

# HEARING

## Ending Global Religious Persecution

House Committee on Oversight and Reform

Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

**Written Testimony of Rushan Abbas**

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Thank you so much for giving me the platform to testify about the unprecedented atrocities that being committed against my people by the Chinese government, under the guise of fighting “Islamic Extremism.” The Chinese Communist Party has carried out a brutal campaign to extinguish the Uyghur people. The goal of the incredibly intrusive surveillance and iron-fisted social control is to wipe out Uyghur civilization by force. The religion has been outlawed. Uyghur mosques, cemeteries and historical buildings have been demolished or turned into entertainment facilities.

According to the China’s ambassador to the U.S., Cui Tiankai, Beijing’s regime is turning Uyghurs into “normal persons.” Today, ALL “normal religious activities” of Islam are banned, labelled as “extreme”, “toxic” and incarcerated those who participate in “illegal religious extremist activities”. What are the illegal religious activities? Fasting during Ramadan and praying? Wearing headscarves? Eating halal food? Refusing to eat pork? Refusing to drink alcohol?...

My name is Rushan Abbas. I am an Uyghur-American, a mother and human rights activist. I was born in Urumqi, the capital city in a region the Chinese government refers to as its “New Frontier” – Xinjiang which geographically and historically called East Turkistan. In name only, Xinjiang is the Uyghur Autonomous Region, but in reality, it is anything but autonomous. In fact, it is China’s colony; an Orwellian, mass-surveillance state where more than three million Uyghurs are arbitrarily detained outside the legal system in fascist concentration camps. The Uyghur people are an ethnically and culturally distinct, Turkic people captive under Communist China’s authoritarian control since 1949. As a result of our unique ethnic identity, culture, language and religion, and our desire for our basic rights and freedoms to be respected, Uyghur Muslims have been repressed and persecuted for seven decades, under the labels of

“Nationalists”, “Counter revolutionaries” and “Separatists.” Following 9-11 tragedy in the United States, Communist authorities rebranded the effort as a “War on Terrorism.” Today the people of East Turkistan have become the victims of Xi Jinping’s signature project, “One Belt, One Road” initiative since 2014.

Now, the Chinese regime decided to destroy Uyghurs as an ethnic race. In order to do that, they begun with eradicating their religion completely. First, religious scholars and community leaders were forced into concentration camps and their works were destroyed. No matter how the Chinese government tried in the past, to eliminate Uyghur Muslims’ cultural and religious heritage, the Uyghur people never lost their ties with their religion and culture. On the contrary, their loyalty was strengthened even more. These strong ties have been the primary target of the communist regime, now. Islamic faith, which holds society together, has been presented to the world as the danger of separatism and terrorism, by the Chinese government.

With the government’s attack on religion and their so-called “De-extremism” regulations, the practice of Islam is totally outlawed. Group reading of the Quran, teaching Islam to children, Islamic names for children, speaking about Islam, having or reading Islamic literature, wearing religious clothing, watching religious videos or advocating Islam in any sense is a crime that is punishable with harsh imprisonment or a long and painful, so-called ‘re-education’ in ‘The Vocational Training Centers’, in reality concentration camps.

Since early 2017, the Chinese government has conducted a policy of mass disappearance, internment, and imprisonment of Uyghur people while populating vast concentration camps with barbed wire and armed guard towers. According to Randall Schriver, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs in the U.S. government said in May 2019, China could be holding as many as three million Uyghurs in the concentration camps. These Uyghurs in the camps are forced into modern-day slavery, being held and laboring against their will at the forced labor facilities, that help China’s economy grow.

The few survivors’ reports emerging from the camps describe an alarming catalog of crimes against humanity, including torture and deaths in custody. Incessant political indoctrination, enforced silence, inhuman conditions, and denial of Uyghur ethnic identity is part of the daily routine in these facilities.

Starting from 2012, The Chinese government implemented “punishment on the spot” policy, which means, any armed forces could kill you if they feel that you are not following their order. Radio Free Asia reported that an Uyghur teenager was shot on spot and killed by a traffic police when he ran the red-light on his motorcycle. Especial forces and armed police could raid Uyghur homes at any time, search and arrest as they wish. With the unlawful and harsh policies, small amount of resentments and protests from the victims’ families started to come to the surface. China has characterized all political resistance as “extremism,” and developed hundreds of political indoctrinations camps dotting the region hold an estimated more than three million Uyghurs in arbitrary detention to undergo ‘thought transformation’. A document quoted the party secretary Chen Quango on detention centers stating the camps should "teach like a school, be managed like the military and be defended like a prison" and “must first break their lineage, break their roots, break their connections and break their origins.” These chilling words stated in

an internal document, reported by the media to the public, only touch on Beijing's harsh policies towards the Uyghurs. The situation is getting worse as the Chinese government continues to get away with their blatant human rights abuses in front of the world community. More than three million people in the concentration camps are charged with no crimes.

