

Turkey Caves in to Pressure to Speak Out against Chinese Oppression of Uighur Muslims

News:

According to the *Washington Post*:

The Turkish government has called on China to close its indoctrination centers holding ethnic Uighurs, marking a rare instance of a major Muslim country joining a mounting international chorus condemning the detention of up to 1 million Muslims in the far western region of Xinjiang.

The statement marks a turnaround for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party, which has been notably silent about China's treatment of Uighurs despite growing inter-national media coverage and pressure from Turkish opposition parties since 2017.

In a statement Saturday, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said the reintroduction of internment camps and the systematic assimilation of Uighur Turks represent "a great shame for humanity."

"It is no longer a secret that more than 1 million Uighur Turks incurring arbitrary arrests are subjected to torture and political brainwashing," Aksoy said.

The article further explains:

Uighur activists applauded Turkey for speaking out, but many question why it is only now coming to their defense. Tahir Imin, a Washington-based activist, said he and others provided documentation of China's incarceration of Uighurs to the Turkish government for more than a year without response.

"We hope the Turkish government will continue its support of the Uighurs' basic human rights, as the West has been doing, and try to do more," Imin said.

The Turkish statement came weeks before the country heads to polls in nationwide local elections.

Erdogan has styled himself as a leader of the Muslim world and a defender of the world's Turkic peoples. In 2009, he described China's crackdown on Uighurs in the wake of ethnic riots in Xinjiang as a "genocide," infuriating Beijing.

But Turkey's ties with China warmed significantly after 2016, when Erdogan faced a failed coup and a chill in relations with the West. The following year, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said during a visit to Beijing that Turkey would help China seize Uighur extremists, alarming Uighur activists and Turkish nationalists who view the ethnic minority as their Turkic kin.

Comment:

Undoubtedly, the media campaign against China has been led by the West, which is confronted with rising Chinese power and relishes the opportunity to expose it for oppressing Muslims, even though America, Britain and others have committed far more brutal crimes against the Muslim Ummah. And Erdogan's primary political loyalty is to the West despite his Islamic rhetoric but this is not enough to explain why the Erdogan government has only now spoken out against China. The answer must be sought in Turkey's upcoming local elections, and the domestic political opposition faced by the ruling party, as explained in an opinion piece in *Hurriyet Daily News*:

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, which has been aiming to further improve economic and trade ties with China, has been deliberately low-profile on the developments. Turkish diplomats, who have been attending UN-led meetings on Uighur Turks, were preferring a rather softer language on China. It was the ruling AKP which had rejected a parliamentary motion tabled by the Good Party in late 2018 in a bid to investigate the recent human rights violations by the Chinese government on the Uighur Turks.

This stance of the government has kicked off reactions both in the international arena and inside Turkey. The ultra-nationalist Great Union Party (BBP), the nationalist Good Party and other minor parties were bashing the AKP for not raising its voice on the ongoing oppression of the Uighur Turks.

The BBP held a massive protest on Uighur Turks on Jan. 24 calling the government to act on the state of their kin “in eastern Turkistan.” Scores of similar protests and meetings have long been taking place in different corners of the Anatolia in recent months, increasing the pressure on the AKP...

Although, of course, that would be too unfair to suggest that this strong-worded action against China has merely domestic political drives, it’s hard to speculate about other reasons.

If Turkey’s criticism of China is for domestic consumption only, then sadly we can expect no substantial change in Turkey-China relations and the oppression of Uighur Muslims will continue as before. The Turkish government is not alone in betraying Uighur Muslims, as a *Bloomberg* article last year noted:

As calls grow in the U.S. and Europe to pressure China to halt alleged human-rights abuses against its Muslim minority, Beijing has so far escaped any serious criticism from governments across the Islamic world...

China accounts for about a 10th of Saudi Arabia’s oil exports and roughly a third of Iran’s, according to ship-tracking data compiled by Bloomberg. It is Malaysia’s top source of foreign investment. And it has ensured the flow of more than \$60 billion in loans for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor infrastructure projects.

Muslim nations “don’t want to damage their relations with China, and consider China a potential ally against the West and the U.S., and therefore they are trying to stay silent,” said Omer Kanat, chairman of the executive committee at the World Uyghur Congress, an overseas Uighur advocacy group.

It is these very policies of seeking help from the foreign disbeliever that has entrenched them in our lands and our affairs. The Muslim Ummah shall never escape its numerous crises until we have rulers that take charge of the affairs of Muslims without dependence on the foreign disbeliever, whether he is from the West or from the East. Allah (swt) says in the Noble Qur’an:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا﴾

“O you who have believed, do not take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. Do you wish to give Allah against yourselves a clear case?” [An-Nisa: 144]

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