



One Hundred and Fourteenth Congress  
**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

March 27, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

As Co-Chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, an official bipartisan human rights body in the House of Representatives, we are writing to urge your serious engagement on the human rights situation of ethnic Uyghurs in China. We are troubled by recent reports indicating worsening repression against Uyghurs, including severe restrictions on political, religious, and cultural activity, as well as police brutality, deprivations of due process, arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, torture, extrajudicial killings, and refoulement of Uyghur refugees. We ask that you monitor this situation closely and voice concerns about the treatment of Uyghurs to Chinese officials and to officials of countries where Uyghurs face unlawful return.

As you are well aware, the Uyghur people, for decades, have experienced systematic discrimination by the Chinese government, and repressive policies have worsened in recent years. Confrontations between Uyghurs and Chinese police have intensified, particularly since the events of July 5, 2009, when inter-ethnic violence broke out and a crackdown was imposed in Urumqi after initially peaceful Uyghur protests. According to reports, 197 people, including many Hans, were killed in the violence, and over 1,400, mostly Uyghurs, were later detained. Until this day, hundreds of detainees

have not been accounted for, and serious allegations of torture and other human rights violations have gone uninvestigated.

Since these events, fatal incidents involving Uyghurs, Chinese police, and Hans have continued to increase. Clashes between Uyghurs and police have resulted in hundreds of deaths in the past two years, including those of Uyghur demonstrators, Uyghur assailants, and Uyghurs alleged to be preparing to carry out attacks, as well as police officers. While independent information about these incidents and transparency in subsequent investigations are lacking, the Chinese government has blamed “terrorist” groups and ramped up its anti-terror crackdowns in Xinjiang.

The Chinese government is within its rights to address threats to peace and security, but we are concerned that these crackdowns are used to suppress Uyghurs, rather than responding to legitimate threats. Uyghurs have been subject to excessive police force, extrajudicial killings, police raids, arrests, trials, and harsh sentencing, including death sentences that lack due process. Any peaceful dissent is oppressed, as demonstrated by the case of Uyghur scholar Dr. Ilham Tohti and his students, Perhat Halmurat, Shohret Nijat, Mutellip Imin, Abduqeyyum Ablimit, Atikem Rozi and Akbar Imin, who are ethnic Uyghurs, and Luo Yuwei from the Yi ethnic minority. The relatives of Uyghur activists also face mistreatment: we fear that the 9-year prison term currently being served by Mr. Ablikim Abdureyim, a son of the well-known Uyghur human rights activist Ms. Rebiya Kadeer, may be arbitrarily extended. Her other children and relatives in China, too, face increasing pressure from the government.

The situation of Uyghur refugees and asylum seekers is also of grave concern. The Chinese government has reportedly increased pressure on other countries to unlawfully return Uyghurs. At least 20 Uyghurs who had fled to Cambodia following the violence in 2009 were forcibly returned, and many faced unjust trials, detention, and disappearances. Since then, dozens of Uyghurs have been forcibly repatriated from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, and many of their fates are unknown. Currently, there are 300 Uyghur refugees in Thailand under threat of refoulement.

We seek your active support on this issue, which represents a serious threat to human rights in China. We urge you to request that Chinese officials fully disclose the whereabouts and conditions of all Uyghurs detained since 2009, including returned Uyghur refugees and asylum seekers, and that China conduct criminal investigations and trials that comply with internationally recognized human rights standards. We further urge you to remind Chinese officials that repressive policies against Uyghurs will only fuel violence and exacerbate tensions in Xinjiang. When you meet with officials from countries where Uyghurs have fled to seek asylum, we ask that you encourage them to


adhere to the principle of non-refoulement. We would appreciate hearing about your interventions on these issues and cases and the responses you receive.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress  
Co-Chair, TLHRC



Joseph R. Pitts  
Member of Congress  
Co-Chair, TLHRC

CC: Mr. Daniel R. Russel, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State  
The Honorable Max Baucus, U.S. Ambassador to China  
The Honorable P. Michael McKinley, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan  
The Honorable W. Patrick Murphy, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the U.S. Embassy in Thailand  
The Honorable Richard M. Miles, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan  
The Honorable Sheila Gwaltney, U.S. Ambassador designate to Kyrgyzstan  
The Honorable Richard Olson, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan  
The Honorable Joseph Y. Yun, U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia  
The Honorable Ted Osius, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam  
The Honorable William E. Todd, U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia