IV. Xinjiang

Findings

• During the Commission’s 2019 reporting year, authorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) expanded a system of extrajudicial mass internment camps in which they continued to arbitrarily detain Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Hui, and others. Security personnel at the camps subjected detainees to torture, including beatings; electric shocks; waterboarding; medical neglect; forced ingestion of medication; sleep deprivation; extended solitary confinement; and handcuffing or shackling for prolonged periods, as well as restricted access to toilet facilities; punishment for behavior deemed religious; forced labor; overcrowding; deprivation of food; and political indoctrination. Some detainees reportedly died in camps due to poor conditions, medical neglect, or other reasons.

• Authorities forced some mass internment camp detainees to engage in labor and forced former detainees to engage in labor following their release from camps. According to research published by German researcher Adrian Zenz in July 2019, authorities began establishing forced labor programs for camp detainees and “graduates” in the second half of 2018, in addition to extensive forced labor programs for XUAR residents not detained in camps.

• Scholars and rights groups provided a strong argument, based on available evidence, that the “crimes against humanity” framework may apply to the case of mass internment camps in the XUAR. Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides a list of 11 acts that may constitute “crimes against humanity” “when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.”

• Official Chinese media portrayed revised regional regulations on extremism as justification for mass internment camps, but the camps remained illegal under both Chinese and international law. In October 2018, the XUAR People’s Congress revised the region’s first anti-extremism regulations, which were adopted in March 2017, and official media described the revisions as a legal basis for “vocational training centers” combating “extremism” in the XUAR—an apparent reference to mass internment camps. International legal scholars and rights advocates stressed that, despite Chinese officials’ attempt to use the revised regulations to justify mass internment camps, the revised local legislation did not provide a legal basis for the camps, particularly because the PRC Law on Legislation only allows deprivation of personal liberty under statutes passed by the National People’s Congress or its Standing Committee.

• In November 2018, Adrian Zenz published the findings of research he conducted into budgets for security expenditures in the XUAR and other regions of China which showed that “political reeducation” carried out in mass internment camps appeared to be aimed at “political indoctrination and intimida-
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—refuting Chinese officials' assertions that the purpose of mass internment camps is to provide vocational education and employment training. In October 2018, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported that, based on its analysis of 1,500 publicly available procurement documents from local governments in the XUAR, authorities administered mass internment camps in the same way as prisons. AFP reported that government departments in charge of administering camps ordered police uniforms, riot shields and helmets, electrified batons, cattle prods, billy clubs, spears, handcuffs, pepper spray, tear gas, tasers, net guns, stun guns, and spiked clubs known as “wolf’s teeth” to maintain control over detainees.

- Mass internment camp detainees reportedly included permanent residents of the United States and Australia. American officials stated in March 2019 that Chinese authorities may have detained several American residents. As of August 2019, Chinese authorities reportedly detained ten or more Australian residents in mass internment camps. In addition, at least five Australian children were reportedly unable to leave the XUAR due to restrictions on the freedom of movement of their parents in the XUAR.

Recommendations

Members of the U.S. Congress and Administration officials are encouraged to:

- Call on the Chinese government to end the mass, arbitrary detention of predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities, including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Hui, and others in mass internment camps, and release those currently detained. Call on Chinese officials to allow U.S. officials, diplomatic representatives of other countries, UN officials, humanitarian organizations, and international journalists to visit the XUAR and independently investigate reports of arbitrary detention. Coordinate with other governments and international non-governmental organizations to compile relevant information regarding specific XUAR officials responsible for the arbitrary mass detention and abuse of individuals in mass internment camps in preparation for possible sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (Public Law No. 114–328).

- Support the passage of the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019 (S. 178 and H.R. 649), requiring the Director of National Intelligence and the State Department to report on issues including the regional security threats caused by Chinese government repression of ethnic minorities in the XUAR, and on the transfer or development of technologies to facilitate mass internment and surveillance there; requiring the Federal Bureau of Investigation to report on topics such as its efforts to protect ethnic Uyghurs and Chinese nationals in the U.S. from Chinese government intimidation, and those whose families in China have been threatened or detained because of their advocacy for the Uyghurs; and establishing a position known as the Special Coordinator for Xinjiang.
○ Urge U.S. companies selling products, providing services, conducting business, or investing in development initiatives in the XUAR to ensure that their products, services, and investment funds do not provide support for XUAR officials’ arbitrary detention of ethnic minority individuals or XUAR authorities’ use of technology to otherwise repress and control XUAR residents, rather than for legitimate law enforcement activities.

