



China blocked Turkish visit to East Turkistan for five years

Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu



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CHINA'S 'UNEASE' OVER TÜRKIYE'S SUPPORT FOR UYGHUR HAS HURT TIES: FOREIGN MINISTER CAVUSOGLU

Merve Aydogan, 29.12.2022

Anadolu Agency, ANKARA

The ebb in ties between Türkiye and China comes from Beijing's "unease" over Ankara's support for the Uyghurs of East Turkistan, said Türkiye's top diplomat on Thursday.

Turkish-Chinese ties have suffered over Beijing being disturbed by "our attitude on the Turkic Uyghurs. They have extradition requests for people who are our citizens, who live in Türkiye all the time, and we don't grant any of them," Foreign Minister Cavusoglu told reporters at an end-of-year press briefing in the capital Ankara.

Rebuffing claims that Türkiye Uyghurs are being extradited to China, Cavusoglu called such claims "a total lie."

"Our defending the rights of the Turkic Uyghurs in the international arena disturbs China. But this is a humanitarian issue," he said, citing a UN Human Rights Council report on Turkic Uyghurs in China released in September.

The report "reveals all (human rights) violations. We have to react to it," he added.

Stressing that Türkiye wants to cooperate with China in a transparent manner, Cavusoglu said: "Our ambassador hasn't been there (East Turkistan) yet, they don't allow him."

Chinese authorities do not allow the ambassador in Beijing to freely visit the region where Uyghur Turks live but instead want him to follow a "program



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“Why should we become a tool for China’s propaganda? They said that a humanitarian delegation from Türkiye could come and examine (the region). It’s been five years since (Chinese President) Xi (Jinping) proposed this. Why have you been preventing this delegation from visiting for five years, why don’t you cooperate?” he asked.

“We want to cooperate, we don’t see this as a political issue. We are categorically not anti-Chinese. We have always said that we support the One-China policy,” Cavusoglu added, referring to the dispute over Taiwan.

In September the UN released a report

on alleged violations of the human rights of ethnic Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in China, concluding that the country may have committed crimes against humanity.

The report found that mass detentions in East Turkistan from 2017 to 2019 were marked by credible documentation of torture, sexual violence, and forced labor, as well as forced abortions and sterilizations.

The 48-page report concluded that “serious human rights violations” were committed by the Chinese government against the Uyghurs and other Muslims under China’s policies to fight terrorism and extremism.

CHINA BLOCKED TURKISH VISIT TO UYGHUR REGION FOR 5 YEARS: ÇAVUŞOĞLU

By Daily Sabah, 30 Dec 2022

China’s unease over Türkiye’s support for Uyghurs has affected ties between the two nations, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said Thursday, adding that the Turkish ambassador was not allowed to visit the Uyghur region despite several attempts.

Addressing at an end-of-year press briefing in the capital Ankara, the minister questioned: “They said that a humanitarian delegation from Türkiye could come and examine (the region). It’s been five years since (Chinese President)

Xi (Jinping) proposed this. Why have you been preventing this delegation from visiting for five years, why don’t you cooperate?”

“Turkish-Chinese ties have suffered over Beijing being disturbed by our attitude on the Turkic Uyghurs issue. They have extradition requests for people who are our citizens, who live in Türkiye all the time. Therefore, we don’t grant any such requests,” Çavuşoğlu added.

Rebuffing claims that Türkiye Uyghurs are being extradited to China, Çavuşoğlu called such claims “a total lie.”

“We defend Turkic Uyghur’s rights in the international arena and this disturbs China. But this is a humanitarian issue,” he said, citing a U.N. Human Rights Council report on Turkic Uyghurs in China released in September.

The report “reveals all (human rights) violations. We have to react to it,” he added.

Stressing that Türkiye wants to cooperate with China in a transparent manner, Cavusoglu maintained: “Our ambassador hasn’t been there (East Turkistan) yet, they don’t allow him.”

Chinese authorities do not allow the ambassador in Beijing to freely visit the region where Uyghur Turks live instead want him to follow a “program that they provide.”

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don’t see this as a political issue. We are categorically not anti-Chinese. We have always said that we support the One-China policy,” Çavuşoğlu highlighted, referring to the dispute over Taiwan.

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JAPAN AND U.S. LAUNCH TASK FORCE ON RIGHTS AND LABOR STANDARDS IN SUPPLY CHAINS

The Japan Times

Jan 7, 2023

WASHINGTON – The United States and Japan on Friday launched a task force to promote human rights and international labor standards in supply chains, amid shared concerns about China’s treatment of Uyghur Muslims, and said they would invite other governments to join the initiative.

The two sides also signed an updated memorandum of cooperation on cybersecurity to strengthen operational collaboration and hosted a roundtable

with Japanese business representatives on upholding human rights and preventing use of forced labor in supply chains, a U.S. statement said.

The signings came ahead of a visit to Washington next week by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida for talks expected to focus on shared concerns about China’s growing might and other pressing international issues.

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai signed a memorandum on the labor-standards initiative with Japan’s visiting Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Yasutoshi Nishimura.

Nishimura’s ministry said the task force envisaged information-sharing on

reporting, best practices and enforcement practices, as well as dialogue with stakeholders, including businesses.

According to the memorandum, the task force participants intend to meet biannually. The participants also include the Foreign Ministry, the U.S. state, commerce and labor departments, as well as the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Japan’s Yomiuri Shimbun daily this week cited Japanese officials as saying the move was spurred by issues such as alleged forced labor of minority Muslims in East Turkistan and that Japan would seek to promulgate regulations that Washington has strengthened to tackle such problems.

