CONFERENCE REPORT

Confronting Atrocities in China: The Global Response to the Uyghur Crisis

World Uyghur Congress | November 2019
The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) is an international organization that represents the collective interests of the Uyghur people in both East Turkestan and abroad. The principle objective of the WUC is to promote democracy, human rights and freedom for the Uyghur people and to use peaceful, nonviolent and democratic means to determine their future. Acting as the sole legitimate organization of the Uyghur people, the WUC endeavors to set out a course for the peaceful settlement of the East Turkestan Question through dialogue and negotiation.

The WUC supports a nonviolent and peaceful opposition movement against Chinese occupation of East Turkestan and unconditional adherence to internationally recognized human rights standards as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It adheres to the principles of democratic pluralism and rejects totalitarianism, religious intolerance and terrorism as an instrument of policy.

For more information, please visit our website: www.uyghurcongress.org
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SUMMARY

From June 6-7, 2019, the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) along with the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), the Uyghur American Association (UAA), and the Central Asia Program at George Washington University held a two-day conference: ‘Confronting Atrocities in China: The Global Response to the Uyghur Crisis’.

The event aimed to bring together political leaders, diplomats, humanitarian and human-rights agencies, policy experts, human rights specialists, Uyghur leaders and the Uyghur community abroad to advance the global response to the human-rights atrocities affecting Uyghurs in East Turkistan and abroad.

In addition, the aim of the conference was to mobilize broad participation in developing diverse strategies in order to pressure China to close political indoctrination camps and respect Uyghurs’ and other Turkic Muslims’ fundamental rights.

The conference was held over two days and included speakers from various backgrounds and disciplines to discuss and address a number of key open questions on how best to galvanize further support for Uyghurs, to mount a coordinated campaign to pressure China to close the camps, ensure accountability for those responsible for ongoing abuses, and adopt measures to safeguard the fundamental rights of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in China and abroad.

Ahead of the event, all the speakers were urged to take a solutions-based approach to the primary question of the conference: How can the international community work together to oblige China to close the political indoctrination facilities and moves towards respecting the fundamental rights of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims?

The conference built upon past events that aimed to highlight the most pertinent issues for Uyghurs and connected interested activists, academics, political leaders and community members as a means of working together to solve major challenges Uyghurs continue to face.
The World Uyghur Congress is an international organisation that represents the collective interest of the Uyghur people both in East Turkestan and abroad. The WUC was established in April 2004 in Munich, Germany, after the East Turkestan National Congress and the World Uyghur Youth Congress merged into one united organisation. The main objective of WUC is to promote the right of the Uyghur people to use peaceful, nonviolent, and democratic means to determine the political future of East Turkestan. The WUC has been supported in part by the National Endowment for Democracy.

The Uyghur Human Rights Project was founded in 2004 with a supporting grant from the National Endowment for Democracy as a human rights research, reporting and advocacy organization. The organization focuses on promoting human rights and democracy for Uyghurs living in East Turkistan.

The Uyghur American Association is based in Washington, DC that works to promote the preservation and flourishing of a rich, humanistic and diverse Uyghur culture, and to support the right of the Uyghur people to use peaceful, democratic means to determine their own political future. The UAA has undertaken the Uyghur Human Rights Project for the purpose of promoting improved human rights conditions for Uyghurs and other indigenous groups in East Turkistan (the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region), on the premise that the assurance of basic human rights will facilitate the realization of the community’s democratic aspirations.

The Central Asia Program (CAP) at George Washington University promotes high-quality academic research on contemporary Central Asia, and serves as an interface for the policy, academic, diplomatic, and business communities. The Central Asia Program focuses on the wider Central Asian space, which includes the five post-Soviet Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan), Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Xinjiang, Mongolia, as well as the Volga-Ural region, Kashmir, and Balochistan.
OPENING CEREMONY

On June 6, 2019, the event began with an opening ceremony on Capitol Hill, attended by over 100 guests. Executive Committee Chairman of the WUC and Director of the UHRP, Omer Kanat, moderated the opening, stressing the importance of the event:

“This conference was hosted at a critical moment of the crisis for the Uyghur people as up to one to three million Uyghurs are being detained in internment camps. The continued existence of the Uyghur people is under threat. Now is the time to take action.”

Dolkun Isa, President, World Uyghur Congress

With his opening remarks, WUC President Dolkun Isa welcomed the distinguished guests at the opening ceremony and thanked them for their involvement in the Uyghur issue and for participating in the two-day conference.

Isa stated that the primary aim of the conference was to bring together political leaders, international agencies, human rights activists, academic experts, Uyghur leaders and the Uyghur community abroad to provide updates on the responses underway and to collectively develop additional strategies on the issue.

Isa reminded the guests that the people in East Turkistan could not participate in any religious celebrations, despite the fact that Muslims all over the world were celebrating as it was time of Eid on the date the ceremony took place during the ceremony.

During his remarks, he briefed the guests on the current Uyghur crisis and stressed the importance of believing that Uyghur advocacy work will help the people in East Turkistan:

“Speakers will discuss and address key questions on how best to galvanize further support for Uyghurs’ rights, to mount a coordinated campaign to pressure China to close the camps, ensure accountability for those responsible for ongoing abuses, and adopt measures to safeguard the fundamental rights of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in China and abroad. We must make use of this opportunity to stand up for all those detained in the camps and collectively work on solutions. We all have a moral responsibility to stop what is happening.”

“We urge the international community to show courage & leadership on this issue. Human rights should be at the forefront, not an afterthought.”

Isa also urged the international community to push China to close the camps: “We are grateful for the actions taken so far by some politicians and national governments to push for the internment camps to be closed. We are grateful to the US senators and representatives for continuously raising this issue and pushing for action. The German government and the European Union have also consistently raised the issue and have advocated for accountability and for the camps to be closed. While we sincerely appreciate their efforts, much more has to be done.”

“The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act must be passed with some urgency. We call on the U.S. government to finally use the Global Magnitsky Act to apply targeted sanctions to the Chinese officials responsible for the internment camps. We urge states to insist that an independent investigation led by the UN be sent to East Turkistan. World leaders and governments that hold freedom and human rights as core values must show courage and leadership on this issue. Humanity and human rights must be at the forefront, not an afterthought.”
forefront of relations with China and not as an afterthought.”

He concluded his remarks by again thank all those who had come to participate in the conference, saying: I would like to thank you all once again for participating in this conference. “Your presence, words and actions have given hope to the Uyghur people. I am looking forward to constructive, action-oriented discussions over the next few days. With cooperation, purpose and determination we can affect real change.”

Randall Schriver, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, U.S. State Department

Following Mr. Isa’s remarks, Randall Schriver, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, Randall Schriver spoke about his experience working on the Uyghur issue and how it has been underreported and that Uyghur stories were unappreciated in the media. However, he remained hopeful that, “if we continue to speak out, use our voice and platforms, we can change that and create greater awareness, then take meaningful actions.”

Mr. Schriver, as a veteran China hand in Washington, said the Pentagon was engaged in a “whole of government approach” to “make sure that greater awareness is accomplished and then action, and meaningful action, to get the Chinese to change their approach, which is counterproductive and ultimately self-destructive.”

Mr. Schriver spoke about his continued concern for the Uyghur people and the effects of the mass internment camps in East Turkistan: “We do worry about the effects this will have on regional security and the potential for radicalization. Treating people this way can certainly lead to those outcomes.”

“China is trying to put down a religion and the soul of man. No government has ever been successful at this [...] this will fail.”

He stressed that Uyghur issue is “a humanitarian issue, it is a religious freedom issue, but for us at the Department of Defense it is also a security issue.” He was confident that the U.S. administration will continue to help in the future and hold China accountable.

Jim McGovern, United States Congressman

US Congressman Jim McGovern, who also serves as the co-chair of Tom Lantos Human Rights Foundation, plays an important leadership role on fundamental human rights around the world.

As a leading voice in China for Tibetans and Uyghurs, McGovern expressed his support for the Uyghur people and his concerns over the human rights situation for the Turkic speaking Muslims in East Turkistan, mentioning that, “we recognise that the
Chinese government is violating the basic human rights of the Uyghur people.”

“We are here to be the wind at your back.”

“There is no question the United States should be doing more to help the Uyghur people, and many of us have ideas on current legislation. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act HR649, S178 and Uyghur Intervention Global Humanitarian Unified Response Act HR1025,” as McGovern invited other Congresspeople to join this bill to ensure that there consequences to repression of Uyghurs.

“I am proud to support the Uyghur people and their fight to live freely, to freely practise their religion and to speak their language,” showing his support for the Uyghurs, McGovern ended his remarks stating that, “We are here to be wind at your back.”

Sam Brownback, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom

Sam Brownback started his remarks speaking of the 75 years of D-Day. June 6, 2019 marks the start of the 75th anniversary of the D-Day Landings and the Battle of Normandy and with it, a momentous occasion to celebrate peace, liberty and reconciliation.

Brownback asked the conference participants if they still have family members with whom they have lost contact in East Turkistan. The majority of the participants raised their hands, and he thanked them for their courage to take part in the event and stressed the importance of testifying on behalf of their detained or disappeared family members.

“China is trying to do something that it has never been successful in the history of mankind,” referring to the Chinese government’s repressive policies. Brownback stressed that, “China is trying to put down a religion and the soul of man. No government has ever been successful at this [...] This will fail.”

Uyghur Congress President Dolkun Isa presented Ambassador Brownback with a Uyghur doppa following his speech to thank him for speaking so strongly on the Uyghur issue.

David J. Ranz, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State

Good morning, salam alaikum, and “Yahshimusiz”. On behalf of our bureau and our Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Alice Wells, I want to thank the World Uyghur Congress for its invitation to speak here today, as well as the Uyghur Human Rights Project, the Uyghur American Association, and the Central Asia Program at the George Washington University.

It is a pleasure to be representing the State Department with Ambassador-at-Large Sam Brownback, who is a close friend of the SCA Bureau and a key partner in our efforts to promote religious freedom in an extraordinary – and extraordinarily diverse – region of the world. It is a further privilege to be speaking alongside such tireless advocates of human rights as Representatives Jim McGovern and Brad Sherman, along with speakers from the international community and the National Endowment for Democracy.

While not directly responsible for Chinese issues, the South and Central Asia Affairs Bureau manages U.S. foreign policy with Central Asian nations such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, many of whose people share ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural ties with the Uyghur community and other
Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The Chinese government’s rampant abuse of the human rights and religious freedoms of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang is an urgent issue impacting the broader region. We call on China to end this campaign of repression, and immediately release the approximately 1 million arbitrarily detained in camps. We urge other governments of the region and the world to join us.

The deteriorating state of religious freedom in China, including the government’s increasing persecution of the Uyghurs and other Muslims minorities, is not only a bilateral issue with China; it is a regional and global one as well. It is a crisis that has engaged all corners of the State Department as we seek to build a global response to the Chinese government’s program of oppression.

I was privileged to visit Kashgar myself 25 years ago. I marveled at the vibrancy of its markets, the beauty of its mosques, the charm and culture of the old city, the incredible food, and of course the warmth and kindness of its residents. It is difficult to comprehend the changes that have taken place on Kashgar’s streets since that time, and across the region.

This campaign of mass detentions and internment; pervasive surveillance and collection of personal data; compulsory stays by Chinese officials in Uyghur homes; and controls on cultural and religious expression are shocking in their scope and devastating in their impact on individuals, families, and entire communities.

In the SCA bureau, as in the rest of the department, we continue to urge the countries in our region to speak out against China’s abuses in Xinjiang, following Turkey’s brave example, and we are committed to promoting accountability for those who commit human rights violations and abuses.

We encourage many countries, as we encourage all governments, to press China privately and publicly, in both bilateral and multilateral contexts, to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals, including members of its ethnic minority population.

“We have to work hard to end the deafening silence, the almost criminal silence of the Muslim world [on this issue].”

There are strong indications that survivors of this campaign, and those who escaped China before being detained, are now being forcibly deported back to China. In China, there is a significant likelihood that they may be falsely charged with a crime and denied due process in accordance with international standards.

Through the work of those assembled here and others, the horrors of Xinjiang are being exposed. As these abuses are progressively brought to light, people will pressure governments to respond and to stand up for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Claiming ignorance or looking the other way is not credible in the face of such egregious atrocities as those we see in Xinjiang. As a Uyghur idiom goes, “A man can’t be blamed for not knowing, but [can be blamed] for not asking.”

The United States will continue to call on China to reverse its counterproductive policies that conflate terrorism with peaceful religious and political expression, to release all those arbitrarily detained, and to cease efforts to coerce members of its Muslim minority groups residing abroad to return to China to face an uncertain fate.

Your advocacy continues to raise awareness and prompt action on this issue. Thank you
for your passion, for your bravery, and for your tireless dedication to this noble work.

**Carl Gershman, President, National Endowment for Democracy**

“I want to congratulate Dolkun Isa and the World Uyghur Congress – and also the Uyghur Human Rights Project, the Uyghur American Association, and the George Washington University Central Asia Program for taking the initiative to organize this important and extremely timely conference.

You had imagination and good judgment to build upon the Democracy Award Ceremony we had in the Congress on Tuesday, when so many Uyghur activists and their supporters were coming to Washington, to convene this urgently needed discussion of how the world should respond to the terrible atrocities that are taking place as we speak in East Turkistan.

I am not going to talk about these atrocities today. I did that Tuesday evening at the Democracy Award event. I want to speak this morning about how we need to respond. I want to say just one thing regarding the atrocities and the concentration camps.

When I mentioned the names the other evening of the economist Ilham Tohti, the religious scholar Muhammad Salih Hajim, the academic Rahile Dawut, and the folksinger Abdurehim Heyit, I said that their disappearance, imprisonment and, in the case of Muhammad Salih, death was evidence of the Chinese policy of committing cultural genocide against the Uyghur people. I realized when I made this point that their names are not well known, that I didn’t even know two of them until a few days before I spoke, and that we have a tremendous job of consciousness-raising to do to make the world aware of the crimes that are being committed today in East Turkestan against the Uyghur people.

We need to build a movement for the defense of the rights and the survival of the Uyghur people. What is happening is terrible – but there are opportunities and we need to know what they are and how to take advantage of them.

The current situation is very different than what it was during World War II when the Holocaust occurred. It’s not just that the Chinese are not yet trying kill every Uyghur, the way the Nazis exterminated the Jews of Europe.

The Holocaust was not widely known when it was happening. The late historian Walter Laqueur wrote a book about the lack of knowledge of the Holocaust when it was being carried out. The book was called *The Terrible Secret* because few people knew about the Holocaust when it was occurring.

> “Why isn’t the Red Cross knocking down the doors to address the situation in East Turkistan?”

Even when some information came out about the Final Solution, it is not circulated or publicized. The information was even suppressed so that the U.S. and British governments would not be diverted from pursuing the war effort against the Nazis.

Today the situation is very different. Despite the many issues of contention with China, there is no overriding priority like the war against the Axis Powers. Today there is also much more information available about what is happening to the Uyghur people. There is not enough information, and it is not widely
known around the world. But the situation is very different from what it was when the Jews were being murdered by the Nazis.

Moreover, the knowledge of the concentration camps in East Turkestan has focused more attention on the Uyghur issue than ever before. Finally, there has been a dramatic change in attitudes toward China, as we saw the other evening when Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced that a House resolution remember Tiananmen Square massacre and called for human rights in China passed unanimously. The issue of support for democracy in China is completely bipartisan, as is support for the rights and survival of the Uyghur people.

We need to take advantage of this and build an international coalition to defend the human rights of the Uyghur people. It should have a number of objectives:

1. To raise the general awareness of the concentration camps and the attempt by the Chinese government to commit cultural genocide against the Uyghur people;

2. To end the deafening silence in the Muslim world. We can do that by mobilizing our many networks of civil society activists throughout the Muslim world;

3. To target companies that are doing business in Xinjiang. One example is Volkswagen, a German company that had a close relationship with the Nazi regime and whose former CEO Herbert Diess said that he was “not aware” of the concentration camps in Xinjiang. There are also 53 Fortune 500 U.S. companies operating in Xinjiang, among them Exxon Mobil, Amazon, General Motors, Ford, General Electric, and Boeing. We can work with trade unions and also business associations to let these companies know that they shouldn’t be operating in a region where the Beijing regime is committing cultural genocide against the native population.

4. We need to raise this issue of cultural genocide and the concentration camps in the context of China’s hosting of 2022 Winter Olympics. Companies like Adidas, Nike, Coca Cola need to be told that they shouldn’t sponsor these games while the Beijing regime is holding three million Uyghurs in concentration camps and committing cultural genocide. Human Rights Watch is already on top of this issue and we need to work with them.

5. We also need to pressure the International Red Cross to insist on access to Xinjiang to find out what is happening in the concentration camps; and

6. As Congressman Jim McGovern just said, there needs to be legislation like the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act that requires our government to produce reports on the crackdown and its national security implications, calls for the appointment of a Special Coordinator for Xinjiang, and recommends the application of Magnitsky targeted sanctions against Chinese officials who are involved in the atrocities being committed against the Uyghur people.

This conference is a first step toward building an international coalition for the defense of the human rights and the survival of the Uyghur people. There are many organizations that are already engaged on this. They can be part of an international coalition. The NED is one of them and its networks like the World Movement for Democracy and the International Coalition for Democratic Renewal, that is a joint effort
with Forum 2000 in Prague, can take up the Uyghur issue.

In addition, the NED’s four party, labor, and business institutes can help by reaching out to their associated networks of political parties, business associations and trade unions. These are all sectors that need to be activated and brought into the coalition. Human rights and democracy groups like Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization are natural partners. We also need to build an interfaith coalition of religious organizations, as well as network of academic institutions.

Not least, there should also be an international network of parliamentarians - like the World Parliamentarians Convention on Tiber that just met in Riga - that is committed to the defense of the human rights of the Uyghur People.

The Uyghur movement has done remarkable work with relatively few people. It’s important now that it work on developing and training a new generation of activists and leaders. The building of a new coalition should provide opportunities for the growth and nurturing of a new generation of leaders, and NED can help on that.

Finally, I think this conference should be an annual occurrence. It’s an opportunity to build solidarity and cohesion within the Uyghur movement, and it also is a way to raise international awareness and broaden the movement’s outreach to new constituencies. This, too, is an area where NED can help.

We’re at the beginning of what will be a long and difficult struggle. I believe, as Ronald Reagan said in his Westminster Address (which led to the creation of the NED), that all dictatorships are inherently insecure and unstable, because they rule without political consent and therefore have no real legitimacy. Reagan famously said that the innate human desire for freedom will leave a closed and oppressive system like the dictatorship now ruling China “on the ash heap of history as it has left other tyrannies which stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people.” I believe that will happen, so don’t give up hope.

As Ambassador Brownback noted, today is the 75th anniversary of the Normandy invasion and the liberation of Europe. Many thousands of Americans gave their lives in that great effort. America remains committed to the cause of human freedom. You need to remember that as you fight for the rights and the survival of the Uyghur people, you are not alone. The American people stand with you, and the support you receive from the NED is an expression of that solidarity. We’ll do everything we can to help. Thank you very much.”

