

## CECC Annual Report 2021

### KEY FINDINGS

#### XINJIANG

- In 2021, the U.S. State Department found that China had committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minority groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The State Department found that acts constituting genocide and crimes against humanity included arbitrary detention, forced abortion and forced sterilization, rape, torture, forced labor, and the violation of freedom of religion, expression, and movement. Parliamentarians in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic have also determined that Chinese authorities committed genocide in the XUAR. Independent experts on international law also found that authorities had committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Turkic and Muslim peoples in the XUAR.
- International researchers and journalists found evidence during this reporting year that authorities continued to expand detention facilities, including mass internment camps, and built new camps and other detention facilities in recent years, including as recently as January 2020. Reports published this past year indicated that XUAR officials continued to sentence many Turkic and Muslim individuals to prison, often following their detention in a mass internment camp. Observers noted that the recent expansion and construction of prisons, the transfer of prisoners to locations outside the XUAR, and the phenomenon of deferred sentences indicate that the scale of imprisonment in the past several years has been so great that it has overwhelmed the existing prison infrastructure in the XUAR.
- Officials carried out some of the most egregious acts of persecution of ethnic minorities in the XUAR against women. According to survivor and witness testimony, as well as researchers' analysis of official documents and other sources, ethnic minority women in the XUAR have been subjected to rape and sexual abuse in mass internment camps and as a result of intrusive state-mandated homestay programs.
- Researchers' analyses of population statistics and other documents published by the Chinese government showed that an increase in forced sterilization, intrauterine device (IUD) insertions, and abortions among ethnic minority women, together with an increased rate of detention among ethnic minority populations, led to significant decreases in natural population growth among ethnic minority communities. According to a report published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, proportionally, birth rates may have dropped more in the XUAR than in any other location in the world since 1950 between 2017 and 2019—a decline “more than double the rate of decline in Cambodia at the height of the Khmer Rouge genocide.”

- Reports published during the past year described authorities' systematic separation of ethnic minority children in the XUAR from their families and their forcible placement in state-run orphanages, welfare centers, and boarding schools. This forcible displacement of children has been carried out in violation of the PRC Law on the Protection of Minors and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to international media reports, many of the children placed in these facilities had at least one parent in detention.

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phanages, welfare centers, and boarding schools. This forcible displacement of children has been carried out in violation of the PRC Law on the Protection of Minors and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to international media reports, many of the children placed in these facilities had at least one parent in detention.

- In June 2021, 12 UN human rights experts stated that they were “extremely alarmed” by reports that Chinese authorities had targeted Uyghur detainees and other minorities in detention for forced organ removal. The experts cited “credible information” that authorities forced such detainees to undergo blood tests and other medical examinations without their informed consent and that the results of these tests are placed in a database used for organ allocation.

### *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 end the formal imprisonment of ethnic minority XUAR residents for political reasons. 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 and imprisonment for political reasons.

- Push for the establishment of a United Nations commission of inquiry to investigate human rights abuses in the XUAR, identify perpetrators of these abuses, and make recommendations to hold perpetrators accountable.

- Prioritize engagement with other governments, multilateral organizations, and international non-governmental organizations to address the mass atrocity crimes being perpetrated against predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in the XUAR. Coordinate with these entities to compile relevant information regarding specific XUAR officials responsible for the mass arbitrary 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) and similar parallel sanctions by like-minded partners. Seek engagement and conduct public diplomacy with governments and civil society groups of Muslim-majority countries who are concerned about China’s treatment of Muslim ethnic minorities.

- Pass legislation prioritizing the resettlement of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Turkic and Muslim refugees in the United States, and granting them Priority 2 status in the United States’ refugee program. Urge other like-minded countries to implement similar refugee resettlement programs for Turkic and Muslim refugees from China. Identify countries likely to

deport Turkic and Muslim refugees from China and engage these countries through diplomatic channels to prevent such deportations.

- Urge Chinese authorities to immediately cease all coercive “homestay” programs, such as the “Becoming Family” program, as well as other initiatives in the XUAR implemented to surveil ethnic minorities in their communities.

- Urge Chinese authorities to immediately cease all placement of children in orphanages, welfare centers, and boarding schools without the consent of a parent or guardian. Call on Chinese authorities to allow children who are ethnic minority residents of the XUAR to leave China to be reunited with their parents and other family members living abroad, in accordance with Chinese and international law.

- Urge Chinese authorities to immediately cease all programs involving the forced labor of mass internment camp detainees and prisoners in the XUAR, as well as programs involving the forced labor of other ethnic minority individuals within and outside the XUAR.

- Direct the U.S. State Department and USAID to create programming to provide care for former mass internment camp detainees, to include such psychosocial counseling and other assistance as may be necessary to address the trauma these detainees have faced.

## XINJIANG

### *Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity in the XUAR*

In March 2021, the U.S. State Department stated that “genocide and crimes against humanity occurred during the year against the predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minority groups” in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).<sup>1</sup> The State Department found that acts constituting genocide and crimes against humanity included arbitrary detention, forced abortion and forced sterilization, rape, torture, forced labor, and the violation of freedom of religion, expression, and movement.<sup>2</sup> This finding is consistent with the determination issued by the State Department in January 2021 that genocide was ongoing against Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minority groups in the XUAR and that authorities had committed crimes against humanity against these groups since at least March 2017.<sup>3</sup> Parliamentarians in the United Kingdom,<sup>4</sup> Canada,<sup>5</sup> the Netherlands,<sup>6</sup> Lithuania,<sup>7</sup> and the Czech Republic<sup>8</sup> have also determined that Chinese authorities’ actions in the XUAR constitute genocide. Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides a list of five acts, any one of which may constitute genocide when it is “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.”<sup>9</sup> China and the United States have both ratified the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>10</sup>

During this reporting year, independent experts on international law also published findings that authorities had committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Turkic and Muslim peoples in the XUAR. These included:

- The Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, in consultation with dozens of international experts, which found evidence that China had committed genocide against the Uyghur people in “each and every act prohibited in Article II(a) through (e)” of the Genocide Convention;<sup>11</sup>
- Four lawyers affiliated with the London-based Essex Court Chambers, who argued that “there is a very credible case that acts carried out by the Chinese government against the Uyghur people in [the] XUAR amount to crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide”;<sup>12</sup>
- In a joint letter led by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 51 human rights and genocide prevention organizations and individual practitioners addressed the international community, stating evidence of official policies toward Turkic Muslims in the XUAR “strongly suggests that crimes against humanity and genocide are taking place”;<sup>13</sup>
- In April 2021, Human Rights Watch, together with Stanford Law School’s Human Rights & Conflict Resolution Clinic, found that authorities had committed “a range of abuses against Turkic Muslims” in the XUAR that constitute crimes against humanity;<sup>14</sup> and
- A legal analyst, writing in a report published by the Jamestown Foundation, who found that authorities’ transfer of ethnic

minority laborers to locations outside the XUAR constitutes the crimes against humanity of “forcible transfer” and “persecution.”<sup>15</sup>

#### *Officials Signal Continuation of Harsh Policies in the XUAR*

During the 2021 reporting year, Chinese President and Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping and other top-ranking government officials made comments indicating that official policies carried out in the past several years in the XUAR had been successful in bringing stability to the region.<sup>16</sup> At the third Xinjiang Central Work Forum in September 2020, Xi said the Communist Party’s policies in the XUAR had been “totally correct” and “must be held to for the long term.”<sup>17</sup> While Xi did not mention detention facilities in the XUAR during the Work Forum and made little mention of security in the region, international observers argued that his remarks likely indicated support for the widespread arbitrary detention, surveillance, and other measures officials have carried out in the region since around 2017.<sup>18</sup> Xi also stressed the importance of promoting a common Chinese identity in order to “[m]ake a shared awareness of Chinese nationhood take root deep in the soul.”<sup>19</sup> He further urged cadres to promote the “sinicization of Islam,”<sup>20</sup> a sentiment that was echoed in the Chinese government’s draft Five-Year Plan that was released at the March 2021 annual meeting of the National People’s Congress.<sup>21</sup> Chinese officials have used the promotion of “sinicization” to heighten official control over religion and restrict religious freedom, including in the XUAR.<sup>22</sup> During a four-day trip to the XUAR in March 2021, Wang Yang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party Central Committee Political Bureau (Politburo), also emphasized the need to promote the “sinicization of Islam” in the region, through the training of religious personnel and other efforts, and to guide Islam in the region to conform to socialism.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Authorities Block Information About Conditions in the XUAR*

Lack of access for independent scholars, reporters, and other observers to the XUAR, combined with a lack of publicly available information from within the region, have hindered the ability of the international community to learn about current developments in the region.<sup>24</sup> While authorities have promoted an official narrative that ethnic minorities in the XUAR enjoy freedom and prosperity,<sup>25</sup> officials have blocked information about human rights conditions in the region from reaching the international community.<sup>26</sup> According to Yale University historian Timothy Snyder, “lack of information or the presence of disinformation” is one of the historical preconditions of mass atrocities.<sup>27</sup> During this reporting year, authorities acted to restrict and surveil international journalists attempting to report on issues such as mass internment camps and forced labor in the XUAR.<sup>28</sup> Authorities increasingly removed information previously available online that documented the mass internment camp system and other repressive policies,<sup>29</sup> and have forced the departure of foreign reporters who investigated the mass internment camp system and other rights abuses in the XUAR, including, in March 2021, BBC reporter John Sudworth.<sup>30</sup> In spite of official

restrictions on access to the XUAR, observers have been able to provide information about human rights abuses through satellite imagery analysis,<sup>31</sup> Chinese government documents,<sup>32</sup> onsite reporting,<sup>33</sup> and testimony from survivors and victims' relatives.<sup>34</sup> [For more information on officials' suppression of information in China, see Section II—Freedom of Expression.]

*Reports Reveal Abuses, Harsh Conditions in Mass Internment Camps*

International researchers and journalists found evidence during this reporting year that authorities continued to expand detention facilities, including mass internment camps, and built new camps and other detention facilities in recent years, including as recently as January 2020.<sup>35</sup> Some low-security camps appeared to have been scaled back or decommissioned, and about half of the detention facilities mapped by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute appeared to be “prison-style facilities.”<sup>36</sup> While it is unclear how many of these “prison-style facilities” served as sites of formal imprisonment, this trend may corroborate reports that officials have been carrying out large-scale formal imprisonment and shifting camp detainees into prisons, where they serve fixed or life terms of imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> According to the New York Times, “the continued growth of detention sites across Xinjiang suggests that the authorities are determined to transform and subdue Uighur society for generations to come.”<sup>38</sup> In December 2020, BuzzFeed reported that, based on official documents, interviews, and its analysis of satellite imagery, more than 100 newly built mass internment camps and prisons contained onsite factories used for detainee forced labor.<sup>39</sup> In November 2020, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported that a crematorium and cemetery appeared to be located in between two mass internment camps in Aksu prefecture, XUAR, possibly indicating that authorities sought to hide information about deaths that occurred in camps.<sup>40</sup>

Reports published throughout the year documented authorities' continued use of torture and other forms of mistreatment against camp detainees.<sup>41</sup> As in the past reporting year,<sup>42</sup> reports emerged documenting the deaths of individuals in mass internment camps or after they were detained in camps or prisons. Examples include the following:

- **Qurbanjan Abdukerim**, a 54-year-old Uyghur textile trader who died in February 2021, several days after being released from a mass internment camp, where he had lost more than 100 pounds during his three-year detention.<sup>43</sup>
- **Abdulghafur Hapiz**. In September 2020, in response to a formal inquiry from the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Chinese authorities confirmed the death of Hapiz, a retired Uyghur driver from Kashgar prefecture, XUAR, saying he had died of pneumonia and tuberculosis in November 2018.<sup>44</sup> Hapiz's Australia-based daughter expressed doubt about the cause of death provided by Chinese officials and said she believed authorities had detained him in a mass internment camp.<sup>45</sup> Chinese officials did not indicate whether or not Hapiz was detained at the time of his death.<sup>46</sup>



- **Qaliolla Tursyn**, a 71-year-old ethnic Kazakh legal consultant, reportedly died in 2020 in Wusu Prison in Shixu (Wusu) city, Tarbaghatay (Tacheng) prefecture, Ili (Yili) Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, XUAR, where he was serving a 20-year prison sentence.<sup>47</sup> Authorities reportedly refused to allow Tursyn’s family members access to his body, and Tursyn’s Kazakhstan-based son expressed concern that his father’s death may have been caused by torture or ill-treatment in detention.<sup>48</sup>

*High Rates of Imprisonment, Lengthy Prison Terms for Ethnic Minorities in the XUAR*

Reports published this past year indicated that XUAR officials continued to sentence many Turkic and Muslim individuals to long prison terms, sometimes following their detention in a mass internment camp.<sup>49</sup> Observers noted that the recent expansion and construction of prisons, the transfer of prisoners to locations outside the XUAR, and the phenomenon of deferred sentences indicate that the scale of imprisonment in the past several years has been so great that it has overwhelmed the existing prison infrastructure in the XUAR.<sup>50</sup> Reports also documented authorities’ use of pretrial detention centers to hold detainees beyond the limits defined by law, as well as the prevalence of torture and other ill treatment in the centers.<sup>51</sup> Since 2017, authorities held a number of Uyghur and Kazakh detainees, sometimes for years, in either pretrial detention centers or at home, under heavy surveillance, whose formal imprisonment had been deferred to a later date, possibly indicating that prisons were overcrowded.<sup>52</sup> American researcher Gene Bunin highlighted additional ways in which XUAR authorities have not adhered to legal requirements in formally imprisoning Turkic and Muslim individuals, including lack of transparency in criminal and judicial procedures; criminal trials carried out inside detention facilities instead of in courts; and failure to provide defendants with legal representation.<sup>53</sup>

