



DEBATE PACK

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Human rights in Xinjiang

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

Earlier this month, Human Rights Watch [published](#) its World Report on events during 2018. In its chapter on China it highlighted many ongoing human rights abuses in the country. Below is an extract setting out some of its concerns:

Human rights defenders continue to endure arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and enforced disappearance. The government maintains tight control over the internet, mass media, and academia. Authorities stepped up their persecution of religious communities, including prohibitions on Islam in Xinjiang, suppression of Christians in Henan province, and increasing scrutiny of Hui Muslims in Ningxia.

Authorities increasingly deploy mass surveillance systems to tighten control over society. In 2018, the government continued to collect, on a mass scale, biometrics including DNA and voice samples; use such biometrics for automated surveillance purposes; develop a nationwide reward and punishment system known as the “social credit system”; and develop and apply “big data” policing programs aimed at preventing dissent. All of these systems are being deployed without effective privacy protections in law or in practice, and often people are unaware that their data is being gathered, or how it is used or stored.

Highlighted in the report was “repression and systematic abuses against the 13 million Turkic Muslims, including Uyghurs and ethnic Kazakhs, in China’s northwestern Xinjiang region.” Human rights groups have documented mass imprisonment there in so-called ‘re-education’ camps. Western governments, including the UK, have expressed [concern](#) about the situation in Xinjiang in recent months.

Concerns about China’s human rights record extend beyond what it does to its own citizens to its efforts to [prevent](#) meaningful international scrutiny, including at the United Nations. Human Rights Watch recently said that Chinese officials are

working assiduously to weaken or block key human rights reviews at the United Nations, ease important standards, and ensure only praise for its rights record. Few, if any, senior U.N. officials broach the Chinese government’s human rights record when visiting China or meeting with Chinese leaders.

China remains a human rights ‘[priority country](#)’ for the UK. But critics argue that – with trade and investment becoming more important for a post-Brexit Britain – the UK’s performance on human rights in China has been “weak and pusillanimous” in practice.

2. Press 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.

[Senate revives bill to sanction China over mass detention of Uighur Muslims](#)

Independent
Gerry Shih
18 January 2019

[We can't keep ignoring human rights abuses against Uighur Muslims](#)

Independent on Sunday
Gulnaz Uighur
13 January 2019

[China defends Xinjiang camps as it takes reporters on tour](#)

Irish Times
Ben Blanchard
7 January 2019

[China says it welcomes U.N. to visit Xinjiang via proper procedures](#)

Reuters
7 January 2019

[China unveils plans to 'sinify' Islam amid signs of spreading crackdown](#)

Financial Times
Lucy Hornby
6 January 2019

[China refuses top human rights official access to Uighur Muslim 're-education' camps](#)

Independent
Peter Stubbley
5 December 2018

[White House to consider China sanctions bill in response to human rights violations](#)

Daily Telegraph
Sophia Yan and Nick Allen
14 November 2018

[China doubles spending on security-related building in Xinjiang – report](#)

Guardian
6 November 2018

[China is committing ethnic cleansing in Xinjiang – it's time for the world to stand up](#)

Guardian
Frances Eve
3 November 2018

[From denial to pride: how China changed its language on Xinjiang's camps](#)

Guardian
Lily Kuo
22 October 2018

[China admits to locking up Uyghurs, but defends Xinjiang crackdown](#)

CNN
Ben Westcott and Nanlin Fang
17 October 2018

[China's paranoia and oppression in Xinjiang has a long history](#)

CNN
James Griffiths
12 October 2018

[US considers sanctions on China over treatment of Uighurs](#)

Guardian
Lily Kuo
12 September 2018

[China tells U.N. rights chief to respect its sovereignty after Xinjiang comments](#)

Reuters
11 September 2018

[Muslim minority in China's Xinjiang face 'political indoctrination': Human Rights Watch](#)

Reuters
10 September 2018

3. Press Releases

Universal Periodic Review 31: China
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
6 November 2018

The UK welcomed recent progress on human rights in China, however raised concerns over increased restrictions to political and civil rights.

Thank you Mr President,

The UK welcomes progress on economic rights and reductions to death penalty offences. However, political and civil rights have deteriorated; including increased restrictions on the freedoms of assembly, association, expression and religion or belief.

