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OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**WHAT WE HEARD: A SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION
OF UYGHURS AND OTHER TURKIC MUSLIMS**

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CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION.....	3
THE XINJIANG UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION: FROM 2000 UNTIL TODAY.....	4
THE SUPPRESSION OF THE UYGHUR IDENTITY	5
A. Criminalization of the Uyghur Identity Through Overly Broad “Anti-Terror” Laws	6
B. The “21 st Century Orwellian State”	8
C. “Political Re-education” Camps.....	9
D. Isolation from the Outside World	11
E. The Harassment of Uyghurs Overseas.....	12
F. Forcible Returns to China.....	13
MOBILIZING AN INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE	14
A. Canada’s Approach to China	15
B. The Impact of Criticism to Date	16
C. Lack of Information	17
D. Imposing Tangible Consequences.....	18
CONCLUSION	19
APPENDIX – LIST OF ACRONYMS	

SUMMARY

1. In October 2018, the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (the Subcommittee) studied the human rights situation of the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims. The Subcommittee heard testimony from Mehmet Tohti, representative of the Canadian Uyghur Congress; Farida Deif, of Human Rights Watch; as well as Darren Byler and Adrian Zenz, both academics. The Subcommittee also heard from witnesses who requested anonymity, as well as testimony on Canada's response to this situation from the Director of Greater China Political Coordination, at Global Affairs Canada (GAC).
2. The Subcommittee has compiled this testimony to bear witness to disturbing developments for Turkic Muslims living in China and abroad. We extend our utmost gratitude to the witnesses, some of whom testified before the Subcommittee at great personal risk. The witnesses painted a clear and compelling portrait of the systematic and widespread repression occurring in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Measures described by witnesses threaten not only individuals and families, but the very survival of the Uyghur identity as a whole. By shedding light on this unprecedented campaign of repression, the witnesses have acted to ensure that these circumstances can neither be denied nor rationalized by the Government of China.
3. Witnesses detailed the manner in which Chinese authorities have begun to associate all outward expressions of Islam or the Uyghur identity as being evidence of Islamic extremism. This has led to the suppression of Uyghur life in the XUAR, where Turkic Muslim residents are subject to political indoctrination supported by an overwhelming police presence making unprecedented use of mass surveillance technology. As a result, the Subcommittee learned, Uyghurs and Kazakhs have largely stopped practising their faith as a community. The criminalization of Turkic Muslim life has led to the arrests of hundreds of thousands since 2014. Witnesses noted, however, that the world's attention only turned towards the XUAR in spring 2018, as evidence mounted that authorities were building camps where hundreds of thousands, potentially up to 1 million, of Turkic Muslims were being detained without charge for indefinite periods for the purposes of "political re-education." Witnesses conveyed the image of overcrowded, unsanitary prison-like facilities where starvation is rampant and where detainees are punished through physical and psychological ill-treatment. Witnesses also noted reports of deaths in the camps, particularly among the elderly and infirm. In order to properly reveal the current state of affairs in Xinjiang, some witnesses called for the Government of Canada to demand that China allow independent human rights investigators into the XUAR.
4. The Subcommittee heard that the campaign has had significant implications for Turkic Muslims outside of China. These individuals cannot communicate with their families. As with other Chinese minority groups, they are subject to direct surveillance and harassment by Chinese authorities. This includes the 2,000-strong community of Uyghurs in Canada, whom themselves can account for 300 family members being held in the camps. Witnesses proposed that cases of harassment of Chinese minorities be tracked, and that GAC continue to raise these cases with Chinese officials.
5. Witnesses also told the Subcommittee that Uyghurs outside of China fear being forcibly deported by governments aligned with China – and that Uyghurs are detained or disappear altogether as soon as they return. Witnesses proposed that the Government of Canada protect Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims by expediting asylum claims and by imposing a moratorium on removals of Uyghurs and Kazakhs from Canada to China or third countries where they would be at risk of deportation.

6. Chinese authorities no longer deny the campaign to “politically re-educate” Turkic Muslims in the XUAR. Witnesses informed the Subcommittee that criticism is primarily coming from Western states and the United Nations. Ultimately, they concluded that the international community as a whole has, as of yet, failed to sufficiently hold China to account or to protect the Turkic Muslim minority. Some witnesses therefore urged the Government of Canada to coordinate its efforts with like-minded states to publicly condemn China for its actions in the XUAR. Some witnesses also called for the imposition of targeted economic measures against officials who have led this campaign of repression. Noting the role of the private sector in supplying the technology and services required to carry out mass arbitrary surveillance, some witnesses also suggested that measures be taken to prevent any Canadian public-sector support for exports of such technology or services, and that targeted economic measures against foreign nationals complicit in human rights abuses in the XUAR be implemented.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Uyghurs (also spelled Uighur) are a Muslim, ethnically Turkic people whose ancestral homeland is in the western Chinese province known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR or Xinjiang). Remote and sparsely populated,¹ the XUAR shares a border with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The Uyghur community numbers approximately 11 million; they live alongside approximately two million Kazakhs and several other groups of Turkic Muslims.² Today, their way of life is under threat. These communities, along with Tibetan Buddhists, Christians and Falun Gong practitioners, have long been subject to indoctrination drives and outright repression by the Chinese government.³ However, since late 2016, human rights violations have escalated to troubling new heights in the XUAR. Today, “the state is, in fact, engaged in a war on public expressions of Islam among Turkic Muslims, and on Turkic Muslim culture.”⁴