Mr. Isa presented Gershman with a Uyghur doppa to thank him for his continued support.

**Marco Rubio, United States Senator**

The co-chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) and a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio graciously sent a video message ahead of the conference calling for action to close the camps. Once again Mr. Rubio highlighted the importance of holding China accountable for its large-scale, systematic and egregious human rights abuses.

“I am looking forward to continuing our joint work to hold the Chinese government accountable & ensure [Uyghurs are free from persecution].”

“I am looking forward to continuing our joint work to hold the Chinese government accountable & ensure every Uyghur is free from persecution,” Rubio said. He also
remarked that the U.S. government will, “continue to do our part to make sure the world knows about that’s happening in Xinjiang – crimes against humanity, the crimes being committed against the Uyghurs and other religious and ethnic minorities.”

In addition, he stressed that, “Advocating for human rights and the rule of law in China needs to be made integral to any discussion that the United States Government has with China, or with allies and partners about China.”

Csaba Sógor, Former Member of European Parliament

Csaba Sógor, who served as the co-chair of the Uyghur Friendship Group in the Parliament, denounced the Chinese government’s treatment of the Uyghurs by highlighting the parallels of Uyghur human rights violations with Tibetan violations at the opening ceremony.

Sógor, hailing from a former communist country, empathised with the Uyghur cause from the beginning when supporting advocacy work. He also provided a summary of the Parliament’s achievements in the past few years with regards to the Uyghur people and his vision for the future, stating that, “There is an urgent task to unite the Uyghur and Tibetan human rights groups to send a strong message.”

Nancy Pelosi, United States Congresswoman & Speaker of the House of Representatives

A statement was read by Reva Price, Senior Advisor to the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi:

“The unabated oppression that the Uyghur communities face at the hands of the Chinese is a challenge to the conscience of the entire world. The bipartisan House of Representatives salutes the courageous men and women of the World Uyghur Congress and the Uyghur Human Rights Project and all who continue the fight for the freedoms and democratic future that the Uyghur people deserve.

Our hearts and minds are with the Uyghur communities, who face religious persecution, including harsh restrictions on observing Ramadan, which just ended this week. Today, and on all days, we reaffirm our commitment to sharing the stories and sharing the outrage of millions of Uyghurs who are being watched, followed, disappeared in internment camps and made to suffer ‘re-education’ efforts.

“Together, let us work toward a future when the world’s most populous nation can at last be called the world’s largest democracy.”

“This week, as we mark 30 years since the atrocity of the Tiananmen Massacre, the global community must stand with all who strive to achieve the Tiananmen Generation’s dream of freedom. The greatest tribute that we can make to the fallen freedom fighters of Tiananmen is to work relentlessly to advance their democratic aspirations: for the Uyghur people, the Tibetan people, the people of Hong Kong and all who have been oppressed and repressed by the Chinese regime.

Together, let us work toward a future when the world’s most populous nation can at last be called the world’s largest democracy.”

Mr. Isa presented Ms. Price with two Uyghur scarfs to thank her and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for her continued support.

Brad Sherman, United States Congressman

On behalf of U.S. Representative Brad Sherman, Ranking Member of the Asia Subcommittee, Chief of Staff Don MacDonald spoke of Sherman’s support for
the Uighur Intervention and Global Humanitarian Unified Response (UIGHUR) Act. Among other provisions, the bill also calls for Global Magnitsky sanctions to be applied to those responsible for the internment camps, establishes human rights disclosure requirements for sensitive exports to China, and instructs American diplomats to protest the deportation of Turkic Muslims to China and increase their outreach to the Uyghur community.

Mr. MacDonald spoke about Sherman’s involvement with the UIGHUR Act. There are currently two bills in the House, Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act 2019 and UIGHUR Act. Back in March, Mr. Sherman co-signed a letter that was addressed to the U.S. state secretary Mike Pompeo urging the Trump administration to take serious action against the Chinese government’s crimes against humanity.

Mr. MacDonald also mentioned the plan to merge the two bills, which are not competing but more complementary. The U.S. House of Representatives, which cares for the Uyghur issue have, “placed significant pressure on the Trump administration to sanction Chinese officials that are complicit in the repression, detention, surveillance in the Uyghur region.”

“If you are complicit [...] in the repression of the Uyghurs, you should not be able to do business with the US government.”

There were reports on Beijing employing US talent to oppress Uyghurs, particularly in the realm of bio-hacking and imprisonment. China had been using equipment from Thermo Fisher, a Massachusetts biotech company, to collect DNA samples from millions Uyghurs under the guise of a free health check. Mr. MacDonald stated that, “The American government should be sure that exports to China from American company do not aid or advance the repression there.”

During his remarks, MacDonald condemned the Chinese government, stating that, “If you are complicit in the repression of Uyghurs, you should not be able to do business with the United States government.” He also stressed the importance of having more diplomatic ties with other Muslim-majority countries who have been silent on China’s treatment of Uyghurs.

On behalf of Congressman Brad Sherman, MacDonald delivered strong remarks and received Uyghur doppa from the WUC president Mr. Isa.

Norman Baker, Former UK Minister of State at the Home Office

Norman Baker, member of the UK parliament from 1997 to 2015 and UK Foreign Minister of State at the Home Office, has been a great supporter of oppressed people in China. He has been continuously active voice in raising awareness of the human rights situation in China. He is also a good friend of the WUC and the Uyghur people.

Mr. Baker began his speech by comparing how New York or London treats its citizens to how China treats its people, especially the minorities, saying that, “the ruling [Chinese] government wants to have one predominant race, one party only, and wants one religion—Communism. All the qualities that New York and London have--multiculturalism and integration-- made them stronger in
return, but the Chinese government is trying to erase its minority's unique identities.

He gave examples for his argument, listing China's oppressive policies towards Tibetans and using the same methods on the Uyghur community: “Destruction of mosques in the Uyghur community, suppression of Uyghur language, this is certainly has come to genocide and it needs to be fought, very hard.”

Baker spoke in detail about the surveillance technology used on Uyghurs, but also their Chinese citizens. He then gave examples about China's Social Credit System: “In 2020, it intends to record every action and transaction by each Chinese citizen, in real time has the response of some of the individuals economic, social and moral behavior with the reward or penalties.”

“The Chinese state has invested 7.2 billion dollars in security for East Turkistan. Just think what could have been done for the people in the region with that money.”

China is also using facial recognition technology to ensure that the amount of toilet paper a citizen uses is now controlled by the state through facial recognition. Baker called this “an abomination by state which has no place in humanity and violates every single human right in our country.”

He said the Chinese state has invested seven billion dollars in security for East Turkistan, telling the audience: “Just think about what could have been done for the people in the region with that money.” China is using technology to strengthen authoritarianism at home and abroad.

By comparing the situation in East Turkistan to George Orwell’s 1984, Baker said that we are witnessing a war that has been declared on the Uyghur community. “It's a war on individual freedom, it's a war on Islam, it's a war on human rights.” He noted the lack of international response on the Uyghur issue and the need for international action to become one voice to speak on the situation in the Uyghur region.

“The international community must stand up & speak out […] this is a deliberate attempt by the CCP to eliminate history, ethnic identity & hope.”

Ending his remarks with a brief but strong message, Baker said: “The sky maybe grey, maybe raining heavily, but one day the clouds will pass and the sun will shine again. Your battle is our battle, the battle of everyone who values freedom and human rights, that's why I am with you today, where we all stand together.”

Chris Smith, United States Congressman

Congressman Chris Smith, among the most consistent and principled supporter of Uyghurs in the U.S. Congress has raised alarm about the internment camps and the persecution of Uyghurs long before the issue gained international prominence. He sponsored the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act in the House of Representatives and has been a leading voice in holding China accountable for its human rights violations.

Congressman Smith started his remarks calling what the Chinese government doing in East Turkistan genocide: “People have
been taken to concentration camps and losing their children. And children have been taken to state run orphanages where they are forced to renounce their parents faith."

“It is time for the UN to step up and recognize this genocide and do so very loudly and effectively. It is also horrendously evil that the Chinese government is constructing a high tech police state where the goal is to forcibly assimilate and transform ethnic minorities.” To hold China accountable for its atrocities, for more than a year, Congressman Chris Smith with Senator Marco Rubio have led a bipartisan coalition against Chinese government policies.

Congressman Smith also, “commended Vice President Mike Pence, Ambassador Sam Brownback and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, for their strong statement,” but he also said there is a need for an even more robust response as this genocide unfolds.

Smith called for, “the Treasury Department to impose Global Magnitsky sanctions against Chinese officials responsible for human rights abuses and the Commerce Department should prohibit sells to any Chinese company complicit in egregious human rights abuses. The FBI should be investigating attempts by the Chinese agent to hurt, harass and intimidate Uyghurs in the United State. The State Department should be actively condemning the Chinese government’s actions in Beijing.”

“**It is time the UN stepped up and recognise this genocide [...] there needs to be an outpouring of support & sympathy for the Uyghur people.**"

“I believe we are at a critical point. Governments and parliaments must condemn what is happening to the Uyghurs. The UN must investigate and hold them to account. The International Olympic Committee should immediately reassess China’s hosting of the 2022 Games.”

Smith ended his remarks with a strong statement: “We need to speak out boldly what the Chinese government is doing to the Uyghurs and what the Xi Jinping doing to the Uyghurs is genocide!”

**Ngodup Tsering, Representative the Office Of Tibet in DC**

H.H. the Dalai Lama representative, Mr. Ngodup Tsering, representing the Tibet Office in North America, expressed solidarity with the Uyghur people. He said, “Currently, the forms of repression used upon the Uyghur people are almost identical to the forms of repression used upon Tibetan people. Our languages, cultures, histories, religions and ethnic identities are under threat. Uyghurs and Tibetans drawn even closer to each other in a spirit of friendship and solidarity. The Uyghur people greatly admire the determination and strength of the Tibetan people in their struggle for survival.”

Tsering continued: “The Tibetan people understand how Uyghurs are suffering under the Chinese Communist Party Regime [...] this is a deliberate attempt by the CCP to erase history, ethnic identity, hope and to create intergenerational anguish.” He also stated that, “While we must bear witness to the crimes, we must educate businesses, the corporate sector that profits from Uyghur concentration camps and we must also educate the leadership of our various governments that as much as it needs China for its development, China also needs them,
in fact more. This must be realised by each government which engages with China.”

He also emphasized that in our fight against tyranny, “The fight must be continuous, consistent and non-violent.” Tsering called for more international advocacy and for education of the matter, and concluded his speech by quoting His Holiness the Dalai Lama: “The winds of evil may blow but it cannot extinguish the flames of Truth.”

Uyghur activist, Mr. Rishat Abbas presented a Uyghur scarf to Tsering following his remarks.

David Kilgour, Former Member of Canadian Parliament

Mr. Kilgour started his remarks quoting German independent researcher Adrian Zenz: “They’re (the CCP) trying to kill the memory of who they are, wipe out their separate identity, language and history, even the slightest perceived fractions having a copy of the Quran on a phone or making a phone contact abroad can all result in incarceration.”

Mr. Kilgour has spoken on Uyghur organ harvesting in the Uyghur region as Uyghurs are now similarly victimized as Falun Gong practitioners. Kilgour stated that Uyghurs entering the camps are blood-tested, possibly for organ transplant purposes. One credible escapee reported that those given orange armbands at the tests simply “disappeared”.

Mr. Kilgour also mentioned Dr. Enver Tohti, who is a former surgeon from East Turkistan, who had been required to perform organ extractions at a time when the industry was just beginning to grow.

Mr. Kilgour pressed world leaders to speak up on the atrocities because it cannot be ‘business as usual’ with a regime that treats minorities or anyone so poorly.

Paul Strauss, United States Shadow Senator

US Shadow Senator Paul Strauss, who represents the District of Columbia and served alongside WUC president in the presidency of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO), has regularly worked with the WUC and other Uyghur organisations to collectively raise human rights concerns. Senator Strauss is a passionate campaigner for civil and political rights.

Strauss spoke about his support for the Uyghur people and his concern for the human rights situation in China, stating that, “As we commemorate, D-Day 75 years ago, let this be our D-Day. Let this be the day where people from all around the world came together in one place to turn the tide of evil, that needs to be eradicated for once and for all.”

Ralph Bunche, General Secretary, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

UNPO General Secretary, Ralph Bunche gave remarks at the opening ceremony,
highlighting the role of his organization which was conceived in the late 1980s by those denied equal representation in the institutions of government.

Amongst their core founding members was the Government of Taiwan, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and the World Uyghur Congress, and they were later joined by the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center.

“At the time of our formal founding in 1991, the Soviet Union was about to collapse and the Cold War ended. Tiananmen had shown an awakening of the Chinese people to liberal democratic values, and the robust initial response from the international community and leadership changes in China promised a change.

“A brighter future for unrepresented and marginalized peoples seemed promising, one in which they would be able to exercise greater control over their economic, social and cultural development and truly participate in public affairs at all levels in accordance with their internationally recognized rights.

For many, this has proven to be the case. Tens of millions peoples were liberated from the vestiges of colonial oppression or were able to escape from the firm grip of communist authoritarianism. Situations held in check by the geopolitical necessities of the Cold War.”

According to Mr. Bunche, for their members trapped in the grips of the Communist Party in China, this promised bright future turned into darkness beginning in 1993 as the Western World embraced the policy of “constructive engagement” with China.

“We forgot the lessons that were learned over the prior half-century; that our efforts to promote a market economy needed to be allied to a concerted effort to promote our values and protect the most vulnerable from authoritarian hegemony. The people of China and the Asia-Pacific region have suffered dreadfully as a result.”

This approach has given space to the Communist Party of China to ramp up its suppression and attempted eradication of China’s ethnic and religious groups; and to export its model in the region.

Why is this happening? Mr. Bunche asked the audience.

He stated that at home, a model of persecution and forced assimilation was created that has been successively applied to the Southern Mongolian, Tibetan, Kazakh and Uyghur people. Abroad, the cheap human rights-free loans and investments have been applied against smaller nations that has enabled them to copy the Communist Party’s model, which has been used to slowly erode support for the government in Taiwan, even as the people there see a level of prosperity and freedom that most in the region can only dream of.

Internationally, the Communist Party and its allies have progressively taken over the United Nations and other international bodies and has begun to shape them in a manner inimical to the rights of the most vulnerable.

And this has happened because we have refused to stand up to this, to do more than just condemn but meaningfully act. To the contrary, too often our governments have been willing to marry public criticism with private kowtowing.

Earlier this year, for example, the government of Italy was widely condemned by the European Union and its member states for so opening rolling out the red carpet for Xi Jinping in an attempt to jump on board the Belt and Road Initiative. Yet

“I believe the tide is finally turning, it’s turning because of the people [...] They’re exhibiting such strength & courage.”
Italy was only doing openly what those who were criticizing it have been doing.

“So against all of that, why am I feeling so positive today?” Towards the end of his remarks, Mr. Bunche made strong, hopeful statement saying that, “I am feeling positive because the tide appears to be turning and because there are so many now willing to push back […] We can see that it’s happening in the international level... the tide is turning because of the people in China, the Uyghur people, the Tibetan people, Taiwanese people, Southern Mongolian people and people in Hong Kong who are exhibiting such strength and courage, that makes you believe that something will change.”

Dominic Nardi, Policy Analyst, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), has become a critical institution for religious freedom within the U.S. government. We are very pleased to recognize a representative of the commission to speak to us during the opening ceremony. Dominic Nardi, who serves as a policy analyst for the commission, focusing on China, Indonesia and Vietnam.

“The Chinese government’s persecution of Uyghurs & other Muslims in Xinjiang is one of the most serious cases of religious persecution in our time.”

In the few short months inside the commission he has already become outspoken representative of human rights situation in China and a friend of the Uyghur people. He also has extensive experience conducting research in Asia, as well as working as a consultant for USAID-funded projects in Indonesia and Burma.

Mr. Nardi attended the opening ceremony on behalf of the chair of the commission Tenzin Dorjee. Mr. Nardi read out Mr. Dorjee’s remarks who couldn’t attend the ceremony in person. Mr. Tenzin Dorjee, who is a Tibetan Buddhist himself, has tremendous empathy towards the Uyghur people. Mr. Dorjee speech concentrated on religious repression targeting Uyghurs:

“China’s persecution of Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists — along with Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, and others — is likely the most notorious example of a clear violation of religious freedom that remains unpunished, but it is far from the only one. In USCIRF’s 2019 Annual Report, 28 countries were cited where governments or societal actors severely violate religious freedom. In many of these countries, religious freedom conditions deteriorated in 2018 and led to the marginalization, imprisonment, or even death of countless people of various faiths and beliefs. Global Magnitsky sanctions can be applied vigorously to punish individuals and agencies directly responsible for the severe religious freedom violations detailed in our report.”

Mr. Tenzin Dorjee stressed the need to use the Global Magnitsky Act to sanction the Chinese officials who is responsible for the mass internment camps in East Turkistan.

Giulio Terzi di Sant’Agata, former Italian Foreign Minister and former Italian Ambassador to the United States

Video message from Mr. Giulio Terzi di Sant’Agata, former Italian Foreign Minister and former Italian Ambassador to the United States, now president of Cybaze, a top cybersecurity company expressed deep concerns towards the Uyghur issue. He stressed the importance of speaking up against atrocities in China and to be at the center of the human rights cause.

Former Ambassador Terzi, who considers human rights and especially religious liberty
a top moral and political priority, stressed that the utter silence in some countries, have further enable the Communist Party to use counter terrorism as an excuse to repress its minorities. He also thanked the U.S. government for their attention on the Uyghur issue and doing so in a bipartisan way. He believes this will lead to great moments in the near future.

Jennifer Wexton, United States Congresswoman

Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton, who could not be at the conference opening sent a message ahead of the event in support of the Uyghur people. Wexton has been serving the people of Northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley for nearly two decades as a prosecutor, advocate for abused children, state Senator, and now a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Virginia’s 10th District.

Her message was clear and strong: “The state sponsored surveillance, intimidation and violence that Uyghurs face both inside and outside of China’s borders is unacceptable. No one should ever be made to suffer or give up their rights because of their faith, ethnicity or heritage.”

“No one should ever be made to suffer or give up their rights because of their faith, ethnicity or heritage.”

“I am proud to be working alongside many of my colleagues in the House of Representatives, continue to shed light on the plight of the Uyghur people, and work towards punishing those responsible for committing these atrocities. Including sanctioning Chinese officials and imposing export controls over American businesses that provide training or technology used by China to conduct surveillance on Uyghur communities.”

Orkesh Dolet (Wu'er Kaixi), former student leader and activist

Mr. Orkesh Dolet, commonly known as Wu'er Kaixi, the charismatic Uyghur student leader of the 1989 student democracy movement, visiting Washington for the 30th anniversary of the June 4 Tiananmen Massacre, lent his voice to the Uyghur cause and delivered the closing statement of the opening ceremony.

“In the last 30 years the world has adopted a wrong China policy [...] The US had adopted a policy of ‘engagement’ – I call it appeasement.”

