



EAST TURKISTAN PRESS AND MEDIA ASSOCIATION
شەرقىي تۈركىستان ئاخبارات ۋە مەدېيا جەمئىيىتى





UN COUNCIL REJECTS DEBATE OF CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IN EAST TURKISTAN

◆ A Western-led vote at the UN Human Rights Council to open debate on the human rights situation for Muslim Uyghur people in East Turkistan was lost by 19 votes to 17 after Chinese diplomatic lobbying.

The draft decision had been co-written by several Western states, but following a rush of diplomatic maneuvers by Beijing, the motion was rejected.

Of the 47 members on the council in Geneva, 19 voted against with 17 voting in favor. Another 11 members abstained.

The proposal to open a debate on the topic came after outgoing UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet released a delayed UN report, just minutes before the end of her term, on East Turkistan pointing to possible crimes against humanity.

Successful lobbying from Beijing

The co-sponsors of the bill included the UK, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Australia and Lithuania.

They had made a last-minute rush to try and shore up support for the vote as it became clearer that its chances of passing were waning.

China, one of the council's members, voted against the motion along with several Asian, African and Latin American member nations.

The abstaining parties included Brazil, Mexico and Ukraine, among others.

Seats on the council are rotated with terms lasting for three years.

mostly Muslim minorities, infuriating Beijing.

The report said China may have committed “crimes against humanity” but stopped short of calling its treatment of the Uyghurs “genocide,” an accusation made since early 2021 by the United States and since embraced by legislatures in several other Western nations.

UN Uyghur Report

A difficult vote for some

The attempted proposal marks the first time China’s human rights record has been brought up in the 16-year history of the council.

The request to hold a debate on the situation in East Turkistan would have been one of the least intrusive forms of criticism possible from the human rights body.

But for many member states, criticizing China brings with it potential problems.

“It’s always difficult for countries to vote against a permanent member of the Security Council,” one Western diplomat told the Associated Press on condition of anonymity, adding that it was a “genuinely difficult call” for some due to their economic ties with China.

Ahead of Thursday’s vote, China’s UN ambassador Chen Xu said Beijing “firmly opposes and categorically rejects” the proposal, accusing the West of turning a “blind eye” to their own human rights issues while pointing fingers at others.

US envoy to the United Nations Human Rights Council Michele Taylor said she was disappointed by the vote.

“No country should be immune from a discussion at the Council,” Taylor said. “We will continue to work closely with our partners to seek justice and accountability for victims of human rights abuses and violations, including the Uyghurs in East Turkistan.”

ab/sms (AFP, AP, Reuters)





AFTER ABSTENTION ON VOTE AGAINST CHINA AT UN, INDIA BATS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF UYGHUR MUSLIMS

After abstaining on vote against China for its alleged atrocities in East Turkistan, the Centre said that the vote was in line with its long held position that country specific resolutions are never helpful.

Centre says human rights of people of East Turkistan should be respected

On Thursday, India had abstained on vote against China at UNHRC

The vote was on China's alleged atrocities on Uyghur Muslims in the region

By Geeta Mohan: A day after abstaining on a vote against China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims at the UN Human Rights Council, India on Friday said that the human rights of people of East Turkistan should be respected.

At a press briefing, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "India remains committed to upholding all human rights. India's vote

is in line with its long held position that country specific resolutions are never helpful. India favours a dialogue to deal with such issues."

"We have taken note of the OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in East Turkistan, Peoples Republic of China. The human rights of the people of East Turkistan should be respected and guaranteed. We hope that the relevant party will address the situation objectively and properly," he added.

On Thursday, India was among the 11 countries which abstained in voting against China for their alleged human rights abuse of the Uyghur population in East Turkistan.

While 17 members voted in favour of the resolution at UNHRC, 19 members voted against it, including China, Pakistan, and Nepal. Eleven members abstained, including India, Brazil, Mexico, and Ukraine.

Since 2017, there has been extensive documentation of Chinas crackdown against Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in East Turkistan, carried out under the guise of fighting terrorism.

Situation still not normal: MEA on Indo-China ties

Arindam Bagchi also said that the situation is not normal between India and China. His statement was in contradiction to Beijing's envoy who claimed that the situation was becoming normal along the Line of Actual Control.

Last week, China's military said that the disengagement of Chinese and Indian troops from Patrolling Point 15 in the Gogra-Hot Springs area in eastern Ladakh was conducive to promoting peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

agree on this. In order for the relations between the two countries to go further, we



LACK OF UYGHUR-LANGUAGE EMERGENCY SERVICES LEADS TO MORE DEATHS IN EAST TURKISTAN

Uyghur residents in a city in northwestern China's East Turkistan region are suffering malnutrition and death despite the lifting of a coronavirus lockdown because of authorities' failure to provide Uyghur language support for emergency services, locals said.

Ghulja (in Chinese, Yining), a city of roughly a half-million mainly Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, had been under lockdown since early August, prompted by outbreaks of COVID-19. RFA has previously reported deaths from starvation or lack of access to medicine in Ghulja.

