

# Canada faces urgent plea to sanction seven Chinese seafood firms over forced labor links

Human rights advocates urge Canada to issue sanctions against seven Chinese seafood companies working with Canadian importers

By [Liza Mayer](#) | Dec. 7, 2023 13:52 GMT



□ Journalist Ian Urbina pursues a Chinese fishing vessel known to use forced labor. Image is still from Outlaw Ocean Project series.

The Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project (URAP) and Human Rights Action Group on Thursday (Dec. 7) asked the Canadian government to issue trade-related sanctions against seven Chinese seafood companies accused of using forced labor.

The action is based on a comprehensive four-year investigation by the journalism group Outlaw Oceans Project (OOP), whose two-part series was published by [The New Yorker](#) in early October, as reported by [Undercurrent News](#).

"Canada must take decisive action to combat these international human rights violations; or else Canada will effectively be a dumping ground for products made with the use of Uyghur forced labor," said URAP executive director Mehmet Tohti in a two-page statement.

The companies identified in the statement, which are reported to be working with Canadian importers "who are continuously benefitting from the products," are: the Chishan Group, Yantai Sanko Fisheries, Yantai Longwin Foods, Qingdao Tianyuan Aquatic Products, the Rongsense Group, Shandong Meijia Group, and Xinjiang Zhongtai Zhihui Modern Service Co Ltd.

The groups suggest Canada use its Special Economic Measures (People's Republic of China) Regulations, which mirror the principles of the Global Magnitsky Act in the US. Both laws serve as mechanisms for targeted sanctions and are employed to address human rights violations and other significant concerns.

China stands as Canada's second-largest fish and seafood provider, exporting CAD 520 million (\$382.5m) worth of goods in 2021 to the North American nation, according to the statement.

Highlighting China's dominance in seafood production and its reliance on forced labor, the OOP series detailed violations aboard Chinese vessels and the forced relocation of Uyghurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority group in China's Xinjiang province, to processing plants.

Despite Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certifications, 11 MSC-certified plants allegedly employed Uyghur forced labor. The seafood churned out from these facilities is distributed to hundreds of restaurants, grocers, and food-service companies across North America, Europe and other regions globally.

The same investigation has led US lawmakers to similarly call for sanctions and for the expansion of the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) to encompass humane sourcing conditions for seafood, not just environmental sustainability.

Ian Urbina, the founder of the OOP, emphasized the need to move beyond mere MSC certifications for seafood sourcing during a hearing before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, as [Undercurrent](#) reported.

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