2. Seized of this issue, in October 2018, the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (the Subcommittee) heard testimony from Mehmet Tohti, representative of the Canadian Uyghur Congress; Farida Deif, of Human Rights Watch; as well as Darren Byler and Adrian Zenz, both academics. The Subcommittee also heard from witnesses who requested anonymity, as well as testimony on Canada’s response to this situation from the Director of Greater China Political Coordination, at Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

3. What follows is an account of the extent of the human rights violations committed by Chinese authorities against Turkic Muslims in the XUAR, as related to the Subcommittee by witnesses. The situation in the XUAR today is rooted in the region’s history. This discussion begins with an account of how the rhetoric used today has been gaining traction over the past 20 years. It then turns to consider how overly broad legislation has effectively criminalized an identity, as well as the methods used by the Chinese authorities: a surveillance state, political re-education camps, near-complete isolation of the XUAR from the outside world, and the harassment of Uyghurs overseas. Finally, the discussion focuses on what is required to galvanize a greater international response. The discussion turns to Canada’s approach to engaging with China thus far, the impact of international criticism to date, the implications of potential information gaps, and potential paths forward for ensuring a resolute and tangible response to this crisis.

¹ Despite occupying approximately 15% of the territory of China, the XUAR is home only to 22 million people, or 1.5% people out of China’s population of 1.4 billion people. See: Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development [SDIR], [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1335 (Darren Byler, Lecturer, University of Washington).

² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1335 (Byler).

³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1310 (Mehmet Tohti, Representative, Uyghur Canadian Society); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Evelyn Puxley, Director, Greater China Political and Coordination, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development).

⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

THE XINJIANG UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION: FROM 2000 UNTIL TODAY

1. Under China's constitution, Uyghurs are granted some degree of political autonomy in the XUAR. In practice, however, this autonomy largely evaporated in the 1990s.⁵ Since the early 2000s, the Chinese state has promoted accelerating levels of Han migration to Uyghur and Kazakh homelands.⁶ According to Mr. Byler, Lecturer, University of Washington, the state was motivated by the desire to develop natural resource extraction, consolidate control over the border regions, and develop new markets. The resulting atmosphere of dispossession led to widespread protest and was met with police brutality.⁷ Uyghur activists—and particularly Uyghur groups fighting to establish a sovereign Uyghur state of East Turkestan—were perceived and portrayed as a threat to the integrity of the Chinese state.⁸ The advent of the global war on terror after the 9/11 attacks allowed Chinese authorities to paint all Uyghur activists as Islamic extremists and terrorists, despite the wide variety of their political views and levels of religious adherence.⁹

2. Uyghur-led violent incidents occurred throughout the 2000s, but were “generally spontaneous, small in scale and defensive responses to policy brutality and state violence. They didn’t resemble anything like an organized insurgency.”¹⁰ The Chinese state’s concerns (some would say excuse) intensified after a widespread turn towards more pious forms of Sunni and Hanafi Islam among Uyghurs in 2012, facilitated by newly available high-speed Internet access. After 2012, some violent incidents by more extreme groups began to include signs of religious motivation. For example, a Uyghur-led March 2014 knife attack led to the death of 30 Han civilians in the southwest Chinese province of Yunnan. The attack is often referred to as China’s 9/11.¹¹ In May 2014, the central government imposed a *Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism*, with the stated goals of “fostering state security, ethnic unity and social stability.”¹² However, Ms. Deif, Canada Director for Human Rights Watch, noted, “we know very well that these are overly broad terms that the Chinese government often uses to crack down on any political expression.”¹³ Witnesses stated emphatically to the Subcommittee that Uyghurs or other Turkic Muslims do not represent a threat to the Chinese state.¹⁴ The small number of violent Uyghur groups that could have posed a terrorist threat have been “neutralized and disbanded.”¹⁵

⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1320 (Byler).

⁶ The Han people belong to the largest ethnic group in China, making up 90% of the population. See: “[Who are the Han Chinese People?](#),” *World Atlas*.

⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 and 1330 (Byler).

⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1310 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1345 (Adrian Zenz, Researcher); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1345 (Byler).

⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1350 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1335 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1345 (Zenz).

¹⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1305 and 1330.

¹² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1330 (Farida Deif, Canada Director, Human Rights Watch).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1350 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1315 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 and 1335 (Byler).

¹⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1315 (Zenz).

3. According to Mr. Byler, the Chinese government is interested in XUAR's land and resources, which include a significant proportion of China's oil and natural gas deposits.¹⁶ Furthermore, in 2014, China launched its Belt and Road Initiative, which includes plans to build ground-based, maritime and aviation transportation infrastructure to extend China's reach through Central Asia towards Russia and Europe, and towards the Middle East and Africa via South Asia.¹⁷ The XUAR is thus China's gateway to the rest of the world – making an enhanced state presence in this sparsely populated region a key part of achieving China's geopolitical ambitions.¹⁸ According to Mr. Byler, “removing these Muslim populations from their homelands and placing them in the system is part of this process.”¹⁹ One tangible expression of this change is in the XUAR's physical landscape. Over the past decade, many Uyghurs have been moved from their land into subsidized government housing.²⁰ Now, a constant cycle of demolition and construction means that buildings built in a Uyghur or Central Asian style are replaced with buildings that are typical of the rest of China.²¹

4. From the Chinese perspective, Han migration, increased infrastructure and economic development is a “quite fair and quite just” way to fold minority groups deemed “backward” into the ethnically Han state.²² According to the testimony of Dr. Zenz, the Communist ideology has presumed that with improved material conditions, people will tend toward atheism. Religious belief is viewed as suspect and inherently problematic.²³ Islamophobic views are widely held in China. The perceived otherness of the Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslims also influences how they are treated.²⁴

THE SUPPRESSION OF THE UYGHUR IDENTITY

1. Ultimately, the Government of China's goal is to accomplish a complete “cultural and linguistic assimilation.”²⁵ Witnesses underscored that what is happening to Turkic Muslims is unprecedented in its scale, technological sophistication and in the level of economic resources attributed by the state to the project.²⁶ Ms. Deif noted,

To be clear, the scale and scope of abuses in Xinjiang are unlike anything Human Rights Watch has seen in China in decades. Not just the numbers of people held, but the abuses—the systematic abuses region-wide—are unprecedented. In addition, the impact goes beyond China to Uighurs globally, including Uighur Canadians here at home. It's unlike anything we've seen before.²⁷

¹⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 and 1340 (Tohti).

