

**Committee:** Special Committee on the Protection of Minorities

**Topic:** The question of the treatment of Uighurs in China

**Chair:** Alexander Fial

**School:** Frankfurt International School

---

## Summary

The Uighurs are a minority group within the People's Republic of China that adhere to a Turkic ethnicity and follow Islam. There are about 11 million Uighurs living in the Xinjiang province today with that number dwindling. The Chinese government has reportedly detained more than a million Muslims in reeducation camps. Human rights organizations, UN officials, and a number of foreign nations have urged China to halt the violations, which the US has labeled genocide. However, Chinese officials claim that what they refer to as vocational training facilities do not violate the human rights of Uighurs. They have refused to provide details about the detention camps and have barred international media and investigators from visiting them. Internal Chinese government documents published in late 2019 revealed vital insights about how the detention facilities were established and maintained.

Experts and government authorities estimate that two million Uyghurs and other Muslims, including ethnic Kazakhs and Uzbeks, have been imprisoned since April 2017. The majority of those detained in the camps have never been charged with a crime and have no legal recourse to contest their imprisonment. According to media sources, the prisoners were detained for a variety of reasons, including going to or contacting persons from any of China's twenty-six problematic nations, such as Turkey and Afghanistan; attending mosque services; and sending messages containing verses from the Quran.

A huge number of Uighur authors and professors are being detained in the camps, signaling a major increase in ethnic oppression. Rahile Dawut, a well-known folklorist, Abdukerim Rahman, Azat Sultan, and Gheyretjan Osman, literature professors Abdukerim Rahman, Azat Sultan, and Gheyretjan Osman, language professor Arslan Abdulla, and poet Abdulqadir Jalaaladdin are among those who have vanished. Kashgar University's president Erkin Omer and vice president Muhter Abdughopur were dismissed from their positions, and their whereabouts are unknown.

## Documenting Xinjiang and its 'training centres'

Several different reports have raised international concerns about "Vocational education and training centres" in China's northwest region, with rights activists describing them as political re-education camps

### GOVERNMENT TENDERS

Publicly accessible records seen by AFP in 2018 that have raised questions about equipment purchased for government facilities

### SATELLITE IMAGES

Research by the East Turkistan National Awakening Movement based in Washington shows distribution of large facilities

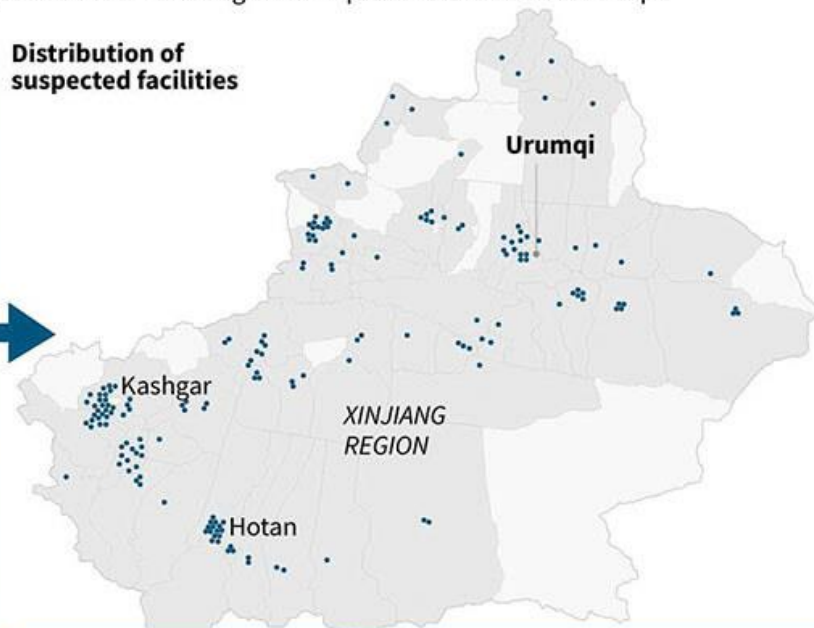
### LEAKED GOVERNMENT CABLES

Published in investigative reports by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) contain instructions for running detention camps

### UN REPORT

Saying as many as **1 million Uighurs** and other mostly Muslim minorities were being held in camps in 2018, according to experts cited by the UN

### Distribution of suspected facilities



■ Beijing claims to counter the spread of separatism, terrorism and religious extremism through "free" training

