



Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submission for consideration during the 45th session for the People’s Republic of China (PRC)

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Summary

1. The government of China is perpetrating crimes against humanity and genocide in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region targeting Uyghur and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples on the basis of religion and ethnicity.¹ The Chinese government is engaging in a systematic campaign to eradicate Uyghur culture, religion, and language through policy and practice, including the destruction of sacred cultural and religious sites such as mosques, cemeteries, and shrines,² as well as marginalizing intangible cultural heritage.³ The government has banned the use of Uyghur language in schools and detained and sentenced scholars wishing to establish Uyghur-language schools within the region.⁴
2. Other systematic abuses include mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in order to “cleanse” detainees of “extremist” thoughts through “re-education.” Chinese government policy now includes the widespread exploitation of the labor of Uyghurs detained in internment camps and through forced labor programs.
3. Freedom of movement is severely restricted and Uyghurs live in a highly securitized environment with ubiquitous surveillance and monitoring. Biometric data of all Uyghurs has been collected, including DNA and blood samples, fingerprints, and iris scans, without consent.⁵ Transnational repression targeting Uyghurs abroad has emerged as a means of extending control over Uyghurs living in the diaspora through harassment and intimidation.
4. China’s policy of forced sterilizations, coerced IUD implants, and suppression of birth-rates meets the definition of genocide under the UN Convention.⁶

¹ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a report on the human rights concerns in the Uyghur region, stated that “The extent of arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim groups, pursuant to law and policy, in context of restrictions and deprivation more generally of fundamental rights enjoyed individually and collectively, may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.” See “OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People’s Republic of China.” Online: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assessment.pdf>.

² See Uyghur Human Rights Project, “Demolishing Faith: The Destruction and Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines,” October 2019, <https://uhrp.org/report/demolishing-faith-the-destruction-and-desecration-of-uyghur-mosques-and-shrines/> and Australia Strategic Policy Institute, “Cultural erasure: Tracing the destruction of Uyghur and Islamic spaces in Xinjiang,” September 24, 2020, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/cultural-erasure>.

³ Uyghur Human Rights Project (February 2023). “The Complicity of Heritage: Cultural Heritage and Genocide in the Uyghur Region.” Online: <https://uhrp.org/report/the-complicity-of-heritage-cultural-heritage-and-genocide-in-the-uyghur-region/>.

⁴ Uyghur Human Rights Project (December 2021). “The Disappearance of Uyghur Intellectual and Cultural Elites: A New Form of Eliticide.” Online: <https://uhrp.org/report/the-disappearance-of-uyghur-intellectual-and-cultural-elites-a-new-form-of-eliticide/>.

⁵ Human Rights Watch (May 1, 2019). “China’s Algorithms of Repression: Reverse Engineering a Xinjiang Police Mass Surveillance App,” p. 23. Online: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/05/01/chinas-algorithms-repression/reverse-engineering-xinjiang-police-mass>.

⁶ Uyghur Tribunal Judgement, December 9, 2021. Online: <https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Uyghur-Tribunal-Judgment-9th-Dec-21.pdf>.

A. Civil and political rights

Prohibition of all forms of slavery

5. The Government of China is subjecting Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples to state imposed forced labor as part of a program including so-called “poverty alleviation,” “vocational training,” “re-education through labor,” and “de-extremification” focused on eliminating cultural and religious practices.
6. **Forced labor transfers:** At least 80,000 Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples have been forcibly transferred from the Uyghur region to factories in eastern and central China between 2017 and 2019, and up to 1.6 million have been estimated to be at risk of forced or coercive labor through state-mandated transfers.⁷ This is part of a state-sponsored transfer-of-labor scheme that goes beyond cotton and garment manufacturing sector, marketed as “Xinjiang Aid.”
7. **Coerced labor of the rural poor in the “poverty alleviation program”:** The Chinese government plans to have at least one million workers in the textile and garment sectors, with at least 650,000 coming from the Uyghur region by 2023. Regional and local government directives indicate that refusal to participate in poverty alleviation in the Uyghur region is considered a sign of the “three evils”—terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism—which are punishable by internment or imprisonment.
8. **Forced labor of current and ex-detainees, including in internment camps:** In a separate but parallel policy to China’s public poverty alleviation plan, the government has enacted a public “re-education” policy that involves internment with some vocational training, indoctrination, and finally release to factories in nearby industrial parks or camp factories. Estimates based on interviews and government statements put the number of former detainees forced to work in garment and textile factories in the hundreds of thousands.

