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WUC PRESIDENT SPEAKS ON ORGAN HARVESTING AT ROUNDTABLE IN THE UK PARLIAMENT

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On 13 December 2017, WUC President Dolkun Isa participated in a roundtable discussion in the UK Parliament on organ harvesting in China. The roundtable was co-hosted by Members of the UK Parliament Jim Shannon and Fiona Bruce and aimed to raise awareness of the practice of forced organ harvesting in China. It assembled a panel of expert speakers to speak on this important issue and to discuss what steps the UK government could take to stop this barbaric practice.

WUC President, Dolkun Isa, participated in the event as an expert speaker. He spoke about the use of organ harvesting against the Uyghur people in particular and put the issue in context of the wider campaign of repression and assimilation against the Uyghur people. With thousands of Uyghurs unjustly detained in Chinese prisons and 're-education' centres and hundreds subjected to enforced disappearance, Uyghur remain vulnerable to forced organ harvesting. Dolkun Isa informed the participants that it was the lack of transparency and accountability of the Chinese police in their treatment of Uyghurs that facilitated a culture of impunity and allowed organ harvesting to flourish. Isa concluded his speech by calling on this UK government to hold the Chinese government accountable for organ harvesting, saying, "when the international community remains silent, organ harvesting flourishes and the cycle of violence, dehumanisation and impunity continues".

Read the full speech below:

Thank you all for inviting me to speak at this roundtable on the very important topic of organ harvesting. It has been great to hear from all of the speakers here today; their words have been equally shocking and informative.

My statement today will focus on putting the practice of organ harvesting in the context of the Chinese government's repressive policies towards Uyghurs. Organ harvesting must be viewed in the context of a widespread campaign of repression and control against the Uyghur people, resulting in the wrongful mass incarceration and enforced disappearances of many Uyghurs.

Organ harvesting is a particularly egregious crime. It violates the victims and causes further pain and distress to their families. It strips the humanity of the victims, who are treated as a collection of parts to be bought and sold for profit. Even after death, it disrespects the victims and deprives them of the right to decide what is done with their remains. At its core, organ harvesting is dehumanizing and brutal crime.

As was mentioned by previous speakers, prisoners are the most at risk for organ harvesting in China. This is dangerous for the Uyghur people, who are experiencing an unprecedented crackdown on their right to peacefully practice their own religion, use the Uyghur language in schools and freely express themselves. Mass arrests of Uyghurs, on unfounded or unspecified charges, have put thousands in prisons and re-education centres. Invasive and overbearing new security measures such as 'predictive policing', constant surveillance online and through security cameras and countless roadblocks and checkpoints in cities in East Turkestan, ethnically profile Uyghurs and further exacerbate the problem.

Relatives of those arrested are often not informed of what their loved one is charged with, what prison they are being held in, or when they are set to be released. In this uncertainty and vacuum of information, with no meaningful accountability or notice about the prisoner's well-being, that organ harvesting is carried out with impunity.

We are also deeply disturbed by reports of the Chinese authorities collecting blood samples from the Uyghur population in East Turkestan. There is a dual purpose to this. On the one hand, collecting blood samples allows the Chinese government to establish a genetic database of the Uyghur people to further monitor, control and repress them. This genetic information also facilitates organ harvesting, making it easier to compare blood types and compatibility of potential Uyghur victims.

Even more concerning are the hundreds of Uyghurs who have disappeared at the hands of the Chinese police. After unrest in Urumqi in 2009, hundreds of Uyghurs disappeared in Chinese custody. Despite efforts by their families and the international community to find out what happened to the disappeared, the Chinese government has not released any information or acknowledged their disappearances. Recently, the Chinese government has been pressuring other governments to return Uyghur refugees and asylum seekers. When they are forcibly returned to China, many of them disappear. Most recently, this was the case with 23 Uyghur students, who were returned to China from Egypt and have since disappeared. We have strong reason to believe that many of those who have disappeared have died in Chinese custody and have had their organs harvested and sold.

These people are subjected to a final indignity of having their organs harvested without their consent, like stripping a car for its parts. Not only were they subjected to one of these most serious human rights violations, deprived of their freedom and had their lives taken from them, even after death they are not permitted to rest in peace. Their bodies and physical integrity are desecrated for profit.

Therefore, organ harvesting remains a major issue for the World Uyghur Congress. As long as the Chinese government, police and security forces are able to act with impunity and detain thousands

of Uyghurs without procedure or accountability, the practice of organ harvesting of Uyghur people will continue. It is the hope of those who engage in this barbaric practice that the Uyghurs who disappear or who die in prison are forgotten. In response, we must continue to raise their cases and to demand justice and accountability.

To do this, we need the help of national governments and the international community. We therefore call of the government of the United Kingdom and the international community to continue to publically raise the cases of those who have disappeared, to denounce the repression of the Uyghur people and to demand answers from the Chinese government.

China is sensitive to criticism and the words and acknowledgement of other states has an impact. When the international community remains silent, organ harvesting flourishes and the cycle of violence, dehumanisation and impunity continues. The Uyghur people look to you, the international community, to speak up on their behalf and help to end the horrific crime of organ harvesting.

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