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## Uyghur Rights Group Fails in Legal Challenge Against UK Government

By Sam Tobin, Reuters , 2023.1.20

A Uyghur rights group's legal challenge against the British government for not investigating the import of cotton produced in the Chinese region of Xinjiang was dismissed by a London court on Friday.

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC), an international organisation of exiled Uyghur groups, had taken legal action at London's High Court against Britain's Home Office, tax authority HMRC and the National Crime Agency.

Judge Ian Dove said in a written ruling that he had dismissed all of the WUC's grounds of challenge.

Rights groups accuse Beijing of widespread abuses of Uyghurs, a mainly Muslim ethnic minority that numbers around 10 million in the western region of Xinjiang, including the mass use of forced labour in camps. Beijing vigorously denies any abuses.

Dove said there was "clear and undisputed evidence of instances of cotton being manufactured in the XUAR (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) by the use of detained and prison labour as well as by forced labour".

But he found that the Home Office's approach to the law on foreign prison-made goods was "legally sound", and ruled that the view of the tax authority and the National Crime Agency on the law on the proceeds of crime was correct.

The WUC argued in October that the Home Office had wrongly refused to launch a probe into the import of foreign prison-made goods, and that HMRC and the National Crime Agency had failed to investigate whether cotton from Xinjiang amounted to «criminal property».

Lawyers representing the British government had argued there had to be a clear link between «the alleged criminality and its

specific product» to investigate whether goods were made in a foreign prison.

Dolkun Isa, the WUC's president, said the ruling was «a greatly disappointing outcome for the Uyghur community».

A British government spokesperson said: «The government is committed to tackling the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains and is taking robust action.

«Over the last year we have introduced new guidance on the risks of doing business in

Xinjiang and enhanced export controls. We keep our policy response under constant review and welcome today's judgment.»

A spokesperson for the National Crime Agency said in a statement that the agency considered information provided by the WUC and «assessed that there is insufficient material from which to commence a criminal investigation at this time».

The statement added that the agency will «assess any new information received and will review accordingly».

## CCP Monitored Tours to Xinjiang Won't Help China. Turkey Talking, More Muslim Nations Can Join

By Ajjaz Wani, ORF , 2023.1.17

On 8 January 2023, a delegation of 30 Islamic scholars from 14 countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, Tunisia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, visited Northwest China's restive Xinjiang province. The delegation, headed by the chairman of the World Muslim Communities Council (TWMCC), was taken on a guided tour of Museum of Combatting Terrorism and Extremism in Xinjiang. It also held meetings with Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials in the region. The chairman of TWMCC praised the historical relationship between China and Islam based on cooperation and alliance and «hailed the efforts of the Chinese authorities in combating terrorism in Xinjiang». He also praised the «interest and determination of the Chinese leadership to serve all people in the region». The guided tour of the TWMCC comes at a time when Beijing

disallowed the Turkish ambassador to visit Xinjiang, and Ankara's renewed support to Uyghurs has discomfited the relationship between China and Turkey.

### Chinese policy towards Uyghur Muslims

At the time of the 1949 Revolution, Xinjiang was under the independent rule of the East Turkestan Republic, with a contested history and centrifugal tendencies. After getting control over the vast Muslim-dominated region of Xinjiang, the CCP, through its cadres, attacked the customs, ideas, and habits of Xinjiang natives and considered Uyghurs as «foreign invaders and aliens». During the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, CCP shut down mosques, banned religious associations, abolished religious education and debarred people from circumcisions and interfaith marriages. As a result, only 1,400 mosques remained

functional out of 29,545 limited to far-flung areas.