¹⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1315 (Byler).

¹⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 (Tohti); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

²² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1315 (Byler).

²³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1325 (Zenz).

²⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

²⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1320 (Zenz). See also: SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1315 (Byler).

²⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1320 (Zenz).

²⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

2. With the appointment of former Party Secretary for Tibet, Chen Quanguo, to the position of Party Secretary for the XUAR in late 2016, a “police state” was installed.²⁸ By early 2017, a new strategy had been implemented: in addition to imposing security measures, large segments of the population were to be “re-educated,” or “transformed.”²⁹ Not only have outward expressions of Islam been criminalized, but Turkic Muslims are subject to persistent daily indoctrination efforts and face “pervasive and constant surveillance.”³⁰ Today, Uyghurs report that “half or more of their immediate family members are in a mix of political education camps, pretrial detention and prison.”³¹ A common refrain is now heard across the XUAR – “everyone is gone.”³²

A. Criminalization of the Uyghur Identity Through Overly Broad “Anti-Terror” Laws

3. Since the beginning of the *Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism*, Islam in Xinjiang has been “effectively outlawed.”³³ While prohibitions on outward displays of religion had formerly applied only to public sector workers and to students, “now, an entire religion is criminalized.”³⁴ Witnesses described prohibitions on a wide array of religious practices or expressions of Islam through anti-terror legislation. This includes a prohibition on facial hair and religious clothing.³⁵ Individuals with names bearing religious significance have been forced to change their names.³⁶ Qurans, religious literature and prayer mats kept at home are confiscated.³⁷ Keeping Islamic dietary practices is prohibited. Halal signs are now illegal,³⁸ and restaurants must stay open during Ramadan.³⁹ It is also prohibited to teach Islam to children. Individuals have been detained for praying five times a day and for circulating religious text among family.⁴⁰ Most mosques have been demolished;⁴¹ the Muslim call to prayer is no longer heard.⁴² Effectively, outward displays of faith among Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslims in the XUAR have effectively stopped.⁴³

²⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

²⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 and 1320 (Byler).

³⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

³¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

³² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

³³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

³⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1310 (Tohti).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

³⁶ SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

³⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 and 1310 (Tohti).

³⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti).

³⁹ SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁴⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

⁴² SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1).

⁴³ *Ibid.*; SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

4. However, religious identity is only one aspect of the Uyghur identity that has come under attack.⁴⁴ Uyghur officials and political figures – even those previously regarded as loyal Communist Party members – have been removed from their positions.⁴⁵ Social and cultural leaders have been specifically targeted for arrest, including professors, athletes and entertainers.⁴⁶ The Uyghur language and culture may no longer be taught in schools.⁴⁷ As one witness stated, “any family that was caught still doing life the Uyghur way would be punished.”⁴⁸ Uyghur books, traditional sitting mats known as *kilpas*, and traditional Uyghur furniture have been banned.⁴⁹

5. In addition to prohibitions, obligations are also imposed on Turkic Muslims, who are subjected to “persistent political indoctrination.”⁵⁰ For example, enthusiastic attendance at flag-raising ceremonies is mandatory and brutally enforced.⁵¹ Political meetings and Mandarin night schools are mandatory.⁵²

6. Hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims have been formally arrested under these overly broad “anti-terrorism” laws.⁵³ They remain detained in pre-trial detention centres or prisons.⁵⁴ According to Mr. Byler, “in 2017, 21% of all who were arrested in the country as a whole came from the Uighur and Kazakh homelands in China.”⁵⁵

7. Ms. Puxley, Director of Greater China Political Coordination for GAC, noted that such challenges to the cultural, linguistic and ethno-religious identities of Uyghurs and other Muslims, in addition to being contrary to China’s constitution and its international human rights commitments, run counter to the United Nations (UN) Global Counter-terrorism Strategy, which was agreed to by consensus at the UN General Assembly in 2006.⁵⁶ In fact, Ms. Deif expressed fear that this approach is “quite likely to deepen and promote new radicalization among Muslim populations in Xinjiang who previously had no affinity with extremist ideology.”⁵⁷ One witness even speculated that this approach may have been designed to intentionally provoke further violence to justify “a total extermination.”⁵⁸

⁴⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1310 (Tohti).

⁴⁵ Ibid.; SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

⁴⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1310 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

⁴⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 (Tohti); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁴⁸ SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

⁵¹ Ibid.; SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁵² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

⁵³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

⁵⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

⁵⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

⁵⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

⁵⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1315 (Deif).