Tai and Nishimura said they would invite other governments to join the effort.

“The United States and Japan cannot do this alone,” Tai said. “To make this work, we must partner with all relevant stakeholders — worker organizations, businesses, and civil society — to bring about lasting and meaningful change. We must also invite other governments to join us as we push ahead to safeguard the dignity of workers everywhere.”

USTR said Tai and Nishimura also discussed Japan’s priorities during its current presidency of the Group of Seven



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nations, Tokyo’s review of its biofuels policies, and Japan’s concerns about electric vehicle tax credits included in the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act.

The cybersecurity memorandum was signed by Nishimura and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, who later jointly hosted a roundtable with Japanese business representatives on upholding human rights and preventing use of forced labor in supply chains, a DHS statement said.

Nishimura on Thursday called for a “new world order” to counter authoritarian regimes that have been bolstered by post-Cold War free trade and economic inter-dependence.

A senior U.S. official said last year that U.S. allies appeared committed to following Washington’s lead in banning forced labor goods from East Turkistan.

The United States’ Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act took effect last year to cut U.S. imports of products from East Turkistan, where Washington accuses China of committing genocide against ethnic Uyghurs and other Muslims, and herding them into camps. Beijing denies abuses in East Turkistan.

“We must address forced labor at each stage of our supply chains,” Tai said. “Whether it’s the cotton in the clothes we wear or metals in the cars we drive, such abuses threaten to undermine the very foundations of our system.

IMPLEMENTING THE UYGHUR FORCED LABOR PREVENTION ACT: A CHALLENGE WORTH THE EFFORT

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, also known as the UFLPA, was signed into law by President Joe Biden on Dec. 23, 2021. This significant international trade legislation was the U.S. response to the Chinese government’s systemic use of forced labor against Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in East Turkistan

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victims of forced labor, according to the International Labour Organization, which they define as, “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.” This also includes indentured labor and child labor.

Almost 28 million people currently are

The two CBP components primarily

responsible for enforcing the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act – the Office of Trade and the Office of Field Operations – began implementing the rebuttable presumption that went into effect on June 21, 2022 after months of intense preparation. That presumption means CBP will treat all goods produced entirely or in part in the XUAR as if they were produced with forced labor, and therefore, prohibited from entering the U.S. pursuant to Section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930.

Personnel from across CBP work together to identify and interdict goods from, or made with inputs from, East Turkistan in order to enforce the UFLPA. Goods produced with forced labor threaten American jobs by creating unfair economic competition, expose consumers to the risk of unknowingly purchasing

goods made with forced labor, finance criminal organizations and result in atrocious human rights violations.

Enforcement is an ongoing challenge, as bad actors continue to seek to benefit financially by circumventing the UFLPA to introduce goods made with forced labor into U.S. markets. Case in point: XUAR jujubes.

Red dates, also known as jujubes, are small, pitted fruits popular throughout Asia. China produces 40% of the world's supply, and the Uyghur Human Rights Project issued a report estimating that 50% of China's jujubes originate in the XUAR. The report said jujubes produced in XUAR continued to turn up on U.S. supermarket shelves even after UFLPA implementation.

The XUAR was financially benefiting



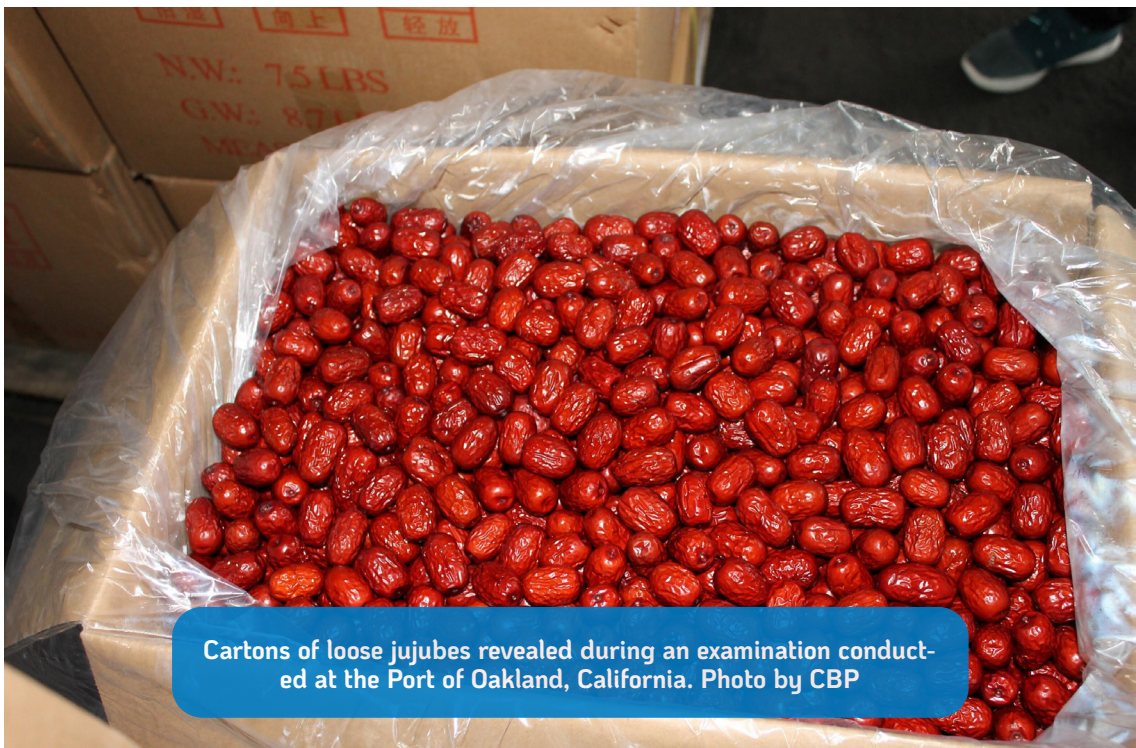
from the circumvention of the UFLPA on the sales of jujubes, according to the Uyghur Human Rights Project report, despite CBP’s enforcement efforts. When international trade analysts Diana Sassmann and Erika Ribeiro of CBP Office of Trade’s New York National Threat Analysis Center saw the Uyghur Human Rights Project report, they immediately sprang into action, and CBP initiated a dynamic and collaborative approach to ensure the correct actions were taken.

