

Treasury Sanctions Perpetrators of Serious Human Rights Abuse on International Human Rights Day

December 10, 2021

Designations target those connected to human rights abuse, including technology-enabled abuse

WASHINGTON — Today, on International Human Rights Day, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating 15 individuals and 10 entities for their connection to human rights abuse and repression in several countries around the globe, pursuant to multiple sanctions authorities. Separately, OFAC is also imposing investment restrictions on one company in connection with the surveillance technology sector of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) economy, highlighting the human rights abuse enabled by the malign use of technology. Human Rights Day is observed annually on December 10, which marks the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1984. That declaration enumerates the fundamental human rights of freedoms of expression, religion or belief, association, and peaceful assembly, and the right to be free from arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy.

“On International Human Rights Day, Treasury is using its tools to expose and hold accountable perpetrators of serious human rights abuse,” said Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo. “Our actions today, particularly those in partnership with the United Kingdom and Canada, send a message that democracies around the world will act against those who abuse the power of the state to inflict suffering and repression.”

Today's actions are taken pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13818, which builds upon and implements the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, and targets perpetrators of corruption and serious human rights abuse; E.O. 13959, as amended, which targets, among other things, companies that operate or have operated in the surveillance technology sector of the PRC economy, and entities that own or control such companies; E.O. 13687 and E.O. 13722, which target the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Workers' Party of Korea and certain conduct related to labor; and E.O. 14014, which targets a range of malign activities, including serious human rights abuse in Burma.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE IN XINJIANG

As the President [stated](#) at the opening of the Summit for Democracy, we will “work with our partners to ... reduce the potential for countries to abuse new technologies including surveillance technologies, to suppress the rights of their people to express their views.”

Technology is a key tool used to advance the exercise of freedom of expression and the protection of other human rights globally. However, authoritarian states misuse technology to facilitate human rights abuse and repression, target members of racial and ethnic minority groups, manipulate information, and spread disinformation.

Abuse of technologies, like the exploitation of data for intrusive surveillance, is on the rise and threatens the security of all people. It is therefore critically important that the United States and other democracies around the world take a firm stance against these repressive activities.

Shohrat Zakir served as the Chairman of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China (XUAR) from at least 2018 until 2021. **Erken Tuniyaz (Tuniyaz)** now serves as the acting Chairman of the XUAR and had served as the Vice Chairman of the XUAR since 2008. During their tenures, more than one million Uyghurs and members of other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups have been detained in Xinjiang. On July 9, 2020, OFAC designated the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau (XPSB), a constituent department of the XUAR, for its role in the serious human rights abuse that has occurred in Xinjiang since at least late 2016.

The XPSB has deployed the “Integrated Joint Operations Platform” (IJOP), an artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted computer system that created biometric records for millions of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region. The XPSB, through the IJOP, uses digital surveillance systems to track Uyghurs’ movements and activities, to include surveilling who they interact with and what they read. In turn, IJOP uses this data to determine which persons could be potential threats; according to reports, some of these individuals are subsequently detained and sent to detention camps, being held indefinitely without charges or trial. According to press reporting, the IJOP technology looks exclusively for Uyghurs, based on their appearance, and keeps records of their movements. The mass detention of Uyghurs is part of an effort by PRC authorities to use detentions and data-driven surveillance to create a police state in the Xinjiang region.

Zakir and **Tuniyaz** are designated pursuant to E.O. 13818 for being foreign persons who are or have been a leader or official of an entity, including any government entity, that has

engaged in, or whose members have engaged in, serious human rights abuse relating to their tenure.

Today, the U.S. Department of State announced visa restrictions under Section 7031(c) of the FY 2021 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act on **Zakir** and **Tuniyaz** due to their involvement in gross violations of human rights, making them ineligible for entry into the United States.

OFAC is also identifying a Chinese firm, **SenseTime Group Limited (SenseTime)**, as a Non-SDN Chinese Military-Industrial Complex Company (NS-CMIC) pursuant to E.O. 13959, as amended by E.O. 14032. **SenseTime** owns or controls, directly or indirectly, a person who operates or has operated in the surveillance technology sector of the PRC's economy. **SenseTime** 100 percent owns Shenzhen Sensetime Technology Co. Ltd., which has developed facial recognition programs that can determine a target's ethnicity, with a particular focus on identifying ethnic Uyghurs. When applying for patent applications, Shenzhen Sensetime Technology Co. Ltd. has highlighted its ability to identify Uyghurs wearing beards, sunglasses, and masks.

SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE IN BANGLADESH: RAPID ACTION BATTALION

Widespread allegations of serious human rights abuse in Bangladesh by the **Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)**—as part of the Bangladeshi government's war on drugs—threaten U.S. national security interests by undermining the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the economic prosperity of the people of Bangladesh.