We are very concerned about treatment of ethnic minorities – including Uyghurs and Tibetans. And we urge China to respect the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Sino-British Joint Declaration in Hong Kong.

We recommend that China:

- 1) Ratify the ILO's Forced Labour Convention and its 2014 Protocol;
- 2) Implement CERD recommendations on Xinjiang and allow the UN to monitor implementation;
- 3) Ratify the ICCPR.

Thank you Mr President.

EU statement on human rights in Xinjiang
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
30 October 2018

The UK supports the below EEAS statement issued on 26 October on the revision by the Chinese authorities of the 'Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification'.

Statement by the EEAS Spokesperson on the situation in Xinjiang:

The revision by the Chinese authorities of the "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification" highlights the deteriorating human rights situation in Xinjiang. There are credible reports of mass detentions in political "re-education camps" affecting Uighurs and other minorities; of mass surveillance; of restrictions on travel; and of Uighurs abroad allegedly being returned to China involuntarily.

These revisions run counter to the recommendations provided by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which call on China to change its policy in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

In this context, the EU expects China to respect freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of expression, as well as the rights of persons belonging to ethnic or national minorities, as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which China is a signatory.

4. PQs

[China: Ethnic Groups](#)

22 Jan 2019 | 209759

Asked by: Andrew Griffiths

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on reports from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and the Chinese Government's deepening crackdown; including credible reports of re-education camps, and widespread surveillance and restrictions targeted at ethnic minorities.

During China's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council on 6 November, the UK made a statement which described our concern about the treatment of ethnic minorities in China, including Uyghurs. We issued a specific recommendation, calling on China to implement the recommendations by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on Xinjiang, and to allow the UN to monitor the implementation.

I raised our concerns about Xinjiang with Vice Minister Guo Yezhou during my visit to China on 22 July 2018. The Foreign Secretary also raised our concerns about the region with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit to China on 30 July 2018.

[China: Human Rights](#)

10 Jan 2019 | 794 c2314-6

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the violations of human rights in China, including the arrest and disappearance of political activists and religious adherents, forced organ harvesting, and restrictions on free speech; and when they last made representations on these matters to the government of China.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

My Lords, we are deeply concerned about restrictions to civil and political freedoms in China, particularly the treatment of ethnic minorities, freedom of expression, association and assembly, and freedom of religion or belief. We highlighted these concerns publicly during China's universal periodic review in November 2018 and in my subsequent Statement. During 2018, the UK raised human rights bilaterally with China on a number of occasions, including through the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, Ministers and senior officials.

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

I thank the Minister for that reply. Has he noted that at the heart of the deterioration of human rights in China has been the imprisonment, interrogation and, in some cases, torture of some 300 human rights lawyers and activists and their families? Among the issues that these brave lawyers have pursued is the mass repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang, the destruction of Christian churches, the arrest and detention of pastors such as Wang Yi and his wife Jiang Rong just before Christmas, and the forced harvesting of organs from prisoners of conscience. Sir Geoffrey Nice QC's China Tribunal describes the situation as,

“involving a very substantial number of victims”,

and as being, “beyond reasonable doubt”, perpetrated by the state. Can the Minister assure us that, in the next universal periodic review, these questions will be put on the agenda, and the Government will do much more to try to raise levels of support for these courageous lawyers and civil society groups, who do not want China to regress into the violence and destruction that was so characteristic of the Cultural Revolution?

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

My Lords, I commend the efforts of the noble Lord in consistently raising this issue and standing up for the different communities, the lawyers and activists, those of different faiths, and those who are being subjected to specific targeting for organ harvesting. I reassure him that, during the last UPR in Geneva, I made it a point to directly raise these issues, including the treatment of lawyers and religious minorities, and specifically the closure of Christian churches and the desperate situation of the Uighurs.

Sir Geoffrey Nice is conducting a review on organ harvesting, and the noble Lord will note that I ensured that some of my officials attended the hearings of the preliminary findings of that report. We are currently awaiting the detailed outcome. Let me reassure all noble Lords that we will consistently raise this publicly, through processes such as the UPR, and bilaterally, as I indicated in my original Answer.

Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury

My Lords, I am extremely grateful to the Minister for his response and also for Mark Field's response to my honourable friend's Written Question just before Christmas. However, noting all the contact that we have had through the Foreign Secretary and the Minister himself in raising our concerns, has the FCO taken the trouble to speak to the Department of Trade and other civil society organisations, including business, about our concerns on civil liberties? Engagement is not simply about political representation. We should make clear to everyone engaged with China that we have genuine concerns over human rights, and that to do business with China we need to see an improvement.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

My Lords, as I have repeatedly said, in bilateral meetings and, importantly, publicly, the Government are clear that our trading relationship with China is important. China is an important strategic

partner, and it is because of the strength of our partnership that we are consistently able to raise these issues bilaterally. The noble Lord raised the important issue of a cross-government approach. Let me reassure him that that is exactly the approach we take. We will continue to raise these concerns, as I have said, through international fora and bilaterally. The situation for particular minorities and for groups that we have not mentioned—for example, journalists detained in China—is deeply concerning; indeed, it is a country which is paramount in our minds as the Foreign Secretary launches his new campaign this year on media freedom.

Asked by: Lord Cormack

It is good to know that the Government are making these representations, but what evidence is there that the Chinese are listening and acting on them? Surely it is a matter of the profoundest concern that the country that will be the dominant power in the world by the middle of this century indulges in these practices.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

My Lords, as I said, our job is to raise this concern bilaterally and, with other like-minded partners, with our Chinese counterparts, and we will continue to do so. If I may, I will refer to a recent example that I have already mentioned in your Lordships' House. Just before Christmas, we sent our diplomats to undertake an insight into the suffering of the Uighur community. They have now reported back and we are looking very closely at their findings and recommendations to ensure that we can take those up with the Chinese. This cannot in any way be done by force of hand. It is through consistent and collaborative representations that we will, I believe, begin to see a change. If the Chinese wish to see a place for China that is progressive—which they clearly do—they need to subscribe to the international standards set and be held accountable.

Asked by: Lord Dholakia

My Lords, according to Amnesty International, there are more executions in China than the rest of the world. Issues that have been identified include not only the death penalty but the one-child policy, the legal status of Tibet, freedom of the press, the lack of regular legal recognition of human rights, the lack of independence of the judiciary, and the lack of rule of law and due process. In our haste to build a good relationship with China, particularly for trade, are we compromising on these human rights issues?

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

My Lords, let me reassure the noble Lord that, if we were compromising, we would not be raising these specific points in public fora, as we have done through the UPR process.

China: Religious Freedom
20 Dec 2018 | 201618

Asked by: Yasmin Qureshi

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the findings of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's report of 30 August 2018 relating to the mistreatment of the Uighur community in China, what assessment he has made of the validity of those findings; and what steps he plans to take to support the Uighur community facing human rights abuses in that country.

Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and the Chinese Government's deepening crackdown; including credible reports of re-education camps and widespread surveillance and restrictions targeted at ethnic minorities.

During China's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council on 6 November, the UK made a statement which described our concern about the treatment of ethnic minorities in China, including Uyghurs. We issued a specific recommendation, calling on China to implement the recommendations by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on Xinjiang, and to allow the UN to monitor the implementation. We also raised our concerns about Xinjiang in our Item 4 statement at the September UN Human Rights Council, and we supported the statement of 26 October by the European External Action Service highlighting concerns about Xinjiang.

I raised our concerns about Xinjiang with Vice Minister Guo Yezhou during my visit to China on 22 July 2018. The Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, also raised our concerns about the region with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit to China on 30 July 2018.

Topical Questions
30 Oct 2018 | 648 c780

Asked by: Richard Graham

Twenty-five years ago, I was part of a British, Han Chinese and Uighur expedition that crossed the Taklamakan desert in western China for the first time. Today, Xinjiang is not a happy region, and there are worrying, wide-scale reports of abuses of the human rights of the Muslim Uighur population. Does the Minister believe that this is something we should be raising at the human rights talks in Geneva?

Answered by: Mr Hunt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

My hon. Friend is a great expert in Chinese matters. I think this issue is of very great, and growing, concern. We will raise it in all appropriate forums, and that may be a very good thought.

