



## The Mass Internment of Uyghurs:

“We want to be respected as humans.

Is it too much to ask?”



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Cover Image: Internees in the Number Four Lop County Education and Training Center listen to a speech by a “De-extremification Propaganda Team” from the regional Ministry of Justice in 2017

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## SUMMARY

The human rights crisis in East Turkestan (also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) requires an urgent international response. The mass internment of Uyghurs in camps across the region is occurring as the Chinese government promotes itself globally as a model of governance and trade through the Belt and Road Initiative. Over a million Uyghurs have been interned out of a population of 11 million. Credible reports of deaths in custody, torture, and systemic political indoctrination must propel the international community into action on behalf of the Uyghurs. For several years, human rights conditions have deteriorated for Uyghurs with little prospect of relief. Political repression, economic marginalization, curbs on religious practice, demographic engineering, and Sinification have been extensively documented by a broad range of actors. Timing is key in human rights interventions to ensure the collective long-term welfare of vulnerable groups, and the time to publicly seek accountability from China regarding the mass-internment of Uyghurs is now.

The international community should call on China to immediately release all those being held without charge in internment camps. It has several instruments with which to bring China to account over the system of internment camps in East Turkestan. The first is the use of United Nations (UN) processes. China's Universal Periodic Review in November 2018 should be leveraged to make Chinese officials answer questions on the internment camp system aimed at "solving" the Uyghur problem. China's bid to shape the rights agenda in multilateral settings should be challenged with a robust defense of political and civil rights at the UN. The second mechanism available to states is to adopt a form of "Global Magnitsky Act." Such acts are global in scale and can be used to sanction Chinese officials complicit in the human rights violations occurring in East Turkestan. The freezing of assets and exclusion from banking systems overseas are within the power of concerned governments. The third measure is to end forced returns of Uyghurs due to Chinese government pressure. Uyghurs who have resided abroad or who have some overseas connection have been forcibly disappeared into internment camps. Given the probability of internment based on ethnicity, there is no reason Uyghurs peaceably living overseas should be returned to China.

Since the spring of 2017, the Chinese government has been systematically interning Uyghurs in camps. While the intention of the camps remains undisclosed, reports of repetitive political indoctrination, Sinification through Chinese language and culture sessions, and compulsory denunciations of Uyghur culture and belief in Islam indicate the Chinese authorities are aiming to forcibly assimilate Uyghurs. As Beijing prepares to situate East Turkestan as the fulcrum of Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative policy, China is attempting to find a solution to the problem of the Uyghurs' distinctive belief in Islam and Turkic identity. The effort to alter the Uyghurs' identification with perceived 'external' allegiances is China's final colonial act in a territory it has plundered and settled while purposefully excluding Uyghurs from the benefits of their homeland.

This report documents the camp system, examining the scale of the facilities, as well as the reported conditions and detainee numbers. To elevate the voices of Uyghurs impacted by the internment camps, the next section of the report presents a synthesis of primary and secondary sources. Uyghurs with experience inside the camps spoke to UHRP, and those testimonies have been added to existing accounts in the international media. Furthermore, UHRP interviews with Uyghurs whose relatives and friends have disappeared into the camps are included along with publicly available sources of similar narratives. The intention is to demonstrate the distress the internment camps have created at a human scale. UHRP found no Uyghur is safe from the camps: students, farmers, store keepers, religious figures, artists, soccer players, local government workers, women, men, children, teenagers, the elderly are among the interned. An indication of China's aim to suppress information of the camps is seen in the targeting of relatives of Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service reporters.

The impacts of the camps and cumulative repressive policies on generations of Uyghurs will be profound. The Chinese government has signaled a clear shift from rhetoric claiming respect for ethnic minorities to forcible assimilation in internment camps and criminalization of ethnic identity, as well as religion. Observers have compared the camps to Soviet Gulags,<sup>1</sup> and in a May 20, 2018 editorial, the Washington Post wrote: "All who believe in the principle of 'never again' after the horror of the Nazi extermination camps and Stalin's gulag must speak up against China's grotesque use of brainwashing, prisons and torture."<sup>2</sup> In his July 2018 testimony before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, scholar Rian Thum stated that in the absence of due process in the camps: "We cannot rule out the possibility of mass murder."<sup>3</sup>

Uyghur youth has been a focus for the Chinese authorities. Before the forced returns of Uyghur students overseas and arbitrary detention in internment camps, young Uyghurs were already prohibited from speaking their own language in schools and universities, sent outside the region for a secondary education, denied employment, prevented from entering mosques, and forcibly disappeared in security sweeps. The latest phase of the internment campaign has seen a large build-up of orphanages to which Chinese authorities are sending Uyghur children with one or both parents in camps. In an environment where state-led racial profiling, harassment and violence is endemic, the future for the next generations of Uyghurs remains bleak. A further escalation of tactics of repression also cannot be ruled out, raising the specter of human-rights violations of an even graver nature in the near term.

## BACKGROUND

The current situation in East Turkestan is without precedent in post-Mao China and has invited comparisons to the Cultural Revolution, as well as regimes such as apartheid South Africa. Since Chen Quanguo took up the post of Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in 2016, there has been a massive expansion of the security forces, as well as a propaganda campaign aimed at accelerating the forcible assimilation of the Uyghur people into a homogenous Chinese identity. Assigning Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials to stay in the homes of Uyghurs to explain the laws and beneficence of the Party, weekly or daily flag raisings, Mandarin classes for all ages, and more aggressive confiscations of Qurans and other religious objects are part of a campaign of which the so-called re-education camps are the most extreme manifestation.

In Spring 2017, it first became apparent that the repression of the Uyghur people was entering a new phase. Uyghur students studying abroad in countries across the world were being contacted by the authorities in their hometowns and ordered to return for political assessment by May 20.<sup>4</sup> The wellbeing of their relatives was used as leverage to ensure they complied. By the autumn, reports emerged that thousands of Uyghurs were being detained in so-called “re-education camps.”

These camps exist outside of the formal legal system, but have grown to a massive size, possibly holding as many as one million people, or 10% of the Uyghur population. There are a variety of terms used in official documentation for these facilities. One of the most common is centralized re-education training centers (集中教育转化培训中心). Although the word 集中 can be translated as either “centralized” or “concentrated/to concentrate” this report will refer to these facilities not as concentration camps, nor re-education camps reflecting their official name, but rather internment camps. This term suggests their nature as extra-judicial detention centers holding a broad cross-section of the population, including men and women of all ages and even reportedly some children.

Thus far there has been little in the way of official acknowledgement of the camps by the Chinese government. The media attention the issue has been getting in Kazakhstan led the Ambassador in Almaty to accuse those protesting “the so-called problems of ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang” of attempting to interfere in China’s internal affairs.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese government has skillfully prevented reporters from being able to investigate the situation on the ground both by restricting their access and threats to any possible sources. Uyghurs who discuss the experiences of themselves or their relatives are placing themselves and their families in danger. The targeting of Uyghurs with any overseas connection has cut off the Uyghur diaspora from their friends and family back home, meaning many cannot get information on their family members’ wellbeing.

This also means that beyond the disappearances of many Uyghurs and the testimonies of those who have managed to flee to safety, much of the evidence of the camps has come from indirect sources and the few hints that have appeared in the official media, although many

Chinese media reports mentioning the camps have been deleted from the internet. One scholar, Adrian Zenz, has gathered a large amount of evidence from Chinese government tenders for constructing and equipping the camps, as well as recruitment notices for staffing them. He argues this evidence demonstrates “the PRC government’s own sources broadly corroborate some estimates by rights groups of number of individuals interned in the camps.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The Re-education Campaign Emerges from “De-extremification”**

“Re-education” has a long history in China, although utilizing it against the Uyghurs on such a large scale is unprecedented, at least since the end of the Cultural Revolution. “Re-education through labor” camps date back to the 1950s, but the term most often used for the program to “re-educate” Uyghurs, *jiaoyuzhuanhua* (教育转化), literally “transformation through education,” was first used on practitioners of Falun Gong. Amnesty International described a process in which detainees “attend daily, often lengthy, “study sessions” where they are required to publicly criticize their own behavior, accept criticisms from others, study CCP documents, directives and relevant political doctrine, and generally demonstrate their submissive and cooperative attitude to camp authorities. These “thought work” and “study sessions” often require detainees to express their political loyalty to the CCP and to express their thanks and appreciation to the CCP for its “concern” and “care” of their situation.”<sup>7</sup> In many ways this matches first-hand descriptions of what is going on inside the camps in East Turkestan.

This re-education campaign represents the ideological side of the government’s securitization strategy, paralleling the massive buildup of a high-tech police force. The ideological campaign is referred to as “de-extremification,” a term first used by the previous XUAR Party Secretary Zhang Chunxian at a Party meeting in Hotan in 2011.<sup>8</sup> At the Second Xinjiang Work Forum in 2014, Xi Jinping declared that “religious extremism is the foundation of Xinjiang ethnic splitism,” and therefore a great danger to Chinese national security, calling for the launch of “de-extremification” work.<sup>9</sup> The national level counter-terrorism law adopted in 2015 calls on relevant government departments to undertake education and propaganda,<sup>10</sup> as does the XUAR regional implementation guidelines.

In a 2014 meeting of the XUAR National People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Consultative Congress it was declared that “solving ideological problems with ideological means” was one of the “five keys” to de-extremification.<sup>11</sup> The government promulgated lists and organized study sessions of signs of religious extremism, such as the 2014 list of 75 signs of extremism.<sup>12</sup> Police distributed brochures about the list, encouraging citizens to report anyone exhibiting one of the signs.<sup>13</sup> At a stability work meeting in 2015, then-Party Secretary Zhang Chunxian announced that “the striking hand must be hard, and the educating hand must also be hard,”<sup>14</sup> a phrase which became common in the campaign (打击的一手要硬、教育疏导的一手也要硬.)

