



DEBATE PACK

CDP 0061 (2021) | 20 April 2021

China and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region

House of Commons Chamber
Thursday 22 April 2021
Backbench Business Cttee debate

The proceedings of this debate can be viewed on [Parliamentlive.tv](https://parliamentlive.tv).

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.

Compiled by:
Nigel Walker

Subject specialist:
John Curtis

Contents

1. Background	2
Evidence of alleged human rights abuses	2
Media Reports	4
China's response to criticisms	4
UK policy and statements	5
Recent developments	6
2. News and media articles	9
3. Press releases	11
4. PQs	16
5. Debates	24
6. Statements	25
7. Urgent Questions	30

1. Background

[Xinjiang](#) is China's largest administrative region and has been an Autonomous Region since 1955. The largest ethnic group is the Muslim, Turkic-speaking Uighurs. There are about 12 million Uighurs, making up just under half of the 25-million population of Xinjiang.

The Uighurs speak their own language, similar to Turkish. There are smaller Uighur populations in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, the latter two of which border Xinjiang (the region also has borders with Tajikistan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India).

A number of NGOs and UN bodies have chronicled restrictive and oppressive measures employed by the Chinese authorities against ethnic minorities in Xinjiang province (MPs referred to such reports during a [debate on human rights in Xinjiang](#) in Westminster Hall January 2019 and on [China's policy on its Uighur population](#) in March 2020).

The Chinese state has [repeatedly rejected](#) such reports. The Chinese Ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming, [appeared on](#) the Andrew Marr show in July 2020 to reject claims about detention camps, describing them as "fake".

There are some [separatist groups in Xinjiang](#) that want to break away from Chinese rule and have on occasion used violent tactics. China has pointed to such incidents to justify its approach in the region saying it is [tackling "terrorism"](#), and is trying to "[de-radicalise](#)" the population.

Evidence of alleged human rights abuses

Successive UK governments have expressed concern about the human rights situation of the Uighurs in Xinjiang since 2009, when ethnic violence brought world-wide attention to the issues in the region. The [July 2009 unrest reportedly started as peaceful protests](#) by Uighurs, which were suppressed by the authorities and later escalated into riots, which saw [some violence](#) by Uighurs against Han Chinese (the ethnic group that makes up most of China).

Global concern has increased markedly since 2018, when [reports emerged](#) that China had interned about one million Uighurs in political education camps.

2018 UN report

The [UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) published a report in August 2018 which has been regularly cited by MPs and the UK Government.

The Committee expressed alarm at the reports of:

- the detention of large numbers of ethnic Uighurs and other Muslim minorities under the pretext of countering religious extremism
- mass surveillance disproportionality targeting ethnic Uighurs, including scanning of mobile phones and mandatory collection of biometric data
- restrictions on travel with the requirement that all residents must apply for permission to leave the country
- the forcible return of Uighurs who had left China

The committee made eight recommendations to China, including for the immediate halt to detaining people who have not been lawfully charged, tried and convicted in what it called extra-legal detention facilities and the immediate release of all individuals held in such circumstances.

Human Rights Watch

In a 2018 report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) described the Chinese government's "[mass arbitrary detention, torture, and mistreatment](#)" of Xinjiang's Muslims. HRW reports [China is collecting biometric data](#) (DNA, fingerprints) from residents in the region. Amnesty International has similarly [reported on restrictions](#) placed on ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. Human Rights Watch reported as recently as 20 February 2020 more evidence of what it described as "[horrific abuses](#)" in Xinjiang.

Jamestown Foundation reports

In June 2020, Dr Adrian Zenz, a researcher at the Jamestown Foundation who has been the source of [several reports](#) on the treatment of Uighurs, released [a report](#) stating China was conducting a campaign to suppress the birth-rates of Uighurs in Xinjiang.

Media [reporting](#) of Dr Zenz's work said that Uighur women and other ethnic minorities "were being threatened with internment in the camps for refusing to abort pregnancies that exceed birth quotas", and women "who had fewer than the legally permitted limit of two children were involuntarily fitted with intrauterine contraceptives". In addition, "some of the women said they were being coerced into receiving sterilisation surgeries".

Zenz's research found that population growth in Xinjiang counties predominantly home to ethnic minorities fell below the average growth in primarily Han majority counties between 2017 and 2018.

Chinese state media [dismissed this evidence](#), citing figures that the overall growth of the Uighur population continued:

The growth rate of the Uygur population is nearly twice that of the overall residents and is way higher than that of the Han population. The Uygur population has increased by more than 2.5 million people in merely eight years. What kind of "genocide" is this? Zenz, with his anti-China stance, fabricated his conclusion without any basis.

Media Reports

Media have also reported on detention camps. In November 2019 BBC Panorama, with other international media, reported sight of leaked documents which show hundreds of thousands of [Muslims are mistreated in high security camps](#).

In February 2020 the Associated Press (AP) news agency obtained details of a database with dossiers on hundreds of people interned in the province. AP says the database "[emphasises that the Chinese government focused on religion as a reason for detention](#)" by providing the reason for detention – often everyday activities such as praying or attending a mosque. China denies discrimination based on religion and argues the detention centres are for voluntary job training.

In October 2020 The Atlantic Magazine, published [an article](#) based on interviews with Uighurs residing abroad, that detailed accounts of China suppressing Uighur identity and culture. The magazine labelled this as "cultural genocide".

In February 2021, the BBC obtained [detailed first-hand reports](#) from Uighur women, saying that in the "re-education" camps for Uighurs, there was systematic rape, sexual abuse, and torture.

China's response to criticisms

In October 2018 Xinjiang Regional government chairman, Shohrat Zakir, in a state media interview acknowledged the existence of facilities that provided "vocational training". [Reuters reported](#) that the official said trainees signed "education agreements" to receive "concentrated training" and undergo "live-in study".

"Through vocational training, most trainees have been able to reflect on their mistakes and see clearly the essence and harm of terrorism and religious extremism," Zakir was quoted as saying.

A March 2019 [Chinese Government report](#) 'The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang' sets out its view of the situation in the region, and the "law-based de-radicalization" it has pursued.

Education and training centers [sic] have been established with the goal of educating and rehabilitating people guilty of minor crimes or law-breaking and eradicating the influence of terrorism and extremism, in order to prevent them from falling victim to terrorism and extremism, and to nip terrorist activities in the bud.

