



Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom

Statement on China

As representatives of the international community, we are deeply concerned about the significant restrictions on religious freedom in China and call on the Chinese government to respect the human rights of all individuals. Many members of religious minority groups in China – including Uighurs, Hui, and Kazakh Muslims; Tibetan Buddhists; Catholics; Protestants; and Falun Gong – face severe repression and discrimination because of their beliefs. These communities consistently report incidents in which the authorities allegedly torture, physically abuse, arbitrarily arrest, detain, sentence to prison, or harass adherents of both registered and unregistered religious groups for activities related to their religious beliefs and peaceful practices. Authorities also restrict travel and interfere with the selection, education, and veneration of religious leaders for many religious groups. We are concerned by the government’s longstanding efforts to suppress Uighur Muslim and Tibetan Buddhists’ religious, linguistic, and cultural identities.

We are particularly troubled by reports of the Chinese government’s deepening crackdown on Uighurs and members of other Muslim minority groups in China, including: undue restrictions on freedom of religion; destruction of mosques; unprecedented levels of surveillance; efforts to pressure other governments into forcibly returning Uighurs to China or to coerce family members of Uighurs still in Xinjiang to encourage Uighurs living abroad to return; and the detention of hundreds of thousands, and possibly millions, of Uighurs and members of other Muslim minority groups in facilities ranging from makeshift holding centers to prisons, ostensibly for “political re-education,” in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. There are reports of deaths in these facilities. We call on the Chinese government to release immediately all those arbitrarily detained.

We are also concerned that the government is destroying or limiting access to houses of worship, including Protestant and Catholic churches and community buildings. Authorities evicted at least 11,500 monks and nuns from Tibetan Buddhist institutes at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar since 2016. Officials also restrict access to, confiscate, and destroy Bibles, Qurans, and other religious materials. We remain concerned about the impact of amended regulations to govern the activities of all religious groups and the draft regulations on foreigners’ religious activities in China.

We strongly urge the Chinese government to protect the religious freedom of all individuals and to respect the human rights of all members of religious groups in accordance to China’s international commitments to respect freedom of religion. Such developments will only further peace, security, and stability in China and among its neighbors.

Co-Signatories: Canada, Kosovo, United Kingdom, United States of America