

# THE PERSECUTION OF UYGHURS IN EAST TURKISTAN

EXTRAJUDICIAL / EXTRALEGAL MASS INTERNMENT CAMPS



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# THE PERSECUTION OF UYGHURS IN EAST TURKISTAN EXTRAJUDICIAL / EXTRALEGAL MASS INTERNMENT CAMPS



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## **About The Norwegian Uyghur Committee (NUC)**

The Norwegian Uyghur Committee (NUC) is an NGO based in Oslo, Norway, founded by the Uyghur diaspora community in Norway in 2003. NUC aims to hold the Chinese regime accountable for its gross human rights violations in East Turkistan (aka. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)) and to advocate justice for the victims. We collaborate with the World Uyghur Congress in pursuit of accountability for mass atrocities perpetrated against the Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in East Turkistan.

Uyghur Transitional Justice Database (UTJD) is an ongoing project that focuses on the registration of the disappeared and extrajudicially interned Uyghurs in East-Turkistan. We are building a comprehensive database to document the ongoing atrocities being committed by the Chinese Communist Party toward the Uyghurs since the revision of its legislation in 2017 (amended Oct. 9, 2018) to “allow” local governments to “educate and transform” people influenced by extremism at so called “vocational training centers”, also effectively known as concentration camps by their extrajudicial nature in East-Turkistan. Norwegian Uyghur Committee (NUC) is gathering testimonies under UTJD project name.

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‘Uyghur identity as mental illness’ by Chinese-Australian political cartoonist, artist and rights activist Badiuca, created for an article on ChinaFile.

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# INTRODUCTION



The Chinese regime's Han<sup>1</sup>-ethnocentric sinicization policies have been exceedingly inflicted on Uyghurs<sup>2</sup> and other Turkic minorities in the past few years in East Turkistan, a region in eastern Central Asia in present-day China. It is also known by its Chinese name Xinjiang<sup>3</sup> ('New Dominion/Territory').

In this report, the referential term 'East Turkistan' will be used instead of 'Xinjiang', and the reason for this is threefold: 1. On the basis of a widespread preference among Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in the diaspora communities; 2. There were two short-lived independent republics before the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC): Turkish-Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan (1933-34); East Turkistan Republic (1944-49); 3. The use of the referential term 'East Turkistan' (with different spellings: Eastern Turkestan, Eastern Turkistan, East Turkestan) in historical academic journal records (Prichard 1839, 196; Huttman 1844, 126; Colquhoun 1900, 20537) has also been taken into account on this matter.

The Chinese regime, with the aim of upholding total control and achieving unquestioning submission in East Turkistan, has been actively executing its coercive ethnocentric sinicization policies to erase Uyghurs' Turkic identity (i.e. language, culture, and the belief system). These specifically targeted assimilation policies have had an enormous impact on the social interactions and the collective psyche of the Uyghur people both at home and abroad, which in recent years also started to impact the lives of other Turkic/Muslim peoples in East Turkistan.

Since 2017, a great deal of news reports and a growing number of research papers have been published, documenting and addressing the human rights violations committed and continue to be committed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) against the Turkic peoples as well as Hui Muslims. Among these human rights violations in East Turkistan, the establishment of the extrajudicial internment camps has been the most prominent over the last couple of years, which have been disguisedly referred to as "re-education" / "vocational training" centers by the Chinese regime. In the subsequent section the Camp System, the very nature and the various types of these internment camps will be further elaborated.

The present report is aiming to serve the information needs of the growing community of organizations, UN and government officials, and other concerned individuals who are devoted to seeking accountability for human rights violations against the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in East Turkistan.

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<sup>1</sup> There are 56 officially recognized ethnic groups in China, and ethnic Han Chinese accounts for 92% of the overall population.

<sup>2</sup> The largest Turkic-speaking ethnic group in East Turkistan, predominantly Muslim.

<sup>3</sup> The full Chinese official name was given in 1955: Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

## WHO ARE THE UYGHURS?

“A nomadic people called the Uyghurs enter the historical record in the sixth century, as one of a number of groups occupying the middle ground between the Tang dynasty and the empire of the Turks, with whom they had much in common linguistically and culturally” (Brophy 2016, 23). However, Uyghurs were first heard of as early as in the second century BCE, playing an integral part in the history of the Turks in central Asia (Czaplicka 1918, 67).

Like other Turkic peoples (i.e. Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Uzbeks etc.), Uyghurs are native to East Turkistan. Although Uyghur population by the end of the nineteenth century was largely concentrated in the southwest, East Turkistan as a whole was ‘becoming a Uyghur homeland’ (Millward 2007, 152). Uyghurs, at least over the last millennium, have lived where they live, they didn’t just arrive in China, on the contrary China arrived in their space. Uyghurs are distinct from the Han-majority Chinese with respect to language, culture, and faith, i.e., the Turkic language (Uyghur), Uyghur traditions and their way of life that are closely related to their neighboring Turkic brothers and sisters in Central Asia, and the Islamic faith. Aggregately they constitute the modern Uyghur identity, against which the Chinese regime is actively taking repressive actions.



As illustrated in the map above, East Turkistan is geographically situated on the northwestern frontier of present-day China, bordering a number of Central-Asian countries, and in addition with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India to its west, Russia to its north, and Mongolia to its northeast. It spans some 2000 kilometers from east to west and some 1650 kilometers from north to south, which amounts to circa 1.7 million square kilometers (almost four times the size of the state of

California). It lies so remote to the west that it is two hours behind Beijing, but it nevertheless operates on Beijing time, following the guidelines of the central polity in Beijing.

The Uyghur population was over three million in 1947 (Millward 2009a, 275), 3.64 million in 1953 census (Lal 1970, 5), around 6 million in 1982 (Gladney 1990, 3), and it increased to somewhere around 12 million in 2015, according to the Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (2017).

For most of the last two and a half centuries East Turkistan has been under the rule of its neighboring China-based states to the east, starting with the Manchu Qing empire's colonial conquest of the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in 1759-60, and continuing through to the Republic of China (1912-49) and into the present-day one-party communist state, the People's Republic of China (1949-present).

However, there had been intermittent uprisings within as well as external challenges coming from the borderlands beyond East Turkistan in this time period, during which East Turkistan gained either partial or total independence several times (Millward 2000, 121). East Turkistan only became a province of the Manchu Qing empire in 1884, which contradicts the relentless narrative (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC 2003, 1) of the Chinese regime: "[East Turkistan] has been an inseparable part of the unitary multi-ethnic Chinese nation" since the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE – 24 CE). As Duara (1995, 32) eloquently puts it: "the pre-existing fullness of China as a nation was necessary for the legitimacy of any nationalist rhetoric". Bovingdon (2001, 96) further elaborates that "[a] state seeking to gain legitimacy, and thereby establish control, in a disputed region has every incentive to produce a history of that region which locates its acquisition of that region in the distant past and thereby naturalizes the incorporation".

From 1759 to 1920s, the first two abovementioned ruling powers dictated, to varying extents, Uyghurs' connections with their neighboring Turkic and Islamic worlds, and the Uyghur nationalist movement had not made significant strides until the 1930s; it was only then the Uyghur nationalist thought gave rise to the modern 'Uyghur' identity (Thum 2012, 628), and the urban intellectuals who were influenced by Western thinking about nationalism subscribed to the notion of Turkic identity, the nationalistic identity, viz. East Turkistanian, as well as the idea of Pan-Turkism (Kanat 1986, 117). "Nationalism is about people, land, and the relationship between them" (Millward & Perdue 2004, 27), and the name 'Uyghur' had bearing on "both pan-Turkic and ethnonational applications" (Brophy 2016, 4).

Some scholars would argue that the ethnonym 'Uyghur', which was largely unused for half a millennium, was reintroduced or revived by the 'ethnicization' nationality policy of the Chinese regime (see Gladney 2004, 102). However, there is some evidence that suggests the use of the ethnonym 'Uyghur' might not have disappeared or fallen into disuse. A Uyghur historian in a 2013 interview claimed that some archival materials, currently suppressed by Han historians, could demonstrate that the ethnonym 'Uyghur' was actually in use among well-educated people from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries (Smith Finley 2018, 740). For a further reading on the formation of the nationalist Uyghur identity and its subsequent impacts on the Uyghur society, see Gladney 1990, Bovingdon 2010, Brophy 2011, and Smith Finley 2018.



In the following section of this report, various ways in which the Chinese regime actively sinicizes, erases, and restricts the expression of the Uyghur identity will be accounted for.

# THE EXTRAJUDICIAL/EXTRALEGAL MASS INTERMENT CAMPS



To account for and better understand the recent establishment of the massive network of internment camps and the extreme measures taken by the Chinese regime to sinicize and obliterate the Uyghur culture and to sterilized Uyghur women in East Turkistan, we need to look back in history and gain insight into the evolution of the repressive policies of the China-based ruling powers, namely Manchu Qing empire, the Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China respectively, thereby attempting to answer the question of how Uyghurs in their millions and other Turkic minorities have ended up in the internment camps. First, the accounts of some prominent integrationist strategies and tactics of the Manchu Qing empire (1759 – 1911) and the Republic of China (1911 – 1949) will be given, and thereafter the focal point will be the oppressive integrationist/assimilationist policies of the Communist China (1949 – present).

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: UNDER MANCHU QING EMPIRE (1759–1911)**

Right after the conquest of East Turkistan, Qing empire's imperial policies, according to Clarke (2007, 266), were not infused with territorial incorporation and assimilation of the populations. In other words, the territory and the peoples of East Turkistan “remained distinct from the eighteen provinces of China proper<sup>4</sup>”, and the cultural boundaries were also maintained (ibid., 265). This lenient approach toward East Turkistan did not last long, and the shift toward a more integrationist approach became apparent during the first decades of the nineteenth century, establishing a tighter relationship to the rest of the Qing empire (ibid., 266). And in the early 1830s the Qing polity officially approved and encouraged the migration of ethnic Han Chinese to Altishahr (i.e. south of East Turkistan), which was accompanied by agricultural colonies (Borei 2002, 289–90).

From the late 1840s to 1864 Manchu Qing empire's dominion over East Turkistan was constantly challenged on all fronts, i.e. from both external forces and internal uprisings, resulting in its loss of power in the region in 1864; it was only in 1877 that the Qing empire reconquered East Turkistan (Clarke 2007, 267-68). This reconquest of East Turkistan was a turning point in Qing's integrationist policy, shifting toward one whose intent was to sinicize and secure the frontier region of East Turkistan, which has persisted to this day and proved to be especially prominent in the last few years.

After the imposition of provincehood on East Turkistan in 1884, a series of explicit sinicization policies were adopted by the Qing: Local place-names were sinicized, e.g. Shanshan for Pijan, Luntai for Yugur, Shache for Yarkand; the migration of Han Chinese people was encouraged;

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<sup>4</sup> A term that refers to the core region of China, excluding Manchuria, Mongolia, East Turkistan (Xinjiang), and Tibet.

farmlands were reclaimed; Han officials were appointed to exercise tighter administrative control in the region; the Qing administration also subjected Turkic peoples to cultural assimilation through Confucius education (Millward 1999, 87; Clarke 2007, 268). These changes continue to reverberate today, which will be elaborated on when we later dive into the integrationist policies of the CCP.

## UNDER THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (1911–1949)

In the Republican era (1911-1949), East Turkistan was in a period of ‘semi-independence’, but the continuity of Qing’s strategies and integrationist policies was maintained in the frontier region by Chinese warlords Yang Zengxin, Jin Shuren and Sheng Shicai (Clarke 2007, 269-70). From 1912 to 1928, Yang ruled supreme in East Turkistan and enjoyed his autocracy, where the Chinese central government was operationally defunct. He actively suppressed the frontier region by censoring the press, restricting the flow of Turkic language publications into and within the region (especially the materials from revolutionary Uyghurs), conducting inquiries on students who had studied abroad, deported Turkish and Soviet nationals that deemed untrustworthy, and arresting liberal advocates and others who embraced liberalism (Millward & Tursun 2004, 68-69). All of the abovementioned oppressive policies from this period resemble the present-day Chinese communist practices in East Turkistan.

Jin Shuren was in power from 1928 to 1932, who was no less autocratic than his predecessor Yang Zengxin, and adopted a sinicizing policy toward the non-Han population in East Turkistan: He imposed livestock butchering tax, prohibited the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, stripped local officials of their power and appointed Han officials to supersede them (*ibid.*, 71), and took the Uyghur farmlands in Qumul (‘Hami’ in Chinese) area and gave them to the Han refugees from Gansu province (*ibid.*, 74).

Under Sheng Shicai’s rule (1933-1943), there was a degree of cultural autonomy, which permitted the operation of both secular Turkic-language and Islamic schools, the establishment of Turkic-language newspapers, and the founding of the Uyghur Progress Union (Rudelson 1992, 98). Sheng was heavily influenced by Stalinist nationalities policies, the goal of which was to create ‘interethnic competition’, widen divisions amongst the Turkic-speaking peoples, and suppress the collective identity beyond ethnicity, i.e. Turkic or Muslim (Millward & Tursun 2004, 80). He even assigned important positions within his government to Khoja Niyaz and Yolbars Khan, the former being the president of the 1933 Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkistan, while the latter being the leader of the 1931 Qumul rebellion (Clarke 2007, 271). But later Sheng purged Khoja Niyaz together with other Turkic leaders and intellectuals who previously helped him consolidate his power (Millward & Tursun 2004, 81).

The Chinese Nationalist Government (Guomindang, hereafter GMD) took control of East Turkistan in September 1944 and deposed Sheng Shicai. GMD’s integrationist strategies toward East Turkistan remained much the same as those of the late Qing empire, and it planned to further colonize East Turkistan by sending up to a million Han Chinese, to replace all Turkic leaders with Han Chinese officials, and to impose higher taxes; however, these colonial strategies were not fully achieved (*ibid.*, 81-82).

With the aim of ensuring the legitimacy of its rule, GMD espoused the notion that the indigenous non-Han peoples of East Turkistan were originally racially Chinese, denying the existence of ethnicities such as Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kirghiz (ibid., 82). GMD administration through its conduct and interactions with the second East Turkistan Republic (1944-1949) demonstrated that it essentially upheld the continuity of both objectives and integrationist strategies of the Qing and Republican periods, which were then effortlessly transferred to the People's Republic of China (PRC) and executed with vehemence (Clarke 2007, 277-78).

## COLONIAL TACTICS/POLICIES OF THE COMMUNIST CHINA (1949 - 2000)

The founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 ushered in a new era of oppression to East Turkistan, as well as Tibet and to the rest of China for that matter.

After having established its power in East Turkistan, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) executed a large scale Han resettlement program in East Turkistan, which had resulted in a rapid demographic change with respect to non-Han and Han populations. In 1949 the total population of East Turkistan was roughly 4.2 million, but by late 1979 the Han Chinese people accounted for roughly half of the total population of 11 million (McMillen 1981, 66). In another statistical perspective, "[b]etween 1940 and 1982, ... the Han's percentage of [East Turkistan's] population [increased] by a massive 2,500 percent. ... while the Uyghur population followed a more natural biological growth rate of 1.7 percent" (Gladney 2004, 112-113).