Former officials and civil servants have been among those ethnic minority individuals sentenced to lengthy prison terms, often after authorities criticized them for being “two-faced.”<sup>54</sup> These individuals include:

- Retired regional forestry bureau head and former mayor of Korla (Ku’erle) city, Bayangol (Bayinguoleng) Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, **Memet Abdulla**.<sup>55</sup> Authorities sentenced 75-year-old Abdulla, a Uyghur, to life in prison in December 2019 for bribery and “separatism.”<sup>56</sup> Abdulla’s family members believe authorities imprisoned him in part due to the fact that two of his children lived in the United States, and because they viewed him as “two-faced.”<sup>57</sup>
- Retired Uyghur government official **Ruqiye Osman**.<sup>58</sup> Authorities sentenced Osman to 17 years in prison in 2019 for having listened to a sermon at a wake she attended more than a decade earlier.<sup>59</sup> Osman, 73, spent 30 years working as a family planning official in Ghulja (Yining) city, Ili (Yili) Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, XUAR, where she won awards for her work ethic.<sup>60</sup>

- Uyghur **Shirzat Bawudun**.<sup>61</sup> In April 2021, official media outlet CGTN released a video featuring Bawudun, the former head of the regional justice department.<sup>62</sup> According to the video, Bawudun had used his position to support terrorist activity.<sup>63</sup> In April 2021, officials announced that they had sentenced Bawudun to death with a two-year reprieve on charges including “separatism” and accepting bribes.<sup>64</sup>

Chinese authorities’ lack of transparency often makes it difficult for relatives of detained Turkic Muslims to obtain confirmation of their sentences and other information.<sup>65</sup> At a December 31, 2020 press conference, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman confirmed that authorities had sentenced retired Uyghur doctor **Gulshan Abbas** to prison.<sup>66</sup> Relatives of Abbas, citing an unnamed source, reported on December 30, 2020, that Chinese authorities had sentenced her to 20 years in prison in March 2019.<sup>67</sup> Authorities initially detained Abbas in Urumqi municipality, XUAR, in September 2018, six days after her sister Rushan Abbas spoke at a think tank in Washington, D.C. about Uyghur rights issues.<sup>68</sup>

Additional cases of Uyghurs sentenced to long-term imprisonment include:

- **Mirzat Taher**.<sup>69</sup> Taher, 30, a Uyghur and an Australian permanent resident who is married to an Australian citizen, was sentenced to 25 years in prison in April 2021 on the charge of “separatism” in Qumul (Hami) municipality, XUAR.<sup>70</sup> According to Taher’s wife, the “separatism” charge was connected to time Taher spent in Turkey in 2014 and 2015.<sup>71</sup>
- **Ehtem Omer**.<sup>72</sup> An Urumqi court sentenced Omer, a well-known Uyghur author, to 20 years in prison in late 2018, possibly on charges related to “separatism,” reportedly in connection with his funding of his nephew’s studies in Egypt, or for engaging in religious activities.<sup>73</sup> Authorities reportedly burned several of his books in 2020 because they contained “separatist content.”<sup>74</sup>
- **Ablikim Kelkun**.<sup>75</sup> In fall 2020, Radio Free Asia reported that in late 2019, authorities in the XUAR had sentenced Kelkun, a popular Uyghur entertainer, to 18 years in prison for “religious extremism” and other charges.<sup>76</sup> Officials reportedly alleged that two of his songs were evidence of his “separatism” and “religious extremism,” and may have also sentenced him because of his close relationship with some religious figures and his past travel to Turkey, a country Chinese officials have flagged for “religious extremism.”<sup>77</sup>
- **Renagul Gheni**.<sup>78</sup> According to Renagul Gheni’s sister, who lives in the United States, authorities sentenced Gheni, a Uyghur painter and art teacher, to 17 years in prison for praying during their father’s funeral and reading the Quran.<sup>79</sup> Prior to her formal imprisonment, authorities reportedly detained Gheni in a mass internment camp or camps in Cherchen (Qiemo) county, Bayangol (Bayinguoleng) Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, XUAR.<sup>80</sup>

