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East Turkistan is home to Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic groups. The region is controlled by the Chinese state, and the Chinese Communist Party applies pressure to East Turkistan through draconian policies. The Uyghur genocide, as it has been designated by the United States and several other nations, continues on today. The United States has been an important ally in the fight to resist the ongoing atrocities, and we look toward even more positive action. These concentration camps constitute the largest incarceration of an ethnic group since the Holocaust. Since the camps were first identified through satellite imagery, the number of camps identified has only continued to grow. These concentration camps are obscured by the Chinese authorities under the auspices of re-education camps. Uyghurs that are taken to the camps are indeed subjected to brainwashing that aims to erase their ethnic, religious and cultural identity. However, these camps serve the regime's policies of destroying the Uyghur people and reshaping the region to maintain their totalitarian grasp.

For me, this genocide has taken on a deeply personal tone. On June 12th, it will be my sister's birthday. It will be the third birthday that she will be spending in the Chinese regime's detention. My sister's name is Gulshan Abbas. She had a career as a medical doctor in China, which ended when she was forced to retire early due to her delicate health. In spite of this, she continued to live her life in the service of treating others, often assisting other members of the community at their medical appointments.

On September 5, 2018, I participated on a panel at the Hudson Institute¹ on the news that was coming out of the Uyghur region of China, otherwise known as East Turkistan. I spoke on the mass internment of Uyghurs in concentration camps constituted a genocide and that it was the world's responsibility to act. China was conducting these operations under the guise of a "War on Terror". They used terms like "Securitization" to attempt to normalize their draconian and genocidal policies. The reality has always been that this is an attempt to ethnically cleanse the region to solidify the power of the one party state.

My sister lives in Urumqi, the capital of East Turkistan. Her daughters live here, in the United States. Beginning on September 11th, they discovered they could not get in touch with her through their traditional methods of communication. They informed me that my aunt had also been out of contact, apparently on the same day.² The reality began to set in that my sister and aunt had been taken into

¹ <https://www.hudson.org/events/1591-china-s-war-on-terrorism-and-the-xinjiang-emergency92018>

²<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2018/10/19/my-aunt-and-sister-in-china-have-vanished-are-they-being-punished-for-my-activism/>

custody by the Chinese state. They were targeted because of my activism here in the United States, in retaliation for my appearance at the Hudson Institute, and for the advocacy activities I had organized throughout the previous year.

For nearly over two years, we were given no word on the whereabouts of my family members, or whether they were alive. In fact, officials within the party slandered my claims of disappearance, insisting that I had fabricated this story, that I was not in contact with my sister by her own volition. They argued that she had even forsaken contact with her daughters, all to make my claims appear ridiculous to the outside world. These claims were proven correct. On Christmas Day 2020, we received confirmation that my sister had been sentenced to 20 years in a prison camp for terrorist activities. My sister, a doctor in a government-run hospital, was painted as a terrorist. The reality is that the Chinese state views me as an enemy of the state, precisely because I am a friend to my people. As a result, all who have committed the crime of being related to me, or associating with me, are guilty.

Even after we lost contact with my sister and began advocating for her, we faced attacks and disinformation from the Chinese regime. The foreign ministry statements denied the truth. Chinese state media outlets, which are used as propaganda platforms, accused Uyghur activists, including me, who were looking to free their family members as liars and agitators. The Global Times spread the lie that I had made up my own sister and stolen her photo online in order to pretend we were related. Only a year later, the foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin admitted that the regime had sentenced my sister in a secret court to 20 years in prison under charges of “being associated with terrorists”.

This practice of guilt by association is a common practice in nations with weak or nonexistent civil liberties. The Chinese regime understands that by targeting the families of those who attempt to expose their genocide, they can keep it quiet longer. It’s horrific to imagine that my sister is in one of these awful places.

Witnesses like Qelbinur Sidik spoke to the type of teaching that goes on inside the camps, where students are forcibly shackled while they are required to denounce their faith and endorse the teachings of the Chinese Communist Party.³ This teaching is tantamount to ethnic cleansing. The aim of it is to weaken the status of Uyghurs as an ethnic group, which tethers them to the land they occupy. By accomplishing this, the Chinese state would see the land of East Turkistan more seamlessly incorporated as a territory. This goal plays out further in the settler-colonial tactics they employ in family separations.

The fracturing of the Uyghur family unit represents a cruel and inhumane operation, but furthers the goal of ethnic erasure as well. In addition to this, the CCP sends cadres to live in the homes of Uyghurs to ensure their compliance to all policies and prevent the practice of traditional customs.