Urge the Bureau of Industry and Security at the U.S. Department of Commerce to track the sale of equipment and technology used by Chinese security agencies and U.S. companies’ sale of surveillance and crime control technology to XUAR officials, and investigate the legality of such sales according to existing U.S. Export Administration Regulations.

○ Urge American universities to provide support to Uyghur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz students at their institutions who are Chinese nationals, to ensure they are able to study in a safe environment free of threats and intimidation from Chinese government officials; to provide scholarships or other financial assistance to students whose parents or guardians have been detained in mass internment camps in the XUAR; to inquire about the well-being of Turkic Muslims who have returned to China after having studied or taught in their institutions; to hold conferences and other programs to raise awareness among students and the general public about the mass, arbitrary detention of Turkic Muslims in the XUAR; and to refrain from holding conferences or establishing programs with Chinese government entities that lend legitimacy to the mass surveillance and mass arbitrary detention programs in place in the XUAR.

○ Urge Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states to take coordinated action to pressure the Chinese government to shut down mass internment camps and end repressive security and surveillance measures aimed at Muslim Chinese citizens, and to condemn mass internment camps and human rights abuses of Muslim Chinese citizens at OIC and other international forums.

○ In bilateral and multilateral consultations with the governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, raise concerns regarding the detention of Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uyghurs in mass internment camps in the XUAR; work with officials from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to pressure Chinese officials to release citizens and residents of these two countries from mass internment camps in the XUAR; and urge officials from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan not to deport ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, or Uyghurs to China, where they are at risk of arbitrary detention in mass internment camps and other types of political persecution.
Intensified Repression in Mass Internment System

During the Commission’s 2019 reporting year, authorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) expanded a system of extrajudicial mass internment camps in which they continued to arbitrarily detain predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities, including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Hui, and others. Security personnel at the camps subjected detainees to torture, including beatings; electric shocks; waterboarding; medical neglect; forced ingestion of medication; sleep deprivation; extended solitary confinement; and handcuffing or shackling for prolonged periods, as well as restricted access to toilet facilities; punishment for behavior deemed religious; forced labor; overcrowding; deprivation of food; and political indoctrination. Some detainees reportedly died in camps due to poor conditions, medical neglect, or other reasons. Deaths that occurred in mass internment camps or shortly after release from camps included the following (this list is illustrative of available reports and not exhaustive):

- Forty-year-old Uyghur Mutellip Nurmehmet, who earned two Master’s degrees in the United States, reportedly died nine days after authorities released him from a camp.
- Renowned Uyghur writer Nurmuheemmet Tohti died in May 2019 after being held in a mass internment camp from November 2018 to March 2019. Tohti’s Canada-based relatives said the 70-year-old suffered from diabetes and heart disease.
- Amine Qadir, a Uyghur in her early thirties, died in a mass internment camp in early 2018. Qadir reportedly had a heart condition that was not treated by authorities at the camp where she was detained.
- Alimjan Emet, a 22-year-old Uyghur security guard, reportedly died in a camp at an unknown date as a result of being beaten during an interrogation.
- Aytursun Eli, a 35-year-old Uyghur woman who had worked as the deputy head of a tourism company, reportedly died during a police interrogation in June 2018. It was unclear whether Eli died in a mass internment camp or at a police station.