China supplemented its targeted attack on the region's cultural ethos and religious fabric with its strategy of creating demographic imbalance. CCP migrated millions of Hans to *Xinjiang* to ensure the subjugation of the Uyghur Muslims and secure the province from external influences. This internal colonialism led to the economic exploitation of the resource-rich province and systematic demographic change in the region. For example, the population of Hans increased from 5 percent to 40 percent between 1949 to 1980. During the same period, the population

psychological influence under the pretext of curbing regional separatism, extremism, and terrorism after 1990. Beijing took to gross human rights violations of the Muslim minorities to counter, what it claimed, as "thousands of terror attacks between 1990 and 2016". China also used the war on terror in the aftermath of the September 2001 attacks to suppress the Muslims of *Xinjiang*. The heightened economic exploitation, demographic changes and suppression of Islamic culture within *Xinjiang* led to the widespread ethnic riots in 2009. Sinicisation gained traction with Beijing's support, and thousands of Uyghurs were jailed.



of Muslim minorities fell from 80 percent to 45 percent. The economic reforms of 1978 led to the increased estrangement of the Uyghur Muslims and other Muslim minorities.

This increased estrangement triggered sporadic agitations against the CCP rule, which increased its economic, social, and

Given the geostrategic location of *Xinjiang* and China's global ambitions to become the world's dominant economic power by 2049, Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled the much-hyped Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013. The BRI was designed to dump China's capital and excess production to expand its "developmental strategy" abroad and as a foreign policy tool.

However, three of six mega BRI projects run through restive Xinjiang, including the controversial and sensitive China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Under Xi's guidance, CCP started its second Strike Hard Campaign in Xinjiang in 2014 to secure the "project of the century". Xi stressed building a "Great Wall of Iron" to protect China's national interests in the region.

The CCP incarcerated more than one-and-a-half million Muslims from different ethnic groups in concentration camps for offences like wearing a veil, growing a long beard and violating family planning norms. Uyghur women were torched, systematically raped and subjected to forced contraceptive device implantation. Muslims of the region were banned from performing Namaz (prayers) in 2017 and fined for violating the ban. Those in the concentration camps were exploited for forced labour and illegal organ harvesting. More than 440 Uyghur intellectuals were arrested to erode the cultural reminiscence of the Uyghurs.

## **Fading Chinese perception management of the Islamic World**

As the reports of concentration camps and atrocities of the CCP on Uyghur Muslims appeared in western media, democracies became anxious about the fate of Uyghurs under Xi's rule. They disapproved of CCP's policy of cultural aggression. Some western democracies even imposed sanctions on some CCP officials and banned cotton imports from Xinjiang—made by forced labour. A United Nations Human Rights Commission report termed China's actions

as a genocide.

On the other hand, China used its economic and political clout over the Islamic world to help Beijing consolidate its voice on the Uyghur issue on global fora, such as the United Nations (UN). A recent example was on 6 October 2022, when most Muslim countries voted against the UN resolution to discuss human rights in Xinjiang in 2023. Out of 47 UN Human Rights Council members, 19 voted against, 17 in favour, and 11 abstained. Beijing has also used Islam as a foreign policy tool and a domestic security strategy. Domestically, Beijing used the Chinese Islamic Association (CIA) to supervise Islamic discourse and religious activity and to promote Islamic soft power for relations with Muslim countries. CIA remained omnipresent after 2009 to manage the perception of the Muslim delegations during the guided tour to the troubled region of Xinjiang. During the recent delegation visit, the CIA took the opportunity to showcase the Xinjiang Islamic Institute, covering 50,000 square meters including teaching buildings, canteens and a prayer hall. The CCP has developed this showpiece at an investment of US\$41.1 Million.

The WWMCC delegation's statements on their guided tour have already come under scrutiny. The Islamic community of Bosnia and Herzegovina has distanced itself from the statements of the former Reisu-l-ulema Mustafa Cerić. According to some observers, TWMCC is a fake NGO of bureaucrats of Arab governments who endorsed China for their petty benefits. Hundreds of Uyghur organisations in

exile criticised the delegation and asked TWMCC to visit 50 camp survivors before giving favourable political statements about China and CCP.