Mr. Dolet reminded the audience of the hopeful atmosphere during the Tiananmen student protests: “We received support from all over China; in fact, I think the 50 days I was in the Tiananmen student movement were the 50 days I felt no discrimination.” Addressing the Uyghur cause over the past decades, he stated that “the right to self-determination is one of the most important and inalienable rights at the heart of democracy.”

Turning back to the current policies of democratic nations towards China, Mr. Dolet noted that:

“In the last 30 years the world has adopted a wrong China policy [...] The US had adopted a policy of ‘engagement’ -- I call it appeasement. If you take the definition of terrorism as achieving political aims through
violence and fear, that perfectly describes the actions of the Chinese Communist Party.”

Mr. Dolet further criticized that representatives from democratic countries were giving China the impression they primarily cared about obtaining market access and merely condemned the regime’s human rights record on the sidelines. He closed his contribution with a quote by Martin Luther King to be kept in mind throughout this crisis: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”
CONFFERENCE
Panel 1: Survey of Evidence
Moderator:
- Rushan Abbas, Campaign for Uyghurs

Speakers:
- Shawn Zhang, Independent Researcher
- Dr. Adrian Zenz, Independent Researcher
- Harald Maas, Journalist

Shawn Zhang
Shawn Zhang studied the growth of concentration camps using satellite images from Google Earth. In his presentation, he shared his findings on the layout and growth of the camps from late 2016 to the present day.

The images Mr. Zhang displayed showed a significant expansion of camps with numerous new buildings being established around the original concentration camp sites in 2018. The researcher concluded that “in mid-2018 the capacity of camps had at least doubled” compared to 2017.

According to his research, every Uyghur city has at least one internment camp, which is notably true for Aksu prefecture and other parts of southern East Turkistan. Camp sizes in the north were generally smaller, he stated. In total he has identified 98 camps and found camps financial data in Hotan prefecture.

Dr. Adrian Zenz
Dr. Adrian Zenz, a German researcher who has spoken widely about the situation in the Uyghur region, used publicly available documents from the Chinese government to uncover information about the camps in the region and to show a way forward for human rights activism in the face of Chinese propaganda.

Battle of Narratives
Dr. Zenz focused his contribution on how to effectively deal with what he called “a battle of narratives” between human rights groups, academics and governments on the one side and the Chinese authorities on the other. While human rights groups are speaking of “concentration camps”, the Chinese side calls them “vocational training centers”; while people are saying there are millions interned in the camps, China insists that far less than one million persons are in vocational training centers. Even the basic concept of severe human rights violations is being contested by the Chinese side; “China redefines human rights to ‘the right of the majority to peaceful development’”, Dr. Zenz stated.

According to the German researcher, this battle cannot be won by “emotionalism”, “rising number claims” or other kinds of counterclaims. Dr. Zenz rather suggested to recalibrate the approach to dealing with Chinese human rights violations and state propaganda: “we should focus on accurate and strategic terminology; we should expose China’s propaganda claims with their own statements and create a visualization of camp reality.”

Transformation Through Education
Dr. Zenz suggested to look critically at China’s policy of ‘transformation through education’, which he called “Beijing’s sweet spot” and “a key concept for re-education in Xinjiang”. “Beijing is trying to distract from [this concept] because it knows it has nothing to win there,” he added. Even though the Chinese government has been linking “skills
training” more closely to transformation through education since 2018, “skills training is the last of five aspects included in transformation through education” whereas its focus, according to official documents, lies on thought education, psychological counselling and behavioral correction, Dr. Zenz asserted.

Vocational Training Internment Camps

The scholar from Germany, furthermore, shared with the audience his preference to refer to the so-called ‘vocational training centers’ as ‘vocational training internment camps’. He argued that even if there may be an aspect – however small – of vocational training involved, the fact that these places need to be primarily defined as internment camps, with a vocational training component, must not be overlooked. According to official Chinese sources, the people in these facilities are “persons to be re-educated” or “transformed”. Official documents also openly speak of “brainwashing” as a method being applied in the process of re-education. These hard facts constitute, according to Dr. Zenz, a good leverage point for calling out the regime on the practices in the internment camps.

Moreover, the researcher analyzed in depth the institutional setup of the camp system, finding eight different kinds of re-education centers, excluding official detention facilities. Therefore, he argued, it is only logical that each form of the eight types of camps contains less than a million persons, “but all forms of internment combined may contain speculatively up to 1.5 million”. Another way to counter Chinese claims, as stated by Dr. Zenz, would be the fact that official vocational centers are not administered by the public education department but by the justice system and the public security agencies, under the same category as drug rehabilitation facilities, detention centers and prisons.

In the last part of his presentation, Dr. Zenz showed computer generated depictions of the “Urumqi Vocational Training School”. They showed a compound surrounded by fences and a watchtower – which were removed, however, in 2019. Further images revealed classrooms with guards in front of their doors, where students were separated by prison bars from their teacher and the blackboard.

How to Engage China on Their Human Rights Violations

In the light of his analysis, Dr. Zenz offered his recommendations on how to counter Chinese propaganda. He stated that:

“China finds it hard to counter direct factual evidence but focuses on refuting the irrefutable and on denying the undeniable – and to distract, to make counterclaims, to shift definitions. We have the better cards and we have the facts on our side. As more and more facts come to light, strong language and we have the facts on our side. As more and more facts come to light, strong language is justified, but emotional hype gives the Chinese more opportunities to refute imprecise speculative statements.”

Harald Maass

Harald Maass recounted the first-hand experiences from his investigative trip to East Turkistan. He traveled there in 2018 with the goal of uncovering what it feels like for Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other minorities to be living under Chinese rule. He combined the findings of his interviews with his own experiences as a foreigner to a vivid account of contemporary East Turkistan.
Mr. Maass began his trip to East Turkistan in Kazakhstan, where he set out to get a feeling for the situation on the ground in the Uyghur region by conducting interviews with two dozen family members of detained Uyghurs and Kazakhs and former inmates of Chinese internment camps. Only a small number of interviews were actually conducted in East Turkistan, because of the extreme danger to the interviewees from the state of total surveillance in the region.

**Mass Internment**

The scale of mass internment was hard to believe for the German journalist when his interview respondents told him in early 2018 that hundreds of thousands had most likely been detained in internment camps. He reminded the audience that at the time of his trip the extent of China’s detention campaign in East Turkistan was not yet known; “but after doing my interviews, I came to believe that these numbers are quite possible”, he added. “I have not talked to one person who has not at least one relative who is held in the camps.”

> “Traveling 13 days, I have not seen one person who was praying, not one person who was following religious traditions in any way.”

Mr. Maass discovered through his interviews the common patterns of why people are being sent to the camps. Most importantly, he found that exclusively non-Han Chinese are impacted by the internment campaign; superficial reasons for internment include, according to Mr. Maass’ research, using WhatsApp to contact family members or using more than the average amount of petrol. Additionally, persons who had fled to Kazakhstan reported to the journalist that Uyghurs living abroad are often lured back to China under different pretenses, such as the need to speak to state officials about their pension claims; if these individuals returned, they were sent straight to the camps, Mr. Maass stated.

**A State of Total Surveillance**

Mr. Maass, further, painted a picture of a state of total surveillance of all non-Han Chinese persons with omnipresent police stations and identity checks. Under this impression of daily life for Muslims in East Turkistan, Mr. Maass, who is an expert foreign correspondent to China, stated: “I have never seen any repression or surveillance on this scale in China – not even in Tibet.”

> “So, if you want to go to a mosque, it is obvious that you have to identify yourself. This makes it more or less impossible to follow their religion.”

Even traveling with a tourist visa, Mr. Maass was not free from the long arm of the Communist Party. He asserted to have been identity checked over 50 times during his 13-day trip through East Turkistan, including having his “mugshot” taken by police in his hotel room one hour after arriving at his first destination in the region.

Anecdotally, Mr. Maass explained what it took to purchase a ticket for a bus trip in East Turkistan. He described the bus stations as “fortified like a security operation”. To enter, it was already required to show an identity document. To get a ticket, a special permit is often necessary and to board the bus the identity of the traveler is being checked again. “Until you get to leave the bus station, you are already checked five times – and this is daily life”, Mr. Maass concluded his observation.

He furthermore submitted that China’s state-of-the-art technology and AI at work in Xinjiang would most likely be proliferated to other regions of China. Mr. Maass also showed himself deeply concerned at China’s
attempt at exporting this technology to other parts of the world.

For locals belonging to a Muslim community in East Turkistan, the repression weighs even heavier, the German journalist recounted. He described that in major cities, outside the more touristic city of Kashgar, checkpoints where non-Han Chinese undergo complete identity checks can be found every few hundred meters. At all four corners of main intersections, police stations have been set up with military-style cars and sometimes barking dogs, and there are military style drills out on the open street. These measures are officially taken “under the pretense of security, but [they] mainly serve to shock and scare the population”, Mr. Maass confirmed.

Suppression of Religious Expression

Mosques were either closed down or open to tourism but empty of worshippers, Mr. Maass stated. The few mosques which gave him the impression of still being in use had full body scanners with iris scanners and identity card readers at their entrances.

Shopping Streets Like Prisons

As Mr. Maass has undertaken several trips to East Turkistan over the past decades, he noticed several changes in its cityscapes. After nightfall, the streets were deserted and even during the day nobody took their meals outside, which had been common during his previous visits. Not only had all shops, however small, been obliged to have a security guard with a helmet and baton at their door, but most notably in Yarkand all shop owners had been forced – in the name of security – to install metal bars on their windows.

Therefore, going shopping seemed to the journalist like walking through a prison. Mr. Maass finished his presentation by concluding that “the extent of control and suppression of the population gives a feeling that the whole region is a prison itself”.

Key points & recommendations:

- Chinese government’s official websites can be used to track for details on camps’ financial budgets, construction base, size, location etc.
- East Turkistan has turned into a militarized surveillance state which makes anyone feel like being in prison
- Following religious practices in public has been rendered virtually impossible
- Refute Beijing’s rhetoric by using accurate and strategic terminology, targeting China’s own propaganda claims
- Be watchful about Chinese attempts to export surveillance technology
Panel 2: Chinese Community Mobilization

Moderator:
- Ilshat Hassan, Uyghur American Association

Speakers:
- Bob Fu, President, ChinaAid
- Xiaorong, Chinese scholar
- Uerkesh Davlet (Wu’er Kaixi), Dissident Activist and Tiananmen Student Leader
- Darren Byler, Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Washington

The second panel focused on the views and beliefs of the Han Chinese community, inside and outside of China, to the crisis and strategies to mobilize, inform and further involve the Han Chinese community in responding to this crisis. Despite the fact that the camps and the persecution of Uyghurs is being perpetrated by CCP officials, the majority of whom are Han Chinese, there has been almost no vocal condemnations from Han Chinese voices of China’s treatment of Uyghurs.

The Han Chinese people and their relation to the Uyghur people remain a pivotal aspect in addressing the crisis in East Turkistan and the lack of successful engagement with the Han Chinese community has seriously hindered efforts to improve the situation.

This panel brought together Han Chinese human rights activists, academics and dissidents to discuss this important issue and to discuss how to foster cooperation, mutual understanding and more effective engagement on the issue of the crisis in East Turkistan.

Bob Fu

The session began with a short speech by the moderator of the panel, Ilshat Hassan (American Uyghur Association President), who introduced the topic and panelists. The first panelist was Bob Fu, President of China Aid, a human rights NGO that focuses on Chinese Christians in China. Mr. Fu informed the participants that as an ethnic Han-Chinese and the pastor of an underground Church he felt compelled to attend the conference and take action to ease the suffering of the millions of Uyghur people. He then offered an apology to the Uyghur community, saying that while many of the crimes against Uyghur were perpetrated by Han Chinese, this did not reflect the feelings of all Han Chinese people.

Throughout his presentation, Mr. Fu stressed the need for Han Chinese to speak out about the atrocities against Uyghurs. He stated that the international community needed to take immediate and joint action, including sympathetic Han Chinese actors, to develop a meaningful response to the crisis.

In this spirit, Mr. Fu called drew the audience’s attention to a recent example of a joint initiative involving a broad coalition to address the crisis, namely the “Taiwan Declaration on Persecution of Uyghurs”, which was adopted by the Taiwan International Religious Forum on 31 May 2019.

A diverse group of policy makers, religious leaders and human rights defenders from numerous Asian, European, American and African countries decided to take joint action on calling out human rights abuses in the Asia Pacific region, including on the atrocities committed against the Uyghur people by China. He further asked for the
support of NGO’s to link up with China Aid’s emergency fund so as to identify those individuals in need of immediate financial assistance due to religious persecution.

“We all know most of these crimes were committed by the Han ethnic Chinese, the Communist Party Chinese, but most of them are not really representing the hearts and minds of the Han Chinese.”

Furthermore, he called for joint action to be taken to end the barbaric practice of organ harvesting, which affects many vulnerable communities in China, including the Uyghurs. Mr. Fu ended his presentation by with an appeal to the participants to not remain silent in the face of atrocities and emphasized the need and responsibility for different communities in China to come together to stand up for human rights and human dignity, saying:

Xiaorong

The next panelist to take the floor was Xiaorong, a prominent scholar and activist with an ethnic Han-Chinese background. The overarching theme of her presentation was to inform the attendees about the mindset and actions of Chinese activists inside and outside of China and the challenges and opportunities for future engagement on the Uyghur crisis.

She first pointed out that the Han Chinese people in China were heavily impacted by propaganda from the CCP and had little to no access to independent or external reports on the situation in East Turkistan, which impacted their view on the crisis. Ms. Xiaorong stated that all social media posts about the camps in China were blocked and strictly regulated as part of a broader campaign to brainwash the population.

In her opinion, the majority of the Han population had bought into the Chinese government’s narrative about the camps due to this indoctrination. She therefore stated that the response of Han Chinese people inside of China to the crisis in East Turkistan went beyond merely staying silent to fully believing that the CCP’s actions in the region were justified. She also pointed out how racism and prejudice against Uyghurs played an important role in this persecution. The inability to provide the Han Chinese public with reliable and accurate information about the true situation in East Turkistan was identified as a major challenge for efforts to address the crisis going forward.

Despite this major challenge, Xiaorong pointed out that there was a reason for hope and that some segments of Chinese society had begun to change their perspectives about the situation in East Turkistan and started to take action to address it.

She then recounted an anecdote of an interaction she had with a WhatsApp group of Chinese human rights lawyers and activists in which they discussed the situation in East Turkistan in the lead-up to UN CERD’s review of China in August 2018. When issues involving the Uyghurs were first posted in the group, it was met with silence and later by responses echoing the Chinese narrative, saying that Islam was evil and that the Chinese government had to take these actions to address terrorism.

While the responses at first were prejudiced, it opened up an honest discussion about the issue. She later arranged a live viewing of UN CERD’s review of China, which proved to be a pivotal moment where the internment camps were discussed by a UN body for the first time.

Quite a few of the activists watched the session, engaged with the issues and started to develop a more nuanced perception of the situation in East Turkistan. She also underlined the role of Han Chinese activists
in exposing the scale and nature in the camps, as several activists travelled to the region to collect vital information about the scale and nature of the camps, which was submitted as a parallel report to CERD. By opening the door for dialogue and debate, the perceptions and involvement of Han Chinese activists started to change.

Xiaorong ended her presentation by listing three key points of what should be done to further involve the Han Chinese community:

- We need to break the great firewall.
- We need to make information available in Chinese language to penetrate that wall and let that info reach the Chinese people.
- People have souls and consciences - we need to put our faith and hope in them.
- We need to combat the narrative of the Chinese government by using their own words and statements against them.

Orkesh Dolet (Wu'er Kaixi)

The third panelist was Uerkesh Davlet (Wu'er Kaixi) who was a student leader in the Tiananmen Square protests and has been a prominent activist and a scholar working to promote human rights and democracy in China.

As he is an ethnic Uyghur, but has been enmeshed in Chinese society and discourse, particularly with Chinese intellectuals and activists, his presentation focused on the contradictory attitudes among different segments of Chinese society. In order to enact change, Mr. Dolet stated, we needed to first understand the mentality and feelings of Chinese society.

He stated that the sentiment in Beijing and among many Chinese citizens was fully in line with the CCP’s propaganda about the camps and rooted in suspicious and prejudicial attitudes towards the Uyghur people. He went on to map out three prevailing attitudes and sentiments among the Chinese people that informed their perspectives on the situation in East Turkistan.

“You use force indiscriminately to establish fear [...] that is what the Chinese government does. That is what the Chinese government has been doing in its country.”

These sentiments have caused many Chinese intellectuals and activists to remain silent about the situation in East Turkistan or even endorse the CCP’s actions. In order to have any traction with these segments of Chinese society, it is therefore necessary to understand this mentality and to find ways to discuss and address them.

1. Anti-Secession Sentiment: Mr. Dolet stated that there was a strong anti-secession sentiment and a belief in a one, great unified China that caused these individuals to view Uyghur activism with suspicion and the actions of the Chinese government in the region as necessary to preserve the unity of China.

2. Colonial Sentiment - There exists among Chinese intellectuals and activists a colonial understanding of the relationship between China and East Turkistan, underpinned by a belief in the supremacy of Han culture and civilization. In line with this belief, many think that the Uyghurs, Tibetans and other ethnic ‘minority’ groups have been ungrateful after receiving money, resources and civilization from the Chinese government.

3. Anti-terrorism Sentiment: The majority of Han Chinese believe the CCP propaganda that Uyghurs are terrorists, which has had a major impact on their thinking and response to the crisis. Several well publicized incidents, especially the Kunming incident, had a
major impact of Han Chinese society’s view of the Uyghur people. This has been instrumentalized by the CCP to justify their actions in the region and has led to a dramatic increase in Islamophobia and racial hatred directed at the Uyghur people.

With regards to the issue of terrorism, Mr. Dolet pointed out that the actions of the Chinese government fit more closely into the most common definition of terrorism, saying:

Mr. Dolet went on to address the mentality of Chinese academics and democracy movement activists in particular. While these groups have largely remained silent or have endorsed the CCP’s actions in East Turkistan, Mr. Dolet emphasized the importance of these groups in effectively addressing the crisis in East Turkistan going forward.

“Being honest and being courageous is the first step to take. Face the reality.”

With regards to the mentality of Chinese intellectuals, Mr. Dolet stated that most seemed to recognize were being mistreated. In conversation with Chinese intellectuals, they told Mr. Dolet that while they were sympathetic to the plight Uyghur people, many saw the CCP’s actions in the region as a necessary evil to counter terrorism. Mr. Dolet went on to state that similar problems existed within the democracy movement.

While some sympathy and solidarity did exist, some democracy movement activists were aware that the majority of Han Chinese had anti-secessionist tendencies and they did not want to lose future support by speaking out about the situation in East Turkistan. In conversations with some of these activists, they would insist that Mr. Dolet reject any secessionism before they discussed human rights. He therefore called on the Han-Chinese intellectuals and democracy movements to be courageous and honest in addressing human rights issues before giving in to the fear of secession.