In March 2019, German researcher Adrian Zenz, speaking on a panel co-hosted by the U.S. Government on the sidelines of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, said he estimated that 1.5 million Uyghurs and other Muslims in the XUAR were or had been detained in mass internment camps. According to this estimate, nearly one in six adult Uyghurs are or have been detained in the camps. Mass internment camps in the XUAR, though varied in size and structure, included extremely large camps such as one located in Dabancheng district, Urumqi municipality, XUAR. Using satellite imagery, analysts estimated the camp in Dabancheng had the capacity to hold up to 130,000 detainees. Internment camps shared common features, such as watchtowers, barracks, barbed wire, and reinforced walls. Some camps were located in struc-
mass internment camps have no basis in Chinese law

Official Chinese media portrayed revised regional regulations on extremism as justification for mass internment camps, but the camps remained illegal under both Chinese and international law. In October 2018, the XUAR People’s Congress revised the region’s first anti-extremism regulations, which were adopted in March 2017 and official media described the revisions as a legal basis for “vocational training centers” combating “extremism” in the XUAR—an apparent reference to mass internment camps. Prior to the revisions, the regulations made no mention of “vocational training centers.” International law also prohibits the mass detention taking place in mass internment camps. For example, as discussed by Lawfare contributor Hilary Hurd, Article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) prohibits the forced internment of Uyghurs “on the basis of their religious, and ethnic identity.” International legal scholars and rights advocates stressed that, despite Chinese officials’ attempt to use the revised regulations to justify mass internment camps, the revised local legislation did not provide a legal basis for the camps, particularly because the PRC Law on Legislation only allows deprivation of personal liberty under statutes passed by the National People’s Congress (NPC) or its Standing Committee. At a June 2019 conference on Uyghur human rights issues, George Washington University law professor Donald Clarke emphasized that when a group of American experts engaged in a bilateral legal dialogue asked their Chinese counterparts to provide the legal basis for mass internment camps, none of the counterparts were able to provide a relevant legal basis.

Crimes against humanity and mass internment

Scholars and rights groups provided a strong argument, based on available evidence, that the “crimes against humanity” framework may apply to the case of mass internment camps in the XUAR. Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides a list of 11 acts that may constitute “crimes against humanity” “when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.” The following acts, listed in the Rome Statute, may apply to the persecution of Turkic Muslims in the XUAR:
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts listed in Article 7 of the Rome Statute</th>
<th>Possible application to the treatment of Turkic Muslims in the XUAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;</td>
<td>Arbitrary, prolonged detention of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Hui, and others in mass internment camps in the XUAR since around April 2017;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Torture;</td>
<td>Security personnel in mass internment camps in the XUAR subjected detainees to widespread torture, including through the use of electric shocks and shackling people in painful positions;</td>
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<tr>
<td>(h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in Paragraph 3 [Article 7(3) of the Rome Statute], or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph [Article 7 of the Rome Statute] or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court;</td>
<td>Security personnel have detained a million or more Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Hui; enforced harsh, widespread restrictions on peaceful Islamic practices of XUAR residents; and subjected Turkic and Muslim XUAR residents to intense surveillance, checkpoints, intimidation, and involuntary biometric data collection;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Enforced disappearance of persons.</td>
<td>Hundreds of intellectuals forcibly disappeared by authorities in the XUAR are among the million or more Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Hui detained in mass internment camps.</td>
</tr>
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#### REASONS FOR DETENTION IN MASS INTERNMENT CAMPS

Security personnel continued to detain people in mass internment camps for such reasons as engaging in “religious extremism” or having foreign connections, such as previous overseas travel or relatives living abroad. Chinese laws define a wide range of peaceful religious customs as “extremism,” including the wearing of veils and having “abnormal” beards. In its March 2019 white paper, the State Council Information Office said detainees in mass internment camps, whom it referred to as “trainees” in “education and training centers,” included those “who were incited, coerced or induced into participating in terrorist or extremist activities.” According to the Xinjiang Victims Database, a resource created by American researcher Gene Bunin that contains information on political prisoners in the XUAR, as of August 15, 2019, of the detainees for whom a reason for detention had been provided, the top
three reasons were as follows: about 33 percent were detained for reasons related to religion; about 20 percent were detained in relation to having traveled abroad; and about 11 percent were detained in connection with a relative or relatives.59