The consolidation of CCP power in East Turkistan culminated in the formal establishment of the Production and Construction Corps (PCC, 兵团, *bingtuan*) in 1954, which consisted largely of demobilized People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers. East Turkistan Republic troops consisting predominantly of Uyghurs and Kazakhs, also known as Ili National Army, were incorporated into the PLA, and many of whom were demobilized and redeployed to settle on a network of paramilitary farms (the predecessor of the PCC), over whom the CCP had total control (McMillen 1981, 68). According to Cliff (2020, 3), the PCC was established as "a military-agricultural colony", and it was the main propelling force behind the Han migration and in transforming the cultural landscape in East Turkistan. The PCC has continued to recruit up to the present more Han people from the interior of China to East Turkistan and lure them with social benefits that are largely not enjoyed by the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples.<sup>5</sup>

State-sponsored Han immigration into East Turkistan, a policy that was present in Qianlong and later Qing periods, was and continues to be one of the most effective policies of the Chinese Communist Party, creating a staunch Han constituency, which is considered by the party as a trustworthy force for stability in East Turkistan. This rationale though both present in some internal-circulation report and acknowledged by local party officials has never been the official

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<sup>5</sup> A typical PCC recruitment advertisement in Chinese published in Feb 2020: <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/PaBVrHjiMUtev7OzSh7O3Q> if deleted please see <https://web.archive.org/web/20200426130614/https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/PaBVrHjiMUtev7OzSh7O3Q>

reason for encouraging the massive Han immigration, while the manpower need for development has been the party's official rationale presented to the public (Bovingdon 2010, 54).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the PCC has become a corporation, enabling the CCP to achieve an increasingly direct control over East Turkistan (Cliff 2009, 102). Furthermore, today's PCC "retains only the slightest connection to the [People's Liberation Army]" (ibid., 101). The PCC in its core continues to perpetuate the occupying and colonizing function in its nature (Cliff 2009).

Yi (2019, 54) argues that the root cause of the ongoing persecution of millions of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in East Turkistan can be attributed to "Chinese settler colonialism", which is unfolded through the Production and Construction Corps (PCC) and ethnic Han migration to the region.

The central government in Beijing gave the "autonomy" status to East Turkistan in 1955, which is reflected in its official Chinese name: 新疆维吾尔自治区(Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region). However, the agency for independent actions regarding internal matters within East Turkistan was dead on arrival, for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) never intended to give the true autonomy to East Turkistan (Xinjiang). The Communist Party leaders considered Uyghurs as "politically untrustworthy", thereby allocating minimum power to them (Bovingdon 2010, 47).

As a matter of fact, smaller regional subautonomous districts and counties were already being established in the spring of 1953. "The division of [East Turkistan] into a number of smaller autonomies was a stroke of administrative genius" (ibid., 44). This integrationist policy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) promoted and placed the idea that East Turkistan was home to thirteen ethnic groups to the foreground, "...counterbalancing the Uyghurs' overwhelming political and demographic weight" (ibid., 45). Moreover, the party wanted to distance itself from the assimilationist policy of the Chinese Nationalist Party (GMD) and to counteract the separatism sentiments in some key frontier regions (Millward 2007, 243).

What was striking about this policy was the imbalance of power distribution, disproportionately allocated to the titular ethnic group in the subautonomous regions/districts. In fifteen out of twenty-seven subautonomous districts, the titular ethnic group accounted for less than half the population (Bovingdon 2010, 46), creating this imbalanced representations of power between Uyghurs and other ethnic groups<sup>6</sup>. For instance, "in 2004 some 48,000 Mongols nominally exercised autonomy in a region with more than 370,000 Uyghurs (and, due to steady immigration, more than 660,000 Hans)" (ibid.).

With respect to the Uyghur language, it was the communist regime who solely dictated the script variety of the Uyghur language. In 1956 the Chinese communist regime, following the footsteps of the Soviet, introduced a Cyrillic-based script for the Uyghur language when Uyghurs already had Arabic-based scripts, the aim of which to a large extent was to weaken Uyghurs' Islamic connections. Then in 1960 following a dent in the 'Sino-Soviet' relations the Cyrillic-based script was superseded with the roman alphabet (with a few special letters), which could essentially be

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<sup>6</sup> The 13 officially recognized ethnic groups in East Turkistan are: Han, Uyghur, Hui, Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, Kirghiz, Mongol, Tatar, Russian, Solon, Xibo and Manchu.

regarded as a ‘Pinyin-isation’<sup>7</sup> not a romanization of the Uyghur language (Millward 2007, 236). “Besides cutting off contact with Soviet Turkic peoples, one goal of this reform was to promote ‘fusion and assimilation’ of minorities by easing the introduction of Chinese vocabulary into Turkic languages” (ibid.). It is paramount to note that minority languages had not been taught for over a decade during the Cultural Revolution (Dwyer 2005, 36), e.g. the Uyghur language was not taught in Kashgar (Jarring 1986, 157).

In 1984, during a period of relatively relaxed minority policies, Chinese authority reinstated the slightly modified Arabic-based script for the Uyghur language. These script reforms under the PRC can be regarded as indicators of general situation in East Turkistan, where each change in the writing system reflects the vicissitudes of PRC minority policy toward Turkic peoples in East Turkistan (Millward 2007, 237).

The Cultural Revolution (1957-1978) marked drastic shifts in politics in China as well as in East Turkistan, which stirred chaos in the social and cultural spheres. In East Turkistan there was an upsurge in cultural intolerance from within the Chinese Communist Party, radiating outward towards various ethnically Turkic groups, where differences between Turkic peoples and the majority Han Chinese were deemed deviant, so the project of cultural homogenization gained extra momentum with the aim of achieving assimilation. It is worth mentioning that East Turkistan suffered more damage in its economy than other parts of China did during the Cultural Revolution (Millward & Tursun 2004, 96).

Following the rift in Sino-Soviet relation in the late 1950s, the CCP purged many non-Han political elites in East Turkistan, most of whom ended up in thought-reform labor camps (Millward & Tursun 2004, 93). We can draw parallels between the thought-reform labor camps and today’s internment camps in East Turkistan, where the official motto of the latter resonates with that of the former: “transformation through education” (教育转化). The representation rate of Uyghurs in the government fell drastically by around 25% in the decade following 1965, and the representation was absent in the regional government in 1969 (ibid., 97).

Backed by the “Leftist” cultural program, the intolerance and active attack on non-Chinese culture were prevalent in the capital area and some smaller cities and villages where most Uyghurs lived. “Difference ... became a sign of backwardness” (Bovingdon 2010, 51). For example, some anecdotal accounts claim that the burning of Qur’an and some other holy texts took place, religious elders were humiliated in the streets, some Islamic sites of significance were either closed off or desecrated, pigs were intentionally kept in mosques, Uyghur girls’ long hair cut short, and traditional clothes were banned (Millward & Tursun 2004, 97). Mao’s minions, or Red Guards, forced many Muslims to raise pigs, with the aim of achieving “rapid and thorough assimilation” (Bovingdon 2010, 52). This cultural conformity campaign of the CCP impacted Uyghurs and other non-Hans the most during the cultural revolution, not only was it an assault on their social spheres, but also on their identities.

It shouldn’t come as a surprise that a large number of ethnically Turkic peoples in East Turkistan, as peoples elsewhere in China proper for that matter, felt indignation at the rampant Maoist

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<sup>7</sup> Not in accordance with the international standards for romanizing Turkic languages; e.g. The letter x is supposed to represent the uvular fricative ‘kh’ sound, but it was pinyinized to stand for ‘sh’ sound.

Cultural Revolution, alienating a significant segment of the population, which forced the CCP to re-examine its integrationist policies after the Cultural Revolution. Some re-evaluations were reflected in Deng Xiaoping's reforms (1978-1988), creating a long overdue temporary breathing room for both economy and ethnic cultural practices. The temporary loose grip on the latter was in fact economically anchored, encouraging tourism in East Turkistan and other minority regions throughout China, where various ethnic groups were allowed to practice their cultural traditions, while at the same time promoting tourism (Gladney 2004, 110). Restrictions on Islamic practices were also lifted in this period, e.g. reopening mosques, and allowing travels to other Islamic countries.

The 1980s were by no means a peaceful period in East Turkistan. There were signs of social unrest, fraught with ethnic/interethnic conflicts. There were student demonstrations that demanded 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'equality between the nationalities'<sup>8</sup>. Their slogans also confronted the issues of nuclear testing in Lop Nor (health concerns regarding the local Turkic peoples), influx of Han people to East Turkistan, and the birth control (family planning/birth restrictions) policy that targeted minorities. Alexis-Martin (2019, 152-53) argues in her paper that "the colonization of Uyghur lands and their use by the PRC for nuclear weapon testing are representative of a mode of nuclear imperialism that treated Uyghur life as worthless". With respect to limiting the population growth, Uyghurs and other non-Han minorities had been exempted from the CCP's birth control policy that was rolled out in the early 1980s, but gradually it also applied to them, starting in 1987 with Uyghur party officials and later enforced to the whole minority populations within a few years' time (Bovingdon 2010, 58-59).

"These issues reflect not religious concerns *per se*, but rather concerns about the treatment and survival of Uyghurs as a nation" (Millward 2007, 282). Furthermore, Millward (*ibid.*, 281) informs us that "movements for rights or independence in twentieth-century [East Turkistan] do not fit the commonly held notion of 'Islamic jihad'."

The period 1991-2005 witnessed a rekindled ethnic minority opposition to the Chinese regime in East Turkistan, accompanied by a familiar counteraction pattern of the communist party: "outright repression, cooptation, Han in-migration and economic development" (Clarke 2007, 283).

Demonstrations, unrest, and some violent incidents continued into the 1990s in East Turkistan. Two major events at the beginning of the 1990s triggered a shift in CCP's minority policy towards non-Han peoples in East Turkistan, which became less tolerant than its previous minority policy in the 80s. These two major events were the Baren<sup>9</sup> Uprising in the April of 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The former had a general popular support at the time, where one of the motives for this uprising could be ascribed to the CCP's birth control policy targeting Uyghurs and other minority families (Millward 2007, 327), in addition there were also other contributing factors like nuclear weapons testing and the export of resources to other parts of China. While the latter event, the Soviet disintegration, came both as a shock and an economic opportunity for the Communist Party.

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<sup>8</sup> In the late 1980s there was also a wave of pro-democracy movement on campuses throughout China.

<sup>9</sup> A township in Akto county, located roughly 58 km south of Kashgar, East Turkistan.

The former Soviet states, like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, whose peoples are historically and linguistically closely related to the Turkic peoples in East Turkistan, gained their independence following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This newly gained independence from their imperial power made the Communist Party uneasy, in that East Turkistan might head towards its independence from its imperial power that is China.

Religious activities were yet again restricted, heavily scrutinized, and in some cases banned by the Chinese regime. Imams had to get state approval, only those who were deemed patriotic and politically aligned with the Communist Party could retain their positions, a practice that has continued up to the present day in East Turkistan. Qur'an schools were closed down and all private scriptural study sessions were prohibited and stamped as illegal religious activities (Bovingdon 2010, 67). In 1991, 10 percent of circa 25000 Islamic clerics failed to retain their positions after a scrutiny conducted by communist officials (Harris 1993:120–21, cited in Bovingdon 2010, 66). The construction of many mosques were halted and many existing mosques at the time were closed down as the crackdown on Islam continued. Despite the fact that the freedom to believe and not to believe is constitutionally anchored, party cadres and students continue to involuntarily abnegate their right to believe.

The Chinese Communist Party reasserted its key elements of integrationist policies over the 1991-1995 period, e.g. with its continued support and encouragement of Han in-migration, and by adopting an economic development stratagem whose objective was to further incorporate East Turkistan into China proper, and simultaneously establishing a bond with other Central Asian states through trade (Clarke 2007, 283; Millward 2007, 289).

A good deal of social unrest and protests took place in 1995 and 1996 in East Turkistan, and in the wake of them was a threefold political counter-reaction: (i.) an internal CCP document<sup>10</sup> was issued on 19 March 1996, warning of and tightening measures for controlling various ethnic and religious activities, as well as 'foreign forces' (e.g. foreign separatist organizations); (ii.) the effecting of the bilateral security treaty on 26 April 1996, signed by China, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Tajikistan and Russia<sup>11</sup>; (iii.) the first proclamation of the 'Strike Hard' campaign (严打 *yándǎ*), clamping down on crime and "separatism and unlawful religious activities". The intent of this campaign was not a general crackdown on crime per se, but rather a clampdown on unofficial political organizations and religion, targeting politically active separatists in East Turkistan, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, while linking separatism with "unlawful religious activities" (Dillon 2019, 58-59). It has been estimated that thousands are detained by the police every year in East Turkistan for "illegal religious activities", based on local media reports that had been closely monitored by Human Rights Watch, where official statistics are rarely made public (HRW 2005, 6). The tactics by which the Chinese regime seeks to have total control over Uyghurs' belief system are punitive in nature, which is a step beyond suppression, seemingly motivated to re-engineer the religious identity of Uyghurs so that it harmoniously fits into the state narrative (ibid., 7).

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<sup>10</sup> The CCP Central Committee Document No. 7, published in English translation, by the Committee Against Chinese Communist Propaganda (CACCP), <https://caccp.freedomsherald.org/conf/doc7.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Since then, this Eurasian political, economic, security alliance, now known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, has expanded to include Uzbekistan, Indian and Pakistan.



The CCP set out to achieve with its second counter-reaction, among other objectives, a crackdown on Uyghur political dissident activities in the Central-Asian states, and it succeeded. Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan started extraditing Uyghur suspects to China upon Beijing's request, leaving only Uyghur cultural organizations operational within the legal framework under state supervision, while banning all other Uyghur political organizations (Millward 2007, 337). It is worth emphasizing that some of these wanted Uyghur suspects had been executed upon their return to China (Becquelin 2004a, 41). The last-mentioned counter-reaction, the 'Strike Hard' campaign in 1996, resulted in several thousands of arrests in East Turkistan, not due to a sudden upsurge in crime, but due to this campaign itself, for there was "a political premium on speed and quantity of arrests and convictions" (Millward 2007, 331).

In February 1997, the second major uprising transpired with popular support in East Turkistan's northern city of Ghulja, popularly known as the Ghulja uprising and massacre among Uyghurs (see Millward 2007, 331-334; Dillon 2019, 67-70). This uprising was yet another major challenge to the Chinese rule after the Baren uprising in 1990. "[It] was clearly the product of a chain of events that began much earlier and was symptomatic of both the government's repressive methods and the Uyghurs' exasperated responses" (Bovingdon 2010, 125). "The region-wide crackdown following the events of February 1997 became almost a permanent feature of life throughout [East Turkistan]" (Millward 2007, 334).

In the period 1980 to 1997, there had been many protests and demonstrations born out of discontent and injustice among Uyghurs against the Chinese rule in East Turkistan, during which the Chinese regime only yielded four times to the matters raised in the protests (see Bovingdon 2010, 128-29). In all other documented cases, the responses from the regime had been either deafening or negatively overwhelming; instead of listening to the public outcry and changing its policies accordingly, the CCP often fired back with more intensified repressive and integrationist policies (e.g. by increasingly restricting religious activities) in East Turkistan (see Bovingdon 2010, 129). Uyghurs have no right to express their discontent in public, if they do, they would face harsh punishment from the regime. As a matter of fact, the regime "equate any expression of dissatisfaction (*buman qingxu*), even metaphorical or ironical, with separatist thought (*fenlie sixiang*)" (Becquelin 2004a, 44).

The period 1996 – 2004 saw at least one extensive political campaign yearly<sup>12</sup>, each led to hundreds of arrests, where the judicial proceedings were rushed, which in turn resulted in expedited convictions that were based on the Chinese Communist Party's "two basics" principle: "basic truth" and "basic evidence" (ibid., 41).

In the following eight years since 1997 there had been neither massive incidents of social disturbances nor large-scale demonstrations in East Turkistan. Despite the relative calm that followed, the Communist Party leadership could not ignore the gravity of the conflicts transpired over the course of the last decade of the twentieth century. The only viable solution/policy the CCP could get behind was the economic development of East Turkistan. Great Development of the Western Regions (西部大开发 *xībù dà kāifā*) as a policy initially emerged in 1999, and was

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<sup>12</sup> For a chronological list of these campaigns, see Becquelin 2004a, 41.

implemented in March 2000. These western regions include East Turkistan, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, as well as other provinces that are geographically located in western China.

To put it in a nutshell, this ‘develop the west’ program, what Becquelin (2004b) calls a “staged development”, would transfer the remaining development capacity from the coastal provinces of China to its western regions and provinces. Although this economically-oriented development program of the CCP sounds reasonable enough at a superficial level (i.e. poverty alleviation), the underlying issues that would ensue, that this vast project would (inevitably or not) give rise to, become a matter of concern. This ambitious project entails an enormous transfer of resources, including manpower, raising concerns about the further population dilution of the ethnic minority areas by a massive Han Chinese resettlement program (Dillon 2019, 75).

