

September 10, 2020

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Bob Chapek
Chief Executive Officer
The Walt Disney Company
Via email

Dear Mr. Chapek,

I am writing (1) to urgently inform you of the serious human rights violations occurring in Hong Kong and Xinjiang at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party, (2) to **explain how Disney has become linked to these issues through the production of *Mulan***, and (3) to **request that**, as one of the world's most prominent entertainment companies that wields great influence on global culture, Disney **publicly condemn the grave human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and consider donating a portion of *Mulan*'s proceeds to organizations supporting human rights in these regions.**

Mulan was extensively filmed in Xinjiang, and its credits thanked eight Xinjiang government entities, including the Turpan Municipal Bureau of Public Security, a police bureau that is involved in running Xinjiang's "re-education" camps, which in reality are concentration camps used to commit cultural genocide against the Muslim population.

The Chinese dictatorial regime has a long history of committing egregious human rights violations against the Muslim population in Xinjiang, particularly the Uyghurs, under the pretense of deterring separatism and extremism. Whereas approximately 90% of China's overall population is Han Chinese, in the Xinjiang region (also known as East Turkestan), the Uyghurs — a largely Muslim, Turkic ethnic minority — are the most populous ethnicity.

In addition to cracking down on the Uyghurs' freedom of expression and freedom of religion, the Chinese government has engaged in mass surveillance to control the Uyghurs, forcibly sterilized Uyghur women, forced Uyghurs into coercive labor programs, and detained an estimated 800,000 to two million Muslims in concentration camps. Detainees are forbidden from leaving the camps, where they are indoctrinated with Communist Party ideology and forced to renounce their culture and religion.

These repressive practices toward Uyghurs and the “re-education” camps have been widely criticized. In October 2019, a group of 23 countries, including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan, signed a [joint statement](#) calling on the Chinese government to end human rights violations and internment camps in Xinjiang. In the United States alone, the House and Senate have passed [bipartisan bills](#) condemning the Chinese government’s treatment of Uyghurs with virtual unanimous consent, and both the Treasury Department and the Department of State have imposed financial [sanctions](#) and visa bans on individuals and companies associated with Uyghur internment.

The world has not seen a mass internment of an ethnic-religious minority group comparable to this since the Holocaust. Yet, Disney has not only chosen to film in Xinjiang, but also to thank — and by extension legitimize — the very people and organizations responsible for some of the most heinous human rights violations of our times. This is outrageous.

In contrast to your resounding endorsement of the government entities that are complicit in the ongoing Uyghur cultural genocide, Disney has remained silent about actress Liu Yifei’s statements in support of police — and by extension police brutality — during Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protests. Since the former British colony of Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, the Chinese government has been chipping away at Hong Kong’s political, legal, and economic autonomy under the “one country, two systems” principle. Attacks against Hong Kong’s democratic institutions and the crackdown against its leaders have intensified in recent years. In 2019, the China-imposed Hong Kong government attempted to pass an [extradition bill](#), which would allow anyone in Hong Kong to be sent to mainland China to be tried at the Chinese government’s request. This attempt sparked mass protests and morphed into broader pro-democracy demonstrations, drawing millions of Hong Kong’s citizens to march in the streets.

Since then, the Hong Kong Police Force has become notorious for its brutal response to the protesters. Peaceful marches against the Chinese government’s latest encroachment on Hong Kong’s promised freedoms were met with widespread police brutality. The [disproportionate police response](#) has included unjustified use of tear gas, water cannons, batons, and rubber bullets; indiscriminate attacks against civilians; excessive use of force; severe beatings; arbitrary arrests; and sexual abuse in detention. To date, not a single police officer has faced charges for these serious abuses of power.

There has been an international outcry against the Hong Kong Police Force’s actions. For instance, the UN Human Rights Council has [accused](#) the Hong Kong police of using weapons in ways that violated international norms, creating “a considerable risk of death or serious injury,” and the United States has [condemned](#) the police’s “unjustified use of deadly force.”

Despite this global condemnation, Liu Yifei, a Chinese-American and the lead actress of *Mulan*, has chosen to publicly support police brutality in Hong Kong. In August 2019, Liu shared a [post](#) on Chinese social media site Weibo that stated, “I support Hong Kong’s police, you can beat me up now. What a shame for Hong Kong.”

Liu is, quite literally, the face of *Mulan*, a female heroine who is supposed to represent honor, bravery, and justice. Yet Disney has not only remained silent about Liu’s support of police brutality in Hong Kong, but has continued to give Liu a platform and promote her in media appearances ahead of *Mulan*’s release.

Disney has publicly shown support for the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, which fundamentally advocates against social injustice, racial discrimination, and police brutality. You have publicly released statements supporting the Black Lives Matter protests, created commercials about “Speaking up because Black Lives Matter,” and pledged \$5 million to organizations working to rectify social injustice and racism.

Much like Black Lives Matter protesters, Uyghur activists are protesting against social injustice, systemic racism, and widespread ethnic-religious discrimination.

Much like Black Lives Matter protesters, citizens in Hong Kong are speaking up against police brutality.

Considering your outspokenness regarding human rights issues in the U.S., we believe your endorsement of the Chinese government, an authoritarian regime involved in gross human rights violations, is hypocritical.

If you maintain your silence, you will be in league with a regime that represses dissent and free speech, condones police brutality, and commits cultural genocide against its minorities. Simply put: by remaining silent on these issues, Disney has become complicit in them.

Disney is a company from the United States, and owes its success largely to the fact that creativity and freedom of expression are allowed to thrive in a democracy such as the U.S. Your company’s Human Rights Policy Statement states that:

The Walt Disney Company is committed to conducting business in an ethical and responsible manner. We respect and support international principles aimed at protecting and promoting human rights, as described in the United Nations’ Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Thanking a government that perpetrates cultural genocide and police brutality, while restricting its citizens' rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom to receive information, is neither ethical nor responsible.

We hope you consider showing consistency in your support for human rights and nonviolent protest movements, no matter where they are. We hope you use your extensive influence to galvanize further support for Uyghurs and Hongkongers, and help them in their courageous struggles for a home free of repression. We hope you do not use your brand's power and prestige to lend legitimacy to authoritarian oppression.

The Human Rights Foundation urgently asks you to make a public statement condemning the human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and consider donating a portion of *Mulan's* proceeds to organizations that support freedom for the Uyghur and Hong Kong populations.

For your convenience, below is a list of organizations vetted by HRF for your donation consideration.

Sincerely,



Thor Halvorssen
President
Human Rights Foundation

Uyghur and Hong Kong Nonprofit Organizations:

Uyghur Human Rights Project, World Uyghur Congress, Campaign for Uyghurs, Uyghur American Association, 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute, HKDC, The Stand News, Hong Kong Free Press

cc: Chris Bender, Jake Weiner, Jason T. Reed, Niki Caro, Rick Jaffa, Amanda Silver, Lauren Hynek, Elizabeth Martin, Bill Kong, Barrie M. Osborne, Time Coddington, Mario Iscovich, Alan Bergman, Ricky Strauss, Robert Iger; Social Responsibility Team, The Walt Disney Company; UN High Commission on Human Rights; Uyghur Human Rights Project; World Uyghur Congress; Campaign for Uyghurs; Uyghur American Association; HKDC; Hong Kong Watch