Sassmann and Ribeiro have worked on the agency’s XUAR portfolio for nearly three years: first on the forced labor Withhold Release Orders linked to cotton from the XUAR and the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, and later on the development and implementation of the Department of Homeland Security’s UFLPA Strategy. They already knew that

much of China’s jujube supply originates in the XUAR and were actively identifying producers there. But entities located outside of the region that export XUAR-origin jujubes were elusive to pin down.

“What we’ve noticed when we’re looking into where XUAR dates are coming from, is that it looks like they’re harvested in the XUAR but shipped from other areas,” Ribeiro explained. She said this is symptomatic of the difficulty of forced labor targeting – particularly in China.

Sassmann noted that it’s a common problem with agricultural products in general. “It’s not unusual ... to have something grown on a farm in one place, and the packing house is somewhere else. This is part of the challenge.” Sassmann said that this practice isn’t inherently illegal. In fact, it’s normal practice in the agriculture industry. But it does make



identifying the origin of goods more challenging. She said with the UFLPA, “it has become normal operating procedure [for Chinese producers] to obfuscate the origin of goods from the XUAR,” making work for CBP employees more difficult.

This case illustrates why reports from civil society, non-governmental organizations and industry play a major role in CBP’s work to keep goods made with forced labor out of the U.S. Sassmann and Ribeiro, armed with the information provided in the Uyghur Human Rights Project report and intelligence gleaned from other sources, identified several inbound shipments that they suspected contained jujubes originating in the XUAR – including one at the nearby Port of Newark, New Jersey, that arrived that very day.

Sassmann and Ribeiro acted quickly, reaching out to their colleagues at the Port of Newark to request they hold the shipment for inspection. Michael Vernon, a deputy chief at the Port of Newark, promptly agreed and worked with import specialists from the Agriculture and Prepared Products Center of Excellence and Expertise, or APP Center, to examine the shipment and its accompanying documentation.

Import specialists Paul Guastella, Eugene Gambardella and CBP Officer Daniel Donnellan examine a shipment of suspect jujubes at the port of Newark, New Jersey. Photo by CBP

The APP Center has a network of staff located across the U.S. and are therefore

well positioned to assist the officers at various ports of entry, conducting joint examinations, and providing photos of the labeling to be translated. The APP Center sends examination results back to the port and CBP’s Forced Labor Division depending upon the outcome of the review.

APP Center import specialists Eugene Gambardella, Ethan Kemler and Paul Guastella, as a part of their examination in this case, photographed suspicious labels and markings on the shipment’s packaging as well as the merchandise itself before enlisting the expertise and assistance of Altungul Emet, a translator who is fluent in Mandarin and Uyghur.

Emet works in CBP’s Civil Enforcement Division and has worked closely with the New York National Threat Analysis Center on UFLPA enforcement. She grew up in Hami, a city in the eastern part of the XUAR, so supporting CBP’s UFLPA enforcement efforts really hit home. “As an American with a Uyghur background, I was proud that my skills could contribute to this mission to support the UFLPA, and to be part of this tireless CBP team. I am clearly in the right place at the right time,” she said.

Emet identified the logo of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, as well as other references to the XUAR, on the packaging after examining the photographs from the port. This triggered an immediate red flag since the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps is a paramilitary organization that has been

sanctioned by the U.S. for several years, even before UFLPA implementation began, and is on the UFLPA Entity List, a list of entities in the XUAR known to use forced labor.

The Port of Newark had all the evidence it needed to detain the shipment with this new piece of the puzzle in place. The examination and action in New York and New Jersey triggered a domino effect on the other side of the country, where additional shipments were intercepted and examined in Los Angeles and Oakland, California – several bearing markings indicating links to the East Turkistan.

Jujubes produced by the Xinjiang Production Construction Corps pictured in their retail packaging. Photo by CBP

With increasingly complex supply chains that span the globe, the UFLPA presents unique enforcement challenges to CBP personnel whose job it is to prevent goods produced with forced labor, in any part of the supply chain, from reaching U.S. shelves. Dina Amato, director of CBP's APP Center, acknowledges the difficulty: "Everything about CBP's work is complex and has challenges – specifically, the layers within the supply chain and the complex documents we must review to make a determination of admissibility," she said. "I truly believe it is how we learn from these challenges and overcome

them that turns them into successes."

"What could be more rewarding than coming to work every day, partnering with the dedicated men and women from CBP to identify the needles in the haystack, and then stopping goods produced using forced labor from entering the United States? Every aspect of this process is rewarding because forced labor is about people in need. And CBP forges a path forward," Amato said.

