



## Foreign Interference Commission

### Public Consultation Process

## Small Group Consultation Meeting Public Summary

In the summer of 2024, Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue and members of the Foreign Interference Commission's (the "**Commission**") Public Consultation Process ("**PCP**") team met with three individuals belonging to the Uyghur Canadian community in a meeting organized with the assistance of the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project. This is a summary of the information shared at that meeting.

Notes to reader:

- The Commissioner has not and will not be making any findings about the accuracy of the information shared at the consultation meeting or make any findings of fact based on this information.
- The meeting attendees did not make an oath or swear to tell the truth before sharing information at this meeting.
- The meeting attendees were not subjected to cross-examination.
- The meeting attendees have reviewed and approved the contents of this public summary.
- Meeting attendees were given the option to anonymize themselves for the purposes of the present public summary. Where meeting attendees have opted to anonymize themselves, they are designated as "Participant 1", "Participant 2", etc.
- At each of the consultation meetings, the meeting attendees were asked to answer two questions, which are set out below. The meeting attendees were each given a total of 15 minutes to respond to both questions.
- Where necessary, Commission counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets and in the footnotes to assist the reader.

## Executive Summary

- The attendees are active members of the Uyghur Canadian community. Some of them have been outspoken critics of the People's Republic of China ("PRC"). They described examples of foreign interference they said were attributable, directly or indirectly, to the PRC.
- Certain attendees mentioned that a common intimidation and repression tactic used by the PRC to silence Uyghur activists is the use of threats against family members in East Turkistan<sup>1</sup>. For instance, certain attendees described their family members and loved ones being imprisoned, interrogated, disappeared, killed, and sent to concentration camps.
- Some attendees explained the PRC also attempted to coerce Uyghur activists to report and inform on their fellow Uyghur Canadians by using threats and intimidation.
- Some attendees stated that their activities were being monitored by the PRC in Canada and that they assume their electronic devices are compromised. Certain attendees stated that they deplore enduring the constant threat of monitoring and surveillance by the PRC despite living in Canada.
- Some attendees said they regularly receive threatening phone calls from anonymous Chinese speakers. Some attendees shared their opinion that law enforcement agencies have not provided the required help in dealing with such threats.
- Some attendees highlighted the need to investigate and where applicable, to prosecute, individuals engaging in intimidation and harassment operations on behalf of the PRC in Canada.
- Some attendees expressed their desire for the Canadian government to provide additional support to the Uyghur Canadian community, particularly with regards to ensuring their safety in Canada.
- Certain attendees stated their wish for Canada to adopt a tougher diplomatic stance vis-à-vis the PRC and reconsider its existing economic links with this country.

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<sup>1</sup> **Note:** The region of East Turkistan is also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and is located in the People's Republic of China.

## 1. Participants' responses to Question 1

The first question posed to the participants was: *How are you, your loved ones and members of your community impacted by foreign interference in Canada's electoral processes and democratic institutions?*

### Participant 1

*Participant 1's responses have been omitted from this summary due to their safety concerns.*

### Participant 2

Participant 2 said that they immigrated to Canada from East Turkistan in 1997. Participant 2 said that they were sent to forced labour camps in the PRC as a young child, and as such they were deprived of the opportunity to obtain a formal education. Participant 2 said that once they returned to East Turkistan, they became an active member of the Uyghur community and were involved in dissident activities against the PRC.

Participant 2 explained that in October 1999, they and many other members of the Uyghur community held a protest in front of the Chinese consulate in Toronto. Participant 2 said that the protest was held in reaction to the PRC's celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding and of its occupation of East Turkistan. Participant 2 recalled their appreciation for the freedom to hold such protests and to advocate on behalf of Uyghurs. Participant 2 said that this freedom was something they never enjoyed in the PRC.

Participant 2 explained that, after having immigrated to Canada, they tried several times to obtain a visa from the Chinese consulate in Montreal to visit their sick mother in East Turkistan. Participant 2 said that in 2013, after years of failed attempts, Participant 2 received a call from their brother in East Turkistan who was instructed to pass a message from the Chinese domestic security services to Participant 2. Participant 2 said that the message was that Participant 2 needed to cooperate with the Chinese domestic security services if they wanted to obtain a visa. Participant 2 said they told their brother to relay their acceptance of the condition to the Chinese domestic security services, and was

swiftly issued a visa by the Chinese consulate. Participant 2 said that prior to leaving, they registered their travel with the Canadian embassy to the PRC, in the hopes that this would ensure their safety.

Participant 2 said that they returned to East Turkistan in April 2013 to visit their family. Participant 2 said that two days after their arrival, they were brought to the Urumqi [the provincial capital] police department, where they were interrogated by four individuals. Participant 2 said that their interrogators tossed their Canadian passport in the trash and tried to coerce them to provide the names of fellow Uyghur Canadian activists. Participant 2 recounted that they provided fake names to convince their interrogators to release them. Participant 2 said that, after ten hours of interrogation, they were told that they would be immediately deported. Participant 2 said that they were deprived of the opportunity to visit their parents.