SHIFT IN OFFICIAL NARRATIVE FROM DENIAL TO DEFENSE

During this reporting year, Chinese authorities shifted the official narrative regarding mass internment camps, moving from denial of the camps’ existence in early 201860 to a public defense of the facilities.61 Rights advocates and scholars noted that Chinese officials felt compelled to change their narrative from denial to justification, in part following criticism of the camps at an August 2018 review of China’s compliance with the ICERD by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.62 In November 2018, during China’s Universal Periodic Review by the UN Human Rights Council, Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng described the camps as a measure that was effective in preventing people from engaging in extremism and terrorism.63 In March 2019, XUAR government chairperson Shohrat Zakir told NPC delegates that the camps were “like boarding schools where the students eat and live for free,”64 and that the camps had been “effective in eliminating religious extremism.”65 In a March 2019 white paper, the State Council Information Office said the camps “fully respect and protect the customs and habits of trainees of different ethnic groups,” including by “car[ing] for their mental health,” and “offer[ing] psychological counseling services.”66 In addition, officials invited foreign journalists on escorted tours of mass internment camps, during which they referred to the facilities as voluntary educational institutions.67 During one such trip, in April 2019, Bloomberg reporter Peter Martin noted that there were bars on the windows of camp dormitories, and doors that locked only from the outside.68

On July 30, 2019, Shohrat Zakir and XUAR government vice chairperson Erkin Tuniyaz held a press conference to describe what they referred to as the success of “vocational education and training centers,” telling journalists that most people had left the centers and obtained employment.69 Research indicated authorities compelled many current and former camp detainees to engage in forced labor, but reports did not substantiate XUAR officials’ claims that authorities had released the majority of camp detainees.70 Observers, including Uyghurs living abroad whose family members were detained in camps, disputed the claims that most camp detainees had been released.71 In August 2019, the New York Times reported that the camp system continued to expand.72

While Chinese officials highlighted the occupational benefits they said camp detainees obtained from vocational education and training,73 official documents sometimes referred to camps as “transformation through education” centers, a term that refers to ideological transformation.74 Chinese authorities have also used “transformation through education” efforts to “transform” Falun Gong practitioners, pressuring them to renounce their spiritual beliefs.75 Freedom House analyst Sarah Cook stated that Chinese Communist Party and government officials who had influence on policies in the XUAR “appear[ed] to be following the anti-Falun Gong
playbook,” and that some of these officials had previously overseen the “transformation” of Falun Gong practitioners.76

**Documentation of Mass Internment Camps**

Information on the scope, nature, and architecture of mass internment camps, and on conditions for detainees in the camps, primarily comes from the following sources:

**ANALYSIS OF CHINESE GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS**

Adrian Zenz’s November 2018 publication on security expenditures in the XUAR and other regions of China—research based on openly accessible official Chinese documents—illustrated that “political reeducation” carried out in mass internment camps appeared to be aimed at “political indoctrination and intimidation.”77 Zenz’s research thus refuted official Chinese claims that the purpose of mass internment camps is to provide vocational education and employment training.78 Specifically, Zenz analyzed information posted online by the Chinese government, including government procurement documents and construction bids for mass internment camps in the XUAR.79 According to Zenz’s research, XUAR budgetary data showed that spending decreased on vocational training between 2016 and 2017, while spending on security-related facility construction, prisons, and detention centers increased significantly.80

In October 2018, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported that, based on its analysis of 1,500 publicly available procurement documents from local governments in the XUAR, authorities administered mass internment camps in the same way as prisons.81 AFP reported that government departments in charge of administering camps ordered police uniforms, riot shields and helmets, electrified batons, cattle prods, billy clubs, spears, handcuffs, pepper spray, tear gas, tasers, net guns, stun guns, and spiked clubs known as “wolf’s teeth” to maintain control over detainees.82 In addition, AFP discovered orders for advanced surveillance systems, surveillance cameras, razor wire, a telephone eavesdropping system, and infrared monitoring equipment.83

**TESTIMONIES FROM CAMP SURVIVORS AND FAMILY MEMBERS**

In the past reporting year, Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and rights advocates living outside of China have documented cases of detention in XUAR mass internment camps, including by sharing detention information online and speaking with international media. In testimony presented at a U.S. Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee hearing in April 2019, Uyghur-American rights advocate Rushan Abbas said “[a]lmost every Uyghur in the U.S. has friends and family detained—sometimes dozens and dozens of family members detained.”84 Abbas said Chinese authorities detained her sister and her aunt in China in retaliation for her participation in a September 2018 panel on repression in the XUAR that took place at a think tank in Washington, DC.85 According to rights advocates, fear of Chinese official retaliation against their family members or friends prevented many Uyghurs and Kazakhs living outside of China from publicizing the cases of camp detainees, but over the
past year, they have spoken out in increasing numbers. Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service journalists continued to publicize the detention of their own family members in the XUAR, which they viewed as retaliation for their reporting on rights abuses.

