



U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing

A Religious Minority Enslaved: Addressing the Complicity of U.S. Companies in Uyghur Forced Labor

Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery

Commissioner Turkel

Thank you very much, Commissioner Bauer.

As Commissioner Bauer mentioned, U.S. companies have a moral and legal duty to ensure that their supply chains in China are not tainted by Uyghur forced labor. Otherwise, they risk being complicit in one of the worst atrocities perpetrated in the twenty-first century.

In a recent New York Times Op-Ed, I commended some U.S. companies for taking this matter seriously and even cutting ties with their suppliers in China that were suspected of using Uyghur forced labor. They are doing the right thing.

However, many American and other international companies continue to rely on third-party audits and inspections, assuming that these measures are sufficient to clear them of the problem of forced labor throughout their supply chains. Let me be clear: third-party audits alone cannot guarantee that there is no forced labor in these companies' supply chains. Given the extremely repressive environment in the Uyghur region, in fact, third-party audits and inspections are often quite meaningless, as many minority workers simply cannot tell the truth about their circumstances for fear of retaliation.

The U.S. government has taken extraordinary steps to counter forced labor in the Uyghur region, including banning imports. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has indicated his agreement with the Trump administration's determination regarding genocide and crimes against humanity, and the Biden administration has expressed its desire to work with international allies to address China's coercive economic practices, including forced labor. U.S. companies must follow suit by stepping up and moving beyond their existing and insufficient supply chain due diligence measures. I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses on how best to tackle the Uyghur forced labor problem and what U.S. companies can do to make sure they do not become complicit in these atrocities—which, sadly, are still occurring in the Uyghur region as we speak.

I would now like to briefly introduce our witnesses. I will keep my introductions short, to leave as much time as possible for questions and answers. More detailed bios of these witnesses will be shown in the chat box and can also be found on USCIRF's website.

Our first witness today is Sophie Richardson, the China Director at Human Rights Watch. Next is Louisa Greve, the Director of Global Advocacy at the Uyghur Human Rights Project. Scott Nova, the Executive Director of the Worker Rights Consortium will follow. After Scott, we will hear from Adrian Zenz, a Senior Fellow in China Studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. And lastly, we will hear from Oliva Enos, a Senior Policy Analyst at the Asian Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation.

I would now like to give the floor to our esteemed witnesses. Ms. Greve, please begin.