Government officials appear convinced that there are large numbers of individuals among the Uyghurs who are “brainwashing” others and trying to convince them to commit violence. In

a 2015 interview with Hong Kong media outlet Fenghuang, the Party Secretary of the XUAR Justice Department Zhang Yun (新疆司法厅党委书记张云) said that among those influenced by religious extremism in one village, 70% were swept up into religious extremism, 30% were contaminated by religious extremism, and a smaller number were already guilty of crimes or planning terrorism.<sup>15</sup> He went on to say that the 70% would easily change if their environment was changed, the 30% required concentrated education work, and the last needed to be firmly attacked. In the same report, the secretary of the Hotan County Political and Legal Committee said that there were 5% in the “obstinate group,” 15% were fellow travelers, and 80% blind followers. As Adrian Zenz points out, these are similar to the numbers of people reportedly detained in the internment camps, suggesting the possibility that quotas have been implemented.<sup>16</sup>

During the early part of the campaign, the government focused de-extremification education on specific groups: prisoners and detainees, those influenced by “religious extremist thought,” and rural people deemed likely to engage in violent terrorism.<sup>17</sup> People targeted or monitored by the government were referred to as “focus persons” (重点人) or persons in the “groups of special concern” (特殊群体). The government had been concerned to fix what were perceived to be weaknesses in village level government. They established the “three in one” mechanism made up of grassroots cadres, “Visiting, Benefiting and Gathering” (访惠聚) Party member teams, and local police offices.<sup>18</sup> This mechanism appears to be that which is carrying out much of the re-education work, including examining Uyghur’s ideological stance, determining whether they will be sent to the camps. Cadres are assigned to the households of Uyghurs who have family members in the camps. In 2017, one Uyghur woman in Lop County, Hotan Prefecture, said that she and her four children had no income because her husband was in re-education.<sup>19</sup> “Family members,” cadres from the local Bureau of Land and Resources, were assigned to visit her weekly, bringing food and a small amount of money. For this she thanked the Party and its “good policies,” and for finding her an “excellent Han relative.”<sup>20</sup>

A 2014 regional People’s Congress work team (地区人大工委组织) conducted an inspection tour of Turfan to investigate the de-extremification work there. The work report, now available only on a mirror website, states that 3,152 people in special interest categories were identified - 760 veiled people, 971 bearded people, 1,388 jilbab wearers and 33 people who wore clothing with a crescent. Out of this, the report claimed, 3,087 had been re-educated, a success rate of 97.9 %. The report called for strengthening the training of those not yet re-educated and stated that numerous cities had established re-education training classes for the special groups. It advocated that for the minority “more stubborn in their thinking, focus on ‘breaking down the barriers in the heart, advance transformation in thinking.’” People “stubborn in their thinking” should also be subjected to 24 hour “accompaniment style” “one on one” mentoring-method centralized training. The centralized training should be combined with tracking after release to ensure the transformation was genuine.<sup>21</sup>

It was also in 2014 that reports began to appear of people being re-educated for limited periods in closed settings. Some localities such as Ghulja established a system separating people into 4 classes labeled A through D. Class A, detained persons, and Class B, “people with

obstinate thinking” were trained by the county Political and Legal Affairs Commission for 20 and 15 days respectively. Class C, “focus persons with unstable thoughts and groups of interest influenced by religious extremist thinking” and Class D, “people who could be influenced by religious extremist thinking” were trained for seven days by township and village organizations.<sup>22</sup> The media compared this targeted re-education to “drip irrigation.” Targets of the re-education campaign are also officially referred to as the “three types of people.” In Yitimliqum village in Kargilik County, local cadres were rewarded with 500 yuan if they discovered and sent the three types of people to re-education, but would be demoted if the three types were discovered in the village more than three times.<sup>23</sup> The 2014 report stated 112 people had been discovered, and after having been re-educated, 75 women had removed their veils, three had removed the jilbab, and 34 men had shaved their beards. Moreover, 36 other individuals had been reeducated. In addition to closed style re-education, the village established “masses service centers,” offering free wedding and funeral services.

The process of creating the re-education system involved the creation of dedicated facilities. One 2014 news report described a three-tier county-township-village “re-education base” system set up in Kashgar Konasheher County.<sup>24</sup> Those who resisted reeducation would be sent to the higher level “bases” while those who complied would be sent to the lower levels and gradually released back into village life. The article described women undergoing reeducation at a village’s “reeducation base.” A work team had been sent to the village due to its “religious atmosphere” and selected women wearing religious attire for re-education. One woman said that the security forces had detained her husband due to “religious extremist thoughts;” she expressed hope that he could be re-educated so they could be reunited. By November 2014, 3,515 had been trained in the three-tier system out of which 3,096 had been successfully “reeducated.”

In September 2015, the former Secretary of the Discipline Inspection Committee visited a “de-extremification education training center” in Hotan with the capacity to train 3,000 people influenced by “religious extremist thought.”<sup>25</sup> According to a media report, they were being trained in government policy, ethnic unity, received psychological counseling and engaged in writing activities to transform their character and re-educate them. The report said that they additionally received two months of training to increase their technical skills. The center had already gone through five cycles, and according to the former secretary those trained were no longer were influenced by “religious extremist thought infiltration,” and voluntarily preached to others.

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (Bingtuan) also ran reeducation centers at this time, for example a Legal System Education Training School run by the Third Division in in Payzivat County in 2015.<sup>26</sup> Teachers were drawn from the Political and Legal Affairs Office, the United Front Work Department, local police stations, grassroots propaganda teams, and retired cadres. The school’s purpose was to centralize the correction of illegal religious activities, manage illegal marriage behavior, and “carry out collective education of stubborn, incorrigible people in cults.”<sup>27</sup> Re-educating the students and make them love the country and the Party was accomplished by military-style lessons in law, government policy, flag raisings, singing the anthem, dancing to the pop song “Little Apple,” and military drills.



After Chen Quanguo took office in 2016 this re-education campaign expanded and became more systematized. In 2017, the “Xinjiang De-extremification regulations” (新疆维吾尔自治区去极端化条例)<sup>28</sup> (unofficial translation available at China Law Translate)<sup>29</sup> came into force, helping give the veneer of legality to this new phase of “de-extremification” work. These regulations were the first in the nation to define “extremification” in the law, defining it in Article 3 as “being influenced by religious extremism, expressing views and engaging in behavior under the influence of extremism and exaggerated religious concepts which reject and interfere with normal production and life.” It lays out 14 manifestations of extremism such as “generalizing the concept of halal” and “irregular beards or name selection,” as well as the vaguely worded “other speech and acts of extremification.”

The regulations further require small leading groups on the issue to be formed in every government bureau at all levels from regional, prefectural and county levels and requires the creation of a system of leadership responsibility for the work and an annual target for appraising results. Article 14 calls for carrying out re-education work through “implementing a combination of individual and collective education, a combination of legal education and mentoring activities, a combination of thought education, psychological counseling, behavioral rectification and technical skills training, combining re-education and humane concern, strengthening the results of re-education.” All government departments and parts of society are called upon to include de-extremification in their work. Anyone who violates the regulations in a manner that doesn’t rise to the level of a crime will be corrected by public security and relevant departments, either by “criticism education” (批评教育) or legal education, or otherwise penalized through other relevant legislation such as the counter-terrorism law.

Despite this legislation, the current system of mass internment does not seem to have a basis in Chinese law. As Chinese legal scholar Jeremy Daum notes, the Counter-terrorism Law authorizes a maximum of 15 days detention for activities that do not rise to the level of a crime, and regarding the “education” provisions of the law, “there is no mention of detention in the discussion of corrective mentoring for minor offenses,” nor does the De-extremification Law mention detention in its education provisions.<sup>30</sup> He goes on to note that while the Counter-terrorism Law does have an “educational placement” provision that appears to allow for indefinite detention, it is solely applied to those who have been convicted of and served a sentence for a terrorism charge. Because the internment camp system is detaining people who have not been convicted of a crime, available evidence suggests that the camps exist in an extra-legal space.

## The Scale and Nature of the Current Internment Camp System

After Party Secretary Chen Quanguo took office in 2016, the re-education campaign was expanded into the present system of internment camps. There appear to be a variety of terms used for the facilities. A 2016 work report glossary on the Lopnur County government website lists the term “three bases, one center: community rectification bases, legal education bases, placement bases for groups of special concern, and de-extremification re-education centers” (三基地一中心: 社区矫正基地、法制教育基地、特殊群体安置帮教基地、“去极端化”教育转化中心。) <sup>31</sup> In 2016, Li Jianguo, secretary of the Bayingol Party Committee (李建国同志巴州党委书记) visited the “center” in Lopnur, which was described as integrating all the “bases” into one “center,” which had by then re-educated 1,029 people. <sup>32</sup> Meanwhile in Pichan County, Turpan Prefecture, the AB class three-tiered system continued, with 146 individuals in the “severe measures detention” A class (严打收押人员) and 116 individuals in the “relatively more poisoned” B level (中毒较深人员) re-educated at the prefecture level, with a further 21,884 B level individuals re-educated at the township and village level. <sup>33</sup>



*Left: A photo of the opening ceremony of the “de-extremification re-education center” appeared on the Lopnur County government website in 2015. Right: Local Party Committee Secretary visits the Lopnur De-extremification education center in 2016 © Lopnur Zero Distance*

A paper published in 2017 by a professor at the Urumchi Party School calls for the creation of centralized facilities capable of holding at least 300 people. <sup>34</sup> It stated that it was a problem that the re-education work was being led by different departments and organized differently in separate locales, with a variety of names for the facilities. The different terms the paper mentions- “‘centralized transformation through education training centers’ (集中教育转化培训中心), ‘legal system schools’ (法制学校), and ‘rehabilitation correction centers’ (康复矫治中心)” appear in 73 government procurement documents analyzed by Adrian Zenz. <sup>35</sup>



*Left: Photographs from a now deleted blog showing lectures at the Tumshuq City Bingtuan Third Division Legal System Education Center 50<sup>th</sup>, 51<sup>st</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> Regiment classes teaching “re-education students” to “distinguish right from wrong” © Bingtuan Satellite*

Zenz notes that most of the procurement notices for the construction of new facilities appeared in March 2017, right before the reported beginning of the expanded detainment campaign in April.<sup>36</sup> The number and monetary value of the notices was highest in the months after the beginning of the construction push, falling later in 2017 through 2018. The first recruitment notices to staff them appeared in May 2017, advertising positions for teachers, as well as for police in the internment camps. The bids suggested both the construction of new facilities and the expansion of existing ones, with some being combined with vocational training facilities. Zenz notes the bids include high walls, fences, barbed wire, surveillance and access control systems as well as accommodations for armed guards, revealing the prison-like nature of these facilities.



*“Understanding the law through examples” de-extremification class in the Bingtuan 14<sup>th</sup> Division Legal System Re-education Center in Guma County, Hotan Prefecture 2017 © Bingtuan Online*

The scale of the transformation of the de-extremification campaign into a system of internment camps is enormous. A leaked official document published in Newsweek Japan stated that there were 890,000 Uyghurs interned in March of 2018.<sup>37</sup> Adrian Zenz estimates that the number of interned could be over a million if regional and prefecture level cities are added to this number and if one assumes the anecdotal rate of 5 to 10% is true.<sup>38</sup> A limited number of photographs of the reeducation centers have appeared in media reports or social media. Utilizing the government bidding documents and other sources, Shawn Zhang has attempted to corroborate the existence of the facilities using Google earth satellite imaging, documenting the conversion of existing facilities and the construction of new ones.<sup>39</sup> In one example, he matched street level photo of a facility in Artush, topped with a sign declaring it to be a “neighborhood center,” to a satellite photo. It appears to be an unused factory complex now surrounded by high walls and guard towers.<sup>40</sup>



*Above: Street level photo of internment camp in Artush Below: Comparison with satellite photo*  
©Shawn Zhang

Many of the internment camps are repurposed from other buildings. Radio Free Asia (RFA) has reported that officials and others who have traveled to the region state that various government buildings and schools were serving as internment camps,<sup>41</sup> and overcrowding in the makeshift facilities meant that some people were being released to continue undergoing reeducation by local cadres in their home villages.<sup>42</sup> In April 2018 a Uyghur businessman said that in the vicinity of Ghulja there were five repurposed facilities including a Party School and a factory which was formerly a police training facility, who also said that numerous people including cadres and teachers were being held in them.<sup>43</sup> In January of 2018 a security official from Kashgar prefecture told RFA that there were approximately 120,000 Uyghurs being held in four internment camps in the area, one of which was a repurposed middle school.<sup>44</sup>



*Google Earth satellite photo of camp outside Kashgar built in 2017 © the Economist*

In September 2017, RFA reported that police officers said there were three camps in Aktu county,<sup>45</sup> and in October of 2017, officials from villages outside Hotan had told RFA that their target was 40%, while another in Kashgar prefecture said that they had not been given a quota but had been ordered to “severely punish” 80% of those detained with prison, sending the rest to the camps.<sup>46</sup> In March of 2018, an official from a village outside of Ghulja told RFA that they had been ordered to send 10% of the village’s 4,131 residents to internment camps.<sup>47</sup> In June 2018, an official from a town in Qaraqash county told RFA that over 10% of the town’s 32,000 residents were interned, with 1,721 in camps and 1,731 sent to prisons, while a police officer in a second village said that 40% had been sent to the camps, saying they had been given a target number.<sup>48</sup> One ethnic Kazakh cadre fled to Kazakhstan, and testified that she worked at a camp holding 2,500 Kazakhs, and knew of two other facilities of the same size in the area, with more in the region.<sup>49</sup> Before being required to teach in the camp, she had been the head of a kindergarten.<sup>50</sup>

The bids analyzed by Adrian Zenz suggest that the vocational training campaign has been folded into the internment camps, with some facilities containing both, or supposed vocational schools also featuring security systems and guardrooms, as well as recruitment for hundreds of

guards.<sup>51</sup> On a visit to a shopping mall in Hotan, reporters from Der Spiegel found it only a fifth occupied, with many shops having notices saying they were closed as a “security and stability measure.”<sup>52</sup> A passerby told them the stores’ occupants had been “sent to school,” a euphemism for being sent to the camps. However, a plainclothes policewoman who was following them told them that the “employees had been sent away for technical training.”

Recruitment notices for teachers in the vocational schools required only a middle school degree and in at least one case was only hiring Han Chinese. In January 2018, the city of Kashgar released a description of a vocational training program for “unemployed youths” and relatives of the “three types of people.”<sup>53</sup> They were to be held for at least three months in centralized “closed military style” sites or dispersed village sites. In addition to military drills, vocational training and the Chinese language, lessons include the Spirit of the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, Xi Jinping Thought for a New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, beneficial government policies, law, de-extremification, ethnic unity, and scientific and health knowledge through lectures to increase their “Five Identifications” (identification with the motherland, Chinese people, Chinese culture, Chinese Communist Party and socialism with Chinese characteristics)<sup>54</sup> in order to make them obey the law and feel gratitude.<sup>55</sup>



*3,000 “youths” in Maralbeshi County undergo “closed off military style” vocational training in 2017*  
© Maralbeshi Zero Distance

In addition, vocational schools are run by local Party Committees in rural areas “to prevent men from taking part in activities that affect social stability,” in the words of a police officer in Yarkand county.<sup>56</sup> These schools, like the internment camps, focus heavily on teaching Chinese. A Uyghur man who was attending an open vocational class in Yarkand

reportedly committed suicide after being threatened with being sent to an internment camp for six months to five years for not being able to recite the national anthem and oath of allegiance to the Communist Party in Chinese.<sup>57</sup>

## Population Data Collection Form 人口信息采集表

基本 信息		Key Data: Age group? Uighur? Unemployed? Passport holder? Prays daily? Religious training? Visited one of 26 countries?*				重点 标签
基本 信息	房屋地址					照片
	房屋性质	<input type="checkbox"/> 自购房 <input type="checkbox"/> 出租房	<input type="checkbox"/> 自建房 <input type="checkbox"/> 公租房	居住 性质	<input type="checkbox"/> 业主 <input type="checkbox"/> 雇工	
	姓名	性别				
	身份证号	出生日期				
	户号	与户主 关系				
	户籍信息	<input type="checkbox"/> 信口 <input type="checkbox"/> 本地 <input type="checkbox"/> 外地 <input type="checkbox"/> 国外	户籍详址			
	文化程度	婚姻状况				
	职业	务工地点				
	流动人口 婚育证明号	儿童是否预防接种		<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否		
	是否为学龄 儿童	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否		学校名称 与班级		
是否有 医社保	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否	医社保 所在地	社保类型			
联系方式	在 来乌日期				关键 信息	
来乌日期	来乌日期					
宗教信仰	<input type="checkbox"/> 无 <input type="checkbox"/> 伊斯兰教 <input type="checkbox"/> 佛教 <input type="checkbox"/> 基督教 <input type="checkbox"/> 其他					
每日礼拜 次数	<input type="checkbox"/> 1次 <input type="checkbox"/> 5次 <input type="checkbox"/> 2-4次	礼拜地点	<input type="checkbox"/> 家 <input type="checkbox"/> 清真寺 <input type="checkbox"/> 其他	是否礼拜		<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否
常去清真寺 名称	是否 持有 宗教 学识		是否 主麻	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否		
是否持有 护照	<input type="checkbox"/> 自持 <input type="checkbox"/> 统管 <input type="checkbox"/> 否	护照编 号	是否 出境 次数	近一次出境 时间和国家		
是否 出境	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否	年内出境 次数	近一次出境 时间和国家			
出境事由	<input type="checkbox"/> 公务 <input type="checkbox"/> 探亲 <input type="checkbox"/> 求学 <input type="checkbox"/> 其他					
境外关系 姓名	境外关系 所在国家		是否有境 外关系人 与境外关 系人关系	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否		
前往 26 国 次数	次	国家名称	最近一次 回国时间			
涉 稳 情况	是否为重点人 员、特殊群体	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否	被列类别	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 特 <input type="checkbox"/>	Type of Person:  Safe Average Unsafe	
	是否被打击 处理人员亲属	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否	是否被打击 处理人员亲属	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否		
	是否参加过 集中教育转化	<input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 否	参加集中 教育时间、地点			
驾 照 车 辆 情 况	驾照类别	驾照类别		驾	Person of interest or member of special population** Score from 1-6	
	是否及	车 <input type="checkbox"/> 货车	车 <input type="checkbox"/> 货车	车辆用途		
备注						

采集人:

社区(村)民警  
审核签字:

社区(村)领导  
审核签字:

15 岁以上  
被采集人签字:

Data collection form brought out by Tahir Hamut, translated and published in the Wall Street Journal © WSJ

The targets for internment appear much the same as those targeted earlier for de-extremification training. In September of 2017, a local police officer told RFA reporters that five types of people were being targeted for internment- “people who throw away their mobile phone’s SIM card or did not use their mobile phone after registering it; former prisoners already released from prison; blacklisted people; ‘suspicious people’ who have some fundamental religious sentiment; and the people who have relatives abroad.”<sup>58</sup> An official in Bayanday township in Ghulja County told RFA that anyone under forty years of age was being targeted as being from an “unreliable and untrustworthy generation.”<sup>59</sup> An official form collects information on Uyghurs, including whether they pray daily, have a passport, have relatives in detention, or are one of the “focus persons” or in a “group of special interest,” in order to determine their reliability, labeling them “safe, average or unsafe.”<sup>60</sup>

So-called “two-faced people,” that is to say Uyghurs, particularly cadres or religious personnel, suspected of being potentially disloyal are another target of the campaign. One Uyghur cadre, Pezilet Bekri, was reportedly sent to a re-education camp after being reported by her Han colleagues for sympathizing with Uyghurs detained in the camps, according to an anonymous source reported by RFA.<sup>61</sup>

The re-education program is spoken about by officials in terms creating immunity to disease. “Religious extremist thought” is described as a “malignant tumor” harming society.<sup>62</sup> “De-extremification” helps create “immunity” to dangerous thought.<sup>63</sup> The Aksu healthcare system even issued a list of “prescriptions” for treating “patients with ideological diseases.”<sup>64</sup> These include intervening in their patient’s clothing choices or spiritual beliefs, unannounced inspections of local medical staff’s computers and cell phones, using scientific and Marxist thought to do a comparison check of one’s own thinking. The de-extremification campaign has not ended with the expansion of the camps. Through evidence gathered by dozens of interviews between July 2017 and June 2018, the Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) estimates that in addition to 660,000 people being detained in camps in the southern region of East Turkestan, an additional 1.3 million may be being forced to attend re-education classes during the day or the evenings in “study sessions” or “open political camps.”<sup>65</sup> This constitutes 20-40% of many villages’ population.

The de-extremification campaign and its transformation into a massive system of indefinite detention in internment camps is aimed at curing the disease of “extremist thought.” Hotan Zero Distance published a tract stating that those sent to re-education were “sick in their thoughts,” having been “infected” with extremism, comparing religious extremism to a drug, cancer or a virus. Those “infected with terrorist thought” need to be sent to re-education to undergo “hospital treatment.” Thus, their detention is not punishment but rather intervention to ensure their entire family does not contract an “incurable disease.”<sup>66</sup> While speaking to RFA one official compared re-education to spraying chemicals on crops, saying “you can’t uproot all the weeds hidden among the crops in the field one by one.” While it is unclear how long the authorities expect this system of detention to last, it appears they expect it to be a permanent solution which will transform the Uyghur population.