⁵⁸ SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

B. The “21st Century Orwellian State”

8. All of this has been accomplished through the establishment of a police state, creating the climate of fear necessary to control populations.⁵⁹ Mr. Tohti, representative of the Canadian Uyghur Congress, told the Subcommittee that the XUAR now resembles a “21st-century Orwellian state.”⁶⁰ Over a million officials and police officers have been deployed to the XUAR.⁶¹ Patrol tanks, armoured police vans and military vehicles are now ubiquitous.⁶² Extensive police recruitment drives and procurement programs for surveillance equipment are underway.⁶³

9. Surveillance is “pervasive and constant.”⁶⁴ Neighbours are encouraged to monitor one another.⁶⁵ State officials are assigned to live in Uyghur homes, with the program intensifying around the month of Ramadan.⁶⁶ Witnesses noted that Uyghurs are required to install security cameras both inside and outside their own homes.⁶⁷

10. Travel and communication are heavily restricted.⁶⁸ The Uyghur-dominated southern region of the XUAR, including the towns of Kashgar and Khotan, are “completely sealed.”⁶⁹ Witnesses described police patrols or checkpoints at almost every street corner, apartment building, shop entrance, mall and bus stop.⁷⁰ Police oversee random sidewalk inspections of identity cards and passports. Cell phones are scanned.⁷¹ Authorities are searching, in particular, for evidence of participation in terrorist activities or protests, such as the 2009 protests where regime brutality was documented.⁷² “At every level,” surveillance and travel restrictions are a “two-tiered system.”⁷³ While non-Uyghurs are subject to some security measures, they are concentrated in Uyghur neighborhoods, and Uyghurs are subject to far more intense scrutiny.⁷⁴ For example, at checkpoints, Han Chinese are directed to a “fast-pass” area while ethnic Turkic Muslims are subject to iris scans and other biometric checks.⁷⁵ The same is true for digital surveillance.⁷⁶

⁵⁹ Ibid.; SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1).

⁶⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti).

⁶¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

⁶² SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁶³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1310 (Zenz).

⁶⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1330 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1340 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

⁶⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1).

⁶⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 (Tohti).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1305.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1305; SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁷¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁷² SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁷³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1335 (Deif).

⁷⁴ Ibid.; SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1 and Witness 2).

⁷⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1335 (Deif).

⁷⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1 and Witness 2).

11. Chinese authorities use mass surveillance systems that make use of QR Codes,⁷⁷ artificial intelligence, phone spyware and big data to identify “threats.”⁷⁸ Witnesses informed the Subcommittee that biometric data is being collected, including fingerprints and voice data. Uyghurs are singled out for iris scans and the data is then embedded in identity cards.⁷⁹

12. According to witnesses, one of the most extreme security measures implemented to date is the collection of DNA samples, including blood samples, through clinics set up for that purpose.⁸⁰ Uyghurs are “very concerned that the DNA that’s been collected will be used to match organs with people who need organs.”⁸¹ Mr. Byler noted, “[t]here’s a lot of evidence that this could be happening, but we don’t have strong evidence to say that it has or is happening, or at what scale.”⁸² Mr. Tohti noted that organ harvesting among Falun Gong detainees was well-documented, but that “organ harvesting is more severely under-reported for Uighurs than for any other people in China.”⁸³

C. “Political Re-education” Camps

13. The police state in place in the XUAR has been supplemented by a “large-scale extrajudicial detention network,”⁸⁴ composed of facilities described by most witnesses as “political re-education” camps.⁸⁵ Mr. Tohti used the evocative expression “concentration camps.”⁸⁶ Mr. Byler relayed that in the XUAR, these centres are described euphemistically as “the schools.”⁸⁷

14. Credible reports indicate that hundreds of thousands – possibly over 1 million – Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslims, as well as Christians have been sent to political re-education camps.⁸⁸ In 2017, upon the initiative of Chen Quanguo, a mass “security assessment” of Uyghur and Kazakh individuals was carried out.⁸⁹ Muslims who were of military age, underemployed, had studied or taught unauthorized forms of Islam, travelled internationally, had passports or had international contacts, were identified as unsafe and as harbouring a world view that “needed to be ‘eradicated’ from society.”⁹⁰ All Muslims in the region now face the same threat of detention. Mr. Byler reported that officials have mandates to detain a certain percentage of the population in their jurisdiction.⁹¹ Reports indicate that children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, the elderly the disabled and seriously ill are now also being detained.⁹²

⁷⁷ A QR Code is a barcode that can be read by a smartphone camera. The barcodes convey data such as web addresses, contact information and general text. QR is short for “Quick Response.” See: University of California Irvine, “[QR Codes: What are QR Codes?](#),” *UCI Libraries*.

⁷⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

⁷⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁸⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

⁸¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1315 (Byler). See also: SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1335 (Tohti).

⁸² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1315 (Byler).

⁸³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1335 (Tohti).

⁸⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1310 (Zenz).

⁸⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1).

⁸⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1310 (Tohti).

⁸⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1340 (Byler).

⁸⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1310 (Zenz); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

⁸⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

⁹² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

15. Accused of no crimes, detainees in these camps are held without due process. They are neither charged nor put on trial, and they have no access to lawyers or family.⁹³ Furthermore, no fixed term is given for their detention.⁹⁴ Satellite imagery shows facilities with extensive security features that resemble those of prisons, including high fences and watchtowers.⁹⁵ It is unclear how many informal detention centres exist, particularly because they take many forms. Describing an otherwise unremarkable apartment building where hundreds of people were kept under supervision in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, one witness concluded that “[t]here are possibly many more locations of these camps than the institutionalized ones that have been found through the GPS surveillance.”⁹⁶ What is clear, however, is that new facilities continue to be built and existing facilities expanded.⁹⁷ Mr. Tohti noted that thousands of Uyghurs have also been transferred to facilities inland.⁹⁸

16. Chinese authorities have not kept, or have not disclosed, official records of detentions.⁹⁹ While Ms. Deif and Mr. Byler stated that there is sufficient information with respect to the scale at which this re-education/detention campaign is being undertaken,¹⁰⁰ the picture of what is happening at these camps and the conditions in which people are held remains incomplete, particularly because reports come from the relatively small number of people who have been released and who have managed to circumvent restrictions on communication.¹⁰¹ Even so, witnesses were able to vividly convey others’ accounts of life inside these camps.

