

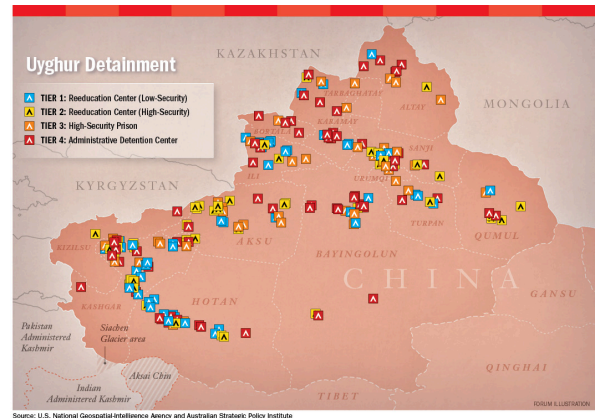
Committee: GA4; Special Political and Decolonization

Agenda Item: The situation of Uyghur Turks: addressing the allegations of genocide and crime against humanity in Xinjiang China **Student**

Officer: Erdem Sarıalioğlu & Derin Eriş - Deputy Chair

Introduction

The maltreatment of Uyghur Turks is considered a crime against humanity done by the Chinese government in Xinjiang China. The Xinjiang Uyghurs Autonomous Region, is the only region located in China that is largely made up of Muslims. There are 12 million Uyghur Turks who are mostly Muslim living in Xinjiang China. Many including Stanford Law School, organizations, activists have labeled these acts as crimes against humanity. There have been many Uyghur Turks that have been held in “political education”/re-education camps, prisons and detention centers without any legal basis since 2017. Figure 1: Re-education centers in China



Prisoners in these camps, centers experienced torture, ill-treatment and other forms of political and cultural abuse. These have been pursued under the Xi Jinping administration of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Crimes against humanity are considered to be the greatest of all human rights abuses according to International Law. There are many cases of crimes against humanity in the Uyghur Turks such as imprisonment, deprivation of liberty which are all in violation of International Law. There have been about 380 of these suspected sites over the years. In order for this issue to be discussed the Xinjiang Region, the limitations placed on the Uyghurs should be addressed.

The accusations against the Chinese Government, the Turkish-Chinese relations, the maltreatment of the Uyghur children as well as the political, social, economical and geopolitical implications of the issue need to be addressed as well.

Definition of Key Terms

Ethnocide: “The attempt to eliminate a culture generally through forced assimilation to a colonial or imperial culture.” Oxford Dictionary

Genocide: “The crime of intentionally destroying part or all of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, by killing people or by other methods.” Cambridge Dictionary

Re-education Centers: “Re-education centers are places where Uyghur Turks have been kept under bad conditions. They are also defined as ‘Re-education Through Labour’ Camps by Amnesty International. The Chinese Government has used these camps in order to treat the Uyghur Turks poor.

Major Actors Involved

People’s Republic of China (PRC)

Uyghur Turks are one of the largest minorities living in the norther-western region of Xinjiang, China. Over the past few years, it has been claimed that the Chinese government has held these groups against their will in Re-education centers, prisons and detention camps. There have been about 380 of these suspected sites. In 2022, it was revealed by BBC that those who tried to escape from these camps would be shot and killed instantly by armed officers. Many countries, organizations as well as the UN have claimed that what the Chinese government is doing is labeled as “crimes against humanity”.

These crimes include genocide, ethnocide and other forms of human rights abuses such as mass sterilization of Uyghur women in order to stop them from reproducing.

In the Xinjiang Police Files it was shown that more than 12% of the adult population of only one county was held in these detention camps and re-education centers. Thus, when applied to the entirety of the Xinjiang region this would mean that there have been 1.2 million Uyghur Turks who have been held in these camps. There have also been crackdowns done by the Chinese government to those Uyghur Turks living outside the camps. The Chinese government has denied all allegations regarding the re-education centers and the detainment of Uyghur Turks. They have claimed that the crackdown is necessary in order to prevent any terrorist acts that may root out from Islamist extremism and that the camps are crucial in order to teach inmates about it.

United States of America

The United States of America has recognized the crimes done by the Chinese government to the Uyghur Turks. They have considered these crimes as genocide and accused them of aiming to eradicate the culture and religion of Uyghurs. The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 became a part of US Law in June 2020. This law requires the tracking of human rights violations against Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups living in the Xinjiang region. This law also calls for sanctions to be given to the individuals who have actively participated or are participating in the maltreatment of Uyghur Turks. This law further stated that any goods produced in the Xinjiang region are products of forced labor done in these re-education and detention camps until it can be proved otherwise. Several federal agencies in the US have taken actions regarding the wrong treatment of Uyghur Turks. For example, The US Department of the Treasury sanctioned multiple senior government officials in China who have been involved in the maltreatment of Uyghur Turks. One of these government officials included Chen Quanguo; Communist Party Secretary for the Xinjiang region.

