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**FOREIGN POLICY BRIEF:
Uyghur Human Rights Abuses in East Turkestan (Xinjiang, China)**

FOREIGN AFFAIRS | FEBRUARY 2022

I. Introduction

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization that protects Canadian human rights and civil liberties, challenges discrimination and Islamophobia, builds mutual understanding, and advocates for the public concerns of Canadian Muslims.

II. Summary

NCCM calls on the Canadian government to support efforts to address China's human rights violations of Uyghur communities in the Uyghur region.¹ NCCM is asking the Canadian government to commit to:

- Strengthen trade restrictions to prohibit the importation of goods manufactured in the Uyghur region (Xinjiang) by amending the Customs and Tariff Act²
 - Support Bill S-204
 - Introduce financial penalties for companies that fail to publish annual comprehensive statements outlining steps taken to address goods related to forced labour in their supply chains
 - Push the government of China to ratify the International Labour Organization's conventions on cancelling forced labour
- Advocate for an end to the arbitrary detention of Uyghur human rights defenders who have unearthed human rights abuses, particularly around forced labour camps in the Uyghur region
 - Advocate for the release of Huseyin Celil
 - Work with international partners to support Uyghurs human rights defenders seeking asylum
 - Adopt the recommendations of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on International Human Rights
- Tackling illegal cyberattacks and surveillance aimed at domestic Uyghur rights activists
 - Provide financing to combat cyberattacks directed at Uyghur human rights groups
 - Form a coalition between multiple Uyghur organisations to improve digital security through incident response collaboration and data sharing
 - Provide victims of online harassment with resources in their native language

¹ Note that the name 'Xinjiang' (translated as 'New Frontier') is widely disliked among the Uyghur community, as it was imposed upon them centuries ago by the Chinese empire. Many Uyghurs have long used the name 'East Turkestan' instead (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02634937.2014.976947>). In addition, the term 'Xinjiang' is often rejected by Uyghur communities due to its colonial connotations, as it is largely associated with the history of imperial Chinese domination of Uyghur territory. This domination has been demonstrated to have paralleled colonial practises in the context of European empires (<https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/33493602>).

² Customs Tariff: Regulations and Orders. (2022, January 20). *Justice Laws Website*. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-54.011/page-26.html>

III. Background

The Chinese government has engaged in ongoing human rights abuses directed at the Uyghur population since 2014 but likely before that as well.³ The Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development released a report in 2021 corroborating this fact. It revealed countless forms of human rights abuses—including East Turkestan (Xinjiang) located concentration camps.⁴ In February 2021, Canada’s House of Commons voted overwhelmingly to pass a motion declaring the CCP’s treatment of its Uyghur population a genocide, despite Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and most members of his cabinet abstaining.⁵ Other international organizations and countries have made similar declarations—including the U.S. and U.K.⁶

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines forced labour as “all work or service that is exacted from any person under the menace of penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily”.⁷ This is a technical definition that cannot capture the breadth of forced labour practices, including the coercive tactics that states use to ensure compliance. What is significant, however, is that evidence of forced labour consistent with the ILO’s definition has been documented across the Uyghur region—with Uyghur and other Turkic Muslims being the primary victims.⁸ According to the U.S. Department of State, there are nearly 1,200 internment camps present across the Uyghur region.¹⁰ Many of these camps are run under the pretense of ‘vocational training’ and involve cases of forced labour under the threat of physical violence, sexual abuse, and torture. Uyghurs, including Muslim, Christian, or secular, are forcibly employed in low-skilled, labour-intensive work across the textile, garment, and automotive sectors.¹¹ This has been buttressed by local and regional Chinese government reports explicitly directing CCP leaders to

³ Van Schaack et al. (2021, June 9). “*Break their Lineage, Break their Roots*”. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting>

⁴ Statement by the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. (2020, October 21). *House of Commons*. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/SDIR/news-release/10903199>.

⁵ Jones, R. P. (2021, February 23). *MPs vote to label China’s persecution of Uyghurs a Genocide*. CBC News. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/uyghur-genocide-motion-vote-1.5922711>

⁶ Smith-Spark, L. & Griffiths, J. (2021, April 22). *UK Lawmakers declare China’s treatment of Uyghurs is genocide*. CNN. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/22/world/uk-china-uyghur-genocide-motion-gbr-intl/index.html>

⁷ Pellerin, W., Scheitterlein, C., & Farrell, T. (2021, December 29). *Combating forced labour in supply chains from a Canadian Customs Perspective*. McMillan. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://mcmillan.ca/insights/combating-forced-labour-in-supply-chains-from-a-canadian-customs-perspective/>

⁸ Forced labour practises include restrictions on the movement of laborers, debt bondage, constant digital surveillance, forced isolation, forced sterilisation, abusive working conditions, and the withholding of wages.

⁹ Brockman, B. (2021, August 26). *China’s Use of Forced Labor in Xinjiang – A Wake-Up Call Heard Round the World?* Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from The Council <https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-use-forced-labor-xinjiang-wake-call-heard-round-world>

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State. (2021, July 1). *Forced labor in China’s Xinjiang region - united states department of state*. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/forced-labor-in-chinas-xinjiang-region/>

¹¹ United Nations News. (2021, March 29). *Rights experts concerned about alleged detention, forced labour of Uyghurs in China*. United Nations. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088612>

involve Uyghurs in this labour recruitment process.¹² Reports also estimate that more than 80,000 Uyghurs were forcibly transferred out of the Uyghur region (Xinjiang) to work in factories across China between 2017-2019 that resulted in family-separation and displacement for many Uyghur families.¹³

The economic impact for China has been enormous. The Uyghur (Xinjiang) region's economic output has grown exponentially and now produces over 20% of the world's cotton and 45% of the world's supply of polysilicon, the key component in solar panels. Reports have linked to the growth in the manufacturing and distribution of these products to serious human rights abuses.¹⁴ The U.S. Department of Labour mentions tomatoes, thread/yarn, textiles, hair products and gloves as items likely produced with forced labour in China.¹⁵ Likewise, lithium and cobalt mining—two rare earth elements necessary to produce batteries—has expanded dramatically in the region.¹⁶ Given this, reports have concluded that there is evidence pointing to growing forced labour practises attributed to the supply chains that carry these products.¹⁷

The CCP's treatment of Uyghurs continues to reflect the extent of state-sponsored violence and ethnic cleansing currently underway. Uyghur human rights defenders, who are critical to documenting ongoing human rights abuses, are routinely detained by the CCP. There are several well-known cases documenting the arbitrary detention of Uyghur human rights defenders and their families who flee.¹⁸ Huseyin Celil is one of these individuals. A naturalized Canadian citizen, he was arrested by Uzbek authorities in 2006 and transported to China for questioning. Celil's detention has been ongoing for 16 years. He has been held without a fair trial and imprisoned on unfounded terrorism-related charges. Celil is just one of countless Uyghur rights defenders who have been targeted, detained and jailed for their activism.¹⁹ The case of Idris Hasan has also garnered global media attention. Hasan is a Chinese citizen who has been active in promoting the rights of Uyghurs, along with helping fellow exiles in their dealings with local authorities by providing translation services.²⁰ Idris was first detained by Turkish officials between 2014-2017 following extradition

¹² Murphy, L. T. T., & Elimä, N. (2021). (rep.). *In Broad Daylight: Uyghur Forced Labour and Global Solar Supply Chains*. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.shu.ac.uk/helena-kennedy-centre-international-justice/research-and-projects/all-projects/in-broad-daylight>.

¹³ Xiuzhong Xu et al. (2020, March 1). Uyghurs for Sale. *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/uyghurs-sale>

¹⁴ Davidson, H. (2020, December 15). *Xinjiang: More than half a million forced to pick cotton, report suggests*. The Guardian. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/15/xinjiang-china-more-than-half-a-million-forced-to-pick-cotton-report-finds>

¹⁵ US Department of Labour. (2020). *List of Goods produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*. Retrieved from https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2019/2020_TVPRAList_Online_Final.pdf

¹⁶ Bryce, R. (2021, December 23). *The electric-vehicle push empowers China*. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-electric-vehicle-push-empowers-china-rare-earths-mining-motors-rivals-11640290395>

