

Debate Pack

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UK supply chains and Uyghur and Turkic Muslim forced labour in China

1	Background	2
2	Press and media articles	14
3	Press releases	16
4	PQs	19
5	Debates	34
6	Early Day Motions	35

1 Background

1.1 The Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims in China

Demographics

Xinjiang, located in China's northwest, is the country's largest administrative region and has been an Autonomous Region since 1955. [According to the NGO Human Rights Watch \(HRW\)](#), it is “the only region in China with a majority Muslim population”.¹

HRW explain that “The Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other communities in the region are ethnically Turkic” and that “unlike the majority Han Chinese, who are primarily Chinese speakers, the Turkic population is predominantly Muslim and have their own languages”.²

According [to China's 2010 census](#) Uyghurs made up 46 percent of the Xinjiang population and Kazakhs 7 percent.³

A [2018 HRW report](#) stated that there around 11 million Uyghurs and 1.6 million Kazakhs living in Xinjiang.⁴

The ethnic makeup of Xinjiang's population has gradually shifted in recent decades. In [a 2022 report](#) (PDF), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), states that in 1953 at the time of the People's Republic of China's first census “over 75 per cent of the total population in the region was constituted by Uyghurs [...] with ethnic Han Chinese accounting for seven per cent”.⁵ While the “overall population of both Han and Uyghur ethnic groups has grown”, Han Chinese make about 42 percent of the region's population today. These shifts “appear to be largely the consequence of ethnic Han migration into the western regions, including as a result of incentives provided by government policies”, said the UN OCHCR report.⁶

¹ HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China's Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

² HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China's Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

³ HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China's Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

⁴ HRW, [“Eradicating Ideological Viruses”: China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims](#), 9 September 2018

⁵ OCHCR, [Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China](#) (PDF) 31 August 2022

⁶ OCHCR, [Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China](#) (PDF) 31 August 2022

Allegations of mistreatment

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in their [most recent human rights report published in July 2023](#), stated that in China in 2022: “Systematic repression of Uyghur culture, society and religion in Xinjiang continued, including ongoing mass detention”.⁷

HRW in a [2021 report on human rights abuses in Xinjiang](#), state that these began to escalate in May 2014 when the Chinese government launched the ‘Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism’ campaign. This was in response to “high-profile attacks allegedly carried out by Turkic Muslims in the Xinjiang region and at the Kunming train station in Yunnan province”.⁸

The report assesses that crimes against humanity are being committed in the region against the Turkic Muslim population:

Research by Stanford Law School’s Human Rights & Conflict Resolution Clinic and Human Rights Watch, along with reports by human rights organizations, the media, activist groups, and others, and internal Chinese Communist Party (CCP) documents, show that the Chinese government has committed—and continues to commit—crimes against humanity against the Turkic Muslim population.⁹

UK Government response to allegations

In 2020 [during a debate on the Uyghurs](#), Nigel Adams, then Minister for Asia, outlined the Conservative Government’s views on allegations of mistreatment of Uyghurs. He said the observations of UK diplomats, having visited Xinjiang twice in 2019, supported much of the recent open-source reporting on the region. He stated the government has also seen “credible evidence to suggest that Uighurs are being used as a source of forced labour in Xinjiang and across China, and that if individuals refuse to participate, they and their families are threatened with extra-judicial detention”. Regarding the Chinese Government’s actions in the province, Mr Adams said that “we believe, based on all available evidence, that its actions are disproportionate, systematic and counterproductive”.¹⁰

On 22 March 2021 the Conservative Government [announced it was placing sanctions on four Chinese officials and an official body](#), in concert with the EU, Canada and the US. It labelled those it sanctioned as “perpetrators of gross

⁷ FCDO, [Human Rights & Democracy The 2022 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Report](#) (PDF) 13 July 2023, p52

⁸ HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China’s Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

⁹ HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China’s Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

¹⁰ [HCDeb \[China’s Policy on its Uighur Population\]](#), Vol 673, C 150WH-151WH, Wednesday 11 March 2021

human rights violations taking place against Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang”.¹¹

Announcing the sanctions then Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, [told the House of Commons](#) “this is one of the worst human rights crises of our time and I believe the evidence is clear, as it is sobering”.¹² Mr Raab went on to say: “I’m sure the whole House will join with me in condemning such appalling violations of the most basic human rights. In terms of scale, it is the largest mass detention of an ethnic or religious group since the Second World War”.¹³

On 18 October 2024, the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, met with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, in Beijing. According to an [FCDO readout of the meeting](#): “Human Rights were discussed, including in Xinjiang, and the Foreign Secretary referenced this as an area which the UK and China must engage, even where viewpoints diverge”. The FCDO readout says Mr Lammy set out that “as fellow Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, it is a necessity that the UK and China increase bilateral engagement”.¹⁴

On 22 October 2024, during a UN General Assembly general discussion on human rights, Australia’s Ambassador to the UN delivered a [joint statement on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and Tibet](#) on behalf of 15 countries, including the UK. The statement referenced several UN reports that detailed “serious human rights violations” in Xinjiang and called on China to “allow unfettered and meaningful access to Xinjiang and Tibet for independent observers, including from the UN, to evaluate the human rights situation”.¹⁵

1.2

Forced labour in Xinjiang

Overview of issues

The House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee published a report in March 2021: [Uyghur forced labour in Xinjiang and UK value chains](#). The report stated that:

There is mounting evidence that the Uyghur population and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have been the

¹¹ FCDO, [Press Release: UK sanctions perpetrators of gross human rights violations in Xinjiang, alongside EU, Canada and US](#), 22 March 2021

¹² [HC Deb \[Human Rights Update\]](#), Vol 691, 22 March 2021

¹³ [HC Deb \[Human Rights Update\]](#), Vol 691, 22 March 2021

¹⁴ FCDO, [Readout: Foreign Secretary meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister](#), 18 October 2024.

¹⁵ Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations, 241022 - [UNGA79 Third Committee: General Discussion on Human Rights: Joint statement on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and Tibet](#), 22 October 2024.

subject of systematic human rights violations, including forced labour, sanctioned by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

There is also compelling evidence that many major companies in the fashion, retail, media and technology sectors with large footprints in the UK are complicit in the forced labour of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.¹⁶

The FCDO's [2023 human rights report](#) stated that in 2022: "Further credible evidence emerged of the use of forced labour, predominantly targeting those from Xinjiang's Uyghur population, affecting a growing range of global industries".¹⁷

Human Rights Watch, in their 2021 report referenced above, says that "there have been numerous credible reports that Chinese authorities are subjecting Turkic Muslims to forced labour under the government's 'idle labour transfer programs'. Under this program "ethnic minorities are placed in jobs, including in factories, in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China".¹⁸

These labour transfer programs started in 2006, according to HRW, predating the 'Strike Hard Campaign', but "dipped around 2014 following the Kunming train station attack". The programs, however "saw a revival around 2017 and 2018 as part of the Chinese government's nationwide 'poverty alleviation' efforts".¹⁹

The report gives further details of how these programs operate:

The levels of coercion involved in these programs appear to have dramatically increased with the Strike Hard Campaign. The evidence indicates that detainees have been sent to perform forced labour after they were released from Xinjiang's political education camps. Satellite images also show the recent emergence of new factories, connected to or near the camps, where inmates allegedly provide low-cost or unpaid labour. In at least one instance, such a factory purportedly became an extension of a political education camp; labourers live in dormitories, may be prohibited from returning home on a regular basis, and receive no pay for their work until they "complete their training".

