

## ETHNIC MINORITY RIGHTS

*Introduction*

During the Commission's 2016 reporting year, Chinese government and Communist Party officials failed to adhere to Chinese and international law in their treatment of ethnic minority populations. The PRC Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law contains protections for the languages, religious beliefs, and customs of the country's 55 recognized minority "nationalities,"<sup>1</sup> in addition to a system of regional autonomy in designated areas.<sup>2</sup> Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China has signed and declared an intention to ratify, contains safeguards for the rights of "ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities" within a state.<sup>3</sup> In practice, however, Chinese authorities enforced restrictions that some observers said prevented members of ethnic minority groups from maintaining their own cultural practices.<sup>4</sup> [See Section IV—Xinjiang and Section V—Tibet for additional information on these areas.]

*State Minority Policy*

Central government officials in China continued to stress the importance of "ethnic harmony" or "ethnic unity"<sup>5</sup> and of ethnic minorities' identification with "the motherland" and "Chinese culture."<sup>6</sup> At the National People's Congress in March 2016, Premier Li Keqiang stressed the need to promote contact, exchanges, and "ethnic blending" (*minzu jiaorong*) between ethnicities.<sup>7</sup> For a third consecutive year, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) authorities implemented a "mass line" campaign,<sup>8</sup> which promotes "ethnic unity"<sup>9</sup> and requires officials working at the grassroots level to monitor and control Muslim residents' religious practices.<sup>10</sup> An Australian scholar outlined concerns regarding the impact of assimilation on ethnic minorities' cultures and languages.<sup>11</sup> In addition to projects aimed at integrating Han majority and ethnic minority populations, government officials pushed both development<sup>12</sup> and securitization<sup>13</sup> in places such as Tibetan autonomous areas and the XUAR in an effort to maintain "stability."

International media reports published during this reporting year highlighted disparities in official policies toward and treatment of Hui Muslims and Uyghur Muslims, stressing comparative tolerance of Hui Muslim religious practices and government programs incentivizing Hui-owned business ventures.<sup>14</sup> Reports, however, also indicated officials' growing fears over the rise of Salafism, an ultra-conservative Sunni sect, in both the Hui and Uyghur Muslim communities, and described government actions to limit the growth of Salafism in China due to concerns over its alleged ties to extremism.<sup>15</sup> In addition, a report published by an American research institute argued that fears over Islam in Chinese official and scholarly circles had led to the April 2016 dismissal of ethnic Hui Wang Zhengwei from his positions as Chairman of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and Executive Deputy Head of the United Front Work Department.<sup>16</sup> Wang had advocated for the preservation of China's regional ethnic autonomy system and had championed ethnic diversity in the face of Chinese officials who support the dilu-

tion of ethnic and religious identities, such as Zhu Weiqun, Chairperson of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.<sup>17</sup> [For more information on official policies toward and treatment of Uyghur Muslims, see Section II—Freedom of Religion and Section IV—Xinjiang.]

### *Grasslands Protests in Inner Mongolia*

Mongol herders and villagers in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) protested against the state-led demolition of herders' homes<sup>18</sup> and killing of their livestock;<sup>19</sup> state exploitation of their traditional grazing lands<sup>20</sup> and resulting environmental damage;<sup>21</sup> and inadequate compensation for the loss of grazing lands.<sup>22</sup> As in past reporting years, IMAR authorities detained herders who engaged in peaceful protests related to grasslands, including herders who reportedly used online forums or spoke to foreign journalists about their grievances.<sup>23</sup>

Representative examples of protests by Mongol herders and villagers included the following:

- In **October 2015**, in Haliut (Hailiutu) township, Urad (Wulate) Middle Banner, Bayannur (Bayannao'er) municipality, IMAR, dozens of herders protested in front of banner government offices regarding a dispute over officials' sale of grasslands, hoping to attract the attention of visiting IMAR Party Secretary Wang Jun.<sup>24</sup> Security officials reportedly detained five of the herders.<sup>25</sup> For at least two weeks beginning February 23, 2016, herders again gathered in front of government offices in Haliut, demanding "adequate compensation and immediate return of their grazing lands."<sup>26</sup>
- On **December 17, 2015**, in Dalain-Huv (Dalahubu or Dalain Hob) township, Eznee (Eji'na) Banner, Alshaa (Alashan) League, IMAR, close to 100 herders protested in front of the Eznee Banner government building.<sup>27</sup> The herders called upon officials to protect traditional grazing lands from "trespassers" from Gansu province who they said destroyed the grasslands, and sought an explanation for an attack by assailants from Gansu on an Eznee Banner checkpoint.<sup>28</sup>
- On **June 10, 2016**, in Bieligitai township, Abag (Abaga) Banner, Xilingol (Xilinguole) League, IMAR, a group of herders blocked the road leading to a highway under construction in protest over what they alleged was an encroachment on their traditional grazing lands.<sup>29</sup> According to the herders, their village chief had commissioned construction of the highway without their knowledge or consent, and this was the second time highway builders had encroached upon their grazing lands this year.<sup>30</sup>

Instances of IMAR officials detaining Mongol herders for using the Internet and giving interviews related to grasslands-related grievances included the following:

- On **November 25, 2015**, security officials in Haliut township, Urad Middle Banner, detained Odongerel, a leading figure in organizing herders' protests, for using the messaging service WeChat to communicate with others.<sup>31</sup> Authorities de-

tained Odongerel again on March 24, 2016, after she used WeChat to express concern over the detention of other herders.<sup>32</sup>

- On **January 25, 2016**, security officials in Darhan-Muuminggan (Da'erhanmaoming'an) United Banner, Baotou municipality, IMAR, detained at least a dozen herders for several hours for contacting "overseas news media and hostile forces" and engaging in "separatism."<sup>33</sup> The detention was reportedly related to a protest staged the previous week by "dozens" of herders in the banner related to compensation they had requested for an official ban on livestock grazing.<sup>34</sup> Following the protest, some of the herders published pictures and video on social media, in addition to speaking to foreign reporters and human rights organizations.<sup>35</sup>

- In **February and March 2016**, security officials in Urad Middle Banner detained at least 20 herders for allegedly "giving interviews to foreign news media," among other allegations.<sup>36</sup> On March 4, authorities detained one of the herders, Saishingaa, for "resisting arrest and providing information to foreign news media and organizations."<sup>37</sup> On March 7, authorities detained two others from among these herders, Munkh and Tuyaa.<sup>38</sup>

- On **March 21, 2016**, security officials in Right Uzumchin (Xiwuzhumuqin) Banner, Xilingol (Xilinguole) League, IMAR, detained herder Enkhbat, and security officials in Left Uzumchin (Dongwuzhumuqin) Banner, Xilingol League, detained herders Burdee and Achilalt for "instigating illegal gatherings via the Internet."<sup>39</sup>

#### *Continued Restrictions on Hada and Family*

As in past reporting years,<sup>40</sup> authorities in the IMAR continued to harass Mongol rights advocate Hada and his family.<sup>41</sup> IMAR officials imprisoned Hada for 15 years beginning in 1995 and subsequently extralegally detained him for an additional 4 years,<sup>42</sup> after he organized peaceful protests for Mongol rights and for his role in founding the banned Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance.<sup>43</sup> According to Hada and his wife, Xinna, as of October 2015, public security personnel maintained a constant presence in their apartment building in order to surveil Hada's activities at home, and have followed him whenever he has gone out.<sup>44</sup> Beginning October 15, 2015, public security authorities in Qingshan district, Baotou municipality, IMAR, detained Hada and Xinna's son Uiles for 10 days, on the charge of "obstructing official business."<sup>45</sup> Security authorities reportedly beat Uiles and Xinna prior to detaining Uiles.<sup>46</sup>

## Notes to Section II—Ethnic Minority Rights

<sup>1</sup>“Ethnic Minorities, Women, Children, Disabled Effectively Protected: Report,” Xinhua, 14 June 16.