¹⁷ Kahlon, A. S., & Dozier, M. W. (2021, December 27). *Uyghur forced Labor Prevention Act: What it means for the solar supply chain*. The National Law Review. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/uyghur-forced-labor-prevention-act-what-it-means-solar-supply-chain>

¹⁸ Richardson, S. (2021, June 9). *Families of activists who flee Xinjiang pay a heavy price*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/09/families-activists-who-flee-xinjiang-pay-heavy-price>

¹⁹ Kashgarian, A. (2021, October 18). *Canadian wife fights for Uyghur husband's release from Chinese prison*. VOA News. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.voanews.com/a/canadian-wife-fights-for-uyghur-husband-s-release-from-chinese-prison-/6275896.html>

²⁰ Azigh, E. (2021, December 16). *Moroccan court rules in China's favor to extradite Uyghur accused of 'terrorism'*. Radio Free Asia. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/idris-hasan-12162021175312.html>

requests from China. After being granted a humanitarian visa by the Turkish Ministry of Interior, he flew to Morocco, where he was arrested on arrival based on a red notice issued by Interpol at China's request.²¹ The charges, once again, were based on unfounded allegations of terrorist activity.

Leaked documents have revealed that the CCP tracks and monitors Uyghurs, many of whom are human rights activists or have spoken openly about human rights abuses in the XUAR. Many are routinely arrested outside of China, often holding foreign passports when they return to China.²² Canada is not immune to these threats against Uyghur human rights activists. Mounting evidence indicates that the Chinese government has been engaging in cyberattacks and surveillance of domestic Uyghur activists. The director of CSIS confirmed last year that China was involved in targeting critics of their Uyghur region (Xinjiang) policies here in Canada.²³

Independent legal scholars have corroborated the agency's findings and identified individual cases of Canada's Uyghur community (approximately 2000) being digitally harassed. This includes documented cases of cyberattacks and online harassment, along with more serious abuses that includes families of Uyghurs in Canada being threatened or punished in the Uyghur region in response to human rights activism by relatives here.²⁴ There is, for example the experience of international human rights lawyer Sarah Teich. While working on a case arguing that the Canada Border Services Agency had the authority to ban items from the Uyghur region, Sarah was on the receiving end of a months-long hacking attempt.²⁵ Facebook has also revealed that Canada's Uyghur community has been targeted in cyber espionage campaigns that have attempted to install malware into their electronic devices to monitor their actions.²⁶

It is noteworthy that the Government of Canada has taken steps to address China's human rights violations directed at Uyghur communities in recent years. But more must be done. Canada can enforce stronger measures of accountability for the CCP's human rights practices in the XUAR. Below, NCCM has outlined three concrete recommendations that the Canadian government can take to end human rights abuses directed at Uyghurs in China.

²¹ *Uyghur activist faces extradition from Morocco to China*. MENA Rights Group. (2021, July 19). Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://menarights.org/en/case/yidiresi-aishan-also-known-idris-hasan>

²² Miller, A., Ram, A., Arsenault, A., & Zalac, F. (2019, November 25). *Uighurs in Canada caught up in China's widescale monitoring of Muslim minority, documents reveal*. CBC News. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/china-uighurs-canada-secret-documents-1.5369835>

²³ Nuttall, J. (2022, January 10). *Almost a year ago, the director of CSIS warned that China and Russia, in particular, are targeting critics in Canada*. Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.urap.ca/human-rights-advocates-say-theyre-being-hit-by-foreign-cyber-attacks-and-that-canada-is-doing-little-to-stop-it/>

²⁴ Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project. (2022). *Draft Report* (No. 1.3). Retrieved January 20, 2022.

