



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The Assistant Director-General for Culture

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair
Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland

21 April 2021

Ref.: CLT/CEM/EPR/21/2530

Dear Mr Tugendhat,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 22 March 2021 where you raise your concerns about the situation of cultural heritage in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.

Since your previous letter, dated 5 March 2021 (ref: CLT/ADG/21/1364), there has been no further development within UNESCO on this matter.

I wish to thank you for your interest in the work of UNESCO and to assure you that the organization will continue to make every effort, within its mandate, to monitor the safeguarding of cultural heritage around the world.

Yours sincerely,

Ernesto Ottone R.

CC: Permanent Delegation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern
Ireland to UNESCO
United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO



Foreign Affairs Committee

House of Commons · London · SW1A 0AA
+44 20 7219 6106 · fac@parliament.uk
www.parliament.uk · [@CommonsForeign](https://twitter.com/ CommonsForeign)

From the Chair
Tom Tugendhat MP

Ernesto Ottone Ramírez
Assistant Director-General for Culture
UNESCO

Letter by email: OFFICE.ADG.CULTURE@unesco.org

22 March 2021

Dear Mr Ramírez,

Thank you for your letter of 5 March responding to concerns about reports of cultural erasure in Xinjiang.

I am concerned that UNESCO has not taken any steps to investigate these reports, which are widespread and numerous, coming from a range of different organisations throughout the world. As the UN body responsible for safeguarding and preserving culture, I would hope that your organisation would be proactive in investigating credible and multiple reports of cultural destruction of such scale.

Likewise, it is worrying that your response referred only to UNESCO heritage sites. This is a surprisingly narrow view of the situation, ignoring the concerted and expressly-stated efforts by the Chinese government to 'sinicize' Islam in Xinjiang, which many believe is being realised through the destruction of important cultural sites.

With these points considered, I have two further questions:

- Will UNESCO acknowledge the reports that religious and cultural sites not included in the World Heritage list are being destroyed and examine the implications for cultural cleansing?
- Will UNESCO request free and unfettered access to Xinjiang, to determine the veracity of these widespread reports of cultural destruction?

It would be helpful to have a response by 5 April. I intend to place your response in the public domain.

Best wishes,

TOM TUGENDHAT