## Reactions to the Internment Camps

The initial condemnation of the extrajudicial imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs was made by the human rights community and by many scholars specializing in the study of Uyghurs or of China. James Millward of Georgetown University published an editorial in the New York Times on the camps' place within the police state the Chinese authorities have created.<sup>67</sup> Rian Thum, an expert on the history of Uyghur religious practices, wrote "Xinjiang has become a police state to rival North Korea, with a formalized racism on the order of South African apartheid."<sup>68</sup> James Liebold of La Trobe University called on the Australian government to publicly condemn China's behavior.<sup>69</sup> Scholar of the Chinese legal system Jerome Cohen called on relevant UN treaty bodies to review the situation and to press China to provide accurate information, and stated his support for the U.S. to implement Magnitsky Act sanctions.<sup>70</sup>

Thus far governments have done little to directly address the situation, even if it is affecting their citizens. Kazakhstan has expressed concern in an official statement about treatment of Kazakhstani nationals and quietly intervened to have several released from the internment camps.<sup>71</sup> The ethnic Kazakh Chinese official who described her work in the camps after fleeing to Kazakhstan was put on trial for crossing the border illegally, but was given a suspended sentence at the request of prosecutors and will not face deportation.<sup>72</sup>

Some of the first official condemnation of the camps has come from the United States. Kelley Currie, U.S. Ambassador to the Economic and Social Council of the U.N. cited the camps when she condemned the Chinese delegation once again blocking World Uyghur Congress president Dolkun Isa's entrance to the U.N.<sup>73</sup> Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman Chris Smith, Chairs of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China called for Ambassador Terry Branstad to travel to East Turkestan and to prioritize the issue in meetings with Chinese officials.<sup>74</sup> At a Congressional-Executive Committee hearing on the issue in July 2018, the two legislators issued strong statements criticizing the silence of international institutions on the issue, and called on other nations' governments to condemn the ongoing repression. Marco Rubio attacked private companies for "turning a blind eye to what's happening" in order not to jeopardize their market access.<sup>75</sup> In addition to calling for Magnitsky Act sanctions to be implemented, Congressman Chris Smith suggested the possibility of utilizing the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 in the form of "broad economic sanctions targeting industries in Xinjiang that benefit China's political leaders or other 'state-owned entities.'"<sup>76</sup> U.S. Ambassador at large for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback called for the use of Global Magnitsky Act sanctions on Chen Quanguo for his role in organizing the camps.<sup>77</sup> However, there has been little reaction from international governments specifically addressing the issue of the internment camps.

The review of China's implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was the first instance of China responding to evidence of the existence of the camps, drawing international attention. Vice-chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination voiced the committee's concerns about "the many numerous and credible reports that we have received that in the name of combating religious extremism and maintaining social stability (China) has changed the Uighur autonomous region into something that resembles a massive internment camp that is shrouded in secrecy, a sort of 'no rights zone.'"

The response from the Chinese delegation was given by Hu Lianhe (胡联合), deputy chief of the United Front Work Department's (UFWD) 9<sup>th</sup> Bureau covering Xinjiang affairs, although the UFWD was not listed among the participating Chinese ministries and institutions in a UN report on the meeting.<sup>78</sup> He stated “[t]here are no such things as ‘re-education centers’ or ‘counter-extremism training centers’ in Xinjiang,” going on to say that authorities provide “criminals involved in only minor offences” with “assistance and education by assigning them to vocational education and employment training centers to acquire employment skills and legal knowledge, with a view towards assisting their rehabilitation and reintegration.”<sup>79</sup> In his response he used the term *zaijiaoyuzhongxin* (再教育中心), literally “re-education centers,” instead of terms such as “transformation through education centers” (教育转化中心), which are used in official tenders and other documents. Thus far Chinese officials are responding to criticisms of the mass internment policy by attempting to frame the network of internment camps as vocational training centers.

In the days after the CERD review, several articles appeared in Chinese media outlet the Global Times justifying the Chinese government's repressive policies, stating “[p]eace and stability must come above all else. With this as the goal, all measures can be tried.”<sup>80</sup> This serves as a total justification of current policies as well as justifying any further escalation. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman likewise blamed discussion of the camps at the CERD review on “certain anti-China forces” and foreign media making “distorted reports...out of ulterior motives.”<sup>81</sup> The Chinese government appears to be formulating a response to criticisms of international media reports. In a letter to the Financial Times in response to Emily Feng's report entitled “Crackdown in Xinjiang: Where Have All the People Gone?,”<sup>82</sup> Chinese Ambassador to the U.K. Liu Xiaoming stated that the regional government's “education and training measures” have been effective in preventing “the infiltration of religious extremism,” and that they include “employment training.”<sup>83</sup> The letter also brought up Britain's counter-extremism initiatives, saying that “[e]very country needs to tackle this challenge effectively. It is time to stop blaming China for taking lawful and effective preventive measures.” The letter once again frames the camps as vocational training centers, and takes the additional step of comparing them to other nation's counter-extremism initiatives.

## VOICES OF THE CAMPS

### **“Every night I heard crying”: Uyghurs released from the camps speak out**

#### *Interviewee One*

Now living overseas, Interviewee One experienced conditions inside the internment camps and prior to his interview with UHRP spoke with AP journalist Gerry Shih.<sup>84</sup>

Interviewee One came from a well-to-do family in Urumchi and graduated from Xinjiang University. He spent time in studying in Egypt and after his return to East Turkestan worked for the Xinjiang Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Following his position with the CCP, he was employed in the state media.

In April 2017, Interviewee One received a letter in Uyghur and then a call from neighborhood police officer called Shohret summoning him to an internment camp. When he questioned the officers as to the reason, he was told “every young Uyghur must go. If you don’t go, we’ll come and take you.”

By May 2017, Interviewee One was in a camp located near Ghulja. The internees were Uyghur and Kazakh and the facility held about 20,000 individuals. Internees consisted of women, men, children, young and old from a variety of professions; however, young Uyghurs were greater in number than any other group. Many of the young Uyghurs Interviewee One spoke to had connections overseas through study, travel or relatives.

Guards told him he was to teach Chinese to the internees due to the high proficiency in the language. Classes were held in small rooms and were two hours long with about 30 people in each group. The content of the classes included the writings of Confucius. Many of the students barely spoke Chinese and struggled with the classes. No Uyghur language was permitted in class.

Chinese authorities classified internees into three groups ranging from ‘good’ students to the ‘worst.’ Depending on classification an internee could expect different kinds of privileges. Interviewee One was considered among the group of safe internees and experienced the best treatment. His windowless room held 35 individuals. Others could expect up to 60 people in one room. There were no showers and usually one meal a day of poor quality. When asked what kind of food was served, Interviewee One said: “this food has no name.”

Internees woke up at 6 am when there would be a shift change in guards. From 6 am to noon, internees were contained in their rooms and expected to keep silent and look down at their feet. At noon, internees were served their daily meal. From 7 pm to 9 pm, the internees were expected to write self-criticisms. The content of the criticisms were admissions of ‘erroneous thinking’ and rejections of belief in Islam. Furthermore, internees were compelled to make pledges to consume alcohol, smoke tobacco, and tell other Uyghurs about the evils of Islam. Study of Chinese language and culture was to be praised in these written confessions. If internees did not or could not complete the daily self-criticism, guards beat them.

At night, Interviewee One described the only sounds in the camp were of people sobbing, dogs barking and guards shouting. He told UHRP: “Every night I heard crying.”

Interviewee One described conversations with a Uyghur businessman who was being pressured by guards to give them money to secure his release. After three weeks of internment, Interviewee One was released for three months due to an undisclosed family issue. Before he left the camp, he was secretly given a handwritten note from a Uyghur woman intended for her children. The note named each of her children and expressed how she missed them very much. She added the children must miss her very much too because it was the first time for them to be separated from each other. The note ended by saying it has been 84 days since she had seen them and that she didn't know she would be staying away for so long.

With the help of relatives, Interviewee One fled to eastern China and then overseas. When he was in Shanghai he befriended a Uyghur, who told him he had received a police order to return to Urumchi. In concluding, Interviewee One said: “I’m sorry for all Uyghurs.”

### **“I am here to break the silence”: Uyghurs with relatives in internment camps**

#### ***Halmurat Harri***

Halmurat Harri is a Uyghur living in Finland. Both of his parents have disappeared into China’s internment camps. His mother was detained in April 2017 and his father in January 2018. Halmurat’s mother and father lived in the Xinqu (new district) of Turpan city, where they ran a store, prior to their disappearance. Before opening the store, his father worked as a Uyghur-Chinese interpreter for the state and his mother as journalist. His parents are in their 60s. His father suffers from diabetes and needs treatment with insulin.

Halmurat told UHRP he has not been informed of his parents’ whereabouts despite repeated requests to local authorities in Turpan and he suspects they are being held in a facility in the city. Since October 2017, Halmurat has called government officials in Xinqu, including officers from the local police station, to inquire about the condition and location of his mother and father. Rather than offer any confirmation as to his parents’ welfare, local officials frequently insulted Halmurat for leaving China and called him a ‘terrorist.’ He was told he should come to China if he wanted to find out about his parents. Halmurat discovered his parents has been disappeared into an internment camp through calls to friends and neighbors. However, he said he has not been able to make these calls because no one will talk to him out of fear for themselves.

In his interview with UHRP Halmurat described a pattern of harassment from Chinese authorities due to his family history and overseas residency. He told UHRP his grandfather had fought for the second East Turkestan Republic against Nationalist Chinese armed forces and was subsequently persecuted during Cultural Revolution. Given this family history, Halmurat’s parents avoided political discussion and activism. Nevertheless, while still in East Turkestan, Halmurat was arbitrarily detained for 10 days in 2008 and his parents secured his release only

after paying a 100,000 RMB bribe to police. In 2009, he settled in Finland and became a naturalized Finnish citizen in 2014. In 2015, he organized trips to Turkey and Dubai to meet his parents, who traveled to see him from East Turkestan. Traveling on his Finnish passport, Halmurat returned to East Turkestan in 2016 and early 2017 to visit his family. On both trips he was interrogated and threatened at the airport upon arrival and departure. Although he has received no indication as to why his parents have been disappeared into an internment camp, Halmurat believes it due to his family's "rebellious history," visits overseas, and his Finnish citizenship.