China's first concentration camp was built under the "Strike hard Campaign" in 2014. It has been almost 6 years. The size of the camps has grown about 500% in the past two years alone. According to the news accounts, the Chinese government is building crematoriums for a culture that doesn't practice cremation. The last time the world saw crematories and concentration camps together, an outright holocaust took place.

I decided to expose the atrocities perpetrated by the Chinese government in East Turkistan, the fate of my in-laws, and the conditions of the camps. Then, as retaliation by the Chinese government, my sister Dr. Gulshan Abbas was abducted and became a victim due to my activism in the United States as an American citizen. Unfortunately, my sister's story is not unique. China harasses Uyghurs in Diaspora, with relatives back home, presenting them with heartbreaking choice: keep silent about the horrific abuses or let your friends and family suffer the consequences.

In the regime's rhetoric, this concentration camp system is made up of schools for vocational training. But surely a person like my sister, a skilled, professional medical doctor, doesn't need any training. She is a thoughtful, caring, amiable soul, with compassion, who made helping others the most important part of her life. She retired in early age from practicing her profession due to impeding health conditions. She is not an outspoken person. She is an introverted person who was never active in any kind of political activities whatsoever. I am not sure if she will be able to endure the harsh conditions of the camps for long and survive for almost 17 months now. Honestly, I don't even know if she is alive!

If you destroy the people who teach both religious and cultural life at once, you cut off people's beliefs and roots. This is what the Chinese Communist Party has aimed to do: to erase the memory of Uyghur historical, cultural and religious life by collecting and destroying their living voices and burning copies of Qur'an and religious books. Chinese government announced now, that they will rewrite the Bible and Qur'an to "reflect communist ideologies". How in the world Islam or any religion would be compatible with communist atheist ideologies?!

Not only is China conducting political and cultural assimilation against the Uyghur Muslims in modern-day concentration camps, while destroying religious and mosques, but they are also destroying Uyghur cemeteries according to recent news articles. From ancient times, there have been three places in a community that show the existence of Islam: Mosques, madrasahs and cemeteries. Today's cruel Chinese regime is eliminating all three of these for Uyghur and Kazakh Muslims.

The persecution against the Uyghurs is racially motivated. The Chinese government's strategy of building a new Silkroad with the Belt and Road initiative is causing destruction in our homeland and filling massive concentration camps with millions of Uyghurs. China's campaign of despotism extends far beyond the horrendous camps. Ubiquitous security like that of George

Orwell's *1984*, a massive, high-tech police state, is the cruel reality for the entire region in West China. According to numerous testimonies, inside of the camps, detainees are intensely indoctrinated with Communist Party propaganda, and forced to renounce Islam. They are subject to rape and torture. China claims that these sprawling camps with barbed wire and armed guard towers are humane job training or vocational training centers. This is a lie. Detainees include medical doctors, academics, businesspeople, and professionals, as well as young children and the elderly, none of whom need job training. Uyghur prisoners have also been dispersed throughout China proper as an attempt to hide the numbers of those who have been detained. The Uyghurs' economy has been completely destroyed, and the government is distributing Uyghurs wealth and re-allocating their lands to Han Chinese.

The streets are filled with cameras equipped with facial recognition, roadblocks, and police checkpoints around every corner, and GPS tracking devices are installed on every vehicle. Uyghur homes are assigned QR Codes to monitor residents' activities. The CCP is orchestrating "mass rape" of Uyghur women who are forced to share a bed with or Han Chinese while their husbands are away in forced-labor facilities. The Associated Press reported last year that according to the Communist Party's official newspaper, 1.1 million Chinese cadres have been stationed in Uyghurs' homes. They have taken up residence in Uyghur's living rooms, dining areas and bedrooms. As a result, Uyghur women are facing sexual abuse. Uyghurs' children at home have been forced to spy on their parents, for any expression of disloyalty to the Communist Party's ideologies or any trace of religious expression.

