

## FACT SHEET

**Who are the Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims?** Turkic people are any of various peoples whose members speak a Turkic language. Their most important cultural link, aside from history and language, is with Islam - the vast majority of Turkic peoples are Muslim. The Turkic people include, amongst others, the Uyghurs, Uzbeks and the Kazakhs .<sup>1</sup>

**Where do the Uyghurs live and why is it important?** While around 300,000<sup>2</sup> Uyghurs live in the Central Asian republics, the majority — nearly 11 million—Uyghurs live in northwestern China in a region which is now called the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), China's largest region.<sup>3</sup> Home to China's largest coal and natural gas reserves, Xinjiang is situated in a critical economic zone.<sup>4 5</sup>

**What is happening to the Uyghurs?** Historically, the government of China has had a contentious relationship with the Uyghurs.<sup>6</sup> In recent years, China's persecution of Uyghurs has become more widespread and systematic. There is growing evidence which indicates China is perpetrating various 'crimes against humanity' in an attempt to eradicate Uyghurs' religion and culture –their identity.<sup>7</sup>

**What are crimes against humanity?** In 1998, the treaty that established the International Criminal Court also established 'crimes against humanity' as one of four core international crimes.<sup>8</sup> The first prosecution of 'crimes against humanity' took place during the Nuremberg trials and, more recently, during the International Criminal Tribunal for the 1994 Rwandan Genocide.<sup>9</sup> According to the treaty, there are 11 acts that constitute crimes against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population.<sup>10</sup> Based on the list below, the Chinese government has and continues to perpetrate many of what the treaty defines as 'crimes' against the Uyghur Muslim people.<sup>11</sup>

## LIST OF CRIMES

### 1) Internment of Uyghurs – Largest Mass Detention of an Ethnic Group Since the Holocaust.<sup>12</sup>

According to the U.S. government assessment: “Since April 2017, Chinese authorities have detained at least 800,000, and possibly more than 2 million Uighurs and members of other Muslim minorities in prison-like internment camps for indefinite periods of time.”<sup>13</sup> Satellite images reveal the total number of camps is estimated to be as high as 1,200.<sup>14</sup> Uyghurs are interned based on their ethnicity and religion and without judicial process or remedy under the false pretext of countering religious extremism. In their own words, the Chinese Government says that party officials are “washing brains” and “cleansing hearts.”<sup>15</sup> According to Chinese government documents, Uyghurs could be detained for “common behavior among devout Uighurs such as wearing long beards, giving up smoking or drinking, studying Arabic and praying outside mosques.”<sup>16</sup>

## 2) **Forced Uyghur Labor Feeds Multinational Corporations that Produce Brands Americans Buy**

A March 2020 report by the US Congressional Executive Commission on China states that “satellite imagery, personal testimonies, and official documents indicate that the XUAR authorities are systematically forcing predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities, including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and others, to engage in forced labor in the XUAR. In some cases, detainees performed forced labor in factories within internment camps.<sup>17</sup> In other cases, authorities released individuals from the camps to perform forced labor in factories elsewhere in the XUAR.”<sup>18</sup> According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, more than 30% of U.S. apparel comes from China, and 84% of China’s cotton is produced in Xinjiang.<sup>19</sup>

## 3) **Targeting of Uyghur Muslim Women: Mass Rape and Sterilization**

China’s government is attempting to dilute the Uyghur population and destroy its culture by targeting its women through forced sterilization and rape. According to testimony of Uyghur women detained in internment camps, many have witnessed the gang rape of Uyghur women by Han Chinese men. Uyghur women in Xinjiang’s camps also corroborate being injected with a substance to disrupt or stop their menstrual cycles.<sup>20</sup> Other measures being promoted by the Chinese government to assimilate the Uyghur minority to the Han Chinese majority include programs that offer jobs and the promise of cash incentives for Uyghur couples to have fewer children and for Uyghur women to marry outside of their race.<sup>21 22</sup>

## 4) **Nearly Half Million Uyghur Children Have Been Separated from their Parents**

Governmental authorities have separated nearly half a million children from their families and put them in state-run boarding schools. Uyghur children are removed from their parents at an early age to assimilate and indoctrinate them to be secular and more loyal to the Chinese Communist Party and nation.<sup>23</sup>