Halmurat's grandmother passed away in February 2018 and his father was unable to attend the funeral because he had been taken into an internment camp a month earlier. When he learned of this, he decided to speak out about his parents' disappearance. He said: "This is about being human. We want to be respected as humans. Is it too much to ask? I am here to break the silence." More information on Halmurat's case can be found on his blog (<https://uyghurs.blog/>).

### ***Interviewee Three***

Interviewee Three is a Uyghur from Ghulja and has lived overseas since 2017. His wife and daughter remain in China. His parents are detained in an internment camp. Chinese authorities took his mother in December 2017 and his father in December 2018. He learned about his parents' detention from a close family friend.

In May 2018, Interviewee Three spoke to his mother through a third party using an undisclosed method. He believes the communication was possible because his mother speaks Chinese well and that this has given her small privileges inside the camp. However, his father is not fluent in Chinese and as a result he has afforded fewer privileges. Interviewee Three's mother told him everything is OK and that she "is learning Chinese." Interviewee Three expressed relief at hearing his mother's voice but he is convinced she could not speak freely. His father-in-law is also in an internment camp and acts as Chinese instructor due to his high proficiency level. As an instructor he is permitted to make calls from the "instructor's phone."

Chinese authorities in Ghulja have not notified Interviewee Three about his parents' detention and whereabouts. Nevertheless, he thinks they are in a facility located within a business development zone. According to Interviewee Three, through conversations with individuals who were once internees in the camps, conditions inside are severe. Internees are not allowed to wear shoelaces, belts and shirts with buttons to prevent suicide attempts. In addition, internees requiring medication cannot self-administer due to the possibility of intentional overdose. While he has no formal reason as to his parents' detention, Interviewee Three believes it is because they had visited countries overseas.

### ***Interviewee Four***

Since the mid-2010s, Interviewee Four has been living in the United States. In East Turkestan, he was employed in manual labor in an undisclosed location. Interviewee Four and his parents owned land and a house, which local officials appropriated through intimidation. When he petitioned the government for a restoration of his property, Interviewee Four was arrested. Other Uyghurs in his village were also pressured to surrender their property. Through the help of close friends, he managed to secure paperwork to leave China. A new supermarket and holiday homes now occupy his land.

Interviewee Four's brother is a successful businessman; however, in April 2018, his brother and his brother's wife were disappeared into a internment camp Interviewee Four learned about the disappearance through a friend who had visited his village. He also discovered that his brother's children are being cared for by his sisters.

In his interview with UHRP, Interviewee Four expressed his distress over the disappearance of his family members. The stress over hearing this news is compounded because he cannot speak to anyone in East Turkestan at the time of interview. Since the disappearance of his brother, his other family members have deleted him from their WeChat accounts. Interviewee Four added his brother and sister-in-law's disappearance may be tied to his residence in the United States or because of the success his brother in business. He indicated that one year after his arrival in the United States, police in Urumchi questioned his brother.

In the light of his negative experience with local officials in East Turkestan regarding the appropriation of his land, Interviewee Four does not want to contact Chinese authorities to ask the whereabouts of his family members. He added: "There is no one who will listen." The lack of information and recent accounts of poor conditions in the camps alarm him and he thinks his brother and sister-in-law might be susceptible to health problems.

### ***Interviewee Five***

Before fleeing to Europe in the mid-2010s, Interviewee Five was a businessman in East Turkestan. He left China after receiving a tip from a friend in the government that he was about to be arrested. Interviewee Five used money from selling his assets to bribe Chinese officials into issuing a passport and securing passage out of China. During his time in East Turkestan, he became involved in charitable causes. Interviewee Five said this, and his family's 'counter-revolutionary' background, raised Chinese government suspicions about him. Charitable organizations he helped found were ordered to appoint government officials as directors. He told UHRP "eventually we were squeezed out."

Since he fled, approximately 65 of Interviewee Five's relatives have either been jailed or interned in camps. He said, "this has happened to them because of me." Shortly after arriving overseas, Interviewee Five received a threatening phone call from regional police in East Turkestan. The police officer, a Uyghur, told him you must return to China or we will "harm

your family.” The phone call was followed by a second from a Han Chinese police officer speaking Uyghur. The police officer warned him against disclosing any information about his family to the outside world. He told UHRP: “The government put pressure on me to go back to China and I didn’t go. Now, they are punishing my family.”

Among the family members either imprisoned or interned are four siblings, nephews, brothers-in-law, and relatives through marriage. Interviewee Five began to realize the scale of the retribution against him through Uyghurs traveling back and forth between East Turkestan and abroad. Later, he was able to get more information through WeChat contacts before those friends deleted his contact details from their profiles. Through these sources of information, he learned his relatives are being held in two locations, one in the south and one in the north of East Turkestan. One of his siblings was being held in a small room with about 30 people. Internees sleep head-to-toe due to the overcrowding. The food was described to him as “poor quality” consisting of a thin broth or bread. The internees are fed at most twice a day.

### **“He bashed his head against a wall to try to kill himself”: Testimonies of the camps in the international media**

#### ***Alleged ‘Crimes’***

The selection of internees for the internment camps appears limited to the Muslim population of East Turkestan, particularly Uyghurs, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz. The Chinese authorities have targeted broad categories of Muslims for detention into the camp system. An indication of the government’s focus of suspicion is seen in a crude system in assessing the ‘security risk’ of East Turkestan’s Muslim residents. A form circulated in the media detailed how everyone is designated ‘100 points,’ which are then docked if a person falls within certain categories. According to forms obtained from the Western Hebei Road Neighborhood Committee in Urumchi, the categories included: “Between Ages of 15 and 55; Ethnic Uyghur; Unemployed; Possesses Passport; Prays Daily; Possesses Religious Knowledge; Visited [one of] 26 [flagged] Countries; Belated Return to China; Has Association With Foreign Country; and Family With Children Who Are Homeschooled.”<sup>85</sup> Each category is allocated ‘ten points’ and if a resident appears in enough categories to score below 50 points, they are labeled as ‘unsafe’ and candidates for political indoctrination.<sup>86</sup>

A further indication of suspicious categories of Muslims came from a police officer who told Radio Free Asia (RFA) reporters persons of interest included “people who throw away their mobile phone’s SIM card or did not use their mobile phone after registering it; former prisoners already released from prison; blacklisted people; ‘suspicious people’ who have some fundamental religious sentiment; and the people who have relatives abroad.”<sup>87</sup> RFA confirmed the targeting of unemployed,<sup>88</sup> young Uyghurs,<sup>89</sup> and religious in two separate reports.<sup>90</sup> In addition, reports of elderly Uyghurs held in internment camps have circulated in the media,

including the case of 82-year-old Ziyawudun Choruq, a former government official in Qara Yulghun.<sup>91</sup>

A special focus of Chinese authorities has been Uyghurs with overseas connections through either relatives resident abroad or travel overseas.<sup>92</sup> The Chinese authorities signaled their intention to punish Uyghurs overseas with the recall of their passports across China and denials to renew Uyghurs' passports at Chinese Consulates abroad.<sup>93</sup> The pressure placed on Uyghurs regarding passports is a long-standing issue in China with problems documented since 2006; however, in the past, the measures were mostly contained within the region.<sup>94</sup> Self-criticism of overseas experience is deemed an important aspect of the 'reeducation' process with some Uyghurs only released from camps if they express remorse over their travel abroad. Going abroad is often linked with ingratitude to the opportunities afforded Uyghurs under the CCP. The director of Public Security in Korla told RFA reporters the internees should admit "it was a mistake to travel abroad, when the [ruling Communist] Party and government have created such a high living standard in our own country."<sup>95</sup> In a further measure, authorities began to link the mere desire to go overseas with a reason for internment in a camp.<sup>96</sup>



©Talk to East Turkestan

China has also focused on the Kazakh community in East Turkestan given their long connections with co-ethnics in Kazakhstan. Reports emerged towards the end of 2017 of Kazakhs returning from Kazakhstan and those with ties in Kazakhstan being detained and sent to internment camps.<sup>97</sup> In a video posted to social media, Nurijamal Devlethankizi, a Kazakh born in East Turkestan and resident in Kazakhstan, made an appeal for the release of her mother Guljamal Devlethankizi interned in a camp. Her mother was sent to an internment camp around November 2017 because she had communicated with Nurijamal via WeChat.<sup>98</sup> On July 17, 2018,



the South China Morning Post reported the testimony of Sayragul Sauytbay, a Kazakh from East Turkestan and a former internment camp employee. Sayragul is on trial in Kazakhstan for illegal entry from China and revealed at a public hearing that she had been tricked into working in a camp that held up to 2,500 Kazakhs.<sup>99</sup>

### *Deaths in the internment camps*

In a June 27, 2018 report, RFA revealed 26 internees of internment camps in Yengisheher and Konasheher had died while in custody. The information was confirmed by a security officer who oversees the two jurisdictions. Among the dead are a 37-year-old fruit vendor named Ablet and possibly several elderly Uyghurs. The security officer told RFA: “The weather conditions are not good and a majority of the elderly people suffer from heart problems, such as high blood pressure. They are unable to adapt to the conditions they are being held in. But that is just my opinion—I can’t provide you with detailed information, as I wasn’t present at the [deaths].”<sup>100</sup>



*Muhammad Salih Hajim ©Radio Free Asia*

On January 29, 2018, UHRP received confirmation from relatives of Muhammad Salih Hajim of his death in an internment camp. The prominent Koranic scholar and Uyghur religious leader was 82 years old. The exact circumstances of his death are unknown, but he was taken into custody toward the end of 2017, along with his daughter and other relatives.<sup>101</sup> In May 2018 press release, the World Uyghur Congress described how “88-year old Abdulnehed Mehsum

died while being held in a internment camp in Hotan prefecture in November 2017, though the death was not reported until May 27, 2018.” Abdulnehed was a noted religious scholar.<sup>102</sup>

Articles from RFA indicate deaths of Uyghurs interned in internment camps extend across age ranges. Two Uyghur students Abdusalam Mamat and Yasinjan, who voluntarily returned from their studies in Egypt to Korla, reportedly died in 2017.<sup>103</sup> Seventeen-year-old Yaqupjan Naman died of “unknown causes” in a camp located in Kashgar. His father “was forced to bury his body under police supervision.” Yaqupjan was interned in a camp because of a visit he made to Turkey in 2016.<sup>104</sup> RFA reported in May 2018 an elderly Uyghur woman died in Yamachang camp in Ghulja county due to health complications.<sup>105</sup>



*Yasinjan ©Radio Free Asia*

The 78-year-old mother of World Uyghur Congress President Dolkun Isa died in an internment camp.<sup>106</sup> In a June 11, 2018 press release the World Uyghur Congress stated: “The Chinese government initiated a campaign of threats and intimidation as well as strict surveillance of both parents that have lasted for the previous 24 years. Despite threats from the government, Mrs. Memet did not give in to pressure and maintained her composure throughout.”<sup>107</sup>

Reports indicate Chinese authorities are placing strict conditions on the burials of Uyghurs who have died in internment camps. Sixty-five-year-old businessman Abdulreshit Seley Hajim had been interned for nine months before his death. Only a few family members were permitted to attend his funeral. Those in attendance described seeing what appeared to be an impact from a blunt instrument to Abdulreshit’s head.<sup>108</sup> According to an unconfirmed report, the family of a Uyghur women named Adalet from Pichan were not allowed access to her body after she had died in a camp. She was initially detained because of a trip she made to Turkey.<sup>109</sup> Uyghurs Nurimangul Memet from Būgūr county<sup>110</sup> and Abdughapar Abdujapar from near Ghulja<sup>111</sup> also reportedly died in internment camps.