The crackdown on Turkic Muslims since 2014 also coincides with the Chinese government's encouragement of the vertical integration of China's garment manufacturing sector by moving textile and garment factories closer to the cotton production centred in Xinjiang, hinting at a textile and apparel

¹⁶ Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee [Uyghur forced labour in Xinjiang and UK value Chains](#) (PDF), HC 1272, 17 March 2021, p3

¹⁷ FCDO, [Human Rights & Democracy The 2022 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Report](#) (PDF) 13 July 2023, p52

¹⁸ HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China's Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

¹⁹ HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China's Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

expansion plan that depends heavily on the forced labour of inmates at the various detention facilities.²⁰

The report also claims that authorities “have assembled Turkic Muslims and sent them to factories in various Chinese provinces”, and “the conditions strongly suggest coercion, including the use of minders and political indoctrination of exported workers”. It notes further that “organised labour transfer programs exist in other parts of China, such as Shanxi province, but these workers do not appear to be subjected to the same coercive conditions as those from Xinjiang”.²¹

Industries affected by forced labour in Xinjiang

According to a December 2023 [report on clothing supply chains between Xinjiang and the EU](#) by the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice at Sheffield Hallam University, Xinjiang “produces approximately 23% of the global supply of cotton and 10% of the world’s PVC, a key material in the production of protective clothing and accessories”. Therefore, the report argues “a huge quantity of the world’s clothes and footwear risk being implicated in the forced labour of the Uyghur people”.²²

A [July 2023 report by the Centre](#) also highlights the risks of Uyghur forced labour in the solar panel industry. It says that Xinjiang “now accounts for approximately 35% of the world’s polysilicon (down from 45%) and as much as 32% of global metallurgical grade silicon production”.²³ A report by the Centre in 2021 on the solar industry in Xinjiang notes that “95% of solar modules rely on one primary material – solar-grade polysilicon”.²⁴ That report stated that “forced labour in the Uyghur Region can pervade an entire supply chain and reach deep into international markets”.²⁵

The 2023 report states that “The vast majority of modules produced globally continues to have exposure to the Uyghur [Xinjiang] Region. Production in China significantly increases exposure [to the region]”.²⁶

²⁰ HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China’s Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

²¹ HRW, [Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China’s Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims](#), 19 April 2021

²² Helena Kennedy Centre, [Tailoring Responsibility: Tracing Apparel Supply Chains from the Uyghur Region to Europe](#), December 2023

²³ Helena Kennedy Centre, [Over-Exposed: Uyghur Region Exposure Assessment for Solar Industry Sourcing](#), July 2023

²⁴ Helena Kennedy Centre, [In Broad Daylight: Uyghur Forced Labour and Global Solar Supply Chains](#), May 2021

²⁵ Helena Kennedy Centre, [In Broad Daylight: Uyghur Forced Labour and Global Solar Supply Chains](#), May 2021

²⁶ Helena Kennedy Centre, [Over-Exposed: Uyghur Region Exposure Assessment for Solar Industry Sourcing](#), July 2023

Chinese government response

In June 2021, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry [responded to questions](#) about forced labour in Xinjiang, in relation to the cotton and solar industries, denying the allegations:

As we've repeatedly said, the allegation of "forced labour" in Xinjiang is an outrageous lie. We still recall that not long ago, a few Western countries and anti-China forces went all out to hype up the so-called "forced labour" in Xinjiang's cotton-growing industry. Now they are turning to the solar energy industry. Xinjiang cotton is speckless and solar energy is clean, but those in the US and the West who are hyping up the issue have a dark and sinister intention. They are trying to fabricate lies like "forced labour" to create "forced industrial decoupling" and "forced unemployment" in Xinjiang to suppress Chinese companies and industries to serve their malicious agenda to mess up Xinjiang and contain China.

There is no "forced labour" in Xinjiang, only voluntary employment and free choice in the labour market. Workers of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang choose profession of their own free will, sign labour contracts with employers voluntarily following the principle of equality, and receive payment for their work. This is in accordance with China's Constitution and laws and conforms to international labour and human rights standards.²⁷

1.3

UK Government's approach to critical supply chains

In January 2024, the Sunak government published the [UK's first strategy for critical imports and supply chains](#). This initiative was driven by severe global supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and shipping route interruptions.

While the main focus of the strategy is to ensure the resilience of critical imports, the government recognises this must be done "without compromising on environmental, social and governance standards".²⁸

In a statement to Parliament on 12 January 2021, the Foreign Secretary said:

Xinjiang's position in the international supply chain network means that there is a real risk of businesses and public bodies around the world – whether it's

²⁷ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States, [Xinjiang Cotton and the allegation of "forced labor"](#), 25 June 2021

²⁸ DIT, [Supply chains resilience framework](#), 16 November 2022; These standards are also referred to as ESG (Environmental, social and governance). The ESG framework measures the wider societal and environmental impact of business activity and the accountability of businesses.

inadvertently or otherwise – sourcing from suppliers which are complicit in the use of forced labour.²⁹

Subsequently, the government published [advice on tackling human rights abuses risks within businesses](#). This guidance aims to help businesses comply with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (see below).³⁰ It has been regularly updating its guidance on identifying [overseas business risk in China](#).³¹

1.4

The Modern Slavery Act 2015

[The Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) is the key legal framework for assessing forced labour issues in supply chains.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 covers England and Wales. [The Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) and [the Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(Criminal Justice and Support for Victims\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) were passed in Scotland and Northern Ireland, respectively.

Under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour, and human trafficking.³²

Under section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 commercial organisations with a turnover exceeding a specified threshold (currently £36 million) are required to produce an annual ‘Transparency in Supply Chains’ (TISC) statement setting out the steps they are taking to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The statement must explain the steps the organisation has taken to ensure that modern slavery is not occurring throughout its supply chain, including the due diligence procedures it has performed on its supply chain. Alternatively, the organisation can publish a statement that it has taken no such steps.

This requirement was designed to empower investors, consumers and NGOs to scrutinise big businesses’ efforts to prevent forced labour and protect workers in their supply chains.