<sup>2</sup>PRC Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law [Zhonghua renmin gongheguo minzu quyue zizhi fa], passed 31 May 84, effective 1 October 84, amended 28 February 01. For protections related to languages, religious beliefs, and customs, see Articles 10, 11, 21, 36, 37, 47, 49, and 53.

<sup>3</sup>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 66, entry into force 23 March 76, art. 27.

<sup>4</sup>See, e.g., “Controls on Uyghur Villages, Mosques Continue Into New Year,” Radio Free Asia, 6 January 16; “Officials Demolish Ethnic Mongolian Herders’ Homes Amid ‘Upgrade’ Plan,” Radio Free Asia, 11 January 16; “Tibetan, Muslim Students Join in Protest for Equal Education,” Radio Free Asia, 28 January 16.

<sup>5</sup>“Li Keqiang: Increase Support for Development for Ethnic Minorities With Smaller Populations, Let People of All Ethnicities Together Move Toward Prosperity” [Li keqiang: jiada fuchi renkou jiaoshao minzu fazhan lidu rang ge zu renmin gongtong maixiang xiaokang], People’s Daily, 5 March 16; Zhu Xiaolong and Hou Lijun, “Zhu Weiqun: ‘Embedded’ Thinking Is an Important Innovation in Ethnic Work” [Zhu weiqun: “qianru shi” silu shi minzu gongzuo de zhongyao chuangxin], Xinhua, 7 March 16.

<sup>6</sup>James Leibold, “China’s Ethnic Policy Under Xi Jinping,” Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, Vol. 15, Issue 20, 19 October 15, 7.

<sup>7</sup>“Li Keqiang: Increase Support for Development for Ethnic Minorities With Smaller Populations, Let People of All Ethnicities Together Move Toward Prosperity” [Li keqiang: jiada fuchi renkou jiaoshao minzu fazhan lidu rang ge zu renmin gongtong maixiang xiaokang], People’s Daily, 5 March 16.

<sup>8</sup>Cao Xu, “Xinjiang’s Third Round of ‘Visit the Masses’ Working Groups Go Into the Villages” [Xinjiang di san pi “fang hui ju” gongzuo zu zhu cun jin dian], China Economic Weekly, 25 February 16; Sui Yunyan, “Third Summary of XUAR 2015 ‘Visit the Masses’ Activity” [Xinjiang weiwu’er zizhiq 2015 nian “fang hui ju” huodong zongshu zhi san], Xinjiang Daily, reprinted in China Internet Information Center, 24 February 16. These articles refer to the “mass line” campaign in the XUAR. For more information on this education and ideology campaign, see CECC, 2014 Annual Report, 9 October 14, 42, 100, 140, 168.

<sup>9</sup>See, e.g., Tom Phillips, “China Launches Massive Rural ‘Surveillance’ Project To Watch Over Uighurs,” Telegraph, 20 October 14.

<sup>10</sup>Sui Yunyan, “Third Summary of XUAR 2015 ‘Visit the Masses’ Activity” [Xinjiang weiwu’er zizhiq 2015 nian “fang hui ju” huodong zongshu zhi san], Xinjiang Daily, reprinted in China Internet Information Center, 24 February 16; Tom Phillips, “China Launches Massive Rural ‘Surveillance’ Project To Watch Over Uighurs,” Telegraph, 20 October 14; Reza Hasmath, “Ethnic Violence in Xinjiang: Causes, Responses, and Future Outlook,” University of Nottingham, China Policy Institute Policy Paper, No. 7, 27 October 14, 3. These articles refer to the “mass line” campaign in the XUAR.

<sup>11</sup>James Leibold, “China’s Minority Report,” Foreign Affairs, 23 March 16.