China: Detention Centres**25 Oct 2018 | HL10621****Asked by: Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of the widespread use of detention centres in Xinjiang, China; and whether they will make representations to the government of China to allow access to such centres by UN rapporteurs and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and reports of the Chinese Government's deepening crackdown; including credible reports of re-education camps and widespread surveillance and restrictions targeted at ethnic minorities. The Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field, raised our concerns about Xinjiang with Vice Minister Guo Yezhou during his visit to China on 22 July 2018. The Foreign Secretary also raised our concerns about the region with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit to China on 30 July 2018. The UK raised our concerns about Xinjiang in our Item 4 statement at the September UN Human Rights Council.

China: Human Rights**23 Oct 2018 | HL10450****Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of alleged human rights violations against China's Uighur population and of reports that up to one million Uighur have been sent to re-education camps; and what representations they have made to the government of China on these issues.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and continued reports of the Chinese Government's deepening crackdown; including credible reports of re-education camps and wide spread surveillance and restrictions targeted at ethnic minorities. I raised our concerns about Xinjiang with Vice Minister Guo Yezhou during my visit to China on 22 July 2018. The Foreign Secretary also raised our concerns about the region with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit to China on 30 July 2018. The UK raised our concerns about Xinjiang in our Item 4 statement at the September UN Human Rights Council.

[China: Detainees](#)

09 Oct 2018 | 174652

Asked by: Lyn Brown

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2018 to Question 165671 on China: Detainees, what recent estimate he has made of the level of internment of members of the Uighur minority in political re-education camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.

Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

There are no official figures detailing the number of people detained in the re-education camps in Xinjiang. However, credible reports estimate that at least one million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have been held in these camps.

The UK Government has serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and reports of the Chinese Government's deepening crackdown, including re-education camps, and wide spread surveillance and restrictions targeted at ethnic minorities. I raised our concerns about Xinjiang with Vice Minister Guo Yezhou during my visit to China on 22 July 2018. The Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, also raised our concerns about the region with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit to China in July 2018.

[China: Religious Freedom](#)

19 Sep 2018 | 173537

Asked by: Gregory Campbell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to the Chinese Government on reports that the freedom and rights of religious citizens are being restricted.

Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practice, change or share ones faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. We believe that societies which aim to guarantee freedom of religion or belief are more stable, prosperous and more resilient against violent extremism.

We regularly raise these concerns with the Chinese Government. I raised the situation in Xinjiang, where amongst other things we have serious concerns about restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, during my visit to China in late July. The Foreign Secretary also raised our concerns about Xinjiang during his visit to China on 30 July.

More broadly, we raised restrictions on freedom of religion or belief with the Chinese authorities at the UK/China Human Rights Dialogue

which took place in Beijing in June 2017, and in our statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 27 June 2018.

China: Human Rights

10 Sep 2018 | 170728

Asked by: Helen Goodman

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Chinese counterpart on the human rights of ethnic minorities.

Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We remain concerned about the treatment of ethnic minorities in China - particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about the situation in Xinjiang with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit to China in July 2018. I also raised our concerns about Xinjiang with Vice Minister Guo Yezhou during my visit to China on 22 July 2018.

We also raised our concerns about Tibet and Xinjiang in the June 2018 UN Human Rights Council and at the last round of the UK/China Human Rights Dialogue in June 2017.

China: Detainees

23 Jul 2018 | 165671

Asked by: Catherine West

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received on significant numbers of people being detained by the Chinese authorities in re-education camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Mark Field | Party: Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We are aware of credible reports of thousands of Uighurs being held in political re-education camps. UK officials recently visited Xinjiang to see the latest situation at first-hand, and found a heavy security presence on the ground. We raised our concerns in the UK statement at the Human Rights Council in June 2018 and with the Chinese authorities at the last UK/China Human Rights Dialogue which took place in June 2017. My officials will continue to monitor the situation in Xinjiang closely.

China: Ethnic Groups

18 Jul 2018 | HL9208

Asked by: Baroness Anelay of St Johns

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with the government of the People's Republic of China about the continued restrictions on Ughur people living in the Xinjian Uyghur Autonomous Region and that government's building and use of re-education camps there.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are aware of reports of significant numbers of individuals being detained by the Chinese authorities in re-education camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and that Uyghurs are subject to increasing security surveillance.