Online forums have provided overseas Uyghurs and Kazakhs with opportunities to document the cases of internment camp detainees. Many Uyghurs and Kazakhs began to publicize the cases of their detained relatives and friends in February 2019, after the Turkish Foreign Ministry criticized mass internment camps and mourned the reported death of Uyghur musician Abdurehim Heyit in one of the camps. The day after the Turkish Foreign Ministry released its statement, an official Chinese media organization released a video of Heyit, showing that he was alive. The video’s release prompted many Uyghurs and Kazakhs living outside of China to post online videos, pictures, and information about missing family members, including some posts that linked to a social media campaign using the hashtag “#MeTooUyghur,” in which they asked Chinese authorities to release video of their detained relatives in order to prove they were still alive. Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and rights advocates have also compiled information on thousands of political prisoners in mass internment camps and other facilities in the online Xinjiang Victims Database, which represents a small proportion of the total number of camp detainees in the XUAR.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA REPORTS

International media documented the size of mass internment camps, as well as the security features in place in and around the camps, by traveling to camp sites throughout the XUAR. Journalists from Reuters, BBC, and the Globe and Mail independently traveled to camps throughout the XUAR to document their existence. Journalists from international media also interviewed former internment camp detainees and their family members to document their experiences. For example, a Washington Post contributor interviewed the wife of ethnic Kazakh Chinese national Zharqynbek Otan, who returned to Kazakhstan after authorities detained him in a camp and other detention facilities in the XUAR for nearly two years. After his release, Otan, 31 years old, reportedly had problems with his memory and difficulty recognizing his family members.

DETENTIONS OF FOREIGN RESIDENTS

Mass internment camp detainees reportedly included permanent residents of the United States and Australia. American officials stated in March 2019 that Chinese authorities may have detained several American residents, including the father of a man living in California. As of August 2019, Chinese authorities reportedly detained ten or more Australian residents in mass internment camps. In addition, at least five Australian children were reportedly unable to leave the XUAR due to restrictions on the freedom of movement of their parents in the XUAR.
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ANALYSIS OF SATELLITE IMAGES

In November 2018, the International Cyber Policy Centre of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute released a report with research based on analysis of satellite imagery, as well as existing scholarly research, news reports, and other sources, which documented the recent expansion of both individual mass internment camps and the camp system as a whole. According to the Centre’s report, which contained analysis of 28 camp locations in the XUAR, these camps increased in size by 465 percent from early 2016 to the quarter ending in September 2018. The report determined that the facilities being constructed “appear intended for permanent use.”

Additional satellite imagery analysis showed rapid growth in the size and scope of camp facilities. In November 2018, Reuters published a report based on analysis of satellite images it conducted together with Earthrise Media, finding that the size of 39 camps they chose to analyze had nearly tripled between April 2017 and August 2018. In October 2018, BBC published the findings of satellite imagery analysis it conducted with aerospace company GMV, concluding that the recent trend in camp construction was towards building larger facilities.

Forced Labor in Mass Internment Camps

According to international media reports, authorities forced some mass internment camp detainees to engage in labor, and forced former detainees to engage in labor following their release from camps. According to research published by Adrian Zenz in July 2019, authorities began establishing forced labor programs for camp detainees and “graduates” in the second half of 2018. At the same time, according to Zenz’s research, officials implemented extensive forced labor programs that involved sending rural residents not detained in camps to centralized training and employment, as well as programs in “satellite factories” located in villages in which rural, mainly female, residents, were forced to work. Government authorities provided subsidies to companies for each current or former camp worker they trained and employed. Companies from provinces and municipalities in eastern China also employed forced labor in the XUAR, including in mass internment camps, through a continuing “pairing assistance” program. Zenz wrote that, since camp detainees have been forced to labor alongside others that have not been detained in camps, “it will soon become impossible to clearly determine whether a labor-intensive manufacturing product in Xinjiang will be made with labor from former detainees or not.”

