

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

Call for Evidence on Batteries for Electric Vehicle Manufacturing

Submission by Anti-Slavery International

Founded in 1839, we are the oldest international human rights organisation in the world. We draw on our experience, which aims to eliminate all forms of slavery and slavery like practices globally. We work in partnership with our supporters, governments, businesses, like-minded organisations and global movements to bring about long-term, sustainable change.

1. Context: The urgent need for the global transition to clean energy

Anti-Slavery International welcomes the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee's enquiry, which recognises the important role of electric vehicles ('EV') in the UK Government's vital journey to net zero. However, we urge the Committee to recognise and assess the risk of the use of forced labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples in the EV industry.

Thus, this submission focuses on the question in the Call for Evidence "What are the risks to the UK automotive industry of not establishing sufficient battery manufacturing capacity in the UK?" We underscore that continued global reliance on processing/manufacturing for the EV industry centred in the Uyghur Region will, as long as current persecution persists, enable the continuation of the Chinese Government's profiteering from state-sponsored forced labour, and thus support the forced labour system. We urge the Committee to develop recommendations which map out a pathway for how the UK Government can support the UK EV industry to develop a truly 'clean' industry, which does not rely on the systemic forced labour of persecuted communities. This will require collaboration with like-minded governments and financial institutions.

- 1.1 Anti-Slavery International welcomes the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee's enquiry into the supply of batteries of EV manufacture in the UK. The world has already experienced over 1°C of warming. It is vitally important that governments internationally commit to limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C, a commitment which is under significant threat as evidenced through the backsliding on this commitment at COP27.¹ This commitment can only be met by a rapid transition from fossil fuels, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 45% below their 2010 levels by 2030 and a commitment to reaching net zero emissions by 2050, as called for by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#).
- 1.2 Development of the UK EV industry is therefore a key part of this necessary transition, and we welcome the Committee's considerations on how to support the growth of the UK EV manufacturing.
- 1.3 However, the transition to clean energy must be fair and respect everyone's fundamental rights. It is important, therefore, that the Committee recognises, understands and recommends UK governmental action against the pervasive forced labour present in the EV industry supply chain, specifically due to the use of lithium in EV batteries.

¹ See, for example, notes in UN reporting that "no real progress" was made on this area <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/cop27-ends-announcement-historic-loss-and-damage-fund> or journalistic reporting <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/20/cop27-summit-climate-crisis-global-heating-fossil-fuel-industry>

- 1.4 This submission will focus on the use of forced labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples in EV supply chains. However, we note that human rights abuses are also present in the EV supply chain due to harms committed in other contexts, for example child labour in mining in the Democratic Republic Congo ('DRC') of cobalt, one of the elements used in lithium-ion batteries.² The DRC is the world's largest source of cobalt. We urge the Committee to consider these harms in its analysis by conducting a human rights and environmental risk assessment of the various key components vital for EV industry.
2. **The forced labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples**
- 2.1 The Government of China is perpetrating human rights abuses on a massive scale in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Uyghur Region), known to local people as East Turkistan, targeting the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples on the basis of their religion and ethnicity. These abuses include arbitrary mass detention of an estimated range of 1 million to 1.8 million people and a programme of re-education and forced labour. This involves both detainee labour inside internment camps and prisons and multiple forms of involuntary labour at workplaces across the Region and cities across China.³ These repressive policies are bolstered by a pervasive, technology-enabled system of surveillance.⁴ UN human rights experts have determined the abuses may constitute crimes against humanity⁵, and legal and human rights experts have declared that the abuses amount to genocide.⁶
- 2.2 Evidence has shown that 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.⁷
- 2.3 We have previously provided evidence to UK Select Committees and UN Special Mandates on this forced labour system, which are available for additional context.⁸
3. **Uyghur forced labour in the lithium supply chain**
- 3.1 In 2022 Sheffield Hallam University and Nomo Gaia ('Sheffield Hallam') published a report, which concludes that the global automobile industry is exposed to the risk of the forced labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples.⁹ This report found that, alongside traditional automobiles, EVs are significantly exposed to Uyghur forced labour.
- 3.2 In recent years, the Chinese Government has actively expanded EV battery production in the Uyghur Region as a feature of the 14th Five-Year Plan. Although sourcing of the raw materials - nickel, cobalt, graphite, lithium, manganese, and others - for EVs is global (for example, cobalt from the DRC, per. 1.4), processing and manufacturing of the key materials