The influx of Han migration to East Turkistan has been continuous ever since the founding of the PRC. The Han population grew a staggering 31.6% between 1990 and 2000 in East Turkistan, which was almost exactly double the growth rate of non-Hans (Bovingdon 2010, 57). “Many analysts have concluded that officially supported Han migration constitutes China’s primary policy instrument for assimilating its border regions” (Gladney 2004, 112).

As a matter of fact, Li Dezhu (2000, cited in Becquelin 2004b:373–74), the head of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the PRC, stated outright in his writing that the government was actively engaged in the Han migrations to the ethnic minority areas in the name of strengthening national unity, a policy he termed as “homogenization” (凝聚化 *níngjùhuà*). “This hidden agenda has exacerbated conflict between Han and non-Han and has not led to the stability that it was designed to produce” (Dillon 2019, 81). The Chinese regime has practiced preferential treatments toward Han migrants, luring them with state-sponsored subsidies and attractive resettlement policies in East Turkistan, which arouses even more indignation in Uyghur people. For instance, the regime would hand out subsidies to college graduates from China proper if they immigrated to East Turkistan, and top party officials would make recruitment trips (Bovingdon 2010, 57).

It has been assumed within the Communist Party that if the economic development in East Turkistan grows to match that of the coastal provinces in eastern China, then all inter-ethnic tension and ethnic separatism will disappear or at least the good economy will render them insignificant. However, China’s Develop the West policy fails to address “the cultural and ethnic superstructure” (Dillon 2019, 88).

## **POST 9/11 REPRESSION OF THE UYGHURS: ‘WAR ON TERROR’ ERODES AWAY UYGHUR IDENTITY**

On September 11, 2001 the world witnessed America’s worst terrorist attacks, and many years have passed, while its repercussions are still keenly felt by many around the world. It was also a turning point that has continued to affect both domestic and international policies across many regions of the world. The attacks accompanied by subsequent attacks in Europe and Indonesia motivated by political Islam have contributed to a global consciousness, where Islam was/is still

linked with terrorism and Muslims became a target group particularly subject to negative attitudes and discrimination.

In the wake of the attacks, the Bush administration declared 'war on terrorism'. Within three months after 9/11, China officially issued its own 'war on terror' document entitled "Terrorist Activities Perpetrated by 'East Turkistan' Organizations and their Ties with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban", which claimed that there was an extensive network of Uyghur terrorists posed serious security threats to China and the world. And on January 21, 2002 China released another document entitled "East Turkistan Terrorist Forces Cannot Escape with Impunities", attributing all past Uyghur opposition in East Turkistan to terrorists linked with a global network of terrorist organizations. The last-mentioned document also accused almost all Uyghur human rights and self-rule groups for being funded directly by Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaida (Roberts 2018, 232).

There was a sudden shift in CCP's official discourse toward Uyghur opposition right after 9/11 attacks, explicitly linking it with terrorism, whereas previously keeping ethnic discontent under wraps (Becquelin 2004a, 39). The terms 'East Turkistan' and 'terrorism' were rarely used in earlier CCP documents (Millward 2007, 339). This shift in official discourse blurred the line between dissent and Islam. For example, the Baren Uprising in 1990, the 1995 protest in Khotan, and the Ghulja demonstration in 1997, all of which previously attributed to 'splittists', who were then relabeled as 'terrorists' in a 2004 article (Zhu Jun 2004, cited in Bovingdon 2010, 120). However, there was a lack of evidence for any active Uyghur militant group inside or outside China; besides, most Uyghur opposition activities in the 1990s, like demonstrations, most started out as peaceful protests only turned violent after police intervened with suppressive tactics, the nature of which could hardly be considered as terrorism regardless of how one defines the term (Roberts 2018, 233). In other words, "no viable Uyghur terrorist threat existed inside the country" during the early 2000s (ibid., 240). Moreover, it was a relatively peaceful time in East Turkistan when the Chinese regime put forth the abovementioned assertions.

The Chinese regime persistently released documents accusing the alleged Uyghur terrorist network of constituting a security threat to China and the world. In September 2002 both the United States and the United Nations officially recognized a little-known Uyghur group, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), as a terrorist organization, which later also subjected to international sanctions. Their official recognition gave China the legitimacy for various upcoming counter-terrorism measures that would further repress the Uyghur people in East Turkistan. It is worth to note that there was no reliable source of information about ETIM's activities after 2001 that could indicate the organization's capacity and its support base (Roberts 2012, 19). In other words, ETIM had little capacity to carry out organized terrorist attacks against China in the post-9/11 context.

It was only in 2006 that some evidence for the existence of ETIM emerged. A new group consisting of only a handful of Uyghurs formed in 2008 in Waziristan: the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). But after 2013 the group grew bigger in size in Syria, owing to the fact that many Uyghurs fled repression in East Turkistan, who felt that their Uyghur identity was constantly persecuted by the Chinese regime, and consequently were a vulnerable militant recruitment target (Roberts 2020; Roberts 2018, 252). There is no evidence of violent attacks ever carried out by this group in East Turkistan, or in other parts of China for that matter (Roberts 2020). However, this group has also

made a number of graphic videos, some of which made explicitly to threaten the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics, constituting a real threat to China at the time, which in turn have justified China's continued counterterrorism measures targeting Uyghur dissent (Roberts 2018, 241; Roberts 2020).

In response to the “sudden” alleged Uyghur terrorist threat, the Chinese regime amended its criminal legal code in December of 2001, adding ‘terrorism crimes’ with harsher punishments to an existing category ‘Endangering Public Security’; Amnesty International (2002, 4-5) noted that these newly added crimes were vaguely defined and thereby casting doubts on future fair prosecutions. Consequently, this amendment just like many other Chinese laws<sup>13</sup>, inherently attempts to be as ambiguous as possible to effectively function as a catch-all measure, preemptively locking up people before the occurrence of any crimes. It also paved the way for future “highly subjective and on-going hunt for terrorists” in East Turkistan (Roberts 2018, 238). The ‘Global War on Terror’ presented a clear dichotomy between global terrorism and Islamic extremism, which propelled and justified China's ongoing persecution of Uyghurs, where the regime equates unauthorized religious activities to ‘extremism’. Beijing has since continued to use this new rhetorical arsenal to persecute the Uyghurs in East Turkistan.

It is worth mentioning the fact that Islam only constitutes one of several unifying markers for Uyghur identity, any of which could play a leading role depending on the circumstances Uyghurs find themselves in. By this line of reasoning, it is to be suggested that an Islamic fundamentalist group will have only limited support among Uyghurs (Gladney 2004, 109). The most obvious and powerful unifying marker for Uyghur identity is their common struggle and suffering under the Chinese rule, who are collectively subjected to the assimilationist and integrationist policies of the CCP.

On July 16, 2001 amendments were made to the Regulations on the Management of Religious Affairs, for instance in Article 1 the “protection of normal religious activities” was replaced by “regulating religious activities according to law” and “guide religion to adapt to a socialist society”. What was already an intrusive requirement for the clergy in Article 8 of the 1994 Regulations was extended to apply to “all citizens who profess a religion”: the loyalty to the state comes first and the practice of religion is “conditional on support for government and Party leaders” (HRW 2005, 37).

The crackdown on various religious activities intensified since October of 2001, and in the city of Kashgar it was reported that 13 “illegal” religious centers were shut down and more than 50 worshippers arrested in early November the same year; in addition, there were scores of arrests on “terrorism” related charges, and many were believed to be sentenced to death (Amnesty International 2002, 20-27). Furthermore, religious observation and access to unsanctioned information throughout East Turkistan were also restricted. In this region-wide campaign, around 150 people were arrested in Ürümqi over the course of two months since September of 2001 for taking part in “illegal” religious activities and “terrorism”; there were also reports of arrests in other parts of East Turkistan (ibid., 15).

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<sup>13</sup> The catch-all language can be found in the controversial National Security Law (e.g. Article 38) imposed on Hong Kong on June 30, 2020, details of which were unknown to public before its passing in Beijing.

The official restrictions and clampdown on religious rights/activities applied to all of East Turkistan, penetrating into many aspects of what constitute an ordinary Uyghur life. The regime dictates the ways in which a religious institution (e.g. a mosque) conducts its matters, e.g. regarding the cleric selection process, the use of the “correct” version of the Qur’an, the place of religious gathering, and preaching contents (HRW 2005, 3). Uyghur government officials (i.e. Communist Party members) and minors (i.e. school children) were banned from observing Ramadan fast, and the authorities also discouraged other Muslims working in various government sectors (e.g. schools and hospitals) from observing religious practices during the holy month of Ramadan<sup>14</sup> (Amnesty International 2002, 23). Moreover, Uyghur clerics (i.e. Imams) were/are still under constant state surveillance, whose ideological state must be in line with that of the Communist Party. To ensure this ideological alignment, the regime carries out ‘religious training campaigns’ and ‘political reeducation campaigns’; “[the] campaigns in 2001 and 2002 systematized the ideological control imposed on clerics (HRW 2005, 50).

Human Rights Watch (HRW 2005, 69-70) noted that law enforcement security forces regularly carried out sweeps in neighborhoods and villages, examining individual houses for ID cards and household residence booklets and interrogating the residents about the whereabouts of the absent family members. They also searched for “illegal” publications, such as Qur’ans not approved by the government. Those who were deemed problematic by the security forces were taken to unknown security facilities for further questioning. These searches were said to be brutal in that family members or relatives could not find out what happened to their loved ones after being detained. Some detainees were locked up for long periods of time without any charges, some convicted, some sent to “reeducation” through labor camps, and others released.

“[I]ndependent religious activity or dissent is at times arbitrarily equated with a breach of state security, a serious crime in China and one that is frequently prosecuted” (HRW 2005, 3). A scholarly paper from a compendium issued by China’s Ministry of Justice, procured by Human Rights Watch (ibid., 72) demonstrates that 9.2% of all convicted Uyghur prisoners in 2001 were imprisoned for having committed “state security crimes”.

We can draw parallels between the anti-separatist campaigns in the 1990s and the abovementioned counter-terrorism measures right after 9/11, where the latter had an internationally recognized focus, namely the ‘terrorism’ element, which in turn contributed to a more repressive approach toward oppressing the whole Uyghur population; to an outsider a course of action justified and to the Chinese regime a repressive policy streamlined with the help of the “Global War on Terror” campaign/narrative. The persecution of Uyghurs would continue with accrued intensity in the following years.

In January 2002 the Chinese regime’s ideology alignment campaigns extended to apply to Uyghur cultural sphere, which includes artists, writers, poets, historians, etc., where “all who openly advocate separatism using the name of art” would be prosecuted, said the region’s chairman (HRW 2002, 11; Amnesty International 2002, 24-25).

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth mentioning that this ban on Ramadan fasting is still in effect in 2020. See RFA 2020a.

It was reported (RFA 2002) that in June 2002, the Chinese regime executed a large-scale book burning in Kashgar, where thousands of books were destroyed, including about 128 copies of *A Brief History of the Huns and Ancient Literature*<sup>15</sup> and 32320 copies of *Ancient Uyghur Craftsmanship*<sup>16</sup>. The latter documented, among other things, age-old techniques and methods of carpet-making, silk-weaving, papermaking, and carpentry. This was decidedly an affront to the Uyghur culture, a part of the state-sponsored Uyghur culture obliteration program. This public book burning was hardly an isolated incident, there had been many campaigns to “wipe out pornography and strike at political publications” (扫黄击政 sǎohuáng jīzhèng), including public burning of “illegal” unsanctioned literary, historical, and religious publications. The authorities can openly obliterate Uyghur literary and cultural works by simply claiming that they are just enforcing the law (Becquelin 2004a, 45).

The Chinese regime continued its efforts to garner international approval and support in its second official December 2003 document entitled “East Turkistan terrorist groups and individuals”, legitimizing yet again its repressive policies in East Turkistan. The document, essentially a rehash of the first official document that was released in January 2002, suggests that Uyghur opposition of all sort is linked to international radical Islamic terrorism.

In 2002 and 2003 the Chinese state intensified its ‘Strike Hard’ campaign with ‘Strike Hard, High Pressure’ campaign, in an effort to fight against the purported “three forces” — separatism, terrorism, religious extremism. According to official media accounts in January 2004, many “terrorists” and “separatists” were arrested in the past 12 months, while revealing no accounts of any trials. In September 2004 the Communist Party head in East Turkistan Wang Lequan revealed that in the first eight months of 2004 authorities accused 22 groups and individuals of committing alleged crimes of “terrorism” and “separatism” (HRW 2005, 69).

## THE MARGINALISATION OF THE UYGHUR LANGUAGE: NO LONGER THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Following years of gradual effort made by the Chinese regime to marginalize the Uyghur language as the medium of instruction in schools and universities, it was decreed in May of 2002 that “Xinjiang University would no longer offer courses in the Uyghur language, at least in the first two years of coursework”, which was then implemented in September the same year (Dwyer 2005, 39-40; Wingfield-Hayes 2002). The Uyghur language as the medium of instruction has been reduced at all levels since 1984, while the Mandarin was only taught in minority-schools as a second language until the mid-1990s, it became the medium of instruction from third grade after the mid-90s (Dwyer 2005, 36; 38-39).

In the name of achieving “educational quality”, the Chinese government put forth ‘bilingual education’ policy in 2004, in an effort to merge minority schools with Chinese schools, simultaneously mandating that Mandarin be the primary or the sole medium of instruction, while

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<sup>15</sup> Chinese Authorities believed that this book could instigate “separatism”.

<sup>16</sup> Verses from the Qur’an were printed in its opening inscriptions.

effectively relegating the mother tongue of the minority students to the status of second language (Schluessel 2007, 257; RFA 2004). Ethnic minority teachers, both in schools and universities, were required to improve their Mandarin language skills. They also had to pass the Chinese Language Proficiency Test (also known as the HSK test), a test normally taken by foreigners. If their proficiency in Mandarin were deemed insufficient, they would face dismissal, or coercive early retirement (Dwyer 2005, 40; RFA 2004). In 2005, in most of the major cities in East Turkistan Mandarin became the sole medium of instruction across all levels of schooling, accompanied by school mergers, which could be regarded as “linguicide—the forced extinction of minority languages” (Dwyer 2005, 39), depriving Uyghurs of the choice of medium of instruction (Schluessel 2007, 260), and a direct attack on their identity.

According to Article 37 under the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy (2001), schools and other educational institutions that primarily admit ethnic minority students should, whenever possible, use textbooks written in their languages, and the medium of instruction should also be in their languages. The Chinese Communist Party, the only ruling party since the founding of the People's Republic of China, does not uphold its own laws and constitution, which is only apt to state that China does not have ‘Rule of Law’. In addition, China also disregards international norms, conventions, and laws. Many dissidents and human rights lawyers disappear into the rightless abyss.

Based on a number of interviews conducted with Uyghur teachers by Radio Free Asia (RFA 2011, also see RFA 2010), by 2011 there had been at least 1000 Uyghur teachers who underwent unfair dismissal due to low proficiency in Mandarin in elementary schools across East Turkistan. A decade after the language policy that was first initiated in 2001, schools across East Turkistan regularly stopped offering Uyghur language education. The so called “bilingual” education really is a euphemism for mandatory Chinese education. Even Uyghur children in kindergartens could not escape the regime’s “bilingual” education campaign, an effort to effectively assimilate a whole Uyghur population. The same Mandarin-language-only curricula also apply to other ethnic groups, such as Tibetans in western Qinghai province. In late June of 2017, all use of the Uyghur language was prohibited across all levels of schooling including the preschool level in the prefecture of Khotan (*Hétian* 和田 in Chinese), and the ban also applies to all collective/communal activities and administration work within the education system; those who violate this order would face ‘severe punishment’ (RFA 2017; also see RFA 2020b).

