

US senators propose China ‘genocide’ declaration

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US Senator Marco Rubio speaks on Capitol Hill in Washington on June 10.

Photo: Reuters

US senators on Tuesday sought to declare that China is committing genocide against Uighurs and other Turkic-speaking Muslims, drawing a rebuke from Beijing.

The resolution was introduced by senators across the political spectrum, although it is unlikely to move immediately, as the Senate is out of session until after the election on Tuesday next week.

The text states that China’s campaign “against Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and members of other Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region constitutes genocide.”

“This resolution recognizes these crimes for what they are and is the first step toward holding China accountable for their monstrous actions,” said US Senator John Cornyn, who sponsored the proposal.

US Senator Jeff Merkley said the resolution would show that the US “can’t stay silent.”

“China’s assault on Uighurs and other Muslim minority groups — escalating surveillance, imprisonment, torture and forced ‘re-education camps’ — is genocide, pure and simple,” Merkley said.

Other cosponsors include US senators Marco Rubio and Robert Menendez, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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Rights groups say that more than 1 million Uighurs languish in camps in the Xinjiang region as Beijing attempts to forcibly integrate the community and expunge its Islamic heritage.

Olivia Enos, a senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation who studies human rights in Asia, said that a genocide resolution on Xinjiang could put pressure on the White House to follow suit and pave the way for additional sanctions.

“Obviously, it would be great to have the executive branch say that this is genocide and/or crimes against humanity, but I think, in lieu of that, this would be a very strong, bipartisan message that the US government cares about the state of the Uighur people, even and especially when the Chinese Communist Party does not,” Enos said.

China yesterday accused the senators of telling “all kinds of lies.”

The “so-called genocide in Xinjiang is a rumor deliberately concocted by some anti-China forces,” Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Wang Wenbin (王文彬) told reporters.

“The US senators you mentioned have always been anti-China, and are keen to concoct all kinds of lies to discredit China and use them to seek their own political gains,” Wang said.

Wang said that the US was culpable in the “assimilation and massacres of Native Americans in history to greatly reduce their population.”

“We urge certain US politicians to respect the facts, stop fabricating lies and stop using Xinjiang-related issues to interfere in China’s internal affairs,” he said.

Additional reporting by AFP

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