### *Uyghurs Targeted for Forced Organ Removal*

In June 2021, 12 UN human rights experts stated that they were “extremely alarmed” by reports that Chinese authorities had targeted Uyghur detainees and other minorities in detention for forced organ removal.<sup>81</sup> The experts cited “credible information” that authorities forced such detainees to undergo blood tests and other medical examinations without their informed consent and that the results of these tests are placed in a database used for organ allocation.<sup>82</sup>

### *Forced Labor Involving Turkic and Muslim XUAR Residents*

During this reporting year, authorities in the XUAR continued to maintain a system of forced labor that involved former mass internment camp detainees and other Turkic and Muslim individuals throughout the XUAR.<sup>83</sup> A March 2021 Jamestown Foundation report outlined authorities’ implementation of large-scale, coercive, and highly securitized transfers of ethnic minority laborers to regions outside the XUAR.<sup>84</sup> These labor programs constitute forced labor under the International Labour Organization’s Forced Labour Convention and are a form of human trafficking under the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.<sup>85</sup> The Jamestown Foundation report estimates that up to 1.6 million of these laborers were at risk of being subjected to forced labor.<sup>86</sup> Based on a paper published by Nankai University in Tianjin municipality and other academic and official sources, the report showed that authorities carried out labor transfers not only for the economic benefit of participating companies, but also for the purpose of diluting the cultural and religious practices and population density of ethnic minority residents of the XUAR.<sup>87</sup> In addition, the report showed that authorities forced hundreds of thousands of ethnic minority farmers to give up their land and become industrial laborers, while officials also worked to bring 300,000 Han Chinese people, mostly from outside the XUAR, to live in southern areas of the XUAR long populated primarily by Uyghurs.<sup>88</sup> Legal analysis provided in the report argues that the transfer of ethnic minority laborers to locations outside the XUAR constitutes the crimes against humanity of “forcible transfer” and “persecution.”<sup>89</sup>

Reports published by the BBC and the Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy in December 2020 indicate that in 2018 and 2019, authorities compelled hundreds of thousands of ethnic minority residents of the XUAR to pick cotton, under labor transfer and “poverty alleviation” programs.<sup>90</sup> The conditions under which workers were employed were reportedly coercive and were achieved through labor transfers carried out by officials to meet government quotas.<sup>91</sup> On January 13, 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issued a region wide Withhold Release Order (WRO) prohibiting the import of all cotton products and tomato products produced in the XUAR.<sup>92</sup> CBP said it issued the WRO “based on information that reasonably indicates the use of detainee or prison labor and situations of forced labor.”<sup>93</sup>

#### FORCED LABOR OF TURKIC MUSLIMS IN THE SOLAR INDUSTRY

Reports published this past year documented the use of forced labor in the solar energy industry in the XUAR, where four of the world's five largest polysilicon producers are located.<sup>94</sup> According to the New York Times, a report drafted by the Horizon Advisory consulting firm provided evidence that major solar companies supplying more than one-third of the world's polysilicon have used the forced labor of ethnic minorities in the XUAR.<sup>95</sup> Polysilicon produced in the XUAR has been used in solar panels sold in the United States and Europe.<sup>96</sup> Research published in May 2021 by the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice indicates that labor transfer programs using workers from the XUAR were pervasive in the solar panel production industry, and at least one solar panel supplier was located in the same industrial complex as detention facilities likely to employ forced labor.<sup>97</sup> According to the Centre's report, all four XUAR-based polysilicon producers either employed forced labor directly or through their sourcing of raw materials.<sup>98</sup> [For more information on forced labor involving Turkic and Muslim XUAR residents, see Section II—Business and Human Rights.]

#### *Persecution of Ethnic Minority Women in the XUAR: Rape, "Homestay" Programs and Population Control*

##### ACCOUNTS OF RAPE IN MASS INTERNMENT CAMPS

According to a report published in March 2021 by the Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, "rape, sexual abuse, exploitation, and public humiliation, at the hands of camp officials and Han cadres assigned to Uyghur homes under Government-mandated programs" constitute the act of genocide of "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" as defined by the Genocide Convention.<sup>99</sup> According to a February 2021 report published by the BBC, several former mass internment camp detainees and a former camp guard described experiencing or witnessing rape, sexual abuse, and torture in camps.<sup>100</sup> An ethnic Kazakh woman formerly detained in a mass internment camp told Radio Free Asia (RFA) that men at the camp, including camp leaders, frequently raped female detainees.<sup>101</sup> Qelbinur Sidik, an ethnic Uzbek woman whom authorities forced to teach Mandarin Chinese at two mass internment camps, heard and saw evidence of rape, sexual assault, and torture during her time at one of the camps.<sup>102</sup>