Though authorities recently rescinded strict coronavirus lockdown in Ghulja, according to Chinese state media, Uyghurs in East Turkistan's third-largest city say the lack of Uyghur-language emergency services has contributed to the number of deaths.

A clerk at the Ghulja Emergency Relief Command Center told RFA that no Uyghur speakers were available to speak with locals who called.

If someone other than Chinese-speakers become ill, they usually turn to bilingual neighborhood committee officials for help with contacting the center on their behalf, she said.

"Neighborhood committee officials all know how to speak [Chinese]," the person said.

If Uyghur-speaking farmers and others happen to contact the center directly, operators at the center tell them to contact neighborhood committee officials first, and they understand that, the clerk added.

"When officials call, we can understand here on our side," the clerk added.

The communication difficulties that Uyghurs experience when seeking emergency assistance for critical medical situations can sometimes lead to delays lasting hours, locals said.

Such difficulties have also caused deaths

in Suydong township of Khorgas county, local Uyghurs said, though the exact number is unknown..

When asked about local residents who died of starvation last week, a cadre at the Suydong township community center said a wall builder named Semet died, leaving behind a wife and children.

Two village cadres in Suydong township said that Semet, a man named Ghiyasidin, and other residents of a village were sick and severely weakened due to a lack of food during the strict lockdown and were taken to the hospital only after the measure was lifted in the county.

But by then it was too late and they died on Sept. 24 and 25, respectively.

When RFA contacted another neighborhood committee in Suydong, a staffer said he knew of Ghiyasidin's passing, and that the Uyghur was a retired postal worker in his early sixties.

"He was treated at a hospital but died in his home," the staffer said.

'Not necessary to ask these questions'

An expatriate from Ghulja county who now lives in Canada and has knowledge of the situation back home told RFA that Tohtahun Abdul from the Yette'on village in Baytokay township, Ghulja county, was seriously ill because of malnourishment during the lockdown.

His wife, Repilem, asked village officials to take Tohtahun to the hospital or to call a doctor, but they rejected the request due to the lockdown measure, he said. As a result, the 50-year-old died at home on Sept. 17.

A Baytokay township policeman confirmed the man died during the lockdown, but said illness was the reason.

When RFA asked him if Tohtahum died of starvation, he said, “We did not ask these types of questions, and it’s not necessary to ask these questions.”

Besides malnourishment, some Uyghurs in the area died because of reactions to unknown drugs and poisoning from disinfectants sprayed to kill coronavirus germs, according to people familiar with the situation in Ghulja who did not want to be named for safety reasons.

The chairwoman of women’s affairs in Kore township, Khorgas county, said many people in her jurisdiction died during the lockdown.

“Many people died in Number 4 village,” she said and refused to disclose their identities or the cause of their deaths. She suggested that RFA seek information from the relevant authorities.

Other parts of East Turkistan have been under strict lockdowns since early August

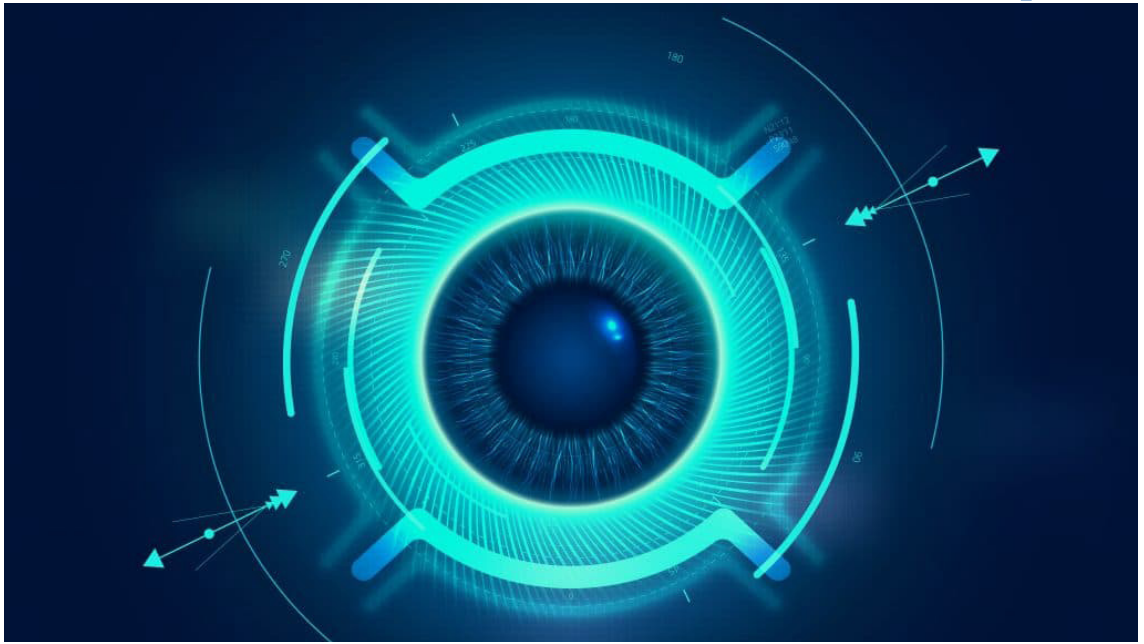
under China’s “zero COVID” policy, forcing Uyghurs in affected areas to rely on local officials for scarce food handouts. Others have not been able to obtain necessary medications.

