

4 November 2019

STATEMENT

China – BHRC welcomes international actions condemning treatment of Uighur peoples in Xinjiang

The Bar Human Rights Committee of England & Wales (BHRC) has been following the human rights situation in Xinjiang with concern. It is estimated that over 1 million Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims are being detained in “*political education camps*”, with millions more subject to restrictions on their liberty. Human Rights Watch has reported that individuals in those camps have been subjected to forced political indoctrination, renunciation of their faith, mistreatment and torture. BHRC is further deeply concerned that lawyers in China are being systematically prevented - by arrest, prosecution for sedition and disbarment - from challenging such unlawful acts. In June 2019, BHRC and the All Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group held a panel discussion in Parliament to consider the treatment of Turkic Muslims in the Xinjiang region of China and to explore how to hold China accountable for human rights violations there.

In that context, BHRC welcomes two recent developments in the international community.

First, the [joint statement of the UK and 22 other countries](#) made at the Third Committee session on the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on 29 October 2019. That statement noted credible reports of human rights abuses in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, including mass detention, efforts to restrict cultural religious practices, mass surveillance disproportionately targeting ethnic Uighurs. The statement called upon the Chinese government to (1) respect its national laws, international obligations and human rights generally; (2) implement the CERD’s eight recommendations relating to Xinjiang, including refraining from the arbitrary detention of Uighurs and members of other Muslim communities; and (3) to allow the OHCHR and UN Special Procedures immediate access to Xinjiang.

Second, the [US Commerce Department's announcement](#) that it will place 28 Chinese public security bureaus and companies on a US trade blacklist owing to their implication in “*human rights violations and abuses in the implementation of China's campaign of repression, mass arbitrary detention, and high-technology surveillance against Uighurs, Kazakhs and other members of Muslim minority groups*”. Those added to the list include the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region People's Government Public Security Bureau, 19 subordinate government agencies and eight commercial firms.

Given steps taken within China to stymie domestic legal action, BHRC emphasises the importance of such action (1) being taken by the international community and individual States and (2) targeting both Chinese state institutions and private companies. BHRC encourages further States, UN agencies and international institutions to consider what steps they could take to bring about an end to the human rights violations and other unlawful treatment of Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in China and to thereby reinforce the Joint Statement before the CERD and the US trade blacklist.

ENDS.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. A report on our joint event with the All Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group is available [here](#).
2. For an interview with our spokesperson, please contact Josie Fathers, Project Coordinator, on coordination@barhumanrights.org.uk or +44 (0)7854 197862.
3. For more information on the Bar Human Rights Committee (BHRC), visit our website at <http://www.barhumanrights.org.uk>.
4. The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) is the international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales, working to protect the rights of advocates, judges and human rights defenders around the world. BHRC is concerned with defending the rule of law and internationally recognised legal standards relating to human rights and the right to a fair trial. It is independent of the Bar Council.