



ISLAM DISPOSSESSED

China's Persecution of Uyghur
Imams and Religious Figures

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UHRP

Islam Dispossessed: China's Persecution of Uyghur Imams and Religious Figures, written by Peter Irwin, examines the mass detention of Uyghur and other Turkic Muslim imams in East Turkistan, including a dataset of 1,046 Turkic imams and other religious figures detained in camps or imprisoned for their association with religious teaching and community leadership since 2014. The report also details attempts by the Chinese government to cut off the transmission of religious knowledge across generations.

Key Takeaways

- The Chinese government has pursued an **extreme campaign to prohibit or marginalize Islamic practices for Uyghurs**, including the detention and imprisonment of religious figures;
- UHRP compiled a dataset of **1,046 cases of Turkic imams and other religious figures from East Turkistan detained or imprisoned** for their association with religious teaching and community leadership since 2014;
- Alleged “charges” include **quotidian religious practices and expression** like basic religious teaching to children, possession of “illegal” religious materials, communication or travel abroad, separatism or extremism, and officiating or preaching at weddings and funerals;
- Interviews with Uyghur imams outside China reveal **harassment and persecution spanning several decades**, who describe varying degrees of persecution beginning in the 1980s until they fled the region in 2015 and 2016 as a result of surveillance and the threat of detention.

Recommendations

- For **governments** to appoint a religious freedom ambassador with expertise in China in order to respond to religious persecution across the country;
- For **governments with Muslim-majority populations** to substantively raise the issue of religious freedom for Uyghurs and other Turkic, Muslim-majority peoples in bilateral dialogue with the Chinese government, and urge the government to reverse repressive policies targeting Islam;
- For **civil society** to support and collaborate with Uyghur-rights activists and organizations abroad to highlight the plight of detained religious figures, particularly through religious freedom organizations;
- For the **UN Working Groups on Enforced Disappearances and Arbitrary Detention** to send a letter to the Chinese government requesting detailed information on the cases of the imams and other religious leaders cited in the report.

Full report:
uhrp.org