Enforcing these laws is not just their job to CBP employees, it is the right thing to do. Forced labor spans every region of the world according to the U.S. Department of Labor. CBP's goal is not only to eliminate forced labor from U.S. supply chains, but to curtail the practice altogether – a mission employees firmly stand behind. "CBP is leading the way in stopping profiteering from forced labor and human misery," said Evan Thomas, a national import specialist assigned to CBP's National Commodity Specialist Division who has worked extensively on UFLPA enforcement. He went on to say this is the most rewarding part of his job.

There is hope for real change in working conditions for millions of people throughout the world with the dedicated, deeply knowledgeable and determined CBP employees on the case.



The complicated path to avoiding cotton from East Turkistan

In the face of evidence that Chinese cotton is picked mainly by forced labour, particularly by Uyghur workers, many Western textile companies are turning to other supply sources. But sourcing “clean” cotton is easier said than done, as efforts by Swiss outdoor supply firm Mammut show.

January 4, 2023, SwissInfo

Ariane Lüthi (text), Pauline Turuban (graphics)

With its slogan “We Care”, the mountaineering and trekking company Mammut casts itself as a pioneer of sustainability. None of its products is manufactured in East Turkistan, and none of the cotton it processes comes from this region, the Swiss company wrote

link in May 2022.

It has become increasingly difficult for businesses to turn a blind eye to the plight of cotton pickers in East Turkistan. The United Nations suspects [External link](#) crimes against humanity. The United States has introduced an import ban [External link](#); and the European Commission is seeking to adopt a similar instrument [External link](#). In Switzerland,

the federal parliament is considering whether to extend a newly adopted law to cover forced labour.

Customers too are increasingly concerned about supply chains. China is the largest cotton producer in the world and almost all of its cotton fields are located in the province that the UN says is home to internment camps^{External link}. There is also evidence^{External link} that ethnic minority Uyghurs are being forced to work in the country’s textile industry^{External link}.

leader China has seen in decades.

Young Chinese are protesting the country’s harsh “zero-Covid” policy and even urging its top leader, Xi Jinping, to step down. It’s something that China hadn’t seen since 1989, when the ruling Communist Party brutally cracked down on the pro-democracy demonstrators, mostly college students. No matter what happens in the days and weeks ahead, the young protesters presented a new threat. However, the company’s Chinese suppliers do not appear on the list of factories checked by GOTS inspectors.

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90%* of Chinese cotton is produced in Xinjiang, but only a tiny proportion is exported directly from the region and the share has declined in recent years. Annual cotton exports** from China and Xinjiang, by trade value.

Year	China without Xinjiang (in billions of US dollars)	Xinjiang (in millions of US dollars)	Xinjiang's share of Chinese exports
2017	15	116	0.8%
2018	15.4	71	0.5%
2019	14.1	41.5	0.3%
2020	11	21.1	0.2%
2021	13.7	12.4	0.1%
2022**	9.4	14.3	0.2%

*Source: US Department of Agriculture **HS Code 52 ***up to and including August.

Table: ptur • Source: [Chinese customs statistics](#) • [Get the data](#)



Avoiding products from suppliers that trample on human rights, however, is complicated. Trade routes are long and convoluted, and the origin of the fibres opaque.

“Separating out East Turkistan cotton is extremely difficult,” says Dorothee Baumann-Pauly, director of the Geneva Centre for Business and Human Rights. “It is surprising how complex the cotton supply chain is. Important manufacturing sites like Bangladesh have no cotton production in-country, so they import everything. Raw cotton is traded by the

bale in Dubai. There are multiple mixing points along the way.”

As far back as 2019, researchers in Washington described^{External link} how cotton fibre from East Turkistan can find its way into the supply chains of Western companies – even those that have no direct links to factories in the region. The fibre is processed into yarn, textiles and finished garments and then shipped from other provinces in China. In 2020, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute^{External link} linked dozens of foreign companies to possible Uyghur

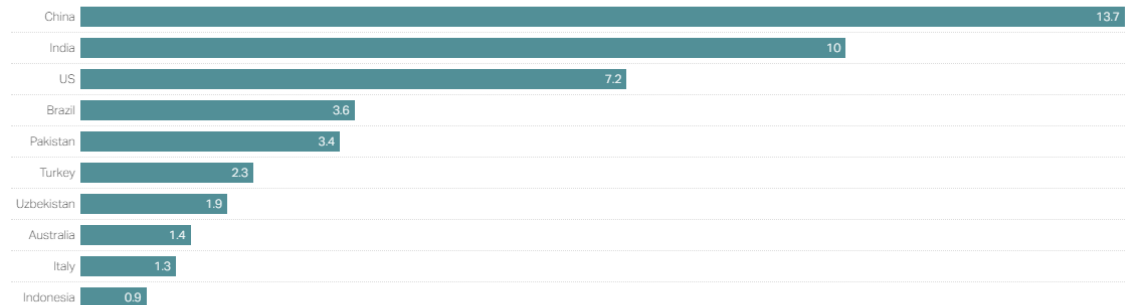
forced labour, prompting a lawsuit [External link](#) against four fashion retailers in France. And last year, a study [External link](#) by Britain's Sheffield Hallam University

found that factories in Vietnam and other countries were using Chinese cotton to make intermediate products that supplied more than 100 international brands.

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China is the world's largest cotton exporter

Top 10 exporters of cotton* by trade volume (in billions of US dollars) in 2021.



*HS Code 52

Chart: ptur • Source: [UN Comtrade database](#) • [Get the data](#)

SWI swissinfo.ch

Just this May, researchers from Germany said they had discovered [External link](#) traces of East Turkistan cotton in garments made by Adidas, Puma and Hugo Boss. Yet these companies had regularly assured customers [External link](#) that they had no links with East Turkistan.