It states that these centres are more akin to boarding schools and those in them have some freedom to leave:

[They] adopt a boarding school management system, and are staffed with instructors, doctors and personnel for logistic services and management to provide trainees with a normal study and life routine. Trainees can have home visits on a regular basis and can ask for leave to attend to private affairs.

The report acknowledges that "in accordance with the law, the centers [sic] adopt a policy of separating education and religion. Trainees may not organize and participate in religious activities."

This bar on worship was also [reported by the BBC](#) when they were invited in 2019 by the Chinese Government to what the BBC called “re-education camps”.

In July 2020, Andrew Marr interviewed Liu Xiaoming, Chinese Ambassador to the UK. Asked about images reportedly showing the mistreatment of Uighur people, Mr Liu [stated](#) that the figure of one million Uighur being persecuted was a “fake accusation”. The Ambassador asked if there was ethnic cleansing in Xinjiang how has “the population doubled in 40 years?”.

Mr Liu went onto say “the majority of Xinjiang people are happy with what is going on in Xinjiang. In the past three years there’s no single terrorist attack in Xinjiang”. And that the “Uighur people enjoy [a] harmonious life, peaceful, harmonious coexistence with other ethnic group of people”.

UK policy and statements

As UK-China relations have deteriorated over the last few years, political pressure on the UK Government to give [greater priority](#) to human rights issues such as that of the Uighurs has grown.

China remains a human rights ‘[priority country](#)’ for the UK. The Government has repeatedly expressed its “[serious concerns about deepening crackdown by the Government of China on religious and ethnic minorities](#)”. In the Human Rights and Democracy report 2018 the Government said:

There were credible reports (in 2018) of more than one million Uyghur Muslims and members of other ethnic minority groups being held in extrajudicial ‘political re-education’ camps, of widespread surveillance and restrictions targeted at minorities, and of families detained and children forcibly adopted.

In November 2019, after the BBC Panorama report based on leaked Chinese Government data, the UK Government called on China to allow UN observers “[immediate and unfettered access](#)”.

Action at the United Nations

The UK representative to the UN delivered a [joint statement on behalf of 23 countries](#) on Xinjiang at the Third Committee Dialogue of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in October 2019. The statement said they shared the concerns raised by the Committee in its August 2018 report and called on the Chinese Government to implement the Committee’s eight recommendations, including halting arbitrary detentions. The 23 countries also called on China to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures immediate unfettered, meaningful access to Xinjiang.

At the end of June 2020, the UK joined with 26 other countries in [issuing a statement](#) at the UN Human Rights Council expressing deep concern about the situation in Xinjiang Province. The UK reiterated calls for UN investigators to be allowed access to the region.

Ministerial statements/comments

Nigel Adams, the Minister for Asia, [outlined the government's views](#) during the March 2020 debate on Uighurs. 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 said 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, he [said that](#) "we believe, based on all available evidence, that its actions are disproportionate, systematic and counterproductive".

Recent developments

Select Committee reports

The Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) in a 2019 report, on '[China and the Rules-Based International System](#)', looked at the situation of the Uighurs. The Committee said it was "extremely concerned" by the treatment of the Muslim population in China's Xinjiang province, where, the committee said "there is credible evidence to believe that more than a million Uighur people and other minorities have been held in detention camps".

The Committee has now launched a new inquiry into Xinjiang detention camps.

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office has [submitted written evidence](#) to that inquiry that includes claims that human rights violations are taking place in the region:

1. There is compelling evidence of widespread and systematic human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang, including the extrajudicial detention of over a million Uyghurs since 2017. Satellite imagery suggests that the Chinese authorities continue to construct internment camps and demolish mosques and other religious sites. Systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and religion remain widespread, and there is extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities. There is also credible evidence of forced labour both within and beyond Xinjiang, and of the forced suppression of births.

The FAC [invited the Chinese Government](#) to submit evidence to the inquiry, but it doesn't appear to have done so.

The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee (BEISC) 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 subject of systematic human rights violations, including forced labour, sanctioned by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

Amendments to the Trade Bill

The peer Lord Alton proposed an amendment to the [Trade Bill](#), to address the question of trade agreements with states where there is credible evidence of genocide.

Supporters of the amendment in the House of Commons, [said it was necessary](#) in part because of China's actions in Xinjiang against the Uighur people.

The amendment would have created a Parliamentary Judicial Committee made up of Parliamentarians who have held senior judicial office. This committee would make a preliminary determination on genocide. The Government would be required to respond to this. If the relevant select committee was unhappy with the Government's response, the Government would have to allow a debate and vote in the House of Commons. Similar provisions would apply in the House of Lords,

The amendment was agreed by the House of Lords but defeated in the House of Commons, despite support from some Conservative backbenchers, such as Iain Duncan Smith and Nusrat Ghani. Labour supported the amendment. The House of Lords is not pressing this amendment any further.

A government-backed amendment by Sir Robert Neill MP was agreed. This also set out a procedure leading to a vote but did not involve the creation of a Parliamentary Judicial Committee. Under the Neill amendment, Select Committees in the House of Commons and Lords will draw conclusions on whether there are credible reports of genocide in the prospective trade agreement partner.

The Trade Bill has now completed all its Parliamentary stages and is awaiting Royal Assent.

March 2021 sanctions

On 22 March 2021 the UK 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 human rights violations taking place against Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang".

Announcing the sanctions the 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". Mr Raab went onto 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.

On 26 March China announced it was imposing its own sanctions in response on nine UK citizens, including five MPs and two peers.

The [BBC quoted](#) a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman as saying the UK's decision to impose sanctions "flagrantly breaches international law

and basic norms governing international relations, grossly interferes in China's internal affairs, and severely undermines China-UK relations".

The spokesman added that the Chinese foreign ministry had summoned the British Ambassador to China to "lodge solemn representations, expressing firm opposition and strong condemnation".

The BBC also reported that a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, later told a press briefing China was forced to act "in self-defence" in response to UK sanctions "based on lies".