Türkiye

Türkiye has been a place for Uyghur Turks who have fled from China since the 1950s. There have been many protests all over Türkiye regarding the maltreatment of Uyghur Turks in China mainly coming from those Uyghur Turks that have fled China. Turkey has stated that China has been against human rights violations. Although, recently the Turkish government has tried to keep the issue more on the low profile.

United Kingdom

In 2021 the UK government sanctioned four Chinese government officials and an official body. Their ground for the sanctions was that they had committed many human rights violations. A judge at London's High Court claimed that the manufacture of cotton was made because of forced labour taking place in China. However, the claim was later dismissed due to the approach the British authorities had on the law. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has also mentioned that “China's treatment of Uighur Muslims 'has all the hallmarks of a genocidal atrocity, The UK Government must act now'”.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR; the UN Refugee Agency is concerned about the wrong treatment of Uyghur Turks by the Chinese government. UNHCR's aim is to protect the rights and well being of refugees. The Uyghur Turks are not able to protect their rights and are being held in re-education centers forcefully. Therefore, the UNHCR must take action regarding the human rights violations happening towards the Uyghur Turks

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

HRW has reported the findings happening in the Xinjiang region as mass detention, torture, cultural persecution, forced labor and other human rights violations. HRW has also stated that Türk and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres need to work together in order to ensure a follow-up on the 2022 Xinjiang report.

This report would also include further evidence regarding the serious human rights abuses that took place in the Xinjiang region against Uyghur Turks. There was also a report done in 2018 by the HRW focusing on the Chinese government campaign of "arbitrary mass detention, torture, forced political indoctrination, and mass surveillance of Xinjiang's Muslims.". HRW has also accused the Chinese government of oppressing 12 million Uyghur Turks.

General Overview of the Issue

The Xinjiang Region

Xinjiang is an autonomous region in China. It is in the northwestern region in China. It has borders to Qinghai and Gansu in the east, Tibet in the south, Afghanistan and the territory of Kashmir in the southwest, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the west, Kazakhstan in the northwest, Russia in the north and Mongolia in the northeast. Its capital is at Ürümqi. Xinjiang has more than 40 ethnic groups within it. However, the largest ethnic minority are the Uyghur Turks. Even though the policy of the Chinese government is to allow the ethnic groups to maintain their cultural identities there have been tensions regarding the mistreatment of ethnic minorities such as the Uyghur Turks.

There was a report done by the Human Rights Watch in 2017, accusing the Chinese government of the maltreatment of the Uyghur Turks in the Xinjiang region. It was reported that these mistreatment acts took place in re-education centers that the Chinese government has begun to operate. Various Member States have also accused the Chinese government because of the mistreatment of Uyghur Turks in the region.

Restrictions Imposed on the Uyghur Turks

The Chinese government has imposed many restrictions on the Uyghur Turks, mainly because of their ethnicity. These restrictions have been imposed alongside the mass detention of the Uyghur Turks in re-education centers.

Uyghurs are prohibited from carrying out basic things about their religion as well as from speaking their language. There are restrictions regarding many areas of their life such as dress, diet, education and language.

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At the beginning of 1996, there was a “strike hard” campaign launched by Chinese authorities who were in Xinjiang. This campaign targeted cell phones, computers and any and all religious material that belonged to Uyghur Turks. In the region, long beards were also banned and women were restricted from wearing any types of veils in public places. There were many protests regarding these restrictions and they resulted in arrests and even executions.

The “strike hard” campaign was relaunched in 2014 by the Chinese government. However, this time the DNA samples, iris scans and voice samples of the Uyghur Turks living in the Xinjiang region were collected. Uyghur Turks were also tracked using CCTV footage and ID cards. As Uyghur Turks were heavily monitored, if they were caught that could result in their detention. Uyghur Turks living in the region are also being watched closely by their neighbors and agents assigned by the state who live in their communities. The Chinese government has placed people who are Han Chinese in the homes of Uyghur Turks in order to monitor their acts closely under the “United as One Family” program. Uyghur women have also been forced to get married to Han Chinese. These are all considered to be basic human rights violations.

Uyghur Turks were also not allowed to build their own mosques, fast during Ramadan and even name their children with commonly used Muslim names. The children of Uyghur Turks faced restrictions regarding their status of attending Islamic private schools and mosques.

Accusations Against the Chinese Government

There have been many accusations against the Chinese government regarding their maltreatment of Uyghur Turks. These maltreatment include torture and mistreatment, forced sterilization and forced labour. Thus, many organizations, governments as well as human rights experts have claimed that what the Chinese government is doing against the Uyghur Turks can be labeled as genocide or ethnocide.

