

Testimony of Ferkat Jawdat for the  
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on Human Rights in China

I would like to thank Chairman Eliot Engel, ranking member Michael McCaul, and all the members of this committee for giving me the chance to share my story and be the voice of my mother and my people here today.

The Communist Party of China does not allow the world to freely hear the voices of over 12 million Uyghurs, not even over the phone to their own families. They are denied passports to travel and international visitors to see them. Instead of allowing freedom, China uses the fear of being thrown into today's concentration camps in the so-called "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region" to terrorize the entire Uyghur population living under an Orwellian mass surveillance police state and to extort silence from Uyghurs abroad. Instead of allowing freedom of speech on personal phones, the world's number one exporter of telephones uses voice recognition and monitors all calls and WeChat usage and even uses the voices of mothers to deliver the regime's threats to silence their own children about the arbitrary mass incarceration in Xinjiang of over three million Uyghurs.

But it is not just Uyghurs who live in fear of China's power to harm them and their loved ones. China uses the fear of retribution and the hope for monetary gain to silence the whole world, from sports leagues like the NBA to Hollywood, businesses, and governments. Indeed, the world's empowerment of China economically has effectively silenced the voice of every single past and current world leader to the world's largest persecution of an ethnic minority since the Holocaust. To be meaningful, the words "Never Again!" must be spoken by today's leaders with their voices and then especially with their actions.

I am here to speak as an Uyghur American subjected to China's long arm of terror. I am also here to ask Congress and the President of what should still be the Free World to stand up for Freedom and stop allowing China to silence your voices. Stop allowing China to take away freedom so totally in Xinjiang, in Tibet, increasingly in Hong Kong, and even here on your own soil as Xinjiang security officials freely deliver threats, psychologically torture, and extortion, against your laws, to silence your own citizens here. China is effectively taking the world hostage. Please do not let your voices be silenced. Begin to speak with meaningful actions.

The Senate spoke unanimously that there should be targeted Magnitsky sanctions on the Chinese officials responsible for reintroducing concentration camps on Earth. Last week, the House strengthened that bill to call for meaningful action by a vote of 407 to 1. Thank you, but please follow through on such rare unanimity so that it actually becomes the first ever law addressing China's persecution against the Uyghurs and send it to the President's desk this week. This law is about telling China to stop targeting Americans with threats and extortion, as it has to Radio Free Asia journalists working here in DC, and to separate American companies from complicity enabling Xinjiang's high-tech surveillance state.

And if I may address President Trump from here, I would like to ask him directly: why have you yet to implement U.S. law – the Global Magnitsky sanctions – to hold Chinese officials accountable? I have never heard you answer that question, but your silence on Xinjiang's millions in concentration camps is deafening. Please not only sign the UIGHUR Act Congress is sending you on, but truly enact it. Please do not sign it and give Chairman Xi assurances that you will not implement it. Stop letting authoritarians silence your voice and your sanctioning actions. Impose targeted Magnitsky sanctions on China for Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong.

President Trump, China holds my mother hostage, and threatened to kill her if I cross their line. The leader of the free world must speak up for freedom and democracy. Those are the values that America beacons to the world to inspire people towards accountable democracy and away from authoritarian kleptocracy. Authoritarians empower billionaires, as in Beijing, on the backs of millions of forced laborers, as in Xinjiang, but the United States empowers people to seek justice and the rule of law.

Look, my family immigrated here for those ideas. I came to the United States in 2011 with my three siblings to reunite with my father, who came here five years earlier and applied for political asylum. My mother was not so fortunate. Despite having been cleared by the US government to come to the US, my mother is still unable to reunite with us because the Chinese government will not issue her a passport. We have exhausted all legal channels since 2005 to get her here. China holds her hostage as leverage over us.

On February 6th, 2018, my mother left me her last message on WeChat, the Chinese equivalent of WhatsApp and other messaging platforms that it does not allow in China. She told me she was going to the "school" – the euphemism the

whole world now knows China uses for its concentration camps. She then disappeared. A month later, five relatives from my father's side—including his older sister, her husband, their son and younger brother—were all rounded up and detained on the same day. I anxiously waited for more than seven months, hoping, praying my mother and relatives would be released. I knew the Chinese government would punish my loved ones if I spoke out publicly.

It was the darkest period of my life. After failing to receive any information about her, I was desperate. So, I made the difficult decision to start speaking out publicly since September 2018. I have met various US government officials and given interviews to more than three dozen news outlets around the world. Each time I spoke out, my cousins, uncles, aunts, and even my 75-year-old grandmother were threatened by the Chinese government and forced to sign documents stating they would cut off all contacts with me. Three days after I met with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in March of this year, they transferred my aunt and uncle to prison as retaliation against my meeting him. Later, they sentenced them to 7 and 8 years in prison for bogus crimes they never committed.

After my story was published in the New York Times in May, I received a phone call from my mother where she told me she was released and begged me to stop speaking out and criticizing China. Three days later, I found out she was released only for one day to call me under the supervision of half a dozen Chinese police and was promptly brought back to the camp the next day.

After my mother became very ill in the camp, she was brought to a hospital by government officials. After learning of her situation and checking her condition, a Han Chinese doctor told the officials that the only way to keep her alive was to restore her contact with her family and allow her adequate medical treatment. My mother was released in early June, and our communication has thankfully been restored. Although I am now able to talk to my mom regularly, a luxury so many of my fellow Uyghurs are cruelly denied, she is constantly monitored. She gets visited by the Chinese police or regional officials every day, and she has to ask them permission to leave the house to go anywhere.