Mr. Dolet’s presentation made clear the need to develop effective counter-arguments and take necessary actions to address these three prevailing sentiments which inform the Chinese public’s attitude towards the crisis in East Turkistan. He concluded his presentation calling on Chinese intellectuals and activists in particular that, “Being honest and being courageous is the first step to take. Face the reality.”

Darren Byler

The final panelist to speak was notable academic and scholar Darren Byler. He titled his presentation “Uyghurs are Bad! Xinjiang Han Islamophobia and Everyday Justification of Re-education”, which focused primarily on the mentality and actions of the Bingtuan, the Han Chinese who were sent to East Turkistan decades ago to ‘secure the borderland’ and the indoctrination of Uyghurs in the camps to harbor deep Islamophobic and racist sentiments towards their own people.

Mr. Byler began his presentation with an anecdote about a Han Chinese student whose family was a member of the Bingtuan in East Turkistan. He recounts how she was shocked at the level of racism and discrimination that her family members exhibited towards Uyghurs, after returning to East Turkistan from studying in the United States. She noted the discrimination that Uyghurs faced and how Uyghurs felt the need to differentiate themselves from ‘bad
Uyghurs’ when interacting with Han Chinese, repeating mantras such as ‘Uyghurs are bad’ and ‘Islam is bad’.

The CCP’s demonization of Islam and of the Uyghur ethnicity has pressured both Han Chinese and Uyghurs themselves to condemn Uyghur ethnicity and religion. The student assessed that the situation in East Turkistan and the attitudes of the Bingtuan towards the Uyghurs had changed dramatically between 2012 and 2018, as racist and Islamophobic sentiments had become the norm in the region.

Darren Byler elaborated that the rise in Islamophobia and racism towards Uyghurs was due in part to CCP propaganda, but also may be a way for the Han Chinese population to make sense of the internment camps and justify the mistreatment of Uyghurs to themselves. The devaluation of the ‘hukou’ for Han Chinese living in East Turkistan under CCP further increased resentment towards Uyghurs.

Islamophobia is now institutionalized in Chinese society, especially in Xinjiang, he stated. Whereas Han Chinese in East Turkistan used to dismiss reports about the camps as exaggerated or Western propaganda, this changed after the CCP admitted the camps existed. The current narrative is that Uyghurs must be re-educated to produce a more prosperous and stable Xinjiang, which has been fully adopted by much of the Han Chinese society in East Turkistan. Han Chinese civilians are even being mobilized as part of the CCP’s efforts to assimilate and control the Uyghur people, with waves of hundreds of thousands Han Chinese being sent to live in Uyghur homes as part of the CCP’s ‘United as One’ campaign. He also noted that Islamophobia was even more severe among Han Chinese outside of East Turkistan.

However, Darren Byler said there was a reason to hope. In his conversations with Han Chinese students about the issue he stated that although many were initially angry or defensive, some expressed deep shock and sadness at the situation and in some cases expressed a desire to take action to address the situation. While propaganda and lack of information has certainly impacted the viewpoints of the Han Chinese people, laying out the facts based on the CCP’s own rhetoric in an honest and open discussion did have success in changing their beliefs and perceptions.

Key points & recommendations:

- Create an open dialogue amongst the Chinese intellectuals to help them regain conscience on the Uyghur issues.
- Engaging with individual Chinese people to show them the true situation in East Turkistan and that the Uyghurs & other Turkic Muslims in East Turkistan have been condemning the Chinese government and not the Chinese people.
- Find counter arguments to address the prevailing sentiments and mentalities, spread by CCP propaganda, that exist among the Han Chinese population.
- Establish ways to transfer credible and reliable information to the Chinese people and to find a way of getting around the great firewall.
Panel 3: Academic Perspectives

Moderator:

- Nicole Morgret, Uyghur Human Rights Project

Speakers:

- Sean Roberts, Associate Professor and Director, International Development Studies, George Washington University
- Timothy Grose, Assistant Professor of China Studies, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
- Vanessa Frangville, Senior Lecturer, Université Libre de Bruxelles
- Donald Clarke, Professor of Law, George Washington University Law School

The panel on Academic Perspectives brought together leading academics from around the world who have been active in researching and exposing the true situation in East Turkistan and even urging governments and other bodies to take concrete actions.

Thus far, the academic community have played a vital role in the response to the crimes against humanity being perpetrated in East Turkistan by providing crucial information and research about the camps that has provided the impetus for some government to speak out and take further action.

This panel assembled some of the most important academic voices who have worked on this issue to learn from their insights into the crisis and to hear their recommendations about what should be done to develop an effective response.

Sean Roberts

Sean Roberts, Associate Professor and Director of International Development Studies at George Washington University was the first to present, focusing on China’s use of the narrative of terrorism to justify its actions and trying to find the truth about China’s allegation of a Uyghur terrorist threat.

Sean Roberts started his presentation by asking the audience how we got to this point in the Uyghur region in China. While he said that Xi Jinping’s authoritarian turn, the changes in China’s ethnic policies and the region’s importance to the BRI as major factors in the current crisis, he focused on China’s use of the discourse of terrorism with regards to the Uyghur people as the driving force that led to the extreme measures used by the CCP against Uyghurs today.

“It is really a colonial situation that has never gotten to a post-colonial stage.”

The background to this crisis and the long term conflict in the region is essentially rooted in different perceptions of how Uyghurs and the Chinese government views East Turkistan or Xinjiang. While Uyghurs view the conquest of East Turkistan and subjugation of the Uyghur people as an act of colonialism, the modern Chinese states views the region as having always been part of greater China. As a result of this, Uyghurs have never been granted meaningful autonomy or had their relationship to their
homeland accommodated. Instead, Sean Roberts stated that, “modern Chinese states have vacillated between ignoring Uyghurs and trying to assimilate them.”

However, Uyghurs have long been resistant to assimilation. The failure of the Chinese government to meaningfully address the Uyghurs relationship to their homeland has caused a difficult and contentious situation in East Turkistan.

While any conflict between the Uyghurs and China was understood through the lens of ‘separatism’ and autonomy for most of China’s modern history, the September 11th terrorist attacks changed the situation, and how the Chinese government framed it, drastically. Sean Roberts noted that six weeks after the attacks, the Chinese government released a policy paper claiming that Uyghur dissidents had long been supported by international terrorist networks.

The US and the UN later recognized the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organization as China largely succeeded in framing its policies towards Uyghurs as ‘counterterrorism’ measures and allowed them to target the entire Uyghur ethnic group. Since that point, the Chinese government has tried to categorize all forms of Uyghur dissent as terrorism.

To deconstruct these claims and establish the truth of links between Uyghur and terrorism, Sean Roberts carefully laid out the available history and research on the topic. From 2001-2003 there was very little evidence of violence and no evidence of terrorism from Uyghurs in East Turkistan. While ETIM did exist from approximately 1990-2001, it was essentially destroyed in 2003, had very little resources and did not have ties to international terrorist networks as the Chinese government claimed.

Despite the fact that this organisation was small, had very little support in the Uyghur community and did not exist past 2003, the Chinese government and Western media routinely referenced it (and still do) when discussing possible links between Uyghurs and terrorism. In a similar way, the potential threat of other groups, such as the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) were vastly overstated and often nonexistent.

“Detainees in the camps are not students, they are unjustly treated as patients with severe mental illness, addiction and disease.”

Although the CCP used the narrative of terrorism to justify its repression of Uyghurs since 2001, there was a dramatic escalation in the intensity of the repression after the 2009 Urumqi Massacre. The CCP blamed the Uyghur people for the unrest resulting in enforced disappearances, executions, a media blackout for a year and increased restrictions on culture and religion.

Sean Roberts asserted that an uptick in violent expression of Uyghurs in East Turkistan abroad was observed from 2013-2015, likely as a result of the severe repression enacted on the Uyghurs by the Chinese government, resulting in a cycle of violence. There is very little information known about these attacks and many in the Uyghur community assume some, if not all, were staged by the Chinese government to justify their repression.

Roberts asserted that after the crackdown in 2009, few Uyghurs may have resorted to violence after perceiving it as their only option. Within this time period, the Chinese government also made a mysterious decision to temporarily return passports to Uyghurs resulting in a mass exodus from East Turkistan. A small number of these individuals joined extremist groups in Syria.
Sean Roberts observed that there has been no reported violence from Uyghurs since 2016.

From a broad perspective, Sean Roberts noted how the narrative of terrorism had been instrumentalized by the Chinese government to justify their repression of the Uyghur people. There is no evidence that violent incidents involving Uyghurs have had any links to international terrorist networks, but rather were a response to the severe repression that Uyghurs faced. Instead, the Chinese government used the narrative of terrorism to crackdown on the Uyghur people as a whole – not just focusing on those who may be at risk of joining a militant group, but all Uyghurs.

The lack of an agreed upon definition of terrorism has allowed authoritarian countries like China to target specific groups and deal with them as almost less than human. Sean Roberts asserted that the terrorism designation is inherently racially or ethnically profiled and carries with it connotations of people opposed to modern civilizations, distorting the global war on terror to justify genocidal strategies. He concluded asserting that these kind of processes end up creating more terrorists and result in a cycle of intensifying violence.

**Key points & recommendations:**

- The Chinese government has instrumentalized the narrative of terrorism since the September 11th terrorist attacks to justify its repression against the Uyghurs.
- The use of the terrorism narrative and associated repression increased tremendously in 2009 after the Urumqi massacre and again during 2013-2015 when a series of violent incidents took place. This has ultimately been used a justification for the need for the unparalleled repression occurring in East Turkistan now and the creation of the internment camp system.
- The use of the terrorism narrative has allowed the Chinese government to target and ethnically profile the entire Uyghur population as potential terrorists. The lack of a clear definition of terrorism allows authoritarian countries to persecute targeted populations under the guise of fighting terrorism.
- This process of reaction and repression risk creating an escalating cycle of violence and may create a problem of terrorism in East Turkistan, where it did not previously exist.

**Timothy Grose**

The second speaker on the panel was Timothy Grose, Assistant Professor of China Studies at the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, who presented on how the CCP uses a lexicon of pathology to justify its policies of mass incarceration of Uyghurs. Essentially, the Chinese government has been targeting the Uyghur people and justifying their actions by portraying the Uyghurs as ‘sick’ and in need of ‘treatment’. In this way, the Chinese government is justifying the camp system as a cure to this affliction:

By using this language of pathology, Timothy Grose asserted that the Chinese government can apply repressive policies to a large segment of society or to treat an 'outbreak'. It also allows the Chinese government to externalize the source of the problem in East Turkistan and claim the epidemiology comes from outside of China. In this way, people...
from ethnic/religious groups are put in the same categories as criminals who commit violent crimes, drug addicts, political activists and patients, with these categories being conflated.

“The CCP’s therapeutic intervention is ill-advised, unwarranted and genocidal. If these policies are not stopped, they will lead to cultural erasure and decades of systemic violence.”

This sort of identification and classifications of ‘enemies’ or ‘targeted populations’ has a long history in China. Since 1949, the CCP has tried to find and attack ‘counterrevolutionaries’, ‘class enemies’ and other ‘targeted populations’ as a part of Mao’s social management policies. Timothy Grose notes that this policy was extended in 1959 with the development of the state’s blacklist system and has been used to organize Chinese citizens into a hierarchy. The result of having a targeted population designation is increased monitoring and may result in further repression.

Grose identified five primary categories of targeted populations in China:

1. Risk to national security
2. Individuals suspected of serious crimes
3. Individuals who have exhibited behavior suggesting early signs of violence
4. Ex-convicts
5. Narcotics users

He further asserts that this targeted population designation may have first been applied to Uyghurs when Xi Jinping announced his “Peoples War on Terror” in 2015, despite the fact that Uyghurs had been targeted with racial profiling and arbitrary arrests since at least 2009.

He notes that the first noticeable expansion of the targeted population was packed with a region-wide ‘Five Types People’ and ‘Project Beauty’ campaigns, culminating in legislation introduced in 2015. The ‘Five Types People’ campaign singled out Uyghurs due to their clothing, grooming habits or religious devotion, as the five types refer to women who wear pious dress and young men who grew beards, among others.

Law enforcement in East Turkistan again expanded the targeted population in 2016 to include more segments of Uyghur society, targeted those who ‘engage in the 3 evil forces’, organize terrorist activities and commit acts that threaten national security, amongst others.

In this way, the CCP began to blur the lines between state crimes, such as terrorism and extremism, with drug addiction and mental illness, under the designation of ‘targeted population’. Timothy Grose asserted that in this way, those who did not have the correct ideological outlook would be treated the same as someone plotting terrorist attacks.

The parameters of defining East Turkistan’s ‘targeted population’ was expanded again in 2017 when regional authorities established a social taxonomy referred to officially as a ‘social credit system’, assigning individuals ‘safe, normal and unsafe’ designations. This designation was determined by a points system.

Points were deducted for having relatives abroad and being outspoken on social media, among other criteria. If an individual scored below a certain threshold they were surveilled and detained. It then evolved as those identified as part of the targeted population were being detained and ‘re-educated’ at alarmingly high rates. The intensity of their re-education depended on how serious their ‘illness’ was.
In this way, Timothy Grose asserted, China’s crimes against humanity perpetrated against Uyghurs can be understood in the context of the Chinese government’s history of designating and persecuting ‘targeted populations’. China has framed and justified the situation in its domestic media and in government documents by saying Uyghurs are ‘infected’ with an ‘ideological illness’ that needs a ‘cure’.

He asserted that it is not just a metaphor as the camps seek to ‘correct’ or excise harmful thoughts and seek to fundamentally alter the psychology of Uyghur detainees. Timothy Grose ended his presentation by stating this strategy by the Chinese government was morally wrong and would not work, saying,

**Vanessa Frangville**

Vanessa Frangville, a Senior Lecturer at Université Libre de Bruxelles then gave a presentation entitled ‘The Assimilative Violence of Chinese Ethnic Policies in the Uyghur Region’, focus on the changes in the Chinese government’s (and associated intellectuals) understanding and implementation of ethnic policies, which greatly contributed to the current crisis in East Turkistan.

Vanessa Frangville began her presentation by stating there is a domestic war on diversity in China. While Han-centrism has led to assimilatory policies over the past century, we have now reached a new, more severe stage. She recalled a debate that took place a few years ago, in which prominent Chinese scholars asserted the ‘second generation of ethnic policies’ implanted in the 1950s between the state and ethnic minority groups did not fulfill the objectives of the Chinese government. Rather than securing social harmony, these policies created fractures and sustained ethno-nationalism. As a result, the scholars asserted that an accelerated fusion of all ethnic groups into the Chinese ‘nation’ was necessary.

“We also need to see the camps within a larger context of the ‘war on diversity’ which is currently taking place in China.”

This was entailed an expansion of the concept of ‘fusion’ or ‘intermingling’, which had been the core of the first generation of China’s ethnic policies. The concept, as originally understood, was in theory a voluntary and harmonious process which did not imply that one group is dominant over the other. In practice this has not been the case and Vanessa Frangville noted that the concept has morphed into ‘accelerated intermingling’ in recent years, which is essentially forced assimilation.

“In many ways we can argue that the second generation of ethnic policies has laid the ideological foundations of the policies in the Uyghur region.”

The camps in particular are a reflection of China’s changing and more assimilatory second generation ethnic policies, she asserted. They are rooted in the ‘theory of stability’ put forward by Chinese scholars – a theory that implies that the precondition of stable nation is the standardization and normalization of language, norms and values – essentially a standardization of human behavior. In this sense, the camps themselves could be seen as machines to standardize or normalize Uyghur everyday life as part of the Chinese government’s broader assimilatory aims.
In this way, asserted Vanessa Frangville, China’s ethnic policies have shifted from a toleration of ethnic identity and culture, to a policy of total assimilation in which all ethnic groups are expected to adhere and adopt a CCP endorsed, Han-centric life and identity. The camps help to accomplish this by spreading fear, while simultaneously sending people to the internment camps to eradicate and transform their thoughts and habits.

Officially, China’s ethnic policies have not changed and are working well, but a closer look at what is happening in China reveals that the second generation of ethnic policies have been progressively implemented even if they are not officially endorsed by the Chinese state. This has been evidenced in the many policies targeting Uyghur culture, religion, language, history and identity as well as Uyghur cultural signifiers and traditions, such as weddings, funerals and the names given to Uyghur children. This has been reinforced further through the promotion of interethnic marriage.

While these assimilatory policies are not new or specific to the Uyghur people, Ms. Frangville asserted, the severity and violence in these policies directed towards Uyghurs is unique. She stated that the camps are the most violent measure that has been taken by the Chinese government. Although it is not clear how systematic or coordinated this violence is, we know about the physical and psychological abuse occurring in the camps and the fear it has instilled in Uyghur communities.

The camps are tearing at the fabric of Uyghur society by tearing Uyghur families apart and dividing Uyghur society into those who are targeted by these measures and those who cooperate with the Chinese government. The very foundations of Uyghur society are being undermined and threaten the future of the Uyghur ethnic group. The Psychological and physical trauma of detention in the camps will pose further threats to Uyghur society.

Key points & recommendations:
- The CCP’s efforts to assimilate the Uyghurs is extremely violent and is undermining the foundations of Uyghur society.
- The escalation of repression of the Uyghur people and the camps system is rooted in a shift in China’s ethnic policies to a more overtly assimilatory second generation of ethnic policy in China.
- The camps participate in a much larger process of absorption, based on assimilationist views that are partly endorsed by major Chinese scholars.
- We also need to ask ourselves How should academics deal with Chinese scholars who are purporting this type of view? Should they be allowed to speak in the name of academic freedom? Is there room for debate?

Donald Clarke

The final speaker on this panel was Donald Clarke, a Professor of Law at George Washington University Law School. His presentation examined the lack of a legal basis for the internment camps under Chinese law and the reasons for and implications of this.

Donald Clark began his presentation by asserting there is no publicly available law, regulation or measure of any name that governs who gets detained in the camps or the process of detention. Despite numerous questions being asked, nobody can even tell you who has the authority to make decisions
and according to what procedure. He further asserts that there is absolutely no information about how a detainee might lodge a protest or an appeal, in theory or in practice.

“These detention centres are unlawful, even under China’s own legal system.”

He recounted an anecdote of a group of American legal experts who travelled to China in late 2018 as part of a delegation to talk about rule of law with their Chinese counterparts. He recounts that the legal experts informed their Chinese colleagues four weeks in advance that they would like to ask what is the legal basis under Chinese law for the internment camps. Despite the ample advanced notice, none of the Chinese legal experts were able to give an answer to this simple question, only asserting that the camps were ‘necessary’.

Under the Chinese constitution there is a clear rule that any physical restriction of physical liberty (like the detention of Uyghurs in the camps) has to have a justification under a statute passed by the National People’s Congress or the NPC Standing Committee. Overwhelming evidence has shown that these detentions are being carried out not pursuant to any such statute. He asserted that Chinese Criminal law also provided absolutely no basis for the camps or the mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs.

“It is outside the regular legal system that there is the greatest potential for atrocities.”