2. News 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.

[Campaigners call for global response to 'unprecedented' oppression in Xinjiang](#)

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
19 April 2021

[From cover-up to propaganda blitz: China's attempts to control the narrative on Xinjiang](#)

CNN
James Griffiths
17 April 2021

[Commons to vote on declaration of genocide in Xinjiang province](#)

The Guardian
Patrick Wintour
14 April 2021

[China launches musical in bid to counter Uyghur abuse allegations](#)

The Guardian
3 April 2021

[US human rights report calls China's treatment of Uyghurs 'genocide'](#)

Financial Times
Demetri Sevastopulo and Aime Williams
31 March 2021

[The 6th Press conference by Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Xinjiang-related Issues in Beijing](#)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China
31 March 2021

[UN in talks with China over 'no restrictions' visit to Xinjiang](#)

The Guardian
29 March 2021

[The Times view on China and the Uighurs: Beijing's Bet](#)

The Times
27 March 2021

[Don't dare lecture us on human rights, China tells Joe Biden](#)

The Times
Didi Tang
26 March 2021

[Stakes are too high for China to give ground on Xinjiang Uighurs](#)

The Times
Didi Tang
25 March 2021

[Uighurs: UK sanctions four Chinese officials over 'appalling violations' of human rights in Xinjiang](#)

Sky News Online
Alan McGuinness
22 March 2021

[China sending children of exiled Uighur parents to orphanages, says Amnesty](#)

BBC News Online
19 March 2021

[Fact Check: Lies on Xinjiang-related issues versus the truth](#)

Xinhua
5 February 2021

3. Press releases

[Human rights violations in Xinjiang: Canada, UK and US joint statement](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
22 March 2021

Foreign Ministers of Canada and the United Kingdom, and the United States Secretary of State statement on their ongoing concern regarding China's human rights violations and abuses in Xinjiang:

We, the Foreign Ministers of Canada and the United Kingdom, and the United States Secretary of State, are united in our deep and ongoing concern regarding China's human rights violations and abuses in Xinjiang. The evidence, including from the Chinese Government's own documents, satellite imagery, and eyewitness testimony is overwhelming. China's extensive program of repression includes severe restrictions on religious freedoms, the use of forced labour, mass detention in internment camps, forced sterilisations, and the concerted destruction of Uyghur heritage.

Today, we have taken coordinated action on measures, in parallel to measures by the European Union, that send a clear message about the human rights violations and abuses in Xinjiang. We are united in calling for China to end its repressive practices against Uyghur Muslims and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang, and to release those arbitrarily detained.

We underline the importance of transparency and accountability and call on China to grant the international community, including independent investigators from the United Nations, journalists, and foreign diplomats, unhindered access to Xinjiang.

We will continue to stand together to shine a spotlight on China's human rights violations. We stand united and call for justice for those suffering in Xinjiang.

[UK sanctions perpetrators of gross human rights violations in Xinjiang, alongside EU, Canada and US](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
22 March 2021

- Foreign Secretary announces first UK sanctions against Chinese Government officials
- sanctions target 4 senior officials and the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps
- new measures complement action by the European Union, Canada and the United States

The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has announced sanctions against the perpetrators of gross human rights violations taking place against Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang, in a move coordinated by the international community.

The UK will, for the first time, impose asset freezes and travel bans against 4 Chinese government officials, as well as a Xinjiang security body, under the [UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime](#) for systemic violations against Uyghurs and other minorities.

The measures come as part of intensive diplomacy by the UK, United States, Canada and European Union to deliver complementary action on Xinjiang. It follows the trend of a growing number of countries holding China to account for its human rights record, with 39 countries signing a joint statement at the UN.

Acting together sends the clearest possible signal that the international community is united in its condemnation of China's human rights violations in Xinjiang and the need for Beijing to end its discriminatory and oppressive practices in the region.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The evidence of widespread human rights abuses in Xinjiang cannot be ignored – including mass detention and surveillance, reports of torture and forced sterilisation.

Working with our international partners we are imposing targeted sanctions to hold those responsible to account.

The UK sanctions will be immediately imposed against:

1. The Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps – a state run organisation responsible for security and policing in areas administered by the XPCC
2. Zhu Hailun, Former Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Committee of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
3. Wang Junzheng, Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and previously Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Committee of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
4. Wang Mingshan, Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Committee of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and former Director of the Public Security Department of XUAR
5. Chen Mingguo, Vice Chairman of the Government of the XUAR, and Director of the XUAR Public Security Department

[Statement of the Chinese Embassy in the UK on Xinjiang-related Issues](#)

**Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom
13 January 2021**

On January 12th, UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and a few others made irresponsible remarks on Xinjiang-related issues at the House of

Commons, slandering and discrediting the development in Xinjiang and China's policies, and announcing restrictive measures on companies allegedly involved in the so-called "forced labour". The Chinese side expresses grave concern at and strong opposition to such blatant interference in China's internal affairs under the name of Xinjiang-related issues.

For some time, certain Western countries, including the UK, have been fabricating and spreading the "lies of the century", including the so-called "mass detention", "suppression of ethnic culture", "forced sterilization" and "forced labour" in Xinjiang. The Chinese side has explained the situation to the UK and other relevant countries through multilateral and bilateral channels on many occasions to clarify the facts, debunk the lies and state our position. The Chinese Government has issued eight white papers on Xinjiang and the Government of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has hosted 22 press conferences to provide information about the economic and social development in Xinjiang and other relevant facts. Moreover, in recent years, the Chinese side has invited more than 1,000 diplomats, journalists and representatives of faith groups from over 100 countries to visit Xinjiang and see with their own eyes the real situation there. From 19th to 22nd October 2020, ambassadors and diplomats from 20 diplomatic missions of Arab countries and the Arab League in China visited Xinjiang. They spoke highly of the achievements in the economy, society and human rights situation in the region and pointed out that the accusations against human rights situation in Xinjiang and China were completely groundless. However, to our disappointment and indignation, the UK side has clung to its bias in total disregard to the facts, confused right and wrong on Xinjiang-related issues and taken negative measures. The Chinese side expresses its strong opposition and would like to reiterate its solemn position:

First, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has seen social stability, economic growth, ethnic unity, harmony between different religions, development in culture and improvement in people's wellbeing. All these are basic and undeniable facts that are fully recognized. The rumours and lies about Xinjiang are groundless. They were fabricated and spread by anti-China forces and ill-intentioned institutions and some Western media. The fact is that, from 10.17 million in 2010 to 12.72 million in 2018, the population of ethnic Uygurs in Xinjiang increased by 2.55 million, That is an increase of 25%, almost doubling the average growth rate of the entire population in Xinjiang (14%) and hugely higher than the growth rate of the population of ethnic Hans (2%). This fact shows that the claim of "forced sterilization" is absurd. As for the absurd conclusion of some anti-China elements, including Adrian Zenz, that 10% of the more than 20 million people in Xinjiang are detained at so-called "reeducation camps", this is based on their rough estimation and interview of only eight people who are ethnic Uygurs. These lies and absurd accusations do not hold water.