RAB is a joint task force founded in 2004 and composed of members of the police, army, navy, air force, and border guards seconded to the **RAB** from their respective units. Its mandate includes internal security, intelligence gathering related to criminal activities, and government-directed investigations. NGOs have alleged that **RAB** and other Bangladeshi law enforcement are responsible for more than 600 disappearances since 2009, nearly 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018, and torture. Some reports suggest these incidents target opposition party members, journalists, and human rights activists.

RAB is designated pursuant to E.O. 13818 for being a foreign entity that is responsible for or complicit in, or has directly or indirectly engaged in, serious human rights abuse.

Additionally, the following individuals are designated pursuant to E.O. 13818 for being foreign persons who are or have been a leader or official of **RAB**, an entity that has engaged in, or whose members have engaged in, serious human rights abuse relating to their tenure:

- **Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun**, Director General, **RAB**, April 15, 2020 to present
- **Benazir Ahmed**, former Director General, **RAB**, January 2015 to April 14, 2020
- **Khan Mohammad Azad**, Additional Director General (Operations), **RAB**, March 16, 2021 to present
- **Tofayel Mustafa Sorwar**, former Additional Director General (Operations), **RAB**, June 27, 2019 to March 16, 2021
- **Mohammad Jahangir Alam**, former Additional Director General (Operations), **RAB**, September 17, 2018 to June 27, 2019
- **Mohammad Anwar Latif Khan**, former Additional Director General (Operations), **RAB**, April 28, 2016 to September 17, 2018

Today, the U.S. Department of State has announced visa restrictions under Section 7031(c) of the FY 2021 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act on **Benazir Ahmed** due to his involvement in gross violations of human rights, making him ineligible for entry into the United States.

DPRK WORKERS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

DPRK nationals often work in other countries, including for the purpose of generating foreign currency earnings that the DPRK can use to support its unlawful weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programs. UN Security Council resolution 2397, adopted on December 22, 2017, requires UN Member States to have repatriated DPRK nationals earning income in their jurisdictions by December 22, 2019, subject to limited exceptions. Foreign firms involved in the employment of DPRK labor contribute to the poor treatment workers endure, which can include being subjected to constant surveillance, forced to work long hours, and having a significant portion of their wages confiscated by the regime. In the last several years, there has been an increase in the abuse of non-work visas, such as student and tourist visas, for DPRK workers to enter and work in countries such as the PRC and Russia.

The Russian university **European Institute Justo** and its provost, **Dmitriy Yurevich Soin**, have sponsored hundreds of student visas for DPRK construction workers in Russia. Some of these workers were affiliated with a DPRK WMD entity, and the revenue they generated from their labor could have been used to support DPRK WMD programs. The **European Institute Justo** is designated pursuant to E.O. 13722 for having engaged in, facilitated, or been responsible for the exportation of workers from North Korea. **Dmitriy Yurevich Soin** is designated pursuant to E.O. 13722 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, **European Institute Justo**.

The DPRK's government-run animation studio, **SEK Studio**, through its animation workers located in the DPRK and the PRC, performs work for foreign customers. Seemingly fueled by the desire for unreasonably low-cost labor, foreign media companies continue to subcontract animation work to **SEK Studio**. **SEK Studio** has utilized an assortment of front companies to evade sanctions targeting the Government of the DPRK and to deceive international financial institutions.

SEK Studio is designated pursuant to E.O. 13722 for being owned or controlled by, or having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of North Korea.

Lu Hezheng, a senior employee and former shareholder of **Nings Cartoon Studio**, worked with representatives of **SEK Studio** to facilitate wire transfers through **Nings Cartoon Studio** and other front companies in the PRC. **Lu Hezheng** is also the sole shareholder of **Shanghai Hongman Cartoon and Animation Design Studio**. In recent years, these front companies received millions of dollars from foreign customers. **Lu Hezheng** is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13722 for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of **SEK Studio**.

Nings Cartoon Studio is designated pursuant to E.O. 13722 for being owned or controlled by, or having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, **SEK Studio**, while **Moxing Cartoon** is being designated for having attempted to act or purport to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, **SEK Studio**. **Shanghai Hongman Cartoon and Animation Design Studio** is designated pursuant to E.O. 13722 for being owned or controlled by, or having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, **Lu Hezheng**.

