Resolution on the situation of the Uyghurs in China (China-cables)

2019/2945(RSP) - 19/12/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation of the Uyghurs in China (China Cables).

The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and ECR groups.

Since President Xi Jinping assumed power in March 2013, the human rights situation in China has continued to deteriorate. The situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where more than 10 million Muslim Uyghurs and ethnic Kazakhs live, has rapidly deteriorated in the last few years. The Chinese authorities are conducting an increasingly intense campaign of mass internment, intrusive digital surveillance (including facial recognition technology and data collection), political indoctrination and forced cultural assimilation. There is reliable information to suggest that Uyghurs and other primarily Muslim ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have been subjected to arbitrary detention, torture, egregious restrictions on religious practice and culture.

The China Cables revelations, which were released in November 2019, are an investigation into the surveillance and mass internment without charge or trial of Uyghur and other Muslim minorities in China' s Xinjiang province, based on leaked classified Chinese Government documents. The Chinese Government has consistently claimed that the camps offer voluntary education and training.

The internment camps in Xinjiang expanded rapidly after the appointment of Chen Quanguo as party leader for the region in August 2016. The Governor of Xinjiang, Shohrat Zakir, claimed in December 2019 that all 1.5 million people in re-education and internment camps had been 'returned to society' without providing any proof.

Parliament expressed its deepest concerns about the increasingly repressive regime that Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities are facing and demanded that the authorities respect their fundamental freedoms, as recommended by credible reports. It strongly condemned the sending of hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and ethnic Kazakhs to political 're-education camps' on the basis of a system of predictive policing, including for having travelled abroad or being adjudged too religiously devout.

Members called on the Chinese authorities to:

- immediately publish a list of all those in detention and all those who have been released, and to release the full details of persons disappeared in Xinjiang to their families;
- provide information about the locations and medical conditions of those detained;
- put an immediate end to the practice of arbitrary detention without charge, trial or conviction for a criminal offence of members of the Uyghur and Kazakh minorities, to close all camps and detention centres, and to immediately and unconditionally release those detained;
- immediately and unconditionally release the Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti and all other human rights defenders, activists, lawyers, journalists and petitioners detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression, and to end the ongoing crackdown involving detention, judicial harassment and intimidation;

- ensure that they have regular, unrestricted access to their families and lawyers of their choice, and to ensure that they, their families and their lawyers are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment;
- allow free, meaningful and unhindered access to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region for independent journalists and international observers;
- provide EU media outlets with the same rights and access that Chinese media outlets are afforded in the Member States;

Parliament regretted the fact that the approach taken and tools used by the EU so far have not yielded tangible progress in China's human rights record, which has only deteriorated over the last decade. An independent investigation should be carried out into the scale and nature of the internment camp system and the numerous allegations of serious and systematic human rights violations. The new Commission is urged to devise and implement a holistic EU strategy with a view to securing genuine progress on human rights in China.

The EU is also invited to consider ways of halting all exports and technology transfers of goods and services that are being used by China to extend and improve its cyber surveillance, by making effective use of appropriate export control mechanisms. Parliament called on the co-legislators, in this regard, to conclude a common position on reform of the Dual Use Regulation on the grounds of national security and human rights considerations. It stressed that it, for its part, it had further developed and strengthened the Commission's proposal on the inclusion of strict export controls for listed and non-listed cyber-surveillance technology.

Lastly, the resolution recalled the importance of the EU continuing to raise the issue of human rights violations in China, and in particular the case of minorities in Xinjiang, at every political and human rights dialogue with the Chinese authorities, in line with the EU's commitment to project a strong, clear and unified voice in its approach to the country.