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Findings

- During the Commission’s 2020 reporting year, the Chinese Communist Party and government carried out efforts to solidify their control over the cultural identity of the country’s ethnic minority groups, in contravention of the PRC Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law. In a September 2019 speech, Party General Secretary and President Xi Jinping appeared to endorse a “second generation” of ethnic policies, promoted by some Chinese officials and scholars, that would dismantle regional and local autonomy frameworks and replace them with policies aimed at diluting ethnic minority cultures.

- During this reporting year, officials in areas with large Hui populations continued to implement policies and restrictions limiting Hui Muslims’ ability to practice their religion and culture. According to a September 2019 New York Times report, in 2018, the State Council issued a confidential directive mandating local officials’ implementation of policies reducing the role of Islam in government and community institutions. Hui community members and other observers expressed the belief that the “Xinjiang model” of detention and religious repression appeared to be further expanding into Hui-populated areas.

- In January 2020, security officials in Jinan municipality, Shandong province, criminally detained Hui poet Cui Haoxin on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.” Cui, who uses the pen name An Ran, had, in recent years, been critical of official policies toward ethnic minorities. Cui’s detention, after his longtime criticism of official ethnic policies, may mark a further narrowing of the space for dissent and expression among Hui communities in China.

- In December 2019, authorities in Tongliao municipality, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, reportedly demolished a Buddhist temple on the grounds that it had been “illegally constructed.” Hundreds of Mongol herders knelt in front of the temple to protest its demolition, but police sprayed them with pepper spray and dispersed the crowd. Germany-based Mongol rights advocate Xi Haiming said that officials demolished the temple in order to eliminate the influence of religion and that they may have been concerned about the Tibetan Buddhist temple’s connection to the Dalai Lama. Many Mongols practice a form of Tibetan Buddhism.

Recommendations

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

- In cooperation with other UN member states, call upon China to allow UN special rapporteurs who work on minority issues such as racial discrimination, freedom of religion or belief, and the protection of human rights while countering terrorism to conduct visits to China to assess the status of ethnic minority rights. In addition, work with other UN member states to issue joint statements condemning violations of ethnic
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minority rights in China, and work to ensure that critics of China’s ethnic minority policies are allowed to freely and safely voice their opinions in UN forums.

○ Urge Chinese authorities to establish independent national human rights institutions in accordance with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (the Paris Principles).

○ Urge Chinese authorities to thoroughly investigate all allegations of racial, ethnic, and ethno-religious profiling, ensure that those responsible for such profiling are held accountable, and provide compensation and other appropriate remedies for victims, as recommended by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

○ Urge Chinese authorities to allow Hui and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority populations to freely engage in Islamic religious rituals, as a matter of their right to religious freedom, and in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as China’s Constitution, which prohibits discrimination based on religion.
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Growing Global Influence and Ethnic Minority Rights

International observers have expressed concern about China’s growing global attempts to redefine human rights,1 including the rights of its ethnic minority citizens.2 Observers criticized China’s April 2020 appointment to a seat on the UN Human Rights Council’s Consultative Group that allows it, together with four other countries in the Group, to oversee the vetting and interview process for the appointment of 17 United Nations human rights experts.3 These include the special rapporteurs who work on minority issues such as racial discrimination, freedom of religion or belief, and the protection of human rights while countering terrorism, all of which are directly relevant to the rights of ethnic minorities in China.4 In addition, in its World Report 2020, Human Rights Watch noted that, during a review of China’s human rights record in 2018 and 2019, Chinese officials and diplomats worked to suppress criticism of human rights abuses in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), including by pressuring delegations not to attend related panel discussions.5

Party and State Policy Toward Ethnic Minorities

“ETHNIC UNITY” AND “SECOND GENERATION” REFORMS

During this reporting year, the Chinese Communist Party and government carried out efforts to solidify their control over the cultural identity of the country’s ethnic minority groups, in contravention of the PRC Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law.6 In a September 2019 speech, Party General Secretary and President Xi Jinping called for increased state and Party efforts to promote “ethnic unity” and “inter-ethnic mingling” nationwide.7 Xi’s speech endorsed concepts consistent with “second generation” ethnic policy reforms, long advocated by leading officials and scholars, which prioritize identification with the country over identification with one’s ethnic group.8 These reforms would also dismantle the system of regional ethnic autonomy created by the “first generation” of ethnic policies9 and end the inclusion of ethnic identity information on identification documents.10 Proponents of “second generation” reforms have argued that including such information on identification documents unnecessarily reinforces ethnic differences instead of emphasizing a national identity.11

Reports published this past year indicated that officials had already begun implementing some “second generation” reforms, including the elimination or reduction of bonus points for ethnic minorities on college entrance exams in some provinces, and the creation of “unity villages” in the XUAR, featuring Han Chinese and ethnic minority neighbors.12 As noted by Belgian scholar Vanessa Frangville, the implementation of mass internment camps in the XUAR, together with state controls on ethnic minority languages, may also show that officials have begun adopting “second generation” reforms.13 According to Australian scholar James Leibold, the Party’s push toward greater control over ethnic minorities’ lives
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may be counterproductive, leading to resentment instead of the unity it seeks to engender.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Crackdown on Hui Religion and Culture}