The severe lockdowns have made life worse for predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in East Turkistan who have been subject to a crackdown by Chinese authorities since 2017 that has included mass detentions in internment camps and prisons and serious human rights violations.

A report issued in late August by the U.N.’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said the repression in the XUAR “may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.”

Translated by the Uyghur Service. Written in English by Roseanne Gerin.





BIOMETRIC DATA COLLECTION BY CHINESE GOVERNMENT STILL GROWING, ALONG WITH BREACHES

Beijing appears to be ramping up its collection of biometric data, as reports roll in of increased surveillance and monitoring of citizens across China. Wristbands that track emotions; facial recognition scans used to record students' moods; the casual cataloguing of Tibetans' DNA: all of these scenarios would fit right into a sci-fi spy film — but they are becoming the day-to-day reality for ordinary Chinese people.

China is already the world's most heavily surveilled country, according to the Independent. But its pursuit of even more control over digital ID and biometric data is barreling ahead. In Beijing, 1800 haptic bracelets have already been handed out

to long-distance bus drivers, to monitor vital signs such as heart rate and blood oxygen. The city's public transport authority has plans to roll out 5,000 additional "recognition systems" to police drivers' behavior.

In Tibet, meanwhile, China appears to be using the playbook it deployed in the East Turkistan region, where DNA collection among Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities preceded a mass campaign of detention and forced labour. The pricking of fingers has become common among groups from monks to schoolchildren, according to *The Economist*. Researchers from the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto say Chinese authorities may already have collected DNA from up to 35 percent of Tibet’s population.

Beijing’s standard justifications for its biometric surveillance activities are increasing public safety, maintaining social stability, and so on. But in the case of collecting Tibetans’ DNA — technically illegal under Chinese law — authorities have been blunt, listing “population control” among their reasons.

As the grip tightens at one end, however,

it is not stopping leaks at the other. According to Bloomberg, it is increasingly easy to find Chinese data for sale on cybercriminal sites, in the aftermath of a massive personal ID breach in June 2022. That incident saw a hacker allegedly seize the data of over one billion Chinese people from the Shanghai police and post it for sale on an underground marketplace known as Breach Forums. Then, in August, another user posted data taken from nearly 50 million registrants of Shanghai’s mandatory healthcare system.

Nor is this expected to be the end of it. Feixiang He, a researcher at the Singapore cybersecurity firm Group-IB, told Bloomberg that interest in Chinese data on Breach Forums has skyrocketed. “The forum has never seen such an influx of Chinese users,” he said, “[and] the number of attacks on Chinese users may grow in the near future.”

THE PLIGHT OF UYGHUR PEOPLE IN IRELAND: ‘MOM LEFT A MESSAGE. SHE SAID, JUST DON’T TRY TO CALL’

Three women from East Turkistan province of China speak about how they live in fear of what is happening to their families at home

“Alice”, who is from East Turkistan province in China but now lives in Dublin, was in a library in England in September 2016 when she noticed friends and family

were blocking her on the Chinese social media platform WeChat.

“On that day pretty much everybody in my WeChat groups blocked me,” she told



The Irish Times. “Mom left a message. She said, ‘Just don’t try to call.’”

It was like being in a house when suddenly the lights went out and everything went dark, Alice said. “Just like that. It is a day I will never forget.”

East Turkistan, which means ‘new territory’ in Chinese, is a traditionally Turkic region of the Chinese People’s Republic where the indigenous Uighur and other ethnic groups are mostly Muslim. One of China’s poorest regions, ethnic tensions with the growing Han Chinese population in the early 2000s led to a massive crackdown by the Beijing regime that continues to this day.

Last month the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a report on the extensive

camp network that has been put in place as part of this crackdown, saying: “The extent of arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of the Uighur and predominantly Muslim groups... may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.”

‘People began to post things on Facebook. That is how I began to learn about the concentration camps in China. People began to post about relatives being taken away’

It was through social media postings in the United States that Alice learned why friends and family back home were suddenly cutting her off from their social media groups.

“People began to post things on Facebook. That is how I began to learn about the

concentration camps in China. People began to post about relatives being taken away.”

When she learned that people who had travelled abroad or had been in contact with people who were living outside China, were being targeted, she was terrified that something she had done could lead to her mother being taken away.

Terrified

In August 2016, Alice had arranged to travel to Turkey to meet up with her mother, who travelled from East Turkistan for the meeting. They spent two weeks together. A month later, Alice was terrified that this trip might see her mother being sent to the camps.

Eventually, she learned her mother was okay, though her mother’s sister and some cousins had been taken. Her aunt was released after two years in the camps, for health reasons.

“When I last met her she weighed about 100 kilos. She was a tall, strong woman. When she came out of the concentration camps, she was 48 kilos. She was quite sick and her body was covered in lumps. Since then she is pretty much in the hospital, recovering.”

One cousin who was taken to the camps has since been released, but another two cousins are still being held.