### *Firsthand testimonies in the international media*

- In January 2018, RFA journalists spoke to Omurbek Eli, a Kazakh citizen interned for seven months in a camp. He was detained during a visit to his parents' home in Turpan. Omurbek's testimony describes harsh conditions inside the facility in which he was detained, including beatings, poor quality of food, and medical treatment only for those who paid. Eli added internees were from all age ranges and backgrounds; 80 percent were Uyghur and the remainder Kazakhs. There were 23 people in his room. Omurbek detailed a strict daily routine of flag raising ceremonies, recitals of 'red songs,' and Mandarin lessons. Furthermore, "in between lessons, there were two hours of military training, marching, standing at attention, and following orders."<sup>112</sup>



*Omurbek Eli ©Radio Free Asia*

- In February 2018, a Uyghur student, Iman, spoke to Foreign Policy about his experience in an internment camp. He returned to China from the United States during the summer 2017 break. Iman was interrogated at the airport and after nine days in detention he was escorted to East Turkestan by three police officers. He was processed into an internment camp. He shared a threadbare room with 19 other Uyghurs. Iman described a monotonous routine of indoctrination sessions. He told Foreign Policy: "Most of my cellmates had already been incarcerated for over two months without being formally charged. I did befriend a man in his 60s who, during my detention, was sentenced to six years in prison. His 'crime'? He sent a religious teaching [tabligh in Uighur], a simple explanation of the Quran, though one not produced by a state-appointed cleric, to his daughter using his mobile phone. She shared it with a friend. The authorities convicted him of possession and dissemination of extremist religious content."<sup>113</sup>
- In May 2018, Kayrat Samarkand, Omir Bekali [Omurbek Eli], and "Eldost" spoke to AP and the Washington Post. Kayrat told the Washington Post that transgression of the camp's rules, including late arrival for study sessions, would be punished with 12 hours

in ankle cuffs. Internees were exclusively Uyghur or Kazakh and were either religious or connected to someone overseas or visited a country outside of China.<sup>114</sup> Samarkand also described a regimen of indoctrination sessions; however, “[a]fter three months, Samarkan couldn’t take the lessons anymore, so he bashed his head against a wall to try to kill himself. He merely fell unconscious.” Interviewees explained the camps ran on a pattern of physical and psychological torture: “Detainees who most vigorously criticize the people and things they love are rewarded, and those who refuse to do so are punished with solitary confinement, beatings and food deprivation.”<sup>115</sup>

- On July 3, 2018, an unidentified Uyghur woman spoke to the Globe and Mail about her experiences inside an internment camp. The woman, who was traveling in China on an overseas passport, was detained upon arrival in East Turkestan. She was interned in a camp with her one-year-old baby and relatives resident in East Turkestan. Her husband secured her release after two weeks inside an internment camp. The Uyghur woman was not permitted underwear, or a bra and her hair was shaved. She was forced to criticize her actions as ‘terrorist’ and ‘separatist,’ as well as denounce belief in Islam. Among the sentences she was coerced to repeat were: “Xi Jinping is great! The Communist Party is great! I deserve punishment for not understanding that only President Xi Jinping and the Communist Party can help me;” “My soul is infected with serious diseases;” “There is no God. I don’t believe in God. I believe in the Communist Party;” and “I am so blind not to see the greatness of our strong country’s laws. I am so stupid that I was not thankful for our President Xi Jinping.”

### *Uyghurs speak about their relatives*

The families of RFA journalists Gulchehra Hoja, Shohret Hoshur, Mamatjan Juma, Jilil Kashgary, Kurban Niyaz, and Eset Sulaiman, who have been at the forefront of exposing the extent and conditions of the internment camps, have been targeted by the Chinese government in a bid to silence independent reporting on East Turkestan.<sup>116</sup> The journalists went public to describe how Chinese authorities have arbitrarily detained family members in “reeducation camps.”

In total 24 of Gulchehra’s relatives in Urumchi and Ghulja have been detained in internment camps, including her brother Kaisar Abduqeyum who was detained in October 2017 and has since disappeared.<sup>117</sup> At least nine of Shohret Hoshur’s relatives are in one of four camps located in Qorghas county.<sup>118</sup> China has previously attempted to intimidate RFA journalist Shohret Hoshur. Three of Hoshur’s brothers in Urumchi were detained in 2014 and 2015. The arrests came after Hoshur published a series of articles on the unrest in East Turkestan that exposed vulnerabilities in state narratives.<sup>119</sup> Two of Mamatjan Juma’s brothers are in internment camps, one in Kashgar and the other in Urumchi. Seven of Jilil Kashgary’s family members are in internment camps. His nephew Nurmemet, who had studied in Egypt for two years, was detained in Ghulja. Both Kurban Niyaz, and Eset Sulaiman have lost touch with their families.<sup>120</sup>

In a June 23, 2018 article, Australian Broadcasting Corporation described how reporters had spoken to over 20 Australian Uyghurs about the situation of their families in East Turkestan. Almost all of the Uyghurs said they had relatives in internment camps. Most of the Uyghurs feared to speak on the record because of possible repercussions from the Chinese government. Nevertheless, many described detentions, interrogations and harassment when returning to visit family.<sup>121</sup> A Uyghur identified only as “Mahmut” told Foreign Policy his mother had been interned in the summer of 2017 after his cousin and his cousin’s wife were pressured to return to China from Egypt. Mahmut’s cousin and his wife were similarly interned. A second Uyghur cited in the Foreign Policy article also asked to have his identity concealed and described how his niece had been repeatedly detained. Sophie Richardson of Human Rights Watch explained: “Relatively few people who have made it through these [re-education camps] and made it out have felt it wise to share that information internationally.”<sup>122</sup>

In interviews, two exiled Uyghurs told RFA their concerns about family members interned in East Turkestan. Nurbiye Nurtay, who now lives in Malaysia, said her 60-year-old mother, Elenur Eqilahun, was detained and sent to an internment camp. Although the family is from Ghulja, Nurbiye does not know the whereabouts of her mother. She added: “When I heard the news, I was devastated. I cannot express the pain and helplessness I feel at not being able early to go back and help her.” Nurbiye believes her mother was interned because of her residence in Malaysia.<sup>123</sup> Omer Ghoja’abdulla, originally from Qaraqash county and currently resident in Istanbul, described how he has lost contact with his sister, Oghulnisa Ghoja’abdulla around March 2017. He learned in early 2018 that she is interned in a camp; however, he is unaware of its location. Omer believes Chinese authorities are holding his sister to force his return to China from Istanbul.<sup>124</sup> The anxiety caused by the lack of information regarding their families is shared by several Uyghurs. Filmed at a protest, Abdurahman Hasan holds two signs: One says: “Where are my children?” and the other: “Just shoot my mother and wife I will pay for the bullets”<sup>125</sup>

In an August 21, 2018 article published in The Australian, Zulfia Erk describes how five of her brothers have been interned in camps in East Turkestan. She told reporters: “It is not really easy for me to share this story because obviously the rest of the family will be affected...My brother’s wife or kids, for example, I have no idea if they are going well or not; it’s hard to get any information from them...Many people here, Uyghurs, think if we keep silent that helps, but actually it’s not, it’s not helping us. It’s allowing (China) to keep doing it — and my brothers have ended up in a camp.”<sup>126</sup>

The severity of the internment campaign in East Turkestan has prompted an unprecedented number of Uyghurs to go public with accounts of relatives detained, sentenced, imprisoned, disappeared or interned. Sometimes the accounts are of events prior to the current internment campaign. UHRP’s Zubayra Shamseden told the Huffington Post “Uighurs...have realized that it doesn’t help to be quiet.”<sup>127</sup> As a means to publicize their plight, a growing number of Uyghurs have committed accounts of their relatives’ internment, disappearance or imprisonment to camera and posted them to social media. UHRP offers a selection of these

testimonies in this report in summary and transcript form as a reference for further reporting, as many of the videos are only in the Uyghur language.

*Testimony One:* “I am Habibe Omer. I will give testimony about my family members who are locked up in internment camps. This is my mother, Zeynepgul Omer, who is 49 years old. According to news I heard in February 2018, she was taken to an internment camp for three to four months. Along with my mother, my younger brother Ebeydulla Omer, 23 years old, was also taken. After few months, he was released because he was sick. He used to be very healthy and a sport-loving child. They released him because he lost his mind. He had a nervous condition. That’s what I heard. There is no other news about him.

This is my cousin [picture of a man with a little girl]. He is 33 years old. According to news I heard in May 2017, he was taken to an internment camp. There has been no news about him since about whether he’s alive or dead. This is my younger brother Memet Abdulla Omer, 26 years old. He’s been in jail for six years. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. I haven’t heard any news about whether he’s alive or dead in prison.

