



DEC 30 2014

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer
President
World Uyghur Congress
350-1420 K Street Northwest
Washington DC 2005
USA

Mr. Kayum Masimov
President
Uyghur Canadian Society
615-5450 Queen-Mary Road
Montréal QC H3X 3V3

Dear Ms. Kadeer and Mr. Masimov:

Thank you for your letter of September 16, 2014, concerning the human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canada's foreign policy and a priority in our long-standing relationship with China. Canada takes principled positions on important issues to promote freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The Government of Canada remains seriously concerned about the human rights situation in China, including ongoing restrictions on ethnic minorities' unique cultures, languages and religions. We are deeply troubled by the security response in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region along with reports of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and harsh treatment of political dissidents, human rights defenders, religious worshippers and ethnic minorities.

Canadian officials remain in contact with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Bangkok as well as with the Thai government regarding the many Uyghurs who remain in detention in Thailand. The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development has also recently raised the issue of detained Uyghurs with the Malaysian government as well, following reports of hundreds of Uyghurs being arrested in Malaysia.

On the subject of refugees, Canada has continued to call on Thailand and its regional neighbours to respect their obligations under the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, notably, adherence to the principle of non-refoulement and ensuring that all refugee repatriation is guided by humanitarian principles, and is voluntary, safe, informed and dignified.

Canada has raised and will continue to raise its concerns with Chinese officials using both bilateral and multilateral channels. Both Prime Minister Stephen Harper and I have spoken publicly on respecting human rights and freedom of religion and belief in China including with respect to Uyghurs. We will continue to do so.

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I can assure you that Canada will continue to encourage China to adopt and implement international standards on human rights including freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression and freedom of association.

Thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Baird".

John Baird, P.C., M.P.