Donald Clark also dispelled the misinformation that revisions made by the Xinjiang Regional Authorities ‘legalized’ by the camps in the fall of 2018, as reported by several media outlets. He noted that only the NPC or the Standing Committee had the authority to legalize the camps (which they have not) and that the revisions themselves only authorized the construction of education and training centres, which has nothing to do with the rules about who gets sent there, procedures, etc.

He therefore asserted that there was absolutely no legal basis under Chinese law to legalize or authorize the internment camps in East Turkistan, making these detentions arbitrary and illegal under Chinese and international law. Given the fact that the CCP has complete control over the legislative process in China and has passed no legislation to legalize the camps, the CCP made a conscious decision to carry out this detention campaign completely outside of China’s legal system. This is especially concerning as it has removed any bureaucratic oversights that exist to protect the rights of detainees and monitor the process of detention, allowing for serious human rights violations to flourish, whether endorsed by the Chinese government or not.

Key points & recommendations:

- There is absolutely no legal basis to justify the mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs in internment camps in Chinese domestic law. The existence of the camps and the mass detentions violate China’s domestic laws and international law.
- The lack of legal basis must be a conscious choice from the Chinese government. The lack of a legal basis eliminates any transparency or oversight in the camps process and may allow serious human rights violations and abuses to be perpetrated in the facilities.
Panel 4: Perspectives & Solutions From Civil Society

Moderator:
- Sophie Richardson, China Director, Human Rights Watch

Speakers:
- Ulrich Delius, Director, Society for Threatened Peoples
- Lucia Parrucci, Advocacy & Training Coordinator, Unrepresented Nations and People Organization
- Annie Boyajian, Director of Advocacy, Freedom House
- Lea Perekrests, Deputy Director, Human Rights Without Frontiers

The panelists, who represented different Non-Governmental Organizations dealing with the human rights situation in East Turkistan, emphasized that policy makers on many different national and international levels have already been sensitized for the atrocities being committed against the Uyghur people. They, however, identified the current lack of stakeholders willing to make the first move as the next challenge for advocacy action on behalf of the global Uyghur community. How to overcome this stalemate with momentum created by different kinds of civil society action became the focal point of a lively discussion.

Sophie Richardson steered the debate between the panelists, while also contributing recommendations to the discussion. She first focused the discussion on Uyghur advocacy accomplishments, following it up with an exchange about the current challenges for promoting Uyghur concerns and concluding with an extensive Q&A session.

Personally, she championed the idea to create more “connective tissue” between citizens and their political representatives, such as government officials and national ministries, including those on foreign affairs and economy. Pushing for more intergovernmental cooperation on the Uyghur crisis, as exemplified by the 2017 “Friends of Xinjiang Coalition” of 15 governments, could also be a viable way forward, according to Ms. Richardson. Economic sanctions would as well be “an adequate tool”.

“There are lists of some 500 Chinese and international companies working in Xinjiang/East Turkistan. We urgently need more research on their activities in the region.”

On the other hand, Ms. Richardson commended the successful work of the international community on processing asylum cases of Uyghurs. She further expressed her disappointment at the lack of response from United Nations bodies, saying that Human Rights Watch “has done a huge amount of work to try to get the UN as an institution to respond in the way it should”, calling it “one of the most serious obstacles” to Uyghur advocacy.

While questioning the necessity of support from Muslim majority countries for a successful response from the UN Human Rights Council, she added that “it is problematic that governments like Pakistan, for example, are willing to go out and praise
China and say everything is fine”. Ms. Richardson instead called on the governments of these countries to “step forward and participate in some sort of multilateral response”.

She, moreover, recommended to make use of the right to address comments to UN Special Procedures: “even if they are barely answered, they become part of the public record, which creates pressure on the High Commissioner to speak out on the issue.” She further supported the idea to make the shareholders of big companies aware of crimes against humanity being committed in places to which their investments are flowing.

**Key points & recommendations:**

- Create more “connective tissue” between citizens and their political representatives, such as government officials and national ministries.
- Advocate for economic sanctions against Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses in East Turkistan.
- Keep using UN Special Procedures; even though the immediate outcome may be disappointing, a constant flow of inquiries creates pressure on the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to speak out on the issue.

**Ulrich Delius**

Ulrich Delius urged human rights defenders to tell the stories behind the horrors of the internment camps: “I think we need to show what does this crazy figure of 1.5 million people in these camps mean. Everybody needs to hear these stories”; especially politicians, who would just ignore random figures or not be able to imagine the people affected, he added.

He, moreover, shared with the audience one of the Society for Threatened People’s (GfbV) success stories of a woman who had been forced to work as a teacher in an internment camp. The woman managed to flee with her family to Kazakhstan, where nonetheless they were still being threatened by deportation back to China. Through eight months of advocacy work, GfbV succeeded in getting the family to safety in Sweden. In this context, Mr. Delius called on the audience to pay more attention to the Uyghur communities living in Central Asia.

The GfbV Director further pointed out the lack of coherent action on the national level in many countries, including Germany. Whereas the German government and the foreign ministry were highly motivated to act on crimes against humanity, other ministries, such as the Ministry of Economy, were not following suit, he stated.

“We need a strategic approach in creating a global coalition”, Mr. Delius continued. “It is necessary that we have states from the Global South in such an alliance”. He encouraged the global community of human rights defenders to find ways to convince governments from Muslim majority nations or the Global South to take coherent action on mass human rights atrocities, such as the Uyghurs are witnessing today. Such an approach would have a better impact than traditional Western democracies acting by themselves.

On the topic of how to reconnect human rights and trade, Mr. Delius said that:

He added that some of these companies were employing people who used to be interned in camps, paying them extremely low wages. Back in Europe, national action plans in
regard to human rights and economic affairs can be used for advocacy purposes: “they offer also the opportunity to at least urge national companies to respect human rights in their activities”, Mr. Delius concluded.

The GfbV Director further noted that “media are looking for new topics, and we have to provide them”. One of those topics should be to speak about the attempts of the Chinese surveillance technology companies to sell their products on the European market, he added. He also advocated for the idea to analyze and discuss the geopolitical changes since 1989 concerning the relationship of China with the rest of the world.

**Key points & recommendations:**

- Tell stories of people recounting the horrors of the internment camps on a more personal level in order to break down the generally known figures into something more humanly graspable.
- Work with Uyghurs who have been seeking refuge in Kazakhstan and are therefore at constant threat of being deported to China; look more closely at the situation on the ground for Uyghurs in Central Asia.
- Conduct more research on companies connected to internment camps.
- Urge companies to respect their national action plans on human rights and economic affairs.

Lucia Parrucci started her contribution by reminding the audience that at the start of the last legislative period of the European Parliament in 2014 barely any of the Members of Parliament (MEP) were willing to speak about the case of the Uyghurs.

The momentum and awareness raised through this campaign allowed the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the World Uyghur Congress to establish the “Uyghur Friendship Group” – a formal cross-party group of 18 MEP’s devoted to Uyghur issues. This successful advocacy campaign was subsequently conducive for promoting the European Parliament’s urgency resolutions on the imprisonment of Ilham Tohti in 2016 and on the mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs in 2018. Ms. Parrucci, however, added for consideration that it had every time been very difficult to overcome Chinese counter-lobbying at the European Institutions.

“We noticed that Ilham Tohti, his cause and his nomination for the Sakharov Prize helped our advocacy in order to make MEP’s link this to the global work of Uyghurs.”

Another major challenge on the European level, according to the UNPO Advocacy Coordinator, is the reluctance of member states to support a coordinated European response to China. Therefore, “it is our duty to make sure that national governments will give [the European External Action Service] the green light to make statements”, Ms. Parrucci stated.

She added that Uyghur advocacy needed to find, especially on national levels, support for tougher EU rules on procurement and investment with Chinese entities. She also insisted that primarily countries involved in China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), such as Italy, needed to push for more reciprocity in
the economic relationship between China and Europe.

When asked about what could be done for the staggering number of Uyghur asylum seekers around the world, Ms. Parrucci proposed to first of all “create a document that can be useful for refugees to follow in order to let them make no mistakes [in the asylum procedure].”

She furthermore told of instances where people were saved by documents sent to the border or immigration offices in support of their cases. Ms. Parrucci also stressed the importance of five to six NGO’s joining forces to make sure that people seeking asylum from persecution in China are not being deported:

She cited the cooperation of UNPO with their four members, representing East Turkistan, Tibet, Taiwan and Inner Mongolia, as an example of how outcomes can be reached because human rights work is being done in a coordinated manner.

**Key points & recommendations:**

- Put a stronger focus on advocacy work on the national level in EU member states so as to make sure that coordinated action can be taken on the EU level.
- Support tougher EU rules on procurement and investment.
- Push governments who are involved in the BRI.
- Keep protesting at UN and other institutions to demand an end to the current atrocities.
- Create a document for refugees on the dos and don’ts of the asylum process.
- Establish a network of several NGOs tasked to protect people fleeing persecution in China.

**Annie Boyajian**

“I have seen the [Uyghur] issue capturing attention in a way that many human rights issues do not,” Ms. Boyajian opened in her introductory statement. Not only was the public at large already aware through mass media reports or through personal experiences with Uyghurs, but also politicians were not disputing the veracity of claims or the magnitude of the atrocities committed by China, she said. “This includes Members of Congress who I would have previously perceived as being fairly close and friendly with the Chinese government,” Ms. Boyajian went on.

“When I meet with state department or Congressional officials, the question is not ‘Tell me what’s happening’, it’s ‘Specifically tell me, what are the creative ways we can actually address this’.”

“When I meet with state department or Congressional officials, the question is not ‘Tell me what’s happening’, it’s ‘Specifically tell me, what are the creative ways we can actually address this’.”

“From an advocacy standpoint we’re ahead of the game in that sense; I am excited that there is momentum,” Ms. Boyajian continued that now it was time for a global response. Freedom House, for example, “is pushing for sanctions against those who have committed atrocities in the Uyghur region”. She added that “we have to see action from some of the Muslim majority countries” and that any action needed to be conducted locally while being organized globally to send out a coherent message.
Ms. Boyajian also suggested to get “a good comprehensive understanding of where the Uyghurs [are] located in the U.S.; who has family members missing; how many family members are missing”. She further argued that such an overview would entice U.S. politicians to become even more active on the issue, because many were eager to talk about the number of people affected by the severe human rights violations in the Uyghur region.

On the issue of trade and human rights, Ms. Boyajian stated that “we need to be vocally pushing for any companies that are invested in Xinjiang and involved in the oppression to divest”.

**Key points & recommendations:**

- Organize a global response with advocacy action, including in Muslim majority countries, in order to keep pushing through grass-roots movements for the long-standing goal of government-to-government responses.
- Use any momentum from the public to demand divestment from questionable assets in East Turkistan.
- Create a list of companies who are investing in East Turkistan.

**Lea Perekrests**

Lea Perekrests called the need for reunification of Uyghur refugees with their family members who had to remain in East Turkistan a major challenge to the Uyghur community, because China refuses to issue them passports to leave the country.

She pleaded for the use of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry in Geneva, which gathers information on severe human rights abuses. In cases where no country visit is possible – as seems likely in the case of East Turkistan – this institution relies on public and private witness testimony, reports from NGO’s and satellite imagery in order to build their case. As a safety measure, they only accept public testimony from persons who do not have relatives in the country in question, Ms. Perekrests told the audience.

On the topic of free trade and human rights, Ms. Perekrests added that the slogan “‘open markets equals human rights’ is a little bit too simple”. She recommended the research of the Australian Institute of Economics and Peace, which “[has] come up with some really innovative research on what builds resilient communities – [on] the economic factors that build peace.”

**Key points & recommendations:**

- Help Uyghurs to overcome difficulties in obtaining passports to leave China, and thereby facilitate family reunifications.
- Make use of the UN Commission of Inquiry.
Panel 5: Witness Testimony

Moderator:
- Zubayra Shamseden of the Uyghur Human Rights Project

Speakers:
- Dolkun Isa, President, World Uyghur Congress
- Mihrigul Tursun, former internment camp detainee
- Ferkat Jawdat, Uyghur activist whose family members were detained in internment camps

This panel of touching and at times gut-wrenching accounts of members of the Uyghur diaspora who have themselves suffered at the hands of the Chinese government or have been affected by reprisals against their relatives in East Turkistan due to their activism in overseas.

Dolkun Isa

Dolkun Isa shared what little information he had on the fate of his family members who still remain in his home country; how they are being harassed by the Chinese authorities on account of his activism abroad. On top of this, he has had no news for two years from one of his brothers, his sisters and his elderly father.

Himself, during his last semester of university in 1988, he was involved in the organization of a demonstration calling out China’s policies of sinicization in East Turkistan. Not long after that demonstration, he was expelled from his university.

In 1994, he decided to leave East Turkistan for Turkey to pursue his studies in political science. In 1996, and after he had claimed asylum in Germany, he founded together with a group of high-profile exiled Uyghurs the predecessor organization to the World Uyghur Congress. “The Chinese government has since that time been continuously targeting our activists,” Mr. Isa clarified.

“They put me on a blacklist; so I could not go anywhere. And I lost all contact with my husband [who had stayed in Egypt].”

Mr. Isa said that “despite being ranked third most wanted terrorist by the Chinese government, I have never in my life seen a real gun or bomb”. Due to this status, he has moreover experienced complications when traveling abroad. He recounted being detained by U.S. immigration authorities in 2003, eventually being deported back to Germany. In 2008 in Seoul, South Korea, he was detained for four days and only intervention from the German foreign ministry and the U.S. state department saved him from deportation to China. Mr. Isa’s accounts documented China’s long arm, which is constantly interfering with Uyghur human rights activism on a global scale.

Mihrigul Tursun

Mihrigul Tursun bravely rendered an account of a terrifying ordeal through a Chinese prison and concentration camp after returning from her undergraduate studies in Egypt to East Turkistan. She began
her witness testimony by telling the audience about the heinous treatment she received from Chinese police upon arrival back in her home country in May 2015, when she was immediately separated from her three infant children, interrogated for three hours, beaten, handcuffed and taken to prison.

Only after four months in prison, she was reunited with her triplets, one of whom was seriously sick and died. Her mobile phone and Chinese identity card were never returned to her, and even after being released from prison, she was always accompanied by a Chinese official no matter where she went, Ms. Tursun explained.

In 2017, she was taken in for questioning twice more. The second time, in April 2017, she was not allowed to sleep for three days and was shown pictures of people she did not know. “Every two hours, three of four men would ask questions. I was not allowed to sleep. This was physical and psychological torture.” After the questioning, they beat her so badly that she lost all hearing in her right ear. The interrogators also electrocuted her head three times and ridiculed her religious beliefs. Finally, they took DNA samples from her saliva and hair and biometrically scanned her whole body.

Ms. Tursun went on to describe her three-months detention in a concentration camp in early 2018 to reveal even more atrocities committed by the Chinese state against their own people. After having been taken to the concentration camp, Ms. Tursun said, she was informed by camp officials that 26 of her family members had been arrested because she had not given any information during her earlier interrogations. She told the audience that those Chinese camp officials gave her the choice: “If you do not give us any information, you will die here within one month but if you do, we will make you die easily.”

Ms. Tursun also painted a grim picture of overcrowding and unsanitary conditions in the concentration camps. She had to share with 68 women between the ages of 17 and 62 a 430-square-meter cell. “One woman had stayed 13 months inside the cell without ever being allowed out to shower, or even wash her hands or face,” Ms. Tursun stated.

According to her, most women were allowed to wash themselves at random intervals with cold water, but nobody was ever allowed outside the cell, whether for showers or for medical treatment. “Sometimes women were taken outside, never to return. We do not know if they died or were transferred to somewhere else,” she continued. The bodies of the nine women who died during her three months in the concentration camp were dragged out of the cell like cattle with a stick, Ms. Tursun explained.

“I saw with my own eyes nine women die.”

In March 2018, the Chinese camp officials told her to travel with her two remaining children to Egypt and then to return to China by herself. If she complied, her 26 relatives would be released from prison. Her husband, who initially stayed behind in Egypt and failed to get news from her after her return to East Turkistan, had himself travelled back to Urumqi, where he was arrested immediately on arrival and was sentenced to 16 years in prison, Ms. Tursun said.

After she arrived in Egypt, she tried to search the internet for information about what was happening to the Uyghur people in East Turkistan, but came up empty-handed. “I was so angry. I thought: ‘Why does the world close its eyes?’” Through the help of the U.S. Embassy in Egypt, she was eventually able to settle in America.

Today, Ms. Tursun wants people outside China to know what happens in the concentration camps in East Turkistan, even though she has been trying in vain to forget the nightmare the Chinese government put her through. She said she now takes every opportunity to tell the world through her
testimony about what is being done to the Uyghur people.

**Ferkat Jawdat**

Ferkat Jawdat outlined, using his own experience as an example, how people whose loved ones are being harassed by the Chinese government or are being held in concentration camps in China can stand up to a seemingly overwhelming adversary.

Mr. Jawdat had joined his father in the U.S. ten years ago, while his mother and most of their family stayed behind in East Turkistan. In January 2018, his mother told him and his father through video chat that she had to “go study in school” for a few weeks but would be back home soon. Although they were extremely worried about his mother’s wellbeing, they kept quiet – afraid that their loved ones in East Turkistan would be harmed should they dare to confront the Chinese government.

After 22 days, his mother was released. They continued to talk through the phones of his mother’s relatives, as her phone had been taken away and she was banned from buying a new one. Mr. Jawdat said they would just look at each other through video chat and cry, because they knew that all communication between them would be monitored by the government. “I knew that there were so many things she wanted to tell me, but she would not say anything,” he confided.

On February 6, 2018, his mother told him that she had to “go back to school” and did not know if they could talk again any time soon. On 5 March 2018, five more relatives from his father’s side – including his sister and her husband who were working in high-level government positions – were sent to a concentration camp. After discussing the situation with his family and friends in the U.S., they still decided not to react because they were scared: “Even though we are living in this big country, we cannot risk our loved ones’ lives, just speaking against the Chinese government.”

Only in September 2018 – contemplating his mother’s bad health condition – he decided to take action by advocating for her release. He contacted his Congresswoman, who wrote letters to the Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. and to the U.S. Secretary of State. Mr. Jawdat supported this campaign by posting testimony videos on social media and giving interviews.

“Imagine, as a son, how hard it would be for you to make a decision [where] your actions could pose a life-threatening risk to your own mother.”

In November 2018, Mr. Jawdat asserted, he received the first reaction to his advocacy efforts after posting a video on Facebook; three days after the post had been uploaded, two more relatives of his were interrogated by police for 48 hours straight and then forced to sign a document obliging them to cut off all contact with him.

On March 26, 2019, Mr. Jawdat explained in a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo how the persecution of Uyghurs in East Turkistan was affecting the lives of Uyghurs living in America. A week after this meeting, he received the news that his aunt and her husband, who had been detained in a concentration camp since 5 March 2018 and were all set to be released, were sentenced to seven and eight years in prison respectively. At the same time, his mother was also transferred from the concentration camp to a prison.
Undeterred, Mr. Jawdat kept posting about his case with the result that the *New York Times* picked up on his story in a podcast on the Uyghur crisis. On May 17, 2019, he finally received a phone call from his mother, who had likely been put under severe pressure by the Chinese authorities to silence her son, as she was telling him not to get involved in any organizations critical of China and trying to paint a happy picture of her life in East Turkistan.