Suggested Recommendations: (1) Swiftly bring about the end of the systematic forced labour of Uyghur and other Turkic and Muslim-majority workers; and (2) provide all victims of forced labour and wider human rights violations, including Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples, with adequate and effective remedies and reparation.

Right to privacy and family life

9. The Chinese government has mandated extensive collection of biodata from all residents between the ages of 12 and 65 in the Uyghur region, as well as biodata from residents of all ages who are considered threatening to regime stability.⁸ This includes DNA and blood samples, fingerprints, and iris scans, all of which is collected without informed consent. Chinese authorities have collected voice samples from Uyghurs during passport application processes and at police checkpoints.
10. The Chinese government operates a centralized data system which stores massive amounts of data from all residents in the Uyghur region. Information logged in the system from various sources may include an individual’s physical characteristics, health information, online search history,

⁷ Adrian Zenz (March 2021). “Coercive Labor and Forced Displacement in Xinjiang’s Cross-Regional Labor Transfer Program,” *Jamestown Foundation*, p. 18. Online: <https://jamestown.org/product/coercive-labor-and-forced-displacement-in-xinjiangs-cross-regional-labor-transfer-program/>.

⁸ Human Rights Watch (May 1, 2019). “China’s Algorithms of Repression: Reverse Engineering a Xinjiang Police Mass Surveillance App,” p. 23. Online: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/05/01/chinas-algorithms-repression/reverse-engineering-xinjiang-police-mass>.

personal behavior and relationships, and also location data of their phones, ID cards, and vehicles.⁹

11. The Chinese government utilizes surveillance technology extensively across the Uyghur region, including through surveillance cameras with facial recognition software, often installed outside mosques and individual homes, and pairs this digital surveillance with in-person monitoring.
12. Surveillance and monitoring contribute to strict control over freedom of movement, from the neighborhood level to movement in and out of the country. Beginning in 2016, the government expanded physical checkpoints guarded by armed police in neighborhoods and villages across the region.¹⁰ Around the same time, passports for all residents were confiscated and authorities began to require permission to leave the country.¹¹ A leaked document in 2020 included “applying for a passport” as one of several reasons for detention.¹²
13. The “Becoming Family” program sends Chinese officials to regularly undertake multi-day “homestays” with Uyghur families.¹³ The cadres, predominantly Han Chinese, visit Uyghur homes where the families are required to provide officials with information about their lives and political views, and are subjected to political indoctrination.
14. According to recent research, it is highly likely that the Chinese government is systematically imposing forced interethnic marriages on Uyghur women.¹⁴ Chinese state media videos, government sanctioned stories, and accounts from women in the diaspora offer evidence that government incentivized and forced interethnic marriages have been occurring in the Uyghur region since 2014.¹⁵
15. Increasingly, the Chinese government has extended control over Uyghurs living in the diaspora through transnational repression, including harassment, threats, and intimidation. This includes having assets in China frozen or seized, calls to return to China, cyberattacks, surveillance, and restrictions on movement and speech abroad. Family members and associates of Uyghurs abroad are targeted for arrest and detention.¹⁶

Suggested Recommendations: (1) Stop the mass collection of all biodata and shut down databases infringing on privacy rights; (2) allow Uyghurs access to their passports and to travel unhindered in China and abroad, and immediately provide consular services to citizens abroad requesting visa and passport renewals without reprisals.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ In a leaked 2018 speech by the Chinese Minister for Public Security, Zhao Zekhi noted that 7,629 “convenience police stations” have enhanced security across the region. Convenience police stations are concrete, bulletproof installations that house medical equipment, charging stations for mobile phones, umbrellas and other “convenient” community services. See Xinjiang Documentation Project, <https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/glossary/>.

¹¹ Human Rights Watch (2016). “China: Passports Arbitrarily Recalled in Xinjiang.” Online: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/21/>.

¹² Uyghur Human Rights Project (February 18, 2020). “‘Ideological Transformation’: Records of Mass Detention from Qaraqash, Hotan,” p. 9. Online: https://docs.uhrp.org/pdf/UHRP_QaraqashDocument.pdf.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 16–17.

¹⁴ Uyghur Human Rights Project (November 2022). “Forced Marriage of Uyghur Women: State Policies for Interethnic Marriages in East Turkistan,” Online: <https://uhrp.org/report/forced-marriage-of-uyghur-women/>.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch (2018). “China: Visiting Officials Occupy Homes in Muslim Region.” Online: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/13/china-visiting-officialsoccupy-homes-muslim-region>.

¹⁶ For detailed research on transnational repression faced by Uyghurs, see Uyghur Human Rights Project, <https://uhrp.org/transnational-repression/> and Freedom House, “China: Transnational Repression Origin Country Case Study,” <https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/china>.