■ Xinjiang officials said in December 2019 that all "students" had graduated from the centres, though an unspecified number of people were still "entering and exiting" them

Source: China public government documents/ ICIJ/ETNAM

AFP

"Citizens of the People's Republic of China have freedom of religion belief," according to Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution. The state "protects regular religious practices," according to the article, and "no one may use religion to participate in actions that undermine public order." The last two provisions might be viewed as the foundation for the state's extensive discretion in interpreting the law. "Normal religious activities" are given state protection without any qualification or clarification. The Uighurs still live in distress and there is no denying that what China is doing to this minority group is less than unacceptable. The international community now looks to seek ways to solve this issue and give the Uighurs a sense of security without fear of being prosecuted for their ethnic and religious alignments.

## Definition of Key Terms

**East Turkestan** – Also known as the Xinjiang Province, East Turkestan was given this name due to its cultural and geographic similarity to the Turkic nations of Central Asia. The region has had periods of autonomy and independence, but in the 18th century, China annexed what is now known as Xinjiang.

**Arbitrary Arrest** – This term is defined as any individual that has been detained without any evidence of committing a crime, or where there has been no proper process of law or order.

**Indoctrination Camps** – Indoctrination is a term used to describe the process of teaching someone to accept a set of ideas without challenging them, most commonly in a religious context. Camps refers to strongholds that have been created to carry out indoctrination for the Uighurs of China in this case.

**Sinicization** – The process through which non-Chinese societies are influenced by Chinese culture and specifically around the Han Chinese identity- the largest ethnic group in China.

**“Black site”** – The term "black site" refers to prisons where inmates are not charged with a crime and have no legal recourse. These black sites are often hidden or conducted in secret. This specific black site refers to a recently discovered prison/detention facility in Dubai, United Arab Emirates holding Chinese Uighur prisoners.

**Turkistan Islamic Party** – The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), previously the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), is a Uyghur Muslim extremist group based in Western China. Its declared purpose is to create an independent state known as East Turkestan to replace Xinjiang. TIP has been classified as a terrorist group by the UN Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee since 2002, however the US removed it off its list of terrorist organizations in 2020.

**Xinjiang Aid** – Xinjiang Aid is an official economic development policy. The program reportedly promotes economic growth in Xinjiang through manufacturing sector industrialisation, agricultural investment, and vocational training.

**Three Forces** – While the term "Three Forces" has long been a component of Chinese security strategy in Xinjiang, the country now refers to terrorism, separatism, and extremism as the "three evil forces," with extremism increasingly dominating official discourse.