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials investigated reports of forced labor products manufactured in a mass internment camp being sold in the United States after the Associated Press reported that an American sportswear company had imported such products. Authorities in Ili (Yili) Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture reportedly sent some former camp detainees back to an internment camp after they refused the terms of their forced labor in a factory. [For more information on forced labor in the XUAR, see...
Transfer of Camp Detainees to Facilities Outside of the XUAR

Reports emerged that authorities transferred some detainees from mass internment camps in the XUAR to detention facilities in other parts of China, due to factors including overcrowding in camps within the XUAR and authorities’ desire to conceal information on camp detainees.\textsuperscript{114} Authorities reportedly carried out transfers in strict secrecy, including through using “sealed railway carriages,” covering the windows of vehicles transporting detainees, and blocking off roads used to transport detainees.\textsuperscript{115} Radio Free Asia reported that authorities transferred detainees to prisons in Heilongjiang province;\textsuperscript{116} Gansu province;\textsuperscript{117} Shaanxi province;\textsuperscript{118} Sichuan province;\textsuperscript{119} Shandong province;\textsuperscript{120} and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.\textsuperscript{121} Authorities also reportedly transferred camp detainees to other locations within the XUAR due to concerns over existing relationships of camp employees to detainees.\textsuperscript{122} On September 26, 2018, state media reported that ticket sales for the regional rail system would be suspended for trains departing on October 22 and later.\textsuperscript{123} Australian scholar James Leibold speculated that authorities were transferring camp detainees in part in order to prevent human rights monitors from being able to track what had happened to them.\textsuperscript{124}

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detentions of Leading Turkic Cultural and Intellectual Figures</th>
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<tr>
<td>As in the previous reporting year,\textsuperscript{125} officials continued to detain leading Turkic intellectuals and cultural figures, including Uyghur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz scholars, musicians, writers, and journalists, in mass internment camps and other facilities.\textsuperscript{126} According to an American scholar and rights advocate, Chinese officials have attempted to “undermine Uyghur scholarly achievement and leadership through indoctrination and terrorization of intellectuals.”\textsuperscript{127}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In May 2019, the U.S.-based organization Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) reported the detention or disappearance of at least 435 intellectuals since early 2017 in the XUAR, stating that the cases it had documented were “likely a small portion of those persecuted,” given the lack of transparency in the region and the severe consequences to individuals providing information about such cases.\textsuperscript{128} UHRP cited University of Washington anthropologist Darren Byler, who said Chinese authorities had focused on public figures “working in speech or text-oriented mediums,” in part because “the reeducation campaign specifically targets public figures who have significant influence.”\textsuperscript{129}</td>
</tr>
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Detentions of Leading Turkic Cultural and Intellectual Figures—Continued

The detentions of Tashpolat Teyip and Sanubar Tursun are illustrative of Chinese authorities’ targeting of leading cultural figures in the XUAR. According to reports published during this reporting year, an unidentified court reportedly sentenced Teyip, the president of Xinjiang University, to death with a two-year reprieve sometime after he disappeared in March 2017. Authorities reportedly accused Teyip, who received an honorary doctoral degree from the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris in 2008, of being a “separatist” and “two-faced.” In the case of Uyghur musician Sanubar Tursun, an international artistic expression advocacy organization reported in February 2019 that authorities may have detained her in a mass internment camp in the XUAR, and cited unconfirmed information that authorities may have sentenced her to five years in prison. In November 2018, organizers canceled concerts she had been scheduled to perform in France in February 2019, after her international contacts could no longer reach her.

Additional representative cases of detained Uyghur cultural and intellectual figures are as follows: Uyghur medical scholar Halmurat Ghopur; Uyghur comedian Adil Mijit; Uyghur singer Zahirshah Ablimit; Uyghur journal editor Qurban Mamut; Uyghur education official Satar Sawut; Uyghur editor and writer Yalqun Rozi, and retired Uyghur professor Mutellip Sidiq Qahiri.