We remain deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in China, particularly in Xinjiang. We raised our concerns about the situation in Xinjiang directly with the Chinese authorities at the UK/China Human Rights Dialogue, which last took place in Beijing in June 2017. In addition we issued an item IV statement at the 38th UN Human Rights Council on 27 June 2018 which reiterated our concerns about re-education camps in Xinjiang. We also supported the EU item IV statement at the same session, which expressed a similar concern.

China: Religious Freedom

24 Oct 2017 | 108831

Asked by: Catherine West

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has received on restrictions on the right to freedom of religion or belief for Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China.

Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We remain deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in China, particularly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. We raised our concerns with the Chinese authorities at the UK/China Human Rights Dialogue which took place on 27 June 2017.

I receive a large amount of Parliamentary questions and correspondence on human rights in China, including on this issue. The FCO maintains an extensive network of contacts across China and the UK, and regularly meets with stakeholders to hear their views and concerns. This includes the China Human Rights NGO roundtable held on 28 September, where this particular issue, amongst others was discussed.

5. Other Parliamentary material

5.1 Statements

[Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report 2017](#)

16 July 2018 | HCWS858

Jeremy Hunt (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office): I have today laid before Parliament a copy of the 2017 Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Report on Human Rights and Democracy (Cm number:9644).

The report analyses human rights developments overseas in 2017 and illustrates how the government works to promote and defend human rights globally.

The report assesses the situation in 30 countries, which the FCO has designated as its Human Rights Priority Countries. These are Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Libya, Maldives, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

This year marks the 70th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The report I have laid before Parliament today demonstrates that the principles and values enshrined in the Universal Declaration remain as crucial as ever.

It also serves as a reminder that ensuring universal respect for those principles remains a difficult task.

The UK Government will continue to play a significant part in this endeavour to protect the 'inherent dignity' of 'all members of the human family'.

**The FCO report can be read in Chapter 6, below.*

5.2 Early Day Motions

[HUMAN RIGHTS IN XINJIANG](#)

EDM 1791 (session 2017-19)

31 October 2018

Alistair Carmichael

That this House expresses concern at reports from human rights groups that the Chinese Government have interned over a million Uyghurs in re-education camps across the Xinjiang region; notes that reports from the camps allege that detainees are being kept in squalid conditions and are forced to renounce their religion or face torture; further notes that these reports of mass incarceration of Uyghurs come at a time when the

Chinese Government have clamped down on civil liberties and introduced other measures which repress Uyghur culture; calls on the Government to make clear its opposition to the repression of the Uyghur community ahead of UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of China in November 2018; and urges the Chinese Government to close the detention centres immediately.

6. FCO Human Rights report

[Human Rights and Democracy: the 2017 Foreign and Commonwealth Office report](#) [Extract]

16 July 2018

Cm 9644

China

In 2017, there was increased evidence of civil and political rights being infringed in China, and of space for civil society being tightened further. While China focused on its record of improving economic and social rights and promoting the right to development, new legislation was introduced which further reduced freedom of speech and assembly. The continuing detention and trials of human rights lawyers and activists, and apparent lack of due process and judicial transparency, remained key issues.

Two important court cases suggested a greater recognition of homosexuality in Chinese law. In Henan, a medical institution was ordered to issue a public apology and compensate a man who was forcibly 'treated' with conversion therapy; and the first official case of male on male rape was heard. On the other hand, there were moves by the authorities to extend the ban on depicting homosexuality on television to the online media.

In 2017, there were more cases of human rights defenders, activists and lawyers facing punishment or ill-treatment. Lawyer Gao Zhisheng disappeared in August, and his whereabouts remained unknown. At least 5 of the over 200 individuals detained in the summer of 2015 remained in custody. Wang Quanzhang continued to be held in pre-trial detention without access to his lawyer. There were credible reports that Li Chunfu and Xie Yanyi had been tortured. Li Heping received a 3-year suspended sentence in April and Jiang Tianyong was given a 2-year sentence in November. Both were convicted of inciting state subversion and had their confessions broadcast.

The authorities tightened their control of expression, association and assembly. The Foreign NGO Law limited the scope of activities for international and domestic NGOs, with only 305 NGOs managing to register by the end of the year. There were credible reports of the police disrupting a range of civil society activities and events. The Cyber Security Law (which came into effect on 1 June) and the National Intelligence Law (28 June) restricted freedom of expression by increasing the scope for censorship and surveillance. State authorities deleted hundreds of social media accounts. The respected international NGO, Freedom House, reported that China had the worst record in the world for internet freedom.

