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I’d like to thank the Subcommittee’s Chairwoman, Congresswoman Bass, and the Ranking Member, Congressman Chris Smith, for holding today’s hearing, “The Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights.” I’m proud to be here and I’m especially proud to represent Radio Free Asia, which was created by Congress with a mandate of providing local timely, accurate news and information to people living in closed countries. There, access to in-depth, reliable journalism is restricted and censored. State-controlled media follows an agenda dictated by regimes. For RFA’s audiences in Asia, the millions who listen to our broadcasts on the radio, access content on our websites, engage with us on social media, and watch our TV programming, RFA often serves as a lifeline to the truth.

As a broadcaster with RFA’s Uyghur Service -- the only independent Uyghur language news service outside China -- exposing the truth can come at a severe cost. Not just for me, but also my colleagues, and our families in China. Also not spared are our sources -- the networks of people on whom we depend to provide our audiences with a clearer picture of what would otherwise be blotted out by state propaganda and disinformation.

Because of our work as journalists, China has long viewed RFA as a hostile foreign news network. This perhaps has never been truer than now, when RFA has been at the forefront of covering an unimaginable humanitarian crisis in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. There, Chinese authorities have detained more than 1 million Uyghurs as well as other ethnic Muslim minorities, such as Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, putting them in cramped, prison-like facilities, while implementing a vast, high-tech surveillance state to monitor and intimidate the remaining minority population in the XUAR. Throughout these developments, my colleagues and I at RFA’s Uyghur Service have worked tirelessly to report on events as they occur in our former homeland.

This includes breaking the news of mass detentions of Uyghurs at the very beginning of the creation and use of China's notorious "re-education" camps, when 120,000 Uyghurs in Kashgar Prefecture were first detained in the spring of 2017; first interviewing the camps' security guards and officials -- who described the harsh treatment and conditions: the forced physical labor and cultural assimilation, scarcity of food bordering on starvation, and even the routine endangerment and harm inflicted on inmates. RFA first uncovered the construction of crematoriums near the facilities in anticipation of disposing of the deceased while disregarding Uyghur burial traditions; and RFA first reported on the overflow of kindergartens and orphanages of Uyghur children whose parents were detained.

RFA was also the first to confirm the deaths of Uyghur detainees in the camps, such as the mother of Dolkun Isa, President of the World Uyghur Congress, and Uyghur religious scholar Muhammed Salih. Some survivors from the camps shared their personal, often nightmarish stories with RFA before talking to other media, including Omerbek Ali, Gulbahar Jelilova, and Mihrigul Tursun -- all of whom I interviewed. Recently, RFA Uyghur confirmed a new and ominous development: the mass transfer of thousands of Uyghur detainees from the XUAR to prisons in six different Chinese provinces.

China has long tried to suppress this story, denying the camps' existence before finally acknowledging them as "job-training" centers under the pressure of global scrutiny. But as RFA has uncovered, many inmates in these camps are respected professionals, scholars, retirees and younger people with careers. China's desire to control the narrative also meant using any means necessary to make it difficult if not impossible to learn the truth. My colleagues at RFA and I do not have access to the region: China would never allow us to get journalism visas and visit the region -- which we once called home. We instead are forced to reach our sources using other means, among them, phone calls. But even that is becoming very difficult, as authorities not only monitor calls, but use AI technology and voice recognition software to attempt to cut us off from reaching sources. Authorities target our sources, even those outside China, by threatening family and loved ones still in the country. This makes it harder to get leads and confirm developments.

As is well known, Chinese authorities have even resorted to threatening my colleagues and me at Radio Free Asia -- even though we are based in the United States and most of us are U.S. citizens. They do this by targeting our China-based relatives. I am among six journalists with RFA's Uyghur Service whose family members have been jailed, detained, or forcibly disappeared -- often in connection with, if not as a direct result of, our work for RFA. One of my colleagues, Shohret Hoshur has two brothers, sisters-in-law and an elderly mother in detention. Mamatjan Juma has three brothers in jail. Eset Sulaiman and Kurban Niyaz each have a brother

in detention. I have about two dozen relatives of extended family who have been detained, almost all taken on the same day. The sad thing is we cannot be too sure about our families' well-being or their fate, since attempts at contacting them carry serious risks. My colleague Jilil Kashgary, who has two detained brothers, recently heard that they may have been sentenced to prison -- but he is still unable to confirm that information with any degree of certainty.

These conditions make our jobs extremely difficult -- but not altogether impossible. My colleague Shohret Hoshur was recently able to piece together information to uncover the tragic drowning of a Uyghur toddler whose parents were detained, working for days to confirm details with police precincts and other sources. Mamatjan Juma interviewed several former detainees now living in Turkey, where he was able to establish key details about the kinds of mistreatment and abuses in the internment camps. I have been able to interview parents who fled the XUAR who were able to locate their children after seeing them on Chinese social media. These are just a few examples of the many exclusive stories RFA is able to get -- all offering a different perspective, establishing an important fact or development, or providing a missing clue or detail that helps us to better understand the fast-evolving crisis in China.

I know and my colleagues know that our work is important. After we began reporting on the events unfolding in Xinjiang, journalists in Western media have investigated and confirmed many details that were first reported by RFA. *The Wall Street Journal*, *the New York Times*, BuzzFeed, BBC, CNN, CBS, *The Economist*, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, France 24, and many other reputable organizations and media have done outstanding work as well. Knowing that so many of our peers turn to RFA as a trusted source is very encouraging. But the cruel irony doesn't escape my colleagues and me. Though we have journalistic insight about so many events happening in Xinjiang, we are often the last to know if our mothers, our fathers, our brothers, our sisters, and our children living there are in prison or not. If they face sentencing or punishment. If they are in need of help or medical care. If they are still alive. That is the fear we live with -- every day and every hour. But there is one greater fear that urges us on: that if we stopped doing our duty as journalists -- if we were silent -- the world would simply forget.