

Anti-Slavery International, Investor Alliance for Human Rights, Uyghur Human Rights Project, and World Uyghur Congress

Response to the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery's call for input on contemporary forms of slavery as affecting persons belonging to ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities: State imposed forced labour in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (the Uyghur Region), February 2022.

The Government of China is perpetrating human rights abuses, including systematic forced labour, on a massive scale in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (the Uyghur Region) targeting the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples on the basis of their religion and ethnicity. This is a joint submission by Anti-Slavery International, Investor Alliance for Human Rights, Uyghur Human Rights Project, and World Uyghur Congress.

Q1: Is there evidence of minorities being subjected to contemporary forms of slavery in your country/community?

The Uyghur Region is home to approximately 13 million Uyghur and other Turkic and/or Muslim peoples. While constituting approximately half the population of the Uyghur Region, they are a minority population compared with the overall ethnic make-up of the citizenry of China.

There is a substantive body of evidence that the Government of China is subjecting the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples to state imposed forced labour as part of a programme including so-called 'poverty alleviation', 'vocational training', 're-education through labour' and 'de-extremification' focused on eliminating Uyghur culture and religious practices.¹

As many as 1.8 million members of the Uyghur and other Turkic and/or Muslim peoples are being subject to mass detention in internment camps and prisons, forced labour, forced sterilisation of women, forced separation of families, and torture.² These policies are bolstered by a pervasive, technology-enabled system of surveillance. Amnesty International³ and Human Rights Watch⁴ have determined the repressive policies in the Uyghur Region amount to crimes against humanity, and an

¹ Research organisations, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Worker Rights Consortium, the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice at Sheffield Hallam University, and the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and investigative journalists from The Wall Street Journal, the BBC Associated Press, The New York Times, The Globe and Mail, ABC Australia, Radio Free Asia, Reuters and other outlets have documented specific cases of forced labour in the apparel and textile industry, including in gloves and shoe manufacturing, in PPE production, in the solar industries, in the automotive industry, in electronics, in hair products and in tomato processing in the Uyghur Region and wider China.

² See for example: Amnesty International. 'Like We Were Enemies in a War': China's Mass Internment, Torture, and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang, June 2021 and Human Rights Watch, "Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots": China's Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims", April 2021

³ Amnesty International. 'Like We Were Enemies in a War': China's Mass Internment, Torture, and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang, June 2021 [ASA_17_4137-2021_Full_report_ENG.pdf \(amnesty.org\)](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa/17/4137/2021/full/report_eng.pdf)

⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots": China's Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims", April 2021

independent legal tribunal⁵, the United States government, and multiple national parliaments have recognised the abuses as amounting to genocide and/or crimes against humanity.⁶

State-imposed forced labour practices include:

Coerced labour of the rural poor in the ‘poverty alleviation programme’: The Government plans to have at least 1 million workers in the textile and garment sectors, with at least 650,000 coming from the Uyghur Region by 2023. To ensure that these individuals have the ‘skills’ required for the factory jobs, they are mandated to go through training in so-called ‘centralised training centres’ which are complete with high fences, police watchtowers and barbed wire. Resistance to attend these training centres is seen as a sign of ‘extremism’ and can result in being sent to a re-education camp.⁷

Forced labour of current and ex-detainees, including in internment camps: In a separate but parallel policy to China’s public poverty alleviation plan, the government has also enacted a public re-education policy that involves internment with some vocational training, indoctrination, and finally release to factories in nearby industrial parks or camp factories. The exact number of former detainees who have been coerced into working in a factory is not known, but estimates based on interviews and government statements is at least 100,000 former detainees are forced to work in garment and textile factories.⁸

Prison labour: Some Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples are within the traditional prison population rather than in the internment system discussed above. The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), for example, administers its own prison system and factories. XPCC —a quasi-governmental paramilitary organisation—is reported to force its own prison population to conduct commercial activities, mainly in cotton harvesting and production.⁹ In addition to harvesting cotton, the Citizen Power Initiative (CPI)’s evidence suggests that prisoners are responsible for the manufacture of textiles, apparel and footwear.¹⁰

State-owned enterprises and private companies accepting subsidies to use forced labourers from the Uyghur Region: The government offers incentives to Chinese-owned companies to incorporate the Uyghur population into their operations.¹¹ The Xinjiang government has offered subsidies and inducements to encourage Chinese-owned companies to invest and build factories

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/09/uyghurs-subjected-to-genocide-by-china-unofficial-uk-tribunal-finds>

⁶ The Uyghur Human Rights Project has compiled resolutions by national governments and parliaments <https://uhrp.org/responses/>