17. Detainees at “political re-education camps” are forced to learn Mandarin and sing the praises of the Chinese Communist Party.¹⁰² Mr. Byler described sessions where detainees are forced to publicly denounce their past “crimes,” such as studying the Quran, learning Arabic, or travelling abroad.¹⁰³ Those who do not fully comply face harsh punishment, including psychological measures designed to “break” detainees,¹⁰⁴ including by targeting their family or masculinity, or forcing them to eat pork, in violation of a strict religious dietary law.¹⁰⁵ Punishments also include beatings, stress positions and isolation.¹⁰⁶ Ms. Deif quoted one released detainee’s account of a punishment:

They put me in a small solitary confinement cell ... in a space of about 2 x 2 metres. I was not given any food or drink, my hands were handcuffed in the back, and I had to stand for 24 hours without sleep.¹⁰⁷

⁹³ Ibid., 1320; SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

⁹⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

⁹⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1310 (Zenz).

⁹⁶ SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1).

⁹⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1325 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1340 (Byler).

⁹⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 (Tohti).

⁹⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1325 (Puxley).

¹⁰⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1340 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1340 (Byler).

¹⁰¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1320 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1340 (Byler).

¹⁰² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

¹⁰³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1315 (Byler).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.; SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

18. Witnesses reported that detainees were locked in overcrowded, unsanitary living quarters, with insufficient nutrition.¹⁰⁸ Mr. Byler deemed the level of nutrition a “starvation diet” that weakened detainees over the long-term. He also made reference to unverified reports of “experiments being done with various drugs, like tranquilizers.”¹⁰⁹ There have also been reports of deaths in the camps, including younger people who had been in good health.¹¹⁰ Witnesses described how psychological abuse had driven some to self-harm and suicide.¹¹¹ Mr. Tohti alleged that crematoria were being built alongside the camps,¹¹² although this was not corroborated by other witnesses.

19. There are also reports that tens of thousands of children of detained individuals have been forcibly separated from their families.¹¹³ They are raised in facilities described alternatively as “orphanages”¹¹⁴ or as “children’s camps with barbed wire and heavy security.”¹¹⁵ At these facilities, children are prohibited from using the Uyghur language, are given Chinese language education, and are taught Han cultural values.¹¹⁶ One witness relayed unverified reports that orphanages were “overflowing,” and that children were being sent to inner China for adoption.¹¹⁷

D. Isolation from the Outside World

20. In Mr. Tohti’s words, “China is now sealing the entire [XUAR], cutting off communication in and out.”¹¹⁸ Simply being in contact with a foreigner could lead to arrest. The level of surveillance on communications, be it by telephone, Internet or social media is such that it has become virtually impossible for Uyghurs in the diaspora to maintain contact with family members or friends in the XUAR.¹¹⁹ Ms. Puxley reported that all residents of the XUAR have been required to surrender their travel documents and to apply for permission to leave China. Permission may be withheld for years.¹²⁰

21. There is a low and ever-diminishing number of foreigners in the XUAR.¹²¹ Business visas are not being renewed.¹²² Non-governmental organizations do not have access. Though a limited number of Chinese or Western journalists have been granted access to the XUAR,¹²³ security measures and strict controls on movement, and individuals’ fear of reprisals, make investigation or documentation exceedingly difficult.¹²⁴

¹⁰⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹⁰⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1340 (Byler).

¹¹⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1320 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹¹¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹¹² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1320 (Tohti).

¹¹³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

¹¹⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1).

¹¹⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti).

¹¹⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

¹¹⁷ SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1).

¹¹⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 (Tohti).

¹¹⁹ SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1315 (Tohti).

¹²⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1315 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

¹²¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1325 (Puxley); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

¹²² SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 2).

¹²³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1330 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1320 (Deif).

¹²⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1320 (Deif).

E. The Harassment of Uyghurs Overseas

22. Members of the Uyghur diaspora – including the 2,000 Uyghurs in Canada¹²⁵ – are also targeted by the Chinese government.¹²⁶ Given the level of surveillance, oppression and mass detention in the XUAR, opposition voices are all coming from outside of China.¹²⁷ However, “the Chinese government does not want Uighurs outside of the country speaking out about human rights abuses in Xinjiang.”¹²⁸ Given passport restrictions, it is very difficult for Uyghurs to leave the XUAR. Speaking of the Uyghur-Canadian community, Mr. Tohti noted, “there are no more Uighurs coming.”¹²⁹

23. China no longer renews passports for Uyghurs and Kazakhs outside of China.¹³⁰ Upon presentation at a consulate or embassy, Uyghurs and Kazakhs have their expired passports confiscated and replaced with a document that only allows them to travel to China.¹³¹ Likewise, newborn Uyghur and Kazakh children born abroad are no longer granted Chinese citizenship or identity documentation. They could therefore be left stateless.¹³²

24. The activities of Uyghurs living abroad are also closely monitored. Witnesses described efforts to convince Uyghurs abroad to collaborate in monitoring activities,¹³³ to extract detailed information on their lives, or to pressure them to return to China.¹³⁴ Mr. Tohti reported that many members of his community in Canada had experienced such harassment.¹³⁵ Chinese authorities effectively hold their family members in the XUAR “hostage” by threatening detention.¹³⁶ If Uyghurs abroad are seen to be protesting or speaking up too loudly, their family members in Xinjiang will be contacted by police.¹³⁷ Ms. Deif called on the Government of Canada to investigate the intimidation of Turkic Muslim diaspora communities in Canada.¹³⁸ Ms. Puxley noted that GAC is aware of cases of harassment of individuals of the Turkic Muslim community and other minorities and encourages those who are being harassed to report to local police agencies. GAC has raised the issue with Chinese authorities in the past, and, according to Ms. Puxley, will continue to do so.¹³⁹

¹²⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1315 (Tohti).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1300.

