

United States Senate

October 20, 2020

Mr. Thomas Bach
President
International Olympic Committee
Château de Vidy
Case postale 356
1001 Lausanne
Switzerland

Dear Mr. Bach:

In last week's edition of *The Economist*, two essays, excerpts of which I have included with this letter, documented the campaign of genocide the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is leading against the Uyghurs, a religious and ethnic minority living in the northwestern province of Xinjiang.

In Xinjiang, the CCP has established hundreds of concentration camps in order to imprison, torture and enslave Uyghurs. Uyghur children are separated from parents and are taken to orphanages where Han Chinese and CCP officials pressure them to renounce their Uyghur culture. Through torture, the CCP threatens Uyghurs to forsake their language, their faith and their culture. When they are not being tortured, they work as slave laborers in factories. Guards in the concentration camps beat those who profess belief in a god. Uyghur women are forcibly sterilized and have intrauterine devices placed inside them to prevent more births of Uyghurs. Some have abortions forcibly performed on them.

For those who are not inside the concentration camps, the CCP has built a draconian surveillance state, and have coupled Orwellian artificial intelligence and facial recognition software with local spies so that neighbors and family members are required to report "suspicious behavior," such as praying. The oppression is so far-reaching that even Uyghurs living abroad are scared to discuss the abuses in Xinjiang because Beijing continues to surveil them and may harm them and their families if they tell the truth about what is happening in the concentration camps. Uyghurs who do speak out are disowned by their friends and families in Xinjiang to avoid association and potential retribution.

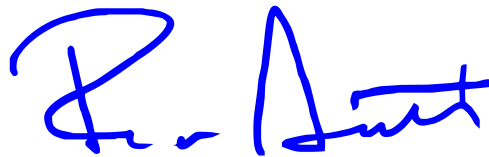
Mr. Thomas Bach
October 20, 2020
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Communist China is committing genocide against the Uyghurs, and it doesn't end there. Recent reports indicate that the CCP is attempting the same thing in Tibet, coercing hundreds of thousands of people in Tibet into mass labor camps.

I am sending you these essays because Beijing is preparing to host to the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. Under no circumstance should Communist China be allowed to host the world's greatest athletic competition while simultaneously holding its Muslim citizens in concentration camps. General Secretary Xi and the CCP do not respect human dignity and refuse to abide by the principles of Olympism. How can the International Olympic Committee (IOC) turn a blind eye to genocide? How can the international community be comfortable giving the regime a platform to whitewash its crimes?

Freedom-loving nations around the world must come out and say that we will not stand for this. The IOC must come out and say it will not prop up a regime that is committing genocide on its people. I urge you to immediately begin working to find a new host city for the 2022 Olympics - one that respects human rights. Do not repeat the mistake of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. For the sake of the Uyghurs, for the sake of the safety of the athletes and the attendees, and for the sake of basic human dignity, move the 2022 Games out of Communist China.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Rick Scott
United States Senator

cc: International Olympic Committee Executive Board Members

“If I speak out, they will torture my family”: voices of Uyghurs in exile

The Economist

John Phipps

October 15, 2020

Let’s call her Miryam. She wouldn’t let me print her name but she told me the same thing as everyone else. During the spring of 2017, in Xinjiang in western China, people began to disappear.

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This was worrying, but not in itself a reason to panic. Uyghurs in Xinjiang had endured crackdowns before.

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Then her mother called, only days after their last conversation, sounding anxious and inhibited. She told her daughter not, in any circumstances, to come home that summer.

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Miryam had grown up in a world of fear and suspicion. Self-censorship and caution were the rule. Even behind closed doors, the family spoke about politics and religion in veiled terms. They took particular care on the phone, not knowing who might be listening. For years her mother had messaged to check that she was doing her “exercises”, a euphemism for Islamic prayers. Miryam knew that the situation now was different, but she also knew that she couldn’t ask about it directly.

In July her parents called again. They had a short, strangled conversation until her mother said to her directly, “don’t contact us unless we contact you.” After that, there was silence.

By the summer of 2017 Xinjiang had become a dark zone, with almost no news coming in or out, even among the whisper networks of exiles and emigrants. But as the year drew to a close, rumours began to emerge. Over cups of tea in out-of-the-way cafés, Miryam and her friends would meet and discuss them. Arrests were being made on a mass scale. Thousands, maybe tens of thousands of people had been interned. Police were on every corner. A massive surveillance programme was under way. Mosques were being closed.