⁷ Adrian Zenz, Beyond the Camps: Beijing’s Grand Scheme of Forced Labor, Poverty Alleviation and Social Control in Xinjiang,” July 2019 at 13-14, hereinafter “Zenz, Beyond the Camps.” Online at <https://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/Beyond%20the%20Camps%20CECC%20testimony%20version%20%28Zenz%20Oct%202019%29.pdf>

⁸ Amy Lehr and Mariefaye Bechrakis, Connecting the Dots in Xinjiang: Forced Labor, Forced Assimilation, and Western Supply Chains, Center for Strategic & International Studies, October 16, 2019)

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Lianchao Han, Cotton: The Fabric Full of Lies: A report on forced and prison labor in Xinjiang, China, and the nexus to global supply chains (CPIFC Monograph Series Book 2) (p. 4). Citizen Press

¹¹ Lehr, Connecting the Dots, op.cit

within the 'vocational training compounds,' right next to such compounds.¹² Additionally, according to CSIS, companies have been encouraged to build 'satellite' factories in villages to ensure that they are able to control and coerce every member to work.¹³

Forced labour transfers: According to reports, at least 80,000 Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have been forcibly transferred from the Uyghur Region to factories in eastern and central China.¹⁴ This is part of a state-sponsored transfer-of-labour scheme that goes beyond just the cotton and garment manufacturing sector, marketed as 'Xinjiang Aid.' This 'Xinjiang Aid' scheme allows companies to participate in two ways: (1) opening satellite factories inside the Uyghur Region or (2) hiring Uyghur workers for their factories located outside Uyghur Region.

Q2: What types of personal, situational and structural factors push minorities into contemporary forms of slavery in your country/community?

There is a substantive body of evidence that the Government of China is subjecting the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples to state-imposed forced labour as part of a programme focused on eliminating Uyghur culture and religious practices. Please see question 3 for further information.

Q3: Are there wider political, economic, social, religious and cultural factors making persons belonging to minorities vulnerable to these practices?

The Government of China has claimed that the Uyghur and other Turkic and/or Muslim peoples population constitutes a domestic security threat and therefore implemented an overall programme including so-called 'poverty alleviation', 'vocational training', 're-education through labour' and 'de-extremification'. The Government's objective is that this programme will result in the Uyghur population integrating into the majority Han Chinese population.¹⁵ A key feature of this programme is the use of forced or compulsory labour – in or around internment camps, prisons, and workplaces across the region and the country.

A 2021 report by Amnesty International said "Far from a legitimate response to the purported terrorist threat, the government's campaign evinces a clear intent to target parts of Xinjiang's population collectively on the basis of religion and ethnicity and to use severe violence and intimidation to root out Islamic religious beliefs and Turkic Muslim ethno-cultural practices" and that "The internment camp system is part of a larger campaign of subjugation and forced assimilation of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang"¹⁶ It concludes that "The Chinese authorities have created a dystopian hellscape on a staggering scale in Xinjiang. Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim minorities face crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations that threaten to erase their religious and cultural identities."¹⁷

¹² Adrian Zenz, *Beyond the Camps*, op.cit

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Fergus Ryan, Danielle Cave, and Nathan Ruser, *Mapping Xinjiang's 're-education' camps* (Barton, Australia: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2018), <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/mapping-xinjiangs-re-educationcamps>,

¹⁵ Amnesty International. 'Like We Were Enemies in a War': China's Mass Internment, Torture, and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang, June 2021.

¹⁶ Ibid, p7

¹⁷ [China: Draconian repression of Muslims in Xinjiang amounts to crimes against humanity - Amnesty International](#)

A legal opinion by barristers at Essex Court Chambers (London), states there is a credible case that, as part of a widespread and systematic attack on the Uyghur people in the region, crimes against humanity are taking place. Further, that the crime of genocide is occurring, as there is evidence of an intent to destroy the Uyghur population as such, including through a pattern of Chinese State-mandated conduct.¹⁸ An Independent Legal Tribunal ¹⁹²⁰

In 2022, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (the Committee of Experts) “...shares the concerns expressed by the Special Rapporteurs to the UN Human Rights Council (see commentary on the Counter-Terrorism Law of the People’s Republic of China (2015) and its Regional Implementing Measures; and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Implementing Measures of the Counter-Terrorism Law (2016)) about terrorist profiling practices based on a person’s ethnicity, national origin or religion in as much as they generate a climate of intolerance, which is conducive to discrimination in employment and occupation and forced labour practices such as those alleged in the observations of the ITUC”.²¹

The Committee of Experts stated it was “...bound to observe, however, that the employment situation of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in China provides numerous indications of coercive measures many of which arise from regulatory and policy documents.”²²

Q4: What has your government done at the local, national, or regional levels to protect minorities from being subjected to contemporary forms of slavery in your country?