Detentions of Kazakhs and Kyrgyz; Documentation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan of XUAR Mass Internment Camps

XUAR authorities continued to detain ethnic Kazakhs in mass internment camps, including some who held permanent residency status in Kazakhstan, sometimes after officials requested that they return to the XUAR from Kazakhstan. XUAR authorities detained at least one Kazakh citizen who was born in Kazakhstan, Gulbahar Jelilova, in a mass internment camp. Authorities detained Jelilova, an ethnic Uyghur businesswoman, in May 2017, in Urumqi municipality, and held her in custody for one year and three months after confiscating her Kazakh passport and issuing her a Chinese identification document. In December 2018, Kazakhstan’s Foreign Ministry reported that Chinese officials had agreed to allow 2,500 ethnic Kazakhs in China to forfeit their Chinese citizenship and go to Kazakhstan, but details of the move were unclear. In March 2019, Kazakhstan’s Foreign Ministry said Chinese authorities had released 20 Kazakh citizens out of a total of 33 held in mass internment camps. Nevertheless, this past year, Kazakhstan authorities repeatedly denied asylum to Chinese citizen Sayragul Sauytbay, an ethnic Kazakh, who fled China in April 2018 after Chinese authorities compelled her to work in a mass internment camp. In June 2019, Sauytbay, her husband, and her children flew to Sweden on an alien’s passport issued by Swedish authorities.

Kazakhs in Kazakhstan with family members detained in camps in the XUAR increasingly publicized their cases, through social media and online videos, often in cooperation with the Almaty-
In March 2019, Kazakhstan authorities detained Atajurt head Serikzhan Bilash on charges of “inciting ethnic hatred” and raided Atajurt’s offices, removing equipment used to videotape detention testimonies. In August 2019, a court in Almaty, Kazakhstan, freed Bilash from detention according to the terms of a plea agreement that reportedly required him to curtail his rights advocacy activities.

Rights advocates in Kyrgyzstan also began documenting the cases of detained ethnic Kyrgyz, including university students whom Chinese authorities detained when the students returned to China after studying in Kyrgyzstan.

Forcible Displacement of the Children of Camp Detainees

Authorities have reportedly placed the children of mass internment camp detainees in the XUAR in orphanages, welfare centers, and boarding schools, often despite the willingness of other relatives to care for the children, raising concerns of forcible assimilation. In 2017, authorities developed a strategy to invest billions of yuan in childcare and boarding school facilities in the XUAR, and the creation of these facilities largely coincided with the establishment of the mass internment camp system in the region. Orphanages, boarding schools, and other full- and part-time childcare facilities in the XUAR house children with one or both parents in internment or another form of detention or forced labor, and provide care for children as young as several months old. Reports suggested the number of displaced children is high: between January 2017 and September 2018, the XUAR government reportedly invested over US$30 million in 45 new orphanages. In 2017, a county in Kashgar prefecture built 18 new orphanages and authorities oversaw the regionwide building and renovation of 4,300 “bilingual” kindergartens, some of which board students. In 2018, Uyghurs in Turkey, Kazakhstan, and the U.S. began reporting the possible disappearance and institutionalization of child relatives, including several non-Chinese citizens. A human rights organization expressed concern that authorities’ displacement of minority children from family homes into state-run institutions, where orphans have long been raised according to Han Chinese cultural norms, represented an attempt by the government to forcibly assimilate Uyghurs.

Intrusive Homestay Programs

Authorities continued to assign cadres and government workers, usually of Han ethnicity, to live with ethnic minority families in their homes for certain periods of time to gather information that was used, in some cases, to send their hosts to mass internment camps. According to official media, as of September 2018, regional officials and other government employees had made more than 49 million visits to ethnic minority residents since the “pairing relatives” (jiedui renqin) or “pairing and assistance” (jiedui bangfu or jiedui fubang) program began in the fall of 2016. Government workers are reportedly eligible for promotions if they volunteer to take part in a homestay program to monitor ethnic mi
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Minority families and teach them about Communist Party policies. According to an in-depth report by Darren Byler, government workers who refused to take part in homestay programs could lose their jobs. Under such programs, workers, referred to as “big brothers” and “big sisters,” watch their host families for signs that their practice of Islam is too “extreme.” Signs of a host family’s “extremism” might include possession of the Quran; having an acquaintance who lives abroad; and an unwillingness to drink alcohol. Visiting cadres were authorized to ask children in the family for information if they felt other family members were evading their questions. The cadres then used the information they compiled to decide whether to recommend that authorities should send members of their host families to a mass internment camp.