The "pair up program" or "double relatives" program to monitor and supervise Uyghurs inside of their own homes and highlight a deep power imbalance between Han Chinese and Uyghurs. According to sources, the Chinese government is running "pair up" program, also known as the "double relatives" program, to monitor and supervise Uyghurs inside of their homes and highlight a deep power imbalance between Han Chinese and Uyghurs. With these forced assimilation policies carried out by the Chinese government, Uyghurs are imprisoned in their own homes, and Uyghur women are facing sexual abuse.

Under the program, the Uyghurs outside of the camps are supposed to live normal lives like you and me. They are facing severe political indoctrination by their Chinese houseguests in their own homes while required to provide these houseguests with information about their lives and political views. Although it says on the name that it is the "Pair Up and Become Family" program, it is one-sided, as only the Han Chinese cadres move into Uyghur homes and continue discrimination and oppression in the private sphere.

Meanwhile, state-owned media has release propaganda videos encouraging Han Chinese men to travel to Xinjiang and marry Uyghur girls. Men are offered money, jobs and housing for intermarriage. Girls and their families are afraid to [refuse](#) the forced marriages because they could be viewed as Islamic extremists sent to the camps.

Besides helping to dilute Uyghur culture, the forced marriages ameliorate the government's infamous birth-limitation policy. That one-child limit, combined with a cultural preference for sons, has created a skewed sex ratio of [117 boys to 100 girls](#) in China. I firmly believe Uyghur girls are being raped through sham marriages.

Between trade threats, the power of the Belt and Road Initiative, debt trap diplomacy and manipulation within the U.N., China has become a power able to strong-arm the world into kowtowing to its every wish. The Chinese regime is bribing and leveraging some key politicians, decision makers, the media, influential scholars, and important businessmen around the world. With that, China has successfully silenced international condemnation of its shameful human rights record.

By holding millions of Uyghurs into the concentrations camps, in their actions, the Chinese government has managed to kill four birds with one stone:

1. Forcing millions of Uyghurs into slavery, forcing them to work on production.
2. Dislocating Uyghurs' from their homes, neighborhoods and towns, to reallocate Han Chinese settlers and open the land for the Belt and Road Initiative.
3. Jailing Uyghur men in camps and prisons and forcing unwed and abandoned Uyghur women into arranged marriages with Non-Muslim Han Chinese men with government gratifications such as money, housing and jobs. Leaving Neither the girls nor their families able to decline in fear of repercussion.
4. And lastly Orchestrating Organ farms, where millions are forced to undergo DNA tests and prepped for slaughter. The human rights organizations in the world need to pay attention to and take the lead against the China's Organ Slavery trade practices.

Children have also become the main target of China's policy of assimilation and social engineering. The Chinese government is trying to eradicate the Uyghur ethnic identity by targeting the younger generation. While their parents are detained in the camps, more than 500,000 Uyghur children have been held hostage in government-run orphanages, where they swear loyalty to the CCP, are indoctrinated, forced to abandon their Uyghur identity and swear loyalty to the CCP, and forced to recognize Xi Jinping as God. The overcrowded orphanages are tantamount to locking children up like farm animals in a shed, according to Radio Free Asia reports. Some are suffering severe injuries and some die without adequate medical care.

Meanwhile conditions in the camps show no sign of improvement. Dr. Olsi Yazeji, a Canadian-Albanian scholar, joined a group of reporters on a "visit" to the camps by invitation of the Chinese government. He went with the intention of telling the world that concentration camps were just false propaganda by the U.S. and other western countries. However, even in pre-arranged, government-orchestrated visits and interviews with coached, supervised detainees, he saw Uyghurs facing brutality only because of their faith. Dr. Yazeji said [publicly](#) that he encountered real concentration camps and witnessed brutal human rights violations.

During the interviews in the camps, the government repeatedly told the journalists in Dr. Yazeji's group that detainees return home for the weekends and be able to use phones to call family members. The reality? My sister has been missing for more than 16 months now and has not called her daughters, one of whom she knew was pregnant at the time of her abduction.