So how can Mammut be so certain that its own supply chain is clean? Andreas Buchberger, head of buying at Mammut Sports Group, was in Vietnam on business when our question reached him. “The cotton’s origin is guaranteed by certification,” he wrote in reply. “We can therefore rule out that the cotton we use comes from East Turkistan.”

Certifying cotton

For this, Mammut relies on the Global

Organic Textiles Standard (GOTS) [External link](#). This label certifies [External link](#) that all steps in the supply chain have been verified independently and on site. A routing slip accompanies the cotton from the first processing step to the finished product.

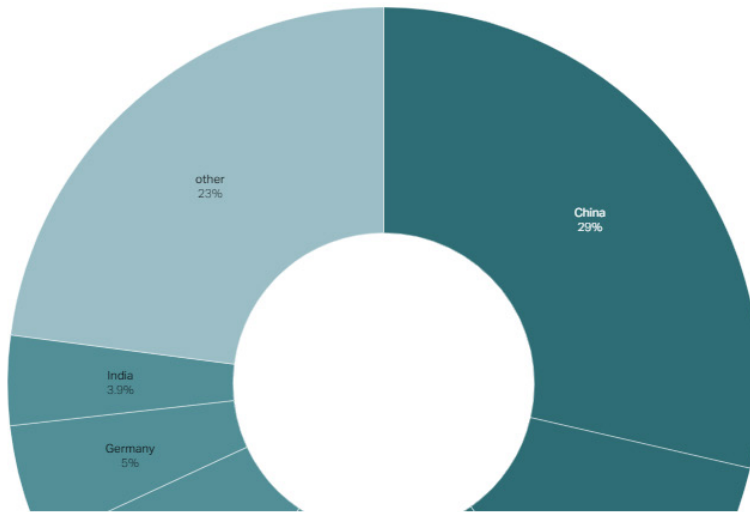
The Swiss company Remei, from which Mammut also purchases cotton products, goes even further: the textiles can be traced back to small farmers in India and Tanzania by means of a QR code. The end buyers are in contact with the plantations, provide seeds and guarantee the purchase of the harvest.

According to Mammut, some 80% of the cotton it uses today is certified.

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Half of the clothes imported into Switzerland come from China or from large Chinese cotton importers

Imports of clothing and clothing accessories* into Switzerland by country of origin, 2021.



“If a manufacturer does not use GOTS-certified cotton, we verify its provenance based on the certificate of origin,” Buchberger explained. In this case, his company determines where its suppliers should buy. “Mammut decides in which regions and from which suppliers raw materials are to be sourced.”

In 2020, Mammut purchased nearly 50 tonnes of cotton. According to the company, none of it came from China. Even its baseball caps, which are sewn in China, are made with cotton from Australia. Moreover, says Mammut,

cotton is a marginal raw material for the company, accounting for a mere 6% of all textiles purchased.

Most of the company’s production, however, does take place in Asia. The Mammut Sports Group publishes a list of its direct suppliers on its websiteExternal link. This includes the names of suppliers from China, which provides the second-largest quantity of textiles to Mammut, after Vietnam.

None of the Chinese suppliers are located in the East Turkistan. But that’s where another challenge arises for companies

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China is the world's largest clothing exporter

Top 10 clothing and clothing accessories exporting countries* by trade value (in billions of US dollars) in 2021.



wanting to avoid cotton produced by forced labour.

Monitoring working conditions

In August, the UN finally published its overdue report on the human rights situation in East Turkistan, despite fierce opposition from China. The chapter on labour issues highlights two major risks: the placement of people in “training centres” – the notorious camps – and “post-training” work assignments in other regions of China. These programmes seek to transfer “surplus” workers from poor, rural areas to places where they are needed. There is evidence, according to the UN, of the use of various coercive methods for this.

Baumann-Pauly of the Geneva Centre for Business and Human Rights points to a major difficulty here: “Even if a company can exclude that cotton or a garment

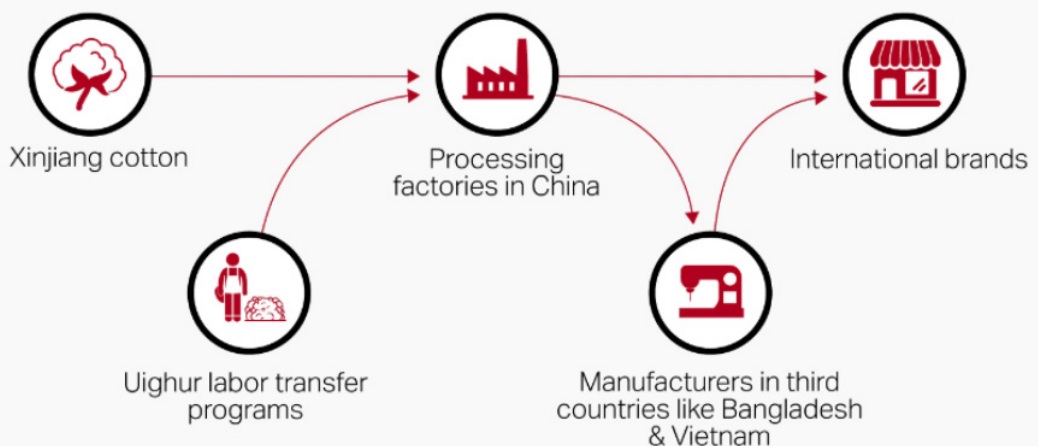
comes from East Turkistan, there is still a possibility that forced Uyghur labour was involved in the production.” The UN recommends that businesses examine their risks even more carefully.