Two years after she was told by her mother not to make contact, Alice’s mother got back in touch. She said Alice’s number had been registered with the police in China and that she was now allowed to make one call every week, at the same time on the same day each week.

“Since then, I have been in contact with my mom, which is good news for us because there are a lot of my friends who haven’t heard anything from their families since 2016, and don’t know if they are dead or alive.”

‘We have lived through a lot, and it leads to a lot of depression. Not being able to contact your family freely... And your culture and your language being destroyed. It is a lot to take’

Alice does not know if any of her friends or former schoolmates who are still in East Turkistan have been put in the camps.

“I don’t speak to anybody now, and I can’t look at social media or anything, so I really don’t know. The main thing is not to try to get in contact, as you might get them in trouble.”

Cut off

Alice is married to an Irish man, moved here with him a few years ago, and now knows approximately 20 Uighur families living in Dublin. As well as being cut off from relatives and friends, these families are conscious that the Beijing regime is

implementing a campaign against Uighur culture, their language, and the Muslim religion.

“We have lived through a lot, and it leads to a lot of depression. Not being able to contact your family freely. Not knowing how they are doing. And your culture and your language being destroyed. It is a lot to take. When we get together, it is all we talk about.”

Alice last visited East Turkistan in 2014, when she went home after her father died. “Joan”, another Uighur who lives in Dublin, travelled to her home in Urumqi, the capital of East Turkistan, in December 2016, when the situation there was still relatively normal. She left in early January 2017 and has not seen her parents since,

though she is allowed have contact over the phone.

She grew tearful when, during an interview with The Irish Times, she was asked if she thought she would ever be able to travel to see her parents again.

“I haven’t seen my parents for five years. I am one of the lucky ones who is still able to [have contact]. I have a [young daughter] who is the first grandchild of my parents, and they have never seen her. They only see her through the video calls. I really don’t know if I will ever be able to go home.”

The world has known for a few years now what is happening in East Turkistan, she said, but nothing has changed.



“Even though there are piles of reports based on evidence about the camps, and the horrible experiences people have, the Chinese government just deny it or say, don’t interfere with our internal affairs. I think the developed world is so dependent on China that no one can sanction China. So, I want to have hope, but now I am not hopeful at all that the situation will change. In Ukraine people are fighting, but in my home, people cannot even fight.”

Alert the world

Joan works for a multinational with operations here and has been living outside China for some time. In 2019, when travelling in Asia but not in China, she made a financial donation, via Facebook, to an organisation working to alert the world about what was happening in East

Turkistan. Soon afterwards, the police came to her parents’ home in Urumqi and took her father away.

“They questioned him for two days, and he didn’t get his phone back for a week. They questioned him about me sending funds to this organisation. My dad just answered that he didn’t know anything.”

During this time Joan’s mother told her what was happening. “I was really scared. I couldn’t sleep for a couple of days. When my dad got back home, he was really angry with me, saying to me over the phone, ‘Don’t do anything like that. Just do your work.’”

“But how could [the Chinese authorities] get this information? That makes me really scared of doing anything, that I donated over Facebook, and they got to



know, and identified me and identified my parents, and questioned my poor dad. Since then, I am not active on Facebook, because of how powerful this Chinese government is.”

In their conversations over the phone Joan and her parents are careful not to discuss sensitive matters. Joan does not believe all calls are monitored, but does suspect they might be recorded, and technology used to alert the authorities if any sensitive words or terms are used, such as God, or East Turkistan, which is the term Joan uses when referring to East Turkistan.

Like Alice, Joan was removed from group chats on social media by her friends back in East Turkistan when the clampdown began. She has little or no information as to how they are getting on. “I don’t contact them because I don’t want them to have any trouble.”

She believes that one family member, a woman, is in the camps. “Her dad passed away a few months ago. It seems she is still in the camps. That is the last I heard. There are still people in the camps, still things going on, but there is not much information about that. People are still frightened to talk about it.”

Joan is hoping she will become eligible for Irish citizenship and that her daughter will grow up in the “free world”.

‘Beaten up’

“Carol”, who lives in Dublin, has two children, only one of whom has met her grandparents, and both of whom she can no longer bring home to East Turkistan to see their relations.

She came to Ireland soon after witnessing serious ethnic rioting in East Turkistan in 2009, and successfully applied for political asylum. She believes the Chinese Communist Party encouraged the Han Chinese to attack Uighurs during the 2009 riots.

“My cousin’s father was beaten up very badly on the street, and was in hospital for almost a year afterwards, with two legs broken, and a few bones in his back.”

Uighurs and other Turkic people who took part in the fighting were described by the authorities as separatists and terrorists, whereas no such designations were ascribed to the Han Chinese civilians who were involved, she said.

Almost 10 years ago, Carol’s mother travelled to Ireland to see her. In late 2016, friends and family members began to block Carol on social media.

“Then my mother told me not to contact them any more. Then she, my mother, disappeared [from social media]. Then she added me back [on social media] in 2018, and said we were allowed to speak again. Then she disappeared again. I am

very hesitant to reach out to her [since then]. In her last message she said it was really not good for them if they get a phone call from a foreign country.”

Carol has not spoken to any member of her family since 2018 and has no contact with former friends in East Turkistan.