Changes to implementation

In 2019, following an [Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) and [a consultation on business reporting under section 54 of the act](#), the

²⁹ HM Government, Human rights violations in Xinjiang and the government's response: Foreign Secretary's statement

³⁰ Home Office, (2021), [Transparency in supply chains: a practical guide](#)

³¹ HM Government, [Overseas business risk for China](#), last updated 6 July 2023

³² Legislation in Scotland and Northern Ireland takes a similar approach.

government committed to improving supply chain transparency by extending requirements to public bodies and requiring these [statements to be published on a register, which was set up in 2021](#). It also announced a number of new measures intended to ensure the government is able to address the risk of modern slavery in supply chains “without placing undue burdens on businesses or officials”. These included new guidance, assessment tools for departments and training.³³

The government started voluntary publication of [Modern Slavery Statements](#), with the latest dating from September 2023. The [2021 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery](#) provides further details on changes to TISC policy and addressing modern slavery in public sector supply chains.

The government also committed to “consider” enforcement options and the introduction of civil penalties for businesses not complying with the requirements. However, it did not act on financial penalties during the previous parliament.³⁴

Calls to reform supply chain provisions of the Modern Slavery Act 2015

At its adoption in 2015, the UK Modern Slavery Act was described as a world-leading piece of legislation aiming to “tackle, prevent and disrupt” modern slavery.³⁵ However, various organisations are assessing it now as too weak to tackle forced labour in supply chains compared to the progress made in other countries.

In February 2021, the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRR) published the report [‘Modern Slavery Act: Five Years of Reporting: Conclusions from Monitoring Corporate Disclosure’](#). The BHRR reviewed over 16,000 statements on slavery issued by businesses since the act came into effect. The report noted that the act had increased awareness of modern slavery and led to improvements among a “[cluster of leading companies](#)”. However, it also concluded that the act had “failed in its stated intentions” to eliminate modern slavery from UK supply chains.³⁶

The UK branch [of Anti-Slavery International](#), an international human rights organisation, has acknowledged that the act has been “a step in the right direction.” However, the organisation criticises the current requirements for businesses as too weak and is calling for [stronger laws](#) to ensure businesses “clean up their supply chains” and respect workers’ rights. [It has also](#)

³³ HM Government Press release, [New measures to make sure government supply chains are free from modern slavery](#), 18 September 2019

³⁴ House of Lords Library, [Modern slavery in UK supply chains](#), 17 November 2021

³⁵ [Modern Slavery Act 2015 Committee: corrected oral evidence, 26 February 2024](#), Q1

³⁶ House of Lords Library, [Modern slavery in UK supply chains](#), 17 November 2021

[campaigns for import controls](#) to prevent goods produced using forced labour from entering the UK market.

House of Lords Modern Slavery Act 2015 committee report

In January 2024, the House of [Lords appointed the Modern Slavery Act 2015 Committee to consider the act](#). The committee reported on 16 October 2024. It said that developments over the past nine years have led to the UK losing its international trailblazer position in terms of eradication of modern slavery. It said that while the act has improved transparency in UK supply chains, other countries have moved further to require companies to undertake due diligence on their suppliers and act to eradicate modern slavery in their supply chains.³⁷

Among the committee's key recommendations is a proposal to introduce a requirement for companies meeting certain thresholds to perform modern slavery due diligence of their suppliers.³⁸

Previous legislative proposals

A Modern Slavery Bill was announced in the 2022 Queen's speech. The bill's main elements included a commitment to reduce the prevalence of modern slavery in supply chains; enshrine in domestic law the Government's international obligations to victims; and strengthen the tools law enforcement agencies use to prevent modern slavery.³⁹ The bill was never introduced.⁴⁰

The [Commercial Organisations and Public Authorities Duty \(Human Rights and Environment\) Bill \[HL\]](#), a House of Lords Private Members' Bill, had its second reading in the Lords on 10 May 2024. The bill, introduced by Baroness Young of Hornsey, would enact legislation similar to the EU's corporate sustainability due diligence directive (see below). It would place a duty on commercial organisations and public authorities to prevent human rights and environmental harms, including an obligation to conduct and publish human rights and environmental due diligence assessments on their own operations, subsidiaries, and value chains.⁴¹ The bill fell with the dissolution of Parliament for the 2024 General Election.

³⁷ [UK's response to modern slavery has not kept up with the advances of other nations - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

³⁸ [UK's response to modern slavery has not kept up with the advances of other nations - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

³⁹ Prime Minister's Office, [The Queen's Speech 2022](#) (PDF), 10 May 2022, p83

⁴⁰ [The Illegal Migration Act 2023](#), which received Royal Assent on 20 July 2023, did introduce some provisions on modern slavery, but these do not address supply chain issues.

⁴¹ House of Lords Library, [Commercial Organisations and Public Authorities Duty \(Human Rights and Environment\) Bill \[HL\]: HL Bill 17 of 2023-24](#) (PDF), 29 April 2024

1.5

Public procurement

The government has addressed modern slavery and forced labour issues in government supply chains through public procurement rules.

In February 2023, the Cabinet Office updated its policy and guidance on [tackling modern slavery in government supply chains \(Procurement Policy Note 02/23\)](#). This sets out how government departments should aim to identify and manage modern slavery risk in public procurement. The guidance replaces the previous [PPN 05/19](#).

Procurement rules will change as a new Procurement Act 2023 comes [fully into force on 24 February 2025](#).

During the passage of the act through Parliament, members of both houses extensively debated procurement bans on companies associated with human rights violations. Some proposed to bar companies linked to modern slavery, forced labour, organ trafficking, crimes against humanity or genocide anywhere in the world, but notably in Xinjiang, China.⁴²

The government acknowledged during debates that the existing rules were too restrictive requiring, for example, a supplier’s conviction before they could be barred from government contracts.⁴³ The government said the new legislation would improve on that⁴⁴ and would “strengthen the UK’s approach to exclude [from public procurement] suppliers where there is clear evidence of the involvement of forced labour and other modern slavery practices, such as in Xinjiang.”⁴⁵

[The Procurement Act 2023](#) gives effect to the new supplier exclusion regime, allowing contracting authorities to exclude suppliers that are not fit to compete for public contracts. This includes debarment because of “professional misconduct” where a serious breach of ethical standards is found. Such breaches include labour market misconduct. Additionally, certain modern slavery offences have been added to the grounds for mandatory exclusion, meaning bidders who have committed these offences must be excluded from procurements. Similar standards can be applied down the supply chain, in relation to subcontractors.⁴⁶

NHS procurement

The Guardian wrote in December 2023 about a DHSC [Review of risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in the NHS supply chain](#). The DHSC report had earmarked the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China as a specific

⁴² [HL Deb Procurement Bill May 2022 cc878, 898](#)

⁴³ [HL Deb Procurement Bill May 2022 c926](#)

⁴⁴ [Procurement Bill \[Lords\] PBC Deb 2 February 2023 c291](#) (PDF)

⁴⁵ [HL Deb Procurement Bill May 2022 c926](#)

⁴⁶ [Procurement Act 2023](#), s26-28, s57 and schedules 6 and 7, s77

area of concern for its supply chain. In response to the report Sian Lea, business and human rights manager at the charity Anti-Slavery International, was quoted as saying:

“the analysis showed the NHS had a high reliance on high-risk suppliers and was potentially exposed to state-imposed forced labour such as in the Uyghur region and Turkmenistan.