Second, there is no so-called "forced labour" in Xinjiang. Helping people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang to find a stable job is absolutely not "forced labour". People of all ethnic groups choose jobs according to their own will and sign labour contracts with their employers on an equal and voluntary basis. Chinese Governments at all levels fully

respect the will of people of all ethnic groups with regard to employment and provide necessary vocational training for those who sign up for relevant jobs. According to a report on the employment situation of ethnic minority population in Xinjiang, an average of 86.5% of the people from the four villages that were surveyed are willing to work away from their home village. This shows that people of minority ethnic groups in the region have a strong willingness to look for jobs in other places. The smiles on the face of people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang who managed to get rid of poverty after finding jobs are the best and most effective rebuttal to the relevant lies and rumours.

Third, the affairs of Xinjiang are purely China's internal affairs and brook no interference by any foreign country in any form. The relevant measures of the UK side run counter to the basic norms governing international relations, undermine the rules in international trade and the principles of market economy, and disrupt the global industrial and supply chain. These measures will only harm the interests of companies and consumers of all countries, including the UK, and benefit no one. The Chinese side opposes politicizing economic and trade issues and will take necessary measures in accordance with law to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests. We strongly urge the UK side to discard its bias, respect facts, immediately withdraw the wrong decision, stop hyping up the "lies of the century" about Xinjiang, and stop interfering in China's internal affairs. Going further down the wrong path will only be self-defeating.

[Human rights situation in Xinjiang and recent developments in Hong Kong: joint statement](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

6 October 2020

Joint statement given by Germany on behalf of 39 countries at the UN General Assembly Third Committee:

Madam President, I have the honour of delivering this cross-regional joint statement on behalf of the following 39 countries: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Monaco, Nauru, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and my own country Germany.

We are gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and the recent developments in Hong Kong.

In June 2020, 50 UN Special Procedures mandate holders issued an exceptional letter of concern, calling on the People's Republic of China to respect human rights. We share their grave concerns. We call on China to respect human rights, particularly the rights of persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, especially in Xinjiang and Tibet.

On Xinjiang, we are gravely concerned about the existence of a large network of 'political re-education' camps where credible reports indicate that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained. We have seen an increasing number of reports of gross human rights violations. There are severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and the freedoms of movement, association, and expression as well as on Uyghur culture. Widespread surveillance disproportionately continues to target Uyghurs and other minorities and more reports are emerging of forced labour and forced birth control including sterilization.

We also share concerns expressed separately by a group of UN experts that a number of provisions in the Hong Kong National Security Law do not conform to China's international legal obligations. We have deep concerns about elements of the National Security Law that allow for certain cases to be transferred for prosecution to the Chinese mainland. We urge the relevant authorities to guarantee the rights which are protected under the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) and the Sino-British Joint Declaration, including freedoms of speech, the press and assembly.

Mr Chair, we call on China to allow immediate, meaningful and unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent observers including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office, and relevant special procedure mandate holders; to urgently implement CERD's eight recommendations related to Xinjiang, including by refraining from the arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and members of other minorities. In view of our concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, we call on all countries to respect the principle of non-refoulement. We also call on China to uphold autonomy, rights and freedoms in Hong Kong, and to respect the independence of the Hong Kong judiciary.

Thank you.

4. PQs

[China: Uighurs](#)

13 Apr 2021 | 175789

Asked by: Yasmin Qureshi

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further steps the (a) Government and (b) UN are planning to take in response to human rights abuses in the Xinjiang Province of China against the Uyghur Muslims.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The government remains gravely concerned by the human rights situation in Xinjiang and is committed to continued robust action to hold China to account for its human rights violations in the region. In February, the Foreign Secretary used a personal address at the UN Human Rights Council to reiterate his call for China to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, or another independent expert, urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang. On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK had imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes and travel bans against four senior Chinese government officials responsible for the violations that have taken place and persist against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Alongside those individuals, the UK also designated the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang.

[China: Uighurs](#)

13 Apr 2021 | 175788

Asked by: Yasmin Qureshi

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation of Uighur children in China in the context of reports of the forced separation of exiled families and children, highlighted in the recent Amnesty International report, entitled China: The Nightmare of Uyghur Families Separated by Repression.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are deeply concerned by reports of the mistreatment of Uyghur children, including reports of children being forcibly separated from their parents and placed in state run institutions. The Government has taken careful note of Amnesty International's report of 19 March 2021 and will continue to engage with a range of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and other experts, to inform our understanding of the situation in Xinjiang and guide policy development. We will also continue to take action to hold China to account for its human rights violation in Xinjiang, working closely with international partners. On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK has imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes

and travel bans against four senior Chinese government officials responsible for the violations that have taken place and persist against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Alongside those individuals, the UK also designated the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang.

[Chen Quanguo](#)

13 Apr 2021 | 175017

Asked by: Imran Ahmad Khan

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will place sanctions on Chen Quanguo, the highest ranking Chinese Communist Party Official in Xinjiang.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK has imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes and travel bans against four Chinese government officials responsible for the violations that have taken place and persist against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Alongside those individuals, the UK also designated the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang. By acting with 30 other countries on an agreed set of designations we increased the reach and impact of these measures and sent the clearest possible signal of the international community's serious concern and collective willingness to act. The FCDO will keep all evidence and potential listings under close review.

[China: Uighurs](#)

13 Apr 2021 | 174969

Asked by: Sarah Owen

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions (a) he, (b) officials of his Department and (c) Cabinet colleagues have had with representatives of the UN on potential steps the UN plans to take in response to the human rights abuses in the Xinjiang Province of China against the Uyghur Muslims.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Government is committed to working with international partners, including the UN, to hold China to account for its human rights violations in Xinjiang. Ministers and Officials are in regular contact with counterparts at the UN in New York and Geneva. For example, the Minister for Human Rights, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, spoke to the High Commissioner for Human Rights in September. In February, the Foreign Secretary used a personal address at the UN Human Rights Council to reiterate his call for China to allow the UN High

Commissioner for Human Rights, or another independent expert, urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang.

[China: Uighurs](#)

29 Mar 2021 | 172042

Asked by: Shabana Mahmood

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department made of the implications for the integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy of Chinese treatment of Uighur people in Xinjiang province during the period of that review.