Original thought and religious beliefs are a danger to any Communist regime. Now, this totalitarian ideology has returned to the world with Xi Jinping. The individual freedom to choose – to choose what we believe, how we believe, and why we believe – is one of the major

achievements of the modern world. It defines our sense of liberty and the freedom of conscience. Yet now this foundation of our freedom has come under attack. This disturbing trend is clearly visible in the persecution of the Uyghur Muslims, Tibetans and what is happening in Hong Kongers today. These blatant violations of human rights, by the Chinese communist regime is only one part of a rising tide of intolerance that is rapidly suffocating the world. Our struggle should be the concern of everyone who values the basic human rights of dignity, respect, and freedom of belief for all people. These rights are a fundamental part of the human legacy, our legacy, that is increasingly under attack from a new tyrannical threat, which is the return of communism through China's rise to power.

The only crime of my sister, the same crime perpetrated by the millions of Uyghurs suffering today, is being Uyghur Muslim. What the Chinese government is doing is a crime against humanity, and at this point, it has become about the right to live and the means to survive as human beings for Uyghurs. It challenges our basic integrity, and the world cannot be silent when over 3 million Uyghurs and other Muslims are being detained, stripped of their religion, culture, and forced to swear blind loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party and Xi Jinping. The Communist Chinese government is exterminating my people today, challenging the human dignity and basic survival rights that God gave us with our birth.

The Xinjiang Papers, one of the first major leaks from Beijing in decades, reveal Chairman Xi's vision for using the "organs of dictatorship" against Uyghurs and showing them "absolutely no mercy." And, it was the new Xinjiang Communist Party Secretary Chen Quanguo's heavy-handed tactics that ordered security forces to "round up everyone who needs to be rounded up" into involuntary camps for "concentrated education and training" -- in other words, concentration camps. The 403 pages of leaked documents provide an unprecedented, inside view of the CCP's racially-targeted and brutal attitude towards the Uyghur people in which the authorities have corralled more than three million innocent people, like livestock, into concentration camps and prisons.

We now know that these ruthless and vicious policies were conceived, and orchestrated, by top-level officials in the Chinese government. Xi Jinping's ability to conceal and mislead the international community about the nature of the camps continues to be eroded, day by day. The fact that the leak happened is also crucial – it illustrates that some official was brave enough to not only deeply question China's approach, but also to risk his/her own life and take action against it by revealing those documents out to the world and to the people that can stop this atrocity.

The Xinjiang Papers make clear in official texts many of the features that journalists and researchers have discovered over the past two years. What is inescapable is the culpability of the most senior Party leaders, especially Chen Quanguo. So, the real question now is how much longer we have to wait until Chen Quanguo is sanctioned under the Global Magnitsky Act. Magnitsky sanctions aim directly at the Achilles Heel of Authoritarian Kleptocracies like China: their repressive violence is exactly what enables their massive scale of corruption to continue. Freezing perpetrator's assets abroad and restricting their freedom to travel publicly names and shames them, showing the world's disgust with their actions and separates them from international trade.

That is exactly what is needed most right now; to hold China accountable for committing unspeakable crimes against millions of Uyghurs. At the very least, the world should separate itself from the perpetrators of today's concentration camps in our homeland.

Those outside the camps suffer under the world's worst Orwellian mass surveillance police state. As crazy as that world is to fathom, the rest of the world's reaction is actually more shocking! The world is not only turning a blind eye to technologically enabled mass violations of rights, allowing the continuation of inhumanity, but also actively investing in China's Communist Party-controlled companies and inviting those companies to export 5G infrastructure that could harbor spyware in Western democracies! One would think that a China that instills such fear in millions of Uyghurs, whom cannot use the phone to talk with relatives abroad lest they be sent to concentration camps, would not be a China that is the main supplier of telephones to the world. I am at a loss for words to understand how the western democratic countries are rewarding China by inviting its mass surveillance tech companies like Huawei to build their own next generation telecommunications backbone.

In the case of China, I have to wonder whether the number of people in the concentration camps would have reached into the millions if the world would have acted early on, when Uyghur intellectuals like Yalqun Rozi were among the first ones imprisoned. But the world has failed to act even now, when there are over three million in the camps. For over a year, we have been asking to governments around the world to implement Global Magnitsky Act and impose sanctions to the Chinese officials responsible for this atrocity. By waiting so long to act, China's actions in my homeland now include every single act listed in the 1948 Genocide Convention, each of which the world, including China, is obligated to prevent.

The world is also granting China the privilege of hosting the Winter Olympics 2022, an event where people should come together to celebrate their differences. To say the least, the CCP does not respect such values but instead tramples them. It seems like a repeat of the 1936 games in Berlin, where Hitler announced the opening of competition.

