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UNREPRESENTED NATIONS AND PEOPLES ORGANIZATION

In the spotlight
Chinese Mass-Internment Camps: Human Rights Violations in Xinjiang

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Chinese Mass-Internment Camps: Human Rights Violations in Xinjiang

20 December 2018

Over the past year, the detention of over one million individuals belonging to Uyghur and Kazakh communities in China in “re-educational” camps became a salient issue in international media and fora. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), along with its Member organisation the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) and other human rights organisations, have tirelessly worked to raise awareness and bring the issue to the international policy agenda, by denouncing this blatant human rights violation committed by the Chinese government.

Although the Chinese government first tried to deny the existence of re-educational camps, the widespread diffusion of evidence about their existence and the growing number of testimonies from the few people who managed to escape the camps, led the country to recognise their existence. Some of this evidence included videos that displayed the inside of an internment camp and satellite footage of 39 camps that compared their augmentation over time. Nevertheless, this change in the Chinese approach towards the camps was accompanied by claims that the camps are meant to improve people’s lives and to counter the alleged terrorist threat represented by the Muslim communities in the region.

In face of the increasing awareness of the existence of re-educational camps, as well as of the severe human rights violations that take place within them, several attempts to investigate and visit the camps emerged from different sources. Nonetheless, attempts from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the German government to conduct independent investigation missions in Xinjiang were rejected by the Chinese authorities.

Amid Chinese resistance to allow the international community to visit the camps, 24 governments spoke out against the violations of religious and cultural rights during the last Universal Periodic Review of China at the UN Human Rights Council, as well as in favour of fundamental freedoms guaranteed under international law. In response, representatives of China defended the positive character of the camps by declaring that “some attendees say they were influenced by extremist thoughts and they never took part in culture and sports activities. They never thought life could be so colorful and so meaningful”.

Atrocities committed against the Uyghurs in China were systematically raised by Member States of the European Union (EU) in bilateral meetings and during the EU-China Dialogue as well as through two European Parliament urgency resolutions issued in 2016 and 2018, that included the case of Ilham Tohti. Hence, although derision against Chinese actions have increasingly emerged in the international community, the situation was hardly altered.

In light of the above, the United States declared that it was considering applying sanctions against China. Furthermore, on 10 December 2018 the EU Council voted with unanimity to approve the Magnitsky Act as a legislation in the EU to potentially be used to sanction individuals who, in their capacity as Chinese government officials, perpetuated human rights abuses.

In spite of the success it has achieved in bringing the human rights violations committed against the Uyghur people to international public awareness, the UNPO continues to seek the liberation of all detainees from re-educational camps, as well as the respect for human rights in the country. With the hope that international pressure will prompt concrete policy changes in the actions of the Chinese authorities, there is still a long way to go before Uyghur people in China can truly live in peace.
Advocacy training
3 November 2018
UNPO staff members were present at the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Brussels to host a workshop on effective advocacy.

Kabylia advocacy meetings
5-8 November 2018
UNPO together with the MAK-Avanad, held a series of meetings with parliamentary assistants of nearly all the main European groups. The MAK was looking to raise awareness about the dire state of the Kabyle region in Algeria, that is subject to chronic underdevelopment and political repression of MAK activists.

UNPO meets Catalan Leader
27 November 2018
UNPO representatives met with Carles Puigdemont, Catalonia’s exiled president. The meeting served to strengthen ties and to consolidate UNPO support for the Catalan issue.

UNPO at 11th FMI
29-30 November 2018
UNPO participated in the 11th session of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues (FMI) in the Palace of Nations in Geneva. During the session discussing statelessness resulting from conflicts, UNPO intervened with a speech addressing the Pakistani occupation of Gilgit-Baltistan. You can see the UNPO intervention by clicking here or read it by clicking here.