From September 1, 2017, following a region-wide directive entitled “The Standard Plan for Bilingual Education Curriculum in the Compulsory Education Phase of the Autonomous Region” (自治区义务教育阶段双语教育课程设计方案 *zìzhìqū yìwù jiàoyù jiēduàn shuāngyǔ jiàoyù kèchéng shèzhì fāng'àn*) the so-called “bilingual” education across all elementary and junior high schools in East Turkistan started shifting to Mandarin-only education, i.e. the end goal would be that all teaching materials and the medium of instruction would be only in Mandarin Chinese (Byler 2019a). There has been an effective way of accelerating the assimilation process of the younger Uyghur generation, namely putting them in boarding schools, also known as residential schools, removing them from their familiar home communities.

In 2000 the Chinese Communist Party established twelve “Xinjiang class” (内地新疆高中班 *nèidì xīnjiāng gāozhōngbān*) boarding schools in the interior provinces of China, receiving students from

East Turkistan, where the vast majority of whom have been Uyghurs, while the primary goal of this program has been ‘political indoctrination’ (Grose 2015, 108). Initially in the year 2000, the enrollment numbers were at 1000, and the number of designated participant cities in China proper was 12. But throughout the years the enrollment of this boarding school program has continued to increase, showing no signs of reducing. In 2020 the annual enrollment numbers are reported to reach 9880, spread across 45 cities in China proper, where the number of participant schools is to be increased to 93 (Mouldu 2020).

Similarly, closer to home in East Turkistan, almost all schools above eighth grade became boarding schools, and starting in 2017, many elementary and nursery schools also became boarding schools. Uyghur children of all ages are increasingly living apart from their parents, growing up in a Chinese-speaking environment, deprived of a family upbringing in the Uyghur language and native culture. This education system is “stealing a generation of Turkic Muslim children from their native societies” (ibid.).

Studies (Reyhner & Singh, 2010; Woolford, 2009) on residential schools have demonstrated that this type of education system is conducive to eliminating native languages, religion and cultural knowledge, which is a form of cultural genocide. The Chinese regime’s increasingly intense efforts to integrate Uyghurs into the Han majority population at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are decidedly more assimilationist than its minority policies in the 1980s.

These illegal directives from the Chinese regime violate China’s own law, for example Article 10 in addition to the abovementioned Article 37 under the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy (2001).

One could argue that there exists an economic incentive for Uyghur school kids to have higher proficiency in Mandarin, a conduit through which they can achieve employment and higher living standards later in life. This argument has a gaping hole in it, assuming that proficiency in Mandarin will lead to future employment, well however, reality begs to differ. As a matter of fact, there is a widespread discrimination in the job market against the Uyghurs and other minorities. It is not uncommon to read “hiring only ethnic Han Chinese” in a job vacancy advertisement (see UHRP 2012, 4-6). In state sectors, most of the available job vacancies are reserved for Han Chinese (CECC 2009). “[E]mployment opportunities have become increasingly scarce for Uyghur applicants, regardless of [their] language proficiency [in Mandarin] (Smith Finley & Zang 2015, 17; also see Smith Finley 2007, 220).

Zang (2011, 154-55), a Han Chinese scholar, finds in his analyses of income gaps that in the city of Ürümqi, in general, Uyghurs make 31% less than Han Chinese. In the whole of East Turkistan Uyghurs make 52% less than Han Chinese in on-state sectors. He also finds that discrimination is a more plausible factor in accounting for the income inequality, rather than schooling background. His findings confirm what many Uyghurs have experienced and suspected for a long time, feeling marginalized in their own land and not enjoying their share of the economic advancement.

Scholars have consistently demonstrated that the Uyghur language is paramount to Uyghur identity (Smith 2000, 155, 157-61; Smith 2002, 159-61; Dwyer 2005, 59; Hess 2009, 82; Schluessel 2007, 260; Reny 2009, 493-4). The abovementioned assimilationist policy of the



Chinese state in making Mandarin the only medium of instruction in schools and universities will only contribute to the further divide between the Han Chinese and Uyghurs. “Any credible educator will agree that schools should build on the experience and knowledge that children bring to the classroom, and instruction should also promote children’s abilities and talents” (Cummins 2001, 16). The research on the importance of bilingual children’s mother tongue development is uncontroversial in that one’s personal growth and educational development are greatly shaped by their mother tongue; the mother tongue proficiency will in turn contribute to their second language development (ibid., 17). “Bilingual children perform better in school when the school effectively teaches the mother tongue and, where appropriate, develops literacy in that language” (ibid., 18).

Learning a second language is beneficial, but it should only occur on one’s own volition. There must be other language policy solutions available to the Chinese regime if it so chooses to adopt, where Uyghurs can achieve higher proficiency in Mandarin while simultaneously developing a good command of their mother tongue by retaining the choice with respect to the medium of instruction. Furthermore, “Increased autonomy is a workable solution which, though apparently in conflict with the tenets of current CCP ideology, will be necessary in the near future in order to avoid widespread language grief among an already restive populace” (Schluessel 2007, 273).

## JULY 5 UPRISING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

11 years ago on July 5, 2009 Uyghurs defiantly, yet peacefully took to the streets in the city of Ürümqi, the administrative capital of East Turkistan, to protest against the Chinese government’s handling of the recent deaths of and brutal attacks on Uyghurs working at the Xuri toy factory (旭日玩具厂 xùrì wánjùchǎng) in the city of Shaoguan in southern province of Guangdong. On the night of June 25, a Han mob (i.e. Han workers at Xuri toy factory) stormed the Uyghur dormitories armed with metal rods, clubs, and machetes and carried out a violent attack on the Uyghur workers, in response to what seemed to be the fallacious/rumorous accounts<sup>17</sup> of sexual assaults on Han women. According to official numbers, two Uyghurs were killed, and 120 people were injured, most of whom were Uyghurs. There were videos posted online, probably taken by bystanders, show hundreds of men carrying out one-sided savage assault on the Uyghurs. One eyewitness account reveals the brutality of the assaults that involved a thousand workers or so: “[p]eople were so vicious, they just kept beating the dead bodies” (Jacobs 2009). Hundreds of Han workers involved in the violence left the factory the following day to avoid arrest (Watts 2009).

According to another eyewitness account reported by *The Guardian* (ibid.), the real death toll was more than 30, as he himself helped to kill seven or eight Uyghurs. Security forces stepped in and prevented the press from conducting interviews with the Han workers who had been involved in the violence, accompanied by media censorship, which implied a cover-up, a concerted effort made by the Chinese government to conceal the real death toll (Smith Finley 2011, 74-5).

Since 2006, and growing rapidly in 2007, the Chinese regime and local governments in East Turkistan have initiated workforce export or “poverty alleviation” programs to send Uyghurs to factories located in far eastern and southern parts of China, of which many companies have taken

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<sup>17</sup> Local authorities found no evidence of any sexual assault committed by Uyghur workers, see RFA 2009a.

advantage. The official narratives promote this type of program as providing opportunities for employment and learning new skills, intending to “relieve high youth unemployment and provide low-cost workers to factories”; according to a 2009 article by *The New York Times* (Jacobs 2009), a growing wave of 1.5 million people had already moved from East Turkistan to the more developed regions in southeastern China, among them were the Uyghur workers at the Xuri toy factory in Shaoguan. Some critics, however, indicate an apparently ironically contradictory and concurrent influx of low-skilled Han workforce hailing from the interior of China (i.e. China proper) to take jobs in East Turkistan (Millward 2009b, 349). Furthermore, overseas Uyghur organizations, such as the World Uyghur Congress, pointed to the fact that Uyghurs were often coerced to take the factory jobs in the interior of China, or else they could face sanctions, such as fines<sup>18</sup>, jail time, outright refusal for farmland allocation, or the allocation of less arable land (RFA 2009a).

The news of this horrible inter-ethnic violence that transpired in Shaoguan hit the Uyghurs hard back in East Turkistan, and countless many witnessed and were enraged by the mercilessly savage attacks on their fellow Uyghurs through videos circulated online posted by bystanders on sohu.com, including an appalling sight of a Han Chinese dragging what appeared to be a dead Uyghur body by his hair. Within days of the Shaoguan fatal violence, Uyghurs in Ürümqi started organizing a protest, using various internet and other communication channels (Watts 2009). Many Uyghurs from other parts of East Turkistan, especially from the south, arrived in Ürümqi before the demonstration, according to Ürümqi Uyghur and official government sources (Millward 2009b, 351).

On July 5, 2009 at around 5pm local time (7pm Beijing time) Uyghurs started to amass for the protest, marching towards the People’s Square in Ürümqi. One protest organizer emphasized in an interview to Radio Free Asia (RFA 2009b) that the protest should not be violent. The collective demand was simple: investigate the Shaoguan killings and restore justice. Some protesters even had PRC flags and waved them as they marched on (Millward 2009b, 351), used in a way to both show their loyalty to the Chinese state and as a “protective shield”, as protest of any sort could land you behind bars in East Turkistan. They also shouted slogans in both Uyghur and Mandarin, strongly condemning ethnic discrimination (Ramzy 2009).

What started out as a peaceful demonstration only turned violent after police intervention. As protesters were approaching the People’s Square in Ürümqi, the armed police were already in position and intercepted protesters’ further advance. The armed police started beating, detaining, and chasing after the protesters in a vicious manner, according to an eyewitness (RFA 2009b). Chinese official sources reported that 70 protesters were arrested right then and there (HRW 2009). There was no effort made on the part of the authorities in having a dialogue with the protesters about the Shaoguan killings. Instead the armed police detained the protest leaders, and thereafter the crowds acted aimlessly; if the government had taken the initiative to have a meaning dialogue with the protesters, the subsequent rioting could have been averted in Ürümqi, according to a businessman in an interview (RFA 2009b).

Chinese officials confirmed that the armed security forces used tear gas, stun grenades, and high pressure water guns to disperse the crowds, though some Uyghur activists accused them of opening

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<sup>18</sup> A sum of money equivalent to around six months of a villager’s income, see Jacobs 2009.

fire on the protesters (Foster & Moore 2009a). As the protesters got agitated by the use of unnecessary force, they contacted their friends elsewhere in the city, informing them of the violent suppression of the protest, which, according to Millward (2009b, 352), triggered the subsequent rioting. International students who were in Ürümqi at the time confirmed hearing gun shots after dark on July 5 (Smith Finley 2011, 76). Media footage<sup>19</sup> and Chinese official admissions<sup>20</sup> also corroborated many eyewitnesses' as well as Uyghur activists' accusations of the use of gunfire made against the security forces.

The Chinese regime quickly accused "outside forces" such as Rebiya Kadeer and the World Uyghur Congress of instigating the rioting, while Kadeer (2009) rebutted the allegation by stating that "[r]eal peace cannot be achieved through a complete lack of acknowledgment of ethnic discrimination and ethnic disharmony in East Turkestan". This quick move taken by the Chinese regime to put the blame on foreign Uyghur activists showed it failed miserably to acknowledge "a boiling over of existing tensions between Uyghurs and Han in the region [East Turkistan]" (Roberts 2018, 242).

There had been a series of mishandlings following the Shaoguan killings. Although the local police arrested the man accused of spreading the rumor of false rape allegations online, which triggered the deadly inter-ethnic violence (Buckley 2009b), it was almost three days after the violent incident. The local government spokesperson Wang Qinxin trivialized the killings of Uyghur workers as "a very ordinary incident" (Watts 2009). Moreover, the Vice Director of the Shaoguan Foreign affairs Office, Chen Qihua, further trivialized the violence by saying that "the issue between Han and Uyghur people is like an issue between husband and wife; we have our quarrels, but in the end, we are like one family" (Jacobs 2009). It was only on July 7 that the Shaoguan police made known about the arrest of 13 suspects linked to the killings, where ironically the suspects were arrested two days earlier, on July 5, when the protesters in Ürümqi demanded an answer from the Chinese government (Kadeer 2009; Watts 2009).

Chinese state media presented "a slanted representation of events" to the general public when they covered the riots in Ürümqi, setting the focus primarily on Han victims while covering no police violence against the Uyghur protesters, which "may have catalyzed retaliations by Han 'vigilantes' on 7 July"; many Uyghurs may also have formed a similar perception with regard to the distorted state media coverage (Smith Finley 2011, 77).

From July 6, 2009 the international press was given limited access to the city of Ürümqi to cover the aftermath of the peaceful-demonstration-turned-violent incident. The following day the reporters were taken on an officially arranged tour to the Han areas impacted by the riots, where they ran into an emotional demonstration by Uyghur women, who appealed to foreign journalists, calling for the immediate release of their sons and husbands detained during and after the riots. By July 7, around 1434 suspects were arrested by the police (Foster & Moore, 2009a; Branigan 2009), most of whom being Uyghur if not all. As an authoritarian regime, China decided to cut off the internet access, international phone calls and text messaging after the Han Chinese mobilized their

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<sup>19</sup> Buckley (2009a) reports that "a spray of bullet holes could be seen on the glass front of a Bank of China office".

<sup>20</sup> On July 7 seven Uyghur patients undergoing treatment at the People's Hospital had been shot (Foster & Moore 2009a). Nur Bekri, the chairman of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region at the same, stated that 12 Uyghurs were shot dead after ignoring warning shots (Duncan 2009).

reprisal attacks on Uyghurs, while these services had not been restored until 10 months after (Huang & Wills 2010).

Chinese Communist Party does not tolerate dissent, and anyone who dares question its authority, legitimacy, course of action as well as the ones who offer constructive criticisms will be persecuted and prosecuted, in the case of the Uyghur economics professor Ilham Tohti at the Central University for Nationalities in Beijing, life in prison. He was detained for several weeks following the July 5 events for having documented cases of Uyghurs who had been arrested, killed, and disappeared and posted the information online (Amnesty International 2016). He had written critically about the Chinese regime's minority policies toward Uyghurs, offering constructive criticisms with recommendations with regard to, among other things, the use of the Uyghur language, the practice of religion, discrimination on the job market for Uyghur applicants, and the state-sponsored Han migration into East Turkistan. In the subsequent years, he had been under house arrests multiple times for varying periods. On September 23, 2014, after a closed two-day trial, he was found guilty of separatism and sentenced to life in prison (ibid.). "Tohti's life sentence for alleged separatism, extreme even in the context of the PRC's punishment of dissenting intellectuals, illustrates the lack of tolerance the state and the Chinese Communist Party now had for any substantive dialogue with Uyghur voices" (Roberts 2018, 245).

Angered by the riots, in addition to what they saw/thought as a weak/inadequate response<sup>21</sup> to the riots on the part of the authorities, Han Chinese in their thousands took to the streets on and after July 7 to seek revenge on Uyghurs, armed with iron bars, clubs, machetes, and other makeshift weapons (Buckley 2009c). Authorities were initially slow to react to the large assemblies of Han Chinese around the People's Square (Branigan 2009). The riot police simply looked on as the angry Han crowds entered a Uyghur district, smashing restaurants and shops, and did not carry out any meaningful attempt to restrain the angry crowd (Buckley 2009c).

There had been indiscriminate arrests and enforced disappearances following the July 5 protest. Amnesty International (2010, 21) notes that people had been detained during the protests, and sweeping door-to-door searches were carried out on July 6 by the security forces, which resulted in a large numbers of arrests of alleged protest participants and those suspected of taking part in violence acts. However, the Chinese authorities did not make public the names and other information of the arrested. Moreover, Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009, 21-22) notes that the sweeping raids brought about "a widespread campaign of unlawful arrests" in Uyghur districts of Ürümqi, which resulted in at least dozens of untraceable disappearances<sup>22</sup>. There had also been targeted raids arresting an unknown number of people from their homes, work places, doctors' offices, or from the streets (ibid., 23-24). While the real number of those arrested and imprisoned in connection with the riots remains unknown, a source briefed on security matters told *Financial Times* that more than 4000 Uyghurs had already been arrested within the first two weeks following the July 5 events (Hille 2009).

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<sup>21</sup> A Han shop owner said that "[t]he government and the police could have stopped this [the riots] on the first day, but their performance was weak" (Foster & Moore, 2009b).

<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Watch (2009, 21) had documented at least 43 cases of enforced disappearances between July 6 and early August of 2009.

