

## COALITION TO ADVANCE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN CHINA

July 15, 2019

Dear CEOs of companies doing business with China,

As an initiative of the Coalition to Advance Religious Freedom in China, we the undersigned write to you regarding the Chinese government's growing utilization of technology to suppress the basic human rights of its citizens. The coalition is a group of diverse civil society organizations that are united to advocate for religious freedom and the respect of human dignity for all people in China. We petition your companies to take steps to ensure that you are not enabling these ongoing human rights abuses. We urge you to not follow in the steps of past companies, which turned a blind eye to the atrocities of the Holocaust and was complicit in providing technology that the Nazis employed in identifying individuals for extermination.

The Chinese Communist Party is implementing a nationwide campaign of control and persecution, including the "Sinification of Religion," affecting religious believers of all faiths and identities, including Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, Hui Muslims, Turkic peoples including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and others.

Clamping down on internet freedom, the Chinese government has created the "Great Firewall" that restricts the free flow of information into and out of China. The Chinese government attempts to whitewash its image on the internet by blocking websites and taking down social media posts that are potentially critical of their policies. Many U.S. businesses are required to host user information on local servers in China and submit to intrusive inspections by Chinese security agencies. The censorship and lack of accountability on the part of China's government leads to corruption, the theft of billions of dollars of American companies' intellectual property, and the exposure of critics to reprisal from the government. This repressive environment makes a mockery of the free flow of information necessary for free markets and prevention of government abuse of individual rights.

In his May 2019 report on surveillance and human rights, the UN Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression outlines concerns around facial recognition technology, noting that "perhaps no other environment demonstrates the comprehensive intrusiveness of these technologies better than China." He continues: "Credible reporting suggests that the Government of China, using a combination of facial recognition technology and surveillance cameras throughout the country, "looks exclusively for Uighurs based on their appearance and keeps records of their comings and goings for search and review"."<sup>1</sup>

We state unreservedly our outrage that international companies are complicit in supplying and servicing the technology used in the massive archipelago of secret detention centers and the

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<sup>1</sup> Surveillance and human rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (Advance Edited Version), 28 May 2019, para. 12

total-surveillance police-state throughout the Uyghur Region. Business as usual cannot continue when an estimated [1.5 million](#), and possibly [three million](#), Uyghur men and women are being dragged away from their homes and families to “re-education camps.” There, they face brainwashing and torture in an attempt by the Chinese government to wipe every vestige of Uyghur culture and religious beliefs from their homeland. The Xinjiang Public Security Bureau’s Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) collects and synthesizes data from a vast network of CCTV, security checkpoints, “wifi-sniffers” tracking IP addresses, DNA collected without consent, and facial-recognition and racial-profiling software. The implementation of this system is widely seen as a precursor to a country-wide roll out of this incredibly intrusive monitoring system. China also is exporting some of this technology to nations such as Syria, Russia, and Venezuela that are currently under U.S. sanctions, exporting tools of despotism to these already repressive regimes.

In light of this situation, we call on your companies to thoroughly review all business dealings in China and communicate to Chinese government, academic, and business partners an affirmative public declaration that you will not help them obtain or develop technology that is directly utilized in some of the worst modern-day human rights abuses. We recognize the potential for your companies to help China’s society flourish if you decide to take leadership on these vital human rights issues.

We ask that you adopt the following three steps to proactively adopt a corporate social responsibility strategy for the Chinese market:

- Form an action plan to prevent complicity in equipping Chinese detention camps, security forces, or Chinese companies with technology that will be used to strip the people of China of their basic human rights
- Refuse to censor your website or social platform’s content for the Chinese government or surrender sensitive user information
- Hold strategic meetings with civil society stakeholders and technology and human rights activists engaged on these issues who can provide valuable insight that can be adopted into your action plans

American companies should not repeat the mistakes of past generations. By taking a proactive approach towards human rights, your companies can avoid the stain of complicity in human rights abuses and leave a legacy of promoting freedom and a better business environment in China. We urge you to use your freedom to stand for the universal rights of people facing brutal oppression in China.

At your earliest convenience, we request a meeting so that representatives of our Coalition can discuss these vital matters with you.

Most sincerely,

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China Aid Association

Greg Mitchell  
Co-Chair  
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Omer Kanat  
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