



General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 March 2021

English only

Human Rights Council

Forty-sixth session

22 February–19 March 2021

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by China Society for Human Rights Studies (CSHRS), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Ill-intentioned Sanctions Harmful to Xinjiang Workers Rights

Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China (Xinjiang) has been under the international spotlight in recent years. In February 2020, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published a report entitled "Uyghurs for sale: re-education, forced labor, and surveillance beyond Xinjiang." The report argues that some Chinese enterprises have been "strictly monitoring" Uyghur and other Muslim minority workers and coerced them to "forced labor." The report also suggests that such employment behavior "pollutes" the global supply chain. Honestly, we were astounded and shocked by the accusations made in this report. We are fully aware that "forced labor" is not in line with Chinese law and violates basic human rights. In August 2019, our team surveyed five enterprises employing Xinjiang minority workers in Guangdong Province in southern China.

The research team of the Chinese Society for Human Rights Studies conducted focus group interviews and participatory observation in five enterprises in Guangdong, two of which were mentioned in the ASPI report. A total of 70 Xinjiang minority workers, including Uyghur, Kazakh, Kirghiz, and Tajik, were interviewed. The daily work and life of Xinjiang workers in these five enterprises were observed. This research mainly focuses on three aspects. We demonstrate the working and living conditions of the Xinjiang workers employed by those enterprises. We discuss the significance of working in enterprises for Xinjiang workers. Finally, we present the impacts of the "forced labor" accusation and the sanctions imposed by the West on Xinjiang workers.

Firstly, through field investigation, our team can confirm no "forced labor" or "surveillance" on Xinjiang workers in those enterprises. On the contrary, fundamental rights of the workers, including equal employment, payment for labor, paid vacations, social insurances, occupational safety, freedom of religious beliefs, freedom of using their languages, and so on, are well protected. Moreover, our research finds that those enterprises demonstrate significant considerations for Xinjiang workers' interests in terms of Halal food preparation, children's education, family reunions, vacations, and transportation fees. Those Xinjiang workers are free to leave the companies after work, hang out, have dinner with friends, go shopping, and travel. Our research finds no sign of "restriction of movement" or "surveillance" in any form. Those workers are also free to quit if they are not satisfied with their employers.

Secondly, working in enterprises outside Xinjiang is of great significance to workers from Xinjiang. Those workers are offered stable financial support and boosted incomes. For the Xinjiang workers, the salaries they receive from the enterprises account for their families' primary source of income, which provides economic security and a basis for them to pursue a better life. The meaning of their job is beyond monetary concerns. Working outside Xinjiang offers them an opportunity to try advanced technologies, modern facilities, and diverse lifestyles, broadening their horizons.

What is more, some outdated ideas, such as "education is not important" and "boys are better than girls," are shattered. On top of that, the language and vocational skills of Xinjiang ethnic minority workers have been significantly improved, which has laid a foundation for future career development. Besides, for most Xinjiang workers, working in more developed coastal provinces and cities also means that their children will have opportunities to enjoy a high-quality education. Our research finds that the children of Xinjiang workers can enjoy not only a free local, high-quality education but also halal foods, daily commute, and after-class tutorial. What impressed us most is that a young Uyghur expressed his strong desire to settle down in the Guangdong during an interview. In his own words, "What a good environment it is here. The air is moist and fresh. Green plants can be seen everywhere, and we all have a steady income here. I am going to buy a house here next year rather than go back to my hometown. So I can take my parents and children to live here and we don't have to live apart." Other interviewees plan to continue working and living where their enterprises are located in the future. This demonstrates that Xinjiang workers endorse the benefits that their jobs bring about for themselves and their families.

Finally, our research shows that these workers' rights have been fully protected in the process of employment. Regrettably, due to the accusations of "forced labor," along with a series of sanctions imposed by the West, the Xinjiang workers' legitimate rights are facing great danger. During our interview, the directors of the enterprises expressed their shared concerns about the future. They are worried that their enterprises will be labeled "forced labor" simply because they hire Xinjiang workers. This single label could result in sanctions imposed by the West, which will affect their enterprises' development and undermine their reputations. When it comes to whether they will continue to hire Xinjiang workers if their enterprises are under threats of sanctions, many of the directors chose silence. Ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang had traveled thousands of miles to work in these enterprises and got used to the new environment. Still, when they are expecting a new life, ill-intentioned sanctions are shattering their hopes and expectations and affecting their families' lives. Unfortunately, the alleged "forced labor" label and related sanctions threaten most of the Xinjiang workers' fundamental rights.
