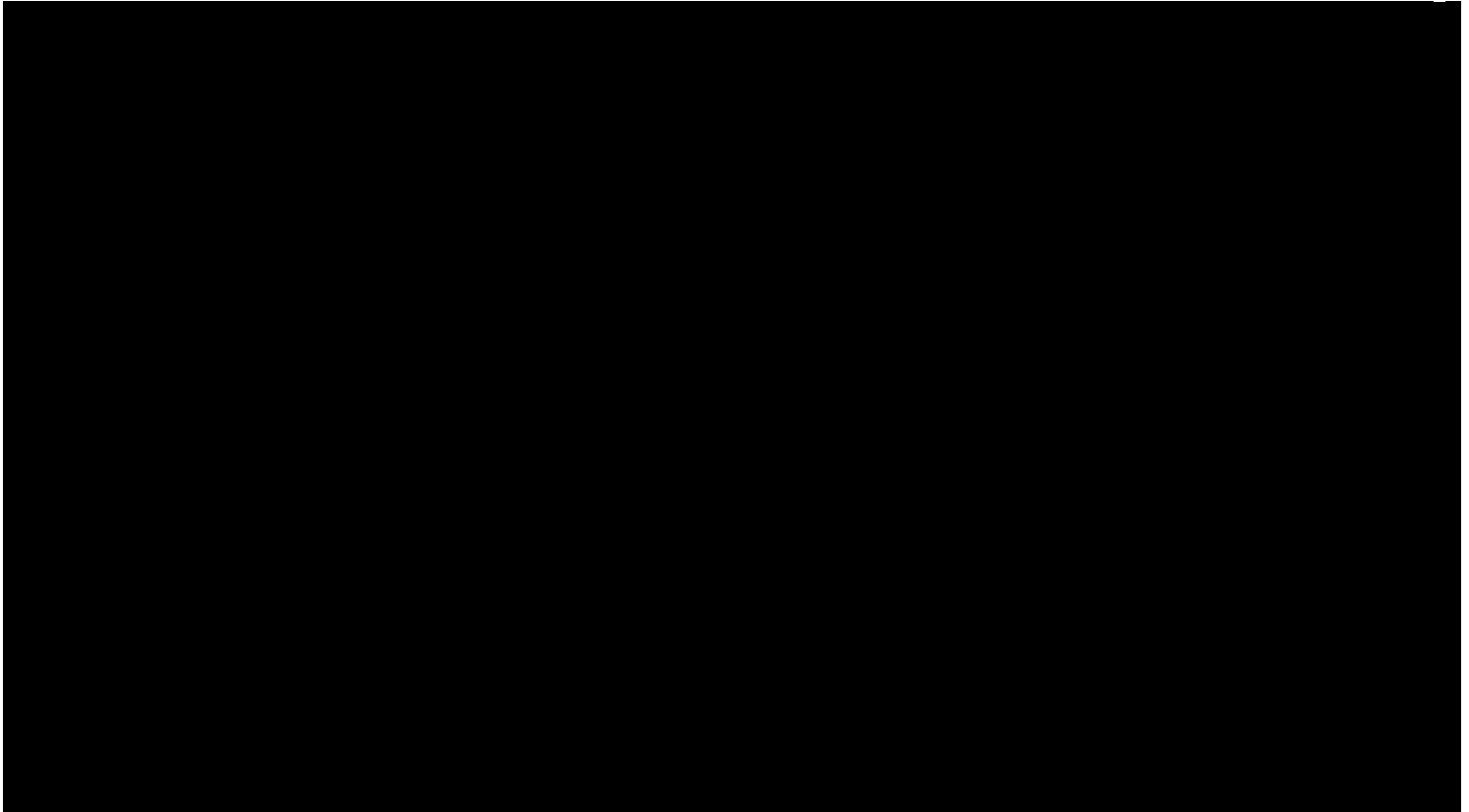


WORLD

CHINA ORGAN HARVESTING CAMPAIGNERS DEMAND UN CHIEF INVESTIGATES APPOINTMENT OF CHINESE DIPLOMAT TO HUMAN RIGHTS ROLE

BY **DAVID BRENNAN** ON 4/20/20 AT 11:28 AM EDT



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An independent tribunal based in London has written to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urging him to investigate the appointment of a Chinese official to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The China Tribunal—chaired by human rights lawyer Sir Geoffrey Nice—claims that diplomat Jiang Duan's appointment to the UNHRC Consultative Group means the UN is "sleepwalking into complicity" with Chinese human rights abuses, including the suppression of Muslim groups in the far west of the country and alleged human organ harvesting.

The Tribunal declared China a "criminal state" in March, accusing it of approving and helping cover up forced organ harvesting for more than 20 years. The Tribunal interviewed more than 50 witnesses and analyzed written evidence of what it claims is a \$1 billion-per-year industry.

China has consistently denied all allegations of forced organ harvesting, though acknowledged in 2005 that it took organs from executed prisoners. Beijing said that practice ended in 2015.

Critics have long maintained that the organ transplant market could not be supported only by executed prisoners, suggesting that the government was harvesting organs from political prisoners and minority groups including practitioners of Falun Gong and the Uighur community in Xinjiang.

Newsweek has contacted the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C. to request comment on the China Tribunal's allegations.

China's totalitarian government has been accused of a wide range of human rights abuses, including the persecution of Muslim minority groups in the far west of the country and suppression of pro-democracy forces in the semi-autonomous region of Hong Kong.

Jiang's appointment to the UNHRC raised "grave concerns" among the members of the China Tribunal that the world's "great institutions" are unwilling to confront China with its "extreme human rights abuses," including organ harvesting.

The Tribunal's letter to Guterres suggested that alleged "forced organ harvesting killings" are comparable "to the worst atrocities committed in conflicts of the 20th century," including the Holocaust, the mass killings committed by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the Rwandan genocide.

"The United Nations cannot be unminded of these concerns, lest it be accused of in effect sleepwalking into complicity," the letter read.

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Asked to comment on the letter, an HRC spokesperson told *Newsweek* that the Consultative Group—to which Jiang has been appointed—exists to recommend special procedures mandate holders, i.e. independent human rights experts, to the president of the HRC. Experts are eventually appointed by all 47 members of the HRC.

Consultative Group members serve in a "personal capacity" and do "not have any influence over, nor can they facilitate, what issues are addressed" by the HRC, the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson added that the body currently has no plans to investigate allegations of organ harvesting in China, though noted that this issue and that of the persecution of the Uighur community has been raised at the Council on a number of occasions.

At the most recent session—suspended due to the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, the spokesperson noted that several sharply critical statements were delivered on the "abuse of this ethnic group."

Hamid Sabi, counsel to the China Tribunal, told *Newsweek* that Jiang's role on the five-member Consultative Group would enable Beijing to bring "enormous influence" to bear and "block any investigations into human rights abuses in China by manipulating the other members."

Sabi said that Jiang will be helping to vet candidates for posts addressing issues such as freedom of speech and enforced disappearances—areas in which China has repeatedly been accused of wrongdoing.

Sabi explained that the Tribunal did not consider issues around coronavirus, but suggested that the "total lack of transparency about forced organ harvesting practises and publication of false data by China to support its denial of grave human rights crimes is consistent with lack of transparency over COVID-19."

Newsweek has contacted the office of the Secretary-General to request comment on the China Tribunal letter.

This article has been updated to include additional comments from the China Tribunal.



This file photo shows members of the Portuguese chapter of Falun Gong—a spiritual practice banned in China since 1999—demonstrating against organ harvesting on July 12, 2017 in Lisbon, Portugal.

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