¹²⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1345 (Deif).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1350.

¹²⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1315 (Tohti).

¹³⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1350 (Zenz); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1330 (Byler).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 and 1310 (Tohti).

¹³³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1325 (Byler).

¹³⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

¹³⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 (Tohti).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1325 (Byler).

¹³⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

¹³⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1350 (Puxley).

F. Forcible Returns to China

25. In recent years, Chinese authorities have applied increasing pressure on other governments to forcibly return Turkic Muslims.¹⁴⁰ Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims who return to China from abroad are subject to immediate arrest and detention on their arrival.¹⁴¹ Mr. Byler reported cases of Uyghurs who returned to China being escorted off the plane, transferred to the XUAR and are immediately sent to a re-education camp or prison.¹⁴² Other Turkic Muslims who have returned home have disappeared altogether.¹⁴³

26. The largest population of Uyghurs outside the XUAR is in Kazakhstan, followed by Turkey. Mr. Byler noted that, “because Kazakhstan has a very close economic and political relationship with China ... the Uighurs who live there are quite afraid that if they speak up too loudly, they could be deported or silenced.”¹⁴⁴ In Turkey, support for the Uyghur community has diminished. This may be in part due to President Erdoğan’s interest in maintaining an economic relationship with China, as well as crackdown on the Gülen Movement, to which many Uyghurs belong, and which is perceived by the administration as a political enemy.¹⁴⁵ According to Ms. Puxley, Turkey no longer accepts Uyghurs who claim refugee status to the same extent as it used to, and has signalled that it may be increasingly willing to deport Uyghur asylum-seekers to China.¹⁴⁶ Mr. Tohti referred specifically to a group of 3,000 to 4,000 Uyghur refugee claimants in Turkey who fear being deported as they undergo the lengthy resettlement process run by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.¹⁴⁷ China has extradition agreements with Kazakhstan and other central Asian republics, through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Cooperation also exists with Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.¹⁴⁸ Mr. Tohti reported that Egypt had deported 209 Uyghur students to China, alleging that the deportations were motivated directly by the promise of Chinese investment; he also noted that Uyghurs had been deported from the United Arab Emirates.¹⁴⁹ Ms. Puxley and Mr. Tohti also noted that Thai authorities had deported a large group of Uyghurs to China.¹⁵⁰

27. Ms. Puxley acknowledged that deporting Uyghurs to China is “probably very problematic under the current situation.”¹⁵¹ She described GAC’s efforts to ensure that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency, which carries out deportations, are apprised of the latest credible information as they carry out their mandates.¹⁵² The Subcommittee learned that Germany, where the World Uyghur Congress is based,¹⁵³ and Sweden have taken steps to expedite the asylum

¹⁴⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

¹⁴¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 and 1350 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1350 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1330 (Byler).

¹⁴² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1330 (Byler).

¹⁴³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 and 1350 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1350 (Deif).

¹⁴⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1320 (Byler).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1320 (Puxley).

¹⁴⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti).

¹⁴⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1325 (Byler).

¹⁴⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1315 (Tohti).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.; SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1330 (Puxley).

¹⁵¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1330 (Puxley).

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1325 (Byler).

process for Uyghurs and Kazakhs,¹⁵⁴ and have temporarily suspended removals of Uyghurs to China.¹⁵⁵ Mr. Byler informed the Subcommittee that other European countries and the United States were considering new forms of assistance for Uyghur and Kazakh asylum seekers.¹⁵⁶ Witnesses urged the Government of Canada to take similar actions to protect Uyghurs by expediting asylum claims¹⁵⁷ and suspending deportations of Uyghurs and Kazakhs to China.¹⁵⁸ Mr. Tohti informed the Subcommittee of situations where approved spousal sponsorship applications were expiring because of Chinese authorities' travel restrictions – he asked that special exemptions be granted in those cases.¹⁵⁹

MOBILIZING AN INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

1. Information about the situation of the Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslims in the XUAR began to catch the attention of the international community in the spring of 2018.¹⁶⁰ In September 2018, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN CERD), in conducting a periodic review of China's practices, condemned China's actions against the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in the XUAR. Additional criticism appears to be coming almost exclusively from Western states, including the United States, Germany, Sweden, Australia and others.¹⁶¹ Malaysia and Pakistan appear to be the only Muslim countries that have openly criticized China and who have refused to deport Uyghurs to China.¹⁶² Mr. Tohti noted that their criticism of China's oppression of the Uyghurs accompanied, in both cases, policies that restricted or rejected Chinese infrastructure investment.¹⁶³

2. With respect to the muted reaction in other states, Ms. Deif observed that "China in many ways is allowed to use its political and economic might to muzzle criticism of its actions around the world."¹⁶⁴ Mr. Zenz, researcher at the European School of Culture and Theology, speculated that the silence among most Muslim countries is likely based on "complex" motivations.¹⁶⁵ Witnesses agreed that, given China's extensive geopolitical reach, China's approach of political re-education through serious human rights violations is likely to be replicated among authoritarian regimes abroad.¹⁶⁶ Mr. Tohti explained: "China has already begun to export its style of authoritarianism to neighbouring countries."¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1325 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹⁵⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1310 (Puxley); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1330 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1325 (Byler).

