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Statement submitted by World Without Genocide in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statements, which are being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

Statement

Accelerating the Recovery from Covid-19: China, Transnational Repression, and Building Strong Institutions (SDG #16)

Since 2014, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have implemented mass repression targeting Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim minorities in China's Xinjiang region. Over a million people experience torture and abuse in detention camps. The Chinese state surveils Uyghurs' lives using AI, forced DNA collection, and a million security officials. The CCP has reduced Uyghur births through forced birth control and forced sterilizations. This persecution is labeled as genocide by human rights leaders and many governments, including the US.

China's persecution of the Uyghurs does not stop at China's borders. An estimated 1-1.6 million Uyghurs reside outside of China. The CCP terrorizes overseas Uyghurs into silence through surveillance, infiltration, intimidation, extradition, and rendition.

Freedom House identifies China's transnational repression as the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive in the world.

Transnational repression has serious consequences: for the victims - a sense of being unsafe even in a supposedly 'free' country, and for governments - a direct threat to the rule of law and democratic institutions.

The use of digital technology rose during the pandemic in the US and elsewhere in response to widespread public lockdowns. Uyghurs in the U.S diaspora reported that their electronic communications were under increased surveillance by the CCP and its agents.

Under 50 U.S. Code §§ 1801-1813, **electronic surveillance** is a federal offense if not conducted pursuant to a search warrant or court order.

Under 47 U.S. Code § 443(a)(1)(C), **harassment** is a crime when an individual "utilizes a telecommunications device, whether or not conversation or communication ensues, without disclosing his identity and with intent to abuse, threaten, or harass any specific person."

These protections are not adequate; changes must be implemented to secure the rule of law and democratic institutions.

First, Congress should codify a broad definition of transnational repression and ensure that laws offer widespread protection.

Second, laws must be strengthened to criminalize "individual espionage." Spying on refugees, a tactic of transnational repression, is not criminalized in the US. A new statute addressing "individual espionage" would aid prosecution of transnational repression.

Third, prohibitions on refoulement must be strengthened. According to Amnesty International, Uyghurs fear rendition and extradition. Although nearly all UN member states are party to conventions prohibiting refoulement, more than 1,500 Uyghurs have been forcibly returned, and many subsequently faced imprisonment and torture.

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