<sup>12</sup>Liu Xin, “China Vows Frontier Boom,” Global Times, 18 March 16; Li Hong, Economic Research Institute of the XUAR Development and Reform Commission, “Comments and Suggestions Regarding How To Carry Out the Plans Organized by the XUAR’s ‘13th Five-Year Plan’” [Zuohao zizhiq “shisan wu” guihua bianzhi de yijian yu jianyi], 16 October 15; Zhao Shubin, “TAR Leaders and State Railways Administration Travel to Tibet for Investigation and Research Group Forum, Losang Jamcan and Lu Dongfu Attend and Give Speeches” [Zizhiq lingdao yu guojia tielu ju fu zang diaoyan zu zuotan luosang jiangcun lu dong fu chuxi bing jianghua], Tibet Daily, 15 May 16; Emily Rauhala, “China’s Plan To ‘Liberate’ a Cradle of Tibetan Culture,” Washington Post, 14 December 15.

<sup>13</sup>James Leibold, “China’s Ethnic Policy Under Xi Jinping,” Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, Vol. 15, Issue 20, 19 October 15, 6–10; International Campaign for Tibet, “Tightening of an Invisible Net: New Security Measures in Eastern Tibet Heighten Surveillance, Control,” 16 February 16; Andrew Jacobs, “Xinjiang Seethes Under Chinese Crackdown,” New York Times, 2 January 16.

<sup>14</sup>Andrew Jacobs, “Light Government Touch Lets China’s Hui Practice Islam in the Open,” New York Times, 1 February 16. See also Jonathan Kaiman, “In China, Rise of Salafism Fosters Suspicion and Division Among Muslims,” Los Angeles Times, 1 February 16.

<sup>15</sup>Jonathan Kaiman, “In China, Rise of Salafism Fosters Suspicion and Division Among Muslims,” Los Angeles Times, 1 February 16. See also Andrew Jacobs, “Light Government Touch Lets China’s Hui Practice Islam in the Open,” New York Times, 1 February 16; James Leibold, “Creeping Islamophobia: China’s Hui Muslims in the Firing Line,” Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, Vol. 16, Issue 10, 20 June 16.

<sup>16</sup>James Leibold, “Creeping Islamophobia: China’s Hui Muslims in the Firing Line,” Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, Vol. 16, Issue 10, 20 June 16.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>See, e.g., Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “China Demolishes Mongolian Herders’ Houses in Freezing Cold,” 8 January 16.

<sup>19</sup>See, e.g., Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Anthrax Vaccine Overdosed, Livestock Wiped Out,” 4 November 15.

<sup>20</sup>See, e.g., Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Protest Government Officials’ Illegal Occupation of Grazing Land,” 23 February 16; “Ethnic Mongolians Protest Missile Tests on Grasslands, Lack of Income,” Radio Free Asia, 26 January 16.

<sup>21</sup>See, e.g., Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Blocked Mines, Six Arrested and Detained,” 19 March 16; “China Holds Five Ethnic Mongolian Herders Who Protested Mining Pollution,” Radio Free Asia, 21 March 16; “Officials Demolish Ethnic Mongolian Herders’ Homes Amid ‘Upgrade’ Plan,” Radio Free Asia, 11 January 16.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Protest Government Officials’ Illegal Occupation of Grazing Land,” 23 February 16; Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Detained for Involvement in ‘Framing and Denouncing the Socialist Regime,’” 8 March 16; Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Blocked Mines, Six Arrested and Detained,” 19 March 16.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders’ Leader Detained for ‘Chatting Via WeChat,’” 27 November 15; Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Taken Away by Police, Herders Accused of ‘National Separatism,’” 26 January 16; “Ethnic Mongolians Protest Missile Tests on Grasslands, Lack of Income,” Radio Free Asia, 26 January 16; Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Detained for Involvement in ‘Framing and Denouncing the Socialist Regime,’” 8 March 16; “China Detains Dozens of Ethnic Mongolians Amid Ongoing Grassland Protest,” Radio Free Asia, 9 March 16; Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Crackdown Escalates, More Herders Arrested for ‘Inciting Illegal Gatherings Via the Internet,’” 24 March 16.

