



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing
Uyghur Human Rights in China and Abroad

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Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery

Good morning everyone, and welcome to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission briefing on Uyghur (WEE-GUR) Human Rights in China and Abroad. Thank you very much to our panel of experts who have come to speak before the Commission on this topic today.

Over the past decades, and with increasing intensity, Chinese authorities have pursued a policy of strict religious and cultural control over Uyghur populations residing in China, and they have sought to extend that control abroad. Government repression of Uyghurs basic human rights has included the use of the Uyghur language, the forced repatriation of Uyghurs living outside of China, the training of Muslim clerics, the celebration of Ramadan, the issuing of passports, the use of veils and the growing of beards.

According to United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Uyghur Muslim parents are

forbidden from including their children in religious activities, and citizens are encouraged to inform the authorities of neighbors involved in unauthorized religious worship. In 2016, reports indicate that the Chinese government destroyed thousands of mosques in Xinjiang (SHIN-JUNG), citing that the old buildings were a threat to public safety.

As a Commissioner on the Congressional Executive Commission on China, I am very concerned by China's increased policies of repression against the Uyghurs. Uyghurs peacefully seeking to promote their political or religious views are often arbitrarily detained and given long prison sentences. No one should be told how to worship or how to express their cultural traditions. These are basic human rights enshrined in international documents that the Chinese government has signed onto and has agreed to respect.

In addition, suppression of cultural and religious identity breeds resentment among the oppressed and can lead them to a violent response. It is in China's best interest to uphold the commitments they have made on international human rights, and to allow Uyghurs the freedom to express their culture and religion as they see fit.

I hope this briefing helps shine a light on how these universal freedoms are withheld from the Uyghurs, and I look forward to hearing the recommendations offered by our esteemed panelists that will help bring about constructive change.