

THE CORONAVIRUS MORTAL THREAT TO PRISONERS IN XINJIANG CAMPS DEMANDS ACTION BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

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Press Conference

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File photo posted by the Xinjiang Judicial Administration to its WeChat account, April 2017, showing detainees at a camp in Lop county, Hotan prefecture, Xinjiang. Photo: RFA, Oct. 2, 2018; cf. WaybackMachine Internet Archive, April 17, 2017.

The Beijing and Wuhan governments' concealment of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan City has assisted it to infect more than 68,000 persons of all ages and kill more than 1,650 victims worldwide to date. President Xi Jinping was reportedly (*Globe*, Feb 17) aware of the epidemic two weeks before he spoke publicly about it.

The earliest cases in Wuhan appear to have been identified in the first week of December. Dr. Li Wenliang, who heroically alerted other doctors and officials there, was reported on Feb. 6 to have died of it himself.

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-51364382?ocid=socialflow_facebook&ns_source=facebook&ns_mchannel=social&ns_campaign=bbcnews&fbclid=IwAR1bf_mma_BnOSmJmhE-B_BvhefaoXaCysmztjydmU3bQiKsLioJm2Ym-Hw&fbclid=IwAR3Zt-gr_Z8sEwLmD8H_saz4ztL_YbFJSpldpV2-wToXHDB_6uD2P1KtWCo
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/01/world/asia/china-coronavirus.html?auth=login-C4aLmE>

There are well-founded fears that the coronavirus will spread in a pandemic way to Xinjiang, where 1-3 million Uyghurs and other Muslims are estimated to be imprisoned in hundreds of camps. Adrian Zenz, one of the leading researchers on Xinjiang's mass internments, notes: "The coronavirus could add an entirely new dimension to the Xinjiang crisis."

Beijing has confirmed at least a dozen cases of coronavirus in Xinjiang, but has not revealed whether any prisoner has been infected. The media blackout, overcrowding, malnutrition, physical/sexual abuse, organ pillaging and other grave human rights abuses in the camps--all suggest the camps could become a nightmare for coronavirus.

<https://theworldnews.net/nz-news/massive-disaster-fears-over-china-s-biggest-breeding-ground-for-virus>

Beijing has refused to close its "re-education" camps in Xinjiang. If the virus spreads in the camps, no one in the outside world is likely to know how Chinese health officials respond, or the extent of the death toll. No human rights organization or news media have been provided access to the camps.

Individuals with weakened immune systems, including the elderly, infants, malnourished individuals and people with high stress levels, such as those detained in these camps, are especially vulnerable to the coronavirus.

It is therefore critical for the world to pressure the Beijing party-state to immediately close these camps and restore their inmates to their homes. We cannot and must not wait for reports to emerge of countless dead prisoners to act.

A Way Ahead

Responsible governments and businesses worldwide should join the United States and Australia in boycotting anyone doing business in Xinjiang. Forced labour in its internment camps is poisoning the supply chain of a number of well-known companies from democratic nations operating there.

source: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/labor-10172019142633.html>

Global Magnitsky legislation makes it easier for those governments with it to impose targeted financial and visa sanctions on officials in authoritarian countries who abuse human rights.

The international community should call on Beijing to allow the International Red Cross and the World Health Organization access to Xinjiang and its camps to monitor and oversee the conditions and what is being done, if anything, to stem the spread of coronavirus.

Thank you.

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