“It is very hard. I have a little baby and my mother has never seen her. And no one in my family [in China] has a passport. I don’t even think about meeting. I just wish I could know she was well and be allowed to chat with her on WeChat.”

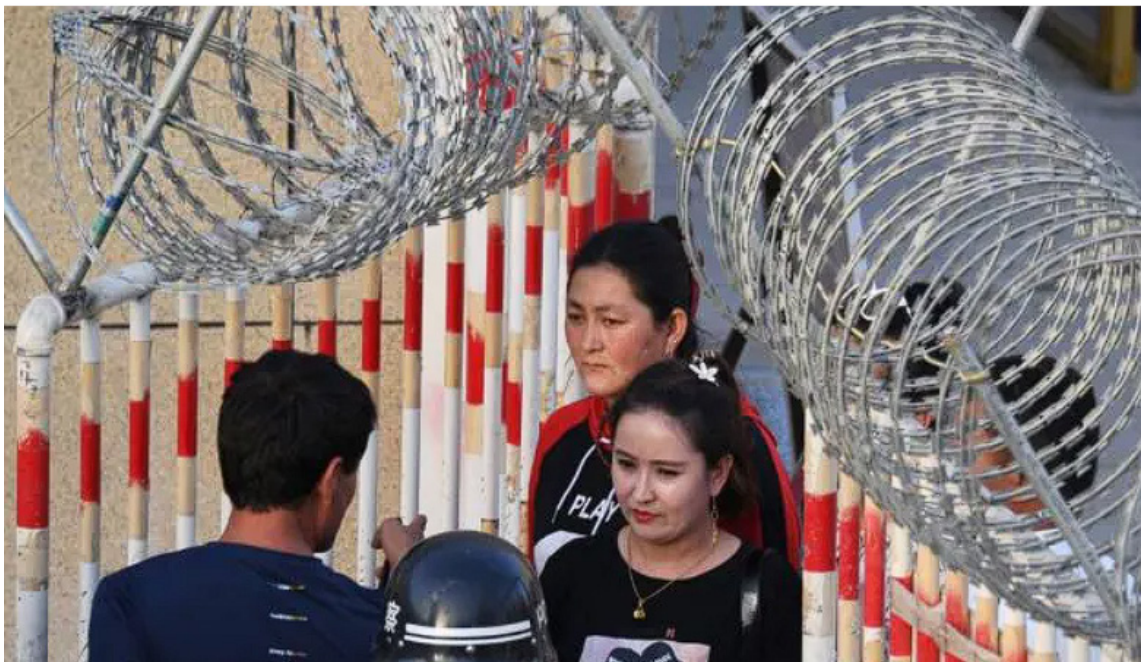
‘So much pain’

Her family were always very close, and shared everything, and it would give her great comfort, Alice said, if she could talk to her family and know how they are getting on.

“Some days I take a walk in the Phoenix Park and I burst into tears. There is so much pain I get, I don’t know how to describe it. I don’t really talk about it, but it is just inside of me. I am always bearing it, living everyday life, and especially now my parents are getting very old. When they need me I will never be beside them, and also they will never see me.

“I am sure my mother would love to see me, to know my situation, to chat with me, but that is not happening.”

The names used in this report are not the interviewees real names and certain details have been withheld to ensure they cannot be identified. All three interviewees said the Uighurs they know who are living in Ireland are careful what they say and are wary of “spies”. None has dealings with the Chinese embassy in Dublin.



The UN high commissioner's report on East Turkistan published in August included interviews with people who were not identified to protect them and their families. The report outlined the system of "vocational educational camps" put in place by the Chinese authorities in East Turkistan since late 2016 as part of a campaign the regime said was designed to combat separatism and extremism in the region, and to promote economic development.

According to the report, the East Turkistan region covers one-sixth of China's total area, has a population of 25.8 million, and is rich in national resources. In 1953, Han Chinese accounted for 7 per cent of the population of East Turkistan. They

now account for 42 per cent. The Beijing Government has supported Han Chinese movement to the region.

In 2014, the Chinese Communist Party leader, Xi Jinping, publicly backed the "strike hard" campaign against what he said was religious extremism and separatism in East Turkistan. In 2016 the regime declared the campaign a success, saying there had been no "terrorist incidents" in East Turkistan since 2016.

According to the UN report, Chinese policy in East Turkistan includes the targeting of men who wear "big beards" or who suddenly quit drinking and smoking, on the basis that these are indicators of extremism.



Sexual violence

Former camp inmates, the report said, have told of treatment that would constitute torture if true, including sexual violence, with “some instances of rape, affecting mainly women”.

The interviewees also reported being made consume pills, donate blood, and undergo injections without their consent, and said the medications they were given had the effect of making them feel drowsy. The former inmates also said they were not allowed pray but were forced to commit to memory Communist Party material and “red songs”.

“Alongside the increasing restrictions on expressions of Muslim religious practice

are recurring reports of the destruction of Islamic religious sites, such as mosques, shrines and cemeteries,” the report said. There was also evidence of widespread and invasive electronic surveillance.

