

End Uyghur Forced Labour

23 December 2021

To:

Madame Michelle Bachelet Jeria
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

RE: Civil society call for public reporting on the human rights situation across China, in particular the forced labour and other abuses against Uyghur and other Turkic and/or Muslim peoples

Madame High Commissioner,

We, the Steering Committee of the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region, are writing to you in support of public reporting on the issue of forced labor and other human rights violations against the Uyghur and other Turkic and Muslim majority peoples in China, and to encourage you to engage with Uyghur human rights and civil society groups on these issues.

Our coalition comprises more than 400 civil society organisations and trade unions from over 40 countries united to end state-sponsored forced labour and other egregious human rights abuses against people from the Uyghur Region in China. The Coalition is calling on leading companies to ensure that they are not supporting or benefiting from the pervasive and extensive forced labour of the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples, perpetrated by the Chinese government. We call on governments, multi-stakeholder initiatives, companies, and other stakeholders to join us in challenging this abusive system and together build the economic and political pressure on the Chinese government to end forced labour in the Uyghur Region.

Three years after the groundbreaking review of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination of China, credible reports of grave human rights violations against the Uyghur, Kazakh, and other Turkic and/or Muslim populations in China continue to emerge.

These abuses include mass surveillance, arbitrary detention, rape, torture, political “re-education,” forced sterilisations, and forced labour. A minimum estimated 1 to 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples are held in mass arbitrary detention. Forced labour forms a centerpiece of abusive policies to punish, control, and forcibly assimilate Uyghurs. Uyghurs are forced to work in factories in the Uyghur Region and across China that produce goods sold all over the world. For example, up to 20% of all cotton-based products, and up to 97% of all polysilicon-based solar panels around the world are at high risk of being tainted with Uyghur forced labour. As countries around the world trade with China, businesses and consumers in particular are exposed to - and at times complicit in - these human rights abuses.

In all cases, there is a clear need for authoritative and objective information and, in particular, from you and your Office.

In your update to the 47th Session of the Human Rights Council, you stated that you 'continue to discuss with China modalities for a visit, including meaningful access, to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region', and indicated your interest in such a visit happening before the end of 2021. However, at the 48th session, you announced that you were "not able to report progress on [] efforts to seek meaningful access to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region."

We appreciate this frankness, and without prejudice for any potential future visit, wish to strongly emphasise that an official visit is no substitute for concrete, expert reporting from your Office.

We also welcome, from the same statement, your expressed wish to make public an "assessment" of allegations of serious human rights violations. This was recognised on 21 October by forty-three states, from all regions, who [jointly delivered a statement on China](#) at the UN's Third Committee that, among other things, encouraged publication of the assessment report "as soon as possible."

We share the view that such an authoritative, public assessment from your Office is both urgent and timely and that such an assessment include findings on the use of forced labour in the Uyghur Region and the forcible transfer of Uyghurs to work in other regions in China. In addition, as meetings with stakeholders in the region is not currently possible, we encourage you to meet with Uyghur human rights and civil society groups, including members of our Coalition, for an exchange of views on issues affecting the Uyghur population.

Sincerely,

The Steering Committee of the Coalition to End Uyghur Forced Labour

AFL-CIO

Anti-Slavery International

Campaign For Uyghurs

Clean Clothes Campaign

Cotton Campaign

Freedom United

Free Uyghur Now

Global Labor Justice – International Labor Rights Forum

Interfaith Center of Corporate Responsibility

Uyghur American Association

Uyghur Human Rights Project

Worker Rights Consortium

World Uyghur Congress