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As the months passed, more reports emerged of the treatment of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs and other Muslim minorities in the region. Working, or sitting on a crowded bus, Miryam would be worrying about her family thousands of miles away. She read every article she could find about Xinjiang and the Uyghurs, and spent hours each day scrolling through social media, scouring for clues. She hunted down every rumour and every lead. Across the world hundreds of Uyghurs were doing the same thing. It was in May 2018 that she first saw the pictures. A cache of images was being rapidly shared online and they struck her so forcefully that she remembers the exact

circumstances – a sunny day, the sound of construction across the road. Grainy satellite photos featured similar-looking building complexes from across Xinjiang: the facilities were huge, with barracked living quarters, tall fences and guard towers in the corners. She knew what the buildings were as soon as she saw them.

The Xinjiang internment system is a vast infrastructure project, years in the making, involving large-scale construction and a three-fold increase in police numbers. When the stories first emerged, they were greeted with incredulity. Over time journalists, academics and human-rights workers have confirmed them through painstaking efforts, charting tenders for government contracts and matching satellite imagery against known geographical landmarks in a territory the size of western Europe to track the building work. Some internees have been released; only a few are brave enough to speak out. Piece by piece, an overwhelming body of evidence has been compiled. A million or more people may have been put in these institutions. The Chinese call them “vocational-training schools”. To anyone else, they look like prisons.

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The Uyghurs I encountered in London were constantly looking over their shoulders. At a well-hidden Uyghur restaurant in the centre of town I had dinner with a group of Uyghurs and Kazakhs whom I had already met a number of times. One of them, a woman in her mid-40s, was sitting opposite me. We ordered food and made small talk for 20 minutes. But when we came to the “situation” – the word which Uyghurs often use to refer to events in Xinjiang – she looked at me with panicked eyes.

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Looking the other way, she slid her message over the table to me. I turned it over. It read: “I DON’T WANT TO TALK WITH PEOPLE HERE.”

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In the basement I asked the group if they were afraid of Chinese spies. The woman said that “there’s always spies”. But she played down the idea of moles among their own number. “We’re a very strong community,” she insisted.

The man on her right disagreed. He told me that community members were sometimes contacted on WhatsApp by people claiming to know their relatives. Often they’d be sent photos or videos of their families, which also contained figures resembling police officers. They would then be asked to send regular reports to Xinjiang about what other Uyghurs abroad were doing. The threat was clear.

It’s hard for Uyghur exiles to shake off the feeling of constantly being watched, because in Xinjiang there are eyes everywhere. Facial-recognition software is ubiquitous and checkpoints common. Security cameras hang over doorways even in the poorest settlements and invigilate worshippers on prayer mats in mosques. The police hold biometric data, including dna samples, for vast swathes of the population. In some parts of Xinjiang all cars are installed with the Chinese equivalent of gps, so that they can be

constantly tracked. These panoptic technologies are combined with constant human surveillance. Police are present on every street.

All the information gathered is fed into the Integrated Joint Operations Platform, the main system of surveillance in Xinjiang, which processes data on every aspect of an individual's life. The ultimate aim is predictive policing: the ability to identify in advance anyone whom the authorities might deem a threat before they've even acted suspiciously. It's a blunt tool. In Xinjiang the definition of "extremist" tendencies can encompass owning a Koran, having an "abnormal" beard (code for "long"), giving up smoking or calling your child a name such as Muhammad.

Uyghurs who live elsewhere in China are subject to intense scrutiny too. I met a man who had arrived in London at the end of 2018. He had left Xinjiang many years earlier for a job on China's eastern seaboard. His local police station in China held a mass of data about him: his height and weight, his fingerprint, his blood type, dna samples, the mould of his face, the lacework of his iris, the unique pattern of vibrations his voice makes. Yet they collected no such information on the majority ethnic Han Chinese among whom this Uyghur lived.

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He has two relatives in the camps, but can't contact his family to ask after them: "Anything I wrote on WeChat could directly threaten them." He said he would never speak out in the media: "They will torture my family." In Britain he considered himself free, but even here he won't attend events that celebrate Uyghur culture. "There are many Chinese spies," he says. "If I go there, the next day my family will disappear." The more recently someone has emigrated from China, the more fearful they tend to be. But newcomers to Britain are often deemed untrustworthy: people wonder what deal they may have made to be allowed out. Kerim, now in his 50s, was detained by Chinese police in Xinjiang during a crackdown in 1994. During his six-month internment he was repeatedly hung from the ceiling while the police flogged him. Twenty-five years on, the ligaments in his wrists are still distended and swollen. After his release, he fled to Norway before moving his family to Britain in 2016.