“While we’re pleased to see that the government has taken steps to identify the very real risk of modern slavery in NHS supply chains, this is only the first of many steps,” she added.

“We also urge the government to improve the standard across all public sector supply chains, so that all government procurement may be free from goods made with forced labour.

The DHSC set out its approach to modern slavery eradication and referred to the upcoming procurement provisions in its written statement on 14 March 2024.⁴⁷

1.6

Due diligence and forced labour legislation in other countries

The EU passed a [corporate sustainability due diligence directive](#) in 2024, to be implemented from 2026. The directive will require large EU and non-EU companies operating in the EU market to follow due diligence processes to address negative impacts of their operations on human rights and the environment. Alongside environmental sustainability aspects, the directive’s focus includes slavery, child labour and labour exploitation. Companies will also be held liable for damage caused by violations and will be liable for compensation.

UK companies with turnover within the EU over EUR 1,500 million will have to apply the directive from 2027. Companies with EU turnover over EUR 900 million will have to apply it from 2028 and those with EU turnover over EUR 450 million, from 2029.⁴⁸

A number of EU Member States including Germany, France and the Netherlands have introduced their own corporate due diligence requirements, which differ in substance and scope. The EU directive aims to reduce

⁴⁷ [HCWS343 \[Modern Slavery Regulations\] 14 March 2024](#)

⁴⁸ Cooley, international law firm, [EU Adopts Mandatory Rules on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence That Will Apply to Many US Companies](#), 24 April 2024

regulatory fragmentation by ensuring the same minimum due diligence requirements apply to companies operating across the EU.⁴⁹

The EU corporate sustainability due diligence directive will be complemented by the EU [regulation prohibiting products made with forced labour](#). The regulation, currently going through the legislative process, would allow the European Commission to investigate suspicious goods, supply chains, and manufacturers. Products deemed to have been made using forced labour would be banned from sales on the EU market (including online) and shipments would be intercepted at the EU's borders.

Australia and Norway have passed similar modern slavery and due diligence laws.⁵⁰

The United States Section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930 prohibits the importation of any product that was mined, produced, or manufactured wholly or in part by forced labour. This act is enforced by the US Customs and Border Protection. The act has been primarily used to screen imports from China because of longstanding concerns about the use of forced labour. Since 2021, for example, all cotton products and tomatoes from Xinjiang can be detained in US ports until an importer can prove they were not made with forced labour.⁵¹

The 2021 US Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) created “a rebuttable presumption” that goods made in Xinjiang or by certain entities with ties to the region are made with forced labour and are banned from entering the US under Section 307.⁵²

⁴⁹ [UK's response to modern slavery has not kept up with the advances of other nations - Committees - UK Parliament](#) (PDF) p58

⁵⁰ As above

⁵¹ Congressional Research Service, [Section 307 and Imports Produced by Forced Labor](#), 17 October 2024

⁵² Congressional Research Service, [Section 307 and Imports Produced by Forced Labor](#), 17 October 2024

2

Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[Uyghur activist accuses Labour of failing to stand up to China](#)

The Guardian
Geneva Abdul
22 October 2024

[UK should outlaw imports of goods made by Xinjiang forced labour, says senior lawmaker](#)

Reuters
16 September 2024

[Modern slavery: court judgment forces UK prosecutors to reconsider supply chain-linked investigations](#)

International Bar Association
Alice Johnson
3 September 2024

[U.K. Companies Trading In Forced Labor Goods Risk Prosecution](#)

Forbes
Dr. Ewelina U. Ochab
8 July 2024

[Uyghur group wins appeal over UK investigation into 'slave labour' cotton](#)

Reuters
27 June 2024

[NCA failure to investigate imports linked to forced Uyghur labour unlawful, court rules](#)

The Guardian
Haroon Siddique
27 June 2024

[Decision overturned. 'Watershed' ruling confirms that UK companies trading in forced labour goods risk prosecution](#)

Global Legal Action Network
27 June 2024

[Top carmakers at risk of using Uyghur forced labour in China, report says](#)

Al Jazeera
Erin Hale
2 February 2024

[Asleep at the Wheel](#)

Human Rights Watch
1 February 2024

[Solar panels used by British Army linked to claims of forced labour in China](#)

BBC News Online
Joshua Nevett
2 December 2023

[Xinjiang Supply Chains Come Under Growing Scrutiny](#)

RUSI
Thomas Ewing
6 July 2022

[Why Companies with Supply Chains in Xinjiang and China Need to Act Now](#)

Kingsley Napier
Fred Allen
1 February 2022

[In Broad Daylight: Uyghur Forced Labour and Global Solar Supply Chains](#)

(PDF)
Sheffield Hallam University
May 2021

[Uyghur abuse: MPs criticise companies over China forced labour](#)

BBC News Online
17 March 2021

[Uyghurs: MPs 'appalled' firms can't guarantee supply chains free of forced labour in China](#)

Sky News
Tom Cheshire
17 March 2021

3

Press releases

[Joint statement on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and Tibet](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

23 October 2024

I have the honour of delivering this joint statement on behalf of Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Lithuania, Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America, and my own country, Australia.

These countries are all committed to universal human rights and have ongoing concerns about serious human rights violations in China.

Two years ago, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' assessment on Xinjiang concluded that serious human rights violations had been committed in Xinjiang, and that the scale of the arbitrary and discriminatory detention of Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities in Xinjiang "may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity".

Subsequently, United Nations Treaty Bodies have taken similar views and made similar recommendations, including the CERD in November 2022 through its concluding observations and Urgent Action Decision on Xinjiang; and the CRPD, CESCR and CEDAW in their September 2022, March 2023 and May 2023 Concluding Observations.

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has issued communications concerning multiple cases of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, and over 20 Special Procedure Mandate Holders have expressed concern about systemic human rights violations in Xinjiang.

Relying extensively on China's own records, these comprehensive findings and recommendations by independent human rights experts from all geographic regions detail evidence of large-scale arbitrary detention, family separation, enforced disappearances and forced labour, systematic surveillance on the basis of religion and ethnicity; severe and undue restrictions on cultural, religious, and linguistic identity and expression; torture and sexual and gender-based violence, including forced abortion and sterilisation; and the destruction of religious and cultural sites.