At a time when the state has thrown at least 450-500 scholars, elites into ethnic-concentration camps, how can continue to do business as usual? And, can exchanges and scholarly cooperation with state institutions in China continue? We should ask ourselves!

Especially the Confucius institute, who's stated aim is to promote Chinese language and culture, but in actuality, promoting the interests and ideologies of the Chinese Communist Party, still very active in Western hemisphere. There are at least 480 such institutes around world among the largest universities. More than 80 of them are here in the United States.

Confucius Institutes are Chinese government-run programs that use the teaching of Chinese language and culture in the universities as a tool to expand the political influence of the PRC. They are overseen by a branch of the Chinese Ministry of Education and are instructed to only teach versions of Chinese history, culture or current events that are explicitly approved by the Chinese Government and Communist Party. Human Rights Watch found various threats to academic freedom resulting from Chinese government pressure. Chinese authorities have long

monitored and conducted surveillance on students and academics from China and those studying China on campuses around the world.

In November 2011, Li Changchun, a former member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, the highest body of the Chinese Communist Party, stated in a speech at the Beijing Headquarters of the Confucius Institute: “The Confucius Institute is an appealing brand for extending our culture abroad. It has made an important contribution toward improving our soft power. The ‘Confucius’ brand has a natural attractiveness. Using the excuse of teaching Chinese language, everything looks reasonable and logical.” The CCP is using Confucius name very effectively around world for their political purposes. Absurdly, Confucius family graveyard destroyed; the very same generation is now in power.

Whoever leaked the Xinjiang files, did so in the hopes that their actions would be a catalyst for significant change. A wake-up call to open your eyes. It is time to act bravely. It is time to stop this holocaust of my people and hold China accountable for its unspeakable crimes against millions of Uyghurs. We are all responsible for what happens next.

Will we be able to uphold the vow “NEVER AGAIN” with real actions to follow or shall we sadly witness a repeat of the 1938 Munich Pact as countries around the world avoided acknowledging Nazi Germany’s human rights abuses for the sake of economic trade, at the cost of millions of lives? But back then, access to information was slow, and they easily hid behind claims of ignorance. It is the 21st century. Ignorance is not an excuse anymore. The fate of the freedom and democracy of our world is at stake here.

There are some of the recommendations I have for our lawmakers:

Please:

- Urge Chinese authorities to ratify the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Liberties and stop criminal prosecutions and persecutions of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic ethnicities, for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, religion and belief.
- Help and stop the repression and persecution of human rights defenders, raising individual emblematic cases such as Dr. Gulshan Abbas and others.
- Direct Secretary Mnuchin, Secretary Ross and Secretary Pompeo to impose sanctions on Chinese officials under the Global Magnitsky Act. It is U.S. law that is inexplicably unimplemented meaningfully against China in particular.
- Press for an urgent fact-finding visit to the Uyghur region, and to other cities where Uyghur detainees are being transported. Announce the request publicly. Urge every Member who visits China to request access to the Uyghur region, and specifically to the detention centers.
- Authorize the doubling of broadcast time for RFA Uyghur language service—RFA reporters have provided the best information about what is happening on the ground in our homeland.
- Instruct the FBI and State Department to work to protect Uyghur, Tibetan, and other Chinese communities from threats or coercion from Chinese affiliated agents—this should include information to Uyghur and Chinese students that they can report on efforts



to intimidate and censor them while they are on U.S. and international campuses. This is part of the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act and a priority of Senator Rubio and Representative Smith, but I wanted to highlight that here for you. The FBI must urgently act to protect Uyghur-Americans from Chinese government “influence operations” here in America as they occur regularly. Chinese officials have openly stated, “The current target is the Uyghur ‘separatists’ and organizations abroad.” Beijing is extending its oppression to Uyghurs who are American citizens, including me and probably every other person who speaks up.

- Direct Secretary Betsy DeVos to work with American colleges to waive tuition for the Uyghur students who are stranded in the U.S., unable to return home, and unable to pay fees due to their parents’ detention in China.
- Direct the DHS Secretary to urgently review the asylum cases of Uyghurs who have fled the repression of the Chinese Communist Party, currently being held up in the United States immigration offices.
- Point out to the Administration that if China is successfully keeping it from acting to deter the targeting of American citizens and to hold China accountable for the concentration camps, China has already won in linking anything, whether money from trade or fear of retaliation, to America’s ability to stand up independently against evident evil.