Though this by itself constitutes a violation of human rights, that which is left unsaid is even more intolerable. Within the camps, women specifically are facing attacks on their bodies, and their reproductive choices are restricted as a means of controlling the population of the region. Sexual violence

³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/4/uighur-tribunal-hears-evidence-of-alleged-china-abuses>

is commonplace, and Uyghur women have testified that these practices were performed by the guards that imprisoned them. Tursunay Ziyawudun, a survivor of the concentration camps, testified last week that:

“After I was brought in, there were three police officers, and they did that to me, and once they did it together, and I have no words to describe the inhuman cruelty of the violence, they didn't just beat me, and they didn't just satisfy their sexual desires...once they used those iron bars, electric shock wands. They raped me by inserting iron bars, electric batons, and other equipment into my genitals...once by them with these electric rods, iron bars and other devices, and three times by them artificial rape. The first time, I was raped by all three of them together.”

Forced sterilization practices have continued to be reported, as more women indicate that they are given medications forcibly that make it difficult or impossible for them to have children. Within these camps, women report being crowded into cells that are filled beyond capacity with insufficient sanitation and nutrition. Ziyawudun said of the conditions in the cells:

“The small bucket inside our cell was also used to go to the toilet, without a lid. The cell was small and there was no ventilation. The environment was so bad, you can't even imagine. I once told a policeman that this bucket was toxic when left without a lid. He replied that I should be glad that they did not let us drink that. There were two armed policemen at the entrance of each cell.”

We know the history behind such treatment, and that the purpose of it is to dehumanize the people it acts upon. With over three million Uyghurs in concentration camps and prisons, this situation has become an emergency. In order to operate this massive apparatus of detainments, the CCP must be able to create arbitrary accusations at will. They do this through the facade of securitization, and counterterrorism.

The claim of terrorism is used as a broad accusation in order to provide cover for any illegal detainment or abusive practice the regime wishes to engage in. This is regularly employed to silence dissidents, activists in diaspora, and to target their families back home. In order to evade international accountability, the Chinese state equates this campaign in East Turkistan to the global war on terror. They then use the lack of due process to deny not only basic civil liberties, but to engage in violence against those detained in their prisons.

The torture being conducted inside the camps has become more clear in recent years. A Han Chinese former police officer in Xinjiang recently testified⁴:

“I have witnessed Uyghurs being tortured. I feel compelled to speak about it because I am a professionally-trained policeman and what I have witnessed fell well below professional policing standards. Uyghur prisoners were sometimes forced to kneel, punched, a plastic bag would be tied over their head in order to induce suffocation and the bag would only be removed when they began struggling to breathe. Sometimes, their

⁴<https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/07-1000-JUN-21-UTFW-022-Wang-Leizhan-English.pdf>

limbs were tied, and waterpipes were inserted in their mouths to force water into their lungs.”

This testimony corroborates the information given by multiple survivors of the camps, many of whom were victims of these very tactics. With such striking and consistent testimony, it should be clear that this is a systematic and targeted campaign of genocide.

What we are witnessing now is the colonial takeover of a region through the eradication of its people. It is possible to see the long term effects of this in real-time. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute recently reported that the decline in birth rates in East Turkistan is the largest in the 71 years of UN data collection, having been cut almost in half.⁵ They have accomplished this by making life nearly inhospitable to Uyghur culture, while targeting women and children as the inheritors of the new generation. Women are forced to undergo sterilization, hysterectomies, and forced abortions. Birth control and IUDs have become mandatory. Reports of women in camps forced to ingest unknown medication only to later be told they were sterile has corroborated the decline in birth rates and is a shared experience of camp survivors. The forced control of birth rates of an ethnic group is a clear violation of Article II of the United Nations Genocide Convention.

The Chinese regime in East Turkistan has also been carrying out the policy of child separation. With millions of Uyghurs in camps or prisons, it is estimated that over 880,000 Uyghur children have been removed from their homes and sent to state-run orphan facilities. In these facilities, children are taught to praise the Communist Party and Xi Jinping. These facilities are designed to program the minds of children and prevent the continuation of the Uyghur identity and culture. The policy of child separation that the regime has implemented is further evidence of genocide, and a violation of several articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Used as an exploited and forced labor supply in the production of nearly 20% of the world’s cotton, Uyghurs are forming the backbone of the Chinese economy. They are systematically moved to Chinese factories, where they work tirelessly to produce goods for export. This has historically been the case in genocides in the 20th century, since a second-class-citizen workforce offers the opportunity for enhanced exploitation and profit for those willing to engage in such crimes. By offering China a supply of free labor, the genocide rewards state owned enterprises, as well as international firms that are complicit in it.