## 5) **Systematic Eradication of Uyghur Culture and Religion**

In 2017, Xinjiang passed a law prohibiting men from growing beards and women from wearing headscarves.<sup>24</sup> Threat of detention is also being used to stop Uyghurs from engaging in any religious practice such as exchanging greetings, praying, and wearing a headscarf.<sup>25 26</sup> Mosques, shrines and cemeteries have also been bulldozed.<sup>27</sup> Uyghur language education has also been banned in schools.<sup>28 29</sup>

## 6) **Mass Technological and In-Home Surveillance of Xinjiang’s Uyghur Population**

According to the UN and Human Rights Watch, the Chinese government has pursued drastic measures to monitor Uyghurs. This includes the collection of biometrics including DNA samples, fingerprints, iris scans, and blood types of Uyghurs between the age of 12 and 65.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese government is also using programs such as the “Homestay”<sup>31</sup> and “Becoming Family”<sup>32</sup> to embed Han Chinese in Uyghur Muslim homes. Described as “relatives” these visitors gather a “biographical profile” for each Uyghur and monitor if they are practicing their Islamic faith.<sup>33</sup>

**Why it's important for Americans to act.** The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has declared that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Chinese government is responsible for crimes against humanity.<sup>34 35</sup> The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 passed by Congress, near unanimously, in May 2020, and was signed into law on June 17, 2020. The law condemns “gross human rights violations of ethnic Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang” and calls for “an end to arbitrary detention, torture, and harassment of these communities inside and outside China.”<sup>36</sup> Among other actions, this new law calls upon the authorities to “close the internment camps and lift all restrictions on, and ensure respect for, human rights.”

**Why it's important for the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom to act.** The Sisterhood knows the cost of silence and calls on all governments and people of good conscience to join us in protesting these crimes against humanity and in working to stop them. Left unchecked, the Chinese government will continue their state-sanctioned cultural genocide and dehumanization against our Uyghur and Turkic Muslim sisters and brothers. According to Article II of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Chinese government has already taken actions that meet the definition of genocide. Moreover, failure to speak out is implicit acceptance of this genocide and creates space for other governments to act similarly.

### **Never Again Is Now!**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Turkic-peoples>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Uighur>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/china-xinjiang-policy-idAFL3E7L803420111008>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-26414014>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/10/21/chinas-attacks-uyghur-women-are-crimes-against-humanity/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resourcelibrary/official-journal/rome-statute.aspx#article7>

<sup>9</sup> <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=yjil>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resourcelibrary/official-journal/rome-statute.aspx#article7>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/10/21/chinas-attacks-uyghur-women-are-crimes-against-humanity/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/china-undercover/>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/120418\\_Busby\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/120418_Busby_Testimony.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/muslims-camps-china/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://theconversation.com/despite-chinas-denials-its-treatment-of-the-uyghurs-should-be-called-what-it-is-cultural-genocide-120654>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/CECC%20Staff%20Report%20March%202020%20-%20Global%20Supply%20Chains%2C%20Forced%20Labor%2C%20and%20the%20Xinjiang%20Uyghur%20Autonomous%20Region.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-51697800>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/10/21/chinas-attacks-uyghur-women-are-crimes-against-humanity/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/world/asia/to-temper-unrest-china-pushes-interethnic-marriage-between-han-and-minorities.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://apnews.com/9ca1c29fc9554c1697a8729bba4dd93b>

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- <sup>23</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/28/world/asia/china-xinjiang-children-boarding-schools.html>
- <sup>24</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/china-xinjiang-int/china-sets-rules-on-beards-veils-to-combat-extremism-in-xinjiang-idUSKBN1710DD>
- <sup>25</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs>
- <sup>26</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/06/in-one-xinjiang-city-beards-and-muslim-headscarves-banned-from-buses/>
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/11/03/china-every-day-is-kristallnacht/?arc404=true>
- <sup>28</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-muslim-minority-school-language-ban-han-xinjiang-uyghur-hotan-hetian-government-communist-a7873446.html>
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- <sup>31</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/26/china-nightmare-homestay-xinjiang-uyghur-monitor/>
- <sup>32</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/13/china-visiting-officials-occupy-homes-muslim-region>
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/simon-skjodt-center-director-delivers-remarks-on-chinas-systematic-persecut>
- <sup>35</sup> <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/holocaust-03062020170229.html>
- <sup>36</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/116/crec/2020/05/27/CREC-2020-05-27-pt1-PgH2293.pdf>