



WORLD UYGHUR CONGRESS
Weltkongress der Uiguren.e.V.
Dunya Uyghur Qurultiyi

Registration No: VR 18781

UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law

Written Statement by World Uyghur Congress (WUC)

22.11.2016

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) is encouraged by the developments at UN's first Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law and hopes that the strong focus on the role of youth activism and engagement will translate to real change in the international arena. Furthermore, the WUC also welcomes the continued work of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth on these issues.

In terms of the wider context of the Forum, human rights, democracy and the rule of law are all mutually reinforcing entities which must be supported interdependently. The importance of one cannot be seen without due regard to the others. The issues faced by the Uyghur population in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China are a case in point in terms of this interrelationship.

The Chinese government continues to restrict the most basic rights of the Uyghur community on nearly all levels. Uyghurs have long suffered under the weight of Chinese policies that have forcibly restricted religious and cultural freedoms—freedoms that are clearly protected on paper in the Chinese Constitution and elsewhere. Uyghur youth have been particular targets for state policies aimed at assimilation into the population of China.

Education policy remains one of the major drivers of this enduring effort. Notwithstanding Chinese Constitutional protections, ensuring, “the right to receive education, the right to use [one’s] own spoken and written languages” and “...the right to inherit and carry on the traditional culture of [one’s] own ethnic group”, education and language policy for ethnic minorities in particular has gradually eroded the capacity for these groups to maintain distinct cultural practices. For years, education policy in Xinjiang has focused on promoting the use of Mandarin as the primary vehicle for study, largely at the expense of the Uyghur language.

At home, parents and guardians have been prohibited from educating their children in line with the Quran or involving their children in any religious practices. New education rules, that came into effect on November 1st, say that parents or guardians cannot “organise, lure or force minors into attending religious activities”. The rules also state that parents are also barred from promoting hardline beliefs in children or from forcing them to dress in specific clothing or with other symbols. If parents are unable to effectively guide their children in these affairs, they are required to send them to specialist schools to “receive rectification”. Additionally, the rules state that any person or group has the right to stop these kinds of behaviours and report them to the public security authorities if necessary.

Another particular issue that affects Uyghur youth has been the forced transfer of thousands of Uyghur women to inner China. Under the policy, thousands of Uyghur women have been



WORLD UYGHUR CONGRESS
Weltkongress der Uiguren.e.V.
Dunya Uyghur Qurultiyi

Registration No: VR 18781

removed from their families and placed into substandard working conditions thousands of miles from their homes. At the same time that the PRC government implements the transfer policy in the name of providing economic opportunities for these young women, it also provides support for the movement of large numbers of Han Chinese migrants into Xinjiang.

The fostering of distrust between Uyghur and Chinese youth also remains a particular problem, especially at the university level. Uyghur students at Xinjiang University in Urumqi are now faced with the prospect of anonymous student informers who have been instructed to report to 'political guides' about discordant political or religious views among the Uyghur student population.

Discussions and debates that veer into political or religious territory in these venues have been meticulously recorded in classrooms, dormitories and other locations throughout the university by informers. Informers are increasingly being drawn from the Uyghur student population as a more effective means of infiltrating the group. These students then submit compiled reports to 'political guides' who reportedly operate in every department of the university and are directly supervised by the Communist Party's university branch. The informers benefit from the program as they are provided special recommendations from the Party upon their return to their home prefecture or to their potential employers.

Considering that the Uyghur population has faced severe issues in relation to China's strong assimilationist drive over the past 50 years, the treatment of the youngest members of the community are real harbingers of what the region will look like in the decades ahead. In line with the theme of the current Forum, the World Uyghur Congress will look to support the education and engagement of the youth populations to the extent that they are able to influence and dictate policy of their own states.