

Oral statement to the 53rd session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide

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Italics not read

On 24 November 2022, the *Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)*, released a rare, [historic decision](#) on the *human rights* situation in Xinjiang under its Urgent Action and Early Warning procedure. For the first time ever, the CERD, *a UN Treaty Body*, referred a matter to the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect.

Yet, over the past seven months, we regret that the joint UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect has neither acknowledged such referral nor acted upon it publicly.

In its decision, the CERD echoes findings of the [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#), the [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#), Treaty Bodies and [Special Procedures](#), and urges China to immediately release all those held or disappeared in detention facilities in Xinjiang, fully review its [national security legal framework](#), and stop intimidating Uyghurs abroad.

On 31 August 2022, the OHCHR concluded to the possible commission of crimes against humanity *against Uyghurs and Muslim minorities*. Earlier, the [UN Special Rapporteur on slavery](#) had also found that some instances of Uyghur forced labour ‘may amount to enslavement as a crime against humanity, *meriting a further independent analysis*’.

In December 2021, the [Uyghur Tribunal](#) – *a people’s tribunal headed by Milosevic’s former prosecutor* – concluded that the Chinese government committed genocide via measures to prevent Uyghur births, *and the crimes against humanity of forcible transfer, imprisonment, torture, rape or other sexual violence, enforced sterilisation, persecution, and enforced disappearance*.

Seldom has the gap between the breadth of UN documentation and the lack of action by the Human Rights Council been so flagrant. Each and every government’s decision to stay silent, or to block accountability, hampers the credibility of this Council, and entrenches China’s impunity for atrocity crimes.

The CERD concludes its decision with a crucial message: it ‘reminds all States of their responsibility to cooperate to bring to an end through lawful means to any serious breach of human rights obligations, *in particular serious violations of the peremptory norm of the prohibition of racial discrimination*.’

The international community failed Rwandans in 1994, and built its genocide-prevention architecture on the promise of ‘never again’. Let us not fail again.

Thank you.