

MARCH 8, 2024

NGO files legal petition to UK government seeking sanctions against Chinese companies

The U.K. government has received a petition requesting sanctions against Chinese seafood companies accused of using forced labor



Chris Chase published in [Supply & Trade](#)



The Palace of Westminster and Big Ben in London, U.K. | Photo courtesy of Daniela Migliorisi/Shutterstock

A British non-governmental organization has filed a legal petition to the United Kingdom government requesting formal sanctions against seven Chinese companies named by the [Outlaw Ocean Project](#) as [having employed Uyghur labor](#) at their seafood-processing plants.

The United Nations has accused China of arbitrary detentions of the Uyghur ethnic minority inside the country, along with [serious human rights violations in the Xinjiang province](#). A U.N. report also said the Chinese government has severed families and used intimidation and threats against Uyghurs who are not residents of Xinjiang province, stating that its restrictions may constitute international crimes, “in particular crimes against humanity.”

Austin Brush, writing on Outlaw Ocean Project Founder [Ian Urbina’s substack](#), said the NGO – which asked to remain unnamed out of concerns regarding possible Chinese government repercussions – filed for sanctions under the U.K.’s Global Human Rights Sanctions law. The law allows for sanctions on individuals or entities relating to credible evidence of human rights violations.

According to Brush, seven companies have been named in the filing: Qingdao Tianyuan Aquatic Foodstuffs; the Rongsense Group, including its subsidiaries Rizhao Rirong Aquatic Products and Rizhao Rongxing; The Chishan Group, including its subsidiaries Shandong Haidu and Rongcheng Haibo; The Shandong Meijia Group, including its subsidiaries Rizhao Meijia Aquatic Foodstuff, Rizhao Jiayuan Foodstuff, and Rizhao Meijia Keyuan Foods; Xinjiang Zhongtai Zihui Modern Service; Yantai Sanko Fisheries; and Yantai Longwin Foods.

While U.K. retailers and suppliers have [cut ties](#) with the Chinese processors, there has been little response from the U.K. government as compared to [moves made by the U.S.](#) and Canada. The first formal calls [came to the Canadian government](#) from advocacy groups Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project (URAP) and the Human Rights Action Group, which named the same companies as the more recent U.K. petition.

A month later, another NGO confirmed to SeafoodSource it [formally filed a recommendation the U.S. government implement Global Magnitsky sanctions](#) against the same Chinese companies. By law, the U.S. government is required to consider any credible information that could result in sanctions offered by an NGO.

That effort [followed withhold-release order petitions](#) against two Chinese vessels that were named in the report, with the Human Trafficking Legal Center submitting a petition against the *Wei Yu 8* and the *Zhen Fa 7*, as well as the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable naming just the *Wei Yu 8*. Withhold release orders would stop any goods tied to the vessels from entering the U.S.

Lawmakers in the U.S. have also [called on the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden](#) to implement Magnitsky sanctions, and others have [called on U.S. Customs and Border Patrol](#) to take action.

Human Rights Watch Executive Director Kenneth Roth called on the U.K. government to do more [in an op-ed in The Guardian](#).

“Neither the British government nor the European Union has followed Washington’s lead in restricting Uyghur forced labor by creating a presumption against imports from Xinjiang,” Roth wrote.


To date, Brush said, the U.K. has used its Global Human Rights sanctions against four Chinese government officials and the state-run Xinjiang security and policing body in relation to the treatment of Uyghurs in China, but it has not ...

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