Outside of the concentration camps and prisons, Uyghurs are subject to extreme authoritarian surveillance. Security cameras monitor Uyghurs, and can recognize them through facial identification and walking gait. Uyghurs are not allowed to pray or practice their faith. Mosques are demolished or converted to nightclubs and bars. Uyghur men are forced to shave their beards and women are forced to dress less modestly. The aforementioned “Pair Up and Become Family” program forces Uyghurs to allow CCP officials and Han Chinese to live in their homes where they can be under constant surveillance.

⁵<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/12/chinese-uyghur-policy-causes-unprecedented-fall-in-xinjiang-birthrates>

With such horrific abuses continuing on, it is vital that we engage with the international community in order to build pressure on China. Without international solidarity, we cannot hope to affect real change. Yet, we watch year after year as more families are torn apart by the same tactics that were used against my sister and my aunt, for the purpose of intimidation. How can we rely on the information and advocacy these activists so bravely give us, if we cannot offer them protection for their families living in their homeland? If they are to be believed, the Chinese state would argue that these disappearances and subsequent sentences are coincidental. This is patently absurd. They do these things with the express goal of intimidation, and they do them with no regard for due process, for free speech, or for human rights. Not just my family, but millions of Uyghurs' families, are in grave danger now as we speak.

Families like the son and daughter of Uyghur intellectual Yalqun Rozi, and the daughter of renowned academic Dr. Rahile Dawut, have been impacted by the regime's attack on Uyghurs. Yalqun Rozi has been imprisoned after being charged with "subverting the state" in 2016 for his role as an editor in producing Uyghur textbooks. Dr. Rahile Dawut disappeared on her way to Beijing from Urumqi in 2017, and no information has been released on her whereabouts. Both are victims of the CCP's genocide on Uyghurs and their systematic targeting of intellectuals and academics to destroy the Uyghur culture and leadership.

Kamalturk and Tumaris Yalqun are Uyghurs in America who have faced adversity and uncertainty and have tirelessly campaigned for the release of their father. Akida Pulat, daughter of Dr. Dawut, has since given up her career and become a full time activist, joining Campaign for Uyghurs to continue her advocacy. These are only two public examples of how Uyghurs globally, and in the United States, are affected personally by the regime's genocide. Thousands of Uyghurs in America share a similar story of desperately wondering where their family is, whether they are safe, and if they will ever see them again..

In the United States, where I have been a citizen since 1995, there is a growing community of Uyghur activists that is expanding and is preparing to engage in the defining fight of our lives. I began my activism in the mid-80s in the student protests in East Turkistan, and carried on as a broadcaster for Radio Free Asia (RFA). While working at RFA, I came to understand that the dissemination of information is one of the most powerful tools to be utilized against a repressive regime. That lesson has informed the work that I am engaged in today.

Within academia, popular culture, and international sports bodies, the full throated defense of Chinese actions remains strong. Largely due to economic influence, academics like Jeffrey Sachs are used as mouthpieces for the regime within influential institutions. This process is formalized on a large scale through the Confucius Institute, which forms partnerships with universities around the world in order to influence their staff and publications.

Sports leagues like the National Basketball Association, and the International Olympic Committee, are beholden to the interests of the Chinese Communist Party. The inaction of these organizations, and their endorsement of the Chinese regime's human rights record, sends a clear message that the economic influence of Beijing is of more importance than the real human cost of that influence. This is true of the

film industry as well, which has made a point to avoid controversial condemnations, and has adopted a business-as-usual stance with the CCP.

Uyghurs are also facing an unprecedented wave of cyberthreats. Organizations are reporting higher than ever rates of hacking and phishing attempts, the majority of which originate from within China. Activists and survivors are regularly targeted on social media and have libel spread about them. We must demand an end to such abuse, which seeks to discourage survivors from sharing their story. The Chinese State believes that they operate with impunity in this regard, since their internet is largely contained. However, the international community is capable of action to address these growing attacks and disinformation.

In the case of intimidation, both physical and in cyberspace, international bodies and nations which respect human rights must demand an end to these threats. The largest threat facing the world is a lack of transparency not only in China, but globally. The issue of addressing human rights atrocities is precluded by the ability to be made aware of them. The CCP understands this and takes every possible effort to prevent information about the genocide from flowing freely. The U.S. Embassy and consulates in China can be proactive in the effort, offering their services to help secure information about families who have faced retaliation. We can support the security of cyberspace for activists by stating firmly that any attacks against international activists is a condemnable offense on the international stage.

