



**Preserving Tibet: Combating Cultural Erasure, Forced Assimilation and Transnational
Repression
Congressional-Executive Commission on China
Rep. Christopher H. Smith
March 28, 2023**

Good morning, and welcome to the first hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China to be held during this 118th Congress.

Today's hearing is an extremely important one, one which I hope will get wide attention and circulation.

For it deals with the attempt of the Chinese Communist Party to erase an entire people, the people of Tibet.

Erasure happens when a people's language, religious and cultural heritage are stripped from them, when children are taken from their parents and placed in institutions – what we call “colonial boarding schools” – where they cannot speak their language nor practice their religion, but instead are taught in an alien tongue and effectively indoctrinated, while the ties that bind them to their families and culture washed away.

Roughly 80 percent of all Tibetan children within the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China are housed in such institutions.

And that is not all. According to the [2022 State Department Human Rights Report](#), the CCP's abuses in Tibet include effectively placing Tibetan Buddhism under central government control, and subjecting Tibetan women to "coerced abortion or forced sterilization."

What is also shocking is how intrusive the CCP's totalitarian reach is.

Biometric data – DNA and iris scans – of over a million Tibetans have been harvested and stored by the CCP. Blood samples were drawn even from children in kindergarten.

And you know what is even more shocking?

It is the role of an American company, Thermo Fisher Scientific in this genetic data collection and genetic surveillance program.

In December of last year, Senator Merkley and I, along with Ranking Members Rubio and McGovern [wrote a letter](#) to Mark Casper, the President and CEO of Thermo Fisher Scientific – and it is important that we note his name, MARK CASPER, as there needs to be accountability by corporate actors – asking him why DNA kits and DNA sequencer replacement parts were still being sold directly by his company to police in the Tibet Autonomous Region for use and abuse in collecting biometric data.

We know this – and more importantly, *he knows this* – because there have been multiple reports by Toronto-based Citizen Lab, Human Rights Watch and indeed this very Commission of Thermo Fisher products being implicated in ongoing human rights abuses throughout the People's Republic of China, through the use of DNA obtained from Tibetans, Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minorities.

Indeed, the most nefarious misuses of DNA collected has been to find matches for organ recipients from unwilling, healthy innocent victims.

While we have yet to see reports of this being done among Tibetans in Tibet, there is now a mountain of evidence that this is what is being done in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, against Uyghurs and other Central Asians such as Kazakhs and Kirghiz.

Indeed, we know from Chinese open source reporting that the “Dead Donor Rule,” which governs transplants deemed ethical by the medical transplant industry, is routinely being violated in the PRC.

We also know that 28 years of age is deemed the ideal age for organ ripeness by transplant surgeons in China, and there is effectively a culling of Uyghurs, Falun Gong practitioners and others to illicitly and barbarically obtain their organs.

I would be remiss if I were not to note, however, that just yesterday evening, Congress took a major step forward to combat this horrific practice when the House of Representatives passed by a vote of 413-2 a bill I authored, along with lead Democratic cosponsor Bill Keating of Massachusetts, H.R. 1154, the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act of 2023.

We should also note that the long arm of CCP repression against Tibetans reaches into this very country, where Tibetans, along with Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, not to mention Han Chinese dissidents living abroad, are targeted for harassment and pressure.

Finally, I want to note that Tibet is important because what has happened in Tibet, beginning in the 1950s, is template for so many of the crimes against humanity which we see play out within the recognized borders of the People’s Republic of China today that prick our consciences, including what is happening in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Indeed, both Tibet and Xinjiang are autonomous only in name, for both suffer a repression so staggering that one might consider it to amount to genocide.

For genocide is not only what we associate with the Holocaust, the gas chambers and the mass killings of men, women and children.

No. For according to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, acts of genocide, intended to destroy “in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group,” also include “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group... Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group... [and] Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

That is what is happening in Tibet, just as it is in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

These crimes, I believe, are crimes that can amount to genocide.

But to end on a more positive note, we hope to hear today from a distinguished panel of experts who not only will help document these abuses, but also point us towards a way forward, to the preservation of Tibet, its language, its culture, its religion, and its people.

Thank you. And with that, I now yield to my esteemed colleague and co-chair of this Commission, Senator Merkley.