Later, he learned that his mother had been released but for one day in order to relay this message to him. “I felt betrayed, especially because they used my mother herself to lie to me”, Mr. Jawdat confessed, but he also said that he knew he had to go even more public and advocate more actively for her release. His mother was finally released to a hospital in May 2019.

Mr. Jawdat concluded his account, by sharing with the audience that he had learned to be louder, stronger and act more publicly in order to achieve his goals with the Chinese government. He encouraged everyone to stand up against the severe human rights abuses committed by China, even if they are most notably affecting Uyghurs today but they might soon be spreading to places like Hong Kong, Taiwan or even to the United States.
Panel 6: Legal Approaches

Moderator:
- Nury Turkel, Uyghur Human Rights Project

Panelists:
- Gianni Tognoni, Secretary General, Permanent Peoples Tribunal
- Michael Polak, Barrister, Church Court Chambers
- Kyle Matthews, Executive Director, Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (MIGS) at Concordia University

Nury Turkel set up the panel discussion with an overview of the conditions on the ground in East Turkistan, explaining the intense security environment, mass detentions and other issues facing Uyghurs in East Turkistan in 2019.

“What based on their statements, they think they have found a final solution to the Uyghur problem. They are killing the Uyghurs without physically killing the Uyghur population.”

Turkel then set out some of the primary questions that he hoped would be addressed by the panelists, including:

What is the basis under Chinese law for these detentions? What kind of people are getting detained? What gets them detained? What are the international legal standards for evaluating China's detention of its ethnic minorities with apparent genocidal intent? Is China committing crimes against humanity? What has the international community done in response? What is the standard by which Uyghurs are detailed? What are China’s obligations under international law? What enforcement mechanisms are available to us? What is China doing to defend these policies?

Michael Polak

British barrister Michael Polak spoke first on the panel to set out some of the available options in terms of addressing the ongoing Uyghur crisis using international law. He began his presentation speaking about the response to genocide and crimes against humanity in the past:

“Politicians, leaders, the international community asked themselves after the Holocaust how humans could commit such terrible crimes to each other. The famous Nuremberg tribunals and the Tokyo tribunals were set up with the hope that this would never happen again.

But then we had the Khmer Rouge crimes in Cambodia, the offences in Bosnia, and then Rwanda and the rest of Yugoslavia. It was hoped that setting up international tribunals and international law would prevent this from happening, but this so far hasn’t been the case.

I still believe that political solutions and even military inventions are the most effective way
of stopping international crimes, but it does leave space for the use of law to tell the story of people involved, to bring justice to those whose rights were trampled upon, and perhaps even to change the behavior of individuals and states.

The international legal system has developed a number of different ways to combat international crimes like genocide crimes against humanity. These include hybrid tribunals which work within a country’s legal system like in Cambodia or Bosnia with an international element. Those tribunal set up by the Security Council like the ICTY and ICTR. The Kosovo Tribunal set up by the European Union set up within Kosovo law.

“Is there a case to be made? I say yes, but I won’t stand here and tell you it’ll be easy, but I do think the case should be put together with regards to deportation to Rome Statute members states.”

There’s also universal jurisdiction which has been developing in legal systems are in the world. We have prosecutions around the world especially in Europe with those who’ve committed crimes particularly in Syria and Libya and it’s something that everyone should really consider because with some jurisdictions all you need is one or two witnesses to torture or crimes against humanity and you can build a case.”

Polak then spoke about the best legal avenues to pursue, including the International Criminal Court, despite China not being Party to the Rome Statute. He went on to describe what crimes may be covered including genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and aggression, suggesting that what is happening to the Uyghur people in East Turkistan would come under crimes against humanity or possibly genocide as well. Polak then went on to address parallels between actions in response to the Rohingya crisis:

“This decision on the prosecutor’s request for a ruling on jurisdiction is a case in regards to the Rohingya people and the crimes committed against them as they fled to Bangladesh. The ruling was in September 2018, and I don’t think the international criminal community don’t expect this ruling, but it has opened the door to the International Criminal Court.

Under crimes against humanity there is the crime of deportation, and what the Court said is that deportation is not a single state crime, it happens not only in the state where the crime is happening, but also in the state where the person is travelling to.

They said that the conduct necessarily takes place on the territory of at least two states. The ramifications are that if something happens in a non-Party state and they’re forced to leave to a Rome Statute state, the Court then will have jurisdiction. So it vastly increases the jurisdiction of this particular crime.”

Polak then explained that it is important to take this into consideration because if we can establish the crime of deportation from East Turkistan to a Rome Statute state, then the court potentially has jurisdiction in the three surrounding countries that are Rome Statute Parties—Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Mongolia.

“Is it difficult? Yes it is difficult. Should it be done? Yes it should be done. All legal aspects should be considered with regards to what is happening in East Turkistan.”

“If you can be deported over land borders, can you be deported through the air? I don’t see any particular reason why you can’t. If coercive acts happen to you in East Turkistan
and you’re forced out and manage to fly to Australia or Canada, does the Court have jurisdiction there? I don’t see any practical reason why that shouldn’t have the effect of being pushed over a border by coercive acts.

Does that help us at this stage?

What would you have to prove? For crimes against humanity – Is it widespread or systematic? I think from the evidence that we’ve heard today, this wouldn’t trouble us too much. Against any civilian population? It’s quite clear that these attacks are against the civilian populations.”

“Destroying not just the physical body, but the cultural heritage of the community is a crime against humanity. We are in dangerous times and the world needs to wake up.”

“Any evidence collected could be used in universal jurisdiction pursuits in different countries. In essence, if there is a Chinese official who has travelled to the UK for example, that we could be shown to have been involved in torture, there is a case to be made.

Starting the ICC process is important. There are two ways to start:

- The ICC prosecutor can take into account information that she receives and choose to take a case forward. If that takes place, the pretrial chamber will make a decision whether the case should go forward or not.
- Alternatively, a state party can refer a case to the prosecutor without the role of the pretrial chamber

I say, is it difficult? Yes it is difficult. Should it be done? I say yes it should be done. All legal aspects should be considered with regards to what is happening in East Turkistan.

Universal jurisdiction provisions from many countries should be studied as to whether there is a case there and whether we should do it.

Those people sitting in China watching our webcast should know that there are legal avenues if you commit these kinds of offences that we’ve been hearing about today.

Thank you very much.”

**Key points & recommendations:**

- Use law to tell the story of people involved, to bring justice to those whose rights were trampled upon, and perhaps even to change the behavior of individuals and states.
- The ICC may be applicable if we can establish the crime of deportation from East Turkistan to a Rome Statute state, then the court potentially has jurisdiction in Afghanistan, Tajikistan or Mongolia, all Rome Statute Parties.
- Evidence collected could be used in universal jurisdiction pursuits in different countries. In essence, if there is a Chinese official who has travelled to the UK for example, that we could be shown to have been involved in torture, there is a case to be made.
- Universal jurisdiction provisions from many countries should be studied as to whether there is a case there and whether we should do it.

Kyle Matthews

Kyle Matthews, Executive Director of the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human
Rights Studies then spoke about a number of different ways in which the international community can push China on the camps.

Matthews then suggests that what we have so far forgotten to take into consideration is the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect.

“Following the genocide in Rwanda, the genocide in Bosnia and the crimes through the Balkan wars, the international community came together led by Kofi Annan to create the Responsibility to Protect.

In 2005, every country at the United Nations, including China, endorsed the outcome document that had two specific paragraphs committing them to do everything in their power to prevent mass atrocity crimes.

Responsibility to Protect is not a license for military intervention, it actually says that national sovereignty comes with a responsibility. You have a responsibility not to subject your civilian populations to crimes to any of these four crimes. And if you are incapable or unwilling to respond then the international community has a responsibility to get engaged. That is where we are now.”

“The legitimate order is where every human, because he’s a subject of human rights, is inviolable in his capacity as a subject of law and not simply as a victim.”

He then related genocide in Cambodia, particularly at the beginning, to what is currently happening to the Uyghur population—namely mass detention. He then stated that, “We are seeing one of the world’s largest, most powerful countries, begin a war and diversity and a war on pluralism and it doesn’t seem to care about what the world says or is in denial.”

“We are also getting more information, not just the narrative re-education, but new skills to survive in the 21st century, but the Guardian and billing card found information earlier this year that many mosques and shrines have been destroyed. Destruction of cultural heritage is a precursor to genocide.

Destroying not just the physical body, but the cultural heritage of the community is a crime against humanity. We are in dangerous times and the world needs to wake up.”

“We also need to introduce legislation to limit western countries from working with Beijing and Chinese companies involved in massive rights surveillance.”

Matthews then points to a recent report published by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect called “Persecution of Uyghurs and Potential Crimes Against Humanity in China.”

The report cautions that if urgent measures are not implemented to end the current state of systematic persecution there is a clear danger for further crimes against humanity to take place. So some of the world’s leading research centers identify what is happening as crimes against humanity.

Matthews then suggests the audience look at a recent blog post by two of Canada’s top human rights experts—John Packer at the University of Ottawa and Payam Akhavan of McGill university who write about what Canada should be doing to protect their Rohingyas. The International Court of Justice can be a potential party to being about justice to perhaps interdict atrocity crimes taking place. He also remarked that, “National governments need to remind Beijing of their responsibilities under Responsibility to Protect.”

“We need to advocate that every NGO, every academic, every activist, need to meet with
the over 50 Responsibility to Protect focal points that are formed in national governments around the world. Many of these governments have in their respective Departments of Foreign Affairs has one person with a responsibility to bring policy to deal with mass atrocity crimes. The person in Washington is in the White House so I think there are high-level contacts to push this case further up the line.”

Matthews goes on to speak about the importance of the Magnitsky Act and how it can be taken up against human rights abusers, instead of wide-scale sanctions, where we can have targeted impacts that have already been used against Russian officials, in Venezuela and government and military officials in Myanmar.

He then suggested that we need to look at what happened in Kenya after the 2007 elections regarding hate speech and Western governments who threatened certain officials with travel bans. The result would be that they would not be able to shop in Paris or London or New York or Washington and they were also threatened to have their children barred from attending western universities.

Also raised was the fact that there is a need for people to look at companies complicit in the atrocities and that we must put pressure on them, especially leading up to the Olympics, as nobody wants to be associated with the country or region in a country associated with the genocide.

“We also need to introduce legislation to limit western countries from working with Beijing and Chinese companies involved in massive rights surveillance. We have to be really careful because this has the potential to be exported beyond borders. Uyghurs may be the first canaries in the coal mine, but others may suffer in the future.

I think we need to look at all aspects multilaterally, of course sanctions, Responsibility to Protect and doing work to

up in the game because it’s a situation that can’t wait any longer.”

Key points & recommendations:

- Responsibility to Protect doctrine may be useful to address the Uyghur issue—states need to call on China to uphold it.
- We must advocate that every NGO, academic, activist, needs to meet with the over 50 Responsibility to Protect focal points that are formed in national governments around the world—many of these governments have one person with a responsibility to bring policy to deal with mass atrocity crimes.
- The Magnitsky Act can be taken up against human rights abusers, so instead of wide-scale sanctions, we can have targeted impacts.
- Look at the Kenya hate speech example—there was a lot of hate speech and Western governments threatened certain officials with travel bans.
- Put more pressure on western companies operating in Xinjiang. Especially leading up to the Olympics, nobody wants to be associated with the country or region in a country associated with the genocide.
- Introduce legislation to limit western countries from working with Beijing and Chinese companies involved in massive rights surveillance.
Gianni Tognoni, Secretary general of the Permanent People's Tribunal, spoke next about the role of the international legal system, legal responsibility, as well as some of the gaps that exist that may be exploited.

He began by saying that, “I would start with the last observation which was made before, from the two witnesses. Please give the space to the Tribunal – they don't need a judge to be judged. They are not victims to be judge, they are subjects.”

Gianni Tognoni spoke principally about the Universal Declaration of People's Rights that was suggested by all the exiles of the dictatorships in Latin America because of the silence of the international community when all countries of Latin America were dominated by dictatorships. All of these countries were considered part of the international community.

He then went on to explain that, “These people were presenting their situation, but no was taking up their defense,” and that, “The international community was a spectator during the bombing of Vietnam and nobody was saying anything and it was important for civil society, for the symbolic representatives from several society, to declare that what was committed in Vietnam was not simply a war, but a crime against humanity. It was a formal violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights where nobody can use it considered colony where people had similar rights to be human.”

He also explained the importance of holding non-state actors accountable for their crimes as well since it became clear in Latin America that dictatorships were not simply a product of the military, but a complex, political, economic situation where transnational corporations were the protagonists.

“It is important because economic crimes are not recognized in criminal law or an international law and at that time it was becoming clear that something very important was changing after the period of the development of international law (the UDHR).

It was clear that the alliance with states with economic power and military power were becoming the truth protagonists of the crimes and those crimes were in fact a part of the new development of the economic order and the development of economic order was considered to be a very good thing because it was procuring the well-being of the population through economic development, but states were no longer a guarantor of the rights of the population.”

Because corporations were becoming the guarantor of the international economic situation, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples says that we are in need of something different from the legal point of view in order to give back to the legal order, the legitimate order. The legitimate order is where every human, because he's a subject of human rights, is inviolable in his capacity as a subject of law and not simply as a victim.

Tognoni explained then that, “In that sense there was a request to establish something that could become a permanent tribunal. A tribunal that was not judging people which was constituted by people who were requesting the intervention of the international community represented in the permanent Distributor to give them a voice in the tribunal even when that voice was not allowed in the international arena.”
The Tribunal was established to respond with the same criteria of being representative of real people in real time, and not after things happen, to give them at least the visibility of subjects."

“It is important to anticipate the judgment of international law that people’s rights should be recognized in order to give the victims their dignity of life, to recognize they are not victims, but human beings.”

The example provided was that of the Sahara people of the northern part of Africa, explaining that the Sahara people still today are people who are under judgment and that the United Nations recognize it formally, but it is not people with their own rights within the international community. With the verdict of the Tribunal, that verdict was received by the organization of the African Union and the Saharan people become a member of the organization of the African Union as a subject of law.

“Over 40 years of our activity, we received 45 cases of different people who are in the same situation from Timor l’Est which became a victim of genocide because the invasion of Indonesia after decolonization of Portugal and Argentina, Afghanistan and the Armenian people who are still looking for visibility of their genocide that had not been recognized by the international community.

Without intervention of the international law and the international community was in fact received by the Tribunal because people representing the real situation were asking for. At least a verdict that recognized them as a subject and not as a victim.”

He argued that while he is confident that the International Criminal Court will declare the genocide of the Rohingya, it was clear for the first time that that was not simply a reaction of the government that it was a formal genocide, and the decision of the court is still waiting two years later.

Importantly, he says that, “The International Criminal Court, which is essential, is seen as a retrospective instrument. Russia and China have indicated that they will never accept the findings of the ICC for Myanmar.”

Additionally, he makes the point that we have to look for new forms of law capable of representing people while things are happening, because of the genocide of the Rohingya or the Tamil are cases of ongoing genocide, and suggests that the same is possible for Uyghurs right now.

Tognoni concludes by saying that, “It is important to anticipate the judgment of international law that people’s rights should be recognized in order to give the victims their dignity of life, to recognize they are not victims, but human beings.

We think that People have the right to convene because that is the first restitution of dignity, of visibility and voice to the oppressed people.”

**Key points & recommendations:**

- We have to look at alternative options in international law.
- We have to recognize (as does the Permanent People’s Tribunal) that people should be seen as a subject of law and not simply as a victim.
- People should be taken as the true protagonists in international law.
- While the ICC is essential, it is as retrospective instrument and Russia and China have indicated that they will never accept the findings of the ICC for Myanmar for example.
- We have to look for new forms of law which is capable of representing people while things are happening, as in the case of Uyghurs right now.
Nury Turkel

Turkel finished off the panel discussion with his own reflections on the meaning of genocide and its implications, arguing that, “When the Dalai Lama one on CNN criticizing China for committing knowingly or unknowingly cultural genocide, he was criticized as an overreach, but if you look at the definition of cultural genocide he was right.”

“It is incumbent upon various governments and legal scholars to make the case that cultural genocide is taking place with respect to Uyghurs.”

Turkel then explained that cultural genocide extends beyond attacks upon the physical or biological elements of a group and seeks to eliminate its vibrant institutions, which may be done in a variety of ways, which often includes abolition of group language, restrictions on traditional practices, the destruction of religious institutions and objectives, and attacks academics and intellectuals.

He then closed out the panel arguing that, “In a larger sense, what genocide really means is it comes with a different dimensions. For example political, social, cultural, economic, biological, religious and moral, and each targeting different aspects of groups existence and that is exactly what’s happening to Uyghurs today.

So this has been a transitional period. This did not happen overnight. It's been building up. It started small, predicated on lies and in expanded rapidly.

It is incumbent upon various governments and legal scholars to make the case that cultural genocide is taking place with respect to Uyghurs.”
Panel 7: Media Approaches

Moderator:
- Alim Seytoff, Radio Free Asia
  Uyghur Service

Speakers:
- Mustafa Akyol, Senior Fellow, Cato Institute
- Harald Maass, Journalist
- Marco Respinti, Director-in-Charge, Bitter Winter
- Merve Şebnem Oruç, Journalist

The panel dealt with the journalistic take on the Uyghur crisis and illuminated the involvement in, and crucial contribution of, journalism to finding a solution to the hardship faced by Uyghurs on a daily basis.

Alim Seytoff

Alim Seytoff spoke about how the Uyghur crisis is well known not only in the U.S. but also in Turkey and in Europe. As the director of the Uyghur Service at the Radio Free Asia, Mr. Seytoff noted the Uyghur issue is reported regularly in the Washington Post, New York Times, CNN and at Radio Free Asia. Uyghur journalists are trying their best to get on the ground information as much as possible considering the Chinese Communist Party’s efforts to control the people from speaking out about the real situation in the Uyghur region. It is important that the experts, scholars and analysts to look at the issue and challenge the narrative of the Chinese government’s propaganda or the pro-trade narrative by their own countries on the Uyghur crisis.

Mustafa Akyol

Mustafa Akyol, Turkish writer and journalist and author of “Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty”, became a contributing opinion writer for the New York Times in 2013. Mr. Akyol wrote an opinion piece for the New York Times on the Uyghur crisis early January this year titled: “China’s Gulag For Muslims” where he talks about the camps and the silence from the Muslim countries on the Uyghur issue. He also attended a panel discussion at the Cato Institute talking about the Uyghur issue, described camps at which “people are forced to listen to ideological lectures, sing hymns praising the Chinese Communist Party and write ‘self-criticism’ essays.” He said survivors told of sleep deprivation, solitary confinement, beatings and torture.