Torture and Mistreatment

The Chinese government has allegedly mistreated and have done acts of torture to the Uyghur Turks that they have placed in re-education centers. There was also a report done in 2018 by the HRW focusing on the Chinese government campaign of "arbitrary mass detention, torture, forced political indoctrination, and mass surveillance of Xinjiang's Muslims." This report underlined the human rights violations that were done by the Chinese government against the Uyghur Turks. In an interview with an Uyghur Turk living in the Xinjiang region in China it was stated that Uyghur Turks would be tortured by the Chinese government by hanging them from their arms for hours and resorting to violence cruelly.

Forced Sterilization

The Chinese government has also enforced mass sterilization to Uyghur women living in the Xinjiang region. Additionally, it carried out a vigorous mass sterilization campaign and programs for the insertion of intrauterine contraceptives (IUDs). Chinese government officials and Chinese academics have mentioned that the growth of ethnic minorities such as the Uyghur Turks may lead to religious extremism as well as social instability.

They have also stated that it may pose a threat towards national identity. Government documents that got leaked show that birth limit violations are the most common reason as to why Uyghur women tend to get placed in re-education centers and detention camps. These claims are denied by a Chinese publication titled "Analysis Report on Population Change in Xinjiang," which attributes the drop in the Uighur Muslim population to the "eradication of religious extremism.

Forced Labor

Uyghur Turks have been long exposed to forced labour in the Xinjiang region. There have been many documented factories near re-education centers and detention camps. There have also been several documents that have stated that one of the only ways to get released from these camps is to work in these factories. Therefore, the only choice Uyghur Turks had was to work in these companies, often under really bad conditions. Uyghur Turks were also isolated from their family because they were transferred to these factories in large groups.

Turkish-Chinese Relations

Under the current regime, the Turkish government has tried to remain in close ties with China. However, they have also stated their concern over the maltreatment of Uyghur Turks. Turkish officials have called for the protection of Uyghur Turks. Türkiye's foreign minister Aksoy, in 2019 has also stated that Uyghur Turks are facing torture and mistreatment in these detention camps. Türkiye has also called these re-education centers in the Xinjiang region "a great shame for humanity". Türkiye has also released a statement that followed: "We call on the international community and the Secretary General of the United Nations to take effective measures in order to bring to an end this human tragedy in Xinjiang,". Regarding the statement made by Aksoy, the China's embassy in Ankara said that the accusations were false. The embassy also asked the government to retract these statements

Uyghur Children Living in Xinjiang

Many Uyghur children have been left without parents in the Xinjiang region. As their parents have been kept in re-education centers and detention camps by force; they have been left without parents. This forced separation could lead to developmental issues in the children. Separation from parents tends to leave children with increased anxiety and emotional instability. Many of the children who were left without their parents have either been placed in orphanages or boarding schools where the learning is mostly in Mandarin. Thus, they were left struggling as they could not use their own language actively. The conditions in these boarding schools were also terrible regarding the Uyghur Turks. There were testimonies from Uyghur Turks who were living abroad that stated the children in these boarding schools and orphanages would be “locked up like farm animals in a shed”. Thus, they were facing abuse in these boarding schools as well.

Reasons/Motivations for the Maltreatment of Uyghur Turks by the Chinese Government

Geo/Political Motivations

Most of the political motivations regarding the maltreatment of Uyghur Turks by the Chinese government are due to national security concerns. The Chinese government views the Uyghur Turks as a threat to their national unity as well as social stability. The state has mounted its policies in the Xinjiang region as necessary measures that need to be taken in order to fight against terrorism and extremism. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has enforced these actions regarding the Uyghur Turks to prevent territorial integrity and prevent extremism. However, the main reason the Chinese government enforces these actions is because they have concerns about the destabilization of the region.

Economic Motivations

There are many sub branches of the economic motivations regarding the maltreatment of Uyghur Turks by the Chinese government.

The Xinjiang region that is home to many of the Uyghur Turks is rich in natural resources. According to the Chinese government, this area is essential to both its economic growth and energy security. However, the extraction of these resources has not benefited the Uyghur Turks. Since the resources located in the Xinjiang region are highly important to the Chinese government they want to maintain control over the region. Thus, this is one of the indirect reasons as to why the Chinese government resorts to the maltreatment of the Uyghur Turks.

China has an initiative called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which seeks to improve economic channels and connectivity throughout Asia and beyond. The Xinjiang region is crucial in ensuring the success of China's BRI due to its strategic location. Thus, the Chinese government sees the control of Uyghur Turks in the region as necessary to ensure the successfulness of the initiative. This is because they think that when they diminish the risks posed by potential separatist sentiments their initiative will be successful.

