



Australian Federation
of Islamic Councils

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Speech for the Webinar “China’s Cooperation with the Muslim World” to be held on 18 August 2021

Prelude:

This speech was prepared earlier this week to be presented at the 18 August 2021 Webinar titled “China’s Cooperation with the Muslim World”. Whilst this event was cancelled on a day’s notice. I believe that it is very important to convey AFIC’s message to our community and to the powers that be both in the Muslim world and to Chinese ruling elites.

Text of speech:

China’s cooperation with the Muslim world

China has risen at an incredible pace. The British 19th century and Japanese 20th Century invasions which had torn through China, have, instead of subjugating China, stirred the Chinese people to rise and build China into an economic powerhouse that is able to compete with the major powers as well as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative extends the old silk road into many new nations. China’s economic and military growth is rapidly changing our world back to two powers instead of one and if China continues its present growth, it might occupy the stage as the biggest superpower on earth.

China’s rise has come at a tremendous cost, for a long time, the one child policy followed by the widely reported and extensively evidenced persecution of minorities, the annexation of East Turkistan, the ongoing encroaches on Hong Kong and Taiwan, the debt-trap strategy borrowed from the World Bank and IMF have all been overshadowing China’s success.

There is no question that today, China is the world’s manufacturing hub and Chinese products have over the decades risen in quality to compete with the best to reach every household on the planet.

Today, we’re discussing China’s cooperation with the Muslim world. Whilst some might excuse the sacrifice of the few for the perceived short-lived well-being of the many, such an approach is strongly condemned in Islam as Islam looks for the well-being of all in a fair egalitarian manner.

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils

*The peak body for Australian Muslims representing
State and Territory Islamic Councils and Societies*



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There is no doubt that China has forged relations with leaders in many Muslim countries. Unfortunately, these relations have included repressive regimes such as Egypt's, Iran's, Syria's Myanmar's (though not a Muslim country) and other mini dictatorships. Relations with these countries have done nothing to improve the human rights record of China or its "friends".

When we care about anyone, we don't just praise their good qualities, we also point out the areas they need to improve. When we care about our nation, we constantly harangue our political representatives to introduce amendments and improvements to laws to make our nation better and stronger.

In this sense, I am not here to pay lip service and offer false praise in the hope of some crumbs being thrown our way, this would be a betrayal of my faith as a Muslim, a betrayal of humanity and a betrayal of my effort as well-wisher.

I have agreed to take part in this event for the simple reason of providing advice. This advice is well-intended and I do urge you to take it in this light. It is my solemn duty as a representative of the Australian federation of Islamic Councils, the National Umbrella for Australia's Muslims to speak the truth, even if it is in the face of overwhelming power.

China's persecution of minorities, the Uyghur, the Falun Dafa, Christians and other minorities cannot be whitewashed by a few articles from friendly sources. Such articles are a betrayal of China and a betrayal of humanity. China can progress and rise without this persecution and without favouring one group or faith community over another. The excuse of fighting terrorism has historically proved to be nothing but a false narrative to excuse the imposition of the leaders' will over dissenting voices. Yet often, it is the dissenting voices that help us improve and build on our success.

It is of no use for China to make deals with Muslim leaders who ignore the persecution of the Uyghur, these deals will not pass the test of time, because the leaders who ignore these persecutions will not last forever. If China is genuine about a respectful cooperation with Muslims, then it must immediately cease all persecution against the Uyghur, it must dismantle the "re-education" concentration camps, it must give the Uyghur a fair pay for their labour, it must remove the spies from the Uyghur homes and must give the people of East Turkistan complete freedom and rights equal to the Han nationals. China must also protect the faith-teachings and practices of Islam from being criticised by officials and must stop persecuting Muslims who practice the teachings of Islam. Muslims must be allowed to pray and fast and perform all the rituals of Islam unhindered, whether they are government workers, students or ordinary citizens. China must respect our Imams and our women, men and children. Islam is not communism or any other ism. Islam is a faith with approximately two billion adherents worldwide, it is not merely the leaders of a few nations. East Turkistan is Not Chinese territory, the Uyghur are not "ethnic Chinese".



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I move now to China's dispute with India over Kashmir. I will not defend India whose human right's record is horrific, however, I urge China to find a way to deal with this dispute without bringing further harm to the people of Kashmir.

I move to China's boycott of certain Australian products and the rhetoric from Chinese officials against Australia. I am a proud Muslim Australian. I take criticism of my nation very seriously. China's attacks on Australia are unfair, unwarranted and purely political. Australian state and federal governments have always been extremely sympathetic to China and have historically been among the most potent catalysts for China's economic growth. There is no question that China's economic growth would have been delayed by decades if it was not for Australia's strategic assistance. China must immediately cease its hostilities against Australia. This confrontational approach does not help either nation.

Finally, I would love to see a nation such as China building respectful relations with Muslims, not just leaders of some Muslim nations. To do so, China must begin to respect the right of Muslims living within its borders and Muslims world-wide. It must also show respect for our faith teachings, ban criticisms of our teachings and faith practices by officials and enshrine in law and policy the freedoms and right to practice our own faith to all Muslims. China must also stop supporting repressive regimes that persecute their populations.

Speech by AFIC president, **Dr Rateb Jneid** that was scheduled for the "China's cooperation with the Muslim World" Webinar.

Authorised for release by **Dr Rateb Jneid**, AFIC president.