Human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo died in custody in July, having been detained since 2008. His widow, Liu Xia, continued to face extrajudicial restrictions. Blogger Wu Gan was convicted of state subversion and in December was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, having been held in detention for over 2 years.

The right to freedom of religion or belief continued to come under pressure in China. There were continued reports of the detention, harassment and persecution of religious groups – including Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Falun Gong practitioners – and of the destruction of religious buildings. There were reports that Pastor Yang Hua was refused medical treatment while in detention.

The human rights situation in Tibet did not improve. Reports of severe restrictions and self-immolations continued. The pre-trial detention of Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk continued. 2017 marked 22 years since the disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima – the Dalai Lama's choice as Panchen Lama.

In Xinjiang, the authorities introduced intrusive security and surveillance measures and cultural restrictions targeted at the Uyghur Muslim population. Thousands of Uyghurs were held in re-education camps after returning from abroad.

China continued to use the death penalty and the number of people executed remained a 'state secret'. There were Chinese media reports of large show trials, followed by multiple executions. Amnesty International reported that China continued to execute more people annually than the rest of the world did put together.

The UK continued to monitor human rights in China, maintaining contact with human rights defenders and their families in China and the UK. We regularly raised our human rights concerns (including those mentioned in this report) with China through a wide variety of channels, including at the 24th round of the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue in Beijing in June. Ministers raised specific human rights concerns and cases in bilateral meetings and at public events, and issued statements. The UK was vocal in the UN and other multilateral fora and issued joint and unilateral statements. We attempted to observe trials and sentencing hearings in China, though we were consistently denied access.

On girls' education, the focus in China has been on women and girls' empowerment through the British Council's 'Inspiring Women China' programme working with schools, volunteers, and local communities to help raise the aspirations of younger generations, particularly girls. The UK's 'Be Yourself campaign' continues to raise awareness about gender equality; through credible voices, women's successes are celebrated, publicising individual experiences to provide inspiration for women all over China.

In 2018, we expect to see more pressure on Chinese citizens' rights with the introduction of a revised Constitution and new National Supervision Law. The authorities are likely to target activists and human rights defenders under recently introduced national security laws. We expect new regulations on religious affairs to limit further the right to freedom of religion or belief. The UK will continue to support projects in China in priority areas, including the abolition of the death penalty, criminal justice reform, strengthening civil society and rights of people belonging to minorities. We will raise human rights concerns regularly in public

and in private. Where possible, we will work with the grain to promote change.

This reporting period marked 20 years since the handover of Hong Kong to China. We continue to defend the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration strongly in public statements and in meetings with the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities. Over 2017, our assessment has been that the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework is generally functioning well, but that important areas of the framework continue to come under increased pressure. This included: the denial of entry to Hong Kong of a UK national and human rights activist, Benedict Rogers; the number of high profile judicial cases related to the political system; reports of mainland security officials operating within the Special Administrative Region; and continuing concerns about the exercise of some of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Joint Declaration and Basic Law. It remains the UK Government's view that, for Hong Kong's future success, it is essential that Hong Kong enjoys, and is seen to enjoy, the full measure of its high degree of autonomy, rule of law, independence of the judiciary, and rights and freedoms as set out in the Joint Declaration and enshrined in the Basic Law, in keeping with the commitment to 'One Country, Two Systems.'

A detailed analysis on Hong Kong is published separately in the government's [6 Monthly Reports to Parliament](#).

7. Further Reading

Websites

[Xinjiang homepage](#)

Human Rights Watch

Reports / publications

[World Report 2019: Annual View of Human Rights Around the Globe](#) [China chapter]

Human Rights Watch

[China 2017/2018](#)

Amnesty International

[China Is Violating Uighurs' Human Rights. The United States Must Act](#)

Foreign Policy

Michael H. Fuchs, Daniel Benaim and Blaine Johnson

28 November 2018

[UN Human Rights Council must demand answers from China over Xinjiang mass internment camps](#)

Amnesty International

2 November 2018

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