²⁵ Nuttall, J. (2022, January 10). *Human rights advocates say they're being hit by foreign cyberattacks - and that Canada is doing little to stop it*. The Toronto Star. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2022/01/10/human-rights-advocates-say-theyre-being-hit-by-foreign-cyber-attacks-and-that-canada-is-doing-little-to-stop-it.html>

²⁶ Thompson, E. (2021, March 24). *Chinese cyber espionage operation targeted Canadian Uyghurs, says Facebook*. CBC News. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/china-uyghur-canada-espionage-1.5962221>

IV. Recommendations

Strengthen trade restrictions to prohibit the importation of goods manufactured in the Uyghur region

Last year, Global Affairs Canada issued an advisory on doing business in the Uyghur region.²⁷ It highlighted the human rights violations impacting Uyghurs in China, with a particular emphasis on forced labour practises.²⁸ More recently, the Canadian government intercepted goods arriving to Quebec from China under the belief that they were the product of forced labour.²⁹ This was the first instance of a trade intervention since the Canadian government amended the *Customs Tariff* in 2020 to ban imported goods made wholly or in part by forced labour. But it has also been the only such instance.³⁰ The *Customs Tariff* amendment has not systematically tackled the forced labour issue in the Uyghur region.³¹ It has left the responsibility of enforcing the import ban in the hands of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), who have yet to institute any sector-specific guidance or rules and have only taken a complaint-based approach with regards to seizing goods suspected of being involved in forced labour.

To seriously confront this issue, Canada must strengthen its trade restrictions to prohibit all goods being imported from the Uyghur region. Bill S-204, currently awaiting its second reading in the Senate, aims precisely at achieving this by amending the *Customs & Tariff Act* to specifically target and prohibit these goods from entering Canada.³² The U.S. has already taken a similar measure by passing the *Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act*, ensuring that products from the Uyghur region are denied entry at U.S. ports. The law also authorizes sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for facilitating forced labour in the Uyghur region³³. Canada has made some progress in this regard. It has imposed sanctions against four officials and one entity under the *Special Economic Measures (People's Republic of China) Regulations*.³⁴ But it has yet to introduce something like the Magnitsky Act—a wide-ranging bill that would authorize the Canadian government to sanction anyone it sees as violating human rights in China by freezing their assets and barring them from entry into the country.

Canada can and should do more to tackle supply chains to ensure that products resulting from human rights abuses are banned. There is mounting evidence pointing to products being sold in

²⁷ An entity referring to either a business or individual with supply-chain links to Xinjiang.

²⁸ *Global Affairs Canada advisory on doing business with Xinjiang-related entities*. Global Affairs Canada. (2021, January 12). Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.international.gc.ca/global-affairs-affaires-mondiales/news-nouvelles/2021/2021-01-12-xinjiang-advisory-avis.aspx?lang=eng>

²⁹ Chase, S. (2021, November 15). *Canada seizes goods made with forced labour from China; MPs urge more action for Uyghurs*. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-canada-seizes-goods-made-with-forced-labour-from-china-mps-urge-more/>

³⁰ The import ban operates through subsection 136(1) of the *Customs Tariff*

³¹ Atkins, J. (2021, July 7). *Canada's forced labour import bans go unenforced*. Global Trade Review. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.gtreview.com/news/americas/canadas-forced-labour-import-bans-go-unenforced/>

³² An act to amend Customs Tariff (goods from Xinjiang), Parliament of Canada (2021). bill. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/S-204/first-reading>.

³³ Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act, US Senate (2021). bill. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/65?s=1&r=20>.

³⁴ *Canadian sanctions related to People's Republic of China*. Global Affairs Canada. (2021, November 16). Retrieved January 20, 2022, from https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/sanctions/china-chine.aspx?lang=eng

Canadian supermarkets and stores being made with Uyghur forced labour. For instance, companies like Nestle, Del Monte and Unilever purchase tomatoes from Chinese companies in the Uyghur region, process them in intermediary countries, and ship them internationally to be eventually sold to Canadian consumers.³⁵ Likewise, Canadians can freely purchase bath towels, quilts and clothes online through retailers like Amazon and eBay that advertise their products as made with cotton from the Uyghur region.³⁶

Attempts have been made in recent years to address these issues. In 2018, Bill-C423 (also known as the ‘Modern Slavery Bill’) was introduced in Parliament. Its aim was to “implement Canada’s international commitment to confirm supply chain transparency and contribute to the fight against modern slavery.”³⁷ The bill imposed obligations on certain entities to report on the measures taken to prevent/reduce the risk of forced and child labour involved in any step of the production process.³⁸ It also provided for an inspection regime that gave Ministers the power to require an entity to provide certain information when necessary.

