

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 17, 2025

His Excellency Dr. Suriya Chindawongse

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United States

Royal Thai Embassy
1024 Wisconsin Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Ambassador Chindawongse,

I write with urgency to express my deep concern regarding the continued detention of 48 Uyghur men in Thailand. Their prolonged confinement under poor conditions is deeply troubling, and I urge the Royal Thai Government to take immediate humanitarian action to prevent their deportation to the People's Republic of China (PRC) and to facilitate their resettlement in third countries willing to receive them without delay.

Over the past decade, the PRC government has systematically persecuted Turkic-speaking Uyghur Muslims—a campaign that the United States and several European governments have recognized as genocide.¹ These Uyghur men in question were originally detained over a decade ago while transiting through Thailand to escape repression in their homeland.² Today, 43 of them remain confined at the Immigration Detention Center (IDC) in Bangkok, while five others are serving sentences at Bangkok Central Prison related to their attempt to escape detention.³

To my knowledge, there is no credible evidence to suggest that these men have committed any crime other than seeking refuge from persecution in their homeland and striving for a life of freedom abroad. They have now been held for over a decade, during which time many have suffered from chronic illnesses, severe malnutrition, and de facto incommunicado detention.⁴

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/blinken-says-genocide-xinjiang-is-ongoing-report-ahead-china-visit-2024-04-22/>, <https://www.axios.com/2021/05/20/lithuania-parliament-china-uyghur-genocide>, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220120-french-lawmakers-officially-recognise-china-s-treatment-of-uyghurs-as-genocide>, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/dutch-parliament-chinas-treatment-of-uyghurs-is-genocide-idUSKBN2AP2CH/>

² <https://apnews.com/article/uyghur-china-deportation-thailand-xinjiang-human-rights-d6f813654cf40ce464bc19203a226de0>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/10/magazine/uyghur-china-escape.html>

⁴ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28775>

Alarming, five detainees—including two children—have already died due to inadequate medical care, underscoring the urgent need for immediate humanitarian intervention.⁵

I am particularly alarmed by reports that, on January 8, 2025, these detainees were asked to sign consent forms for repatriation to China, which they refused. The following day, they released an urgent letter pleading for assistance from UN agencies, governments, and civil society, highlighting their well-founded fear of persecution if forcibly returned to the PRC.⁶ Given the well-documented human rights abuses against Uyghurs in the PRC, their refoulement would place them at grave risk of arbitrary detention, torture, or worse.

Thailand has long been a respected member of the international community and has a strong record of humanitarian action. Several countries have already expressed a willingness to accept these individuals,⁷ providing a viable resolution to this prolonged crisis. During his Senate confirmation hearing on January 15, incoming Secretary of State Marco Rubio acknowledged the precarious situation of these Uyghur men and committed to resolving this issue through diplomatic means.⁸ The U.S. Congress fully shares Mr. Rubio's concerns and sentiment.

I respectfully urge the Royal Thai Government to release these men to third countries as soon as possible out of humanitarian considerations and in accordance with international human rights norms, particularly the principle of non-refoulement.

I appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and request that you convey these concerns to the highest levels of your government. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



John Moolenaar
Chairman
House Select Committee on the CCP

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://apnews.com/article/uyghur-china-deportation-thailand-xinjiang-human-rights-d6f813654cf40ce464bc19203a226de0>

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/10/magazine/uyghur-china-escape.html>

⁸ <https://www.rfa.org/english/uyghur/2025/01/15/us-thailand-detainees/>