Answering member: James Heappey | Ministry of Defence

The situation in Xinjiang is one of the worst human rights crises of our time. The Government has repeatedly made its concerns clear and advocates that China must be held to account for their human rights violations. The Foreign Secretary's announcement in Parliament on Monday 22 March of sanctions targeting four key individuals alongside the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps represents the latest of a series of actions which send an unequivocal message that those responsible for serious human rights violations in China will face consequences.

This latest action reflects the approach and objectives articulated in the Integrated Review; the UK is committed to being a force for good in standing up for human rights around the world, using our independent sanction regime to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations and abuses.

The Review recognises that China presents a complex, systemic challenge to the UK and our allies. As the Review makes clear, we need to be prepared to push back to protect our values and global interests, while maintaining our ability to cooperate in tackling global challenges such as climate change and the mutual benefits of our economic relationship. The UK wants a mature, positive relationship with China, based on mutual respect and trust. There is considerable scope for constructive engagement and cooperation. But as we strive for that positive relationship, we will not sacrifice either our values or our security. As we continue to engage, we will always protect our national interests and hold China to its international commitments and promises.

[China: Uighurs](#)

25 Mar 2021 | 173207

Asked by: Imran Ahmad Khan

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the finding of Amnesty International's report of 19 March 2021 alleging that China has been sending the children of exiled Uighur parents to orphanages.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are deeply concerned by reports of the mistreatment of Uyghur children, including reports of children being forcibly separated from their parents and placed in state run institutions. The Government has noted Amnesty International's report of 19 March 2021 and will continue to engage with a range of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and other experts, to inform our understanding of the situation in Xinjiang and guide policy development. We will also continue to take action to hold China to account for its human rights violation in Xinjiang, working closely with international partners. On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK has imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes and travel bans against four Chinese Government officials, as well the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang.

[China: Uighurs](#)**25 Mar 2021 | 172851****Asked by: Stephen Timms**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the evidential basis to suggest that the Chinese state is committing genocide against Uyghur Muslims; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, and closely monitors the significant volume of credible, open source evidence suggesting serious, systemic violations are occurring in the region. The UK continues to work closely with international partners to hold China to account. On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK has imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes and travel bans against four Chinese government officials, as well the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang.

It is the long-standing policy of the UK Government that any judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent court.

[China: Uighurs](#)**25 Mar 2021 | 172849****Asked by: Stephen Timms**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in that country.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We have repeatedly raised our deep concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang at senior levels with the Chinese government, including the Foreign Secretary raising directly with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Counsellor Wang Yi on a number of occasions. Through these regular representations we have underlined a wide range of specific concerns, including the extra-judicial detention of Uyghurs and other minorities and the credible reports of forced labour, torture and forced sterilisation.

[China: Uighurs](#)

17 Mar 2021 | 166370

Asked by: Shabana Mahmood

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on UK security co-operation with Canada of the decision of the Canadian Parliament to deem the actions of China on the Uighur population as genocide.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We have taken note of the motion passed by the Canadian House of Commons relating to Xinjiang, though this has no impact on our security cooperation with Canada. The UK continues to play a leading role in holding China to account for its gross human rights abuses in Xinjiang, working closely with international partners including Canada. It is the long-standing policy of the British Government that any judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent court, rather than for Governments or non-judicial bodies.

[China: Uighurs](#)

16 Mar 2021 | HL13781

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of China about (1) the BBC report on the treatment of Uighur women in Xinjiang who said they had been subject to sexual violence in re-education camps, published on 2 February, and (2) its decision to ban BBC World News broadcasts; and what plans they have to raise these issues as a breach of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the UN Human Rights Council.

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

As Minister Adams said in the House of Commons on 4 February, the BBC report of 3 February includes deeply distressing testimony of the rape, torture and dehumanisation of Uyghur women in Xinjiang detention centres. It is a further, compelling addition to the growing body of evidence of the gross human rights violations being perpetrated against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang. The Government has raised the specific allegations in the BBC report with

the Chinese Embassy in London. The Government has also raised China's decision to ban BBC World News in mainland China - an unacceptable curtailing of media freedom - directly with the Chinese authorities.

We continue to play a leading role in holding China to account for human rights violations, working closely with international partners, including at the UN. On 22 February, during his high level statement to the Human Rights Council, the Foreign Secretary underlined the need for urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights or another independent fact-finding expert.

China: Uighurs

12 Mar 2021 | HL13778

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the motions passed by the Canadian House of Commons on 22 February and Dutch Parliament on 25 February to declare that the treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang amounts to a genocide; and what plans they have to make such a determination

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

We have taken note of the motions passed by the Canadian House of Commons and the House of Representatives of the Netherlands relating to Xinjiang. The Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in the region. We continue to play a leading role in holding China to account, working closely with international partners, including Canada and the Netherlands.

It is the long-standing policy of the British Government that any judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent court, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies.

China: Uighurs

08 Mar 2021 | 162695

Asked by: Afzal Khan

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of sending dignitaries to the 2022 Beijing Olympics in light of the human rights abuses being perpetrated by the Chinese Government in Xinjiang.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK is not normally in favour of sporting boycotts. No decisions have been made about Ministerial attendance at the Beijing Olympics in 2022, or any other Ministerial travel in 2022. Participation of the national team at the Winter Olympics is a matter for the British Olympic

Association, who are required to operate independently of the government under International Olympic Committee regulations.

The Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We continue to play a leading role in holding China to account for its human rights violations in the region, working closely with international partners, including at the UN.

[China: Genocide](#)

01 Mar 2021 | 154943

Asked by: Caroline Lucas

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration in respect of whether the treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang, China amounts to genocide; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. The UK plays a leading role in holding China to account for its human rights violations in the region, working closely with international partners, including the US. We regularly discuss our concerns and related questions of policy with the US. In a call on 27 January 2021, the Foreign Secretary and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed cooperation to hold China to its international commitments. It is the long-standing policy of the British Government that any judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent court.

[China: Human Rights](#)

01 Mar 2021 | 154941

Asked by: Caroline Lucas

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the credibility of allegations that have been made in respect of the (a) detention of hundreds of thousands of Uighurs and other minority groups in closed camps, (b) systematic use of rape and torture in those camps, (c) demolition of mosques and suppression of Islamic symbols, beliefs and practices belonging to those groups, (d) forced separation of children and families in those groups for education in state institutions, (e) forced sterilisation of women in those groups and (f) systematic suppression of reproductive rights among members of those groups as a means of population control targeted at specific ethnic groups.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

There is a large, diverse and growing body of evidence that underpins allegations of the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in "political re-education camps"; the systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam; and

invasive surveillance targeting minorities. This evidence includes first hand testimony from victims who have fled the region; satellite imagery showing the scale of the internment camps; and extensive and credible third party reports from NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

The UK Government is also deeply concerned by reports of the separation of children from their families, and distressing testimonies of the sexual assault and forced sterilisation of Uyghur women in Xinjiang detention centres. These testimonies are further, compelling additions to the evidence of gross human rights violations being perpetrated against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang.