The riots in Ürümchi were the most violent incidents since the Ghulja Uprising in 1997. The rioting not only caused enormous material damage, but also unacceptable human losses. The Chinese official figures released in September show that 197 people lost their lives<sup>23</sup>, more than 1700 were injured, 331 shops and 1325 motor vehicles were vandalized (Millward 2009b, 352). The ways in which the July 5 peaceful-demonstration-turned-violent incident unfolded can give us insight into the following factors that continue to contribute to the state repression of the Uyghurs, i.e. the state differential handling/treatment, socio-ethnic inequality, and Uyghur discontent. The ramifications of this incident will affect all Uyghurs in East Turkistan in the years to come, from ever more state-sponsored efforts to sinicize the Uyghurs culturally and linguistically to the ongoing persecution of the Uyghurs in the forms of extrajudicial internment camps, forced labor, and Uyghur women sterilization programs.

The state's differential handling of the Han vigilantism/riots on July 7 and 8 further consolidated the perception of favoritism/tolerance towards the Han Chinese among many Uyghurs, which was contrasted with the deployment of heavy-handed response to suppress the largely peaceful Uyghur protesters on July 5. As Millward (2009, 354) notes that Han mobs "seem to have moved about with impunity even as the press watched, in stark contrast to how the Uyghur demonstration on 5 July was repressed". Moreover, this differential handling could also be perceived in the untenably slow police response to the Shaoguan Han violence/killings, where the Uyghurs were the victims. As one Uyghur eyewitness put it: "When the Chinese came out with batons and clubs, there is no one to stop them. They [the police] are pretending to stop them, but they are not really strict; if the Uyghurs had come out with batons and clubs, they would immediately be fired upon" (RFA 2009c). Another interviewee commented further on the differential treatment: "If the government was as cruel towards them [the Han Chinese rioters] as they were towards the Uyghurs, they surely would be able to take care of the problem [Han vigilantism/riots] in a moment" (ibid.).

Another example that illustrates an apparent double standard made evident through the foreign press was when the Communist Party secretary of Ürümchi, Li Zhi, appealed for and spoke sympathetically with the Han Chinese rioters at a safe distance on top of a police car, asking the crowds to return home, while also leading them to chant "down with Rebiya" (Millward 2009, 354; Buckley 2009c); whereas Uyghur protesters did not receive a similar sympathetic appeal from any state official on July 5.

Smith Finley (2011, 79-80) notes that the socio-ethnic inequality between the Han Chinese and the Uyghurs in Ürümchi, accompanied by the sociopolitical discontent in Uyghurs, can be implied through the physical targets of the Uyghur rioters that "symbolized comparative Han advantage", such as cars, shops, businesses and upscale real estate, all of which were largely owned by wealthy Han Chinese.

Some Uyghur rioters indiscriminately attacked Han Chinese purely base on their ethnicity which, a behavior that was not acceptable and resolutely opposed by Rebiya Kadeer (Kadeer 2009), could be interpreted as unreservedly equating ordinary Han civilians with the Chinese regime's minority policies (Smith Finley 2011, 80), "[representing] a significant redirection of anger along

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<sup>23</sup> The Chinese authorities reported that the July 5 Uyghur death toll was at least 46, while not having publicly acknowledged any Uyghur death on July 6 and 7 (Amnesty International 2010, 20).

more clearly ethnic lines” (Thum 2009). As discussed in earlier sections of the present report, these repressive policies and Uyghur discontent include state-sponsored Han immigration to East Turkistan; restrictions on religious freedom/activities (Bovingdon 2010, 129); the abolishment of the Uyghur language as the medium of instruction in schools and other educational institutions ((Dwyer 2005; Schluessel 2007); state failure to make any meaningful effort to outlaw employment discrimination against the Uyghurs (Becquelin 2004b); state exploitation of natural resources in East Turkistan where Uyghurs do not enjoy their share of the profit (ibid.); the widening wealth/income gap between Uyghurs and Han where the former have a lower living standard; indiscriminate random arrests and the ensuing unfair trials (Amnesty International 2010); and a general perception of social and spatial marginalization (Smith Finley 2011, 80).

The interethnic clashes gave full vent to years of accrued repression, which in turn followed by intense crackdown on the suspected Uyghurs accused of involvement in the riots. The series of events played out after July 5 marked a turning point in Uyghur-Han settler relations and amplified the repression of Uyghurs as follows: a) the Chinese state started questioning the loyalty of the whole Uyghur people, not just some suspected of endangering “state security”; b) the already repressive policies toward Uyghurs intensified, so did the state efforts at destroying the Uyghur identity, whose point of departure chauvinistically anchored in settler colonialism; c) the Chinese regime accelerated its measures to incorporate East Turkistan into China proper, where the end game is to make the Uyghur region a generic part of China; d) ultimately led to the ongoing persecution of the Uyghurs in their millions extrajudicially interned in “reeducation camps”, the criminalization of some expressions of Uyghur culture, e.g. activities deemed religious in nature, the forced labor in factories, and the women’s sterilization program that is the genocidal policy of the Chinese regime.

## **THE CAMP SYSTEM: A MEANS OF INFLICTING STATE TERROR**

What has been transpiring in East Turkistan in the last few years, already engendered copious international opprobrium, can be described as “a composite version of twentieth century authoritarian fantasies and popular dystopias that is made possible by twenty-first century technology” (Clarke 2018; Vanderklippe 2017; cited in Cliff 2019, 181), accompanied by the Chinese regime’s intensified efforts to coercively indoctrinate Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in a massive network of internment camps, subject Uyghurs to forced labor, indoctrinate Uyghur children (i.e. The Stolen Generation), control Uyghur birth rates (i.e. genocide in accordance to the UN Genocide Convention), for which the endgame is to eradicate the Uyghur identity and thereby accomplishing a successful assimilation, effectively constituting an ethnocide.

Since 2017 news outlets in the West have been covering China’s unprecedented social reengineering project that is the mass indoctrination camps. The Chinese regime intensified its efforts to persecute the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims by rounding them up in their estimated millions and effectively extrajudicially/extralegally interned them in many of its so-called “re-education” camps, prison-like fortified internment facilities, across East Turkistan (aka. Xinjiang). In the summer of 2017, Uyghurs in East Turkistan began deleting their contacts (i.e. friends and family members) abroad on the Chinese social messaging app Wechat. They also made clear to

their contacts abroad that they should stop the communication by phone calls, or else troubles would ensue.

As the situation was getting tense in the region, satellite imagery showed a wave of building complexes/projects installed with double fences and guard towers across the region. Many existing facilities were likely converted to prison-like compounds, based on many procurement bids advertised to construction companies that required installations of prison-style features (Denyer 2018). These internment camps are equipped with barbed wire, security fences, surveillance devices, surveillance rooms, guard railings, and guard netting (Introvigne 2018). As of October 2018, the Agence France-Presse (AFP 2018), based on its collected data, estimated that there were at least 181 internment facilities. In an interview conducted by Radio Free Asia on November 8, 2019, Adrian Zenz, a senior fellow in China Studies at the Washington-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, estimated, based on the Communist Party's primary source documents as well as other sources of information, that the number of the internment camps in East Turkistan had likely surpassed 1000, a speculative number that he was cautiously confident about (RFA 2019).

The conditions in the internment camps have been pestilential, according to the former camp teacher Qelbinur Sedik (Ingram 2020). The internees were crammed into small spaces, allowed to go to toilet only three times a day at fixed times, and allocated 15 minutes for the shower that happened only once a month. At a women's internment camp in Ürümqi, each prison cell stank of urine, the source of which was from a toilet bucket that was placed in each cell and emptied once a day. The internees only had 1 minute for the face wash in the morning and were allowed to take a 15-minute long shower once a month. Consequently, many became sick given the highly unhygienic conditions.

Furthermore, there have been many reported cases of torture, which included for example "four kinds of electric shock: the chair, the glove, the helmet, and anal rape with a stick" (ibid.). Former internees told the Human Rights Watch that they had been subjected to physical abuse and torture: shackled, deprived of sleep, and beaten and hung from ceilings/walls (HRW 2018a, 33–36). Another former internee was tortured for not making his bed, forced to wear an outfit of iron claws and rods that had locked him in a star position for 12 hours; those like him, refused to comply, would also be fitted with handcuffs and ankle cuffs for up to 12 hours (Kuo 2018). If the noncompliance continued, they could be punished with waterboarding or strapped to a metal 'tiger chair' for 24 hours (Denyer 2018; Shih 2018). One Uyghur man, also a former internee, testified that he was subjected to gang rape by more than 20 camp guards (Chao 2019). A policewoman at a women's internment camp told a former camp teacher that each day several Uyghur girls would be gang raped by the Han Chinese executives in the camp, "sometimes with electric batons inserted into the vagina and anus" (Ingram 2020).

With respect to the number of people affected by one of up to 8 forms of extrajudicial/extralegal mass internment, estimates have ranged between 1 million to 3 million people: more than 1 million according to UN human rights panel (ABC 2018a); up to 1.5 million (Zenz 2019b); 2 to 3 million (Chinese Human Rights Defenders 2020); likely closer to 3 million, according to Randall G. Schriver, the US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs (Buckley & Wong 2019). The impact of this mass internment is felt nearly by every Uyghur family in East Turkistan in

that at least one in each family and in countless other cases several individuals in a family are extrajudicially interned (Zenz 2019b). In the south of the region, up to 80% of adults in the cities are interned/detained at some point in 2018, according to the remaining locals; “[e]mpty streets in [Ürümchi] and Kashgar are an eerie testament to how the security campaign is fraying Xinjiang’s economic and social fabric” (Feng 2018a).

The Human Rights Watch reports that those detained have no due process with no access to legal counsel (HRW 2018a, 28), and have been subjected to gross human rights violations, viz., torture and brainwashing (ibid., 30 & 69; Denyer 2018), sexual abuse (Introvigne 2020), family separation (HRW 2019a), and forced sterilization (Zenz 2020a; The Associated Press 2020).

This unprecedented large-scale detention system, evidenced to be larger than China’s entire prior ‘education through labor’ system (Zenz 2019a, 103), is illegal according to China’s Constitution (Article 37) and Law on Legislation (Articles 8 & 9) despite the Xinjiang legislation<sup>24</sup> that “has no legal authority to prescribe measures for detention” (Donald Clarke 2018; also see Daum 2018). The physical restriction of personal liberty is authorized only in accordance with the statutes passed by the National People’s Congress or its standing committee, while detentions in the massive network of internment camps have no basis in any such statute (ibid.). The interned do not go through a judicial process, thereby making the detentions extrajudicial in addition to being extralegal.

China is a party to four international conventions on human rights: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratified by China in 1981); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, ratified by China in 2001); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, ratified by China in 1980); and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT, ratified in 1988). The forced internment and religious suppression of [Uyghurs] arguably violates each of these conventions. (Hurd 2018)

The Chinese regime’s “re-education” campaign began in late 2013 according to its official and state media reports, which was only to become more institutionalized in the following years (Zenz 2019a, 103). As Xi Jinping<sup>25</sup> became the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) On November 15, 2012, the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI) that he first formally announced during a visit in Kazakhstan in September 2013 became his overarching ambition. Given its geographically strategic location, East Turkistan plays a crucial role in China’s ever increasing economic influence and political clout directed westwards by land and sea, hence the ‘securitization’ project in East Turkistan — the massive network of internment/indoctrination camps accompanied by mass surveillance — to ensure stability in the region. Furthermore, this ‘securitization’ project was further justified to an extent following the continued violent incidents engendered by state repression in East Turkistan since the July 5 uprising of 2009; in other words, “an escalating cycle of repression followed by violence and more repression in the following years” (Roberts 2018,

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<sup>24</sup> It was passed in 2017 and amended on October 9, 2018 by the Standing Committee of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region’s legislature.

<sup>25</sup> He is also the head of the People’s Republic of China and the chairman of the Central Military Commission, but he is not the ‘president’ of China for it has an authoritarian political system, i.e. not freely elected by a popular democratic vote. (see Sonnand 2017; Stone Fish 2019; O’Keeffe & Stech Ferek 2019)



244). Subsequently, several high-profile alleged Uyghur-initiated violent incidents<sup>26</sup> also accelerated, if not consolidated, the Chinese regime's 'securitization' project.

By 2014, the Chinese regime stepped up its crackdown on Uyghur websites, restricting, what was already nonexistent, freedom of speech, censoring online contents<sup>27</sup>, and imprisoning many Uyghur webmasters for lengthy sentences for, among other things, "splittism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration" (Olesen 2014). Following the abovementioned high-profile violent incidents in 2013 and 2014, the Chinese regime declared a "People's War on Terror" in May of 2014, and carried out further restrictions on religious practices and expression, for instance, authorities established checkpoints in Kashgar to enforce the "project beauty" campaign, where the use of headscarves to cover the face or even the neck was banned; there also were house-to-house searches targeting suspected separatists, terrorists, extremists in Yarkend, where the Chinese state spent 2 million dollars on surveillance system, according to its official document; the religious repression in southern East Turkistan in 2014 became an "all-out attack on Islam" (Denyer 2014).

In August 2016 Chen Quanguo (陈全国), the former Communist Party chief in Tibet, was transferred to East Turkistan to be the new party chief, which can be interpreted as "a vote of confidence" for his conflict management in Tibet, where he had developed and enforced "a new model of intensive policing and 'grid surveillance' 网格化管理 involving 'convenience police stations' 便民警务站"<sup>28</sup>, accompanied by the 'double-linked household management system', i.e. "groups of ten families are required to spy on one another to check on security threats and risks of poverty" (Dillon 2019, 188), constituting a part of a more expansive social control: Three-Dimensional Public Security Preventative Control System (立体化社会治安防控体系) (Groot 2019, 102; also see Zenz & Leibold 2017a, 17). Based on the analysis of the 'Qaraqash (Karakax) list', a leaked Chinese government document, Zenz (2020b) notes that the primary role of Chen was to "adjust, optimize and especially upscale existing frameworks and mechanisms" linked to the mass internment efforts. Zenz also argues that prior to Chen's transfer to East Turkistan, the "reeducation" framework was already developed and well under way.

The Grid-style surveillance management is made possible by utilizing CCTV cameras, mobile network technologies, and big data processing power, surveilling the public within a distinctly allocated geometric zone (Zenz & Leibold 2017b, 24), which turned East Turkistan to "a security state within a state", "virtually quarantined from the rest of the PRC" (Roberts 2018, 246). This surveillance system primarily targets the general Uyghur population, making them "feel increasingly under siege in their own homeland" and thereby putting a strain on the long-term social stability in the region (ibid., 26). After being appointed as the party chief in East Turkistan,

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<sup>26</sup> On October 28, 2013 a family of three Uyghurs drove an SUV into a crowd at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, killing themselves and two civilians and injuring at least 42 (Rajagopalan 2013); on March 1, 2014 a group of Uyghurs carried out random knife attacks at a train station in China's southern city of Kunming, killing 31 civilians and injuring 141 (Wong 2015); on May 22, 2014 attackers drove two cars into a crowd and also blasted with explosives in Ürümqi, killing 31 civilians and injuring 94 (Jacobs & Tatlow 2014); on September 18, 2015 an attack at a coal mine in Aksu resulted in at least 50 deaths (Blanchard 2015).

<sup>27</sup> "Issues like discrimination, bilingual education for children, religion, and unemployment are among the many dangerous or off-limits topics [in East Turkistan]" (Olesen 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Although these convenience police stations are designed to make intrusive securitization less intimidating, their primary objective is surveillance (Zenz & Leibold 2017b, 25). As of March 2017, there had been built or renovated 7300 such stations in East Turkistan, functioning as operational connecting points for each grid (Leibold 2020, 50).

applying the same securitization tactics he had developed in Tibet, Chen within a year's time had accomplished what took him five years in Tibet (Zenz & Leibold 2017a, 16)<sup>29</sup>.

