

PUBLIC CALL FOR IAF TO SUSPEND ACCREDITATION RECOGNITION FOR BODIES SUPPORTING CHINESE OPPRESSION OF UYGHUR MUSLIMS

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Across the world, human rights organizations have outlined the oppressive, inhuman treatment of minority Uyghur Muslims within China, who are forcibly detained in the Xinjiang region of that country and forced into “re-education camps.” The bulk of these actions occur in the Xinjiang region known as the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, or XUAR. Uyghur Muslims are then forced into labor, sexual abuse and rape¹, religious persecution, and slavery.

In many cases, Uyghurs are forcibly migrated from camps to factories operated by major Chinese manufacturing firms, in violation of international human rights and International Labor Organization (ILO) regulations. Nevertheless, these companies then hold various ISO certifications accredited by IAF member bodies, often attesting to the “occupational health and safety” of the worksites.

During these audits, which can include ISO 45001, it appears that IAF member ABs and their CBs ignore human rights abuses and nevertheless certify the companies, allowing them to market their operations as being compliant and consistent with ISO standards and international law. Instead, these companies may not comply at all, and the CBs and ABs issuing these certificates may be – either intentionally, or by omission – helping prop up a horrific international human rights scandal.

Recently, the United States issued sanctions against a number of China-based companies found to have been involved in the forced labor and abuse of Uyghurs in China. This includes, for example, the KTK Group which operates out of Changzhou China, and which is certified to ISO 45001 and other standards by Guardian Independent Certification (GIC). That CB is then accredited by UKAS and JAS-ANZ, under the IAF banner. According to research conducted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, KTK was found to have been the beneficiary of forced labor provided from the Xinjiang camps:

From 2014 to mid-2018, Xinjiang’s Nilka county transferred 390 people to work in other provinces of China. In the first 6 months of 2019, the county transferred 551 people out of Xinjiang. That included workers sent to Changzhou, Jiangsu, dozens at a time. In July 2019, 41 Uyghur workers were transferred to KTK Group in Changzhou.²

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2021/02/03/behind-the-camps-gates-rape-and-sexual-violence-against-uyghur-women/>

² <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/uyghurs-sale>

The IAF's CertSearch database reveals other companies specifically within the XUAR. According to CertSearch, companies holding IAF-matrixed certifications include Xinjiang Mushen Machinery Co. Ltd, certified to ISO 45001 by China United Certification, and accredited by CNAS. The company Xinjiang Ashele Copper Industry Co. holds OHSAS 18001 issued by China Quality Mark Certification Group / IQNet, and claims accreditation by CNAS as well; that certificate is specifically for a company located within the XUAR.

Within the AS9100 scheme, the IAQG has issued multiple accredited certificates to aerospace organizations operating within the XUAR, including Xinyang Yicheng Aviation Technology Co., Xinxiang Pingyuan Aviation Supplies Co., and XinJiang Joinworld Company. The bodies issuing these certificates include Performance Review Institute, Bureau Veritas and SGS UK, all accredited by IAF members.

The IAS-accredited certification body Otabu openly markets its services in Xinjiang specifically, as seen on their website at <https://www.otabuglobal.com/st/iso-9001-2015-certification-xinjiang-china>. IAS is a member of the IAF, and its senior executive Mohan Sabaratnam was – ironically – granted a leadership role in the IAF's Taskforce Against Fraudulent Behavior.

According to research by Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, the XUAR holds over 10 million oppressed Uyghurs, and revealed "state-engineering human rights disaster" and horrific conditions. It furthermore alleged the XUAR is part and parcel of China's "Belt and Road" policy, which has been viewed with suspicion by democratic nations.

The XUAR is a key zone of the Belt and Road Initiative and a region rich in natural resources, [anthropologist Darren Byler] pointed out, and control over this Northwestern area is essential to [China General Secretary] Xi Jinping's ambitions. Byler described extensive use of cameras, digital media and biometric checkpoints, prisons, internment camps and, more recently, coerced labor to accomplish tight control over the Uyghurs. Byler also explained how, since the spring of 2017, the local police instituted a point-based ranking system for Uyghurs that assessed, for example, whether he or she owned religious tracts, his/her daily prayer practices, and ties to foreign countries.

In the internment camps themselves, the detainees undergo boot camp-style ideological and Chinese language training in conditions akin to medium security prisons. Pictures of blindfolded captives with their hands tied behind their backs, guards with tasers and weapons, all belied the Chinese government's characterization of these camps as benign, vocational training centers.³

Nevertheless, the head of the IAF member body CNAS (China National Accreditation Service), Xiao Jianhua, gave a speech in September of 2017 entitled "International Accreditation and Mutual Recognition and "The Belt and Road Accreditation Cooperation, Bringing Out the Best in Each Other," in which he praised the Belt and Road initiative, and tied its success directly with the work of IAF and IEC:

IAF, ILAC and other regional accreditation cooperation organizations have built up multilateral mutual recognition agreement for international accreditation, promoted extensive admission and utilization of accreditation and mutual recognition, constantly developed and coordinated accreditation technologies, and

³ <https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/human-rights-crisis-xinjiang-uyghur-autonomous-region>

formed a far-ranging international cooperation network, which has laid a solid international accreditation system foundation for the nations alongside "The Belt and Road" to carry out accreditation cooperation.

Accreditation cooperation among the nation alongside "The Belt and Road ", interactive communication and joint development, and interaction and exchanges among the nations alongside "The Belt and Road " through accreditation cooperation can not only promote development of accreditation system of the nation alongside "The Belt and Road ", serve economic and trading development of such nations, but also enrich and promote multilateral cooperation mechanisms for international accreditation. All three moves can bring out the best in each other.⁴

As you are aware, Mr. Xiao is also the President of your own organization, the IAF, and has held powerful roles within the IAF for many years prior to ascending to his current role. The IAF can thus trace its responsibility to the Uyghur humanitarian disaster through its own leadership roster.

These details provide a damning picture that the IAF, through its regional partner APAC and the various accreditation body members, are helping promote and sustain a massive human rights abuse program, based on forced labor, repression of religious freedom, and sexual slavery.

Oxebridge calls on the IAF to suspend membership for any AB or CB operating in the XUAR region, to suspend all peer assessments of such members, and to forcefully denounce the Chinese government for its oppression of Uyghur Muslims.

Respectfully submitted,



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⁴ www.cnas.org.cn