¹⁵⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹⁵⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹⁵⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Zenz); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1330 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

¹⁵⁹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti).

¹⁶⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley); SDIR, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 25 October 2018 (Witness 1).

¹⁶¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1300 and 1340 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1320 (Puxley).

¹⁶² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1315 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1320 (Puxley).

¹⁶³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1340 (Tohti).

¹⁶⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1325 (Deif).

¹⁶⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1340 (Zenz).

¹⁶⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1330 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1320 (Zenz); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1325 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1340 (Byler).

¹⁶⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1330 (Tohti).

A. Canada's Approach to China

3. Ms. Puxley told the Subcommittee that Canada's own relationship with China is "multi-faceted."¹⁶⁸ The Government of Canada "is committed to constructive exchanges with China on human rights,"¹⁶⁹ and "continue[s] to seek a comprehensive relationship with China built on trust and mutual benefit in which common interests and respective concerns can be addressed."¹⁷⁰ Ms. Deif also acknowledged that, "from a private diplomacy perspective, Canada is quite strong" in advocating for human rights.¹⁷¹ For example, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs¹⁷² both raised the situation of the Uyghurs with their Chinese counterparts in September 2018, though in the context of meetings on a wide range of topics.¹⁷³ However, non-governmental witnesses were unanimous in placing strong emphasis on the importance of public condemnations.¹⁷⁴ Ms. Deif and Mr. Zenz noted that quiet, backdoor or vector diplomacy has limitations.¹⁷⁵ Mr. Zenz was of the view that quiet diplomacy would "not make a difference."¹⁷⁶

4. The Government of Canada first expressed its concerns about the situation of the Uyghurs at the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC) in March 2018. In July 2018, officials signed on to a joint statement of concern at a ministerial meeting on religious freedom hosted by the United States Department of State.¹⁷⁷ Ms. Puxley noted that the Government of Canada would avail itself of the UN HRC's Universal Periodic Review hearing on China to issue recommendations regarding the situation of the Uyghurs.¹⁷⁸ That hearing took place on 6 November 2018, after the conclusion of the Subcommittee's study.¹⁷⁹ Canada's representative stated that Canada is "deeply concerned by credible reports of the mass detention, repression and surveillance of Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang," and called on Chinese authorities to "release Uyghurs and other Muslims who have been detained arbitrarily and without due process for their ethnicity or religion"; and to "end prosecution or persecution on the basis of religion or belief, including for Muslims, Christians, Tibetan Buddhists and Falun Gong."¹⁸⁰

¹⁶⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1340 (Deif).

¹⁷² Deputy Ministers are professional, non-partisan public servants. Their role is to provide their Minister with expert advice and to undertake the day-to-day management of the department on the Minister's behalf. See: Government of Canada, [Deputy Minister champions and committees](#), 21 February 2018.

¹⁷³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

¹⁷⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti).

¹⁷⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1340 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1315 (Zenz).

¹⁷⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1315 (Zenz).

¹⁷⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ UN Web TV, [China Review – 31st Session of Universal Periodic Review](#), 6 November 2018, 37:17-37:38.

5. The Government of Canada has also sought to “engage non-traditional partners to express their concerns,” including Malaysia and Turkey.¹⁸¹ Ms. Puxley noted that the Government of Canada had reached out to members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.¹⁸² Mr. Zenz stated that, to date, “Muslim governments have been very disappointing in failing to take a public stance on the matter.”¹⁸³ Even so, Ms. Deif noted that Canada could provide a “level of political cover” for potential partner states who might wish to join resolutions denouncing restrictions on freedom of religion at either at the UN Human Rights Council or the General Assembly.¹⁸⁴

B. The Impact of Criticism to Date

6. Witnesses suggested that criticism from the United Nations, from Western governments, and the international press have had some impact on China.¹⁸⁵ Mr. Tohti noted that a cadre of Chinese officials – who agree with the anti-Uyghur campaign’s goals – have expressed alarm that the campaign has attracted international attention.¹⁸⁶ Mr. Zenz observed that media exposure and international outcry has prompted China to change its strategy from denial to acknowledgement, and finally a form of rationalization, through a propaganda and marketing campaign that included broadcasts on state television.¹⁸⁷ In response to the UN CERD’s September 2018 report, Chinese officials denied a campaign of political indoctrination, claiming that individuals suspected of minor criminal offences were being provided with vocational training. China’s state broadcaster aired selective footage of re-education centres, purporting to demonstrate how vocational training can help “rescue ignorant, backward and poor rural minorities.”¹⁸⁸ However, pursuant to an October 2018 amendment, XUAR’s “de-extremification” ordinance now refers to these sites explicitly as political re-education institutions.¹⁸⁹ Mr. Zenz noted, “[i]f we had said nothing, even that would not have been necessary.”¹⁹⁰ Mr. Byler agreed, adding that the legislation was a “direct response to international pressure from the UN, from western governments, and from the international media discourse.”¹⁹¹ He speculated that while this measure could be seen as a “doubling down” on their strategy, it may also indicate that China has reached the conclusion that “they’ve gone a little too far and they need to pull back.”¹⁹²

¹⁸¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1320 (Puxley).

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1350 (Zenz).

¹⁸⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif).

¹⁸⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1340 (Byler).

¹⁸⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1330 (Tohti).

¹⁸⁷ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1320 (Zenz).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 1310.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 1320.