Uyghurs across East Turkistan were commanded/forced to return to their hometowns, typically with fewer employment opportunities, to obtain a new checkpoint pass; visiting a relative in a neighboring town now requires a written permit; this measure restricts the mobility of the majority of the Uyghur population as they couldn't procure such pass (Zenz & Leibold 2017a, 22; Byler 2020). The Uyghur mobility restrictions also include, among other things, the confiscation of passports (Wong 2016), the ordering (also repatriations) of Uyghur students studying abroad to return home (Feng 2017)<sup>30</sup>, and enclosures of neighborhoods with fences accompanied by security checks (RFA 2016); the limitation of Uyghur movements also occurs between cities in addition to mobility restrictions within individual urban area.

The National People's Congress of the PRC, directly controlled by the Communist Party, officially approved the counter-terrorism law on December 27, 2015 that came into effect at the turn of the year, criminalizing almost all Uyghur dissenting voices, traditions, and Islamic belief and practices as indications of terrorism and extremism; moreover, this law was complemented by the "de-extremification regulations" that further encroaches upon Uyghur's public expressions of their religiosity, allowing to legally persecute "Uyghurs' thoughts, appearance, and behavior" (Roberts 2018, 246), though some local officials in East Turkistan had already been enforcing many of the regulations' restrictions for years, according to James Leibold (Gan 2017). As discussed earlier, neither the counter-terrorism law nor the de-extremification regulations allow for prolonged detention, i.e. the massive network of internment camps, with indefinite detention, are illegal.

At the end of 2014 the Communist regime put out a booklet entitled *The Basics to Identifying Religious Extremist Activities* — 75 different signs of religious extremism (识别宗教极端活动 (75种具体表现) 基础知识),<sup>31</sup> consisting of three parts, viz., the advocacy of religious extremism ideology, abnormal religious extremist activities and their initial signs, and suspicion of engaging in illegal religious extremist activities. The public was encouraged to report to the police whenever there was an encounter with any of the 75 signs of religious extremism. Many signs on this list constitute grounds for internment (see Greer 2018).

According to the former detainees and their relatives interviewed by Byler (2020), they were interned because of the digital texts, audio clips, and videos that they shared on their mobile devices, and in many other cases the acts of registering several SIM cards by using single ID card, installing unsanctioned foreign apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp on their cell phones, or using VPNs (Virtual Private Networks) to bypass China's "great firewall" in order to access blocked websites, applications, or to simply anonymize their online activities by encrypting their web traffic. Constituting no real crime by any legal standard, "the digital footprint of unauthorized Islamic practice" or even one's association to someone who transgresses one of these violations, is reason

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<sup>29</sup> Between August 2016 and July 2017, there had been advertised 90866 security-related positions, almost 12 times the number following the Ürümqi uprising in 2009, around 95% of which were assistant police positions that were linked to what were then circa. 7500 convenience police stations across East Turkistan (Zenz & Leibold 2017a, 18).

<sup>30</sup> Many were untraceably disappeared upon arrival (Shih 2017).

<sup>31</sup> <http://archive.fo/TlazC> (in Mandarin)

enough to be taken away to one of the detention centers, and thereafter most Uyghurs would either receive lengthy prison sentences or be sent to one of the internment camps (Byler 2019b).

The comprehensive surveillance system as it has been developed by the world's leading Chinese tech companies would only go so far to detect "deviant" religious or problematic behavior, but if the Chinese state wants to probe even deeper into the Uyghur daily life, it needs to be physically present at their homes. And enter the Uyghur homes they did, becoming the ultimate uninvited guests. Since 2016 over a million Chinese Communist members, i.e. civil servants, had been commanded to physically surveil Uyghur families through a number of week-long homestays (Byler 2018). These surveillance workers had been assigned as "relatives" to Uyghur families, with whom they ate, lived, did house chores, and studied Communist Party guidelines together (同吃同住同劳动同学习)<sup>32</sup>, even sharing the same bed. As Byler (2018, 4) notes that these state-directed visits often focus on the (extended) families of those who had been sent to the internment camps or detention centers.

Neighborhood committees across East Turkistan would evaluate Uyghurs' trustworthiness by examining them with the Trustworthiness Assessment Form, in which people start with the highest score of 100 and then by taking into account various causes of point deductions, their total scores go down. Among the causes of point deductions, one can find for example 1) being Uyghur; 2) in possession of a passport; 3) in the age range of 15-55; 4) daily praying; 5) being unemployed. Each point-deductible cause leads to 10-point deduction, where those in urban areas with a score below 50 points would potentially be sent away to internment camps (Byler 2020), and in other cases a score that falls below 60 means one risks internment (Zand 2018).

According to Global Times (2018), the Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece, between October 2016 and September 2018 there had been around 1.1 million civil servants assigned to pair up and become "family" with "more than 1.69 million ethnic minority citizens".<sup>33</sup> It also reported that along with 49 million assessment visits to Uyghur families, there had been held 11 million ideology study sessions. In the provided guideline<sup>34</sup>, the "relatives" can follow the guidance as to how best carry out their assessment visits. In addition to filling out various forms, they also need to take notes regarding suspicious or deviant behavior or thoughts, which in turn could send the suspected Uyghurs away to the mass internment camps for "re-education".

Human Rights Watch (HRW 2019b) reverse-engineered an app that is, used by government officials and the police, linked to the mass surveillance system called Integrated Joint Operations Platform<sup>35</sup> (IJOP, 一体化联合作战平台), managed by the Public Security Bureau. IJOP gathers

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<sup>32</sup> As indicated by the United Front Work Department of CPC Central Committee at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180521023148/http://www.zyztzb.gov.cn/tzb2010/S1824/201712/029ea48103254b359c754152e005c302.shtml>

<sup>33</sup> The first campaign of this sort started in 2014, with 200 000 Communist Party members sent to surveil the Muslim population (HRW 2018b).

<sup>34</sup> The surveillance workers were given "Pair-up-and-Become-Family Week Guideline" (结亲周手册), available at <https://livingotherwise.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/%E2%80%9C%E5%9B%9B%E5%90%8C%E2%80%9D%E4%B8%89%E9%80%81%E6%B4%BB%E5%8A%A8%E6%89%8B%E5%86%8C.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> This mass surveillance system was first reported by the Human Rights Watch in February 2018, and the app source codes indicate that the first version was released already in December 2016.

information from various sources, e.g. CCTV cameras, checkpoints, gas stations, and integrates the collected information with the help of artificial intelligence (AI) in such a fashion that the system actively looks for “abnormal” and “suspicious” activities/behavior that can in turn alert the authorities and warrant further investigation. All Uyghurs are required to install Clean Net Guard app (净网卫士) on their cell phones, which literally turns every phone into a ‘big brother’ in a pocket.

The mass internment efforts of the Chinese regime are facilitated, if not streamlined, by China’s domestic surveillance technologies that are increasingly in demand among authoritarian regimes across the globe. Tech companies, such as Huawei, Hikvision, iFlytek, Dahua as well as hundreds of other Chinese companies, supply surveillance technology to East Turkistan, facilitating human rights violations<sup>36</sup>. Uyghurs generate data, which then feed into the AI-assisted surveillance apparatus, which in turn governs and social-engineers Uyghur life.

The web of surveillance in Xinjiang reaches from cameras on the wall, to the chips inside mobile devices, to Uyghurs’ very physiognomy. Face scanners and biometric checkpoints track their movements. Nanny apps record every bit that passes through their smartphones. (Byler 2019b)

The Chinese regime also started collecting several types of biometric data of people between the ages of 12 and 65 in 2017 under the guise of “physical examinations”, including DNA, blood type, fingerprints, iris scans, voice and face signatures (HRW 2017). According to the Chinese government’s National Health and Family Planning Commission, 18.84 million of the region’s circa 21.8 million people have “enjoyed” the government’s free health checks, in other words, all their biometric data have been collected<sup>37</sup>.

Since 2016 The Chinese regime has used a variety of terms to refer to the internment camps before settling on the euphemistic term ‘Transformation through Education Center’<sup>38</sup>. This all-encompassing term is used to include “a taxonomy of incarceration”, ranging from detention centers (看守所), prisons (监狱), to vocational training centers (Grose 2019). Some of the terms used are as follows: De-extremification Transformation through Education Base (去极端化教育转化基地), Legal Bureau Transformation through Education Training Center (司法局教育转化培训中心), Transformation through Legal System Education Training Center (法制教育转化培训中心), Centralized/Concentrated Closed Education Training Center (集中封闭教育培训中心), Transformation through Legal System Education School (法制教育转化学校), Transformation through Education Training Base (教育转化培训基地), Transformation through Education and Correction Center (教育培训转化及矫治中心), Vocational (Skills Education) Training Center (职业技能教育培训中心).

In August 2018 following the condemnation of a UN human rights panel that more than 1 million Uyghurs had been held in the mass clandestine internment camps (ABC 2018a), the

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<sup>36</sup> It was reported in April 2018 that Dahua and Hikvision received over \$1 billion to build comprehensive surveillance systems in East Turkistan since 2016 (Rollet 2018).

<sup>37</sup> [https://web.archive.org/web/20200807010751/http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-11/02/content\\_5236389.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20200807010751/http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-11/02/content_5236389.htm) (in Mandarin). It is also indicated that the regime started collecting biometric data already back in September 2016.

<sup>38</sup> For a more comprehensive list, see Zenz (2019a, 106-112).

Chinese regime initially repudiated any claims of this sort and denied the existence of the indoctrination camps (ABC 2018b). Two months later the Chinese regime started calling the internment camps as benign vocational training centers that teach law, its common language (i.e. Mandarin), and vocational skills<sup>39</sup>. However, the Chinese regime's efforts to indoctrinate a large swath of the Uyghur population are evident in its official documentation: "Vocational Skills Education Training Centers wash clean the brains of people who became bewitched by the extreme religious ideologies of the 'three forces'" (cited in Zenz 2019b).

Based on Chinese official documents as well as public procurement bids or advertisements to construction companies, it is to be indicated that there are up to 8 types of internment facilities, which then can be subsumed under three categories, viz. transformation through education camps; legal system "schools" (camps); and vocational training internment camps (Zenz 2019b). It is worth to note that though technically correct to refer to these internment camps as 'concentration camps' given that people are taken away and interned in a concentrated manner that involves indoctrinating a large swath of the general Uyghur population in restrictive/limited spaces, the objective of the camps is not brought to the fore with this term (ibid.).

According to the activist group Chinese Human Rights Defenders (2018), 13% of all China's indictments in 2017 were carried out in East Turkistan, despite the latter constituting only 1.5% of China's population; with respect to the number of arrests, East Turkistan accounted for 21% of all China's arrests. These official Chinese statistics can, along with other mounting evidence, serve as an indication of the scale of the state-directed mass internment drive.

In June 2020 German DW news reported that some former detainees gave testimonies about how they were mistreated in the internment camps, stating that they had to pick from a list<sup>40</sup> one or more deviant acts, in other words they had to choose the "crimes" that they "committed" prior to their incarceration.<sup>41</sup> The lack of, or rather non-existent judicial process while incarcerated in the mass internment camps is a well-known fact. After choosing a "crime" from a list, the internees would then have their Potemkin trials with no legal representation, set up only to give the appearance of a judicial process. The former internees were coerced to pick their "crime(s)" and also had to confess their "crime(s)", or else they would remain in the internment camps indefinitely, a standard threat that they each received. One former female internee remarks that she was sentenced to 2 years in prison for having travelled abroad. Preposterous the sentence may be, but she felt she was one of the lucky ones, for other internees were sentenced to 6 or even 10 years. Following the international opprobrium and the increased media coverage, the Chinese regime seems to use the sham trials to empty out several of its indoctrination camps, while prisons start to swell.

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<sup>39</sup> According to the state-affiliated media outlet China Daily, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201810/17/WS5bc68c76a310eff303282c6f.html> or <https://archive.vn/Vf5LL>

<sup>40</sup> This list consists of more than 70 "deviant" acts or alleged crimes, including having travelled or contacted people abroad, but most of the acts are linked to one's religiosity, such as praying or wearing a veil. This list is likely based on the 2014 Communist Party propaganda booklet entitled *The Basics to Identifying Religious Extremist Activities — 75 different signs of religious extremism* (识别宗教极端活动 (75种具体表现) 基础知识).

<sup>41</sup> "China convicts Uighurs in sham trials at Xinjiang camps" DW news, June 8, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/china-convicts-uighurs-in-sham-trials-at-xinjiang-camps/a-53699982>

Beginning in late 2018, there was strong indication that the extrajudicially/extralegally interned in the mass “re-education” indoctrination camps were being given prison terms while still incarcerated in the camps (Bunin 2019). Some internees were released months or almost 2 years after being given lengthy prison terms, all thanks to their relatives or family members’ persistent campaigning outside of China (ibid.).

## THE PATHOLOGIZATION OF UYGHUR RELIGIOSITY

It is evident in official documents, e.g. the above mentioned surveillance workers’ guideline, that the regime’s mass internment drive has pathologized Uyghur religiosity. According to one Chinese government document<sup>42</sup>, anyone infected with an ideological “virus” must be promptly admitted to transformation-through-education centers, i.e. ideological “hospital”, before illness arises. If you so happen to worry about the cost of all this, the government has got you covered, for this is a gratuitous residential treatment offer. The official discourse is fraught with the language of pathology, which “taps into a long history of what anthropologist Stevan Harrell called China’s ‘civilizing project’, treating people on China’s geographic and cultural periphery as inferior and therefore deserving of the colonial predation visited upon them” (Grose 2019). In the surveillance workers’ guideline, the regime’s salvation discourse is blatantly present: “The Communist Party and the government took preventative measures to save him, his family, and his family members so that he wouldn’t embark on a path of self-destruction, hurt his family, or harm society; what part of all this do the family members not understand? Should be grateful to the party, right?” (党和政府为了不使其走上毁灭的道路、避免伤害家庭、危害社会，挽救了他、挽救了他的家庭，家属还有什么想不通的呢？是不是应该感谢党？ ).

## COERCIVE FAMILY SEPARATION

With 1 to 3 million people incarcerated in some form of mass internment, many Uyghur children have been deprived of one or both parents. Countless families have been coercively separated, in some cases there were relatives or extended families to take care of the children, but the regime forcibly sent thousands of children to de facto orphanages anyway; in many other cases, where given the regime’s large-scale mass internment drive not only the parents but also the extended families have been sent away to the mass internment camps, as a result, the younger children would end up in “child welfare guidance centres”, while older children may end up in state-run vocational schools, according to locals in Ürümqi and Kashgar (Feng 2018b). When Associated Press journalists visited one kindergarten with “a walled enclosure lined with barbed wire” in Khotan where one of their Uyghur informants’ four children were believed to be kept, they were prevented from doing their job of investigating, and were ordered to delete any photos taken by armed police (Wang & Kang 2018).

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<sup>42</sup> Available at <https://archive.vn/jMKNKZ> (in Mandarin)

The Kashgar local government states in an official document<sup>43</sup> that children who attend the 4th grade and above with parent(s) taken to the internment camps must go to boarding schools at the first opportunity, including the scenario in which one parent is still at home. It also states that government officials must follow up on parent(s) or custodians and do the necessary persuasion work, and guide them so that they themselves take the initiative to send their children to boarding schools. The guideline also necessitates regular varied “educational” activities/instillation: in elementary schools, students must be instilled with e.g. core values in socialism, gratitude education (i.e. be grateful to your country), serve-your-country contents; in junior high, students must be instilled with for example 75 signs of religious extremism; in high schools, students must be instilled with for example legal education. One boarding school The Associated Press visited in 2018, the No. 4 High School in Peyziwat county (伽师县), was installed with barbed wire around its school complex and dormitory buildings (Wang & Kang 2018). “The educational goals are secondary to the political goals. They aim to dissolve loyalties to ethnic identity.. toward a national identity” said professor Timothy Grose to The Associated Press (ibid.).

