



[China Retaliates Against U.S. Sanctions of Officials Involved in Beijing's Mistreatment of Uyghurs](#)

Earlier this week, China announced sanctions would be levied against U.S. officials that have spoken out against the Chinese government's treatment of Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang province. Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, in addition to the Trump administration's Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, are among the officials that have been sanctioned. The move is widely viewed as a tit-for-tat measure after the U.S. announced sanctions on various Chinese officials in Xinjiang, including the Chinese Communist Party's secretary for the region. During Beijing's crackdown in Xinjiang, Chinese authorities have arbitrarily detained over one million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other Muslim minorities. Detainees are housed in facilities, and the U.S. State Department contends that they have been subjected to torture, forced labor, physical and sexual abuse, and death.

Late last week, U.S. sanctions were placed on top Chinese officials involved in the persecution of Muslim minorities in Xinjiang province. Among the officials sanctioned were Xinjiang's Communist Party Secretary Chen Quanguo, who is also regarded as the architect of China's repressive policies in Tibet. This round of sanctions is significant for its direct targeting of Chinese Communist Party officials, as previous sanctions have stopped short of this mark. After the sanctions were announced, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian condemned U.S. interference in China's "internal matters" and warned that "reciprocal measures" would be taken, hinting at the forthcoming sanctions on U.S. officials.

A spokeswoman for China's foreign ministry said that the sanctions on U.S. officials would come into force on July 13th, but it was not immediately clear what the sanctions would entail. It is thought that they would be similar to the sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Chinese officials, which were visa restrictions and asset freezing. Beijing also warned that further measures from the United States would be met with an equal reaction. In response to the sanctions, Sen. Marco Rubio tweeted "I guess they don't like me" in reference to the leadership in Beijing. The move is largely symbolic, given the U.S. officials' personal financial and legal exposure in China is limited.

China has rejected all criticism of its policies in Xinjiang and considers the matter to be an internal affair. Beijing views the Muslim minorities in the province as a threat to national security due to perceived radicalization, although there has been little evidence in support of this. The U.S. State Department alleges that in addition to arbitrary detention in "re-education camps," Uyghurs in Xinjiang have been subjected to mass surveillance and forced hospitality for communist party officials. Despite this, a recent excerpt from former national security advisor John Bolton's book claimed that President Trump believed Beijing's treatment of Uyghurs was "entirely the right thing." Tensions between China and the U.S. have risen in recent months over disagreements on COVID-19, the status of Hong Kong, military activity in the South China Sea, and more. The announcement of sanctions from both sides is unlikely to defuse the situation and threatens to ramp up animosity from each party.