Female interviewees spoke of forced birth control. In its report, the UN office noted how official figures showed a sharp decline in birth rates in East Turkistan since 2017, with the rate falling from 15.88 per thousand in 2017, to 8.14 per thousand two years later. Uighur-majority areas in East Turkistan accounted for most of the decline, it said.

In Hotan, which is 96 per cent Uighur, the birth rate went from 20.94 per cent in 2016, to 8.58 per cent two years later, while in Kashgar, which is approximately



92.6 per cent Uighur, the rate dropped from 18.19 per cent to 7.94 per cent in the same period.

“Even taking into account the overall decline in birth rates in China, these figures remain unusual and stark,” the report said.

The Chinese Government strongly opposed the release of the UN report, saying the “so-called assessment” ran counter to the mandate of the high commissioner’s office “and ignores the human rights achievements made together by all ethnic groups in East Turkistan and the devastating damage caused by terrorism and extremism to the human rights of people of all ethnic groups in East Turkistan”.

Based on disinformation and lies fabricated by anti-China forces, it said, and out of a presumption of guilt, the “so-called assessment” distorted China’s laws and policies, “wantonly smears and

slanders China, and interferes in China’s internal affairs”.

‘Peace and contentment’

“People of all ethnic groups are living a happy life in East Turkistan in peace and contentment. It is the best human rights protection and the best human rights practice,” the regime said.

A spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs said Ireland was actively engaged at the current UN human rights session in Geneva, Switzerland, and supported efforts to request a debate on the East Turkistan report.

“Senior officials in the department have also raised the findings of the OHCHR assessment with Chinese counterparts on two occasions and have urged China to give serious consideration to the report and its recommendations”, the spokesperson said.

AS CRACKDOWN EASES, EAST TURKISTAN FACES LONG ROAD TO REHABILITATION

KASHGAR, China — A lone guard looks out through the bars of the metal gate onto a dusty village road lined with spindly poplars and marigolds.

The facility inside these peeling, whitewashed walls used to be a “vocational education and training center,” local residents say, one of the feared detention camps in East Turkistan where authorities sent Muslim Uyghurs for ideological reformation. Now, it’s a coronavirus quarantine center, decorated with colorful murals of doctors and healthy families.

A nine-day reporting trip by The Washington Post through the region in late July and early August revealed concerted efforts by Chinese officials to put the crackdown behind them. But even as the most visible security measures have been loosened, East Turkistan residents continue to live under heavier official pressure than in other parts of China.

A long-delayed United Nations report concluded in August that the Chinese government's actions in East Turkistan may constitute crimes against humanity, with "severe and undue restrictions on a wide range of human rights." Beijing maintains it was a justified crackdown on religious extremism and terrorism, and denies reports of torture and mistreatment that the U.N. team found credible.

The East Turkistan crackdown began in the wake of Chinese leader Xi Jinping's

trip to the arid borderland in 2014, which was marred by a knife-and-explosives attack on the Urumqi train station. Xi ordered officials to "strike first" against terrorism. They began broadly rounding up Uyghurs for detention and ideological reeducation in 2016, based on vague and expansive criteria, such as abstaining from alcohol or maintaining contact with overseas relatives.

U.N. report: China may have committed crimes against humanity in East Turkistan

So far, the campaign has closely tracked the textbook arc of previous crackdowns by the Chinese Communist Party, including intense pressure on local officials to catch every last suspect, mobilization of the public to inform on one another, sweeping detentions, and then the eventual release of most people back into society, with harsh prison sentences for a minority as a warning to the rest.



For Uyghur families ruptured by the crackdown, there is no hope for forgetting, or for a return to normalcy.

A cheerful show

Before the crackdown, Uyghurs would gather for evening prayers in the mosque by the Afaq Khoja mausoleum, a holy tomb site for Muslims. On an August evening, the mosque was silent. Instead, a cheerful dance show for tourists was underway in the surrounding gardens.

A female tourist from Henan province, a member of China's majority Han ethnicity, was pulled onstage and a mock wedding to a Uyghur man acted out, with the two tossed in the air in blankets. At the end, a plastic infant was placed in her arms, to the crowd's cheers.

"We just experienced a Uyghur wedding and it's quite humorous," the woman, who did not give her name to The Post, told a domestic TV station after the show.

Who are the Uyghurs, and what's

happening to them in China?

Such nuances are lost for the legions of domestic tourists who poured into East Turkistan this summer, part of a patriotic push to shore up the sanctioned region. With information about the brutality of the crackdown strictly censored in China, many Chinese support it. Life in the rest of China has also gotten more repressive in the pandemic, with long lockdowns and intrusive tracking, making some of the policies in East Turkistan seem more normalized to a domestic audience.

The notorious official who oversaw the campaign against the Uyghurs, Chen Quanguo, was replaced with a new regional boss in December. The newcomer, Ma Xingrui, 62, hails from the more-liberal coast and has pledged to present a friendlier face for East Turkistan. He has also emphasized adherence to law in speeches to local officials, an apparent nod to international condemnation of the extrajudicial detentions and police brutality.