Mr. Akyol talks about how the Uyghur issue is deep issue in Turkey which is why Turkey should have been at the forefront of defending for the Uyghurs. Turkey have always had emotional investment that the Uyghurs should be defended. However, he is disappointed with the response of the Turkish government for the issue for the past couple of years. He suggested that we should try to condemn the Turkish government respond better on the Uyghur crisis.

The Turkish media have been reporting on the Uyghur issue but the different political party in Turkey controls different media which then the reports on the Uyghur issue comes at a different stage. Although the Turkish president Erdogan himself have not openly condemned the Chinese government
on their persecution of the Uyghurs these past few years however the foreign ministry have responded to the Uyghur crisis this year with a strong sentiment that shaped how the media in Turkey responds to the Uyghur cause. This shows that there is a genuine feeling towards the Uyghur crisis in Turkey.

“China should respect the rights of each and every citizen [...] if they have a terrorism problem they might be creating those terrorism problems by oppressing people.”

Mr. Akyol also noted how the other Muslim countries either stated silent on the issue or actively supported the Chinese governments repressive policies towards the Uyghurs and other Turkic groups in the Uyghur region. The reason for this according to Mr. Akyol is that the Muslim countries knows that friendship with the Chinese government pays well, big investment in the Muslim countries since at least 20 member countries of the OIC-Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, have China as their top investors. Mr. Akyol stressed that he understand that there are trade/business relationship between these Muslim countries and the Chinese government however his humble message to the Muslim countries is that “the least these countries can do is to say that they will speak to their friends in Beijing about the Uyghur crisis and not to pretend that nothing is happening.”

Mr. Akyol stated that his focus on the Uyghur crisis is the freedom of Uyghurs from the persecution of the Chinese regime. “China should respect the rights of each and every citizen [...] if they have a terrorism problem they might be creating those terrorism problems by oppressing people.”

Harald Maass, a journalist from Germany, pointed out the lack of big media interest in the plight of the Uyghur people. Although some media have been reporting the issue but in the large global scale it is still not widely known, not like the European refugee crisis or Syria for example.

Mr. Maass points out it is due to the lack of personalized stories and high-quality pictures, media outlets were not interested in publishing big stories on the Uyghurs; consequently, people can’t relate to them emotionally, this is largely due to lack of visual evidence of what is exactly happening in the Uyghur region.

“The fact that China frames its repression of Uyghurs as a domestic issue and their fight against the terrorism, have helped Muslim countries stay silent. They do not wish for domestic interference.”

He thus called on his fellow journalists to report on stories which grant their readers a more personally relatable insight into the suffering of the Uyghur population. He encouraged journalists to publish accounts of what it feels like for families to visit their loved ones in an internment camp or how they deal with situations where one family member has been detained in a camp whereas another is working for the police force in order to earn money.
It is extremely difficult to report from the ground in the Uyghur region since it is a black box there. The story dies easily because of heavy surveillance. When Harald Maass visited the Uyghur region, border guards forced him to unlock his computer and cell phone and hand them over for inspection which is an experience that he did not even have in North Korea. Through his journey in the Uyghur region, Mr. Maass tallied the number of police checks, and over the course of 13 days, he was subjected to such checks 57 times.

The issue is silent because of international opinion. When we have the international audience to feel what is happening, consistently, they will find it is hard to ignore the situation.

**Key points & recommendations:**

- Need good pictures and emotional articles that make the reader feel the situation emotionally.
- We should visit the family of those detained.
- The issue is less well-known because of international opinion, so we need more of an international audience to see the issue in the press.
- We also need more creative ways to report on the issue.

**Marco Respinti**

The next panelist to speak was Marco Respinti, the Director-in-Charge of media outlet Bitter Winter. For his presentation, he used the experience of Bitter Winter to point highlight elements of good practice in addressing the crisis and raised what more needed to be done to achieve real and meaningful change in the situation.

“The CCP, as all totalitarian regimes, fear people, fear freedom of expression and press, fear a conscious civil society.”

Bitter Winter is one of the few media sources to provide on the ground information and break exclusive stories about the situation in East Turkistan and in the rest of China. Bitter Winter was the first media outlet to disseminate video of the inside of an internment camp and its important and insightful reporting has played an important role in revealing China’s horrific persecution of Uyghur Muslims and other religious groups to the rest of the world.

Mr. Respinti informed the audience that all the credit for Bitter Winter’s reporting must go to their large network of several hundred journalists and correspondents in China who risked their lives and personal safety to reveal the true situation in East Turkistan and the rest of China. Despite measures taken to ensure their safety, he stated that 45 of their reporters had been arrested by the Chinese government on false charges revealing state secrets and working with foreign powers. He stated that many were tortured and that 22 reporters were still missing. Out of the 45
reporters who were arrested, 22 were based in East Turkistan and 18 of those are still missing, including the correspondent who had recorded the inside of an internment camp.

The circumstances of Bitter Winter show how truly difficult it is to report on events in China and to disseminate information about atrocities occurring in the country. Despite these difficulties, Mr. Respinti was keen to underline the incredible importance of truthful reporting on the Uyghur crisis and the impact it has had on efforts to address this crisis. An essential component of this process, he noted, was communicating this information effectively, to read a wide audience and inform them about what is happening in East Turkistan and the rest of China. This is one area that we all had to improve on, he continued.

He also pointed to the need for people of different abilities and competencies to work together in addressing this situation. He gave the creation and work of Bitter Winter as an example. Bitter Winter is composed of different professionals, including journalists, scholars, activists, different communities and members of different faiths who work together for the sake of truth, liberty and justice. The success of Bitter Winter in reporting on what is happening inside of China is due to the cooperation and effective use of these different individuals’ knowledge and competencies, he asserted. It is a model that should be imitated and diffused so that more groups could focus on doing meaningful and effective work to address this crisis.

He gave three examples of organisations and individuals who had used good communication between different groups and individuals, and worked together to effectively express ideas and disseminate information:

1. **Uyghur Rally** - An organisation founded in September 2018 by two non-Uyghurs in New York City. Although they do not have a lot of resources, Mr. Respinti asserted they had managed to make a substantial impact by focusing on achievable objectives and knowing how to work with the media.

2. **The daughter of Gulshan Abbas** contacted Bitter Winter about the disappearance of her mother. She gave her personal testimony and details about her mother’s case to Bitter Winter, who wrote an article about it, which they published on Mother’s Day. The article garnered considerable attention and the personal testimony was seen as an effective way to communicate about the camps.

3. **Bitter Winter** – Mr. Respinti again pointed to Bitter Winter as a good embodiment of these communication and cooperation that should serve as a model for other entities. Despite Bitter Winter having a very small budget, it has been able to make a sizable impact in the response to the crisis in East Turkistan.

In conclusion, Mr. Respinti noted that we are all responsible for communicating this message about the camps in whatever capacities we had. Even for the average person who has no experience in human rights activism, it is easy to take action by organizing mailing lists, blogging, posting on social media and even by discussing these issues by word of mouth. Truthful journalism, photos and messages are great communication tools, he asserted. Mr. Respinti concluded by reminding participants about the importance of communicating effectively, stating:

**Key points & recommendations:**

- We must all improve how we communicate and disseminate
information about the crisis in East Turkistan to spread awareness and reach the wider public.

- Bringing together professionals with different skills and competencies to work together on this issue is a successful model that should be replicated.
- We all have the capacity to take action and spread awareness on this issue and should use the means at our disposal to inform our communities about what is happening in East Turkistan.

**Merve Şebnem Oruç**

The last panelist to intervene was Merve Şebnem. She is a columnist for Daily Sabah and a TV commentator for Super Haber TV based in Istanbul.

Ms. Şebnem compares the internment camps in East Turkistan with the Nazi concentration camps. She is alarmed by the ongoing genocide that is happening to the Uyghur people. She begins her speech by expressing her disappointment with US policies since 9/11, a country that claims to be the world champion of human rights, and how they are coordinating with authoritarian regimes. Ms. Şebnem addressed the solidarity that the Muslim world has to show in this urgent matter, but maintained the argument that the Uyghur crisis shouldn’t be the concern of Muslim states only.

It seems unrealistic to ask Turkey its undivided attention since Ankara has its own security issues, with the refugees issue that has been going on in the country since the beginning of the Syrian war. After the Urumqi massacre in 2009, Erdogan was one of the first world leaders to criticize China’s repressive ways and call it a genocide, and the Turkish Trade minister later called for a boycott of Chinese goods. One of the main reasons why Turkey has to be proactive in the Uyghur crisis is because of the 80,000 Uyghurs that live in Turkey. Turkish people do care about Uyghurs and are outraged by the violation of human rights by the Chinese government in East Turkistan.

The panelist then addressed China’s economic power and its influence on the international system. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is a global development strategy adopted by the Chinese government involving infrastructure development and investments from over 100 countries. China wants to boost the global economy through this immense project and East Turkistan is at the heart of this world trade infrastructure program. The BRI is the main factor behind China’s urge to bring the Uyghur region under its control. Drastic measures have been taken, such as placing 1-3 million of Uyghurs and other Turkic ethnic groups in internment camps that Beijing calls as “re-education centers”.

Ms. Şebnem concluded by saying that the only effective way to contribute to the Uyghur cause is to pressure China by threatening the Belt and Road Initiative and putting a stop to its economic power. Beijing is willing to spend billions of dollars to finalize this project, and won’t hesitate to eliminate the Uyghurs. This can only stop if the international community comes together and put an end to this abuse of power.

**Key points & recommendations:**

- We must make the Uyghur crisis an international matter, and not solely depend on Muslim states cooperation.
- We must pressure our own states to threaten China on the BRI and demand the end of the Uyghur genocide.
Concluding Session: Concrete Action Going Forward

The last panel of the conference focused on summarizing the content and concrete recommendations discussed throughout the rest of the conference to help inform and develop a more holistic strategic response to the Uyghur crisis.

This panel in particular focused on concrete action and finding creative solutions to the problems faced in mobilizing the international community to take the steps necessary to close the internment camps.

The last panel opened with remarks by Dr. Erkin Sediq. He stated that in order for the Uyghur diaspora and the international community to have a more effective response to the Uyghur crisis, there was an urgent need for more information from the ground in East Turkistan. He raised allegations of mass prisoner transfer from the camps and possible mass executions that may be occurring but are not reported on due to lack of information. Mr. Sediq stated his hope that the international media pays more attention to this area.

The session then opened up with an open discussion, between a panel composed of the staff of the World Uyghur Congress, Project Manager Pete Irwin, Project Coordinator Ryan Barry and Project Assistant Shahrezad Gheyrat, moderated by UHRP Advisor Louisa Greve. This interactive segment invited the participants of the conference to collectively discuss and contribute to a more effective strategy to address the crisis in East Turkistan, based on and informed by the presentations made throughout the conference.

Discussion revolved around several key issues:

- Providing Credible Information and the Importance of Narrative

As raised earlier in the conference by German scholar Dr. Adrian Zenz, the issue of ‘narrative’ and the importance of providing reliable and consistent information was discussed in detail. Participants of the conference recognized that a key obstacle to overcome in meaningfully addressing the crisis was to combat disinformation and propaganda from the Chinese government, who have claimed at different points that the camps do not exist, that they were for vocational training and then that they were a ‘counterterrorism’ measure.

The discrepancy between the figures put forward of the number of detainees in the camps would help China to undermine the validity of Uyghur organisations allegations, some participants noted. It is therefore very important going forward to ensure that all information is verified before dissemination and standardized across organisations working on this issue. Dr. Zenz also recommended that Uyghur activists combat China’s narrative on the camps by using their own language against them.

Journalists, especially Harald Maas, pointed to the lack of reliable information as one of the central impediments to meaningfully addressing the crisis. The fact that there had been barely any photos or videos of the inside of the internment camps and the heavy restrictions put on journalists reporting on the region made it difficult to report on the real situation in East Turkistan. He stated that Uyghur activists and journalists had to explore new ways to get information out of
the camps and East Turkistan in general and suggested using drones to accomplish this.

- **How to Collaborate/Cooperate between Different Groups Working on the Issue**

The issue of how to coordinate and communicate between different groups and individuals with different backgrounds and competencies to collectively address the crisis in East Turkistan was also identified as a central obstacle. It was recognized that the conference itself was immensely useful as it brought together people of all different disciplines who were working on the Uyghur issue to share their experience and brainstorm potential solutions. Participants also noted that different groups and individuals needed to communicate more regularly to prevent from replicating the same work and to allocate limited resources more efficiently and effectively. However, how to continue this cooperation and communication after the conference presented a challenge.

Marco Respinti from Bitter Winter suggested that we organise a conference call between all interested participants at regular intervals (every few weeks or once a month) to update each other on our work and progress and to identify potential opportunities for engagement. Other participants discussed organizing all interested parties under an umbrella body or a loose coalition to coordinate activities across groups and individuals. Participants also discussed the challenges of collaborating between different organisations with different objectives, budgets and concerns in a more formalized way. It was also suggested that the conference itself become a yearly event in order to enable this communication and establish continuity of the work.

Participants also discussed successful examples of joint initiatives and cooperation, such as the Taiwan Declaration on the Persecution of Uyghurs which was signed the month prior. Several people pointed to the Freedom of Religious Belief Roundtables and similar interfaith dialogues and meetings as a way to foster solidarity and cooperation.

- **How to Efficiently and Securely Share and Disseminate Information**

Another key element that was raised by multiple participants, was the issue of how to share and store reliable information about the crisis, in order to raise awareness about the crisis and to document specific violations to ensure justice and accountability in the future.

Throughout the conference, it was identified that witness testimony of those who had been in the camps and released or by Uyghurs whose family members had disappeared into the camps was the most effective way to reach and influence policy makers and the general public. It was suggested that camp survivors go on a tour to tell their story at relevant events and institutions to spread awareness and mobilize people for collective action.

The need to establish a centralized database documenting the names and all relevant details of those who have been detained in the camps was also raised by a number of participants. It was recognized that we need to explore more ways to share information securely and anonymously in this regard.

- **New Methods/Ideas** - This panel summarized and assessed the different ideas and strategies that were discussed throughout the conference including:

- **Legal options** - Such as using universal jurisdiction to target Chinese officials responsible for the camp system in individuals countries and raising the crisis in the ICC through illegal forced return of Uyghur refugees to China by state parties.

- **Targeting Private Companies** - Participants agreed that targeting private Western companies who had provided technology, financing or
support to Chinese authorities and companies in establishing the camp system.
RECOMMENDATIONS & OUTCOMES

The conference produced a multitude of recommendations in each of the panel discussions as well as the opening ceremony, ranging from approaches with the press to work with legal scholars to how best the NGO community can work in tandem to produce concrete outcomes.

Recommendations have been compiled and summarised here below:

Who Are Our Targets?

- To target companies that are doing business in Xinjiang—Volkswagen, a German company that had a close relationship with the Nazi regime and whose former CEO Herbert Diess said that he was “not aware” of the camps.
  - There are 53 Fortune 500 U.S. companies operating in Xinjiang, among them Exxon Mobil, Amazon, General Motors, Ford, General Electric, and Boeing. We can work with trade unions and also business associations to let these companies know that they shouldn’t be operating there.
  - More research is needed on companies connected to the camps.
  - Use any momentum from the public to demand divestment from questionable assets in East Turkistan.
  - Urge companies to respect their national action plans on human rights and economic affairs.
- Companies like Adidas, Nike, Coca Cola need to be told that they shouldn’t sponsor the Olympic Games while the Beijing regime is holding three million Uyghurs in concentration camps and committing cultural genocide.
- Organize a global response with advocacy action, including in Muslim majority countries, in order to keep pushing through grass-roots movements for the long-standing goal of government-to-government responses.
- Put a stronger focus on advocacy work on the national level in EU member states so as to make sure that coordinated action can be taken on the EU level.
  - Support tougher EU rules on procurement and investment.
  - Push governments who are involved in the BRI.
- Keep protesting at UN and other institutions to demand an end to the current atrocities.

Where Else is Pressure Needed?

- International Red Cross should insist on access to Xinjiang to find out what is happening in the concentration camps.
- Keep using UN Special Procedures; even though the immediate outcome may be disappointing, a constant flow of inquiries creates pressure on the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to speak out on the issue.

What Should be Our Approach?

- We have the facts on our side, so we should continue to use these facts to our advantage. As more and more facts come to light, strong language is justified, but emotional hype gives the Chinese more opportunities to refute imprecise speculative statements.
  - Refute Beijing’s rhetoric by using accurate and strategic terminology, targeting China’s own propaganda claims.
  - We need to combat the narrative of the Chinese government by using their own words and statements against them.
- Create more “connective tissue” between citizens and their political representatives, such as government officials and national ministries.
- Advocate for economic sanctions against Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses in East Turkistan.

**How To Reach General Public?**

- People have souls and consciences - we need to put our faith and hope in them.
- We also need to ask ourselves How should academics deal with Chinese scholars who are purporting this type of view? Should they be allowed to speak in the name of academic freedom? Is there room for debate?
- Tell stories of people recounting the horrors of the internment camps on a more personal level in order to break down the generally known figures into something more humanly graspable.
- Work with Uyghurs who have been seeking refuge in Kazakhstan and are therefore at constant threat of being deported to China; look more closely at the situation on the ground for Uyghurs in Central Asia.

**Additional Recommendations**

- We need to make information available in Chinese language to penetrate that wall and let that info reach the Chinese people.
- Create an open dialogue amongst the Chinese intellectuals to help them regain conscience on the Uyghur issues.
- Engaging with individual Chinese people to show them the true situation in East Turkistan and that the Uyghurs & other Turkic Muslims in East Turkistan have been condemning the Chinese government and not the Chinese people.
- Find counter arguments to address the prevailing sentiments and mentalities, spread by CCP propaganda, that exist among the Han Chinese population.
- Establish ways to transfer credible and reliable information to the Chinese people and to find a way of getting around the great firewall.

- Be watchful about Chinese attempts to export surveillance technology
- We need to find ways to break the great firewall.
- Create a document for refugees on the dos and don'ts of the asylum process
- Establish a network of several NGOs tasked to protect people fleeing persecution in China.
- Help Uyghurs to overcome difficulties in obtaining passports to leave China, and thereby facilitate family reunifications.
- Chinese government official websites can be used to track for details on camps’ financial budgets, construction base, size, location etc.
**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES**

**Rushan Abbas**
Founder and Executive Director of Campaign for Uyghurs, Rushan Abbas started her activism work while she was a student, participating in the pro-democracy demonstrations at Xinjiang University in 1985 and 1988. Since her arrival in the United States in 1989, Ms. Abbas has been an ardent campaigner for the human rights of the Uyghur people. Ms. Abbas was the Vice President of Uyghur American Association for two terms and the former reporter at Radio Free Asia. Under her organization, Ms. Abbas introduced and led the “One Voice One Step” Uyghur women’s movement.

**Mustafa Akyol**
Mustafa Akyol is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute’s Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity, where he focuses on the intersection of public policy, Islam, and modernity. A Turkish journalist and author, he is a regular contributing opinion writer for the New York Times since 2013, and has been a regular opinion columnist for Turkish publications such as Hurriyet Daily News, and for the Middle-East focused Al-Monitor.com. Akyol is the author of Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty praised by The Financial Times as “a forthright and elegant Muslim defense of freedom.” He is also the author of The Islamic Jesus: How the King of the Jews Became a Prophet of the Muslims and of six books in Turkish, including Rethinking the Kurdish Question.