Participant 2 said that upon their return to Canada, they contacted and gave interviews to Canadian media outlets about their experience during their recent trip to the PRC. Participant 2 said that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (“**CSIS**”) contacted them for a meeting to discuss their trip to the PRC following the publication of multiple articles featuring their story.

Participant 2 said that since 2015, 55 of their family members, most of whom are farmers, have been detained in the PRC. Participant 2 said that their two brothers, who worked as businessmen in East Turkistan, were respectively sentenced to 17 and 18 years in prison due to their religious beliefs. Participant 2 noted that it was impossible for them to obtain information about their family members in East Turkistan, and that they did not know whether their relatives were still imprisoned or whether they had passed away.

Participant 2 expressed their dismay at the fact that, despite living in Canada and being a Canadian citizen, they have to live under the PRC’s influence and in a state of constant fear.

### Participant 3

Participant 3 said that they have been engaged in advocacy on behalf of the Uyghur community since their arrival in Canada in 2001. Participant 3 said that they served as

the head of the Uyghur-Canadian Association (“**UAC**”) from 2012 to 2014 as part of this work. Participant 3 noted that the Uyghur diaspora was a relatively new and small community in Canada, numbering approximately 2,000 individuals.

Participant 3 said that the PRC’s interference with and harassment of the Uyghur Canadian community is a well-known fact, which their fellow community members experience on a daily basis. Participant 3 referenced a 2007 article on the topic published in Maclean’s [a Canadian news outlet] entitled “*Beijing is always watching*”. Participant 3 recalled first meeting with CSIS officials in 2007 about PRC interference against Uyghur Canadians, and with Global Affairs Canada (“**GAC**”) officials in 2015 about the existence of concentration camps in East Turkistan. Participant 3 noted that, to their knowledge, these meetings did not lead to concrete actions.

Talking about their personal experiences of PRC intimidation, Participant 3 explained that within weeks of their election as head of the UAC, they began receiving menacing phone calls urging them to stop their advocacy in Canada and threatening to kill them. Participant 3 reported these phone calls to the *Service de police de la Ville de Montréal* [Montreal City Police Department] (“**SPVM**”) and gave investigators permission to audit their phone. Participant 3 said that after a few months, they were told that the SPVM did not have the ability to investigate such cases and that they should consider moving from their current residence.

Participant 3 believes that the PRC is becoming more brazen and aggressive in its foreign interference activities in Canada, despite the issue gaining significant public notoriety in the last years. Participant 3 said that the PRC does not only threaten Uyghurs who testify about the abuse they suffered in China or who want to obtain information about missing family members. Participant 3 said that even innocuous actions such as establishing a mosque and a community center for the Uyghur diaspora may lead to individuals being targeted by the PRC.

Participant 3 explained that the PRC’s repression against Uyghur manifests in various ways. Participant 3 said that, amongst other forms of harassment and intimidation, Uyghurs are the target of intelligence-gathering operations, threats against family members back in East Turkistan in order to induce information sharing and collaboration

with the PRC, cyberattacks against organizational websites and Uyghurs' personal devices, and social media trolling campaigns. Participant 3 mentioned that they assumed their personal phone calls were being monitored by the PRC.

Participant 3 explained that the mental trauma experienced by the Uyghur Canadian community as a result of transnational repression was very profound. Participant 3 said that the realization that the PRC's influence and repressive activities extend to Canada is extremely traumatizing for all members of the Uyghur diaspora.

## 2. Participants' responses to Question 2

The second question posed to participants was: *What are your suggestions for how you and others in your community who may be vulnerable to foreign interference could be supported and protected, and for how foreign interference could be detected or combated?*

### Participant 1

*Participant 1's responses have been omitted from this summary due to their safety concerns.*

### Participant 2

Participant 2 emphasized the need for Canada to develop a better understanding of the PRC and its actions. For instance, they pointed out that despite the mounting evidence indicating the occurrence of a genocide against the Uyghurs, the PRC government still denies it.

Participant 2 said that Canada should take action against the reported Chinese police stations in Canada. Participant 2 stated that further investigation be conducted into the police stations because there may be things that have not yet been discovered.

Participant 2 expressed their desire for the Canadian government to provide support to the Uyghur community in Canada. Participant 2 expressed their belief that the Uyghur

diaspora, including Uyghur dissidents, can provide useful information to the Canadian government that it may not otherwise be able to obtain.

Participant 2 indicated that want Canada to take a stronger diplomatic stance against the PRC, in light of the PRC's authoritarianism and support of authoritarian regimes around the world.

### Participant 3

Participant 3 expressed their wish for Canada to petition for the release of a Canadian citizen of Uyghur origin who was arrested in Uzbekistan at the behest of the Chinese government and subsequently deported to the PRC, where they have been imprisoned for many years. According to Participant 3, this case involving the extraterritorial arrest of a Canadian citizen has marked the Uyghur community and sent a troubling signal to diaspora members.

Participant 3 also argued that Canada's economic ties with the PRC should be re-examined, suggesting that concerns over human rights violations in the PRC ought to inform the nature of Canada-China economic and diplomatic relations.

Finally, Participant 3 highlighted the importance for the Canadian government to ensure the safety of vulnerable diaspora communities, including Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Falun Gong practitioners, amongst others.