



## China Reform Monitor No. 1379

August 14, 2019 **Joshua Eisenman**

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### **A GROWING GLOBAL OUTCRY OVER CHINA'S TREATMENT OF UIGHURS...**

Envoys from 22 countries, including Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, France, Germany and Japan, have co-signed a letter to the UN's Human Rights Council president, Coly Seck, and its High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, expressing concern about China's internment of one million or more ethnic Uighurs. The letter cites "credible reports of arbitrary detention as well as widespread surveillance and restrictions, particularly targeting Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang." It calls on China to stop the practice and allow "freedom of movement of Uighurs and other Muslim and minority communities in Xinjiang." Diplomats rarely send open letters to the council but did so because China has vetoed all formal resolutions. Beijing, for its part, has dismissed the letter as "slander." (*London Guardian*, July 10, 2019)

### **...AS BEIJING'S DEFENDERS CLOSE RANKS**

In turn, UN ambassadors from 37 countries (including Russia, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Algeria, North Korea, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe) have signed a letter defending China's treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. The letter, which was submitted to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in response to the letter mentioned above, commended "China's remarkable achievements in the field of human rights." Echoing China's own defense of its internment camps, the letter described them as "vocational education and training centres." (*Hong Kong Free Press*, July 13, 2019)

### **WAS INTERPOL COMPLICIT IN EX-CHIEF'S ARREST?**

Grace Meng, the wife of the former Interpol head who was detained in China last Fall, has sued the global police cooperation agency at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague for its complicity in China's "wrongful acts." Her husband, Meng Hongwei, disappeared in October 2018; when Mrs. Meng reported him as missing, Interpol announced that he had resigned as president. Mrs. Meng said Interpol had threatened her with legal action for speaking out, but a spokesperson for the organization called that allegation "baseless" and said the agency had no "involvement with China's actions against" her husband. (Reuters, July 7, 2019)

### **CHINA INVESTS IN GENOME EDITING OF CROPS**

China is betting big on genome editing to create new food crops; with at least twenty groups around the country using the gene editing tool CRISPR to modify crops. In 2017, state-owned ChemChina paid \$43 billion – the most Beijing has ever spent on a foreign company – to acquire Switzerland-based agribusiness Syngenta, which has a large CRISPR research and development team. But while China's CRISPR plant community is ready to unleash a bounty of edited crops, Beijing must first clarify its policies. Should regulators open the door for CRISPR-engineered food, however, it could go from laboratory to commercial farm in about six months. (*Science*, July 29, 2019)

### **IMPORTS OF U.S. PORK SURGE AMID CHINESE PRICE SPIKE**

In May, U.S. pork exports to China, which fell 75 percent to 1609 metric tons between July and December 2018, more than tripled year-on-year from 5788 to 17,603 metric tons. The surge is due to increasing domestic pork prices, which rose nearly 30 percent in June and are expected to hit record levels in the last quarter of 2019. Due primarily to African swine fever, which shows no sign of abating, China's 2019 pork output is slated to slump 25 percent, with an additional 15 percent production decline expected in 2020. U.S. pork imports to China face a 62 percent tariff, but Beijing has approved duty waivers for importers. Prices for other meats, including chicken, have also risen substantially, pushing China's consumer price index up 2.7 percent in June compared to a year earlier. (*South China Morning Post*, July 29, 2019)