² See resources compiled by Human Trafficking Search <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/cobalt-mining/>

³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. "OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China", August 2022 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assessment.pdf>, Amnesty International. "Like We Were Enemies in a War": China's Mass Internment, Torture, and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang", June 2021 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/china-draconian-repression-of-muslims-in-xinjiang-amounts-to-crimes-against-humanity/>, Human Rights Watch, "Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots": China's Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims", April 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/19/china-crimes-against-humanity-xinjiang>; Luke Adams, Steve Andrews, Scott Flipse, Megan Fluker, and Amy Reger, "Staff Research Report: Global Supply Chains, Forced Labor, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region," Congressional-Executive Commission on China, March 2020, <https://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/CECC%20Staff%20Report%20March%202020%20-%20Global%20Supply%20Chains%20and%20Forced%20Labor%20and%20the%20Xinjiang%20Uyghur%20Autonomous%20Region.pdf>, Adrian Zenz, "'Wash Brains, Cleanse Hearts': Evidence from Chinese Government Documents about the Nature and Extent of Xinjiang's Extrajudicial Internment Campaign," Journal of Political Risk, 7 (11), November 2019, <http://www.jpolarisk.com/wash-brains-cleanse-hearts/>; Fergus Ryan, Danielle Cave, and Nathan Ruser, "Mapping Xinjiang's 'ReEducation' Camps," Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 1 November 2018, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/mapping-xinjiang-re-education-camps/>; "World Report 2019: Events of 2018: China," Human Rights Watch, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/china-and-tibe>

⁴ Chris Buckley and Paul Mozur, "How China Uses High-Tech Surveillance to Subdue Minorities," The New York Times, 22 May 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/22/world/asia/china-surveillance-xinjiang.html>

⁵ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. "OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China" August 2022 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assessment.pdf>, Tomoya Obokata, "Contemporary forms of slavery affecting persons belonging to ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority communities Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences" July 2022 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/408/97/PDF/G2240897.pdf?OpenElement>

⁶ Uyghur Tribunal Judgement, December 2021, <https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/UYGHUR-TRIBUNAL-Judgment-2022.09.20.pdf>. The Uyghur Human Rights Project has also compiled resolutions by national governments and parliaments <https://uhrp.org/responses/>

⁷ 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 PVC, in hair products and in tomato processing in the Uyghur Region and wider China. For key reports see <https://enduyghurforcedlabour.org/home/reports/>

⁸ Written submission to the Foreign Affairs Committee enquiry on 'Xinjiang detention camps', December 2020, <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/13587/html/>, Oral evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 'Xinjiang detention camps', March 2021, <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/1769/html/>, 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, <https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022-Joint-Submission-to-SR-Slavery-Minorities-State-imposed-forced-labour-of-the-Uyghur-population.pdf>

⁹ Laura Murphy, Kendyl Salcito, Yalkun Uluyol, Mia Rabkin, and an anonymous team of authors, Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice Sheffield Hallam University and Nomo Gaia, December 2022, <https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Aascds%3AUS%3A69ce4867-d7e7-4afa-a98b-6c8350ceb714>

for EVs is increasingly concentrated in China. This submission will focus upon lithium, due to its reported linkages with Uyghur forced labour.