UNFAIR JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN THE DPRK

While DPRK workers abroad endure poor working conditions, individuals who remain inside the country are also often subjected to forced labor, constant surveillance, and severe restrictions on their exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The DPRK **Central Public Prosecutors Office** and court system reportedly are used to prosecute and punish persons for political wrongdoing in a legal process involving fundamentally unfair trials. These trials sometimes end in sentencing to the DPRK's notorious prison camps, run by the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Social Security. **Ri Yong Gil** is the previous DPRK Minister of Social Security and recently assigned Minister of People's Armed Forces, a UN- and U.S.-designated entity.

The DPRK **Central Public Prosecutors Office** is designated pursuant to E.O. 13687 for being an agency, instrumentality, or controlled entity of the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea. **Ri Yong Gil** is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13687 for being an official of the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea. Both the **Central Public Prosecutors Office** and **Ri Yong Gil** were designated by the European Union in its sanctions action in March 2021 under the European Union's Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime.

Foreigners have also been the victims of the DPRK's fundamentally unfair justice system, such as American prisoner Otto Warmbier, who was arrested in 2016, and other foreign prisoners who remain detained in the DPRK today. The treatment and eventual death of Otto Warmbier, who would have turned 27 years old this year, were reprehensible. The DPRK must continue to be held to account for its abysmal human rights record.

SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE IN BURMA

On February 1, 2021, the military of Burma disregarded the will of the people and overthrew the democratically elected civilian government. The military regime's subsequent and ongoing brutal crackdowns against the people of Burma, including children and members of ethnic minority groups, continue to undermine respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The persons sanctioned today are associated with the military regime's ongoing attacks on democracy and brutal repression.

Today's Treasury actions targeting those connected to human rights abuse in Burma complement actions also taken today by the United Kingdom and Canada, who imposed sanctions on several of the same targets. Coordinated actions with our likeminded partners enable us to form a unified front in the fight to identify, promote accountability for, and disrupt access to the international financial system by those who abuse human rights.

Myo Swe Win is the Chief Minister of the Bago Region of Burma. On April 9, 2021, the region of Bago erupted in violence, with armed forces killing at least 82 people—the second-highest death toll in a single day and the highest number of casualties in one day in a single location since the military began crackdowns on protests following the February 1, 2021 coup.

Myo Swe Win and the following three individuals are designated pursuant to E.O. 14014 for being foreign persons who are or have been a leader or official of the Government of Burma on or after February 2, 2021:

- **Saw Myint Oo** is the Chief Minister of Kayin State in Burma.

- **Maung Ko** is the Chief Minister of the Mandalay Region of Burma.
- **Khat Htein Nan** is the Chief Minister of Kachin State in Burma.

The **Directorate of Defense Industries (DDI)** is under direct control of the Ministry of Defense of Burma and is responsible for manufacturing weapons that are primarily used by the Burmese military and Police Force. Weapons manufactured by the **DDI** have almost certainly been used in the military's brutal violence against the people of Burma.

The **Quartermaster General Office (QGO)**, an entity that is subordinate to the Ministry of Defense, is responsible for securing supplies for the Burmese military to include bullets and artillery that were used to kill more hundreds of civilians since the coup.

The **Myanmar War Veterans Organization's (MWVO)** stated objective is to take part as a reserve force of the Armed Forces of Burma for national defense and security. The organization's leadership is composed of several senior military leaders and aims to coordinate with Ministries on matters related to national defense and security.

The **DDI**, the **QGO**, and the **MWVO** are designated pursuant to E.O. 14014 for operating in the defense sector of the Burmese economy.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

Today's NS-CMIC identification prohibits the purchase or sale by U.S. persons of any publicly traded securities, or any publicly traded securities that are derivative of such securities or are designed to provide investment exposure to such securities, of the entity identified above pursuant to E.O. 13959, as amended.

As a result of today's actions taken pursuant to E.O. 13818, E.O. 13687, E.O. 13722, and E.O. 14014, all property and interests in property of the persons designated above that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked. Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC, or otherwise exempt, all transactions by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons are prohibited. The prohibitions include the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any blocked person or the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

GLOBAL MAGNITSKY

Building upon the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, E.O. 13818 was issued on December 20, 2017, in recognition that the prevalence of human rights abuse and corruption that have their source, in whole or in substantial part, outside the United States, had reached such scope and gravity as to threaten the stability of international political and economic systems. Human rights abuse and corruption undermine the values that form an essential foundation of stable, secure, and functioning societies; have devastating impacts on individuals; weaken democratic institutions; degrade the rule of law; perpetuate violent conflicts; facilitate the activities of dangerous persons; and undermine economic markets. The United States seeks to impose tangible and significant consequences on those who commit serious human rights abuse or engage in corruption, as well as to protect the financial system of the United States from abuse by these same persons.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Center assisted OFAC in identifying perpetrators of serious human rights abuse and corruption.

[Click here to view more information on today's designations.](#)

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