

American public complicit in Chinese atrocities

By William Carrington

staff writer

Over the last few years, more and more articles have been published about the various human rights abuses going on in China, and as exposure has risen, so have the Chinese efforts to suppress freedom of speech. Despite wide abuses taking place across China, the average American knows little about the atrocities taking place on the other side of the world, and knows even less about America's complicity in them.

Since 2014, China has been detaining many of its own citizens, most of them falling under the muslim minority culture of "Uyghurs," but those detained also include Turkic Muslims, Christians, and Kazakhstanis. The U.S. estimates that three million Chinese citizens have been detained in the Chinese "re-education camps." If these numbers are accurate, Uyghur detention camps may be the largest mass incarceration since the Holocaust.

There are an estimated 40+ "re-education" camps in China at this time, and the conditions within them aren't entirely certain to the outside world. The BBC published an article in June of this year with pictures of a propaganda-friendly, clean, and most importantly, extremely secure facility, and China reinforced to the world that their camps were labor camps.

How- ever, it's im- portant to also note the first hand accounts of the abuses suffered within the camps. Another article published by the BBC in February reports claims of water torture in freezing temperatures and citizens being disappeared by their own government.

As unbelieve- able as it sounds, China has been harvesting the organs of Uyghurs since around 1999, with definitive reports only being released in 2019. According to the The Guardian, The China Tribunal, chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, who was a prosecutor at the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, said in a unanimous determination at the end of its hearings it was "certain that Falun Gong as a source - probably the principal source - of organs for forced organ harvesting."

These accounts are backed by leaks from China's top security official in 2017, and the reports of countless victims can't just be ignored in light of China's Tiananmen-square-like cover up story.

America's complicity in this behavior is nothing less than disgusting, and the depth of the measures taken in our own country to cover up China's crimes have only

come to light recently.

There's a reason that the average American hasn't heard of China's crimes against Uyghurs, and it can be seen best through the lens of 2019's six-month long (so far) protests against China in Hong Kong.

An explanation (not complete or perfectly accurate) to explain the conflict leading up to the Hong Kong protests: Hong Kong is a Chinese territory essentially given more democratic rights than the rest of China due to the territory being recently handed over (1997) from Britain to China. After 1997, Hong Kong was making huge strides towards a more democratic government. However, since CY Leung was elected as Chief Executive of in 2012, democratic development has come to a halt, causing mounting tension between democratic Hongkongers and the aristocratic Chinese communists in control of their government.

This tension grew and grew until February of this year, when the government of Hong Kong proposed The Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Bill 2019. Basically, this bill would allow extradition to mainland China and bring Hong Kong closer to Chinese rule, undercutting any strides toward democracy that Hongkongers have made in the past.

Since the Hong Kong protests started over six months ago, dozens of events deemed "controversial" by the Chinese state have been constantly censored from Chinese press and Chinese owned media like WeChat and TikTok. These censored images include a total ban on images of or mentions of Winnie the Pooh, due to a viral WeChat post that said General Secretary Xi Jinping looked like him. This is awful and undemocratic, but it's China — it's out of our hands.

This is where the United States and our country's struggle with balancing democracy and capitalism come in. The first protest in Hong Kong was held on the 15th of March. Since then, the economic power of China has caused countless American brands and totalitarian regime, putting companies to side with a ting business interests over any semblance of democratic values.

ESPN instructed its anchors not to discuss Hong Kong, Vans removed a pro-Hong Kong shoe design from its website, Paramount Pictures removed a Taiwanese flag from Top Gun, Nike removed Rockets merchandise from its store after the manager tweeted in support of Hong Kong, Apple removed the Taiwanese flag from the keyboards of Apple users in Hong Kong and Macau, and 21 other brands, including GAP, Zara, Givenchy, Versace, Samsung, Ray-Ban and American Airlines have apologized for their anti-democracy stances. Google has deleted a game about the Hong Kong protests from the Play Store, and video game company Blizzard has suspended players for voicing support for Hong Kong.

The Chinese agenda is clear, and it's honestly unsurprising. China genuinely doesn't care about its people, and it never has. China has never given any political voice to ethnic minorities, and while the human rights abuses and organ harvesting come as a surprise, they're not unprecedented.

However, American complacency in these issues is what's really disgusting. We, as Americans, have a lot going on. I'm not sure at what part of your day you have "protest China" down in your planner, but the least we can do is pay attention.

As members of a democratic nation, we'd like to think that we believe in freedom, but we all have a duty to be informed and hold our government and companies accountable. Ignoring the Nike shareholders means ignoring labor camps and religious discrimination, and American complicity in China's crimes threatens our democracy and the principles of the free world.

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