- 3.3 China is now estimated to process 44% of the world's chemical lithium, and produces 78% of cathodes, 91% of anodes, and 70% of lithium-ion battery cells, with a growing percentage of these processes underway in the Uyghur Region. Sheffield Hallam's research finds that key actors in lithium processing and distribution, mining and processing of manganese (necessary for the manufacture of EV batteries and other alloyed metal car parts), the manufacture of lithium battery anodes, and the sale of battery-grade lithium materials are all deeply implicated in the Region's state-sponsored labour transfer programs.¹⁰ The report also finds that the world's most significant manufacturer of batteries and China's top producer of lithium have recently in 2022 registered joint ventures in the Uyghur Region.¹¹
- 3.4 Through supply chain exposures to the companies alleged to be implicated in the state-imposed forced labour schemes, Sheffield Hallam alleges that the supply chains of Daimler (a UK company), BMW, Honda, Tesla, General Motors, Ford, General Motors, Mercedes-Benz, Honda, Hyundai, Volkswagen, ZF Group and Bosch Automotive are all at risk.¹² Furthermore, due to the dominance in the market of two of the Uyghur Region companies in question, Sheffield Hallam states that "practically all EV battery manufacturers are exposed".¹³
- 3.5 Sheffield Hallam's research also notes that graphene – a potential alternative to lithium-ion batteries for EV batteries – is produced in the Uyghur Region.¹⁴
- 3.6 Separately from exposure through lithium, Sheffield Hallam's research also alleges that the supply chains of London Electric Vehicle Company – the supplier of EV black cabs in London, Aston Martin, Bentley, Daimler, Jaguar, Rolls Royce, and many others are exposed to Uyghur forced labour due to their electronic supply chain.¹⁵¹⁶

4. Recommendations to the UK Government

- 4.1 The UK Government must urgently advance all routes to transition from fossil fuels, to meet net zero commitments and its commitment to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. However, this opportunity to transition to sustainable renewable energy must be a just transition which provides decent work for all workers in the renewable energy sector. The UK Government must therefore tackle instances where forced labour is used in mineral extraction, processing and manufacturing in the EV supply chain.
- 4.2 Specifically, on the prevalence of forced labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic- and Muslim-majority peoples in the EV supply chain, the UK Government should urgently recognise that the transition to the use of clean energy must not be undertaken through a reliance on products produced with the systemic forced labour of persecuted communities.
- 4.3 In seeking to expand the UK EV manufacturing industry, the UK Government therefore should urgently focus resources and investment on efforts which will support the UK, and global, EV industry to source alternative supplies of the key components necessary for the EV industry and related industries. This will require collaboration with like-minded governments and financial institutions, including considering the role of UK development finance.
- 4.4 We also recommend that the UK Government urgently introduces new legislation which will incentivise the UK EV industry to identify and address the risk of forced labour in its supply chain. This requires the introduction of new primary legislation which introduces a corporate duty to prevent adverse human rights and environmental impacts, a Business, Human Rights and Environment Act¹⁷, as well as complementary legislation which will enable the banning

¹⁰ Ibid. See p36-38.

¹¹ Ibid. See information on CATL and Ganfent Lithium Industry Co. p37.

¹² Ibid. p36-37.

¹³ Ibid. p38.

¹⁴ Ibid. p38.

¹⁵ Ibid. p41.

¹⁶ For a list of all global companies exposed to Uyghur forced labour in the automobile industry, see <https://www.shuforcedlabour.org/drivingforce/companies> Note that this list does not solely concern EVs, but also traditional automobiles.

of imports of products made wholly or partially with forced labour¹⁸. Comparable legislation has been introduced, or is under development, in the United States, Canada and the European Union.¹⁹

- 4.5 We underscore the paramount urgency for global collaboration on the human rights catastrophe of Uyghur forced labour in our transition to clean energy. This issue must therefore feature high on the agenda in key policy discussions and negotiations, including the forthcoming G7, G20 and COP28 conferences in 2023.

¹⁷ See our briefing paper on the need for a UK Business, Human Rights and Environment Act, January 2022, https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ASI_Report_UKBHREA_FULL.pdf

¹⁸ We've joined with over 20 civil society and trade union organisations in the UK, including Amnesty International, Justice and Care, Human Rights Watch, the TUC, and Unseen, to outline the principles we need to see in a UK legal framework on import controls. These principles also detail how the UK's existing approach on Transparency in Supply Chains should be improved. <https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Modern-Slavery-Bill-Supply-Chain-Principles.pdf>

¹⁹ Read more in our FAQ <https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/FAQ-forced-labour-global-supply-chains.pdf>