

May 9, 2019

The Honorable James Risch
Chair, Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Ranking Member, Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable Eliot Engel
Chair, Committee on Foreign Affairs
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs
United States House of Representatives

Dear Senators Risch and Menendez, and Representatives Engel and McCaul,

Your leadership in defending human dignity and international religious freedom strengthens America's standing in the world and merits our strong gratitude.

We warmly applaud the March 4 letter sent by Representatives Engel, Sherman, Yoho and Smith urging vigorous and decisive action by the Administration to address the human-rights crisis in the Uyghur Region of China. The April 3 letter signed by a bipartisan group of 24 Senators and 19 Representatives, led by Senators Menendez and Rubio and Representatives McGovern and Smith cogently expresses the urgency of the crisis and the need for a strong U.S. foreign-policy response.

Several hearings on religious persecution and the shocking mass-internment of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims have put the issue before Congress. The crisis remains dire, and Congress must take the next step. The situation urgently requires legislation to condemn the Chinese government's brutal campaign of eradication of the Uyghurs' culture and religion, and to deter and reverse the ongoing collective punishment of Turkic ethnic communities in China on the basis of religion. Congress has a critical role in ending the Chinese government's confidence that there are no consequences for its campaign of ethno-religious repression on a massive scale.

We urge swift action to take up two bills addressing the crisis, the **Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019 (H.R. 649 and S. 178)**, and the **Uighur Intervention and Global Humanitarian Unified Response Act of 2019 H.R. 1025**).

We offer our support for any hearings or additional study that the subcommittees and committees may wish to undertake. We would be happy to help secure additional witnesses or expert testimony, provide a staff briefing, or respond to any questions.

Reports have now confirmed large-scale, highly secretive prisoner-transport to remote parts of the country. Many thousands of children are now experiencing their third year of separation from their parents through forced placement in state orphanage institutions. Reports of deaths in detention are increasing, despite the extreme secrecy preventing information from reaching the outside world.

The State Department's December 4 Senate testimony provided an estimate of between 800,000 and possibly over two million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim communities detained in extralegal prison-camps for secret indefinite detention, where they are forced to denounce their religion and identity. They are subject to inhuman torture, withholding of

medical care, food and water deprivation, humiliation and ill-treatment, as well as forced labor.

The long arm of the Chinese government's repression also reaches Uyghurs living abroad, who are being pressured to return home, to remain silent about the human-rights crisis, or even to spy, through threats to their families. As you know, six reporters working for the Congressionally supported Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service have suffered cruel reprisals as a result of their work, with more than 30 of their relatives detained or disappeared. This demonstrates the lengths the Chinese government is willing to go to silence Uyghurs, and is a direct challenge to the rights and wellbeing of U.S. citizens.

U.S. leadership on the crisis, as it enters its third year, will pave the way for other governments and the United Nations to call the Chinese government to account and impose genuine consequences for China's trampling of international norms on a shocking scale. Many governments remain intimidated by Chinese threats of retaliation and reprisals. It is up to the U.S., the champion of liberal values and the country that did the most to lead the world out of the ashes of World War Two, to lead the way once again.

Very sincerely yours,

The 23 undersigned human rights and religious freedom organizations

21Wilberforce
Anti-Defamation League
Association Against Religious Persecution
Bitter Winter
Campaign for Uyghurs
CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)
China Aid
The Church of Almighty God
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Citizen Power Initiatives for China
Defense Forum Foundation
The Council of The Ethnic Peoples and Religious of Vietnam
International Christian Concern
International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPC)
Jubilee Campaign USA
North Korea Freedom Coalition
Union for Reform Judaism
Uyghur Academy USA
Uyghur American Association
Uyghur Entrepreneurs Network
Uyghur Human Rights Project
Uyghur Rally
Vietnamese People's Evangelical Fellowship