Since my mother was released, Chinese security agents reached out to me twice directly on WeChat and demanded that I “listen to them, work with them” in order to keep my mother safe and possibly facilitate her request for a passport. They taunted me with the prospect of her release to the US. Their extortion went to the heart of a mother-son relationship. When I declined their demands, they told

me I should be ready to pay the price as I was going up against a global superpower. They compared me as worthless.

But I believe freedom is only attained by not submitting yourself as someone's slave to obey. It is the hostage taker that alone is responsible for his actions, including the illegal psychological torture he inflicts on relatives to attain his demands. A regime that terrorizes by taking family members hostage cannot be appeased and submitted to with silence about its concentration camps. The U.S. must finally lead the world against hostage taking, as its founding fathers once did, by punishing them, not giving in to their demands.

The State Department issued a statement on November 5th asking the Chinese government to release my and two other Uyghurs' family members and stop harassing and threatening us. Their response? The Chinese government released a statement four days later falsely branding me and Arafat Arkin, who is sitting here in the audience, as though we—rather than the Communist regime that is terrorizing us—were members of a terrorist organization. They referred to the World Uyghur Congress, which we all know is not a terrorist organization, but one that is decidedly against terrorism, including China's authoritarian terror that it wields against citizens through arbitrary arrests and mass detentions. A state's use of terror to achieve compliance from its supposed domestic enemies through fear of arbitrary mass arrests is the very reason the word "terrorism" came into existence in the 1790s with the French Revolution's Reign of Terror. It was Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, and Mao who relied on authoritarian terror as official policy. China's Communist Party Secretary for Xinjiang, Chen Quanguo, is clearly following in their footsteps, resorting to mass terror against its own citizens to "show absolutely no mercy."

While simply denying and distracting the world from its war on Uyghurs, Xinjiang security officials forced our family members to record videos about their "happy lives" in China and to call us the scum of the family.

My mother was released six months ago and right now as we speak she is in the hospital, again, for the 7th time. Remember, concentration camps are designed to weaken and infirm in overcrowded cells people never charged with any actual crime. The last time I saw my mother, hugged my mother, was September 2010 before I left for university in another Chinese province. Just for speaking out for the love of my mother, I was falsely labeled a terrorist by the second largest state power in the world. Not a day goes by when I don't worry. I worried as I wrote this speech when China released additional propaganda videos against me. I worry

about what will happen to my mother after I finish this speech here in front of you today.

But I will not keep silent about what China is perpetrating against my mother and millions of my people. And I am asking you, President Trump, to stop allowing China to silence you. Find a voice that speaks of freedom and justice like Reagan's to the world to end tyrannies. Do not succumb with envy for their rich autocrats who have stolen billions from their own people and treat their suffering as badges somehow making them "great leaders." They are tyrants who rule for life, secured only by the wealth they steal.

America is still a beacon of hope and faith.

Such constant, unshakeable fear is what all Uyghurs face, each and every day. It has indeed kept many of us silent until now. The ones who choose to speak out publicly receive constant threats from the Chinese government and their relatives are punished. As that Chinese agent told me in his last threat, China thinks we're nothing, we're powerless compared to them. But they are wrong.

It is still the truth that sets people free.

As we have had the courage to speak out, more and more people throughout the world have heard what is happening to millions of Uyghurs. Journalists, researchers, human rights activists, and leaders within governments have taken up our cause to "rescue those delivered to death." The US government has led the world in responding with words and now is beginning to act. All of you, especially with the overwhelming passage of the strengthened Uyghur bill by this House of Representatives, have proved to the Chinese government that the Uyghurs are not alone. We have strong allies and friends supporting us and protecting us. The strongest and most supportive is the US government.

So, I want to thank each of you and this wonderfully free country for standing up for human rights and justice for Uyghurs.

Today, I would ask you to continue to stand up for us by:

1. Speed up enactment of the House-amended Uyghur Act of 2019, S.178, as soon as possible to get the President's signature while it is still 2019.

2. Pass legislation to address the massive scale of forced labor in Xinjiang, so that the products of forced labor are no longer welcomed in the U.S. and internationally.
3. Sanction the Chinese technology companies that directly enable Xinjiang's mass surveillance policy state.
4. Increase the size, reach, and funding of the Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service that is directly targeted by China for its reporting that has led the world's awareness on Xinjiang. The Chinese government is spending billions every year to spread its propaganda around the world. We should counter its propaganda by denying it such unequal access here and empower those who tell the truth with more resources and manpower to ensure facts pierce through China's fiction.
5. Provide funding for Uyghur organizations who have been targeted by China and have decided to speak out to lead the world to respond to China's persecution of the Uyghurs, like the Uyghur American Association (UAA) and the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP). The UAA was established in 1998 and is the largest Uyghur grassroots organization in the US and the parent of the Uyghur Human Rights Project.
6. Rededicate our great country to our commitment to "Never Again!" by taking action to convince China to empty its concentration camps and dismantle, rather than export, its high-tech mass surveillance police state.
7. And as a son, I ask you to help me to finally convince China to release its Uyghur hostages whom it uses specifically to target U.S. citizens with threats and extortion, and to bring my mother to the US when any of you or any U.S. official flies to China.