Protest organised by the IRA
7 November 2018
UNPO attended a protest in front of the Mauritanian embassy to denounce the imprisonment of the leader of IRA-Mauritania Biram Dah Abeid.

Self-determination Conference on the Political Possibilities of Catalan Independence
9 November 2018
UNPO’s Programme Manager was present at an event organised by the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) in the Hague discussing the road ahead for self-determination in a panel that included Alfred de Zayas and members of Assemblea Nacional de Catalunya.

Human Rights & Democracy in Pakistan: Reflections on the 2018 General Elections
21 November 2018
The UNPO in cooperation with MEP Julie Ward (S&D) organised a round-table titled “Human Rights & Democracy in Pakistan: Reflections on the 2018 General Elections”, at the European Parliament in Brussels. Counting with the participation of representatives of political parties in Pakistan, human rights advocates and Members of the European Parliament, the round-table has outlined important issues observed in the 2018 national elections and prompted a constructive dialogue on the democratic challenges and human rights situation faced by minority communities in the country.

That the project of CPEC crosses the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan illegally annexed by Pakistan, a UNPO representative highlighted the negative effects of the construction of the corridor on the livelihoods of the region’s indigenous people.

UPR China and March for human Rights
6 November 2018
UNPO was present at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of China at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

In the morning of 6 November 2018, the UNPO, the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) and the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) have jointly organised a protest to highlight the severe human rights situation in Southern Mongolia and in Tibet as well as the mass arbitrary detention of the Uyghur people by Chinese authorities in internment camps.

Event at the European Parliament Discusses CPEC
7 November 2018
The European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS), together with MEP Jonathan Bullock, organised a seminar entitled “CPEC - East India Company Mark 2?” at the European Parliament. Observing
CHT Advocacy Meetings

3 - 4 December 2018

The UNPO conducted advocacy meetings at the European Parliament with two representatives of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Aiming at shedding light on the ongoing human rights violations in the region, the meetings were an opportunity to discuss the situation.

Conference on Self-Determination at Princeton University

7 - 8 December 2018

UNPO’s Programme Manager participated at a conference on “Self-Determination in Conflict Prevention and Resolution”, hosted by the Liechtenstein Mission to the UN and the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University. Bringing together leading academics, diplomats and other experts on the topic of self-determination, the conference discussed ideas on how self-determination can be brought into discussions of conflict prevention and resolution.

KKF annual meeting

7 - 9 December 2018

From 7 to 9 December 2018, UNPO Member the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) hosted its annual meeting in San José, California. Special guests and KKF delegates from across the United States, as well as Canada and various countries in Europe looked at achievements made in 2018 and discussed strategies for the coming year. The event gathered an international audience and saw speeches by European and North American KKF delegates and various speakers, including a UNPO representative.

Protest organised by the IRA

7 December 2018

IRA-Mauritania staged a protest at Brussels central station against the Mauritanian regime in a bid to raise awareness against the current regime.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Assessing the Environmental Consequences of CPEC

11 December 2018

The UNPO in collaboration with the World Sindhi Congress organised a panel discussion entitled “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Assessing the Environmental Consequences of CPEC”. The event brought together academics, students and human rights activists to discuss the inevitable environmental consequences of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, paying particular attention to the construction of mega-dams in the region.

Conference Report Following Event on the Khmer-Krom

5 November 2018

UNPO published a conference report following the event “Political & Economic Situation in Southeast Asia: the Case of the Indigenous Khmer-Krom People” held on 2 June 2018 at the Palais du Luxembourg in Paris, France and hosted by French Senator Mr. André Gattolin. The international conference enabled information sharing and wide and open discussion on this topic among supporters of the Khmer-Krom cause. UNPO is indebted to the speakers for their inspiring and instructive contributions. Download the report here.

Report to the UNCAT

3 December 2018

UNPO published the report it submitted to the UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) concerning the continuous and grave human rights violations against the indigenous Khmer-Krom people in the Mekong Delta. Download the report here.

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