Drawing on a wide range of sources, from official documents and reports, Chinese state media articles, to government policy directives, Zenz (2019c) presents compelling evidence arguing for the existence of large-scale state-directed various types of “intergenerational separation” (i.e. family separation). Anticipating a large number of children would be left uncared for after interning their parents in its mass internment drive, the Chinese regime established a parallel massive network of state-care and boarding school facilities<sup>44</sup> capable of accommodating children of almost all age groups. These state-run facilities are fortified with various security measures, in which Uyghur children are exposed to intensive Mandarin and Han-culture education, a systematic state-directed accelerated assimilation, which has been highly praised by the state propaganda whereby the children are the beneficiaries of family separation. The regime also has a comprehensive contingency plan regarding the socio-economic and psychological impacts of family separation, while the public schools are required to follow up on the children of the interned, staving off potential incidents. Moreover, relatives and family members are under the state’s watchful eye. Some documents show that many children under state care have one or both parents incarcerated in some form of mass internment.

By May 2019, there had already been at least tens of thousands of Uyghur children in state-run boarding schools, while they can be held under “state care” on weekdays even after the internment camps release their parent(s), meaning that the Chinese state has more time to indoctrinate and sinicize the children than their parents have to pass down what constitutes as Uyghur identity: The Uyghur Language, Uyghur culture and traditions, and the Islamic faith. “This is almost certainly not coincidental, but a deliberate part of “breaking roots” and changing Turkic minority societies through coercive social re-engineering”, which as its long-term objective, the Chinese regime is on course to carry out “a targeted cultural genocide” (Zenz 2019c).

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<sup>43</sup> “Notice on the Further Improvement of the Educational Administration of the Boarding School System for the Students in Tough Predicament” (关于进一步做好困境学生寄宿制教育管理工作的通知) available at <https://archive.vn/AMJxJ> (in Mandarin)

<sup>44</sup> The construction of this massive network of state care was completed in late 2017, three years ahead of the originally set deadline as the new Communist Party chief Chen Quanguo was transferred to East Turkistan in 2016.

## UYGHUR FORCED LABOR

Forced labor, as it was slowly being rolled out since the summer of 2018, became the next chapter of the Chinese regime's efforts to subjugate a large swath of the Uyghur population. As one batch of "trainees" graduates from the mass internment "re-education" camps, there must be one batch of "trainees" in employment/work (结业一批就业一批), according to a leaked internal Chinese document.<sup>45</sup> "Jutting out against desert dunes, the new industrial zones in Xinjiang are often surrounded by high walls, barbed wire and security cameras. Some are built near indoctrination camps and employ former inmates" (Buckley & Ramzy 2019).

Many previously interned had been released from the internment camps, only to find themselves held captive and trapped in various forms of forced labor (Zenz 2019d). As *The New York Times* reported back in 2018 that "[t]he inmates [from the mass internment camps] assigned to factories may have to stay for years" (Buckley & Ramzy 2018). In his research based on Chinese government documents, Zenz (2019d) yet again presents to the world the Chinese regime's relentless drive to erase Uyghur identity, which includes an amalgamation of forced labor, family separation, and social control over Uyghur families, while executing all these state-directed measures in the name of "poverty alleviation".

The forced labor program operates in parallel with the mass internment indoctrination camps (Buckley & Ramzy 2019).

Zenz (2019d) in his research has identified three major routes to forced labor through indoctrination (political indoctrination and thought reform on religiosity) by which the Chinese regime subjects a large swath of the Uyghur adult population as well as other Muslim minorities to forced labor with varying degrees of coercion: 1. With the highest coercion level, internees are released from internment camps and sent to forced labor in camp-adjacent factories or close-by industrial parks, and subsequently may then be sent to their home regions' forced labor factories; 2. Targeting mainly the general rural population, adults of working age who are able to work are first sent to centralized training programs that include thought reform and ideological indoctrination, and then to forced labor thereafter; 3. With arguably the most intrusive social re-engineering aim in mind, having the most detrimental impact on Uyghur society, accompanied by a form of involuntary labor with relatively weaker direct evidence of coercion than the two abovementioned, Communist Party work teams in villages "encourage" people (especially women) to take full-time factory jobs in various ways, while their children are placed in state-run child care facilities.

In spite of varying degrees of coercion, the overarching objective of the three abovementioned routes to forced labor is to serve 'government social stability needs' (政府出于维稳的需求) through thought reform and Communist Party ideological indoctrination, as it is indicated in various government documents (Zenz 2019d).

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<sup>45</sup> Item no. 20 in the operations manual for running the mass internment indoctrination camps in East Turkistan, available at <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/6558510/China-Cables-Telegram-English.pdf> (in English) or the original in Mandarin <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/6558509/China-Cables-Telegram-Chinese.pdf>



In the case of the third route to forced labor, the so called satellite factories in rural villages, like other forced labor factories elsewhere in East Turkistan, are likely to be equipped with high security features, such as fences, surveillance apparatus and metal detectors, according to what were previously publicly available advertisements to construction companies as well as procurement bids. Chinese regime's "poverty alleviation" measure "promotes a significant degree of separation of children from their parents – at least during the work days" (ibid.). Almost all satellite factories in villages have day care centers where pre-school children can go to while their parents work at factories. Zenz (ibid.) argues that forced labor occurs in a state-controlled milieu, greatly reducing family interaction, thereby diminishing "intergenerational cultural, linguistic and religious transmission".

According to a video reporting by *The New York Times* (Buckley & Ramzy 2019), many Uyghurs as well as other Muslim minorities (but mostly Uyghurs) have been sent to forced labor from the south of East Turkistan (e.g. Kashgar and Khotan), where most Uyghurs live, to mostly Han-Chinese populated north (e.g. Kuitun). "There is a great deal of pressure placed on individuals to sign work contracts. The threat of the camps hangs over everyone's heads, so there is really no resistance to assigned factory work," said Darren Byler, an expert on East Turkistan (ibid.). In the video, one worker says that he now only makes a third of what he used to, in comparison with his income back home in the south. One Kazakh worker named Erzhan confirms the exploitation by stating that "[he] worked on a production line for 53 days, earning 300 yuan (\$40) in total" (Byler 2019c). "The goal of the internment factories is to turn Kazakhs and Uyghurs into a docile yet productive lumpen class — one without the social welfare afforded the rights-bearing working class" (ibid.).

"Government documents blatantly boast about the fact that the labor supply from the vast internment camp network has been attracting many Chinese companies to set up production in Xinjiang [i.e. East Turkistan], supporting the economic growth goals of the BRI [the Belt and Road Initiative]" (Zenz 2019d). While in eastern China where fewer people want menial low-skilled factory jobs, East Turkistan offers not only government subsidies and generous tax breaks but also inexpensive labor (Buckley & Ramzy 2019).

According to a recent report from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (Xu et al. 2020), in the period 2017 to 2019, more than 80000 Uyghurs had been transferred out of East Turkistan to China proper, assigned to many different factories via the Chinese government's labor transfer program called 'Xinjiang Aid' (援疆).<sup>46</sup> The report has identified 27 factories across 9 Chinese provinces that have been using Uyghur forced labor, manufacturing products for 83 global brands, including Apple, Nike<sup>47</sup>, Gap and Sony. The relocated Uyghur workers cannot opt out easily as this labor transfer program is closely linked to the Chinese regime's mass internment drive in East Turkistan, where defiance highly likely would send them to one of the internment camps.

On July 19, 2020 another exposé by *The New York Times* revealed that Uyghur forced labor was used, through the controversial state-directed labor transfer program (also known as the "poverty

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<sup>46</sup> Sending young Uyghurs away to work in China proper can change their mind-set and distance them from religious extremism, according to one local government report, <https://archive.ph/FN4bt> (in Mandarin).

<sup>47</sup> The Washington Post reports on a Nike shoe factory supplier tainted with Uyghur forced labor, see at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/china-compels-uighurs-to-work-in-shoe-factory-that-supplies-nike/2020/02/28/ebddf5f4-57b2-11ea-8efd-0f904bdd8057\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-compels-uighurs-to-work-in-shoe-factory-that-supplies-nike/2020/02/28/ebddf5f4-57b2-11ea-8efd-0f904bdd8057_story.html)

alleviation” program), by a number of Chinese companies manufacturing personal protective equipment (PPE) to meet both the growing domestic and global demand as the COVID-19 continues to run rampant worldwide.<sup>48</sup> As of June 30, 2020 more than 17 companies out of the 51 in East Turkistan take part in the coercive labor transfer program. Moreover, *The New York Times* also traced and identified several other companies in China proper (e.g. Hubei province) that use Uyghur forced labor to produce PPE.

## THE CHINESE REGIME’S GENOCIDAL POLICY: FORCED CONTRACEPTION, STERILIZATION & ABORTION

The Chinese regime is committing yet another crime against humanity that is the systematic Uyghur birth suppression, in addition to its mass internment drive in East Turkistan, while at the same time encouraging its Han majority population to have more children. Although this piece of breaking news based on solid evidence was reported by The Associated Press (2020) on June 29, 2020, the state-directed deliberate measures against the Uyghur population growth are nothing new to the Uyghurs, accounts of which circulated largely amongst the Uyghurs themselves. Uyghur women have been subjected to forced abortion along with forced sterilization since the mid-1990s, especially in the south of East Turkistan where most Uyghurs reside.

For instance, in Khotan the forced birth control and forced abortion have been the Chinese regime’s persisted practices for many years prior to its mass internment drive (i.e. before 2016), where the local government demands all Uyghur women to have intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUDs) inserted after giving birth to their first child. Uyghur families would have to send an application to the local government in order to temporarily remove<sup>49</sup> the IUDs when they wish to have a second child. In villages, Uyghur women are almost always forced to have IUDs inserted after the first child, while in the cities, though may not be forced they<sup>50</sup> are threatened to lose their jobs if they bear a third child. Irrespective of where they live (in the villages or cities), Uyghur families must pay huge fines (compared to their income level) for having more than two children, where the third or the fourth child will often be stateless despite their parents having paid the fines. And in many other cases, Uyghur women who are civil servants or work in government sectors would be forced to undergo abortions for having more than two children.

The investigation of The Associated Press (2020) accompanied by the research of Dr. Adrian Zenz (2020a), based on a systematic analysis of Chinese government’s statistical data and various primary source documents, have vindicated Uyghurs’ anecdotal and personal accounts of forced contraception and forced abortions.

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<sup>48</sup> A video investigation where “China Is Using Uighur Labor to Produce Face Masks”, updated Aug. 13, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/19/world/asia/china-mask-forced-labor.html>

<sup>49</sup> The Chinese IUDs can only be removed surgically by state-approved practitioners, while all other unsanctioned removals will face prison terms and fines (Zenz 2020a, 14).

<sup>50</sup> Concerning at least the Uyghur civil servants and those in government sectors.

“The [Chinese] state regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks, and forces intrauterine devices, sterilization and even abortion on hundreds of thousands, the interviews and data show” (The Associated Press 2020). Beijing’s financial support for birth control had seen a dramatic effect in East Turkistan in the period 2015-2018<sup>51</sup>, where the birth rates in the southern predominantly Uyghur cities of Khotan and Kashgar decreased by at least 60%, and in 2019 across East Turkistan, birth rates fell by almost 24%, whereas the national birth rates in China fell by only 4.2% (ibid.). The principle of equal treatment is absent under the Chinese rule in East Turkistan, in that Uyghurs and other minorities are punished in the abovementioned ways plus possible internment for having too many children (Zenz 2020a), while Han Chinese are not subjected to any of these, except for paying fines if caught. As a matter of fact, in Qaraqash (Karakash) county the most common reason for extrajudicial internment was having too many children, where 149 out of 484 camp internees were incarcerated for this very reason, according to a leaked government document (Zenz 2020b; The Associated Press 2020).

After being sent to the internment camps, Uyghur women are subjected to forced IUDs, forced intake of birth control pills, and forced contraceptive injection, while some that managed to flee the country later found out that they became sterile (The Associated Press 2020; Nikkei Asian Review 2019). Former camp internees also recounted cases of forced abortion transpired in the internment camps, where they were told that they would undergo abortions if tested positive after pregnancy checks (The Associated Press 2020).

Since 2017 the regime started to crack down on illegal births, seeking to punish prior violations dating back to as early as the 1990s, resulting in a dramatic surge in the number of prosecutions in birth-control related violations, accompanied by extrajudicial internment at least in the case of three counties<sup>52</sup> (Zenz 2020a, 10-11). Minority counties often imposed double punishments: first prosecuted birth control violations, then forced the violators to undergo IUD insertions or sterilization procedures (ibid., 12).

In 2014, the number of women who had undergone IUD insertion in East Turkistan was over 200,000; however, this number spiked to 330,000 (i.e. around 65 percent increase) in 2018, in sheer contrast to elsewhere in China as more and more women started removing the IUDs (The Associated Press 2020).

According to government birth control data, between spring 2017 and fall 2018 nearly 74% of married women in 12 rural and urban areas of Kōk Gumbez District had IUD insertions, half of them only had one child; in 2018, 80%<sup>53</sup> of all net IUD insertions (minus the removals) in China occurred in East Turkistan, despite the latter accounting for just 1.8% of China’s population (Zenz 2020a, 14).

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<sup>51</sup> In the same time period, East Turkistan witnessed 7.8 times more IUD insertions (minus removals) per capita than the national average in China (Zenz 2020a, 14).

<sup>52</sup> 1) Qiemo County in Bayingol Prefecture mandates long-term contraception as well as internment as punishment for those violators; 2) In its 2019 birth control policy, Nilka County in Ili prefecture would send away those who refuse to terminate their illegal pregnancies to extrajudicial internment camps; 3) In its early 2018 directive, Qapqal County in Ili Prefecture would also send the violators who refuse to pay the fines to the internment camps.

<sup>53</sup> This percentage was at 2.5% in the year 2014.

By 2019 more than 80% of women of childbearing age in four minority prefectures in southern East Turkistan were to be subjected to involuntary long-acting contraception (Zenz 2020a, 12-13). Through family planning, the regional government in Kizilsu Prefecture is aiming at a bare 1.05‰ (i.e. 1.05 per mille/thousand) birth rate target for the year 2020 (ibid., 9).<sup>54</sup> It is worth noting that IUDs cause severe pain and discomfort, even regular vaginal bleeding, and those who managed to have them removed after years of discomfort likely became sterile as the IUDs punctured their wombs (RFA 2020c).

In the past, sterilization procedures in East Turkistan were not carried out in a large-scale manner. Beginning in late 2017 many local family planning documents demonstrate the Chinese regime's efforts to offer free sterilization procedures and also set official targets. In 2018, 1.1% of all married women in East Turkistan had been sterilized (Zenz 2020a, 17). As indicated in official documents, 34.3% of all married women in Khotan and 14.1% in Guma County were planned to be sterilized in 2019, with ample government funding that continued into 2020 (ibid.). In 2018, the local government launched the “free birth control surgery” campaign, intending to subject the rural populations to mass sterilization, with ample funding to perform hundreds of thousands of tubal ligation<sup>55</sup> sterilization procedures (ibid., 2; 15). Zenz (ibid., 18) notes that, based on official primary sources<sup>56</sup>, it is likely that the state-directed mass sterilization of women with three or more children is taking place.

Here is a case of one Uyghur woman who had been subjected to tubal ligation sterilization. The former camp internee Zumrat Dawut had been incarcerated for over two months in 2018, whose ordeal could have lasted much longer had her husband not pressed Pakistani diplomats, according to a Washington Post report (Rauhala & Fifield 2019). Upon her release, she was forced to renounce her religion and not to speak about what happened in the camp by signing documents; in addition, she had to pay a sum of \$2,500 for having three not two children. Subsequently, she was offered a free sterilization procedure by the Chinese government, while still in a terrified and vulnerable state, she could not say no for fear of further internment. On October 22, 2018 she underwent an irreversible surgical sterilization.

State-directed forced abortions also transpire in East Turkistan, where the Chinese regime commands the hospitals to carry out forced abortions and infanticides, according to a piece of reportage by Radio Free Asia (RFA 2020c) in August 2020. The Chinese family planning policy allows two children for Uyghurs and other minorities who reside in cities, while for the minorities in the countryside three children. Hasiyet Abdulla, worked as an obstetrician in multiple hospitals in East Turkistan over 15-year span, said that between births there must be a waiting period of at least three years, meaning that Uyghur women must wait at least three years to have another baby after giving birth to their first child. The strict enforcement of this birth control policy has led to many abortions, including late-term abortions and in some cases infanticides (i.e. the killings of

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<sup>54</sup> To put it in perspective, the natural population growth rates in 2018 and 2019 in Kizilsu were 19.66‰ and 8.18‰ respectively. Zenz (2020a, 10) notes that the growth rate in 2018 was way below the anticipated official target, which was not only due to the regime's mass internment drive, but also the increasingly sterner birth control measures.