##### INTRUSIVE HOMESTAY PROGRAMS

During this reporting year, reports continued to emerge about intrusive homestay programs in the XUAR, under which authorities assign cadres and government workers, usually of Han Chinese ethnicity, to live with ethnic minority families in their homes to conduct surveillance and compile information on family members.<sup>103</sup> These programs, known as "*jiedui renqin*" or "pairing relatives,"<sup>104</sup> leave families, and particularly women, vulnerable to sexual violence and other types of abuse.<sup>105</sup> Visiting "relatives" have monitored their hosts for "extremist behavior," including the

expression of resentment toward coercive population control measures.<sup>106</sup> According to Qelbinur Sidik, she was the victim of sexual harassment committed by a Han Chinese male “relative” assigned to live in her home.<sup>107</sup> Sidik also provided the account of an acquaintance who told her she heard male cadres speak about raping female host “relatives” in rural areas of the XUAR.<sup>108</sup> According to University of Nottingham scholar Rian Thum, ethnic minority host families “. . . live in fear, under the system in which they are subject to political judgment in every aspect of their own home.”<sup>109</sup>

**Women Subjected to Forced Sterilizations, IUD Insertions,  
and Abortions**

During this reporting year, the Commission observed reports of abusive population control measures targeting ethnic minority women in the XUAR. Researchers’ analyses of population statistics and other documents published by the Chinese government showed that an increase in forced sterilization, intrauterine device (IUD) insertions, and abortions among ethnic minority women, together with an increased rate of detention among ethnic minority populations, led to significant decreases in natural population growth among ethnic minority communities.<sup>110</sup> At the same time as authorities heightened population control measures among ethnic minority women in the XUAR, officials throughout China had relaxed the enforcement of population control measures for the majority Han Chinese population, and the natural population growth of the Han Chinese population in the XUAR increased.<sup>111</sup> Authorities threatened with arbitrary detention those ethnic minority women who refused to comply with forced population control measures.<sup>112</sup> According to at least one mass internment camp survivor, women in the camps were also subjected to forced abortions and forced IUD insertions.<sup>113</sup>

A May 2021 report published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) found that due to authorities’ campaigns to decrease the birth rate, using forced sterilization and IUD insertions, in the southern part of the XUAR beginning in April 2017, the birth rate in the XUAR decreased by nearly half between 2017 and 2019.<sup>114</sup> According to the authors of the ASPI report, the biggest decreases occurred in counties with the largest ethnic minority populations.<sup>115</sup> The report’s authors found that proportionally, birth rates in the XUAR may have dropped more than in any other location in the world since 1950 during this time period—a decline “more than double the rate of decline in Cambodia at the height of the Khmer Rouge genocide.”<sup>116</sup>

**Women Subjected to Forced Sterilizations, IUD Insertions,  
and Abortions—Continued**

Research and analysis of official data and other materials conducted by scholar Adrian Zenz showed that by 2019, XUAR authorities planned to force at least 80 percent of women of childbearing age in four southern prefectures mainly populated by ethnic minorities to undergo IUD insertions or sterilizations.<sup>117</sup> According to Zenz's research, the natural population growth rates of these four prefectures declined by 72.9 percent between 2015 and 2018, and these rates continued to decline in 2019, falling to at or just above zero in several counties.<sup>118</sup> Based on Zenz's analysis of projected population growth in southern areas of the XUAR, following official plans to continue to suppress birth rates in these areas, the estimated population loss for ethnic minority populations, compared to population growth rates without substantial government interference, could fall between 2.6 and 4.5 million people by the year 2040.<sup>119</sup>

*Forcible Displacement of Ethnic Minority Children*

Reports published during the past year described authorities' systematic separation of ethnic minority children in the XUAR from their families and their forcible placement in state-run orphanages, boarding schools, or other facilities.<sup>120</sup> This forcible displacement of children has been carried out in violation of the PRC Law on the Protection of Minors<sup>121</sup> and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>122</sup> Many of the children placed in these facilities reportedly had at least one parent in detention,<sup>123</sup> and authorities placed some children as young as 18 months in orphanages or other state-run facilities while forcing or coercing their parents to work.<sup>124</sup> Reports indicated that authorities often placed children in such facilities without the consent of their families.<sup>125</sup> Amnesty International called on Chinese officials to end the placement of Uyghur and other Turkic Muslim children in state institutions.<sup>126</sup> In their March 2021 report asserting that China had committed genocide against the Uyghur population in the XUAR, the Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights stated that Chinese authorities had committed the act of "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group," by separating children from their families and placing them in state-run facilities.<sup>127</sup>

