

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Reuters) - The U.S. Senate passed legislation on Wednesday to ban the import of products from China's Xinjiang region, the latest effort in Washington to punish Beijing for what U.S. officials say is an ongoing genocide against Uyghurs and other Muslim groups.

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act would create a "rebuttable presumption" assuming goods manufactured in Xinjiang are made with forced labor and therefore banned under the 1930 Tariff Act, unless otherwise certified by U.S. authorities.

Passed by unanimous consent, the bipartisan measure would shift the burden of proof to importers. The current rule bans goods if there is reasonable evidence of forced labor.

The bill must also pass the House of Representatives before it can be sent to the White House for President Joe Biden to sign into law. It was not immediately clear when that might take place.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio, who introduced the legislation with Democrat Jeff Merkley, called on the House to act quickly.

"We will not turn a blind eye to the CCP's ongoing crimes against humanity, and we will not allow corporations a free pass to profit from those horrific abuses," Rubio said in a statement.

"No American corporation should profit from these abuses. No American consumers should be inadvertently purchasing products from slave labor," Merkley said.

WIDER IMAGE In China's new Xinjiang: patriotic tourism, riot police and minders
<https://t.co/IpOixFoj5> pic.twitter.com/5CTFdmKFXd

— Reuters (@Reuters) [June 17, 2021](#)

Image source: Twitter

Democratic and Republican aides said they expected the measure would get strong support in the House, noting the House [approved a similar measure](#) nearly unanimously last year.

The bill would go beyond steps already taken to secure U.S. supply chains in the face of allegations of rights abuses in China, including existing bans on [Xinjiang tomatoes, cotton and some solar products](#).

The Biden administration has increased sanctions, and on Tuesday [issued an advisory warning businesses](#) they could be in violation of U.S. law if operations are linked even indirectly to surveillance networks in Xinjiang.

French prosecutors have opened an investigation into four fashion retailers suspected of concealing 'crimes against humanity' in China's Xinjiang region, a judicial source said <https://t.co/gdMtfa0yCt> [pic.twitter.com/X1Ut3UsxT6](https://t.co/pic.twitter.com/X1Ut3UsxT6)

— Reuters (@Reuters) [July 2, 2021](#)

Image source: Twitter

Rights groups, researchers, former residents and some Western lawmakers and officials say Xinjiang authorities have facilitated forced labor by detaining around a million Uyghurs and other primarily Muslim minorities since 2016.

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