

PERSECUTION OF UYGHURS, INCLUDING CULTURAL LEADERS, MUST CEASE

Public Demonstration in Montreal

Dorchester Square

November 15, 2020, (13 heures)

Hon. David Kilgour, J.D.



La persécution par Pékin des Ouïghours et d'autres turcophones au Turkistan oriental (Xinjiang) depuis que l'armée de Mao s'est emparée de la nation indépendante en 1949 a été systématique et souvent inhumaine.

Since 2016 under party (CCP) secretary general Xi Jinping, conditions have worsened considerably; increasingly, comparisons are made with the Holocaust. Today, no foreign government, media or business from rule of law nations are permitted to send diplomats or other foreigners into the region. The world can only speculate at what COVID-19 has done to Uyghurs in concentration camps and forced labour facilities.

We know from testimonies, leaked official documents and satellite imaging that the government of China is subjecting millions of Uyghurs to concentration camps, forced labour, forced sterilization and mass surveillance, among other horrific conditions, which experts say amount to cultural genocide.

Forced labour is so widespread across the region that experts say that all products made there are tainted. We learned from a CCP white paper in mid-September, 2020 that about 1.3 million Uyghurs and other minorities have gone through “vocational training” every year between 2014 and 2019.

Volkswagen is one of the democracies' companies operating in the region. In a recent interview with the BBC, its CEO in China defended Volkswagen's presence there. Is Volkswagen lending tacit support to China's policies of mass incarceration and ethnic repression.

Persecution of Cultural Leaders

The CCP says that all Uyghurs should be exposed to "vocational/de-extremification /cultural cleansing training." East Turkistan Uyghur intellectuals have experienced especially fierce regime repression. They've been interned, imprisoned, and forcibly disappeared as part of Beijing's intensified assault on Uyghurs and continued extermination of their culture in East Turkistan. The nature and scale of the genocide is shocking.

As guardians of Uyghur traditions, chroniclers of their history and creators of art, Uyghur intellectuals were building the Turkic-speaking society's reservoir of collective memory within the narrow limits of authoritarian rule. Their detention underscores current totalitarian attempts to decimate Uyghur identity in order to remold the community into a secular one, integrated into mainstream Chinese culture and compliant with Communist Party whims.

Thanks to the prodigious efforts of Abduweli Ayup, scholar-in-exile, the world now has an up-to-date list of about 360 Uyghur intellectuals imprisoned during the past 4 years.

Several have died in detention or after being released; others have gone missing after being released. The true number of intellectuals who have died in the camps, or died immediately after release, is unknown, given the veil of secrecy and fear.

Often, entire families are detained. Let me tell you about one of them:

The Hajims: The father, Muhemmedalih, was formerly a researcher at the Nationalities Research at Xinjiang Social Science Academy. He had also translated the Quran into Uyghur and was a religious scholar and translator. Retired, he died at the age of 84 in a camp. His daughter, Nezire, an independent writer, is now in a camp, as is her husband, Adiljan, a poet and former staff member of the Xinjiang People's Radio Station.

I'd like to conclude by paying tribute to a Uyghur poet who is missing. Her name is Chimengul Awut, and she wrote under the pen name "Chimenqush" (a flower bird). Chimengul worked for Kashgar Uyghur Publishers as a senior editor before being taken away to a camp in 2018. Aziz Is Elkun, secretary of the Uyghur branch of PEN International, writes for those who have no voice, including Chimengul. He responds poignantly to her disappearance by saying:

I can't believe you've become a wilted flower. I cannot believe you have become a caged bird.

I want to break the lock of this cage... You will return one day.

You will come back next spring, holding a bunch of flowers in your hand.

If you don't come, the Poplar Trees won't blossom, the peach trees won't bloom in Beshkerem.

A swallow won't fly over the city of Kashgar. Life won't go on without you.

Conclusion

The international community, including Canada's national government and Parliament, must act now before it is too late to condemn the Beijing party-state's unconscionable persecution of Uyghurs and other Muslims in general, including Chimengul and other intellectuals. We must also ban imports from the region and impose Magnitsky sanctions on all involved.

Merci mille fois.