Rights Council on Monday in Geneva.

“In the meantime, my Office is finalising its assessment of the available information on allegations of serious human rights violations in that region, with a view to making it public.”

China denies Western countries' accusations that it mistreats minority Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, or that forced labor is carried out there.

## EU to Ban Forced-Labour Products in Tougher China Stance

*Yahoo News, September 15, 2021*



*The EU is looking to impose an import ban on products made from forced labour, the bloc's chief said on Wednesday, in a move seen aimed at China over its treatment of its Uyghur population.*

***The announcement was one of several made by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her annual State of the European Union speech that signalled a more assertive stance towards Beijing.***

***More explicitly, von der Leyen called on Chinese President Xi Jinping to show "leadership" by setting out in detail how his country -- the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases -- plans to meet its climate change goals ahead of a UN COP26 summit in early November.***

*She also outlined EU plans to set up trade and infrastructure links in other parts of the world -- including the Indo-Pacific region where China dominates -- to rival Beijing's "Belt and Road" initiative.*

*The stance underlined a hardening Western approach to China, which has be-*



come an economic powerhouse that competes with the US and EU while eschewing their democratic and social values.

Yet Brussels is also keen to portray its moves as independent and less hardline than those from Washington, with which Beijing has more tense relations.

### - Human rights 'not for sale' -

On the forced labour issue, von der Leyen did not mention any country by name, but allegations that China is using sequestered Uyghurs in its Xinjiang region to make products for export are becoming a key issue in EU-China ties.

In von der Leyen's native Germany, rights activists this month filed a criminal complaint against five retailers, including Hugo Boss and C&A, accusing them of benefiting from Chinese state abuse of Uyghurs.

Von der Leyen said in her speech before the European Parliament that while the EU strongly backed global trade, it "can never be done at the expense of people's dignity and freedom".

"There are 25 million people out there, who are threatened or coerced into forced labour. We can never accept that they are forced to make products -- and that these products then end up for sale in shops here in Europe," she said.

"So we will propose a ban on products in our market that have been made by forced labour. Human rights are not for sale -- at any price."

On climate, von der Leyen singled out China's leader by name, urging him to make concrete announcements on what his country will do to help the world limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius before the COP26 in Glasgow on November 1 and 2.

"The goals that President Xi has set for China

are encouraging. But we call for that same leadership on setting out how China will get there," she said.

"The world would be relieved if they showed they could peak emissions by mid-decade -- and move away from coal at home and abroad."

Then, in a clear swipe at China's Belt and Road plans, von der Leyen talked up Europe's own project to build trade, infrastructure and supply-chain links, starting with the Indo-Pacific region, that includes much of Asia where China is bolstering its own trade routes, as a "template".

That "reflects the growing importance of the region to our prosperity and security -- but also the fact that autocratic regimes use it to try to expand their influence," she said.

"It does not make sense for Europe to build a perfect road between a Chinese-owned copper mine and a Chinese-owned harbour. We have to get smarter when it comes to these kinds of investments," she said.

The EU, she said, will soon unveil a "Global Gateway" strategy that she said would take a "values-based approach, offering transparency and good governance to our partners" to build links around the world to ensure it was "a trusted brand".

The initiative, she said, will be a "priority" in regional summits, beginning with an EU-Africa summit in February.



# 'Wall of the Disappeared': U.S.-Backed Uyghur Exhibit Opens in Geneva

By Emma Farge, 09/16/21

*GENEVA (Reuters) - A U.S.-backed Uyghur photo exhibit of dozens of people who are missing or alleged to be held in Chinese-run camps in Xinjiang, China opened in Switzerland on Thursday amid high tensions over human rights between Beijing and Washington.*

The "Wall of the Disappeared" which also features interviews with camp survivors about alleged forced sterilisation stands outside the United Nations in Geneva where a month-long session of the Human Rights Council opened this week.

"It was important for us to bring faces to represent the statistics," said Zumretay Arkin whose uncle is featured in the exhibit. "It's easier to forget about numbers but if people see faces, we hope they will grasp the urgency of the situation."

Rights groups estimate one million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have been interned in camps that China describes as vocational training centres to combat religious extremism.

The United States gave a financial grant for the exhibit which will later travel to Brussels and Berlin, the World Uyghur Congress told Reuters. Earlier this week, the U.S. mission in Geneva displayed it at a diplomatic reception, according to sources who attended.

"We are committed to placing human rights at the center of our China policy, and we will continue to highlight the grave human rights



Dolkun Isa, President of the World Uyghur Congress sets up the display at a United States-backed Uyghur photo exhibit of dozens of people who are missing or alleged to be held in Chinese-run camps in Xinjiang, China in front of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, September 16, 2021. REUTERS

abuses we see the PRC committing across China, in Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and elsewhere," a U.S. mission spokesperson said. China said that the human rights situation in Xinjiang was "pretty good". "The attempt of some forces to pursue their political agenda by slandering China are doomed to failure," a mission spokesperson added.

"There is a difference between countries that have confronted immoral acts in the past, and sought to improve, and countries that are committing crimes against humanity in the present," the U.S. envoy Benjamin Moeing said in response.

The top United Nations rights official Michelle Bachelet this week raised Xinjiang in her opening speech, lamenting that efforts to gain access to investigate reports of serious violations against Muslim Uyghurs had not succeeded.