B. Economic, social and cultural rights

Right to health

16. Since 2015, Chinese officials have made efforts to reduce the birthrate of Uyghur women through coercive family planning, including forced sterilization. Authorities have planned a campaign of mass female sterilization in rural Uyghur regions, noting in official documents they wish to target 14 and 34 percent of all married women of childbearing age in two Uyghur counties that year.¹⁷ The campaign aims to permanently sterilize rural minority women with three or more children, as well as some with two children, criteria which would cover at least 20 percent of all childbearing-age women.
17. The birth-rate across the Uyghur region fell by nearly half (48.74 percent) from 2017 to 2019, with the largest declines in counties where Uyghur and other Turkic peoples are concentrated.¹⁸ The birth-rate in counties with a 90 percent or greater Turkic population declined by 56.5 percent, on average, during that same period. For example, 99 percent of the population in Khotan County is Uyghur, and as noted by researchers relying on government data, “the county experienced a drop in birth-rate from 25.41 per thousand people in 2012 to 7.41 per thousand in 2018, or a decrease of 70.8 percent.”¹⁹
18. In 2018, 80 percent of all net added IUD placements in China were performed in the Uyghur region, despite the fact that the region only makes up 1.8 percent of the nation’s population.²⁰ Between 2015 and 2018, the regional government placed 7.8 times more net-added IUDs per capita than the national average.²¹
19. Government documents show that local authorities are instructed to punish Uyghur women who “violate” birth control targets with extrajudicial internment.²² A leaked document showed that in one county the most frequently cited reason for internment of Uyghur women was a violation of birth control regulations. One official, in a 2018 government work report, stated that “[by] severely curbing behaviors that violate birth control [policies], birth and natural population growth rates have declined dramatically.”²³
20. The Chinese government argues that the Uyghur population in the region has increased in absolute terms between 2010 and 2018. This claim obscures data for each of these years from the *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook*, a government publication, which demonstrates the dramatic fall in birth-rates from 2017–2019 in particular. Following the publication of research analyzing this demographic data, subsequent *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* editions began omitting all key

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Australian Strategic Policy Institute (May 12, 2021). “Family De-planning: The Coercive Campaign to Drive Down Indigenous Birth-rates in Xinjiang,” p. 4. Online: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/family-deplanning-birthrates-xinjiang>.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 11.

²⁰ Adrian Zenz (July 2020). “Sterilizations, IUDs, and Coercive Birth Prevention: The CCP’s Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birth Rates in Xinjiang,” The Jamestown Foundation, China Brief Volume: 20 Issue: 12, p. 3. Online: <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Zenz-Internment-Sterilizations-and-IUDs-UPDATED-July-21-Rev2.pdf?x99616>.

²¹ Ibid, p.14.

²² Uyghur Human Rights Project (February 18, 2020). “‘Ideological Transformation’: Records of Mass Detention from Qaraqash, Hotan.” Online: <https://uhrp.org/report/mass-detention-hotan/>.

²³ Adrian Zenz (July 2020). “China’s Own Documents Show Potentially Genocidal Sterilization Plans in Xinjiang,” *Foreign Policy*, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/01/china-documents-uighur-genocidal-sterilization-xinjiang/>.

demographic statistics, including birth-rates by region, population figures by nationality, population figures by region and birth-control figures by region.²⁴

Right to education

21. In 2017, the Khotan Prefecture Education Department banned the use of the Uyghur language “at all education levels up to, and including secondary school, in favor of Mandarin.” The directive also called upon local schools to “resolutely correct the flawed method of providing Uyghur language training to Chinese language teachers.”²⁵
22. The government of China’s implementation of “bilingual education” programs in the Uyghur region has intentionally weakened teaching and the use of the Uyghur language in order to transition Uyghur students to speak and learn only in Mandarin Chinese, rather than simultaneous teaching in their native tongue.²⁶

Suggested Recommendations: (1) Stop imposing family planning policies on Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in the Uyghur region; and (2) publish disaggregated demographic data for the Uyghur region including birth rates and population figures.

