



February 07, 2019

Amnesty International urges the House and Senate to swiftly pass H.R.1025 the Uighur Intervention and Global Humanitarian Unified Response (UIGHUR) Act

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of Amnesty International and our more than seven million members and supporters worldwide, we urge you to pass H.R.1025, the Uighur Intervention and Global Humanitarian Unified Response (UIGHUR) Act. Up to one million Uighurs and other ethnic minorities are being arbitrarily detained in these so-called “re-education camps” – in what is an affront to international human rights law. This legislation will send an important signal to the Chinese government, as well as countries around the world, that the persecution, arbitrary detention, and torture of the Uighur and other ethnic minorities will not be tolerated.

We thank Congressman Brad Sherman (D-30) and Congressman Ted Yoho (FL-3) and other co-sponsors for their leadership on the issue. The entire Congress needs to now speak with one voice and swiftly pass legislation without haste.

Last year, Amnesty International published a report after conducting interviews across four continents and over 100 people who lost touch with their relatives and friends inside the Uighur region and who fear that they have been detained. In the report titled “Where Are They”, we documented cases of brainwashing, torture, punishment from verbal abuse to food deprivation, solitary confinement, beatings and use of restraints and stress positions in these mass detention camps. People have been reported to be detained for travelling abroad for work or education or being in contact with people outside China. Those who resist or fail to show enough progress reportedly face punishments ranging from verbal abuse to food deprivation, solitary confinement, beatings and use of restraints and stress positions – likely to amount to violations of the absolute prohibition under international law of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. There have been reports of deaths inside the facilities, including suicides of those unable to bear the mistreatment.

What we are witnessing in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), is the systematic and widespread subjugation of its Muslim ethnic minority in camps and the erasure of their ethnic culture and traditions under the guise of national security concerns.

Detention of individuals resulting solely from the peaceful exercise of human rights, involving sufficiently serious violations of international norms relating to fair trials, or in violation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination constitutes arbitrary detention, which is prohibited under international human rights law. So do detentions that take the form of prolonged detention without charge or trial, or secret, prolonged incommunicado, or indefinite detention without review. Arbitrary arrest or detention is consistently prohibited under international human rights law.

This legislation takes the important step of ensuring U.S. policy will oppose the mass arbitrary detention of Uighur minorities; support efforts to combat governmental discrimination against ethnic minorities within the People's Republic of China or to limit them from travelling domestically or internationally; and hold senior regional officials accountable for gross human rights violations. The UIGHUR Act includes key provisions which would improve global advocacy at the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Countries, and Central Asian states and make it a priority for the U.S. government. Finally, the bill mandates important reporting requirements for any companies, including any machine learning, pattern recognition, artificial intelligence, or biometric technology and requires them to certify they are not facilitating the mass arbitrary detention of Uighur and other ethnic minorities.

It is essential that the Chinese government hear the concerns being voiced across the world about what is happening in the XUAR. The Chinese government needs to hear that the vilification of entire ethnic or religious groups will not bring the stability and harmony it seeks in the XUAR. By targeting these groups and forcing them to undergo political and cultural assimilation, China's leaders are inviting conflict, chaos and large-scale human tragedy. This legislation is a step toward helping to prevent that.

Amnesty International urges the House and Senate to pass H.R.1025 the UIGHUR Act. For More information, please contact Francisco Bencosme at fbencosme@aiusa.org or (202) 845-5075.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Francisco Bencosme". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Francisco Bencosme
Asia Advocacy Manager
Amnesty International USA