**Norman Baker**
Norman Baker is a former minister in the British government, firstly for three and a half years at the Department for Transport then for a year as deputy to Theresa May in the Home Office. He was a Liberal Democrat MP between 1997 and 2015. He has a strong interest in both human rights and in the environment and has served on the UK Parliament’s Human Rights Committee. Until last year he had for many years been President of Tibet Society, the world’s longest established Tibet support organisation. He is a published author, a regular columnist and broadcaster, and a singer-songwriter who has issued three albums.

**Francisco Bencosme**
Francisco Bencosme is the Asia Pacific Advocacy Manager at Amnesty International USA. Francisco has testified before Congress and has provided media commentary on multiple outlets including the New York Times, Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal. In 2018, Francisco was named one of The Hill’s Top 2018 Lobbyist for their campaign on Myanmar Rohingya issues. Before joining AIUSA, he served as a Professional Staff Member on the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he assisted Democratic Senators on issues related to East Asia/Pacific, South Asia, and State Department/USAID oversight. Francisco also served as the President of the Congressional Hispanic Staff Association and as a board member of the Foreign Affairs Congressional Staff Association. Francisco is also a Truman Security Fellow, a Penn-Kemble Fellow, and an International Career Advancement Program alum. Francisco received his Master of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University, a graduate certificate from the USAF Air University, and his B.A. from Wake Forest University.

**Annie Boyajian**
Annie Wilcox Boyajian is Director of Advocacy at Freedom House, and leads Freedom House’s advocacy to the U.S. government and collaboration with American human rights groups. Prior to joining Freedom House, she spent seven years on Capitol Hill, working in both the Senate and the House. During her time on
the Hill, Boyajian focused on foreign policy, human rights, and appropriations issues, and served most recently as a Legislative Director. She has worked extensively on freedom of expression and freedom of religion issues, and holds a Master’s degree in International Affairs: U.S. Foreign Policy from American University’s School of International Service. Her Master’s research project focused on China’s influence on African media.

**Ralph Bunche**

Ralph is the General Secretary of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the Executive Director of our Dutch and US foundations. A lawyer by profession, Ralph has advised or represented governments, businesses and grassroots movements, including UNPO member peoples past and present, on international law and business and human rights matters worldwide. He joined the UNPO after serving in senior management positions for Fair Trials, the global criminal justice watchdog that focusses on extradition and other international criminal cooperation instruments, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for whom he managed the human rights and rule of law portfolio in Kosovo.

**Darren Byler**

Darren Byler is a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Washington. His research focuses on Uyghur dispossession, culture work and "terror capitalism" in the city of Ürümchi, the capital of Chinese Central Asia (Xinjiang). He has published research articles in Logic, Asia-Pacific Journal, Contemporary Islam, Central Asian Survey, the Journal of Chinese Contemporary Art and contributed essays to volumes on ethnography of Islam in China, transnational Chinese cinema and travel and representation. He has provided expert testimony on Uyghur human rights issues before the Canadian House of Commons and writes a regular column on these issues for SupChina. In addition, he has published Uyghur-English literary translations (with Mutellip Enwer) in Guernica and Paper Republic. He also founded and edits the digital humanities art and politics repository The Art of Life in Chinese Central Asia, which is hosted at livingotherwise.com.

**Donald Clarke**

Donald Clarke is a professor at the George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C., where he specializes in Chinese law. In addition to his academic work, he founded and maintains Chinalaw, the leading internet listserv on Chinese law, and writes about Chinese law at The China Collection blog. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

**Ulrich Delius**

Ulrich Delius is Director of the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP), a Germany based international human rights organization, promoting the rights of ethnic nationalities and religious minorities. A former STP Asia Desk officer, he has been working for more than three decades on ethnic nationality issues, religious freedom and human rights in China. He started in the 1980ies to promote a dialogue between the Chinese democracy movement and Uyghurs, Tibetans and Mongolians. He has published many human rights reports on the situation of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Tibetans, Mongolians, Falun Gong, the Chinese Democracy Movement, internet freedom and writers in prison.

**Vanessa Frangville**

Vanessa Frangville is currently Senior Lecturer and Chair holder in Chinese studies at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Belgium. She is also the director of EASát, centre for East Asian Studies at the ULB. Her previous research dealt with discourses on ethnicity and nation building in modern and contemporary China, with a special focus on
cinema and “ethnic minority” film. She is currently working on online and offline Uyghur youth activism in Europe.

**Dr. Bob Fu**

Dr. Bob Fu is a life member of Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and founder/president of China Aid (est. 2002). China Aid is an international NGO with a mission to advance religious freedom and rule of law for all in China. A campus student leader during the Tiananmen Square Democracy movement in 1989. He has a Ph.D in the field of Religious Freedom from St. John’s College, Durham University in the United Kingdom. His autobiography is called God’s Double Agent. He is editor in chief of Chinese Law & Religion Monitor Journal. As president of CAA, Bob has testified before both chambers of US Congress, US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China(CECC). He has testified before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, UK and Dutch Parliaments as well as the EU Parliament. He regularly brief and advise both the Executive and Legislative branches of US and other western governments about religious freedom and human rights in China.

**Louisa Greve**

Ms. Louisa Greve serves as UHRP’s director for external affairs. She is an expert on human rights in China and an experienced non-profit advisor. Her first visit to East Turkestan was in 1988, and she has traveled and worked in China since 1980. She is currently Washington Fellow for CSW, a UK-based advocacy group promoting freedom of religion or belief for all peoples and faiths. Ms. Greve was formerly Vice President for Programs and East Asia Director at the National Endowment for Democracy, with previous experience at Special Olympics International, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the United Nations Development Program. Ms. Greve has served on the Amnesty International board, the Virginia Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and the International Advisory Committee of the Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China. She is the author of several book chapters on ethnic issues and human rights in China, and has testified before Congress on democracy in Asia.

**Timothey Grose**

Timothy Grose, PhD is an assistant professor of China Studies at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. His research on Uyghur ethno-national identities and their expressions of Islamic piety has been published in the China Journal, Journal of Contemporary China, and Foreign Policy and featured in the Economist, the Atlantic, and CNN. His book on Uyghur boarding schools, Negotiating Inseparability, was published by Hong Kong University Press in October 2019.

**Dolkun Isa**

Dolkun Isa is the President of the World Uyghur Congress and Vice President of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). He was a former student-leader of pro-democracy demonstrations at Xinjiang University in 1988 and founded the Students’ Science and Culture Union at the university in 1987 working on programs to eliminate illiteracy, promote science and lead other students in East Turkestan. He was then dismissed from university. After enduring persecution from the Chinese government, Isa fled China in 1994 and sought asylum in Europe, and became a citizen of Germany in 2006. He has since been presenting Uyghur human rights issues to the UN Human Rights Council, European Parliament, European governments and international human rights organizations. He has worked to mobilize the Uyghur diaspora community to collectively advocate for their rights and the rights of the Uyghurs in East Turkistan.
**Wu’er Kaixi**

Wu’er Kaixi, a Uyghur national, was born in Beijing, China on February 17th, 1968. In 1988 he was admitted to Beijing Normal University, where he studied education administration. In April 1989, he was instrumental in initiating a Beijing student movement for democracy and freedom that galvanized the world. One of the most influential student leaders, he maintained a leading role throughout what became known as the Tiananmen Student Movement, and which ended when it was brutally suppressed by the Chinese government on June 4th. His impassioned meeting with Chinese Premier Li Peng before the crackdown was watched on televisions throughout China and the world, making Wu’er Kaixi a household name in China and a representative student leader internationally. After the June 4th massacre Wu’er Kaixi was listed No 2 on China’s list of 21 most wanted student leaders. With the help of sympathizers in China and Hong Kong, he escaped from China via Hong Kong to France. In Paris Wu’er Kaixi and his colleagues in exile founded the Federation for a Democratic China (FDC), of which he was elected as the founding vice president. With his Tiananmen colleague Shen Tong, Wu’er Kaixi continues his pro-democracy activities as Co-Chairman of the Democracy for China Fund (DCF). He now lives in Taiwan, where through his magazine and newspaper columns and regular television appearances he has become a political commentator and social activist.

**Omer Kanat**

Omer Kanat was born in Ghulja city in East Turkistan and current Executive Committee Chairman of the World Uyghur Congress. He helped found UHRP in 2003, as well as the World Uyghur Youth Congress, where he served for two terms as President from 1996 to 2000. He helped found and has served as the Vice-President of the World Uyghur Congress since 2006, prior to taking up the position of Director of UHRP in 2017, Mr. Kanat simultaneously served as the International Outreach Coordinator for the World Uyghur Congress, Director of the International Uyghur and Human Rights and Democracy Foundation (IUHRDF) and Vice-President of the Uyghur-American Association. From 1999 to 2009 Mr. Kanat was the Senior Editor of Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur Service, and served as the Editor and later Senior Editor of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty’s Tajik Service. Mr. Kanat is fluent in English, German, Uyghur, Turkish, Persian, Tajik, Dari, Uzbek, and is functionally proficient in the Kyrgyz and Kazakh languages.

**Ilshat Hassan Kokbore**

President of the Uyghur American Association; records information management profession, who currently works for the federal government as a contractor. Before he came to the U.S. Ilshat H. Kokbore was a lecturer at Shihezi Tech College in Shihezi, East Turkistan (Xinjiang Uyghurs Autonomous Region, in Chinese). Ilshat H. Kokbore Graduated from Dalian Tech University 1988 with a major in chemical engineering. He has been a Uyghur language and chemical engineering subject lecturer for 15 years in Shihezi Vocational Teacher Training College. He published academic articles in local newspapers, magazines; and giving lectures in medical college, adult education college; he was a certified Chinese Uyghur language interpreter/translator in Uyghur region; have done numerous court, legislative translation and interpreting assignment. Due to political prosecution he was forced to flee for survival, leaving behind elderly parents, and family with a teenage son in 2003.

**Harald Maass**

Harald Maass is a German-based journalist focussing on international topics. For more than a decade he covered China and North-East Asia as a correspondent for major German newspapers. He studied Journalism
and Sinology in Munich, Beijing and Hong Kong and holds a PhD in International Politics from Berlin University. He recently published an investigative report about the surveillance state and re-education camps in Xinjiang, for which he travelled three weeks through the region and interviewed former inmates of camps and their relatives. The report was published in Germany, Switzerland and UK.

**Kyle Matthews**

Kyle Matthews is the Executive Director of the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (MIGS) at Concordia University. He joined MIGS as Lead Researcher of the Will to Intervene Project in 2008 and was appointed Senior Deputy Director in 2011. At Concordia he founded the Raoul Wallenberg Legacy of Leadership project as well as the Digital Mass Atrocity Preventing Lab, which works to counter online extremism and study how social media platforms are being used as a weapon of war. His work focuses on human rights, international security, the Responsibility to Protect, global threats, and social media and technology, and global cities. He works closely with the Canadian All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and has advised Members of Parliament on issues related to international peace and security. He previously worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, where he was posted to the Southern Caucasus (Tbilisi), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa) and Switzerland (Geneva). Prior to that he worked for CARE Canada in Albania and later at its headquarters in Ottawa, where he managed various humanitarian response initiatives and peace-building projects in Afghanistan, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

**Nicole Morgret**

Nicole Morgret is the Uyghur Human Rights Project’s Project Coordinator. She has extensive experience living overseas, and a background that includes work on political campaigns, in NGOs and as a teacher. Before joining UHRP she spent four years in China, including several in Nanjing earning her Master's degree from the Hopkins-Nanjing Center. Her undergraduate degree is from the American College of Thessaloniki.

**Merve Sebnem Oruc**

Merve Sebnem Oruc is a political commentator and a columnist mostly focusing on interstate relations, Middle East politics, Turkish foreign affairs, Muslim world and Turkic peoples. She currently lives in Turkey. She pens a column for English-language Daily Sabah regularly since 2014. She was the Head of Online of Turkish state-owned TV channel TRTWorld, which is established in 2015. She founded the channel's online division. She has written columns, articles, analyses for several newspapers and web sites both in English and Turkish for five years.

**Lucia Parrucci**

Ms. Lucia Parrucci graduated from the University of Bologna in International Relations and Diplomatic Affairs at completed her master's degree in Development and International Cooperation at the University of Siena with first class honours. Since 2018, she is a member of the Steering Committee of the Political and International Science Department of University of Siena. Ms. Parrucci served as a collaborator for the Laogai Research Foundation Italy for more than a year and starting from January 2016, has been working at the UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization) mainly focusing on human rights violations in China.

**Lea Perekrests**

As the Deputy Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF), Lea Perekrests has worked on Chinese human rights issues for the past three years. She has specifically worked with Chinese religious communities including Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghur
Muslims, Church of Almighty God members, as well as Christians from house churches. In addition to this work, Lea and the HRWF team have compiled a 'Freedom of religion or belief prisoners database' which currently details the legal cases of approximately 2,000 prisoners in China.

**Michael Polak**

Michael practices in criminal law, public law, and human rights law, in both the international and domestic spheres. As well as defending in trials for serious criminal offences in the domestic courts, Michael also carries out private prosecutions, a unique specialism which allows those who have been the victim of crimes to hold those responsible to account when the authorities fail to act. Michael has conducted research on a cases before an international criminal tribunal in the Hague as well as spending time at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Cambodia. Michael international practice focusses on international legal assistance, the assistance of foreign nationals and lawyers who get into trouble around the world. In this area Michael has represented clients in Belarus, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and the Middle East. Michael's international practice also includes public international law where he has advised marginalised tribal groups who have had their human rights infringed. He also has experience making applications to remove INTERPOL Red Notices and has written for Westlaw on the law in this area as well as advising UK based human rights organisation about the current universal jurisdiction provisions in English law.

**Marco Respinti**

Marco Respinti is an Italian professional journalist, essayist, translator, and lecturer. He has contributed and contributes to several journals and magazine both in print and online, both in Italy and abroad. One of his books, published in 2008, concerns human rights in China. A Senior fellow at the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal, a non-partisan, non-profit U.S. educational organization based in Mecosta, Michigan, he is also a founding member as well as Board member of the Center for European Renewal, a non-profit, non-partisan pan-Europian educational organization based in The Hague, The Netherlands. He serves as Director-in-Charge of The Journal of CESNUR and Bitter Winter. In May 2019, at the International Book Fair of Turin, Italy (the second largest book fair in Europe), he received the annual FIRMA (International Festival of Religions, Music, and Arts) media award for a journalism promoting religious liberty.

**Sophie Richardson**

Sophie Richardson is the China director at Human Rights Watch. A graduate of the University of Virginia, the Hopkins-Nanjing Program, and Oberlin College, Dr. Richardson is the author of numerous articles on domestic Chinese political reform, democratization, and human rights in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Vietnam. She has testified before the European Parliament and the US Senate and House of Representatives. She has provided commentary to the BBC, CNN, the Far Eastern Economic Review, Foreign Policy, National Public Radio, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post. Dr. Richardson is the author of China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Columbia University Press, Dec. 2009), an in-depth examination of China's foreign policy since 1954's Geneva Conference, including rare interviews with policy makers.

**Sean Roberts**

Sean R. Roberts is an Associate Professor of the Practice of International Affairs and Director of the International Development Studies program at The George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs. Dr. Roberts is an anthropologist by training and wrote his dissertation at the
University of Southern California on the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan and their interaction with China’s Uyghurs. In addition to his academic work, he has done substantial work in the field of international development, primarily on democratization and human rights in the former Soviet Union and especially in Central Asia. Dr. Roberts has published numerous articles in academic journals, edited volumes, and in policy-oriented publications, both about political development in Central Asia and about the Uyghurs. He also frequently provides commentary to major news outlets on these subjects, and he is currently writing a book on the impact of the war on terror on Uyghurs.

Alim Seytoff

Alim Seytoff is the Service Director for Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur Service, previously the Executive Director for the Uyghur Human Rights Project. In 1999, he started his career at RFA as a Production Coordinator and Broadcaster. Alim has written many articles on China’s human rights violations of the Uyghur people. He has been published in a number of prominent news sources, including The Wall Street Journal, Al Jazeera, World Policy Institute, Asia Times, The Huffington Post, Index on Censorship, and China Rights Forum. He has been frequently interviewed and/or quoted by CNN, Al Jazeera, BBC, Fox News, PBS, Voice of America, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Foreign Policy, The Christian Science Monitor, and the newswires. He has testified several times before the US Congress and has briefed both White House and State Department officials on China’s human rights violations of the Uyghur people. Alim holds a BA in Chinese Studies from Xinjiang University and a BA in Broadcast Journalism from Southern Adventist University. He has a master’s degree in Public Policy from the Robertson School of Government at Regent University. Alim received his Juris Doctor degree from Regent University School of Law in 2006 and is a licensed attorney.

Gianni Tognoni

Doctor of medicine and surgery, since 1969 he has undertaken basic, clinical, epidemiological and public health research in some of the most critical fields of medicine, such as cardiology, intensive therapy, neurology, psychiatry and oncology, publishing results in more than 600 articles in the most prestigious international journals and being responsible for leadership in various departments. Among his activities he is a WHO consultant for the selection of essential medicines, founding member of the international society for independent information on pharmaceuticals, coordinator of projects on community epidemiology in countries in Central and Latin America, as well as some in Africa. From his collaboration with the second Russell Tribunal to scientific activities he has actively worked in the fields of human rights, right to health, and rights of peoples. Since its establishment in 1979, he has been Secretary-general of the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal.

Nury Turkel

Nury Turkel is a U.S.-based Uyghur rights advocate and attorney at Covington & Burling LLP in Washington D.C., where he specializes in litigation, government enforcement, and regulatory compliance. Turkel was born in a re-education camp in China’s Xinjiang region, and has been advocating for the rights of the Uyghur people in the region. Turkel is the former president of the Uyghur American Association (UAA) as well as the former executive director of the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), an organization that is committed to promoting human rights and democracy. Turkel serves as a prominent voice for the Uyghur people by urging international action against the repression of the Uighur people, such as international sanctions against Chinese government officials who actively participate in the abuse of human rights. Turkel holds a J.D. from American University Washington
College of Law, and has been featured in various media outlets such as BBC, Financial Review, and PRI as well as foreign policy forums.

**Adrian Zenz**

Adrian Zenz is an independent researcher and supervises PhD students at the European School of Culture and Theology, Korntal, Germany. His research focus is on minority education, public recruitment and state securitization in Tibet and Xinjiang.

**Shawn Zhang**

Shawn Zhang is a recent graduate of University of British Columbia law school JD program. He also holds a Master’s degree in East Asian Studies from Washington University in St. Louis and a Bachelor’s degree in Chinese literature from Peking University.
CONFRONTING ATROCITIES IN CHINA:
THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO THE UYGHUR CRISIS

June 6-7, 2019
Washington, DC

Opening Ceremony: U.S. Capitol Building
Conference: George Washington University