There have also been many forced labour allegations regarding the Uyghur Turks against the Chinese government. Many of the Uyghur Turks have been forced to work in factories without their consent. It has been stated that nearly the only way to get out of the re-education centers and detention camps was to work in these factories under very harsh conditions. Since the Chinese economy heavily relies on the products produced in the country, the detainment of Uyghur Turks benefits industrial growth.

Timeline of Important Events

Date:	Event:
May 2014	The Strike Hard Against Violent Terrorism campaign, launched by the People's Republic of China Government aiming to minimize cultural differences and disable people's cultural independence

2017	The Chinese Government puts more than 1 million people to so called “re-education camps”, reports suggest
2018	The United Nations stated their concern regarding the Uyghurs being held at political camps
2019	Leakage of Chinese government documents regarding the conditions at these camps and how “mass detentions of muslims” were organized
2020	UN Human Rights experts release the joint statement of increased international condemnation
2021	Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International publish reports, accusing PRC for crimes against humanity
2022	UN OHCHR publishes report further approving that acts of the Chinese government may be considered as crimes against humanity
2023	Joint Declaration published by 51 Member States (See 2nd document below.)

Related Documents

1. OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People’s Republic of China, published in August 2022, focuses on the human rights abuses in the district against Turkic Muslim individuals.

2. Joint Statement on Behalf of 50 countries in the UN General Assembly Third Committee on the Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang, China - United States Mission to the United Nations, was issued in October 2023. 51 countries in total agreed to issue this document condemning the acts of violence by the Chinese government against the Uyghur Turks.
(For more info on this, you may visit Human Rights Watch.)
3. Xinjiang report by Independent UN Experts was published in September 2022, inviting the Human Rights Council to assemble a specific session on China.

Past Solution Attempts

In 2018, the International Criminal Court (ICC) decided to start an investigation on the camps located in the Xinjiang region to detect any human rights violations that may have been occurring. No one has filmed these camps except for a few reporters and experts. Later it was announced that the ICC declined to investigate the Chinese government for their detainment and detention of the Uyghur Turks. Imposing sanctions is also not an option as the Chinese government is not taking any responsibility for their actions.

There have also been joint letters sent to the Chinese government by other governments regarding the maltreatment of Uyghur Turks. However, as mentioned earlier since China does not take any responsibility for these actions no agreements have been made.

There have also been many reports published by organizations such as the Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) stating the human rights violations and crimes against humanity done against the Uyghur Turks by the Chinese government. In 2023, a joint declaration was also published by 51 Member States that condemned the acts of violence done by the Chinese government against the Uyghur Turks.

Despite these attempts towards solving the maltreatment of Uyghur Turks in the Xinjiang region, none of them have been efficient enough to solve this issue definitively.

Possible Solutions

Firstly, the United Nations (UN) and all delegates must focus on eradicating the issue of maltreatment of the Uyghur Turks in the Xinjiang region. Additionally, short term solutions also need to be addressed. The humanitarian aspect of the issue needs to be elaborated on as the Uyghur Turks living there need urgent care for all the torture and mistreatment that they have suffered. The humanitarian aspect of this issue could focus on providing financial aid to the mistreated people; providing food sources as well as clothing.

Furthermore, the UN should encourage all Member States to investigate the re-education centers , detention camps for any and all human rights violations.

The UN should also take actions regarding the medical care of the refugees in the Xinjiang region. Opening health centers under the supervision of the UN can be a way to address this specific problem. The refugee children should also be provided with good education since they have been deprived of receiving a quality one. Delegates need to focus on this specific aspect while keeping in mind that this education should be specific to all age groups in order to make it more efficient.

Moreover, since many children are separated from their parents due to these camps; a family reunification system with data collected from the camps can also be proposed as another solution. The security of this database must be ensured by a trusted cybersecurity team.

Useful Links

1. [UN Human Rights Office issues assessment of human rights concerns in Xinjiang, China | OHCHR](#)
2. [“Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots”: China’s Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims | HRW](#)
3. [China: Draconian repression of Muslims in Xinjiang amounts to crimes against humanity - Amnesty International](#)
4. [Independent Uyghur Tribunal finds China committed genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang - ABC News](#)
5. [CHINA 2023 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT](#) (Featuring Uyghurs, by United States Department of State - Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor)
6. [Religious and cultural mentions removed from names of China's Xinjiang villages, rights groups say | AP News](#)
7. [‘Absolutely No Mercy’: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims - The New York Times](#)
8. [Xinjiang leak reveals extent of Chinese abuses in Uighur camps | News | Al Jazeera](#)
9. [Volkswagen Sells Controversial Xinjiang Factory in China - The Wall Street Journal](#)

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