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Other repressive regimes might be wary of targeting people with an international profile. But a network of foreign contacts is precisely what China fears. In February 2020 a database of more than 300 Uyghur detainees in Xinjiang was leaked to the international press, revealing why these individuals had been detained. Crimes punishable by internment included "visiting one of 26 suspicious countries", "applied for passport" and "accidentally clicked on an overseas website on their phone". Any engagement with the world beyond China is deemed suspicious.

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The Chinese authorities are taking no chances with the Uyghurs. Of the 500 or so Uyghurs in Britain today, only four or five have even a slender public profile. The effort

trained on a single individual serves a wider purpose. When one Uyghur is threatened, the whole community grows watchful.

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Abdullah's uncle was detained by the authorities in late 2017 after the school he taught at reported him for praying at work. It's impossible to know exactly what happened to him after that. But there are enough survivor testimonies, as well as an extraordinary cache of secret party documents leaked to international news organisations, to piece together a picture of the experiences of the hundreds of thousands of people whose voices we have no way of hearing.

The Chinese government uses a number of euphemisms to refer to its detention facilities: "transformation-through-education centres", "legal-system schools" and "rehabilitation-correction centres". It isn't clear whether these indicate distinct types of institution or different levels of security. Monitored by cameras and guarded over by armed officers in watchtowers, they are prisons in all but name. Some centres allow internees to keep their phones, feed them well and teach them about elements of Chinese culture. A very few even let attendees go home each night. Abdullah's uncle was not at one of these.

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Most days he would probably have been taken to a classroom, where he might have been shackled to a desk. Detainees are forced to learn elementary Mandarin, if they don't speak it already, and declaim slogans such as "I am Chinese" and "I love Xi Jinping". Some facilities simply force internees to sit still on stools all day, surrounded by guards, and watch repetitive tv broadcasts about the importance of the Chinese Communist Party and the greatness of the Chinese president. Abdullah's uncle would have listened to lectures exhorting him to renounce his past, his religion and his identity. Protocols set out in leaked documents recommend that internees should be allowed monitored contact with their families by phone, but almost none of those who have survived report being allowed to make calls. For the majority of his internment, Abdullah's uncle seems to have had no access to the outside world.

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Officials are supposed to monitor the "ideological education" of detainees. Former inmates testify that beatings are routine. Reports from Xinjiang and elsewhere in China tell of guards using stress positions including the "tiger chair" – a seat, sometimes spiked, in which prisoners are chained and forced to sit for days. Many female detainees have said they were raped by guards, as have some men. Survivors have testified to a mandatory regime of pills and injections, treatments that mirror those given to dissidents and prisoners of conscience elsewhere in China. Former inmates have observed changes in their fertility as a result of the medication: women stop getting their periods; men become impotent. This seems to be yet another element of an enormous, state-backed sterilisation programme that has been under way in Xinjiang for several years. Perhaps inevitably, given all they have endured, some

internees have attempted to commit suicide.

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The younger generation is the final frontier in China's war against Uyghur identity. Increasing numbers of schools in Xinjiang teach in Mandarin; some ban children from using their native tongue even at break times. There have been reports of books written in Uyghur being burned and Uyghur signage has been removed from many public places. Praying at home is a crime punishable by imprisonment and many mosques have been turned into mere tourist sites.

Even in Britain some people are afraid of reprisals against their families in China if they are found to be sending their children to the Uyghur school. "This is just for educational purposes," one volunteer insists. "This is not political." But in hushed tones he worries what may have happened to young Uyghurs who came from Xinjiang to London in the past and volunteered at the school, before returning to China. Thousands of miles from Xinjiang, the political calculations continue.

Orphaned by the state: How Xinjiang's gulag tears families apart

The Economist

October 17, 2020

For Zumrat Dawut's three children, Fridays were terrifying. That was the day when officials would question students at their schools in Urumqi, the regional capital of Xinjiang in China's far west. The interrogators were looking for clues about their lives at home. They wanted to know whether parents prayed or used Islamic greetings at home, or talked to the children about the prophet Muhammad. The information they gleaned could result in a family member being sent to a "vocational training centre", the government's euphemism for a camp in Xinjiang's new gulag.