Unfortunately, the private Members’ bill did not pass, and supply chains have continued to operate without transparency. In 2020 alone, reports revealed that 83 global companies were directly or indirectly involved in employing Uyghur workers under forced labour conditions.³⁹ The Government of Canada must put the onus on companies to comply with import/export laws and make it clear that no company will be exempt if they import/export goods resulting from forced labour. Introducing financial penalties is an important measure for companies that fail to publish annual comprehensive statements outlining steps taken to address goods related to forced labour in their supply chains. This is not too dissimilar from the U.K.’s *Modern Slavery Act 2015*, which requires large commercial organizations to publish these statements each year.⁴⁰

In addition to domestic strategies, Canada must also work with international partners to push the Chinese government to ratify the International Labour Organization’s conventions on cancelling forced labour.⁴¹ With China being one of only eight states that have yet to ratify the agreement, there is an opportunity for Canada and the international community to act and ensure that forced labour practices end globally.

³⁵ Szeto, E. et al. (2021, October 9). *Canada’s grocery chains stocked with tomato products connected to Chinese forced labour*. CBC News. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/marketplace-tomato-products-investigation-1.6227359#:~:text=Canadian%20consumers%20who%20purchase%20popular,to%20a%20CBC%20Marketplace%20in vestigation>.

³⁶ Chase, S. & Fife, R. (2021, March 29). *Canadians can buy Xinjiang cotton products despite Ottawa’s vow to stop forced labour imports*. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-canadians-can-buy-xinjiang-cotton-products-despite-ottawas-vow-to-stop/>

³⁷ McKay, J. (2019, February 2019). *Creating Canada’s Modern Slavery Bill*. Delta 8.7. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://delta87.org/2019/02/creating-canadas-modern-slavery-bill/>

³⁸ An Act to enact the Modern Slavery Act and to amend the Customs Tariff, Parliament of Canada (2021). bill. <https://parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/bill/S-216/first-reading>

³⁹ Xiuzhong Xu et al. (2020, March 1). Uyghurs for Sale. *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/uyghurs-sale>

⁴⁰ Penningtons Manches Cooper. (2017, November 20). *Section 54 of the UK’s Modern Slavery Act*. Section 54 of the UK’s Modern Slavery Act: The evolution from voluntary to mandatory? Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.penningtonslaw.com/news-publications/latest-news/2017/section-54-of-the-uks-modern-slavery-act-the-evolution-from-voluntary-to-mandatory>

⁴¹ This includes the *Convention on Forced Labour, 1930*, the *Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957* and the *Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention*.

Push to end the arbitrary detention of Uyghur human rights defenders in China

Whether residing in Canada or any other country, Uyghurs speaking openly about human rights abuses are potential targets of the CCP government. The Canadian government does not have to act alone in dealing with this issue. Multinational partnerships and institutions like the EU, UN, NATO, G7 and OSCE are strategic resources that can assist the government in coordinating a joint response regarding Uyghur human rights defenders. Civil society organizations have been routinely identifying and researching human rights defenders who are targeted by repressive governments. The UN Office of the High Commissioner has also recognized the key role human rights defenders play in the realization of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁴²

Canada can also establish ties and work closely with Uyghur-led civil society organizations based at home and around the world. Likewise, Canada can channel its efforts through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to emphasize the extent to which Uyghur human rights defenders are targeted and the protections that need to be strengthened. The government can make clear recommendations to other states on speaking out in support of Uyghur human rights and pushing the CCP towards ceasing from its actions.⁴³

Canada should also consider adopting the recommendations of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on International Human Rights.⁴⁴ Among these include a recommendation on supporting global development assistance aimed at civil society organizations in countries tied to China's Belt and Road initiative. It also involves a continuation of demands to gain proper access to the XUAR, in order to conduct a thorough investigation of reported human rights abuses.

The Canadian government should also act decisively in advocating for the release of human rights defenders that are currently imprisoned on unsubstantiated charges. It must start by appointing a special envoy to China to secure the release of Uyghur-Canadian activist Huseyin Celil from prison. Celil has been denied consular access due to the CCP government's refusal to recognize his Canadian citizenship. He is regularly placed in solitary confinement and his health condition is unknown. Attaining justice for Celil is an important commitment that Canada must make to ensure that human rights defenders are not forgotten.