Officials in areas with large Hui populations continued to implement policies and restrictions limiting Hui Muslims' ability to practice their religion and culture.\textsuperscript{15} Authorities carried out these policies and restrictions, at least in part, in order to promote the “sinicization” of Hui communities.\textsuperscript{16} One component of officials’ efforts to “sinicize” Islam is the “four enters” (\textit{si jin}) campaign, referring to four items they said should enter every mosque: 1) the PRC flag; 2) information regarding China’s Constitution, rule of law, and Regulations on Religious Affairs; 3) “core socialist values”; and 4) Chinese “traditional culture.”\textsuperscript{17} According to a September 2019 New York Times report, in 2018, the State Council issued a confidential directive mandating local officials’ implementation of policies reducing the role of Islam in government and community institutions.\textsuperscript{18} Hui community members and other observers expressed the belief that the “Xinjiang model” of detention and religious repression appeared to be further expanding into Hui-populated areas.\textsuperscript{19} Authorities reportedly ordered the complete or partial destruction of mosques\textsuperscript{20} and the closure of mosques serving Hui communities,\textsuperscript{21} placed strict quotas on the number of students in religious classes,\textsuperscript{22} and shut down religious schools serving Hui students.\textsuperscript{23} In addition, authorities formally imprisoned Hui religious figures.\textsuperscript{24} In the XUAR, authorities detained many Hui who had traveled abroad, holding some in mass internment camps.\textsuperscript{25} [For more information on freedom of religion for Muslims in China, see Section II—Freedom of Religion.]

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\textbf{Detention of Hui Poet Cui Haoxin} \\
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In January 2020, security officials in Jinan municipality, Shandong province, criminally detained Hui poet Cui Haoxin on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.”\textsuperscript{26} Cui, who uses the pen name An Ran, had in recent years been critical of official policies toward ethnic minorities.\textsuperscript{27} The free-expression organization PEN America described Cui’s January 2020 detention as “clear retaliation for his outspoken defense of Chinese Muslims.”\textsuperscript{28} In online posts and writings and interviews with journalists, Cui had criticized restrictions on Hui religious practices throughout China and the mass internment of Uyghurs, Hui, and other groups in the XUAR.\textsuperscript{29} In 2018, authorities detained Cui twice for his social media posts and arbitrarily searched his home.\textsuperscript{30} Shortly before his January 2020 detention, Cui had published Twitter posts about the case of Vera Yueming Zhou, a Hui resident of the United States whom authorities detained in October 2017 in a mass internment camp in the XUAR.\textsuperscript{31} [For more information on the detention of Vera Yueming Zhou, see Section IV—Xinjiang.] \\
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Demolition of a Buddhist Temple in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR)

On December 9, 2019, authorities in Tongliao municipality, IMAR, reportedly demolished a Buddhist temple on the grounds that it had been “illegally constructed.” Hundreds of Mongol herders knelt in front of the temple to protest its demolition, but police sprayed them with pepper spray and dispersed the crowd. A local herder told Radio Free Asia that authorities had suppressed news of the temple’s destruction, including by restricting the movements and communications of local residents. Germany-based Mongol rights advocate Xi Haiming said that officials demolished the temple in order to eliminate the influence of religion, and that they may have been concerned about the Tibetan Buddhist temple’s connection to the Dalai Lama (many Mongols practice a form of Tibetan Buddhism). [For information on official restrictions on the practice of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibetan areas of China, see Section V—Tibet.]

Detention of Mongol Writers

- **Lhamjab Borjigin.** In or around August 2019, a court in Xilinhot city, Xilingol (Xilinguole) League, IMAR, sentenced Mongol historian Lhamjab Borjigin to one year in prison, suspended for two years. In April 2019, the court tried the 75-year-old on charges reported by the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center as “ethnic separatism,” “sabotaging national unity,” and “illegal publication and illegal distribution.” A Xilinhot official previously linked the first two charges to a book Borjigin self-published in 2006 about Mongols’ experiences during the Cultural Revolution.

- **Zhao Baahuu.** In September 2019, public security officials in Ke’erqin Right Center Banner, Hinggan (Xing’an) League, IMAR, administratively detained Mongol poet Zhao Baahuu, who had published poetry online that was critical of the Chinese government’s policies toward ethnic minorities. According to an administrative detention notice, Zhao had violated Article 26 of the PRC Public Security Administration Punishment Law for poems he had published. Upon his release, authorities reportedly confined Zhao to his home under “soft detention.”
Notes to Section II—Ethnic Minority Rights


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15 China’s Repression of Islam Is Spreading beyond Xinjiang,” Economist, September 26, 2019. For a discussion of the implementation of policies and restrictions on Hui communities’ faith and culture in the prior reporting year, see CECC, 2019 Annual Report, November 18, 2019, 109–110, 118–19.


17 China’s Repression of Islam Is Spreading beyond Xinjiang,” Economist, September 26, 2019. For more information on Cui Haoxin, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database record 2020-00071.


23 Emily Feng, “Afraid We Will Become the Next Xinjiang: China’s Hui Muslims Face Crackdown,” NPR, September 26, 2019.

24 Ibid.


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[Inner Mongolian author Lhamjab Borjigin sentenced on the charge of “separatism”), Radio Free Asia, September 16, 2019. For more information on Lhamjab Borjigin, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database record 2019-00105.


39 Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Poet Detained and Placed Under House Arrest,” October 14, 2019; “Zhongguo Nei Menggu zuojia Zhao Bahu yinyan huozui zao juliu, ruanjin” [China Inner Mongolian writer Zhao Bahuu detained and held in soft detention because of speech], Radio Free Asia, October 14, 2019. For more information on Zhao Bahuu, see the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database record 2020-00037.


41 Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, “Poet Detained and Placed under House Arrest,” October 14, 2019; “Zhongguo Net Menggu zuoia Zhao Bahu yinyan huozui zao juliu, ruanjin” [China Inner Mongolian writer Zhao Bahuu detained and held in soft detention because of speech], Radio Free Asia, October 14, 2019.