

Committee Secretary
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Abdullam Imerov
President,
Belgium Uyghur Association

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Dear Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee,

Please accept this submission for the Customs Amendment (Banning Goods Produced By Uyghur Forced Labour) Bill 2020 on behalf of the Belgium Uyghur Association.

Belgium Uyghur Association represents Uyghur communities in Belgium and is a voice for Uyghurs in East Turkestan (aka Xinjiang, China). We actively engaged in Uyghur Human Rights advocacy in Belgium to raise awareness of Uyghur genocide.

The government of China is perpetrating human rights abuses on a massive scale in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Uyghur Region), known to local people as East Turkistan, targeting the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples on the basis of their religion and ethnicity. These abuses include arbitrary mass detention of an estimated range of 1 million to 1.8 million people and a program to “cleanse” ethnic minorities of their “extremist” thoughts through re-education and forced labour. This involves both detainee labour inside internment camps and multiple forms of involuntary labour at workplaces across the region and even in other parts of China.

According to the report published last year by Australian Strategic Policy Institute more than 82 foreign and Chinese brands are directly and indirectly benefiting from Uyghur forced labor. Political Uyghur activists and members of European parliament, have been lobbying these companies to end the use of forced labor with China. Some of them like H&M have already cut their ties with Chinese suppliers after the accusation of benefiting from forced labor while the others are still silent. We believe legislation is more effective in removing forced labour from their supply chains than for it to be left to individual companies.

In United States, Congress passed the The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in September 2020 which requires companies sending goods to the United States to scrutinize those supply chains, or perhaps abandon Chinese suppliers altogether. It would impose high standards, barring imports of goods made “in whole or in part” in Xinjiang unless companies

prove to customs officials that their products were not made with forced labor. As a result, companies were already responding by trying to find sources for products outside Xinjiang.

In UK, the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, revealed new export controls designed to stop British firms from using products or materials sourced from slave labour camps.

In coordination with the United Kingdom and other international partners, Canada is adopting a comprehensive approach to defending the rights of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, including by advancing measures to address the risk of goods produced from forced labour from any country from entering Canadian and global supply chains and to protect Canadian businesses from becoming unknowingly complicit.

Canada's approach includes the following seven measures:

- The Prohibition of imports of goods produced wholly or in part by forced labour;
- A Xinjiang Integrity Declaration for Canadian companies;
- A Business Advisory on Xinjiang-related entities;
- Enhanced advice to Canadian businesses;
- Export controls;
- Increasing awareness for Responsible Business Conduct linked to Xinjiang; and
- A Study on forced labour and supply chain risks

Following its counterparts, Australian Government should introduce import bans and legal sanctions for businesses that fail to prevent and remedy human rights abuses, including forced labour, in their global supply chains.

We support this Amended Bill to sanction Australian companies who are complicit with using forced Uyghur labour in their supply chain.

The situation in East Turkistan (Aka Xinjiang) represents some of the darkest moments in modern history. The ultimate goal should be to end of the detention, repression of ethnic people using a variety of foreign policies. Effective combined implementation of this bill and Magnitsky Act will have a meaningful impact on the situation of Uyghurs.

We thank the committee for their time and providing us this opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

Abdullam Imerov
President,
Belgium Uyghur Association