It is the responsibility of all journalists to report the situation in East Turkistan as clearly as possible. With such limited information coming out of the state, we must often rely on the testimony of survivors who have left the camps. As victims of the Chinese regime's genocide have continued to testify, it has become clear that their stories corroborate each other, painting a consistent picture. The international media should boost the stories of survivors, their tales of sexual violence, forced sterilization, and torture. These are actions that the world had long deemed inexcusable, but so far their stories have not had the mainstream coverage that could help inform the global community.

One of the critical reasons China desires extensive control over East Turkistan is economic. The value derived from cotton production and a nearly endless supply of free labor to be directed toward State Owned Enterprises offers a flow of profit to a regime at the expense of my people. By demanding an end to these practices, and by following that demand through with a promise to purge American supply chains of this slavery, we can strike a severe blow to the international image, and funding, of the regime. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act is of critical importance for beginning to address the problem. It is also an explicit opportunity to state unequivocally that we are a people who value human life and dignity over profit.

There is also an opportunity to include forced labor prevention standards into acts that aim to enhance American competitiveness. The Endless Frontier Act could serve this purpose. In order to guarantee American leadership, we must guarantee not only economic, but moral authority. By showing the world that we are committed to being a leader in human rights globally, we can create an international precedent that endures. The legislative capabilities at our disposal to offer real world limitations on China's capability to engage in genocide are narrow, but very much real.

With thousands of Uyghurs outside of East Turkistan seeking safety and refuge, they often find themselves in precarious situations in countries that have shown themselves to be unfriendly to Uyghurs. Uyghurs who have fled to Pakistan as well as neighboring Central Asian countries find themselves at risk of deportation, and Uyghurs in Turkey who have sought asylum face a similar situation. The United States has the opportunity to ensure the safety of Uyghurs fleeing persecution and genocide through creating a priority status for Uyghurs seeking asylum or refuge. Even in the United States, there are Uyghurs who have waited years for their asylum case to be heard in court, and the possibility of being sent back to China only to disappear in a concentration camp is a grim prospect. The United States should designate Uyghur refugees as Priority 2 to allow them a streamlined process and avoid notification and extradition by Chinese authorities.

The United States and our allies have a practical opportunity to take action to stop the Uyghur genocide. By limiting economic exploitation, demanding an end to genocidal practices, and enabling refugee protections, we can apply pressure to the Chinese Communist Party while alleviating it for millions of people under threat of their control. My sister, and the relatives of Uyghurs all over the world, are relying on our resolve to act on their behalf. I hope the world will rise to this occasion, and demand an end to Uyghur genocide. If we do this today, we will save millions tomorrow.

Policy Recommendations

- The Uyghur American Community would benefit greatly from increased government action in the process of locating and confirming the safety of missing relatives. This would also likely increase the number of activists willing to speak on the genocide, should they feel protected. U.S. embassies and consulates, as well as those of allied countries, could be mobilized for better information-sharing and could request of Chinese officials that they be allowed access to visit/seek out missing individuals.
- The passage of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. This bill is critical to making sure that Uyghur forced labor is not profitable and forcing brands to extricate their supply chain from the Uyghur region.
- The enforcement of import bans on goods associated with forced labor, made possible through existing regulation and guidance.
- The condemnation of cyber attacks and social media harassment by Chinese state officials and operatives, which serves to discourage participation in activism and stifles international organizing.
- Place higher precedence on investigating CCP foreign interference in threatening and stifling the free speech of Uyghur-Americans.
- Prioritize Uyghur refugees through P2 status so that their asylum and refugee applications are fast tracked.
- The undertaking of an urgent fact finding independent investigation in East Turkistan to counter Chinese narratives and propaganda that deny the testimony of survivors. The United Nations must be granted access to the region in order to fully assess the degree to which the genocide has progressed.

- Chinese officials carrying out genocide should not be permitted to send children to U.S. universities or hide wealth abroad while Uyghurs are facing imprisonment and death for studying abroad. Sanctions should be applied more broadly against all CCP officials and Xi Jinping himself, as well as family members of high-ranking members of the Chinese Communist Party.
- Increase funding to support free and open journalism and reporting in the Uyghur language through Radio Free Asia (RFA). RFA Uyghur service receives tips from many sources which they carefully verify. Due to their understanding of language and cultural contexts, they are the only radio station in the world able to carry out this kind of vital work of exposing the genocidal crimes of the Chinese regime and providing the truth.