For this due diligence, Mammut relies on the Fair Wear Foundation, an organisation made up of companies, textile associations, trade unions and NGOs that has gotten the thumbs up External link from players critical of globalisation, such as Public Eye. Fair Wear wants to ensure that working conditions in factories are monitored and workers can lodge complaints. The content of any grievances and the company’s reaction can be viewed publicly.

Over half of the complaints addressed to Mammut to date have come from China. The main issue is overtime. Although Mammut has already significantly

How forced labor can enter Western supply chains

Xinjiang



extended order lead times and involves the factories early on in the planning process, excessive overtime remains a problem. This is one reason the company decided to gradually shift production to Vietnam, according to a September report by the Fair Wear Foundation [External link](#).

As for forced labour, Mammut found risks not in China, but in Lithuania and Taiwan. There, migrant workers must reportedly pay high fees to placement agencies, which amounts to a violation of international rules but is “unfortunately legal in many countries”, the company wrote [External link](#).

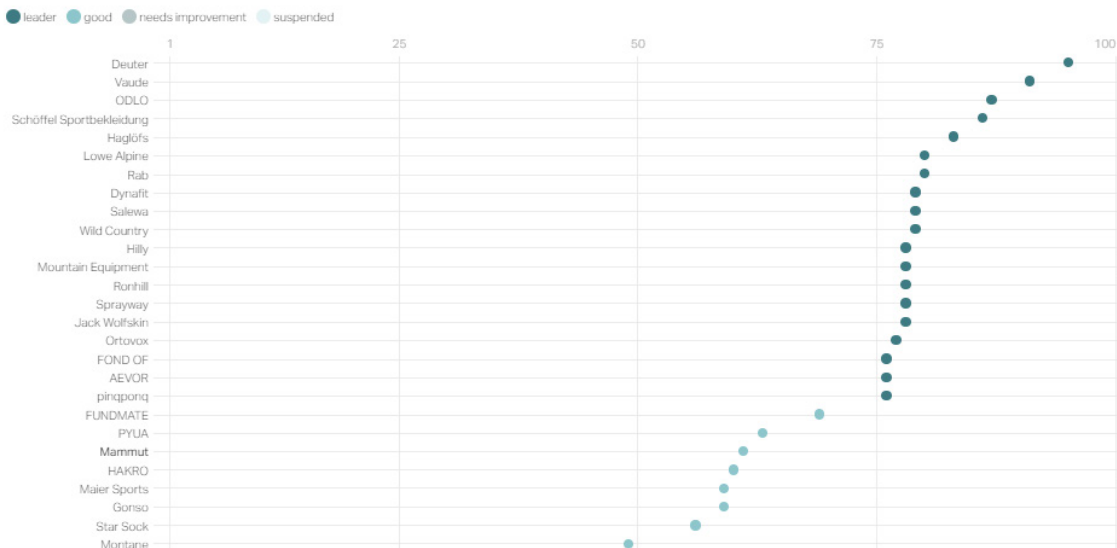
The company appears helpless in the face of its own global supply chains. “In many cases, the path from raw material fibres to a finished garment now passes through countless production sites and several continents,” Mammut wrote. “The result: an enormous amount of work is required to monitor the conditions under which a product is produced.” Some of the costs associated with this work are borne by customers, in return for the promise of sustainability thanks to specially labelled products.

became a journalist,” she said, her voice cracking.

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Mammut's sustainability performance is good, but not exceptional

Overall score (out of 100) in the "Brand Performance Check" conducted by the Fair Wear Foundation among its Outdoor&Sports member brands



Compared with other outdoor and sports companies [External link](#) audited by the Fair Wear Foundation, Mammut does not shine. The group is rated as “good” but does not achieve “leader” status. The staff are known to keep their eyes

and ears open in the factories [External link](#) and keep track of where production is taking place. Nevertheless, an export inspection in 2021 found that a company unknown to Mammut had been involved in its production process.



Fate of Uyghur miners trapped in gold mine collapse uncertain after nearly 2 weeks

Expert says miners are likely dead and Chinese authorities remain mum about rescue efforts.

By Shohret Hoshur for RFA Uyghur
2023.01.06

The fate of 18 miners – mostly Uyghurs – trapped in a collapsed gold mine in East Turkistan remained uncertain, officials said, implying that rescuers have failed to pull any of them out alive nearly two weeks after the Christmas Eve disaster.

“I know that the rescue operation is going on, but I don’t know the result of the rescue efforts,” said an employee of West Gold Yili Co., which owns the mine in Qarayaghach town of Ghulja county,

or Yining in Chinese. He insisted on not being identified by name.

An employee at East Turkistan Emergency Relief Supervision Command Center said the rescue operations were ongoing and that two of the center’s leaders went to the site of the accident the day it occurred, Dec. 24.

“The fate of those trapped in the mine [and] the responsibility for the incident are confidential information,” he told Radio Free Asia, also requesting anonymity. “These aren’t the questions

we have answers to. It is not yet time to ask about responsibility for the incident.”

When asked about the number of people participating in the rescue operation, he said he was not allowed to make the information public.

Of the 40 miners working underground at the time of the accident, 22 were safely rescued.

Chinese authorities in Ghulja have not issued any updates about ongoing efforts to extricate the miners, and the reason for the collapse remains unknown.

So far, they have held only one press conference about the accident, though it highlighted the participation of relevant organizations and leaders in the rescue operations. During the news conference, authorities did not disclose the cause of the mine collapse, who was responsible, or the identities of those still trapped underground.

RFA learned earlier that most of the 18 workers underground were mostly Uyghurs from government organizations in Ghulja county, where the mine company is located.