China has had many opportunities to meaningfully address the UN's well-founded concerns.

Instead, China labelled the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' assessment as "illegal and void" during its Universal Periodic Review adoption in July.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' statement in August, the problematic laws and policies in Xinjiang continue to remain in place. The statement again called on China to undertake a full review, from the human rights perspective, of the legal framework governing national security and counterterrorism.

Chair, as with our concerns for the situation in Xinjiang, we are also seriously concerned about credible reports detailing human rights abuses in Tibet.

United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies and United Nations Special Procedures have detailed the detention of Tibetans for the peaceful expression of political views; restrictions on travel; coercive labour arrangements; separation of children from families in boarding schools; and erosion of linguistic, cultural, educational and religious rights and freedoms in Tibet.

We urge China to uphold the international human rights obligations that it has voluntarily assumed, and to implement all UN recommendations including from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' assessment, Treaty Bodies and other United Nations human rights mechanisms.

This includes releasing all individuals arbitrarily detained in both Xinjiang and Tibet, and urgently clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing family members.

Transparency and openness are key to allaying concerns, and we call on China to allow unfettered and meaningful access to Xinjiang and Tibet for independent observers, including from the United Nations, to evaluate the human rights situation.

No country has a perfect human rights record, but no country is above fair scrutiny of its human rights obligations.

It is incumbent on all of us not to undermine international human rights commitments that benefit us all, and for which all states are accountable.

Embassy Spokesperson on rumours and lies about so-called "forced labour" in Xinjiang

**Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom
1 March 2024**

Question: For some time now, there have been people hyping up rumours about so-called "forced labour" in Xinjiang. Do you have any comment?

Embassy Spokesperson: For quite some time now, certain elements in the world, out of their ideological bias and anti-China agenda, have been fabricating and spreading false narratives about so-called "forced labour" in Xinjiang, and gone to great lengths to smear Xinjiang's effort to ensure employment security. We firmly oppose and strongly condemn this.

People of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang enjoy full freedom of employment, and their labour rights are protected in accordance with the law. People choose their jobs freely in the labour market, and the government promotes employment and the creation of new businesses. Employees of all ethnic groups and their employers establish labour relations on a voluntary basis. People have full freedom to choose their professions, and their freedom of movement has never been restricted in any way. The people's government of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region follows the Constitution of the International Labour Organization and other relevant international conventions, and strictly implements the Labour Law of the People's Republic of China and other domestic laws and regulations. The labour rights of employees in Xinjiang, including the rights to receive remuneration, take time off, have safe and clean working conditions, and enjoy social security and benefits, are lawfully protected.

This is well proven by the following facts and statistics: In the past decade, the per capita disposable income of Xinjiang residents doubled from 13,700 yuan to 28,900 yuan. In 2023, the disposable income of urban and rural residents in Xinjiang increased by 5.6% and 8.4% respectively. Xinjiang's economic growth was among the highest in the country. In 2023, nearly 3 million people participated in collective labour negotiations in Xinjiang. More than 300 legal assistance venues have been established in Xinjiang, and trade unions and lawyers work to protect the rights and interests of employees and resolve their requests in accordance with the law.

The so-called "forced labour" narratives fly in the face of the facts, and distort and smear China's policy governing Xinjiang. They essentially are aimed at undermining Xinjiang's prosperity and stability and holding back China's development. They also undercut international trade rules and the stability of global supply chains. Such malicious attacks and smears against other countries are in no one's interest, and should be unanimously opposed by the international community.

4

PQs

[China: Uyghurs](#)

31 Oct 2024 | HL1751

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Foreign Secretary intends to take steps to ensure that China's actions against Uyghurs is recognised as genocide through international courts and by working with international partners, in accordance with his remarks in March 2023.

Answering member: Baroness Chapman of Darlington | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

It is the long-standing policy of the British Government that any judgment as to whether crimes against humanity or genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent national or international court, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. It should be decided after consideration of all the evidence available in the context of a credible judicial process.

Regardless of any court's decision, this Government will stand firm on human rights, including China's repression of Uyghurs and others in Xinjiang. This includes raising our concerns at the highest levels of the Chinese government, and coordinating efforts with our international partners to hold China to account for human rights violations.

[China: Uyghurs](#)

30 Oct 2024 | 10524

Asked by: Carla Lockhart

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the Chinese government on the treatment of Uighur peoples in Xinjiang.

Answering member: Catherine West | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

This Government stands firm on human rights, including in Xinjiang, where China continues to persecute and arbitrarily detain Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities. These concerns were raised directly by the Foreign Secretary on his recent visit to China. We continue to coordinate efforts with our international partners to hold China to account for human rights violations, for example, joining a statement led by Australia on China's human rights situation at the UN Third Committee on 22 October.

Import Controls: Forced Labour

22 Oct 2024 | HL1356

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government how many cargo planes flying the route from Urumqi to Bournemouth have been searched by UK border officials to ensure they are not carrying goods made by Uyghur forced labour in Xinjiang.

Answering member: Lord Hanson of Flint | Home Office

The Government encourages businesses to monitor their global supply chains with rigour, uncover and remedy any instances of modern slavery they may find. Under Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, commercial businesses who operate in the UK and have a turnover of £36 million or more must report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains by publishing an annual modern slavery statement.

The Home Office is currently working with a wide group of stakeholders to update the Section 54 statutory guidance. This will further support businesses to produce high quality statements, which are underpinned by effective measures to prevent and effectively respond to instances of modern slavery in supply chains.

China: Human Rights

24 Sep 2024 | HL863

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential implications for the UK's relationship with China of (1) the detention of Uyghur children in boarding schools in Xinjiang, and (2) the alleged cultural genocide perpetrated by the government of China through the forced assimilation of Uyghur and Kazakh children; and what diplomatic actions are being taken to address these concerns.

Answering member: Baroness Chapman of Darlington | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests.

We stand firm on human rights, including in Xinjiang, where China continues to persecute and arbitrarily detain Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities. We raise our concerns at the highest levels of the Chinese government. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary both raised human rights in their recent introductory discussions with President Xi and Foreign Minister Wang.

NHS: Supply Chains

11 Sep 2024 | 4556

Asked by: Nadia Whittome

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to audit NHS supply chains to ensure that no medical (a) garments and (b) equipment are sourced from (i) Xinjiang and (ii) other regions with widespread reports of forced labour and human rights abuses.

Answering member: Karin Smyth | Department of Health and Social Care

The United Kingdom is committed to tackling the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains, and is taking robust action. We have introduced new guidance on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang specifically in section 6.2 of the guidance, enhanced export controls, and announced the introduction of financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-china/overseas-business-risk-china#business-and-human-rights>

The Procurement Act, which received Royal Assent in 2023, will enable public sector contracting authorities to reject bids and terminate contracts with suppliers which are known to use forced labour themselves or anywhere in their supply chain.

Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires commercial organisations that supply goods and services and have a total turnover over £36 million to publish a transparency statement annually, to set out what steps they have taken to ensure that modern slavery is not occurring in their supply chains.

The Department has pledged to put an end to modern slavery in the National Health Service by meeting my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's duty to assess and mitigate modern slavery risk in NHS supply chains. New regulations will require public bodies procuring goods or services for delivering health services in England to assess the risk of modern slavery and implement reasonable steps to procurement and contracting activities, with a view to eradicating the use of goods and services tainted by modern slavery.

Solar Power: Supply Chains

26 Jul 2024 | 271

Asked by: Blair McDougall

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that solar panels installed in the UK do

not contain polysilicon manufactured through the slave labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in China.

Answering member: Michael Shanks | Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

No company in the UK should have forced labour in its supply chain. We will be working with colleagues across Government to tackle the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains.

We are also relaunching the Solar Taskforce, which will focus on identifying and taking forward the actions needed to develop supply chains that are resilient, sustainable and free from forced labour. This will support the significant increases in deployment of solar panels needed to meet our ambition of tripling the UK's solar power capacity by 2030.

Import Controls: Forced Labour

26 Jul 2024 | 228

Asked by: Alicia Kearns

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing controls to prevent the import of products made with Uyghur forced labour.

Answering member: Douglas Alexander | Department for Business and Trade

No company in the UK should have forced labour in its supply chain. The Department for Business and Trade will continue to assess and monitor the effectiveness of the UK's existing measures, alongside the impacts of new policy tools that are emerging, to ensure it can best tackle forced labour in supply chains, and work with businesses and international partners to understand the impact of measures to combat forced labour.

Forced Labour: China

05 Mar 2024 | HL2599

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent Human Rights Watch research that suggests several major carmakers could be complicit in abuse of China's Uyghur Muslims.

Answering member: Lord Johnson of Lainston | Department for Business and Trade

Modern slavery is a barbaric crime which we are determined to stamp out. In 2022, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published its assessment of the human rights situation in Xinjiang, which found that China

had carried out "serious human rights violations" against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities.

The Government's overseas business risk guidance sets out the risks of operating in Xinjiang and urges UK companies to conduct appropriate due diligence and consider their corporate responsibilities when making business decisions. The Minister for Industry and Economic Security has requested meetings with named manufacturers in the Human Rights Watch report to discuss this issue in more detail.

Xinjiang: Uyghurs

19 Feb 2024 | 13566

Asked by: Neil Coyle

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what his policy is on the use of the term genocide in reference to Uyghurs in Xinjiang province.

Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

It is the UK Government's longstanding policy that any judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for judicial decision, rather than for the government. We are taking robust action in response to China's human rights violations in Xinjiang regardless. In October 2023, the UK led a joint statement with a record 50 signatories on Xinjiang at the UN, demonstrating a significant number of countries are prepared to call China out for its human rights violations. We have also imposed sanctions, enhanced export controls, provided guidance to businesses, and taken action to tackle forced labour in supply chains. The UK Government also consistently raises human rights violations with the Chinese authorities at the highest levels - the Foreign Secretary last did so during a call with China's Foreign Minister in December 2023.

Forced Labour: China

19 Feb 2024 | 13203

Asked by: Sir Iain Duncan Smith

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of the findings of the report entitled China: Carmakers Implicated in Uyghur Forced Labor, published by Human Rights Watch on 1 February 2024 that car manufacturers including Tesla and Toyota are using Uyghur slave labour.

Answering member: Nusrat Ghani | Department for Business and Trade

Modern slavery is a barbaric crime which we are determined to stamp out. In 2022, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published its assessment of the human rights situation in Xinjiang, which found that China had carried out “serious human rights violations” against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities.

The Government’s overseas business risk guidance sets out the risks of operating in Xinjiang and urges UK companies to conduct appropriate due diligence and consider their corporate responsibilities when making business decisions. The Department for Business and Trade is continuing to consider actor agnostic measures that would improve supply chain transparency and traceability. I have requested meetings with named manufacturers in the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report to discuss this issue in more detail.

Forced Labour: China

19 Feb 2024 | 13202

Asked by: Sir Iain Duncan Smith

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what work her Department is taking to help ensure that the supply chains of UK car manufacturers do not include Uyghur slave labour.

Answering member: Nusrat Ghani | Department for Business and Trade

Modern slavery is a barbaric crime which we are determined to stamp out. In 2022, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published its assessment of the human rights situation in Xinjiang, which found that China had carried out “serious human rights violations” against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities.

Section 54 of The UK’s Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires businesses with a turnover of £36m or more to publish modern slavery statements and statements from relevant UK car manufacturers are available at <https://modern-slavery-statement-registry.service.gov.uk>. We have set out clear guidance for businesses on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang and announced plans to introduce financial penalties for organisations who fail to meet their statutory obligations to publish annual modern slavery statements.

I have requested meetings with named manufacturers in the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report entitled ‘Asleep at the Wheel: Car Companies’ Complicity in Forced Labor in China’, published in February 2024, to discuss this issue in more detail.

Xinjiang: Uyghurs

09 Feb 2024 | 12059

Asked by: Ruth Jones

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the Chinese government's treatment of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang; and what diplomatic steps he has taken in response.

Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government has led international efforts to hold China to account for its human rights violations in Xinjiang. We were the first country to lead a joint statement on China's human rights record in Xinjiang at the UN, and our leadership has sustained pressure on China to change its behaviour. In October 2023, the UK led another joint statement with a record number of 50 signatories on Xinjiang at the UN, demonstrating a significant number of countries are prepared to call China out for its human rights violations. We have also imposed sanctions, provided guidance to businesses, and taken action to tackle forced labour in supply chains. Bilaterally, we consistently raise human rights issues at senior levels with the Chinese authorities; the Foreign Secretary did so in his introductory call with China's Foreign Minister on 5 December.

Organs: Human Trafficking

06 Feb 2024 | HL2038

Asked by: Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to their paper Review of risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in the NHS supply chain, published on 14 December 2023, and specifically their assessment of human rights violations in Xinjiang, whether an assessment was made of the number of people at risk of forced organ harvesting.

Answering member: Lord Markham | Department of Health and Social Care

The United Kingdom is committed to tackling the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains, and is taking robust action. We have introduced new guidance on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang, enhanced export controls, and announced the introduction of financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act. The Procurement Act, which received Royal Assent in 2023, will enable public sector contracting authorities to reject bids and terminate contracts with suppliers which are known to use forced labour themselves or anywhere in their supply chain.

