

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 6, 2020

Commissioner Adam Silver
National Basketball Association
645 5th Ave
New York, NY 10022

Dear Commissioner Silver,

We are deeply concerned by reports regarding abuse in an NBA youth-development program in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), one of the most tightly controlled regions in China. Recent investigations suggest that your organization has been aware of Chinese state-sanctioned abuse of children in its Xinjiang basketball training camps, but did not take action.

The Chinese Government and Communist Party are committing some of the worst human rights violations of our time. In a July 21 letter, Deputy Commissioner Mark Tatum asserted that, “The NBA has had no involvement with the Xinjiang basketball academy for more than a year, and the relationship has been terminated.” However, on July 29, 2020, a report published by ESPN revealed that the NBA’s Xinjiang training center was fully operational as of spring 2019. The ESPN report directly contradicts assertions in the NBA’s July 21 correspondence with Congressional offices and quotes two sources characterizing the league’s statement as “completely inaccurate.” A New York Times article later also reported that the center was still operating as of June 2019.

Therefore, it is our understanding that the NBA has not been forthcoming with members of the Senate regarding questions surrounding the NBA’s relationship with the Xinjiang basketball academy. If true, this is unacceptable. We ask that you identify the specific date on which you severed the relationship with the Xinjiang basketball academy and publish documentation to substantiate that date.

The July 29 ESPN story outlines in excruciating detail the mistreatment of young players by Chinese coaches, including physical abuse and corporal punishment. It also indicates that coaches filed written reports documenting this abuse to the NBA office in Shanghai, but the abuse continued in many cases.

The Chinese Government and Communist Party (CCP) are committing egregious human rights violations throughout the country. They have cracked down more harshly on Christians, Tibetans, human rights activists and lawyers in addition to brutally breaking their treaty commitment to the autonomy of Hong Kong. And now we have mounting evidence of the horrific crimes occurring in the XUAR. Beijing’s policies have led to the mass internment of more than one million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities and government-organized forced labor of these same minorities. New reports have

emerged recently of the Chinese government forcibly sterilizing Uyghur women or forcibly aborting pregnancies. Any of these abuses, much less all of them together, likely constitute atrocity crimes and crimes against humanity under U.S. and international law.

With this public information available to anyone willing to read it, we remain deeply troubled by the league's degree of engagement with the Chinese Communist government. In light of these disturbing revelations, we request answers to the following questions by August 26, 2020:

1. What steps did the NBA take between March 2019 and November 2019 to formally terminate its relationship with the Xinjiang training camp?
2. Is there a culture within Chinese training camps of physical discipline being "an integral part of training?"
3. How are coaches who engaged in proven cases of physical abuse addressed? Do these coaches still work with or at any NBA training centers?
4. What is the reporting structure that allowed written reports filed in Shanghai to seemingly not make their way to the NBA's headquarters in New York? How has this structure been improved since these incidents?
5. How is the NBA working to increase oversight and authorities over local coaches, academic programs, and living conditions?

As an American organization who claims to hold integrity and respect as part of its core values, we urge the NBA to take a stand against the horrific abuses by the Chinese Government and Communist Party. Their actions are an affront to human dignity and universal values. History will not judge kindly those who remained silent or were complicit in the Chinese Communist Party's human rights abuses.

Thank you for your immediate attention. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



MARSHA BLACKBURN
United States Senator



MARCO RUBIO
United States Senator