I have another cousin. His name is Abdulla Memet. He was arrested in March 2014. His crime was that he had watched a religious preacher on his phone. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on October of the same year. He was 16 when he was arrested and sentenced. I heard that he was moved to prison. I haven’t heard any news about him either. Communication with my family members has been cut off, so I haven’t heard any news about them and I don’t know whether he’s alive or dead either.

Another person, his name is Abdukadir Kirem, is my mother’s cousin’s younger brother. He was taken away from his restaurant on December 2015. Since then there has been no news about him. If he’s in prison, we don’t know which prison. On the same day, the authorities took away his son Keyyum Abdukadir. There is no news about him and his son. Both son and father have disappeared. Later I heard Keyyum Abdukadir’s two sons were taken to internment camps. That means four men from one family were all taken. I don’t know about the mother.”

[Note] The individual shows more pictures of her relatives and people she knows, including young men the Chinese government educated at the China Islamic Institute and later sent Egypt to study. All have been taken into internment camps and no news has been heard about them. She states: “China is denying that there is a thing called internment camps. In fact, they exist. They are lying. I personally know and can testify that my direct relatives and people I know have been interned in camps and they are still there. I don’t know what is happening to them and there is no news about them.”<sup>128</sup>

*Testimony Two:* “I am Salahiddin Ahad, currently, I live in Bermuda. I am from Kashgar, East Turkestan. Today I will give testimony regarding my two older brothers and one younger brother’s situation. All of my brothers were first locked up in concentration camps by Chinese communist terrorists and later sentenced to 10 to 12 years in jail.

My first older brother, Tohtahun Ahad is 46 years old. Before he was arrested, he was a shop owner in Urumchi. My other older brother is Hajim Ahad. He is an innocent person. All his life has been spent farming, caring for livestock and woodworking. My younger brother,

Rozahun Ahad is 33 years old. Before he was arrested, he used to help my older brother in Urumchi as his shop assistant.

Since I wasn't able to learn about their situation directly, I've learned about them through my other relatives inside and outside China. Tohtahun Ahad was taken to a camp on March 2016. My second older brother was taken to a camp on June 2016. At this time, my younger brother, Rozahun Ahad, had to undergo political education all day and return home at night. Around September or October 2016, he was also taken to the camps.

Until last Sunday, I believed that they were in the Chinese camps, but I learned that they have been sentenced to 10 to 12 years in jail. This news has devastated me. I know for sure my brothers are absolutely innocent. Just because they are Uyghur and owners of their home, the Chinese terrorist government sentenced them for such a long-term of imprisonment. Why am I saying they are Chinese terrorists and a terrorist government? At one time, I asked an American official: 'What is the terrorist? Please explain to me, who is a terrorist? What kind of person do you call a terrorist?' He told me: 'Terrorists are people who kill innocent people, threaten innocent people, and insert horror and fear into peoples' hearts.'<sup>129</sup>

*Testimony Three:* "My name is Subat. I came to Turkey from East Turkestan with my older sister and mother. The reason we came here is because of Chinese oppression. Even if I'm a child, I still witnessed lots of oppression. My father and my aunt have been jailed. It has been three years and there is no news of their whereabouts. My aunt had three children and there is no news of them. I wish to save my father and my aunt from jail. Where are the supporters of justice? I beg you, please care for our rights as a child and please protect us. Thank you."<sup>130</sup>

*Testimony Four:* In this video, a Uyghur mother testifies her daughter has disappeared and she doesn't know whether she's been sentenced or locked up in an internment camp. One thing that is certain is she was taken by the Chinese and disappeared. She states: "I have kept silent before but now I realize it is not useful to be silent. Now I am ready to speak up on behalf of my daughter. Whoever asks, wherever I am required to go, I'll speak up about my daughter's disappearance. I miss her so much. I have never been separated from her before."<sup>131</sup>

*Other testimonies posted online:* (a) Two children detail how their parents have been interned. Abdulla and Muhemmed Abduzahir are 10 and 8 years old. They are asking for help to secure the release their parents.<sup>132</sup> (b) A Uyghur woman, Dilber, testifies that three generations of her family have been suffering from Chinese government oppression. She adds there has been no news about her 76-year-old mother, her husband, children and grandchildren.<sup>133</sup> (c) A young Uyghur from Turpan, who currently lives in Russia, states she has never been involved in any political activities or expressed her opinion, but her parents, brother-in-law, and other relatives have been taken interned into camps.<sup>134</sup> (d) Nabijan Ela states he has not communicated with his parents and relatives for over a year. There is no news about his loved ones. He does not know whether they are in camps, dead or in prison. Nabijan wishes to find out the whereabouts of his sister Zohre Ela and find out whether she is alive or dead.<sup>135</sup> (e) A Uyghur man gives testimony about his family members' arrest, death and disappearance.<sup>136</sup>

### *Prominent Uyghurs in internment camps*



*Ablajan Ayup ©Radio Free Asia*

Chinese authorities have made prominent Uyghurs a target for internment in internment camps. This approach not only demonstrates that fame or wealth is no protection from internment, but also sends a message to ordinary Uyghurs that CCP power in the region is unquestioned. Popular singer Ablajan Ayup was detained on February 5, 2018 and has since disappeared.<sup>137</sup> Scholar Rachel Harris writes promotion of Uyghur culture and encouragement of the Uyghur language is one of the reasons he may have been interned.<sup>138</sup> In November 2017, RFA reported Uyghur singer and musician Abdurehim Heyit had been arrested in March the same year. According to UK-based Uyghur singer Rahima Mahmut “Abdurehim Heyit was a state artist, and all of his songs were approved by the Chinese government...None of his songs were banned before.”<sup>139</sup>



*Abdurehim Heyit ©Freemuse*





*Halmurat Ghopur ©Radio Free Asia*

Intellectuals Abdulqadir Jalaledin and Halmurat Ghopur are also reported as interned in internment camps. Police raided Abdulqadir’s home in January 2018 and to date no formal charges have been made.<sup>140</sup> Abdulqadir was a lecturer at the Xinjiang Pedagogical University in Urumchi and a noted writer and philosopher. Halmurat, president of the Xinjiang Food and Drug Administration’s Department of Inspection and Supervision, has been detained in an undisclosed location since November 2017. An exiled Uyghur in Norway told RFA “One of Halmurat Ghopur’s students who is studying abroad had been in contact with him via a messaging app, and [Ghopur] had kept some of their correspondence on his phone without deleting it.”<sup>141</sup> Halmurat is an internationally recognized scientist whose work has been honored by the Chinese government.



*Abdulqadir Jalaledin ©Radio Free Asia*

On August 10, 2018, the New York Times reported the likely disappearance into an internment camp of prominent Uyghur scholar Rahile Dawut.<sup>142</sup> Professor Dawut is a leading expert on Uyghur folklore and traditions whose work the Chinese state had sponsored. According to the report, Professor Dawut left Beijing for Urumchi in December 2017 and has not been heard from since. Rahile’s likely detention reflects the extent of intolerance among Chinese officials for scholarly research into Uyghur cultural expression that may diverge from party narratives.



*Rahile Dawut on the cover of the January 2017 edition of “Xinjiang Women” © Taiwan News*

The family of human rights activist Rebiya Kadeer has frequently been harassed by the Chinese government since her arrest in East Turkestan in 1999. Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action in November 2017 describing how up to 30 of her relatives have been detained in internment camps. Amnesty wrote her relatives are at “high risk of torture and other ill-treatment.”<sup>143</sup>

In May 2018, prominent businessman Obulkasim Haji from Kashgar was detained and sent to an internment camp,<sup>144</sup> while Uyghur entrepreneur Muhammad Sulayman has reportedly been interned in a camp since April 2017.<sup>145</sup>

On August 17, 2018, RFA reported the detention of Ablimit Hoshur Halis Haji, his brother Abdureshit Hoshur Haji, and two of his brother’s business partners, including a Uyghur named Weli Haji. According to details provided by Ablimit Hoshur Halis Haji’s half-brother,

Erkin Molla Esya, who lives in Canada, the four men were sent to facility in Ghulja Prefecture in approximately June 2018. Erkin Molla Esya told RFA his half-brother's detention is likely connected to the establishment of the Halis Foundation, which provided financial assistance to promising Uyghur students and offered grants to Uyghurs for overseas study.<sup>146</sup>

Uyghur soccer player Uyghur Erfan Hezim was detained in February 2018 while visiting his parents in Dorbiljin. A police officer at Dorbijin Police Central Command told RFA: "Currently, he is being detained at the Jiaochu township reeducation center. He was detained two months ago for visiting foreign countries." Erfan had visited Spain and Dubai as part of his soccer training and development. In July 2017 he signed a five-year contract with Chinese Super League team Jiangsu Suning F.C.<sup>147</sup> On June 13, 2018, The Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels (FIFPro), which represents over 65,000 soccer players worldwide, issued a statement expressing concern about Erfan's internment.<sup>148</sup>



*Erfan Hezim ©Radio Free Asia*

### ***Uyghur students in internment camps***

In May 2017, reports described how Chinese authorities in East Turkestan had ordered the return of Uyghurs students overseas by May 20. The order included students resident in Egypt, Turkey, France, Australia, and the United States. Students who spoke to journalists explained how Chinese officials had threatened their families with jail terms if they did not return home. Students who had already returned were arrested and held in internment camps.<sup>149</sup>

Uyghur students in Egypt were a group of interest to China. By early July 2017, Egyptian intelligence and security assisted in the detention of up to 200 Uyghurs. Many of the Uyghurs were students of Arabic and Islamic theology at Cairo's Al-Azhar University. One Uyghur

student told RFA: “Anyone deported back to China will definitely be jailed.” Despite calls to the university for protection, 80 students were detained in a sweep on July 12, 2017.<sup>150</sup> Egyptian authorities began deporting Uyghurs to China in July 2017. According to a New York Times article 12 Uyghurs were forcibly returned on July 6, 2017 and another 22 Uyghurs’ deportations were pending.<sup>151</sup> According to a representative of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization “ some 90 percent of the estimated 7,000 - 8,000 Uighurs living in Egypt had returned to China.”<sup>152</sup>



*Buzainap Adbureshit*

Upon their return to China, Uyghur students from Egypt have been forced to undergo ‘reeducation’ in internment camps or been sentenced to prison terms, including Hebibulla Tohti, a Uyghur scholar of theology whose studies in Egypt were sanctioned by the state-run Islamic Association;<sup>153</sup> Hezritieli Memet a 12-year-old boy whose parent voluntarily returned from China in February 2017; and 17 Uyghurs from Yopurgha county.<sup>154</sup>