According to government statistics, the number of students at boarding schools that teach grades one through nine in the XUAR grew from nearly half a million in 2017 to 880,500 in 2019, an increase of almost 77 percent.<sup>128</sup> While this figure is not exclusively comprised of ethnic minority students, the significant increase in students during the time of mass internment camp detentions in the XUAR, and in areas with large ethnic minority populations, signifies that many of the students were members of ethnic minority groups.<sup>129</sup> Human Rights Watch noted that parents' opposition to the placement of their children in full-time boarding schools put those parents at risk of being sent to mass internment camps.<sup>130</sup>

Chinese authorities have reportedly acted to prevent the reunification of ethnic minority children with their family members who

have relocated abroad, and have restricted the ability of parents living in exile to communicate with or obtain information about their children who remain in the XUAR.<sup>131</sup> In one example, Canada-based Uyghur Dilnur has been unable to contact XUAR-based family members or obtain information about what has happened to her son and daughter, whom she left in the care of her parents, since April 2017.<sup>132</sup> Before she left China in 2016, police reportedly told her they had denied her application for her seven-year-old son's passport because "they believed she would not come back to China if they issued a passport to him."<sup>133</sup> Mihriban Kader and Ablikim Memtimin fled to Italy in 2016 to avoid forced abortion and detention after Mihriban became pregnant outside of state-mandated birth limits, and left four of their children in the care of Mihriban's parents.<sup>134</sup> After police detained Mihriban's mother and her father was hospitalized, the children were left without a caretaker.<sup>135</sup> In June 2020, authorities in Shanghai municipality detained the four children and sent them to a state-run orphanage in the XUAR after they traveled alone across the country and attempted to enter the Italian consulate in Shanghai to obtain visas for Italy to rejoin their parents.<sup>136</sup>

#### *Repressive Surveillance Technology and Security Measures*

Reports published this past year documented the ways in which authorities in the XUAR have used surveillance technology to maintain control over Turkic and Muslim residents.<sup>137</sup> American scholar Darren Byler referred to the surveillance infrastructure in the XUAR as a "digital enclosure system" that, together with the fear of arbitrary detention, "holds Uyghurs and Kazakhs in place and creates endemic conditions of unfreedom."<sup>138</sup> Ethnic minority residents of the XUAR have been subjected to frequent checks of their mobile phones for "suspicious" content<sup>139</sup> and to involuntary face scans at public places that authorities matched to individual identification documents and the biometric data linked to these documents.<sup>140</sup> Officials sometimes installed cameras in or near peoples' homes to surveil them more closely.<sup>141</sup> Security officials also flagged individuals for additional scrutiny if they did not have a mobile phone in their possession, had switched off their phone, or had not been active on social media.<sup>142</sup>

Officials integrated data gathered from surveillance technology and other forms of policing into a system called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), which automatically identified people for detention.<sup>143</sup> Human Rights Watch analyzed a leaked list of more than 2,000 mass internment camp detainees from a predominantly Uyghur part of Aksu prefecture, XUAR, from 2018, and found that the IJOP system determined who should be detained and who should remain in detention based on a number of legal, nonviolent behaviors authorities considered suspicious.<sup>144</sup> These behaviors included wearing a burqa or veil or having a long beard; having more children than allowed by government policy; using software deemed suspicious; traveling to countries considered "sensitive"; or being young.<sup>145</sup>

In January 2021, news outlet the Intercept reported on its findings from a leaked police database based in Urumqi municipality, XUAR, comprised of millions of files, which also showed how secu-

rity authorities integrated online surveillance, data from checkpoint stops, facial recognition technology, home visits, and auxiliary policing to control and monitor local Muslim residents.<sup>146</sup> According to the Intercept's analysis, the Urumqi police database showed that authorities labeled former residents who had obtained asylum abroad as terrorists; monitored, investigated, and detained the relatives and friends of Uyghurs who had traveled abroad, in order to guard against "foreign ideas"; and even ordered the inspection of phones and computers of workers who had visited relatives outside of Urumqi.<sup>147</sup> The Intercept report also showed how authorities used rewards and pressure to compel ordinary citizens to provide information about neighbors, and compelled both ordinary citizens and auxiliary police to monitor their communities in highly intrusive and regimented ways.<sup>148</sup>