As Ms Dawut describes it, ethnic Uyghurs like her were under constant watch. Her children suffered the effects as much as their parents. Every Monday they were not in school she had to take them to the courtyard of her block of flats to watch the raising of China's flag, whether in freezing winter temperatures or in blazing summer heat. Participants were careful to look cheerful. Not only were the officials watching for signs of dissatisfaction; every family had to keep an eye on ten neighbouring families, and report anything suspicious by putting notes in a box at each ceremony.

Ms Dawut says that before she and her children fled to America last year (they are seeking asylum there), she spent two months in one of the new camps where more than 1m people, mostly Uyghurs, have been sent without trial since 2017. Her offences: receiving calls from Pakistan where her husband is from; visiting Pakistan years earlier; accepting money from a foreigner (a family friend who lived in China); and securing an American visa. She was put in a cell so packed that inmates had to take turns sleeping. Her children feared that if they misspoke during their Friday interrogations, she would be sent back.

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The work groups' records use a chilling official terminology to refer to children whose parents are being held by the state. They are called dankun ("single-hardship") or shuangkun ("double-hardship"), depending on whether one or both parents have been sent away to a vocational-training camp in the new gulag, a regular prison or another kind of detention facility.

Yarkand, a county in Kashgar prefecture on the southern rim of the Taklimakan desert, has about 900,000 residents. Of them, roughly 100,000 are children in grades one to six (ie, aged between about seven and 12). In 2018 more than 9,500 of these students were recorded at one point as being single-hardship or double-hardship (822 were of the double kind). All of those children were Uyghurs, apart from 11 who were of Kazakh or Tajik ethnicity—two mostly Muslim groups whose members account for less than 1% of the population of Yarkand. Not a single Han child had a parent in custody. These data, if extrapolated across Xinjiang, imply that around 250,000 of the region's nearly 3m Uyghurs under the age of 15 have had one or both parents interned. As Mr Zenz notes in a paper published as *The Economist* went to press, 880,500 children had been placed in boarding facilities by the end of 2019, an increase of nearly 383,000 since 2017.

The tearing apart of Uyghur families has been so rapid that local governments have struggled to accommodate the surge in the number of children who have lost parents to internment. Indeed, the documents show that some double-hardship children have been placed in institutions meant for children whose parents have died or left them. Governments are rapidly expanding and transforming primary schools into boarding facilities, many of them with high-security fences. Even pre-kindergartens are being adapted for boarding. Infants only a few months old have been placed in them.

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Assaults on family life continue after children have left school. When Uyghur girls grow old enough to wed (the legal age for which is 20 in China), they can expect to be cajoled by officials into marrying Han men. Nowadays refusal can incur retribution for the woman's family. Even as the government eases its limits on family size elsewhere in China, in Xinjiang it is tightening such controls, imposing fines and other sanctions on Uyghur couples who have more than two children, or three if they live in the countryside. Uyghur women are being fitted with intrauterine devices at a rate far higher than in China as a whole, according a report in June by the Associated Press, citing findings by Mr Zenz.

Women with three children are at greatest risk of being forcibly sterilised. Ms Dawut says she was subjected to such treatment in 2018. After she recounted her ordeal at an American-government panel last year on the sidelines of the un, media in China released a video of Ms Dawut's brother. In it he said she not been to one of the camps and had not been sterilised. She says she is willing to be examined medically to prove the latter. But the statistics are telling enough: birth rates among Uyghurs in Xinjiang have plummeted, official figures show. In Kashgar and the neighbouring prefecture of

Hotan, they fell by more than 60% between 2015 and 2018.

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The government's policy of sending hundreds of thousands of Han officials and civilians to stay in Uyghurs' homes is another disturbing example of how Xinjiang's Han-dominated government (under Communist rule, the region's leader has always been Han) is chiselling away at Uyghur family life. Officials call it "becoming kin". Han "relatives" stay as often as every month with Uyghur families for ten days at a time (the stays often impose costly burdens on the Uyghurs, even though the "relatives" are supposed to help with provisions). Hosts have to show enthusiasm, or face repercussions. Ms Dawut's then ten-year-old daughter was assigned a 20-year-old man as kin. She shows a photo of the official drinking tea in her home, smiling, seated next to her child. She weeps as she describes how uncomfortable this relationship between the young man and her daughter made her feel.

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Ms Dawut says she is still haunted by her experience in a camp. Every day she would gather in a classroom with women from several other cells, where they would have to study "Xi Jinping Thought". As they left, guards would ask them, "Is there a God?" A "yes" would earn a beating. Then they would ask if there was a Xi Jinping, Ms Dawut recalls, in tears. "They said, 'Your God cannot get you out of here, but Xi Jinping has done so much for you.'"