Likely dead

Chinese authorities have cracked down on unsafe mining practices and levied harsher penalties for violations across the country in recent years, though cave-ins still occur where safety measures are slipshod, especially at makeshift or far-flung mining sites.

Mine collapses are usually caused by large

amounts of water erupting underground at the mining site or by the failure of structural material supporting tunnel roofs, said a Uyghur mine expert, who requested anonymity for safety reasons.

The trapped miners could likely survive only three to five days underground, he said.

“If there is no information for 10 days regarding the 18 trapped miners, then it is most likely these miners are not alive anymore,” the expert told RFA earlier this week.

“If miraculously they were not injured due to the mine collapse, the air ventilation wasn’t blocked, and no poisonous gas was released, then they would still die of lack of water and food in a week,” he said.

Another officer at the command center said he did not know how many more days the rescue operations would continue.

“We are not responsible for information and propaganda,” he said.

“Even if we know, we can’t tell you what we know. There are parts of this matter that are disclosed to the public, and parts that are not disclosed. We can only say that the rescue operation is still going on,” he added.

An employee at the Ghulja County Petition Bureau said relatives of workers still in the mine have not contacted the office.

“We have not yet received a complaint from the family of those who were under the mine,” the employee said. “We heard from the community that most of the 18

people were Uyghurs, including teenagers, but we were not informed about this in official meetings.”

Elfidar Hanim, president of the Uyghur American Association, expressed concern about the fate of the trapped miners.

“Such events and subsequent rescue efforts should have been reported live on site, but the Chinese authorities are not doing this,” she told RFA.

Chinese authorities are protecting their

reputation and the failure of their system by placing themselves above public safety, Hanim said.

“Since most trapped miners are Uyghurs, authorities want to deal with this tragedy discreetly,” she added.

Translated by Mamatjan Juma for RFA Uyghur Written in English by Roseanne Gerin. Edited by Malcolm Foster.

Ethnic Kazakh In East Turkistan Sends ‘Extremely Rare’ SOS In Bid To Escape Arrest,

In the uber-authoritarian police state that is China’s East Turkistan, it is hard enough to speak out, let alone try to reach an international audience in a bid to flee to a



“If I disappear or if I die, I want the world to hold them responsible,” Zhanargul Zhumatai, an ethnic Kazakh journalist and musician residing in the city of Urumqi in China’s East Turkistan, said in an “extremely rare” correspondence with ers.

Yet Zhanargul Zhumatai, an ethnic Kazakh journalist and musician residing in the city of Urumqi, is doing just that.

In the past week, Zhumatai, 47, has been sounding the alarm about the pressure she is under from local security services.

She said they have told her she faces arrest for communicating with a well-known Kazakh activist who lives in the United States but can “save herself” if she signs into a psychiatric hospital.

Now she is hoping that the international community will support her in her bid to travel to Kazakhstan, where she has residency rights and once worked for government-funded media.

“If I disappear or if I die, I want the world to hold them responsible,” Zhumatai told Danish academic and East Turkistan expert Rune Steenberg in an international

phone call on January 2.

Witnessing ‘Everything But Death’ In The Camp

East Turkistan is one of the most tightly controlled jurisdictions in the world.

In recent years it has become synonymous with the incarceration of over 1 million Turkic and Muslim minorities -- some independent estimates have doubled that figure -- initially in tightly guarded facilities that Beijing likened to vocational training centers.

Outside of China the facilities were branded “reeducation camps” and the testimonies of former detainees, including a number of ethnic Kazakhs, revealed shocking patterns of abuse there.

Zhumatai’s claim to have spent time in one of these facilities is backed up by



leaked Chinese police records that say she was arrested in 2017.

Steenberg, who works at the Palacky University of Olomouc in the Czech Republic, told RFE/RL he has spoken to Zhumatai every day since January 2.

The anthropologist said it is “extremely rare” for anyone in East Turkistan -- where even having foreign apps on a telephone

can invite incarceration -- to discuss state pressure with foreigners.

Zhumatai, who in the past worked in Kazakhstan as an editor for the government-funded Qazaqstan Radio and Television Corporation, knows the risks connected with foreign communication all too well.

who saw the incident could not stand



Steenberg has confirmed the authenticity of the transcript and told RFE/RL that Zhumatai on January 5 informed him she has been in contact with Kazakhstan’s embassy in Beijing.

“They told her that she would be given papers to enter Kazakhstan.... She is happy about this but still doesn’t trust them fully. She fears that (China’s Public Security Bureau) or the local city administration may arrest her, caring little about the Kazakh Embassy,” Steenberg

said.

Kazakhstan’s Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request to confirm this information.

“In the past days she has not left her mother’s apartment. Her sister brings them groceries,” Steenberg added.

A Tight Spot For Astana

Anger in Kazakhstan over the plight of the East Turkistan Kazakhs, the province’s second-largest Turkic group after the

Uyghurs, has proven awkward for the Kazakh government, which prides itself on a booming trade relationship with China.

Astana has raised the issue with Beijing and claimed at the beginning of 2019 to have secured the transfer from China of over 2,000 ethnic Kazakhs.

But the government has not joined international condemnation of Beijing's policies there, and later that year Kazakhstan's then-Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdi cited reassurances from China that there were no ethnic Kazakhs remaining in China's camps.

Gene Bunin, the creator of the East Turkistan Victims Database that has now profiled close to 50,000 victims of the crackdown, says this claim is likely true.

But he points to evidence that many in the region are still "serving lengthy prison terms on dubious charges" or living under house arrest and tight surveillance.