But even in tourist areas, there were glimpses of elevated pressures on Uyghurs. Cooking knives are still chained to the counters at restaurants. Signs in the backs of taxis remind passengers their conversations are being recorded. Guards carrying machine guns and truncheons watch over Kashgar residents lining up for coronavirus testing.

Outside several mosques, police officers rushed over to demand a Post reporter delete photos, saying it was forbidden to publish images of the religious structures. Such a rule does not exist elsewhere in China.

Under watch

The “end” of a crackdown is a relative term. Once a cohort has been identified as a potential threat to the party’s rule, it never leaves heightened scrutiny. Decades after Tiananmen, pro-democracy intellectuals continue to be closely tracked

by Chinese security, with some placed under house arrest each year around sensitive anniversaries. Members of the Falun Gong spiritual movement — who were thrown into labor camps in the late 1990s similarly to the Uyghurs — also remain under close watch today.

All signs suggest that the same will be the case for Uyghurs.

The most reviled part of the crackdown, the reeducation camp program, appears to have ended in 2019 under international pressure. While a comprehensive independent survey of camp sites has yet to be done — East Turkistan is more than twice the size of Texas — scattered checks by journalists since late 2019 have found such sites abandoned or converted.

At some of the sites, local residents or guards confirmed they were former “vocational education and training centers,” Beijing’s official term for the



“As for ‘reeducation’ — if it is being defined narrowly as the extrajudicial detention of Uyghurs and Kazakhs — it seems to have come to a halt,” said Timothy Grose, a East Turkistan expert at the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Indiana. “Certainly, political ideology classes are still being carried out in prisons, factories, local government buildings and homes, so ‘reeducation’ is ongoing.”

Close surveillance of Uyghurs also continues, including through an intrusive program that sends officials for homestays in villagers’ homes.

China slams U.N. ‘farce’ on East Turkistan as Uyghur exiles praise report

Rayhan Asat, a U.S.-based lawyer, said officials recently visited her parents in East Turkistan and asked them to remind her brother to “study well” in prison. She said this seemed to indicate reeducation continues for prisoners.

Asat has proclaimed her brother’s innocence after he was sentenced to 15 years in prison for “inciting ethnic hatred” in the crackdown. As with many cases, there was no sign he had a lawyer for his defense, or court records released, adding to the anguish and fear of his loved ones.

As those with shorter sentences begin to be released from prison, some will be entering a system for their continued monitoring and ideological education.

East Turkistan issued updated guidelines in 2021 for “community corrections,” a parole-like program that allows for continued supervision for former prisoners who have completed their sentences. The guidelines specify that ideological education may continue for those who served time for religious-extremism-related offenses.

The East Turkistan government did not respond to a query about how many former prisoners are in the program.



Lack of transparency

In an industrial park outside the city of Hotan, the sprawling yellow buildings of a former reeducation center stand empty. Down the street, a prison is operating, on a block sealed off with a tall metal gate.

“It’s a prison back there,” a worker said. “You shouldn’t linger around here.”

The continued operation of prisons in industrial parks across East Turkistan is one reason human-rights activists say forced labor may still be present in the region, which Chinese authorities deny. East Turkistan also still operates state-organized poverty alleviation labor transfer programs, which the U.N. report flagged as a forced labor risk due to Uyghurs having reported threats if they don’t participate.

There are broad implications for China’s economy. East Turkistan is a key source of natural resources for China’s manufacturing sector. U.S. sanctions on goods linked to the region have snarled

international supply chains for fashion, food and solar panels.

Firsthand accounts of forced labor from Uyghurs have waned in the past couple of years, and assessing the current situation is difficult. China has made it all but impossible for many Uyghurs to leave the country, confiscating their passports and prohibiting non-emergency travel broadly during the pandemic.

“The full information is extremely limited,” said Gheyur Qurban, head of the Berlin office of the World Uyghur Congress. “People are afraid to go back and can’t even reach family members over the phone.”

Intense surveillance and intimidation of local residents make it hard to ascertain whether workers are speaking truthfully if they say conditions are fine — or to protect their safety if they report problems. Multiple international auditing firms have pulled out of East Turkistan because of such difficulties, and China kicked out one auditor that wrote an



unfavorable report.

At several other industrial parks, officials cited pandemic restrictions in barring access. Police prohibited interviews at an electronics factory located next to a detention center for drug offenders that used to be a reeducation center in Kashgar's Shule County.

There have been some changes, such as the closure of reeducation camps containing factories. Local officials have eased up on rhetoric that unemployment is a sign of extremism. China's National People's Congress ratified the U.N. International Labor Organization's Abolition of Forced Labor Convention in April.

But state-organized labor transfers are continuing in East Turkistan, said Laura Murphy, a human rights professor at Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom.

"Lack of transparency is a major challenge and one reason it took so long

for international concern to focus on the region," said Jeremy Daum, a senior fellow for Yale Law School's Paul Tsai China Center. "At the same time, the situation has continued to evolve, in part as a result of this growing attention both in China and abroad."

U.S. ban on East Turkistan cotton fractures fashion industry supply chains

Clearing up its labor reputation may be a long process for East Turkistan. Under international standards, a supply chain is considered tainted if even a fraction of it contains forced labor.