China: Detainees

23 Feb 2021 | HL13160

Asked by: Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they have on (1) the number of concentration camps run by the government of China in Xinjiang, and (2) how many people are held in any such camps.

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

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang including the extra-judicial detention of Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in "political re-education camps". Credible open source reporting indicates that up to 380 suspected detention facilities in Xinjiang have been newly built or expanded since 2017, and that over one million Uyghurs and other minorities have been detained in the camps over a similar period. The data currently available does not allow us to ascertain the number of people detained at any one time.

China: Uighurs

05 Feb 2021 | 145072

Asked by: Rachael Maskell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what additional steps the (a) UK Government and (b) UN are planning to take in response to the human rights abuses in the Xinjiang Province of China against the Uyghur Muslims.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Government will continue to demonstrate international leadership to hold China to account for its gross violations of human rights in Xinjiang, including at the UN. On 6 October 2020, the UK and 38 other countries joined a statement at the UN Third Committee in New York expressing deep concern at the situation in Xinjiang. On 12 January, the Foreign Secretary announced a robust package of measures to help ensure that British organisations, whether public or private sector, are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in Xinjiang. We have also repeatedly urged China to allow the UN Human Rights Commissioner unfettered access to the region.

5. Debates

[China's Policy on its Uyghur Population](#)

12 Oct 2020 | House of Commons | 682 cc26-50WH
Motion that this House has considered e-petition 300146 relating to China's policy on its Uighur population. Motion lapsed.

[Detention of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang](#)

09 Sep 2020 | House of Commons | 679 cc1436-808
Agreed to on question.

[China's Policy on its Uighur Population](#)

11 Mar 2020 | House of Commons | 673 cc129-152WH
Motion that this House has considered China's policy on its Uighur population. Agreed to on question.

[Human Rights: Xinjiang](#)

29 Jan 2019 | House of Commons | 653 cc323-347WH
Motion that this House has considered human rights in Xinjiang. Agreed to on question.

6. Statements

[Human Rights Update](#)

22 Mar 2021 | 691 cc621-635

Dominic Raab (Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the treatment of the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

This is one of the worst human rights crises of our time and I believe the evidence is clear, as it is sobering. It includes satellite imagery; survivor testimony; official documentation and, indeed, leaks from the Chinese Government themselves; credible open-source reporting, including from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International; and visits by British diplomats to the region that have corroborated other reports about the targeting of specific ethnic groups.

In sum, the evidence points to a highly disturbing programme of repression. Expressions of religion have been criminalised, and Uyghur language and culture discriminated against on a systematic scale. There is widespread use of forced labour; women forcibly sterilised; children separated from their parents; an entire population subject to surveillance, including collection of DNA and use of facial recognition software and so-called predictive policing algorithms.

State control in the region is systemic. Over 1 million people have been detained without trial. There are widespread claims of torture and rape in the camps based on first-hand survivor testimony. People are detained for having too many children, for praying too much, for having a beard or wearing a headscarf, for having the wrong thoughts.

I am sure the whole House will join 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, and I believe one thing is clear: the international community cannot simply look the other way.

It has been two and a half years since the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called on China to stop arbitrarily detaining Uyghurs and other minorities in the Xinjiang province. It is over 18 months since the UK led the first ever joint UN statement on Xinjiang at the UN General Assembly's third committee, back in October 2019. The number of countries now willing to speak out collectively has grown from just 23 to 39 as the evidence has accumulated and as our diplomatic efforts have borne fruit. That is a clear signal to China about the breadth of international concern.

Last year, 50 independent UN experts spoke out about the situation in an exceptional joint statement calling on China to respect basic human rights. Last month at the Human Rights Council, I led the calls on China to give the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet—or some other fact-finding expert—urgent, unfettered access to Xinjiang. Since then, Ms Bachelet herself has

reinforced in the clearest terms the need for independent access to verify the deteriorating situation. We regret that, instead of recognising those calls from the international community, China has simply sought to deny them. Chinese authorities have claimed that the legitimate concerns raised are fake news. At the same time, the authorities continue to expand prison facilities, surveillance networks and forced labour programmes. China continues to resist access for the UN or other independent experts to verify the truth, notwithstanding its blanket denials.

For the UK's part, our approach has been to call out these egregious, industrial-scale human rights abuses, to work with our international partners and ultimately to match words with actions. In January, I announced a package of measures to help ensure that no British organisations—Government or private sector—deliberately or inadvertently can profit from human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities, and that no businesses connected with the internment camps can do business in the UK.

Today, we are taking further steps, again in co-ordination with our international partners. Having very carefully considered the evidence against the criteria in our global human rights sanctions regime, I can tell the House that I am designating four senior individuals responsible for the violations that have taken place and persist against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Alongside those individuals, we are also designating the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. That is the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang. The sanctions involve travel bans and asset freezes against the individuals and asset freezes against the entity we are designating. The individuals are barred from entering the UK. Any assets found in the UK will be frozen.

We take this action alongside the EU, the US and Canada, which are all taking similar measures today. I think it is clear that, by acting with our partners—30 of us in total—we are sending the clearest 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, and that we will act in concert to hold those responsible to account.

As the Prime Minister set out in the integrated review last week, China is an important partner in tackling global challenges such as climate change. We pursue a constructive dialogue where that proves possible, but we will always stand up for our values, and in the face of evidence of such serious human rights violations, we will not look the other way. The suffering of the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang cannot be ignored. Human rights violations on this scale cannot be ignored. Together with our partners, we call on China to end these cruel practices, and I commend this statement to the House.

[Xinjiang: Forced Labour](#)

12 Jan 2021 | 687 cc159-179

Dominic Raab (Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the situation in Xinjiang and the Government's response.

The evidence of the scale and severity of the human rights violations being perpetrated in Xinjiang against the Uyghur Muslims is now far-reaching. It paints a truly harrowing picture. Violations include the extrajudicial detention of over 1 million Uyghurs and other minorities in political re-education camps; extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities; systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture, education and, indeed, on the practice of Islam; and the widespread use of forced labour. The nature and conditions of detention violate basic standards of human rights. At their worst, they amount to torture and inhumane and degrading treatment, alongside widespread reports of the forced sterilisation of Uyghur women.

