

Remarks by Senator Marco Rubio for USCIRF's Hearing on *A Religious Minority Enslaved: Addressing the Complicity of U.S. Companies in Uyghur Forced Labor*

Thank you for inviting me today to share a few words with you all at this important hearing.

- I am grateful for USCIRF's work to shine a light on those who are being persecuted around the world because of their faith.
- The tragic reality is that so many individuals are persecuted, jailed, tortured, and even killed for who they are, and/or what they believe in.
- In China, these abuses are especially egregious.
- The ongoing crimes against humanity and genocide against the Uyghur people, and other Muslim minorities, in Xinjiang at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party demands the world's attention.
- America was founded in part by people fleeing religious persecution. Religious freedom was our first freedom and one that Americans cherish deeply.
- That is one of the many reasons why we have a moral responsibility to be a champion for people around the world who are oppressed or targeted because of their faith.
- Few rights are more fundamental to humans flourishing than the freedom to live out your faith according to your conscience, without fear of persecution, violence or imprisonment.
- Religion speaks to the most essential and puzzling questions of the human condition. Who are we? How did we get here? Why do we suffer? What makes our lives meaningful? Where do we find wisdom and peace in a world plagued with confusion and chaos?
- When a regime deprives a people of their right to practice their faith freely, they are depriving those people of their full humanity. They are cutting them off from the traditions that sustained their ancestors and defined who they are as a people.

- This is precisely why Beijing has targeted the Uyghurs.
- Like all communists, the Chinese Communist Party maintains a general contempt for religion, viewing it as an existential threat to its absolute control over society.
- Beijing's goal is to impose ideological uniformity and eventually eliminate religion. As Xi Jinping has said, "the Party leads everything." The CCP aims to maintain its monopoly to set the standards for how people think and act.
- To do so, it must eliminate all significant expressions of difference, and religion is chief among those differences.
- The CCP forbids Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims from following traditional dietary restrictions, performing daily prayers, growing a beard, wearing a headscarf, going on Hajj, reading the Koran, and teaching the faith to their children. Using the Uyghur language is restricted and frequently smeared as an expression of terrorist sympathies.
- Since 2017, the CCP has detained more than a million Uyghurs and other Muslims minorities in Xinjiang in political reeducation facilities. The documented atrocities against Uyghurs are sickening and evil: torture, forced labor, sexual violence, forced abortion, and forced sterilization.
- Earlier this year, Senator Merkley and I reintroduced the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act to address the systematic use for Uyghur forced labor and ensure that Americans are not complicit.
- Hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other ethnic minority laborers in Xinjiang are forced to pick cotton.
- Figures from 2018 indicate that well over half a million people were compelled to pick cotton through the CCP's coercive labor training and transfer program. Xinjiang produces more than 20 percent of the world's cotton.
- And it isn't just cotton. Other products include tomatoes, hair products, apparel, and consumer electronics. We know that polysilicon from Xinjiang is also tainted by forced labor.

- My bipartisan bill protects U.S. consumers from unknowing complicity in Uyghur forced labor. It creates a rebuttable presumption that would ensure that goods produced with Uyghur forced labor cannot enter the United States. The onus will be on companies to provide evidence that their goods coming from Xinjiang or other government labor schemes for Uyghurs were not made with forced labor.
- Let us be totally clear. There is no ability for companies to conduct business as usual in Xinjiang or where Chinese government programs have transported Uyghurs outside of the region. Put another way, proper due diligence of their supply chains is just not possible. CCP officials block it. As with so many issues, normal business practices do not prevail in China. The CCP refuses to play by the rules, and it ignores international norms.
- The United States and the free world must respond strongly and quickly to the CCP's violations of human rights, like forced labor.
- We cannot allow the CCP's perverse power and influence to warp us all through our economic entanglement with them. It is long overdue for American companies to wake up to this reality.
- Should they choose to continue doing business where they know they may be complicit in human rights abuses, including genocide, we must call it out and do everything we can to ensure they do not make unknowing consumers complicit in their actions.
- Thank you again for holding this hearing and drawing attention to this important issue.
- There is a long road ahead until we end the abuses against Uyghurs and bring justice.
- We must remain firm in holding any CCP official responsible for these heinous crimes accountable for their actions. I will not stop fighting, nor will I remain silent until all Uyghurs are free.