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One Hundred and Twelfth Congress

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

February 17, 2012

The Honorable Gary Locke
Ambassador of the United States of America
c/o U.S. State Department
Beijing
China

Dear Ambassador Locke:

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the worsening repression inflicted upon ethnic Uyghurs by the Government of China. We have been following closely the human rights situation affecting the Uyghurs for nearly two decades. Recent reports indicate that members of the Uyghur community in China face greater controls on their religious, political, and cultural activity, as well as increased security restrictions, deprivations of due process, forcible disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings. We urge you to continue to monitor this situation, and to raise concerns about the treatment of Uyghurs in your meetings with Chinese officials.

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer, a well-known Uyghur human rights activist, has kept us informed of the increasingly tense situation in Xinjiang, China, particularly since the deadly confrontations that took place on July 5, 2009. We are very troubled that China appears to be engaging in a pattern of systematic abuse against Uyghurs, and denying them any opportunity for peaceful protest against repressive practices. If these actions continue, we are concerned that they will lead to a continuing escalation of violence in Xinjiang.

As you know, as a result of the events that took place on July 5, 2009, 197 people were killed, and over 1,000 people were detained. Hundreds of Uyghurs detained after the riots have not been accounted for by the Chinese Government, and allegations of torture and other serious human rights abuses committed against detainees have gone uninvestigated. Many of the Uyghurs who have been tried in connection with the July 5 events have reportedly been denied fair and open trials, as well as the right to choose their attorney.

These confrontations between Uyghurs and Chinese officials have only grown worse since 2009. According to recent media reports, on July 18, 2011, approximately

KALINDA M. STEPHENSON
Republican Staff Director

P: 202.225.3599
F: 202.226.4478
TLHRC.HOUSE.GOV

JANICE KAGUYUTAN
Democratic Staff Director

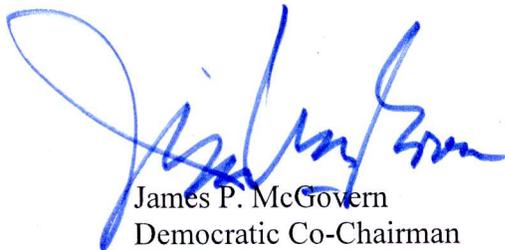
100 Uyghurs peacefully gathered in Khotan to peacefully protest repressive government policies when they were fired upon by Chinese police, leading to clashes between protestors and police. At least four people were killed, and an estimated 70 people were arrested in connection with the event. During the weekend of July 30, a series of knife and bomb attacks broke out in Kashgar, resulting in the deaths of several people. Four men were sentenced to death, and two men were sentenced to 19 years imprisonment, as a result of the incidents. There are concerns that the four men were tortured into giving confessions, and that they were denied adequate legal counsel during their trials.

In December 2011, during an official "Strike Hard" campaign in Xinjiang, Chinese forces fired upon a group of Uyghurs, which included women and children, as they attempted to flee across China's border to seek refuge in another country. Seven members of the group were killed, four were injured, and four adults and five children were reportedly detained, their whereabouts unknown.

In January of this year, several news sources reported that China is increasing its police presence in Xinjiang in order to combat "religious extremism." While the Chinese Government is within its rights to combat terrorism, we are concerned that this police crackdown is motivated not out of concern for legitimate threats of terrorism, but rather, to suppress the Uyghur population. We seek your earnest engagement on this issue, which represents a serious threat to religious, cultural, and political freedom in China. In addition, we urge you to request that Chinese officials fully disclose the whereabouts and conditions of all Uyghurs detained since 2009, and to conduct fair and open trials against individuals suspected of criminal wrongdoing.

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

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Democratic Co-Chairman
TLHRC



Frank R. Wolf
Republican Co-Chairman
TLHRC