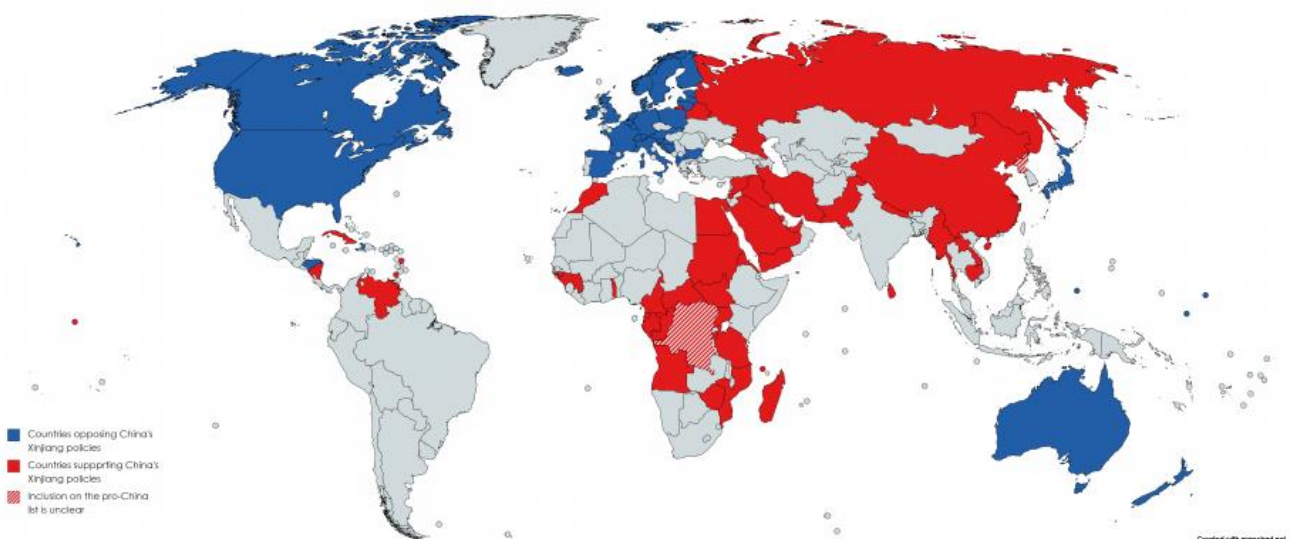
## Background Information

The land which the Uighurs call home is officially known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and has been claimed by China since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in 1949. Some of the region's Uyghur residents refer to it as East Turkestan and say that it should be independent of China. Xinjiang covers one-sixth of China's land area and has borders with eight nations, including Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Even though Xinjiang takes up one-sixth of the entire landmass, Xinjiang is by far one of the least populated areas of the country, being on the left side of the Heihe–Tengchong Line.

The majority of those that live in China are from the Han ethnicity and are by far the most populous group in the country. This makes the Uighurs of the nation a very small minority group even though there are approximately 11 million of them in the country. The government of China does not see the Uighurs as a peaceful ethnic group and have attempted to promote Chinese cultural unity while punishing certain expressions of Uyghur identity. The Chinese government has even brought in mass amounts of Han Chinese into the Xinjiang region in order to cleanse Xinjiang of the Turkic minority group.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved



**World Uyghur Congress** – An international organization of exiled Uyghur groups whose goal is to "represent the collective interest of the Uyghur people" both inside and outside the People's Republic of China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

**Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region** – An autonomous region in the North-East part of China. This is the area where the majority of the Uighurs call home, it can also be referred to as East Turkestan.

**Organization of Islamic Cooperation(OIC)** – An international organization formed in 1969 with 57 member nations and a population of over 1.8 billion people as of 2015, 49 of which are Muslim-majority countries. The OIC has stated that it "commends the efforts of the People's Republic of China in providing care to its Muslim citizens.

**Human Rights Watch** – Human Rights Watch is a non-governmental organization that undertakes human rights research and advocacy on a global scale. In 2017, the Human Rights Watch released a report condemning the actions of the Chinese government and to shut them down.

**China** – China is the main country at question when discussing the treatment of the Uyghurs. The Xinjiang province is a part of China and it is the Chinese government that carries out the atrocities such as the re-education camps.

**United Arab Emirates** – Wu Huan, a Chinese Uyghur lady, stated in June 2021 that she had been kidnapped by Chinese authorities in Dubai and held captive in a house that had been turned into a prison. Wu Huan's evidence revealed that she and at least two other Uyghurs were detained for eight days. It was one of the Chinese-run "black sites" that was discovered for the first time the United Arab Emirates.

**Turkey** – The Turkish Foreign Ministry denounced China for their actions in February of 2019. However, some people are trying to "exploit" the Xinjiang situation, according to Erdoğan, in order to endanger the "Turkish–Chinese partnership." Some Uyghurs in Turkey have reported fear about being deported back to China.

**United States** – The relations between China and the United States have decreased significantly with the Uyghurs being one reason why. Both sides have posed sanctions on one another and limited access to resources. On 14 September 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security blocked imports of products from four entities in Xinjiang.

**Saudi Arabia** – Saudi Arabia has been a strong advocate for the right doings of the Uyghurs stating that "China has the right to carry out anti-terrorism and de-extremization work for its national security."

## Timeline of Events

<b>July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009</b>	<b>The Urumqi riots of July 2009 were a series of violent riots that erupted in Urumqi, Xinjiang China, on July 5, 2009. The riots on the first day, which comprised at least 1,000 Uyghurs, began as a peaceful protest but quickly escalated into violent attacks on Han people. According to Chinese authorities, a total of 197 individuals died, the majority of them being Hans.</b>
<b>April 2017</b>	<b>The first re-education camps were established within the Xinjiang province by Xi Jinping's administration.</b>
<b>June 2021</b>	<b>The black site in the United Arab Emirates was uncovered.</b>

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

On July 8, 2019, 22 nations released a statement calling for an end to China's mass detentions and expressing alarm over pervasive monitoring and persecution.

On September 10, 2018, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urged China to remove limitations on her and her team, requesting China to let observers enter Xinjiang and expressing worry about the situation there.