C. Rights of specific persons or groups

Women

23. The Chinese government restricts Uyghur cultural and religious expression extended to women in leadership roles in local religious affairs and teaching, particularly Uyghur women serving as *büwi*—a religious role which includes duties in the community. The Chinese government has attempted to expand its oversight and control of Uyghur women serving as *büwi*.²⁷
24. Uyghur women have been banned from wearing long skirts or burqas as part of a campaign to assimilate Uyghur women into Han Chinese society. Police have stopped Uyghur women in the street to forcibly “cut down” the length of their traditional skirts.²⁸

Children

25. Ample evidence demonstrates that Uyghur children have been deeply affected by recent assimilatory policies of the Chinese government. Children have been forcibly separated from their parents, institutionalized in orphanages and boarding schools, and placed in educational settings where they are not allowed to produce or consume knowledge in their native language.²⁹

²⁴ Australian Strategic Policy Institute (May 12, 2021). “Family De-planning: The Coercive Campaign to Drive Down Indigenous Birth-rates in Xinjiang,” pp. 23–24. Online: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/family-deplanning-birthrates-xinjiang>.

²⁵ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (January 2018), OL CHN 1/2018, Online: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=23557>.

²⁶ Uyghur Human Rights Project (May 2015). “Uyghur Voices on Education: China’s Assimilative ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in East Turkestan.” Online: <https://docs.uhrp.org/pdf/Uyghur-Voices-on-Education.pdf>.

²⁷ Uyghur Human Rights Project, “Sacred Right Defiled: China’s Iron-Fisted Repression of Uyghur Religious Freedom,” p. 29, <https://docs.uyghuramerican.org/Sacred-Right-Defiled-Chinas-Iron-Fisted-Repression-of-Uyghur-Religious-Freedom.pdf>.

²⁸ Tara Chan (July 17, 2017). “Police are reportedly cutting too-long dresses off ethnic minority women in the middle of streets in China,” *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/police-cutting-dresses-off-uyghur-women-in-xinjiang-china-2018-7?r=US&IR=T>.

²⁹ See Amnesty International, “China: Hearts and Lives Broken – The nightmare of Uyghur families separated by repression,” March 19, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/3798/2021/en/> and Human Rights Watch, “China: Xinjiang Children Separated from Families,” September 15, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/15/china-xinjiang-children-separated-families>.

Suggested Recommendations: (1) Reunite children who have been forcibly removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools; and (2) provide Uyghur-language teachers at all education levels across the Uyghur region and ensure students are provided instruction in their mother tongue.

D. Cross-cutting issues

Cooperation with UN Special Procedures

26. The Chinese government, despite stating that it seeks “cooperation” with UN mechanisms and special procedures mandate-holders, has allowed access to a very small group of experts on a very selective basis since 2018. The following chart illustrates some of the experts and working groups who have repeatedly requested access to China without success.³⁰

Mandate-holder	Request for country visit	Reminders
Disappearances	2013	2013, 2014, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022
Independence of judges	2011	2013, 2014, 2015
Torture	2015	2017, 2019, 2021
Privacy	2016	2019, 2022, 2023
Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions	2005	2008, 2009
Human rights defenders	2005	2008, 2015
Minority issues	2009	2015, 2018
Freedom of religion	2004	2006, 2019
Toxics and human rights	2014	2018, 2019
Business and human rights	2017	2019, 2020
Freedom of assembly	2011	2013, 2017
Water and sanitation	2010	2013
Environment	2018	2019
Counter terrorism	2017	2019
Freedom of expression	2015	2018

Equality and non-discrimination

27. The Chinese government, while touting the success of development policies in the Uyghur region for many years, has failed to provide detailed, disaggregated data showing disparities between ethnic groups. In doing so, it remains difficult to adequately understand how development policies have been impacting Uyghur and Chinese populations as such, especially in the context of crimes against humanity and genocide.

³⁰ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Country visits of Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council since 1998. Online: <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryVisits.aspx>.

28. Uyghurs suffer from significantly higher unemployment rates than Chinese due to exclusion by state and private employers in sectors like energy, construction, resource extraction, and government positions,³¹ as well as exclusion based on language skills.³²

Suggested Recommendation: Provide access to UN special procedures mandate-holders for requested country visits and cooperate fully with UN human rights mechanisms.

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About the Uyghur Human Rights Project:

The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) promotes the rights of the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples through research-based advocacy. We publish reports and analysis in English and Chinese to defend Uyghurs' civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights according to international human rights standards.

³¹ Ilham Tohti (April 15, 2015). "Present-Day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region: Overview and Recommendations – Unemployment," *China Change*. Online: <https://chinachange.org/2015/04/22/present-day-ethnic-problems-in-xinjianguighur-autonomous-region-overview-and-recommendations-1>.

³² Uyghur Human Rights Project (April 2017). "Discrimination, Mistreatment and Coercion: Severe Labor Rights Abuses Faced by Uyghurs in China and East Turkestan." Online: https://uhrp.org/docs/Discrimination_Mistreatment_Coercion.pdf.