

Muslim groups boycott Hilton over bulldozed Uyghur mosque

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Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (center), other CAIR representatives, and representatives of Uyghur human rights organizations, hold a press conference in Washington on September 16. (Photo courtesy of CAIR)

A coalition of more than 40 American Muslim groups is leading a global boycott of Hilton Hotels over its involvement in a hotel project in Xinjiang, China, where a Uyghur mosque was bulldozed to make way for the building.

At a September 16 news conference outside the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC, representatives of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the World Uyghur Congress, the Uyghur Human Rights Project, and other organizations said Hilton had ignored a one-week deadline that CAIR had given the company to pull out of the

project in Xinjiang before initiating the boycott.

“They decided to put profit over values. They decided to put their own bottom line over human rights and values,” said CAIR executive director Nihad Awad.

The United States and other governments around the world have labeled China’s treatment of the Uyghurs, a mostly Muslim ethnic group whose homelands are in Xinjiang, as a genocide. In July, the US bipartisan Congressional-Executive Commission on China issued an open letter calling for Hilton to end the project.

“As a signatory to the UN Global Compact, Hilton has committed itself to supporting international human rights standards,” a July statement from the commission said. “Given these commitments, we ask that Hilton take steps to halt construction and otherwise disassociate itself and its brand from the hotel project in Hotan and reject complicity in the persecution of Uyghurs.”

The site of the bulldozed Duling Mosque in Xinjiang’s Hotan Prefecture is being turned into a mixed-use development by a Chinese developer. One of the new businesses planned for the site is a Hampton by Hilton hotel, which is owned by Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. A sign at the construction site for the new hotel asked passersby to “warmly celebrate the Communist Party’s 100th anniversary,” according to media reports.

According to analysis of satellite images and other data conducted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, some 65 percent of the province’s mosques—roughly 16,000—have been severely damaged or destroyed by Chinese authorities since 2017. —Religion News Service