¹⁹¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1340 (Byler).

¹⁹² Ibid.

C. Lack of Information

7. A lack of data is a key concern for the international community.¹⁹³ Whether privately or publicly, Canadian officials are wary of making “allegations that can’t be founded.”¹⁹⁴ Mr. Tohti criticized Canada’s representative to the United Nations for citing only the most conservative estimates of the numbers of Uyghurs detained in camps – using conservative estimates, he noted, amounted to “shy[ing] away” from a true public condemnation.¹⁹⁵

8. Ms. Puxley emphasized that the Government of Canada is “looking at all avenues for collecting information.”¹⁹⁶ She noted that Canadian diplomatic personnel had been granted access to the XUAR, but that their visits were “quite constrained” due to security measures and the concerns of individuals in the XUAR who feared reprisals.¹⁹⁷ Ms. Puxley did note that what Canadian diplomats have observed corroborates independent reports.¹⁹⁸

9. GAC is currently working with non-traditional partners to gather information,¹⁹⁹ collecting information from Canadians who have recently been to the XUAR (who are diminishing in number), as well as members of the Uyghur community in Canada, whose communications with people in the XUAR is limited.²⁰⁰ Mr. Tohti noted the important role that Uyghurs in Canada can play in providing testimony to the Government of Canada. He noted that the Uyghur community in Canada will make efforts to compile names of relatives detained in China.²⁰¹

10. Ultimately, GAC relies heavily on the United Nations as a source of credible information.²⁰² However, the UN is also constrained by the lack of information provided by Chinese authorities. For example, the CERD, which issued its report on China in September 2018, noted that exceedingly broad estimates have put the number of people detained at tens of thousands to over a million. The UN CERD has formally requested data from the Chinese government, including grounds for detention, the numbers of people detained and any measures taken to ensure that their families are promptly notified of their detention.²⁰³ Despite the lack of information, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, noted that the UN CERD’s report corroborated other reports they had received;

¹⁹³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1325 (Puxley).

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1325 (Tohti).

¹⁹⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1325 (Puxley).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 1305.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 1330.

²⁰⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1320 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1330 (Puxley).

²⁰¹ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1345 (Tohti).

²⁰² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1325 (Puxley).

²⁰³ Ibid., 1305 (Puxley). For more information, see: United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, [Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China \(including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China\)](#), UN Doc. CERD/C/CHN/CO/14-17, 19 September 2018.

High Commissioner Bachelet has requested that the Government of China permit access for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the region.²⁰⁴

11. Ms. Puxley underlined the importance of obtaining data from Chinese authorities and aims to continue to work with UN officials as they press for access to the XUAR.²⁰⁵ Ms. Deif strongly urged the Government of Canada to press China to permit access to UN officials to conduct an independent assessment of the situation.²⁰⁶

D. Imposing Tangible Consequences

12. According to Ms. Deif, China has yet to pay a significant political cost for its widespread human rights violations in the XUAR.²⁰⁷ Ms. Puxley noted that Canada continues to work with like-minded partners, including the United States and European leaders, and that the Government of Canada “would be looking at a wide variety of options as the situation develops.”²⁰⁸ While she noted that Canada has the legislative tools to impose sanctions, the focus remains on “working multilaterally and bilaterally to raise these issues, and hopefully to see the situation change.”²⁰⁹ Mr. Byler noted that American and European leaders are considering whether to impose targeted economic sanctions on Chinese authorities implicated in the campaign, as well as the possibility of imposing economic sanctions on key Chinese security companies involved in the XUAR.²¹⁰

13. Witnesses provided the Subcommittee with proposals in order to assure that China’s actions are met not only with condemnations but also with tangible consequences. Mr. Byler explained that, to support its campaign, China is attempting to develop new forms of counterterrorism and cybersecurity equipment with a view to exporting the technology. He recalled his conversations with Chinese technology-sector workers who viewed countries identified under the Belt and Road Initiative as strong markets for such equipment. Mr. Byler added that 60% of the world’s Muslim population lives in the areas identified.²¹¹ Mr. Tohti, Ms. Deif and Mr. Byler strongly urged the Government of Canada to refrain from supporting the surveillance state in place in the XUAR by controlling exports from Canada and by limiting purchases from, and investment in, technology firms with links to this campaign.²¹²

14. Mr. Tohti and Ms. Deif suggested that the Government of Canada consider imposing targeted economic sanctions, in the immediate term, against Chinese officials linked to human rights violations, notably Party Secretary Chen Quanguo.²¹³

²⁰⁴ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1305 (Puxley).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1325.

²⁰⁶ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1320 (Deif).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1305.

²⁰⁸ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018, 1335 (Puxley).

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1305 (Byler).

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1345.

²¹² SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1345 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 (Deif); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018, 1345 (Byler).

²¹³ SDIR, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2018, 1305 (Tohti); SDIR, [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018, 1305 and 1330 (Deif).

CONCLUSION

1. The actions of the Government of China will have an irreversible impact on the lives of Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims in the XUAR and abroad, and their survival of a community. To protect these vulnerable minorities, it is essential to expose the Government of China's actions for what they are: a campaign of assimilation unprecedented in its scale and sophistication. The trampling of human rights and civil liberties of millions of Turkic Muslims is never justifiable, whether it is in pursuit of security, economic development or any other interest.

2. The Government of China's actions in the XUAR deserve the censure of the international community. The Subcommittee thanks its witnesses for their worthy contributions, and applauds their efforts to continue to shine a light on this most staggering campaign of human rights abuse.

APPENDIX – LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Title
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
UN CERD	United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
UN HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UN OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region