

NORWEGIAN NGO-FORUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt
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Oslo 17 October 2022

Dear Anniken Huitfeldt, Norway's Foreign Minister,

Below is a statement by a group of organizations in the Norwegian NGO Forum for Human Rights. The statement points to the precarious situation in Xinjiang, China, where Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities are victims of widespread and systematic human rights violations. According to a recent report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, these violations may constitute crimes against humanity.

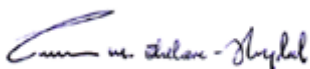
The statement recommends measures that Norway, alone or in cooperation with a group of like-minded states, should initiative to address the situation.

China is active in the UN, and other international forums and bilaterally to ensure that the human rights situation in Xinjiang does not get the attention it warrants. Norway should play an active role in keeping the situation on the international agenda and increase pressure on China to stop its persecution and abide by its obligations under international law.

The following organisations support the statement:

- [Amnesty International Norway](#)
- Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund ([SAIH](#))
- [Pen Norway](#)
- [Stefanus Alliance International](#)
- The Human Rights House Foundation ([HRHF](#))
- The Norwegian Helsinki Committee ([NHC](#))
- [The Norwegian Humanist Association](#)
- The Norwegian Human Rights Fund ([NHRE](#))
- [The Rafto Foundation for Human Rights](#)
- [The UN Association of Norway](#)

Best regards,



Gunnar M. Ekeløve-Slydal
NGO Forum Coordinator / Deputy Secretary General NHC

Statement:

Norway must strengthen support for the Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in Xinjiang, China

(Oslo 17 October 2022) Norway should condemn the ongoing systematic and widespread human rights violations against Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in Xinjiang. So far, the UN Human Rights Council has failed to adopt a single resolution against China for these violations, although the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [concluded](#) that they may constitute crimes against humanity. Norway must ensure that China does not succeed in taking the situation in Xinjiang off the international human rights agenda.

On 17 October 2022, a [hearing](#) on the situation of the Uyghurs takes place in the Norwegian Parliament. The Norwegian government should use this as an opportunity to strengthen support and make use of available tools to address the serious human rights situation in Xinjiang.

Similar to other Chinese groups of Turkic descent, the Uyghur people of Xinjiang have long faced prejudice and persecution. Following the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Beijing launched policies of assimilation and strict police control on the pretext of fighting terrorism and secession. Chinese authorities suppressed Uyghur calls for autonomy and their religious expressions.

These policies have in recent years developed into a program of ethnic and religious persecution. More than one million Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities are held in more than 300 detention facilities, while twice as many are reportedly receiving “re-education”. Many people have experienced torture and forced labour in detention. Outside the detention facilities, Chinese authorities have imposed a pervasive [system](#) of mass surveillance, controls on movement, arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance, cultural and religious erasure, and family separation on Turkic Muslims.

Evidence suggests that these actions of Chinese authorities constitute *crimes against humanity*. According to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), crimes against humanity are serious specified offences that are knowingly committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population, being targeted against a large number of victims and according to a methodical plan. Crimes against humanity are considered among the gravest crimes under international law.

Many countries are reluctant to raise concerns about human rights violations in Xinjiang because of their economic ties with China. China’s “debt trap diplomacy” [explains](#) how the Chinese government uses loans to smaller nations for its geopolitical purposes, and put pressure on states not to criticise human rights violations. Therefore, the role of rich democratic countries in stepping up support for the Uyghurs is crucial.

Recently, the UN Human Rights Council rejected a draft decision (A/HRC/51/L.6) on the “debate on the situation of human rights in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China”, by a vote of 17 in favour, 19 against and 11 abstentions.

Recommendations

Norway should together with like-minded states:

- Condemn the ongoing systematic and widespread human rights violations against Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in Xinjiang, and urge Chinese authorities to release those who have been unjustly detained or imprisoned
- Call on Chinese authorities to comply with their obligations under international human rights treaties
- Impose targeted sanctions together with like-minded states against Chinese officials, responsible for the most serious human rights violations
- Ensure that Norwegian companies are not engaged in trade or transportation of mass surveillance tools (malware, cameras, software, etc.) with China
- Ensure that imported products from China do not include goods, produced by the use of forced labour in Xinjiang
- State that Uyghurs, residing in third countries (especially in Arab countries) should not be returned to China, where they risk detention, torture, and other serious human rights violations
- Provide asylum to those who are fleeing from repression in Xinjiang

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- [Amnesty International Norway](#)
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- The Human Rights House Foundation ([HRHF](#))
- The Norwegian Helsinki Committee ([NHC](#))
- [The Norwegian Humanist Association](#)
- The Norwegian Human Rights Fund ([NHRF](#))
- [The Rafto Foundation for Human Rights](#)
- [The UN Association of Norway](#)

Background: What can be done to address the situation in Xinjiang?

- The [early warning and urgent action procedure](#) of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which oversees the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, can be used to stop and address treaty violations. Field trips and follow-up activities may be a part of this system. Additionally, under Article 11 of the convention, any state party may initiate a state complaint against China. China would be required to present and defend itself since, unlike other similar human rights treaty complaint systems, this process is not subject to either an opt-in requirement or an opt-out option. These state-to-state methods have not been frequently employed in the past, but they are accessible to governments.
- China has ratified many other U.N. human rights conventions. These include the Convention against Torture (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and others. Through periodic evaluations of China's adherence to the treaties, the treaty bodies can address the situation in Xinjiang and put forward recommendations to Chinese authorities. China has also ratified the Slavery Convention, which forbids slavery in all of its manifestations.
- The UN Human Rights Council may adopt resolutions on the situation in Xinjiang, but this has not happened so far. The UN Commissioner on Human Rights may play an important role in keeping the situation on the international agenda, documenting, and categorizing abuses. China plays, however, an increasingly destructive role in [weakening](#) the UN Human Rights System to ensure that it receives less criticism.
- Outside the UN System, groups of like-minded states can impose targeted sanctions against Chinese officials that are responsible for human rights violations, such as travel bans and freezing of assets. Violations that may amount to international crimes – such as crimes against humanity – may be subject to investigations and prosecutions in some democratic states that have legislation and the capacity to exercise universal jurisdiction.
- A range of other financial and trade-related measures can be put in place. Norway's Transparency Act obliges Norwegian companies to ensure that they or their suppliers are not involved in human rights violations.