These claims are supported now by a large, diverse and growing body of evidence that includes first-hand reports from diplomats who visit Xinjiang and the first-hand testimony from victims who have fled the region. There is satellite imagery showing the scale of the internment camps, the presence of factories inside them and the destruction of mosques. There are also extensive and credible third-party reports from non-governmental organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, with the United Nations and other international experts also expressing their very serious concerns.

In reality, the Chinese authorities' own publicly available documents also bear out a similar picture. They show statistical data on birth control and on security spending and recruitment in Xinjiang. They contain extensive references to coercive social measures dressed up as poverty alleviation programmes. There are leaks of classified and internal documents that have shown the guidance on how to run internment camps and lists showing how and why people have been detained.

Internment camps, arbitrary detention, political re-education, forced labour, torture and forced sterilisation—all on an industrial scale. It is truly horrific—barbarism we had hoped was lost to another era is being practised today, as we speak, in one of the leading members of the international community.

We have a moral duty to respond. The UK has already played a leading role within the international community in the effort to shine a light on the appalling treatment of the Uyghurs and to increase diplomatic pressure on China to stop and to remedy its actions. I have made my concerns over Xinjiang clear directly to China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi. We have led international joint statements on Xinjiang in the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee and the UN Human Rights Council. In the Third Committee, we brought the latest statement forward together with Germany in October last year and it was supported by 39 countries.

China's response is to deny, as a matter of fact, that any such human rights violations take place at all. They say it is lies. If there were any genuine dispute about the evidence, there would be a reasonably straightforward way to clear up any factual misunderstandings. Of course China should be given the opportunity to rebut the various reports and claims, but the Chinese Government refuse point blank to allow the access to Xinjiang required to verify the truth of the matter.

We have repeatedly called for China to allow independent experts and UN officials, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, proper access to Xinjiang, just as we in this country allow access to our prisons, our police custody suites and other parts of the justice system to independent bodies who hold us to account for the commitments to respect human rights that we have made.

China cannot simply refuse all access to those trusted third-party bodies that could verify the facts and, at the same time, maintain a position of credible denial. While that access is not forthcoming, the UK will continue to support further research to understand the scale and the nature of the human rights violations in Xinjiang. But we must do more, and we will.

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 inadvertently or otherwise, sourcing from suppliers that are complicit in the use of forced labour, allowing those responsible for violations to profit—or, indeed, making a profit themselves—by supplying the authorities in Xinjiang. Here in the UK, we must take action to ensure that UK businesses are not part of supply chains that lead to the gates of the internment camps in Xinjiang, and to ensure that the products of the human rights violations that take place in those camps do not end up on the shelves of supermarkets that we shop in here at home week in, week out.

We have already engaged with businesses with links to Xinjiang; we have encouraged them to conduct appropriate due diligence. More widely, we have made a commitment to tackling forced labour crystal clear. With the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the United Kingdom was the first country to require companies by law to report on how they are tackling forced labour in their supply chains. Today, I can announce a range of new measures to send a clear message that those violations of human rights are unacceptable and, at the same time, to safeguard UK businesses and public bodies from any involvement or links with them.

I have been working closely with my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for International Trade and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Our aim, put simply, is that no company profits from forced labour in Xinjiang, and that no UK business is involved in their supply chains. Let me set out the four new steps that we are now taking.

First, today the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and the Department for International Trade have issued new, robust and detailed guidance to UK businesses on the specific risks faced by

companies with links to Xinjiang, and underlining the challenges of conducting effective due diligence there. A Minister-led campaign of business engagement will reinforce the need for UK businesses to take concerted action to address that particular and specific risk.

Secondly, we are strengthening the operation of the Modern Slavery Act. The Home Office will introduce fines for businesses that do not comply with their transparency obligations, and the Home Secretary will introduce the necessary legislation setting out the level of those fines as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Thirdly, we announced last September that the transparency requirements that apply to UK businesses under the Modern Slavery Act will be extended to the public sector. The FCDO will now work with the Cabinet Office to provide guidance and support to UK Government bodies to exclude suppliers where there is sufficient evidence of human rights violations in any of their supply chains. Let me say that we in the United Kingdom—I think rightly—take pride that the overwhelming majority of British businesses that do business do so with great integrity and professionalism right around the world. That is their hallmark and part of our USP as a global Britain. Precisely because of that, any company profiting from forced labour will be barred from Government procurement in this country.

Fourthly, the Government will conduct an urgent review of export controls as they apply, specifically geographically, to the situation in Xinjiang, to make sure that we are doing everything we can to prevent the export of any goods that could contribute directly or indirectly to human rights violations in that region. The package that has been put together will help to ensure that no British organisations—Government or private sector, deliberately or inadvertently—will profit from or contribute to human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities. I am of course sure that the whole House would accept that the overwhelming majority of British businesses would not dream of doing so. Today's measures will ensure that businesses are fully aware of those risks, will help them to protect themselves, and will shine a light on and penalise any reckless businesses that do not take those obligations seriously.

As ever, we act in co-ordination with our like-minded partners around the world, and I welcome the fact that later today Foreign Minister Champagne will set out Canada's approach on these issues. I know that Australia, the United States, France, Germany and New Zealand are also considering the approaches they take. We will continue to work with all of our international partners, but the House should know that in the comprehensive scope of the package I am setting out today the UK is again setting an example and leading the way.

We want a positive and constructive relationship with China, and we will work tirelessly towards that end, but we will not sacrifice our values or our security. We will continue to speak up for what is right and we will back up our words with actions, faithful to our values, determined, as a truly global Britain, to be an even stronger force for good in the world. I commend this statement to the House.

7. Urgent Questions

Chinese Government Sanctions on UK Citizens

13 Apr 2021 | 692 cc155-167

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if he will make a statement on recent sanctions imposed by the Chinese Government on UK citizens.

Nigel Adams (Minister for Asia): The Government stand in complete solidarity with those sanctioned by China. As the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have made clear, this action by Beijing is utterly unacceptable and unwarranted.