<sup>55</sup> A surgical procedure in which both fallopian tubes are either blocked/tied or cut, and in the case of Uyghur women, the tubes are usually cut under the auspices of Chinese government, making it much harder to undo (RFA 2020c).

<sup>56</sup> For example, one government spreadsheet is titled “Family Planning in Southern East Turkistan's (Xinjiang) Four Regions and Prefectures—Situation of Families' Implementation of the Tubal Ligation Sterilization Measure” (南疆四地州计划生育家庭落实结扎措施情况表) (Zenz 2020a, 18).

full-term newborns), where those in the maternity wards were simply following orders.<sup>57</sup> “They wouldn’t give the baby to the parents—they kill the babies when they’re born,” Abdulla said.

Every hospital runs a family planning unit in East Turkistan, not only keeping track of all pregnancies and supervising IUD insertions, but also monitoring pregnant women for possible birth control violations, such as the rule of at least three-year time gap between births. The state-affiliated news outlet Ürümchi News Online reported that the former leader of the family planning unit Chen Yanchun, at the Women and Children’s Hospital in the capital city of Ürümchi, stated that there occurs an average of 30 or an upper limit of around 60 forced abortions at the hospital (RFA 2020c).

Shahide Yarmuhemmet, a Uyghur woman who worked at a local family planning office in Ürümchi’s New City District (新市区) between 1996 to 2011, confirmed the veracities of Abdulla’s account. She said that the heavy-handed enforcement of the family planning policy is upheld at every administrative level both in cities and the countryside, where violations are met with forced abortions; moreover, an application is required of a couple wishing to have a child.

Radio Free Asia has documented forced abortions in East Turkistan dating back to at least 2005, and in a recent interview with a Uyghur woman named Bumeryem who currently lives in Turkey, it was revealed that she was subjected to forced abortion back in 2004 when she was 5 months pregnant with her fourth child, stating that “[i]f my baby who was aborted were alive today, he’d be 15 years old” (ibid.). In the recovery room Bumeryem met other women who also underwent forced abortions at different stages of pregnancy, including full-term. Expressions of discontent over the past few decades regarding the family planning policy have been deliberately associated with “separatism” and “extremism” by the Chinese regime.

Not long after the publication of Zenz’s research (Zenz 2020a)<sup>58</sup> on the systematic Uyghur birth suppression, the local Communist Party officials in Suydung township, situated in Ili prefecture’s Qorghas county, warned local residents about possible visits from both Chinese and foreign inspectors that they could face fines or be sent to internment camps if they tell the truth about the family planning policies (RFA 2020d). A local police officer as well as a neighborhood committee chief confirmed to Radio Free Asia about this series of prep work, which involved instructing local residents in how to answer the questions concerning the family planning policies and internment camps, if asked whether they have IUDs inserted, they should say no (ibid.).

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<sup>57</sup> Hospitals are forced to follow the Communist Party orders, pursuant to the widely distributed official documents. Noncompliance will lead to fines, thus the hospitals comply, according to Abdulla (RFA 2020c).

<sup>58</sup> Zenz’s research was first published on June 28, 2020 and updated on July 21 the same year.

# METHODOLOGY



Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities who fled East Turkistan reside in various corners of the globe, which makes the data procurement process a challenging task. We decided to gather most of our data through our online platform<sup>59</sup>. In addition to this online multilingual platform, individuals may also contact us directly through popular mobile communication apps, phone calls, or by email. By utilizing the above mentioned means of communication, we hope to reach out to as many victims as possible. Moreover, there had been some dedicated trips<sup>60</sup> completed by our project manager to some European countries to accommodate those victims who were not able to provide testimonies via our online solutions; in other words, we conducted a number of face-to-face interviews with them.

Our online platform is called Uyghur Transitional Justice Database (UTJD), whose primary objective is to procure testimonies and other relevant data with respect to the ongoing genocidal policies of the Chinese regime. We take strict measures to safeguard our data, which are stored in our offline database. Despite the fact that the Chinese regime holds a stranglehold on information flow within the country, we strive to verify the identities of the individuals and the veracity of the submitted information about the disappeared and the extrajudicially interned in East Turkistan. Furthermore, we also take the precaution of protecting the identities of the informants/testifiers, preventing potential cases of individually-targeted reprisals from the Chinese regime against their family members or relatives back home in East Turkistan.

The data procurement process is challenging in that many testifiers themselves struggle to find out the basic information about the disappeared/interned: when, whereabouts, and the reason why. With this difficulty in mind, the UTJD has and continues to accommodate the testifiers, who have full access to their data, where the data can be removed and renewed as the situation unfolds.

Additionally, we assist the testifiers in producing audio and video testimonies. These testimonies are in turn published via our social media accounts, with English subtitles. In this case, we would seek consent before publishing the testimonies, and as a matter of course, testifiers can withdraw their consent at any time. Those who for some reason cannot provide testimonies via our digital solutions, face-to-face interviews may be conducted. Data previously procured upon consent for public use may be shared among other human rights organizations as well as various governmental institutions, such as the *Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances*.

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.utjd.org/>

<sup>60</sup> Due to COVID-19 pandemic some trips were postponed.

## **OPEN SOURCE INFORMATION**

We gather information that is publicly available on various social media platforms, which initially would be labeled as unconfirmed. Many testifiers make use of social media to post their testimonies. The testimonies are usually given by family members, friends or colleagues. We will try to get into contact with the person in question and confirm the existence of the testimony. Subsequently, the status of the collected data will be changed to confirmed. The next step is to verify the veracity of the data collected, which is challenging in and of itself due to China's stranglehold on information flow in East Turkistan, firmly held by the Chinese regime.

## **MEDIA REPORTAGE & THE LEAKED GOVERNMENT RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS**

We also make use of the extensive reportage carried out by various credible news outlets, both on-the-ground reporting and their investigative journalism. The data collection of this sort is mostly categorized as confirmed/verified.

## **UTJD ONLINE REGISTRATION FORMS**

Any individual who is affected by the massive network of internment camps in East Turkistan can give testimony by visiting the UTJD and fill out various forms, which are available in different languages that are commonly used by the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in East Turkistan and neighboring Central Asian countries. The forms consist of the most essential items of information that in turn would contribute to a meaningful data analysis, and yet at the same time not requiring all fields to be filled out by the testifiers. Our team will contact the person in question and inquire for further information in order to confirm and verify the data provided.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Some interviews and data collection are carried out via Skype and telephone calls, which are a part of our testimony collection process. This data procurement method is more accurate in that we directly inquire into the testimony and thereby can label the data collected as confirmed/verified.

## **FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS**

In order to accommodate a portion of the testifiers, we also travel to different countries in Europe to conduct face-to-face interviews. Additionally, we are open to cooperation with local volunteers who can conduct such interviews following our guidelines. Testifiers can choose to provide information in writing or digitally. In addition, we assist testifiers in giving testimonies in audio or video formats. Our team will periodically plan such trips if needed, but that depends on our resources.

## DATA COLLECTION ON PAPER

Due to the increasing harassment in various forms carried out by the Chinese regime as well as its digital surveillance threats, many Uyghurs in the diaspora communities are afraid to give testimonies using our online solutions. Therefore, testimonies may also be given on paper.



# NO ONE IS SAFE: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON THE UYGHUR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE DATABASE



The following analysis is based on the data provided by the Uyghur Transitional Justice Database, based in Norway.

Basic composition of our dataset on internees is as follows:

243 or 15.4% are female, 1,337 or 84.6% are male, 13 unclear (1,593 in total)

Profession	Number	Ratio
Actor/Actress	18	3.52%
Architect	1	0.20%
Astronomer	1	0.20%
Writer	13	2.54%
Butcher	1	0.20%
Chef/Cook	3	0.59%
Designer	5	0.98%
Doctor	19	3.71%
Engineer	11	2.15%
Factory worker	1	0.20%
Farmer	19	3.71%
Hairdresser	3	0.59%
Journalist	8	1.56%
Lawyer	6	1.17%
Lecturer	6	1.17%
Librarian	2	0.39%
Nurse	3	0.59%
Pharmacist	1	0.20%
Photographer	2	0.39%
Police Officer	6	1.17%
Realtor	1	0.20%
Scientist	1	0.20%
Secretary	1	0.20%
Tailor	3	0.59%

Taxi-driver	2	0.39%
Teacher	68	13.28%
Bookkeeper	5	0.98%
Businessperson	52	10.16%
Civil Servant	20	3.91%
Craftsman	1	0.20%
Editor	44	8.59%
Newly Graduated	1	0.20%
In the Judiciary	5	0.98%
Linguist	3	0.59%
Head of a Department (under a provincial government)	2	0.39%
Poet	14	2.73%
Professor	18	3.52%
Clergyman	22	4.30%
Researcher	12	2.34%
Sportsman	2	0.39%
Student	99	19.34%
Village Communist Cadre	2	0.39%
Webmaster	5	0.98%
<b>Total</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Number</b>
Bachelor's Degree	298
Junior College for Professional Training (大专)	8
High School	76
Master's Degree	7
Middle School	98
No education	10
PhD	20
Primary School	54
Professor	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>587</b>

As illustrated in the above tables, 162 have either primary/middle school education or no education at all, while over 300 have a university degree. However, it may not be a representative sample since the educational background is known for only 1/3 of the entire dataset.

The average age for females is 44, for males 38.3, and for the whole dataset is 39, though we only managed to procure the age info of 1,017 of the total 1,593 people.

30 and below: 256

31-40: 342

41-50: 251

51-60: 116

61 and above: 52

As listed above 586 or 57.6% of the total dataset are aged 35 or above, which indicates that these internees are not in an age group that would normally receive job training in East Turkistan.

Regional distribution of the interned is as follows:

City	Numbers Registered
Aqsu	39
Atush	32
Bortala	1
Ghulja	80
Khotan	31
Korla	26
Qaramay	9
Kashgar	136
Qumul	3
Sanji	2
Turpan	28
Ürümchi	193
n/a	1013
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1593</b>

In our collected data, only 1/3 of the internees' place of internment was known, and given that the sampling of this dataset is not random, it may not represent the overall geographical internment pattern across East Turkistan. Ürümchi might have a higher representation simply because more data was collected concerning Ürümchi internees, which could be attributed to better communication, or maybe other confounding factors.

Of the 1,503 that were detained/interned in 2016 or later (or for whom no date of arrest is known), only 69 are shown as released, although this is a variable where information is problematic, because detainees/internees might be released without the knowledge of their relatives outside of China. Even if that were the case, the known rate of release is still very low (i.e. 4.6%).

The religious status of the detainees/internees is only known for about 1/3 of them. Of the 658 for whom it is registered, 54 are shown as not practicing or not religious, 532 as practicing, and 71 as religious scholars. However, the exact meaning of “practicing” is not well defined, and most Uyghurs might be categorized as such. Nevertheless, the share of religious scholars is quite high.

Of 545 for which Chinese language skills are shown, 131 are shown to have no or only basic skills, with about 1/3 or 168 being fluent. Clearly, the camps hold many people who either have a good education, or have good or exceptionally good Chinese language skills, or both.

With respect to the health condition, only 379 people have such data point registered, and most (299) of whom were healthy. This is likely to a degree dependent on age, given that not few in detention are elderly.

Overall, this dataset broadly confirms our existing knowledge that the camps do not primarily or only hold young people with little education or no jobs, but also substantial shares of people who are some or all of the below:

- Of middle or older age
- Well-educated
- Holding good jobs
- Speaking Chinese well

Contrary to the propaganda images, the vast majority of detainees/internees are men, often middle-aged. This is consistent with other data indicating that the Chinese regime’s internment campaign has primarily targeted heads of households.

# CONCLUSION



Given our limited resources in the course of our data procurement process as well as China's stranglehold on information flow in general, there is a degree of insufficiency in our dataset. Having acknowledged that, our analysis nevertheless reflects much of what is already known about the Chinese regime's mass internment drive. China refers to its internment camps in East Turkistan as "re-education" centers, but based on the known educational background info for 1/3 of our entire sample, more than 300 internees have a university degree, which speaks volumes to the falsehood of the regime's internment campaign.

The average age of the internees in our dataset is 39, which demonstrates that the majority of them would not normally be enrolled in such "job training" programs. The release rate of the internees is at markedly low 4.6%. The Chinese regime also targets Uyghur religiosity in its internment campaign, but base on the known religiosity data point (i.e. only available for 1/3 of the dataset), 54 internees were registered as non-religious or not practicing, suggesting that the target population also includes those whose religious thoughts do not have to be "re-educated".

Another aspect of the whole "re-education" campaign has been that of learning Mandarin Chinese, based on the known Mandarin proficiency data point for 545 internees in our dataset, 168 of whom have high proficiency in Mandarin, which also contradicts to one main intent of the regime's "re-education" drive. Moreover, our dataset is also consistent with the broadly known fact: interning mostly men in the households. Predicated upon our dataset, we can safely say that the Chinese regime's internment campaign does not favor one Uyghur demographic over another with respect to educational background and Mandarin proficiency, i.e. no Uyghur is safe from the regime's mass internment drive.

The overarching goal of all China-based states since the late Qing period has been to integrate East Turkistan to the rest of China, though this intent to control East Turkistan had been interrupted multiple times. The oppression toward the Uyghurs and other minorities, as discussed in the present report, has followed the ideological vicissitudes of the China-based regimes. While under Xi's rule, this oppression toward the autochthonous peoples of East Turkistan has intensified to a previously unrivaled magnitude.

Since 1949, the People's Republic China has, with varying degree of intensity, adopted various integrationist and repressive policies to assimilate the Uyghurs and other minorities into its Han-majority social fabric, whose impacts include state-directed Han immigration to East Turkistan; restrictions on religious freedom/activities (Bovingdon 2010, 129); the abolishment of the Uyghur language as the medium of instruction in schools and other educational institutions ((Dwyer 2005; Schluessel 2007; Byler 2019a); state failure to make any meaningful effort to outlaw employment discrimination against the Uyghurs (Becquelin 2004b); state exploitation of natural resources in East Turkistan where Uyghurs do not enjoy their share of the profit (ibid.); the widening wealth/income gap between Uyghurs and Han Chinese where the former have a lower living standard;

indiscriminate random arrests and unfair trials (Amnesty International 2010); a general perception of social and spatial marginalization (Smith Finley 2011, 80); and the ongoing social-engineering of the whole Uyghur population, the aim of which is to erase the Uyghur identity.

The ongoing mass internment drive of the Chinese regime has shown that, among other things, the Uyghurs have been subjected to forced detention, ideological indoctrination, mass surveillance, forced labor, coercive family separation, forced contraception, forced sterilization, forced abortion, while their children are indoctrinated in state-run orphanages and brought up as Han Chinese.

So far only the United States has demonstrated that the systematic human rights violations against the Uyghurs and other minorities in East Turkistan have consequences: The United States Senate unanimously passed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 and it became law on June 17, 2020; on July 9, 2020 the US imposed sanctions against the top Communist Party officials linked to the mass internment of Uyghurs, including Chen Quanguo, the Party chief in East Turkistan; A number of companies complicit in Uyghur forced labor have been put on the entity list; The Treasury Department imposed sanctions on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (takes effect September 30, 2020), a powerful conglomerate of the Chinese regime in East Turkistan, which is also responsible for the continuous Han Chinese migration to East Turkistan since 1949.

The Chinese regime has engaged in severe human rights violations (crimes against humanity) that meet the criteria for genocide as defined by the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The role of the collective and national consciousness, “which by its very nature, tends to emerge and re-emerge, however often and however harshly it is suppressed, in all peoples whose national identity is threatened by a ruling power” (Kanat 1986, 118).

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