Additionally, proactive steps can also be taken to protect Uyghur human rights defenders seeking asylum. Indeed, tens of thousands of Uyghurs are said to be displaced around the world, many of whom lack citizenship documents but are still under threat of arrest and detention by CCP authorities. Turkey alone hosts roughly 50,000 Uyghurs.⁴⁵ An emergency refugee program to fast-

⁴² *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/srhrdefenders/pages/declaration.aspx>

⁴³ *Canada's Universal Periodic Review Recommendations*. Global Affairs Canada. (2021, December 31). Retrieved January 20, 2022, from https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/upr-epu/countries-pays.aspx?lang=eng

⁴⁴ Statement by the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. (2020, October 21). *House of Commons*. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/SDIR/news-release/10903199>.

⁴⁵ Chase, S. (2021, November 1). *World Uyghur Congress urges Canada to take refugees, block Chinese imports*. Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://www.urap.ca/world-uyghur-congress-urges-canada-to-take-refugees-block-chinese-imports/>

track Uyghur refugee applications can ensure that vulnerable Uyghurs can find safety in Canada. This is among the key recommendations advocated by the World Uyghur Congress.⁴⁶

Commit to thwarting cyberattacks and surveillance aimed at domestic Uyghur rights activists

Leaked documents have uncovered that Uyghur activists in Canada are currently being tracked, monitored, harassed, and threatened by the CCP government.⁴⁷ Canada must publicly condemn these actions. It must also protect domestic Uyghur activists who are presently being targeted by launching an official investigation into these cyberattacks—one that works closely with the Uyghur community and systematically compiles their stories of digital threats and harassment. Likewise, the government can work to form a coalition between multiple Uyghur organisations to improve digital security through incident response collaboration and data sharing—akin to the Tibetan Computer Emergency Readiness Team that works to strengthen cybersecurity across Tibetan organizations. The government can buttress these efforts by encouraging digital platform providers to pay special attention to threats deployed against Uyghur communities. As for those who have already suffered cybersecurity attacks, the government should work to provide these victims of online harassment with resources in their native language.

While Canada has historically had strong cybersecurity capabilities, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce notes that the country is falling behind relative to its G7 peers.⁴⁸ R&D investment is declining while competitors continue to pour billions into cybersecurity infrastructure. This has dire implications for human rights activists living in Canada and who have family living abroad. Digital espionage impinges on an individual's freedom of expression, right to privacy and right to security. This is especially true for members of historically marginalized groups, who suffer disproportionately from digital surveillance and who are routinely driven off the internet as a result.⁴⁹ Indeed, two decades of research by The Citizen Lab has demonstrated this fact.⁵⁰ To better protect Uyghur communities in Canada, the government must provide adequate financing to combat cyberattacks directed at Uyghur groups. The need for such security has only grown more paramount as the CCP's surveillance capabilities continue to increase in sophistication and intensity as it seeks to silence human rights defenders.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Miller, A., Ram, A., Arsenault, A., & Zalac, F. (2019, November 25). *'They can find out anything': Leaked documents show China's surveillance of Uighurs worldwide*. CBC News. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/china-uighurs-canada-secret-documents-1.5369835>

⁴⁸ *Canada can become the most cyber secure country on the planet*. Canadian Chamber of Commerce. (2021, October 8). Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://chamber.ca/canada-can-become-the-most-cyber-secure-country-on-the-planet/>

⁴⁹ Khoo, C., Gill, L. & Parsons C. (2020, October 20). *Comments on the Federal Government's Proposed Approach to Address Harmful Content Online*. The Citizen Lab. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://citizenlab.ca/2021/09/comments-on-the-federal-governments-proposed-approach-to-address-harmful-content-online/>

⁵⁰ Anstis, S. et al. (2020, October 20). *Submission to the Government of Canada on the Renewal of the Responsible Business Conduct Strategy*. The Citizen Lab. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://citizenlab.ca/2020/10/submission-government-canada-on-renewal-of-responsible-business-conduct-strategy/>