

Reference: TG ASA 17/2021.2130

11 October 2021

Your Excellency,

RE: OPEN LETTER TO ALL UN MEMBER STATES ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UN-LED MECHANISM TO INVESTIGATE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN XINJIANG, CHINA

I would like to urge you, as UN member states, to take concrete action to ensure justice and accountability for the hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Hui, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and other members of predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities, subjected to mass internment, torture and persecution in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang).

I am conveying a petition signed by 323,832 people from 184 countries and territories demanding the release of all those arbitrarily detained in internment camps and prisons in Xinjiang and the closure of these camps.

The Chinese government's efforts to cover up its violations of international human rights law in Xinjiang, to silence activists who dare to speak up, and to label every criticism as a "Western lie", have not succeeded in preventing the world from seeing the truth about the situation in Xinjiang. Everyday people from around the world – from Pakistan to Argentina; Indonesia to Nigeria; Peru to Côte D'Ivoire among many others – are raising their voices and calling for justice.

According to the evidence gathered by Amnesty International and corroborated by other reliable sources, members of predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang have been subjected to an attack that meets all the contextual elements of crimes against humanity under international law. The evidence demonstrates that the Chinese government has committed at least the crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture and persecution by knowingly and purposefully targeting ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, including through the excessive restriction of their basic human rights, as well as through an ethnically targeted campaign of mass detention and torture and other ill-treatment.

The international community must stop pretending that this dystopian reality will somehow remedy itself. UN member states have failed to address the crisis despite the fact that credible reports of crimes under international law have continued to mount over the past three years. Worse yet, some states have used their platform at the UN to condone China's human rights violations, including in Xinjiang. UN member states have a duty to protect the human rights of all people in Xinjiang, investigate suspected crimes under international law, and ensure accountability. The Chinese authorities cannot be allowed to be above the law any longer.

I call on you, as member states of the UN, to urgently address and help remedy the situation in Xinjiang. This means taking every opportunity to speak out strongly and publicly in relevant forums against the abuses taking place, and working together to launch a robust independent international investigation into crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations in Xinjiang.

UN member states have a responsibility to act and cannot shy away from calling out crimes under international law simply because China is a powerful country that believes it can act with impunity. The time to remedy this situation is now.

Yours sincerely,

Agnès Callamard
Secretary General