Following a closed-door trial, Buzainap Adbureshit was sentenced to seven years imprisonment. The charges made against her and her current location remain unknown. Buzainap was among the Uyghur students in Egypt pressured to return to China.<sup>155</sup> Six students returned from Turkey to Bortala between January and April 2017 were convicted of undisclosed charges and handed sentences of between five and twelve years. The names of the six individuals are Kawser, Mewlan, Jawlan, Mudeser, Suriya, and Gulshan. Although these cases do not relate to detention in internment camps, they illustrate the vulnerability of Uyghurs returned to China. For example, in an article dated May 29, 2018, RFA detailed how student Gulgine

Tashmemet returned to Ghulja from Malaysia after completing her studies out of concern for her family with whom she had lost contact. Since her return her current whereabouts is unknown and she is believed to have been detained in an internment camp.<sup>156</sup>



*Gulgine Tashmemet ©Radio Free Asia*

### ***Officials punished for expressing sympathy***

Uyghurs working for the Chinese government and their families have not been immune from punishment<sup>157</sup> Omerjan Hesén and Elijan Ahmet from Hotan were sentenced to 11 years imprisonment for refusing to send Uyghurs to internment camps.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, Pezilet Bekri, who was Communist Party secretary of Kashgar's Yarbagh Neighborhood Committee, was detained for expressing sympathy with Uyghur internees. A Kashgari businessman now based in Turkey and familiar with Pezilet's case told RFA: "You don't have to be a Uyghur to show sympathy to the weak and the vulnerable...Any human being with a sense of justice would be unable to hold back their emotions on seeing innocent elderly men and women having black hoods placed over their heads and being taken away, or hearing terrified children screaming as their parents or siblings are being forcibly detained." Furthermore, police officers considering resignation from their posts risk internment if they quit their posts<sup>159</sup> and a cadre in Bayanday Township near Ghulja, who praised by the government for information leading to the arrest of 30 Uyghurs, has had seven of his relatives interned in camps.<sup>160</sup> Tursun Hoshur, a 64-year-old party cadre in Peyziwat county was interned in a local camp for having religious sympathies.<sup>161</sup>

## LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

### Enforced Disappearance and Arbitrary Detention

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) outlines the fundamental rights of individuals to due process. Article 9 states: “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile” and Article 10 declares: “Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.”<sup>162</sup>

The primary international legal instrument protecting against enforced disappearances is the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons From Enforced Disappearance.<sup>163</sup> The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is not a signatory to the convention; however, the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances, from which the convention developed, was passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992.<sup>164</sup>

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which China has failed to ratify, details provisions against arbitrary detention. Article 9 states: “No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.” Article 9 adds that anyone who is arrested should be informed of the reasons for their arrest and be promptly brought before a judge or other judicial officer. Importantly, Article 9 also states “Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful.”<sup>165</sup>

Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which China is party, contains a similar provision on the right to challenge the legality of detention in Article 37: “Every child deprived of his or her liberty shall have the right to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance, as well as the right to challenge the legality of the deprivation of his or her liberty before a court or other competent, independent and impartial authority, and to a prompt decision on any such action.”<sup>166</sup>

### Torture

The PRC signed the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on December 12, 1986; however, torture of Uyghur detainees is endemic. Provisions against torture are outlined in Article 5 of the UDHR and Article 7 of the ICCPR. Torture is also explicitly outlawed under Chinese law, such as Articles 18, 50 and 58 of the Criminal Procedure Law,<sup>167</sup> and the government of the PRC is regularly pressed by sources ranging from the United Nations and Amnesty International to offices within the Chinese government itself to implement mechanisms whereby people who have suffered torture can report the fact and have the allegation independently investigated. To

date, however, no measures to address or curb torture in China have been seen to be demonstrably effective.

### **Enforced Returns and Restriction of Movement**

The 1951 Refugee Convention is the leading international legal instrument dedicated to the protection of refugees. Participants in a United Nations conference in 1951 in Geneva met to draft a document codifying the legal status and rights of refugees. The United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (widely referred to today as the “Refugee Convention”) was adopted on July 28, 1951, and subsequently entered into force on April 22, 1954.

One of the central provisions of the Convention is the principle of non-refoulement, under which “no Contracting State shall expel or return (‘refouler’) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”<sup>168</sup> The Convention applied only to individuals who had sought refuge as a result of events that took place prior to January 1, 1951, but a protocol entered into force on October 4, 1967 that requires states to apply the provisions of the Convention to all refugees covered by the Convention regardless of date. Article 14 of the UDHR states: “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”<sup>169</sup>

Freedom of movement within and across borders is protected in the UDHR and ICCPR. Article 13 of the UDHR outlines: “(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, ICCPR states in Article 12.2: “Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.”<sup>171</sup>

Article 2.5 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities outlines the rights standard on contact between co-ethnics across international borders: “Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group and with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.”<sup>172</sup>

### **Repression Based on Religious Belief and Ethnicity**

Article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination “guarantee[s] the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law.” Article 5 continues to specify on the basis of ethnicity “(a) The right to equal treatment before the tribunals and all other organs administering justice; (b) The right to security of person and protection by the State against

violence or bodily harm, whether inflicted by government officials or by any individual group or institution.”

Article 18 of the UDHR outlines the individual right to freedom of religious belief: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”<sup>173</sup> Individual and collective religious freedom is restated in Article 18 of ICCPR,<sup>174</sup> Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,<sup>175</sup> and Article 2 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, which states: “Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities...have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion.”<sup>176</sup> In addition, Article 30 of Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the religious rights of minority children: “...a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”<sup>177</sup>

Freedom of religious belief and protection from ethnic discrimination is in theory permitted under the laws of the PRC. Article 36 of The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China states: “Citizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief.” Article 11 of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (REAL) confirms: “Autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas guarantee the freedom of religious belief to citizens of the various nationalities.” Article 4 of the constitution and Article 9 of the REAL outline the prohibition of discrimination against ethnic minorities.<sup>178</sup>



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **For the Chinese Government**

- Close all internment camps immediately and release all internees without condition.
- Investigate the deaths of internees inside the camps through a genuine and transparent process that includes the testimonies of families and internees. All government officials found to be complicit in the deaths of internees must be censured and victims' families given proper explanations regarding the deaths of loved ones.
- End the practices of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances of Uyghurs and realize rights standards as outlined in the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons From Enforced Disappearance, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Implement a legitimate and effective complaints mechanism as a means of redress for victims of torture within China. China must amend its Criminal Procedure Law to align itself with the definition of torture outlined in the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Meet the standards outlined in Article 2.5 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and end the practice of punishing Uyghurs for having overseas connections.
- Observe the rights protecting minorities against discrimination based on ethnicity as outlined in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Realize normative standards regarding religious freedoms as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, and Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

### **For Concerned Governments**

- Utilize China's November 2018 Universal Periodic Review to question China about reports of the mass-internment of Uyghurs in camps. Member states should ask about reports of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, deaths in custody and torture.
- Adopt forms of the "Global Magnitsky Act" to censure Chinese officials complicit in human rights violations in East Turkestan, including freezing assets.
- Call on China to immediately release all internees in camps without charges and conditions, as well as investigate the deaths of internees inside the camps through a genuine and transparent process that includes the testimonies of families and internees.
- Insist Chinese officials establish regulations that reflect international human rights standards ensuring Uyghurs enjoy the right to speak their mother tongue cultural and religious freedom, and racial equality, and the freedom of movement.

- Adhere to obligations under the Refugee Convention, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding the principle of non-refoulement in Uyghur cases.
- Open consulates in the East Turkestan regional capital of Urumchi that will permit a closer monitoring of human rights conditions in the region.
- Establish a “Special Coordinator for Uyghur Affairs” in national foreign ministries.
- Pass a “Uyghur Policy Act” that mandates investigation of violations of Uyghurs’ fundamental rights.

#### **For the International Community**

- Tighten monitoring mechanisms of the treaty bodies covering international human rights instruments in the United Nations system, especially regarding the People’s Republic of China’s obligations to meet international standards.
- Send observers, particularly the Special Rapporteurs on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Religion or Belief; Minority Issues; and Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to East Turkestan with unfettered access to internment camps and Uyghur communities to impartially conduct an assessment of China’s compliance to its international obligations to protect the human rights of the Uyghur people.
- Ensure human rights standards and obligations are fully met by the Chinese government before multilateral assistance and projects, through agencies such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, are approved.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The information for this report is a synthesis of primary and secondary sources on the internment camps in East Turkestan. Primary source data was gathered in interviews conducted in Uyghur and English. UHRP spoke to Uyghurs who had experienced conditions in the camps and to Uyghurs whose relatives were interned in the camps. Interview subjects were selected at random through existing networks and through a willingness to speak.

Finding eyewitnesses prepared to relate accounts of the internment camps was not an easy task. The long reach of Chinese government repression in East Turkestan extends beyond the region to Uyghur exiles, even those in democratic nations. For this reason, UHRP offered complete anonymity to interviewees. To protect interview subjects, UHRP changed identifying details unless interviewees specifically expressed that we not do so.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Uyghur Human Rights Project would like to thank all the brave individuals who, despite the threat of Chinese government censure, came forward to give their accounts of the internment camps in East Turkestan. So much of human rights research relies upon this kind of courage and UHRP is fortunate to have been able to work with such people. UHRP is grateful to the academics, journalists, and NGOs whose work is cited in this report. In many cases, such a public stance against Chinese government policies has implications on careers.

Many people have worked hard to make sure this report is accurate and objective. The writers would like to thank UHRP's staff for invaluable guidance and their human rights expertise. UHRP also extends a special appreciation to the National Endowment for Democracy, whose unwavering support for freedom, democracy, and human rights in East Turkestan ensures that Uyghurs will always have a forum to voice their concerns and issues.

Uyghur Human Rights Project  
Washington, D.C  
August 2018

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The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) was founded by the Uyghur American Association (UAA) in 2004 with a supporting grant from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). UHRP's mission is to promote human rights and democracy for the Uyghur people. In 2016, UHRP became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

UHRP works to raise the profile of the Uyghur people by:

Researching, writing and publishing commentary and reports in English and Chinese covering a broad range human rights issues involving civil and political rights, through to social cultural and economic rights;

Preparing briefings – either written or in person – for journalists, academics, diplomats and legislators on the human rights situation faced by the Uyghur people.

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