<sup>24</sup> “Chinese Police Detain Mongolian Dissident’s Son Amid Ongoing Protests Over Grasslands,” Radio Free Asia, 15 October 15.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Protest Government Officials’ Illegal Occupation of Grazing Land,” 23 February 16; Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Detained for Involvement in ‘Framing and Denouncing the Socialist Regime,’” 8 March 16.

<sup>27</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Riding Horses and Camels, Herder [sic] Took to the Streets in Southern Mongolia,” 17 December 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> “Herders Blockade Disputed Highway Project in China’s Inner Mongolia,” Radio Free Asia, 13 June 16.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders’ Leader Detained for ‘Chatting Via WeChat,’” 27 November 15.

<sup>32</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Crackdown Escalates, More Herders Arrested for ‘Inciting Illegal Gatherings Via the Internet,’” 24 March 16.

<sup>33</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Taken Away by Police, Herders Accused of ‘National Separatism,’” 26 January 16; “Ethnic Mongolians Protest Missile Tests on Grasslands, Lack of Income,” Radio Free Asia, 26 January 16.

<sup>34</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Taken Away by Police, Herders Accused of ‘National Separatism,’” 26 January 16.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Herders Detained for Involvement in ‘Framing and Denouncing the Socialist Regime,’” 8 March 16; “China Detains Dozens of Ethnic Mongolians Amid Ongoing Grassland Protest,” Radio Free Asia, 9 March 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Crackdown Escalates, More Herders Arrested for ‘Inciting Illegal Gatherings Via the Internet,’” 24 March 16.

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., CECC, 2015 Annual Report, 8 October 15, 139–40; CECC, 2014 Annual Report, 9 October 14, 102; CECC, 2013 Annual Report, 10 October 13, 97.

<sup>41</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “After 19 Years of Imprisonment Hada Still Treated as Prisoner,” 22 October 15; “My Husband Remains in Prison, Long After His Release: Dissident’s Wife,” Radio Free Asia, 23 October 15; Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Mongolian Dissident’s Son Arrested and Detained for ‘Obstructing Official Business,’” 16 October 15; “Chinese Police Detain Mongolian Dissident’s Son Amid Ongoing Protests Over Grasslands,” Radio Free Asia, 15 October 15.

<sup>42</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Mongolian Dissident’s Son Arrested and Detained for ‘Obstructing Official Business,’” 16 October 15.

<sup>43</sup> “Inner Mongolian Dissident’s Family Targeted,” Radio Free Asia, 5 December 10; Hada, Xinna, and Uiles, Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Open Letter From Hada and His Family Members,” 2 July 14; Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “SMHRIC Statement to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association,” 19 February 14. For Commission analysis on Hada, Xinna, and Uiles, see “Authorities Heighten Persecution of Detained Mongol Rights Advocate’s Wife and Son,” CECC China Human Rights and Rule of Law Update, No. 1, 3 January 13, 2. For more information, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database records 2004-02045 on Hada, 2010-00704 on Xinna, and 2010-00705 on Uiles.

<sup>44</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “After 19 Years of Imprisonment Hada Still Treated as Prisoner,” 22 October 15; “My Husband Remains in Prison, Long After His Release: Dissident’s Wife,” Radio Free Asia, 23 October 15.

<sup>45</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Mongolian Dissident’s Son Arrested and Detained for ‘Obstructing Official Business,’” 16 October 15. See also “Chinese Police Detain Mongolian Dissident’s Son Amid Ongoing Protests Over Grasslands,” Radio Free Asia, 15 October 15.

<sup>46</sup> Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Mongolian Dissident’s Son Arrested and Detained for ‘Obstructing Official Business,’” 16 October 15; “Chinese Police Detain Mongolian Dissident’s Son Amid Ongoing Protests Over Grasslands,” Radio Free Asia, 15 October 15.