While campaigns of mass arrests may have slowed down, "the ability for the authorities to detain someone without much formality remains," he told RFE/RL.

Kazakhstan, in turn, has on several occasions suppressed activism related to East Turkistan.

Back in September police arrested two vocal relatives of East Turkistan detainees ahead of a visit to the country by Chinese

leader Xi Jinping.

Bilash, the activist, is no longer welcome in his homeland, to which he moved from China, gaining citizenship over a decade ago.

His Atajurt voluntary organization, headquartered in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty, played a key role in exposing Chinese policies in East Turkistan, mostly by publishing video testimonies by former camp detainees.

But in 2019 he was arrested and charged with inciting social tensions and only released after a public outcry and coverage of the case by the international press.

In a telephone interview with RFE/RL, Bilash said Zhumatai is likely being punished for her work defending the rights of Kazakh herders in East Turkistan, a matter he said they had discussed.

He likened the importance of her case to that of Sairagul Sauytbay, an ethnic Kazakh who escaped from East Turkistan to Kazakhstan by crossing the border illegally and became the first person in the world to testify about Chinese reeducation camps in an open court in 2018.

While Kazakhstan did not deport Sauytbay back to China, it did not offer her a path to citizenship, either. She now lives with her family in Sweden.

"The difference is that Sairagul spoke out



THE URUMQI FIRE WAS STATE TERROR: THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT GOT IT RIGHT

For once, the European institution was brave enough to speak out while others had remained silent.

by Kok Bayraq, 12/28/2022

Bitter Winter

The world stood up when a Syrian boy drowned in the sea, and when George Floyd was brutally murdered; it became not only an American or Syrian problem, but also a world problem. This sensitivity, this responsibility is certainly deserved and appreciated; but when 44 people were burned alive in Urumqi, one hundredth of this sensitivity was not aroused. Why?

When I was considering this mystery, I heard the voice of the European Parliament. On December 15, the European Parliament, called on the

Chinese government to be transparent about the number of victims and the circumstances under which they died in the Urumqi fire. They called for prompt, effective, and thorough investigation.

The passing of a joint motion for a resolution on the Chinese government crackdown on peaceful protests across the People's Republic of China was a good step toward drawing international attention to one of the most tragic events in modern history: forty-four people were burned alive in Urumqi because of politics. It was also a chance to highlight the Muslim world's shameless silence and the US's weak voice regarding the

tragedy.

The European Parliament went to the root of the tragedy by stating, “All the victims of the Urumqi fire are of Uyghur ethnicity, thus deepening the suffering of this ethnic group, which has fallen victim to systematic human rights atrocities taking place in East Turkistan, which the European Parliament has recognized as constituting crimes against humanity and representing a serious risk of genocide.”

The value of this call is clearer if we look at the nature of the Urumqi fire tragedy.

What is the character of the Urumqi fire? Was it natural or human-made? Intentional or unintentional? Were the motives and causes negligence or inhumane selfishness?

In my view, the fire may be natural, but it is unnatural for a fire to last three hours and cause forty-four deaths. This is an artificial harm, an artificial death. Because their doors were locked by officials! The damage may not be intentional, it may be the result of negligence, but this negligence does not arise from the mystery of a disaster but from the indifference to the life of these forty-four souls. It is the savagery and barbarism of totalitarian regimes, putting their own interests above all else, always, everywhere. It would be a great mistake to view and characterize it as just the fruit of ineffectiveness and laziness.

Why would a person stay silent when a group door is locked or even closed? Because she is scared.

Why did the Chinese government try to scare its citizens? To reduce COVID cases to zero? For the safety of the people? Their slogan says yes, but that is not the reality of the situation. A country that cares about the security of its people will first respect their rights and dignity and will not violate those rights because of politics. It will give a free press the right to investigate. It will not imprison dissenters or crash protests with tanks to protect the regime.

What was China’s real reason for wanting to reduce COVID cases to zero? The goal was to justify their dictatorial regime by doing what other countries and governments in the world could not do, proving that dictatorship is also useful, finally prolonging the life of the ruler, and consolidating his throne.

How do we call politically motivated intimidation? Terror.

Most of the forty-four people who died in the fire were mothers and children. Their husbands and fathers, who might have been able to break the locked doors, were in camps and jails. For example, victim Qemernisa’s husband, father, two brothers, and eldest son have all been in prison for six years. What do you call keeping mothers and children separated from the rest of their families for political purposes? A hostage situation. A terror organization can take hostages for a few days or weeks; if a group functions as hostage for years, this is a case of state terror.

The expanded Supreme Council of the International Federation of East Turkistan Organizations convened. The first meeting of 2023 of the expanded Supreme Council of the International United of East Turkistan Organizations, which consisted of heads of organizations, religious scholars, academics, opinion leaders and others from all sectors of East Turkistan society, from Turkey and various countries of the world, was held in Istanbul.





China is continuing its genocide crimes in East Turkistan in 2023.

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What is happening in East Turkistan?

What is true and what is false?

The “ISTIQLAL” journal uses reliable sources, evidence and witnesses to reveal China’s crimes against humanity and shine a light on the oppression in East Turkistan as well as exposing China’s fake news propaganda.

Editor in Chief **Abdulvaris Abdulhalik**

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Address **Kartaltepe Mah. Geçit Sok. No: 6 Dükkan 2
Sefaköy K.çekmece İSTANBUL**

info@istiqlalmedia.com

www.turkistantimes.com/en

www.istiqlalhaber.com

www.istiqlalmedia.com

+90 212 540 31 15

+90 553 895 19 33

+90 541 797 77 00