The House will recall that on 22 March, the UK, alongside the EU, Canada and the United States, imposed asset freezes and travel bans against four senior Chinese Government officials and one entity responsible for the violations that have taken place and persist against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. In response, China sanctioned nine individuals and four organisations, including Members of this House and the other place, who have criticised its record on human rights. It speaks volumes that while 30 countries are united in sanctioning those responsible for serious and systematic violations of human rights in Xinjiang, China's response is to retaliate against those who seek to shine a light on those violations. It is fundamental to our parliamentary democracy that Members of both Houses can speak without fear or favour on matters of concern to the British people.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made absolutely clear the Government's position through their public statements and on 22 March. I also summoned China's representative in the UK to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to lodge a strong, formal protest at China's actions. This Government have been quick to offer support to those who have been sanctioned. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary held private meetings with the parliamentarians named in China's announcement. My noble Friend, the Minister for human rights, Lord Ahmad, met other individuals and the entities that have been targeted. Through this engagement, we have provided guidance and an offer of ongoing support, including a designated FCDO point of contact and specialist briefing from relevant Departments.

Just as this Government will be unbowed by China's action, I have no doubt that Members across this House will be undeterred in raising their fully justified concerns about the situation in Xinjiang and the human rights situation in China more broadly. I applaud the parliamentarians named by China: my hon. Friends the Members for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton), for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat), for Harborough (Neil O'Brien) and for Wealden (Ms Ghani), my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith), the noble Lord Alton and the noble Baroness Kennedy for the vital role they have played in drawing attention to the plight of the Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

This Government have worked with partners to build the international caucus of those willing to speak out against China's human rights violations and increase the pressure on China to change its behaviour. We have led joint statements at the UN's human rights bodies, most recently joined by 38 countries at the UN General Assembly Third Committee in October, and we have backed up our international action with robust domestic measures. In addition to the global human rights sanctions announced on 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced a series of targeted measures in January to help ensure that British businesses are not complicit in human rights violations in Xinjiang. The United Kingdom will continue to work alongside its partners to send the clearest possible signal of the international community's serious concern and our collective willingness to act to hold China to account for its gross human rights violations in the region.

Treatment of Uyghur Women: Xinjiang Detention Camps

04 Feb 2021 | 688 cc1102-1114

Nusrat Ghani: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the treatment of Uyghur women in Xinjiang detention camps.

Nigel Adams (Minister for Asia): I acknowledge the strength of feeling about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, which is shared by hon. Members across the House. The BBC report to which my hon. Friend refers is chilling. It includes deeply distressing testimony of the rape, torture and dehumanisation of Uyghur women in Xinjiang detention centres. It is a further compelling addition to the growing body of evidence of the gross human rights violations being perpetrated against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang. The evidence of the scale and severity of these violations is now far reaching. It paints a truly harrowing picture. If China wishes to dispute this evidence, it must allow unfettered access to the region for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights or another independent fact-finding body.

This Government are committed to taking robust action in respect of Xinjiang. That is why on 12 January the Foreign Secretary announced a series of targeted measures to help ensure that British organisations are neither complicit in nor profiting from the human rights violations in the region. This includes a review of export controls as they apply to Xinjiang, the introduction of financial penalties for businesses that do not comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, and support for UK Government bodies to exclude suppliers that are complicit in forced labour.

These measures demonstrate to China that there is a reputational and economic cost to its policies in Xinjiang, and it is why the UK has played, and will continue to play, a leading role in building international pressure on China to change course. In October 2019 and June 2020, the UK led the first two joint statements on Xinjiang at the UN. In October 2020, 38 countries joined the UK in a robust statement at the UN Third Committee. This diplomatic action is vitally important. More

countries than ever are speaking out about Xinjiang. China has already been forced to change its narrative about the camps, and its denial of these violations is increasingly hard to sustain. The Foreign Secretary has made clear the extent of our concern directly to his counterpart, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and I have raised the issue with the former Chinese ambassador in London.

On the specific allegations of forced birth control, we have raised these with the Chinese authorities and used our national statement at the UN Human Rights Council last September to draw international attention to this deeply concerning issue.

I can assure the House that we will continue to work with our international partners, including with the new US Administration and through our G7 presidency, to hold China to account for its actions. The UK has called repeatedly for China to abide by the UN's recommendation to release all those who have been arbitrarily detained, and I know that right hon. and hon. Members will join me today in reiterating that call.

[Uyghur Slave Labour: Xinjiang](#)

16 Dec 2020 | 686 cc290-306

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if he will make a statement on what the Government are doing to deal with the overwhelming evidence of the Chinese Government's use of Uyghur slave labour in Xinjiang province.

Nigel Adams (Minister for Asia): Evidence of forced Uyghur labour within Xinjiang and in other parts of China is credible; it is growing and it is deeply troubling to the UK Government. Yesterday's media reporting, based in part on Chinese Government documents, suggests that forced labour is occurring on a significant scale. The reports raise particular concerns regarding the cotton industry, with serious implications for international and UK supply chains. We have consistently made clear our view that all businesses involved in investing in Xinjiang or with parts of their supply chains in Xinjiang should conduct appropriate due diligence to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support, or risk being seen to support, any human rights violations or abuses.

In our national action plan, implementing the UN guiding principles on business and human rights, we set out our expectation that UK businesses should respect human rights across their operations and their international supply relationships. While there is an important role for Government, businesses have a clear responsibility to ensure that their supply chains are free from forced labour. We have issued clear guidance and held regular meetings with businesses and industry stakeholders to underline our concerns and the importance of thorough due diligence. We have also financed projects to build the evidence base and increase awareness of the risks. This includes the high-profile report "Uyghurs for sale", which has led several companies to take action in respect of their supply chains.

I have updated the House on a number of occasions on the UK's international leadership and extensive diplomatic activity to hold China to account. Most recently, alongside Germany, we brought together a total of 39 countries in a joint statement at the UN General Assembly Third Committee in October. That sent a powerful message to China on the breadth of international concern, including on the issue of forced labour. In September, we devoted our entire national statement at the UN Human Rights Council to China, again raising forced labour.

In summary, the UK has taken the lead internationally. We have shone a light on the evidence of what is going on, to raise awareness and urge action, and we have provided clear guidance to business. However, the Government acknowledge that, in light of the gross human rights abuses being committed, there is more to be done. That is why, in September, the Home Secretary announced plans to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and why the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is co-ordinating extensive work right across Government to address this deeply concerning issue.

I will conclude by reassuring the House that we recognise and share the depth of cross-party concern on the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We have made that concern abundantly clear to the Chinese Government, and we expect China to live up to its responsibilities under international law and to the commitments it has made as a leading member of the international community. Continuing to stand up for those whose human rights are oppressed remains a top priority for this Government.

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).