A substantive body of evidence demonstrates that the Government of China is perpetrating human rights abuses, including systematic forced labour, on a massive scale targeting the Uyghur and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples on the basis of their religion and ethnicity. Concern has been expressed by various UN experts, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination²³, and most recently the ILO Committee of Experts. The UN Secretary General recently urged the President of China to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit the Uyghur Region which has been requested since she assumed office in 2018.

Q6: What has been the role of civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, trade unions, and human rights defenders in protecting minorities from being subjected to contemporary forms of slavery?

Civil society organisations, trade unions and human rights defenders are working together to address state-perpetrated repression of the Uyghur people. A key priority of the **Coalition to End**

¹⁸ [Legal opinion concludes that treatment of Uyghurs amounts to crimes against humanity and genocide. \(glanlaw.org\)](https://www.glanlaw.org/)

²⁰ [Uyghurs subjected to genocide by China, unofficial UK tribunal finds | Uyghurs | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/14/uyghurs-subjected-to-genocide-by-china-unofficial-uk-tribunal-finds)

²¹ 2022 Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) – China (ratification 2006)

²² 2022 Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) – China (ratification: 1997)

²³ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China (including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China), CERD/C/CHN/CO/14-17, 19 September 2018, paragraphs 40, 42 and 47

Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region's [Call to Action](#) is to urge global brands to urgently exit the Uyghur Region at every level of their supply chains, to prevent the use of forced labour of Uyghurs and other groups in other facilities, and to end relationships with suppliers supporting the forced labour system. The breadth of the forced labour policy creates significant risk of the presence of forced labour at virtually any workplace, industrial or agricultural, in the Uyghur Region. The Uyghur Region produces over 80% of all China's cotton, which means that roughly one-fifth of all cotton products globally could be made with cotton and/or yarn from the region.

Q7: What has been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on minorities?

The Covid-19 pandemic led to additional risks for the Uyghur population. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used during the Covid-19 pandemic was manufactured using the forced labour of Uyghurs. The New York Times found evidence of several factories manufacturing medical grade protective equipment in cities across China which reportedly use Uyghur labour through the labour transfer scheme (detailed in question 1) and export globally. The New York Times traced such a shipment to a medical supply company in the U.S. state of Georgia.²⁴ Given these identified cases, there is a likelihood that public procurement of PPE in many countries may have been the product of Uyghur forced labour.

In addition, forced labour transfers of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities from the Uyghur Region to factories in eastern and central China are reported to have continued even during the Covid-19 pandemic in periods of lockdown, putting Uyghurs at risk of contracting the virus.²⁵

Q8: What are persisting obstacles/challenges in preventing minorities from being subjected to contemporary forms of slavery?

There is a significant body of evidence that the Government of China is perpetrating human rights abuses on a massive scale in the Uyghur Region, including systematic forced labour, targeting the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples on the basis of their religion and ethnicity. State imposed forced labour is extremely difficult to tackle and it is impossible for victims of these abuses to achieve justice and remedy.

Q10: What recommendations do you wish to propose in order to effectively address these ongoing challenges and protect minorities from contemporary forms of slavery?

Government of China:

- Take immediate steps to end human rights violations in the Uyghur Region against the Uyghur and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples, including widespread systematic forced labour.

Brands and retailers:

- Given evidence of the pervasive scope of the abuses, the fact that forced labour is state-orchestrated, and the impossibility to address these abuses, brands/retailers need to urgently exit the Uyghur Region at every level of their supply chains, to prevent the use of forced labour of Uyghurs and other

²⁴ [China Is Using Uighur Labor to Produce Face Masks - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

²⁵ [Xinjiang Authorities Sending Uyghurs to Work in China's Factories, Despite Coronavirus Risks — Radio Free Asia \(rfa.org\)](#)

groups in other facilities, and to end relationships with suppliers supporting the forced labour system. All brands and retailers should join the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region's "Call to Action".

Concerned governments:

- Impose visa bans, travel bans, and targeted individual sanctions under the US Global Magnitsky Act, the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, and other human rights sanctions regimes in place in Canada, the UK and elsewhere.
- Adopt mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence legislation.
- Adopt or enact legislation banning imports of goods produced through forced labour.

The United Nations:

- The UN Human Rights Council should adopt a resolution to create a commission of inquiry with authority to investigate allegations of crimes against humanity and other human rights abuses against the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples, including widespread systematic state-imposed forced labour. The Commission of Inquiry should make recommendations to end the abuses, identify responsible officials and provide a road map for holding them accountable, and call for appropriate reparations for victims and survivors.
- The UN high commissioner for human rights should exercise her independent monitoring and reporting mandate to collect information, speak out publicly on her findings, prepare reports on the human rights situation in the Uyghur Region.