The review, which examined the NHS Supply Chain's supplier base, primarily focussed on medical devices and consumables. It did not specifically address the risk of forced organ harvesting because the National Health Service does not engage with supply chains from China for the procurement of human organs.

[Xinjiang: Uyghurs](#)

29 Jan 2024 | HL1599

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of China regarding the treatment of Uyghurs and other Turkic people in Xinjiang.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK continues to lead international efforts to hold China to account for its human rights violations. In March 2021, we imposed sanctions on four individuals and one entity for their involvement in the egregious violations taking place in Xinjiang, acting with 29 other countries. Sanctions are just one tool at our disposal. At the UN, we were the first country to lead a joint statement on human rights violations in Xinjiang in 2019 and last year we led another joint statement, which had a record number of signatories. We have taken action to tackle forced labour in supply chains, for example, guidance to UK businesses and enhanced export controls. Bilaterally, we continue to raise China's human rights violations with the Chinese authorities at the highest levels - the Foreign Secretary raised the situation in Xinjiang during his first call with China's Foreign Minister in December last year.

[China: Uyghurs](#)

29 Nov 2023 | 3337

Asked by: Tahir Ali

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he plans to take diplomatic steps in response to China's treatment of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang.

Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government closely monitors China's serious human rights violations in Xinjiang against Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minorities, and continues to lead international efforts to hold China to account and change its behaviour.

In October 2023, the UK led a record joint statement on Xinjiang at the UN, demonstrating a significant number of countries are prepared to call China out for its human rights violations. We have also imposed sanctions, provided guidance to businesses, and taken action to tackle forced labour in supply chains.

We consistently raise China's human rights violations with the Chinese authorities at the highest levels. The former Foreign Secretary did so during his visit to Beijing in August 2023. We will continue to raise these issues directly with China and in multilateral fora including the UN.

Uyghurs: Forced Labour

26 Apr 2023 | 181468

Asked by: Dr Matthew Offord

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that goods produced by the forced labour of Uyghur Muslims in China are not included in any Government procurement contracts.

Answering member: Alex Burghart | Cabinet Office

HM Government is committed to preventing modern slavery occurring in public sector supply chains. The Cabinet Office has published commercial policy and guidance setting out the steps that all Government departments must take to identify and mitigate modern slavery and labour abuse risks throughout the commercial life cycle - focusing on the areas of highest risk. This policy is mandatory for all Central Government Departments, their Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

The Government has taken a number of measures to help ensure that no British organisations are profiting from or contributing to human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities. We have introduced guidance for UK businesses on the risks of conducting business in Xinjiang, implemented enhanced export controls, and committed to introducing new procurement guidance for Government bodies as well as financial penalties for non-compliance with section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act.

The Procurement Bill, which is being considered by Parliament, strengthens the rules around excluding suppliers due to serious misconduct anywhere in their operations, including the supply chain. This includes explicit provision for suppliers to be prevented from bidding for contracts where there is evidence of their involvement in modern slavery.

[China: Uyghurs](#)

01 Dec 2022 | HL3499

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner report OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China, published on 31 August, which found that human rights violations against the Uyghur population "may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity", what steps they are taking in response to that finding.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights provides new evidence of the extent of China's efforts to silence and repress Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. It includes a broad range of evidence, including first-hand accounts from victims.

The UK has led international efforts to pressure China to change its behaviour. We have imposed sanctions, led joint statements at the UN, taken action to tackle forced labour in supply chains, funded research to expose China's actions, and consistently raised China's human rights violations at the highest levels in Beijing. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary did so in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart on 20 September.

Given the seriousness of the report's findings, on 6 October we supported formal action at the UN Human Rights Council that requested a Council Debate on the situation in Xinjiang. While this vote didn't pass, China's attempts to stifle debate and hide the truth will not succeed. We will continue to work with our partners to hold the Chinese authorities to account and continue to shine a spotlight on China's human rights violations.

[Xinjiang: Human Rights](#)

20 Oct 2022 | HL2290

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to table motions for consideration at (1) the UN Human Rights Council, (2) the General Assembly, and (3) the Security Council, following the United Nations report OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China, published on 31 August.

Answering member: Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights provides new evidence of the extent of China's efforts to silence and repress Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. It includes a broad range of evidence, including first-hand accounts from victims.

The UK has already led international efforts to pressure China to change its behaviour. We have imposed sanctions, led joint statements at the UN, taken action to tackle forced labour in supply chains, funded research to expose China's actions, and consistently raised China's human rights violations at the highest levels in Beijing.

We have raised the report's findings with the Chinese Embassy in London as well as senior officials in Beijing. We are now considering appropriate next steps with our international partners.

China: Uyghurs

19 Oct 2022 | 58944

Asked by: Charlotte Nichols

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Chinese counterparts about the treatment of Uighur Muslims.

Answering member: Jesse Norman | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government regularly raises the human rights situation in Xinjiang directly with the Chinese authorities at the highest levels. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary did so in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart on 20 September. The UK also continues to lead wider international efforts to pressure China to change its behaviour. We have imposed sanctions, led joint statements at the UN, taken action to tackle forced labour in supply chains, and funded research to expose China's actions.

Hikvision: Sanctions

15 Jul 2022 | 2684

Asked by: Paul Holmes

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he will extend the departmental ban on Hikvision to include (a) BGI Group and (b) other Chinese state linked companies implicated in abuses against Uyghurs.

Answering member: Maria Caulfield | Department of Health and Social Care

The United Kingdom has an established policy to manage modern slavery risks and we continue to take action to limit exposure to human rights and modern slavery abuses in supply chains. Governmental commercial teams are required to undertake due diligence to ensure risks in supply chains are mitigated. Managing risks within existing contracts is the responsibility of those who are party to the contract and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

There is no specified procurement evaluation criteria in UK legislation or policy related to entities of Chinese origin and to take account of the national origin of companies would be against the principles in UK law related to equal treatment. The Department evaluates bids and if there is sufficient evidence of human rights or modern slavery abuses in any of the supply chains, we take appropriate steps to exclude them from that procurement. Procurement rules include 'exclusion grounds' of mandatory grounds, where contracting authorities must exclude and discretionary criteria, where they may exclude. If a bidder is convicted of an offence under section 1, 2 or 4 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, there is a mandatory exclusion. However, even if there is no conviction, strong evidence of breaches is likely to be grounds for discretionary exclusion.

BGI Genomics is a supplier on the National Microbiology Framework contract, launched in 2021. The mandatory and discretionary exclusion criteria was requested from all suppliers at the time the Framework was tendered. BGI Genomics was awarded a call-off contract from the Framework contract by the UK Health Security Agency in August 2021 which also involved compliance with mandatory and discretionary selection requirements. This call-off contract lapsed on 14 November 2021 and no further contract with BGI has been let.

