

**Statement at OSCE HDIM 2019****Democracy institutions, including:**

- **Democracy at the national, regional and local levels**
- **Democratic elections**

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon, I am speaking on behalf of the World Uyghur Congress.

Democracy, democratic institutions and human rights and common values form the backbone of our international system that has led to a prolonged period of relative peace and prosperity. However, the concept of democracy and the democratic values underpinning our international system are under attack like never before. We have been witnessing a general slide towards authoritarianism and the undermining of democratic values that will have major security implications for OSCE member states and for our international community as a whole.

This attack on democracy has been led by a number of undemocratic states who are proposing an alternative model of development that deprives their citizens of a voice, violates their basic human rights and strips them of their individuality. The Chinese government in particular has trumpeted its unique form of repression and development as a model for other countries to follow.

The greatest challenge to the concept of democracy and human rights can be seen in our multilateral institutions, particularly in the UN Human Rights Council. China, Russia and a number of other states have actively sought to undermine democratic values and the concept of human rights in the UN. In February 2017, the Chinese Mission, along with a group of sympathetic states, tried to pass a resolution that would have completely neutered all human rights mechanisms in the UN Human Rights Council and replace it with a vague notion of dialogue focused on 'win-win' solutions, that would make those who commit human rights violations as the ones responsible for addressing these abuses and reduce human rights discussions to talks between political leaders.

To underline this point, the Chinese mission later in the session stated that other states should not criticize the government of Myanmar for its treatment of the Rohingya, as it was a domestic situation for Myanmar. In this line of thinking, ethnic cleansing would be allowed to take place without a word from the international community or UN Human Rights bodies.

We saw this again this summer at Human Rights Council, where the issue of China arbitrarily detaining over 1 million innocent Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in internment camps, which constitutes a crime against humanity. In July 2019, 22 countries at the United Nations' top human rights body issued a joint statement, urging China to end its mass arbitrary detentions and related violations against Uyghurs in China. In response 37 states wrote a letter in response defending the internment camps and China's repression of Uyghurs.

How have we reached the point where 37 states, including Russia and other OSCE members, actively support and defend a crime against humanity in the UN. How can we say that we, as an international community, respect human rights and democratic values when more states are

willing to support one of the largest mass arbitrary detentions in modern human history, than those who will defend these values?

The crimes against humanity being perpetrated against the Uyghur people has become a litmus test for the international community's commitment to human rights and democratic values. So far we have failed miserably.

A coalition against human rights and democracy of authoritarian states appears to be forming, challenging our democratic institutions, the concept of human rights and the foundations of our international system.

This is not just a threat to democracy and human rights that should concern OSCE member states, it is THE threat.

Sadly, many policy makers seem to take the international architecture, human rights and democracy for granted. For the vast majority of human history, there was no constraints on power, no right of citizens to have a say in the governance of their community and no moral compulsion to care about the lives and well-being of people who live far away from you simply because they are human.

If OSCE members do not wake up to this threat and take action to defend democracy and human rights at the local, national, regional and international level, we will certainly be faced with living in a far more insecure and cruel world in the future.