### *Freedom of Religion*

XUAR government and Party officials curtailed Muslim residents' freedom to practice their religious beliefs, including by implementing restrictions on prayer,<sup>149</sup> defacing and destroying mosques and cemeteries,<sup>150</sup> and detaining individuals for practicing or possessing materials about Islam.<sup>151</sup> As in previous reporting years,<sup>152</sup> XUAR officials reportedly imposed controls on Muslims' observance of Ramadan.<sup>153</sup> On Eid al Fitr, the holiday marking the end of Ramadan, authorities forced some Turkic Muslim residents in the XUAR to sing propaganda songs, and to dance in front of the Id Kah mosque in Kashgar prefecture.<sup>154</sup>

Reports published this past year showed that authorities have specifically targeted Turkic Muslim religious figures in the XUAR, including state-sanctioned imams, for detention in both mass internment camps and prisons.<sup>155</sup> The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) and Justice For All documented more than 600 cases of Muslim clerics who were detained since 2014 that likely represented a much larger number of detained religious figures in the region.<sup>156</sup> UHRP and Justice For All found that officials began widespread detention of Muslim clerics in the XUAR before they began the mass detention of the general population, likely due to the high degree of influence the clerics had in their communities.<sup>157</sup> Officials often charged clerics with offenses related to "extremism," "separatism," or taking part in "illegal" religious activities, based on such activities as praying outside of a state-approved mosque, preaching at weddings and funerals, or traveling abroad.<sup>158</sup> In May 2021, Kyodo News reported that in 2017, authorities detained a former imam at the prominent Id Kah mosque and sentenced him to 15 years in prison for "having spread extremism."<sup>159</sup> The case of Uyghur farmer **Ismail Sidiq**, who was sentenced to an additional 11 years in prison in 2018 on charges including taking part in "illegal religious activities" for praying in a prison dormitory and taking other unapproved actions, shows that officials punish detainees for observing their religious faith inside detention facilities.<sup>160</sup>



NEW RESEARCH REVEALS SCOPE OF MOSQUE AND  
SHRINE DESTRUCTION

Observers have noted that authorities' destruction of mosques, shrines, and other sacred sites maintained by Muslim ethnic minorities in the XUAR has been designed to erase the religious and cultural practices they observe that differentiate them from the Party and state's vision of an ideal Chinese society.<sup>161</sup> Article 6 of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief mandates that member states must protect places where people "worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief," including cemeteries and shrines.<sup>162</sup> New research based on satellite imagery and onsite reporting showed that, mostly since 2017, authorities demolished or damaged around 16,000 mosques in the XUAR and demolished or damaged more than half of the region's other religious sites, such as shrines and cemeteries.<sup>163</sup> [For more information on official restrictions on Muslims' right to practice their faith throughout China, see Section II—Freedom of Religion.]

#### Notes to Section IV—Xinjiang

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<sup>2</sup>Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “2020 Human Rights Report: China (Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet),” March 30, 2021.

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<sup>5</sup>House of Commons, Canada, “Vote Detail—56—Members of Parliament—House of Commons of Canada,” February 22, 2021.

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<sup>10</sup>United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter IV, Human Rights, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, accessed April 5, 2021.

<sup>11</sup>“The Uyghur Genocide: An Examination of China’s Breaches of the 1948 Genocide Convention,” Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy and Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, March 2021, 4–5.

<sup>12</sup>Alison Macdonald QC, Jackie McArthur, Naomi Hart, and Lorraine Aboagye, “International Criminal Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity and Genocide against the Uyghur Population in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,” Essex Court Chambers, January 26, 2021, 1; Global Legal Action Network, “Legal Opinion Concludes That Treatment of Uyghurs Amounts to Crimes against Humanity and Genocide,” February 8, 2021.

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<sup>20</sup>“Xi Jinping: Jianchi yifa zhi Jiang tuanjie wen Jiang wenhua run Jiang fumin xing Jiang changqi jian Jiang nuli jianshe xin shidai Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi Xinjiang” [Xi Jinping: Persist in governing Xinjiang according to law, unite and stabilize the culture of Xinjiang, enrich the people and make Xinjiang prosper over the long term, and strive to build a new era of socialism in Xinjiang with Chinese characteristics], *Xinhua*, September 26, 2020; Chun Han Wong, “Xi Says China Will Continue Efforts to Assimilate Muslims in Xinjiang,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 26, 2020.

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