



ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS  
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April 4, 2018

Ambassador Terry Branstad  
United States Embassy of Beijing, China  
No. 55 An Jia Lou Lu 100600  
Beijing, China, 100600

Dear Ambassador Branstad:

We write regarding the grave and deteriorating human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), particularly the Chinese government's mass, arbitrary detentions of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities, and the detention of family members of six Radio Free Asia (RFA) employees (please see attached enclosure from RFA). We urge you to visit the XUAR, including the "political education centers," and to prioritize the situation in the XUAR in your interactions with Chinese government and Communist Party interlocutors, including the plight of the family members of these U.S.-based RFA journalists.

The bipartisan Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), which we chair, highlighted in its 2017 Annual Report growing restrictions on religious freedom in China, particularly in the XUAR. The situation has only worsened in recent months. Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in the XUAR have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, egregious restrictions on religious practice and culture, and a digitized surveillance system so pervasive that every aspect of daily life is monitored—through facial recognition cameras, mobile phone scans, DNA collection, and an extensive and intrusive police presence.

There are credible media reports that as many as 500,000 to a million people are or have been detained in what are being called "political education centers," the largest mass incarceration of a minority population in the world today. Thousands are being held for months at a time and subjected to political indoctrination sessions. Many have reportedly been detained for praying, wearing "Islamic" clothing, or having foreign connections, such as previous travel abroad or relatives living in another country. Reports have emerged of the deaths of detainees in these centers, including the death of a well-known Muslim religious scholar who may have been held in such a facility, and there are reports that torture and other human rights abuses are occurring in overcrowded centers secured by guard towers, barbed wire, and high walls.

Among those detained are dozens of family members of Radio Free Asia (RFA) Uyghur Service journalists. These detentions serve to intimidate the families of U.S. government employees and undermine some of the most effective reporting from within the XUAR, a region which is increasingly off limits to international reporters, members of civil society and

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diplomats. We are also concerned by the detention and likely mistreatment of dozens of family members of U.S.-based Uyghur rights activist Rebiya Kadeer in apparent retribution for her human rights advocacy efforts. These are unacceptable realities that necessitate a strong response from the Administration.

We are seeking a report on the Embassy's efforts on these issues, both in terms of diplomatic engagement and the Chinese government's response. In the cases of the detention of the RFA reporters, we urge you to personally lead diplomatic efforts to prioritize these cases, seek clarity as to the whereabouts and well-being of these individuals, and press for their release. If there is no immediate resolution to these cases, we ask that the State Department consider denying visas to executives or administrative staff of Chinese state-run media operating in the United States.

We further request that the Embassy begin to compile relevant information regarding specific XUAR officials responsible for the arbitrary mass detention and abuse of Uyghurs for possible sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Act.

The Chinese government and Communist Party's crackdown in the XUAR touches on a range of interests critical to U.S. efforts to secure a free and open Indo-Pacific region. We look forward to working with you to advance U.S. interests, address abuses of internationally recognized human rights and curtail government policies that risk serving as a catalyst for radicalization.

Sincerely,



Senator Marco Rubio  
Chairman



Representative Chris Smith  
Cochairman