As China's perception management of the Islamic world through these guided tours came under scrutiny from several Islamic quarters, Türkiye[1] has become more vocal on the issue. Türkiye, where most Uyghur exiles live, has already strongly communicated to Beijing concerns about the treatment of the Uyghurs in China. On 12 January, Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said, "We conveyed our views, expectations, and sensitivities regarding

the issues on our agenda, especially the Uyghur Turks". Türkiye has already stopped the extradition of Uyghurs to China, and China has retaliated by restricting visits by the Turkish ambassador to Xinjiang. The Uyghur issue has already made relations between China and Türkiye fraught. The growing concern in Türkiye may help more Muslim countries to oppose the Chinese genocide of Uyghurs openly on regional and global fora. The protests in Bangladesh on November 2022 against the Chinese oppression of Uyghur Muslims are a case in point.

## China's Cotton Imports From US Skyrocket After Xinjiang Ban

By Fibre2Fashion, 2023.1.19



China's cotton imports from the US soared to new highs in 2022. The US had imposed a ban on cotton and cotton products originating from the Xinjiang

region of China in June 2022, which led to a steep rise in cotton imports by China. China had imported cotton worth \$1.601 billion in 2021 and imports reached

\$2.899 billion in the first eleven months of 2022. The inbound trade increased to \$1.604 billion in 2020 against imports of \$731.486 million of 2019. China's cotton imports were worth \$1.063 billion in 2018 and \$980.245 million in 2017, according to Fibre2Fashion's market insight tool TexPro.

China's imports were \$1.744 billion in the first half (H1) of 2022 against the inbound shipment of \$470.466 million in H2 2021, \$1,130.774 million in H1 2021, \$1,071.074 million in H2 2020

and \$530.622 million in H1 2020, as per TexPro.

Last year, cotton prices skyrocketed in the global markets due to low production and a rise in consumption. It prompted Chinese importers to turn to the US. As the US has banned cotton produced in the Xinjiang region of the country, Chinese textile industry has no option but to import cotton from the US to maintain its exports of textile products to the world's largest economy.

## Religious Liberty Expert 'Disappointed' in Vatican-China Deal

By Ellen Teague, The Tablet 2023.1.18



The Holy See signed the agreement with China in 2018 and in October 2022 it was renewed for a third two-year term.

The US chief advocate for religious freedom has expressed "disappointment" with the Vatican over its provisional agreement with

China on the appointment of bishops in the country.

Nury A Turkel, a Uyghur American human rights lawyer who chairs the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, expressed his view when he met

with Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister, at the Vatican on 12 January.

The Vatican and China signed the agreement in 2018 and in October 2022 it was renewed for a third two-year term.

Speaking afterward their meeting to journalists, Mr Turkel said that China “has been using the agreement to justify its crackdown on underground churches” and to “punish Chinese priests”.



He cited the case of Bishop Joseph Zhang Weizhu of Xinxiang in Henan Province, who has been detained by Chinese authorities since May 2021 for refusing to join the government-recognised church.

Mr Turkel said China’s Catholics “need a voice, and they are looking up to the Vatican to use its influence to help them”.

Turkel said he raised the issue of the Chinese Communist Party’s increasing hostility toward the “vibrant” Catholic

community in Hong Kong advocating for democracy.

In particular, he told reporters that the arrests of Jimmy Lai, a Catholic entrepreneur who founded a pro-democracy newspaper in Hong Kong, and Cardinal Joseph Zen, bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, are examples of “how intolerant the regime is”.

Meanwhile, in China, an exhibition on the sinicisation of Catholicism is on display at the archbishop’s residence in Beijing, marking the 15th anniversary of the appointment of Bishop Joseph Li Shan as archbishop of the capital in 2007.

He is now chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the official government entity that controls the life of the Church in China.

The introductory panel explains that the purpose of the exhibition is to further promote the sinicisation of Catholicism, to better understand secretary general Xi Jinping’s views on religion and to explore Beijing’s rich Catholic cultural resources.

In his speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2022, marking his third term in office, President Xi Jinping renewed his commitment “to the sinicisation of Christianity, guiding the adaptation of religion and socialist society to the Chinese context”.



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