Clothing: China

06 Jun 2022 | 9079

Asked by: Catherine West

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will conduct a review into the supply chain for fashion businesses in light of evidence of human rights abuses in China.

Answering member: Paul Scully | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The Government has taken steps to help ensure that no British organisations profit from, or contribute to, human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities in China. This includes new guidance for UK businesses on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang and enhanced export controls, as well as

the introduction of financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act. Organisations are expected to report on the action they are taking to tackle and prevent modern slavery risks in their supply chains as part of their annual modern slavery statement. Our overseas business risk guidance makes clear to UK companies the risks of operating in Xinjiang and urges them to consider their corporate responsibilities when making investment decisions.

Forced Labour of Uyghurs: UK Supply Chains

29 Mar 2022 | 711 cc686-8

Asked by: Afzal Khan

What steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the supply chains of businesses in the UK do not use forced labour of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China.

Answering member: Paul Scully | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

In January 2021, we announced a robust package of measures to help to ensure that no UK organisations are complicit in the human rights violations being perpetrated in Xinjiang. We have also supplied detailed guidance to UK businesses, and will continue to engage with them.

Forced Labour: China

28 Jan 2022 | 108570

Asked by: Rachael Maskell

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to ensure that no products imported into the UK have been manufactured from forced labour, either from Uyghur Muslim communities or other imprisoned groups, in China.

Answering member: Ranil Jayawardena | Department for International Trade

HM Government has helped make sure that British businesses are not complicit in the violation of rights and responsibilities occurring in Xinjiang through their supply chains by requiring them to report openly on steps taken to tackle modern slavery.

Under section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more which carry on a business (or part of a business) in the United Kingdom, wherever incorporated or formed, are required to publish annual modern slavery statements, setting out steps taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

[China: Uyghurs](#)

25 Jan 2022 | 107489

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the UK's work at the UN on imposing sanctions and a range of supply-chain measures to end human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Answering member: Amanda Milling | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK remains deeply concerned by the scale and the severity of the human rights violations being perpetrated in Xinjiang. In response, the UK has led international efforts to hold China to account at the UN, imposed sanctions on senior Chinese government officials, and taken robust action in respect of UK supply chains.

Those sanctioned face travel bans and asset freezes across the US, Canada, the EU and the UK, which together make up over 1/3 of global GDP. This sends a clear message to the Chinese Government that the international community will not turn a blind eye to such serious and systematic violations of basic human rights.

The supply chains measures we have taken include new guidance for UK businesses, and announcing enhanced export controls as well as the introduction of financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act. Taken together, these measures will help ensure that no British organisations - government or private sector, deliberately or inadvertently - are profiting from or contributing to human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities.

[Imports from Xinjiang, China](#)

20 Jan 2022 | 707 cc489-490

Asked by: Afzal Khan

China is the largest cotton producer in the world, with 84% of cotton coming from the Xinjiang region. The region also produces 45% of the world's supply of the key component in solar panels, polysilicon, which means that the supply chains are tainted with forced Uyghur labour. In a response given in the other place, the Government outlined that they would

“continue to pursue a positive economic relationship with China and...increase trade with China.”—[Official Report, House of Lords, 21 October 2021; Vol. 815, c. 252.]

In light of the genocide against the Uyghur Muslims, does the Minister think that is an acceptable approach, and will the Minister now follow in the footsteps of the US and ban imports from China's Xinjiang region?

Answered by: Penny Mordaunt | Department for International Trade

First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising the issue. The more we can talk about it, keep it on our agenda and raise the profile of such matters consistently, the more helpful it is. We are looking at what other nations are doing and we keep our policies under review. He is right: we need a mix of targeted responses against states and also companies that have those practices. We have a good track record on combating modern slavery and being a global leader in this field, but we also need the transparency and tools for consumers and customers of those businesses to find other suppliers if they have concerns. We will keep the matter under review, and I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we take those matters very seriously.

Uyghur Tribunal

05 Jan 2022 | 92880

Asked by: Fiona Bruce

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings of the judgment of the Uyghur Tribunal, chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, published on 9 December 2021.

Answering member: Amanda Milling | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Government notes the findings of the Uyghur Tribunal, and welcomes its contribution to building international awareness and understanding of the human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang. The UK has led international efforts to hold China to account at the UN, imposed sanctions on senior Chinese government officials, and announced measures to help ensure no UK organisations are complicit in human rights violations through their supply chains. The policy of successive UK governments is that any determination of genocide or crimes against humanity is a matter for a competent court.

5

Debates

Uyghur Tribunal Judgment

20 Jan 2022 | House of Commons | 707 cc527-565

Motion that this House notes that the December 2021 Uyghur Tribunal’s judgment in London found beyond reasonable doubt that the People’s Republic of China was responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and torture in the Uyghur region; and calls on the Government to urgently assess whether it considers there to be a serious risk of genocide in the Uyghur region and to present its findings to the House within two months of this motion being passed, use all means reasonably available to ensure the cessation of ongoing genocide, including conducting due diligence to ensure it is not assisting, aiding, abetting or otherwise allowing the continuation of genocide and fulfil its other obligations under the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, accept the recommendations of the fifth report of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, Uyghur forced labour in Xinjiang and UK value chains, Session 2019–21, HC 1272, including black-listing UK firms selling slave-made products in the UK and putting in place import controls to protect UK consumers, and place sanctions on the perpetrators of this genocide, including Chen Quanguo.

6

Early Day Motions

[The UN OCHR's Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region](#)

EDM 367 (session 2022-23)

7 September 2022

Brendan O'Hara

That this House notes with great concern the findings of the United Nations OCHR report Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region released on 31 August 2022; is horrified by the details in this report including the use of arbitrary detention, forced sterilization and mass slave labour; notes that the evidence for these egregious crimes against humanity is beyond reasonable doubt; urges the Government to strengthen Magnitsky style sanctions against officials in the People's Republic of China who are involved in these crimes; and calls on the Government to now accept this Parliament's declaration that the atrocities occurring in the Xinjiang region amount to genocide.

[Verdict of the Uyghur Tribunal](#)

EDM 763 (session 2021-22)

9 December 2021

Layla Moran

That this House notes with grave concern the findings of the Uyghur Tribunal of 9 December 2021 which detailed the depth and severity of abuses taking place against Uyghurs in Xinjiang by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) including rape, forced re-education, forced labour, mass surveillance, forced sterilisation, cultural and religious destruction; further notes the Tribunal's verdict that there is proof beyond reasonable doubt that the People's Republic of China are committing crimes of torture, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide as defined under international law; calls on the UK Government to accept Parliament's declaration of the atrocities in Xinjiang as a genocide; and urges the UK Government to step up sanctions against CCP officials involved in perpetrating these abuses.

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