

## Warning Issued as UK Imports Solar Panels Linked to Human Rights Abuses

July 25, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



Download IPFS

The United Kingdom is increasingly at risk of becoming a destination for solar panels and green technologies produced under questionable ethical conditions, according to a new report from the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR). The report warns that the UK's current efforts to uphold human rights in global supply chains are "inadequate," allowing goods linked to exploitation to enter the country with little oversight.

The findings highlight a notable contrast with enforcement measures in the United States and European Union, where some import restrictions and transparency laws aim to limit the entry of ethically compromised products into domestic markets. Without similar mechanisms, the UK remains exposed to the inflow of goods produced in regions with documented labour concerns.

The solar energy sector, central to the UK's net-zero ambitions, is especially vulnerable. The rapid rollout of solar infrastructure has outpaced scrutiny, creating serious blind spots in sourcing practices. The JCHR cited concerns that solar panels from companies allegedly linked to forced labour practices, particularly in China's Xinjiang region, may have been installed across the UK. Organisations such as Manchester City Football Club and Cheltenham Racecourse were identified as sites using solar panels, potentially linked to unethical sourcing, though there is no evidence they were aware of such issues in their supply chains.

The committee called for an overhaul of the UK's Solar Roadmap, urging the government to adopt a clear and enforceable strategy to ensure ethical sourcing. "It's intolerable that in the 21st century, we are profiting from goods made through suffering and exploitation," said Lord Alton, chair of the JCHR. "Strong leadership is essential to prevent these goods from entering our markets."

Polysilicon, used in more than 95% of the world's solar panels, is heavily sourced from regions under international scrutiny. The UK has no domestic capacity to produce this key material, leaving it almost entirely reliant on imports. Despite growing concern, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has yet to implement firm safeguards.

Data from Sheffield Hallam University's Helena Kennedy Centre and the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) identified at least 84 non-residential UK sites using solar panels suspected of being sourced unethically. IPAC's Luke de Pulford noted that the JCHR report confirms long-standing warnings. "Critical supply chains are being dominated by practices that raise serious ethical questions. The UK cannot afford further delay."

The JCHR called for tighter import controls, stronger penalties for companies that fail to meet ethical standards, and clearer legal remedies for affected communities. Solar Energy UK, a leading trade body, defended the industry, stating its support for initiatives like the Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI), which promotes transparency and responsible sourcing.

Without immediate and coordinated action, the UK risks undermining both its moral authority and economic sovereignty as it pushes forward with its clean energy transition. The message is clear: ethical leadership must underpin the path to net zero.