A report on the effect and application of China's Counter-Terrorism Law and its Regional Implementing Measures in Xinjiang was released on November 1, 2019, by ten UN Special Rapporteurs, including the vice-chair of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.



## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

- The creation of the World Uyghur Congress in order to specific tackle the issue of the Uyghurs
- <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26957&LangID=E> (Office of the High Commissioner Statemen)
- [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2020-0431\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2020-0431_EN.html) (European Parliament Resolution)

Although there have been many talks on the issue of the Uighurs, there has not been a fully realized resolution by the United Nations which helps tackle the issue.

## Possible Solutions

- Support the request made in the letter to the High Commissioner of the United Nations Human Rights Council in July 2019, calling for the permission of independent international observers to enter the Xinjiang region of China.
- To target organizations that are working together in Xinjiang. One example is Volkswagen, a German organization whose previous Chief Herbert Diess said that he was "not mindful" of the inhumane imprisonments in Xinjiang. There are additionally 500 U.S. organizations working in Xinjiang, among them Exxon Mobil, Amazon, General Engines, Portage, General Electric, and Boeing. One possibility is to work with worker's guilds and furthermore business relationship to tell these organizations that they shouldn't be working in a location where the Beijing system is committing possible genocide against the local populace.
- Raise awareness of this issue of forced labour and the re-education camps with regards to China's facilitating of 2022 Winter Olympics. Organizations like Adidas, Nike, Coca Cola should be informed that they shouldn't support these games while the Beijing system is holding 3,000,000 Uyghurs in re-education camps and committing possible genocide.
- We could possibly have the Worldwide Red Cross gain admittance into Xinjiang to discover what's going on in the re-education camps;

## Bibliography

- "Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots." *Human Rights Watch*, 2021.
- "China: Draconian Repression of Muslims in Xinjiang Amounts to Crimes against Humanity." *Amnesty International*, 10 June 2021, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/china-draconian-repression-of-muslims-in-xinjiang-amounts-to-crimes-against-humanity/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/china-draconian-repression-of-muslims-in-xinjiang-amounts-to-crimes-against-humanity/).
- Documenting Xinjiang and Its "training Centres."* 27 July 2020. *Antalayar*, [atalayar.com/en/content/turkey-sends-uyghur-refugees-china](http://atalayar.com/en/content/turkey-sends-uyghur-refugees-china).
- Lum, Thomas, and Michael A. Weber. *China Primer: Uyghurs*. E-book ed., 2021.
- Maizland, Lindsay. "China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang." *Council on Foreign Relations*, [www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang](http://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang).
- Merchant, Nomaan. "Detainee Says China Has Secret 'black Site' in Dubai, Holds Uighurs." *The Sydney Morning Herald* [Sydney], 17 Aug. 2021, [www.smh.com.au/world/middle-east/detainee-says-china-has-secret-black-site-in-dubai-holds-uyghurs-20210817-p58jau.html](http://www.smh.com.au/world/middle-east/detainee-says-china-has-secret-black-site-in-dubai-holds-uyghurs-20210817-p58jau.html). Accessed 18 Aug. 2021.
- Putz, Catherine. "2020 Edition: Which Countries Are for or against China's Xinjiang Policies?" *The Diplomat*, 9 Oct. 2020. *The Diplomat*, [thediplomat.com/2020/10/2020-edition-which-countries-are-for-or-against-chinas-xinjiang-policies](http://thediplomat.com/2020/10/2020-edition-which-countries-are-for-or-against-chinas-xinjiang-policies).
- Standish, Reid. "Researchers Say Islamic World 'Actively Collaborating' with China's Global Campaign against Uyghurs." *RadioFreeEurope RadioLiberty*, [www.rferl.org/a/islamic-world-china-uyghurs/31324045.html](http://www.rferl.org/a/islamic-world-china-uyghurs/31324045.html).
- "Uyghur in China." *Joshua Project*, 2021, [joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/15755/ch](http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15755/ch).
- "Uyghurs." *Minority Rights Group International*, [minorityrights.org/minorities/uyghurs/](http://minorityrights.org/minorities/uyghurs/).
- "Who Are the Uyghurs and Why Is China Being Accused of Genocide?" *BBC*, July 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037).
- World Uyghur Congress*. [www.uyghurcongress.org/en/current-issues/](http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/current-issues/).