"Even if you talk to a worker outside the workplace, would they be thrown in jail after you left or otherwise disciplined if something came out that was detrimental?" Lee said. "Can people living in East Turkistan speak up without fear of retribution? I think that is going to be the key question."



Lasting scars

If Chinese officials look to previous crackdowns, they may conclude the diplomatic fallout is finite and surmountable.

After the Tiananmen Square crackdown, Western nations had also recoiled in horror, cutting business ties and adopting sanctions. Business fallout was mostly short lived, with China emerging as the world's factory floor in the years that followed. The U.S. and European Union arms sales embargoes have remained in place but haven't prevented China's rise as a military power.

China's detention and torture of members of the Falun Gong spiritual movement in 1999 also drew widespread international criticism at the time but has had little long-term effect for Beijing.

What has proven long-lasting is the psychological effects for those targeted. Psychiatrists coined the term "concentration camp syndrome" to

describe the long-term mental suffering of survivors of Nazi camps. Similar symptoms have been documented among Vietnam War veterans and those persecuted in China's Cultural Revolution. Researchers have found this trauma does not even end at death, and can be passed from generation to generation.

Gene Bunin, an independent researcher who founded the East Turkistan Victims Database, a crowdsourced list of Uyghur detainees, said the mass detentions have been deeply traumatic for the population, with the long-term consequences unclear.

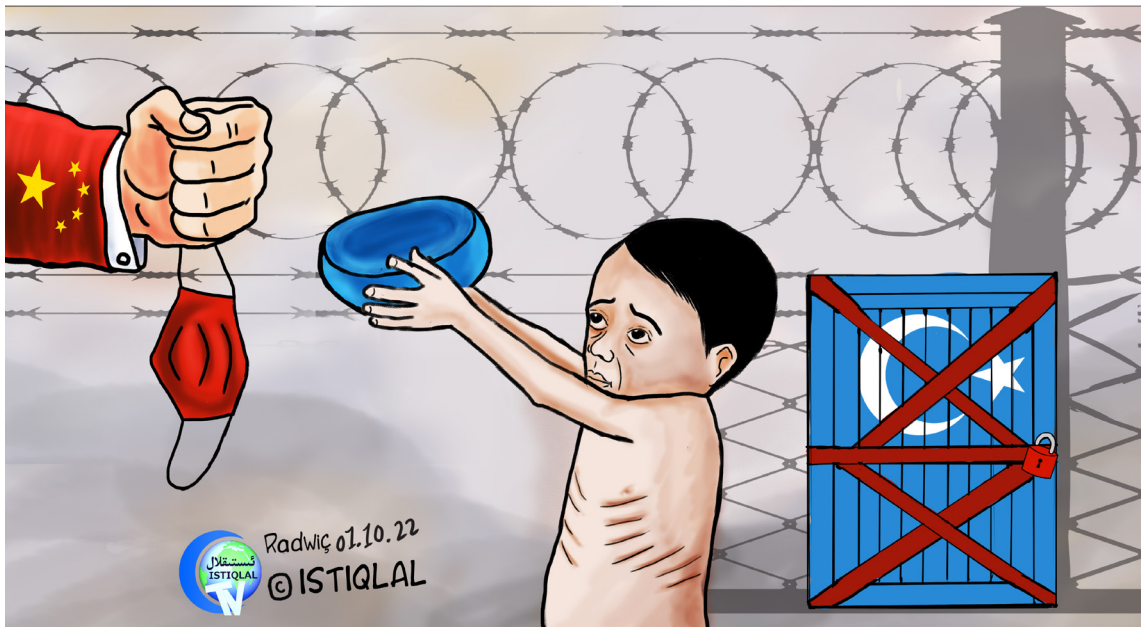
"You can't just take out such a huge portion of the population and expect things to just go back to normal," he said.

Asat agrees. "It did so much damage to Uyghur people's psyche," she said.

Cadell reported from Washington. Christian Shepherd, Lily Kuo and Pei Lin Wu in Taipei, Taiwan, contributed to this report.







The entire areas in East Turkistan are currently under lockdowns, and the Chinese regime continues its starvation genocide crime under the name of “zero-COVID policy”.

References

<https://www.indiatoday.in>

<https://www.stuff.co.nz>

<https://www.rfa.org>

<https://www.irishtimes.com>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com>

istiqlal

What is happening in East Turkistan?

What is true and what is false?

The “ISTIQLAL” journal uses reliable sources, evidence and witnesses to reveal China’s crimes against humanity and shine a light on the oppression in East Turkistan as well as exposing China’s fake news propaganda.

Editor in Chief **Abdulvaris Abdulhalik**

Graphic Design **Orkesh**

Editor **Radwa Adel**

Caricature **Radwa Adel**

Editorial Board **East Turkistan Press And Media Association**

Publication Type **Monthly Journal**

Address **Kartaltepe Mah. Geit Sok. No: 6 Dükkan 2
Sefaköy K.ekmece İSTANBUL**

info@istiqlalmedia.com

www.turkistantimes.com/en

www.istiqlalhaber.com

www.istiqlalmedia.com

+90 212 540 31 15

+90 553 895 19 33

+90 541 797 77 00