Repressive Surveillance Technology and Security Measures

During this reporting year, XUAR government authorities continued to use surveillance technology and other measures to tighten state control over ethnic minority groups in the region, and to identify individuals to detain in mass internment camps. A report published by Human Rights Watch in May 2019 documented authorities’ continued use of a centralized system known as the “Integrated Joint Operations Platform” (IJOP) to compile and analyze information collected through mass surveillance mechanisms in the XUAR and to detect “abnormal” behaviors, targeting individuals for detention in camps or other types of restriction on movement. In February 2019, Dutch cybersecurity researcher Victor Gevers discovered an online database run by the Chinese facial recognition company SenseNets that compiled real-time information on the movements of more than 2.5 million individuals in the XUAR, recording more than 6.7 million coordinates in a 24-hour period. Gevers consequently asserted that the database was used to surveil Uyghur Muslims. According to international media reports, SenseTime, which set up SenseNets together with Chinese firm NetPosa Technologies in 2015, helped establish a “smart policing” venture in the XUAR, and counted American and other companies among its investors. [For more information on surveillance measures and foreign commercial investment in repressive security technology in the XUAR, see Section II—Business and Human Rights.]

Freedom of Religion

During the reporting year, the head of the Chinese Communist Party’s United Front Work Department, You Quan, and XUAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo both emphasized the need to “sinicize” religion and resist “religious extremism” in the XUAR under the direction of the Party. Chinese officials justified measures to repress Islamic religious faith and Muslim cultural identity, often by invoking “sinicization” and “anti-extremism” arguments. These measures included:

• Restrictions on religious ceremonies, including funerals and burial practices;
• The confiscation and destruction of religious books and prayer mats;
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- The policing of commonly used religiously inflected phrases such as “assalamu alaykum”; 181
- Cracking down on halal products and their designation; 182
- Forcing some Muslims to drink alcohol and eat pork, in violation of their religious beliefs. 183

Throughout the XUAR, government and Party officials also enforced the physical destruction and closure of mosques, as well as policies restricting and deterring mosque attendance. 184 In May 2019, the Guardian newspaper released the findings of research it had conducted with the journalism site Bellingcat, using satellite imagery analysis, reporting that 15 mosques and Islamic shrines out of 91 sites analyzed had been destroyed or nearly destroyed between 2016 and 2018. 185 Of the sites analyzed, the Guardian and Bellingcat also found that 31 mosques and 2 major shrines, including the prominent Keriya Heytgah Mosque in Hotan prefecture, XUAR, had suffered significant structural damage. 186 Scholars and journalists reported that mosques throughout the XUAR were empty of worshipers and featured security cameras, razor wire, and security guards at entrances who were responsible for checking visitors’ identity documents. 187

Officials throughout the XUAR detained Turkic Muslims in mass internment camps for religious reasons. Examples of such individuals whose detentions were reported in the past year included an 80-year-old man detained in a camp for one year reportedly in part because “he was a Muslim who had a beard”; 188 an 87-year-old man detained in a camp because he could read the Quran; 189 a woman detained in a camp and a prison for studying Islam at an Egyptian university; 190 and a man in his twenties whom authorities detained in a camp and then sentenced to 15 years in prison for posting information and photos about Islam on the messaging service WeChat. 191 Authorities reportedly sentenced well-known Uyghur businessman Abdughappar Abdurusul to death, possibly for making an unsanctioned Islamic pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. 192

As in previous reporting years, 193 XUAR officials reportedly imposed controls on Muslims’ observance of Ramadan. Turkic Muslim residents of the XUAR faced restrictions on fasting, 194 mosque attendance, 195 and the exchange of Islamic greetings. 196 Authorities reportedly forced some Muslim civil servants and students to eat lunch during Ramadan 197 and forced some Uyghur Muslims to eat pork in spite of their Muslim faith. 198
Notes to Section IV—Xinjiang


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7, 24. United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter IV, Human Rights, Convention on the Elimi-

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