# Australian Uni Says Chinese Uyghur Profiling Study Breached Ethics Code

*By Reuters -September 15/21*



*SYDNEY: An Australian university said on Wednesday that it has asked journal publisher Wiley Online Library to retract a research study conducted by a former faculty member that helps Chinese facial recognition software better identify ethnic Uyghurs.*

*Curtin University said that the study published by the academic Wanquan Liu and co-authors at Chinese universities in 2018 was conducted without its knowledge and had breached its ethics code.*

*"Ethics approval should have been sought by the academic," the university said in a statement to Reuters in response to a request for comment on the outcome of its internal investigation into the matter.*

*Liu did not immediately respond to an email request for comment.*

*Wiley issued an expression of concern to readers in September 2020 about the data contained in the study, and told ABC, Australia's national broadcaster, on Wednesday that it*



was reviewing Curtin's request for a retraction. Wiley did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Liu and his co-authors said they had collected a dataset of facial images by recruiting hundreds of students of Uighur, Tibetan and Korean ethnicity from the Dalian Minzu University in China.

The study, funded by the Chinese government, said "face recognition has great application potential in border control, customs check, and public security".

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Four Corners programme first reported in 2019 on concerns that the Uyghur subjects had not given consent.

Liu worked at Curtin in Western Australia for two decades, funded by an Australian Research Council grant, but left to take up a new post at Sun Yat-sen University in Shenzhen in May, according to biographical details published on the Chinese university's website.

The incident is the latest in a spate of contro-

versies involving Chinese ethnic profiling research on Uyghurs, a mostly Muslim minority group under heavy surveillance by authorities in the western Chinese region of Xinjiang. China denies all accusations of mistreatment or discrimination in Xinjiang.

Another publisher, Springer Nature, has retracted two articles involving Uyghurs on ethical grounds in the past two weeks.

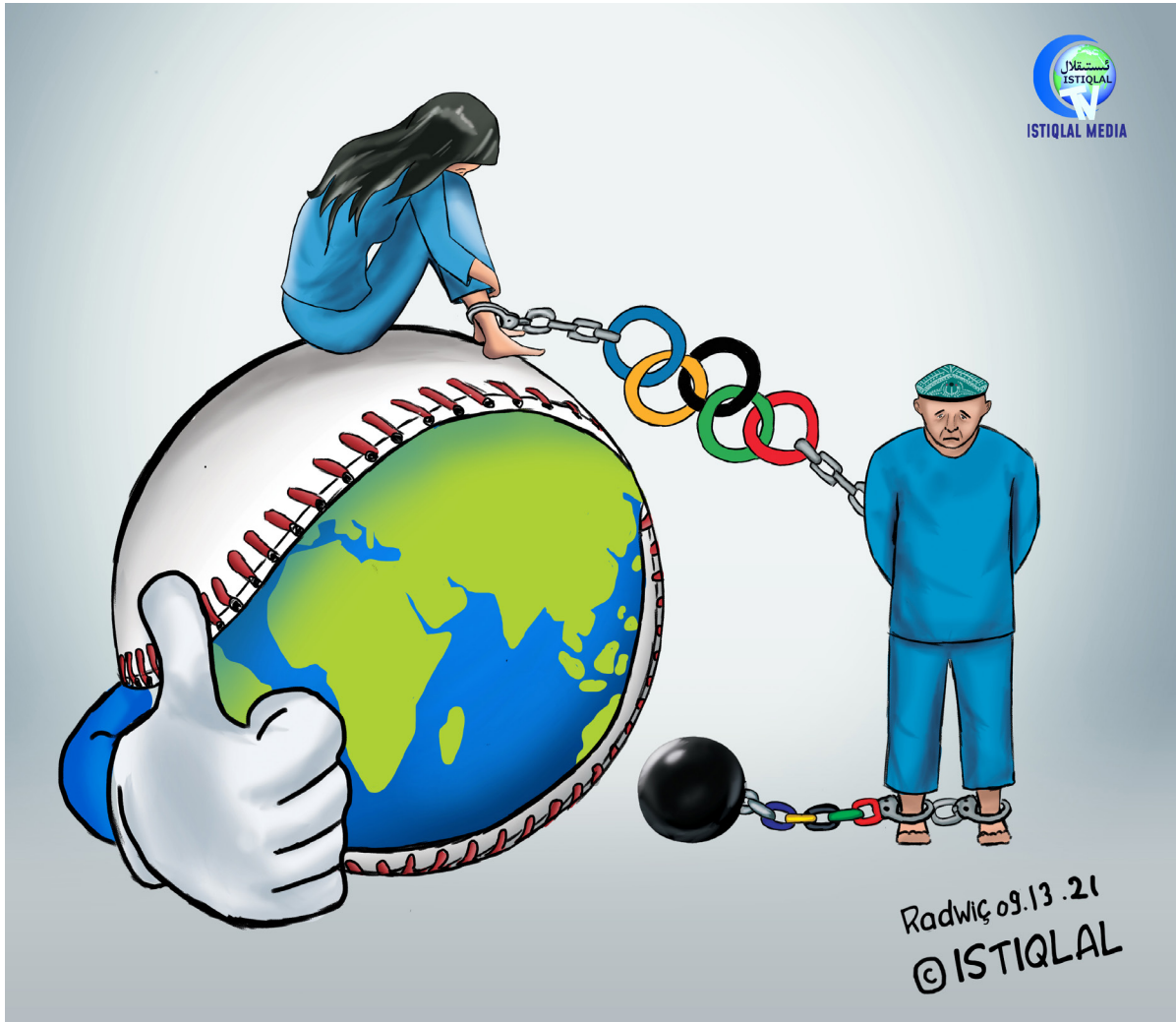
A Curtin University spokesperson told Reuters in an emailed statement the research had been undertaken by Liu informally, without the support of a contract or formal documentation, though the published study acknowledges him as working in Curtin's computer studies department.

Australia's universities have come under government scrutiny for foreign interference through international research collaboration.

The Australian Research Council said in March that security agencies had increased vetting of projects funded by its grants at the country's universities.



**Broadcasters across the world such as NBC are being called to cancel planned coverage of the Beijing 2022 Olympics**



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