

## STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSION BY CAMPAIGN FOR UYGHURS

*Submitted to the Human Rights Council in Advance of  
the Fourth Universal Periodic Review  
of the People's Republic of China*

by



*Campaign for Uyghurs is a registered nonprofit organization founded in 2017 with a mission to promote and advocate for the human rights and democratic freedoms of the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in East Turkistan (also referred to by the Chinese authorities as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) with a special focus on women and youth. Campaign for Uyghurs mobilizes individuals and the international community to build bridges, take action, and raise public awareness regarding human rights abuses against the Uyghur people. We expose human rights atrocities, activate global grassroots organizations and civil societies, build solidarity with other persecuted communities, and empower the Uyghur diaspora to construct productive campaigns to raise awareness, impact policy, and stop the systematic human rights abuses against the people of East Turkistan.*

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## SUMMARY

1. In its Third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2018, the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) supported 284 of the 346 recommendations by 141 states.<sup>1, 2</sup> sixteen of these recommendations specifically mentioned human rights concerns regarding the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Recommending states urged the PRC to take specific steps, including to “facilitate full access to Xinjiang and Tibet for all relevant United Nations special procedures,” “ensure full transparency,” “close all ‘re-education centres’ in Uighur areas,” “[c]ease arbitrary detention of Uighurs and other Muslim groups,” and “abolish all forms of arbitrary detention, including internment camps in Xinjiang, and immediately release the hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of individuals detained in these camps.” The government of the People's Republic of China did not accept fourteen of the sixteen such recommendations.
2. Despite the PRC's positive portrayal of its policies in East Turkistan, also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as “necessary and just,”<sup>3</sup> the assessment by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published in August 2022 maintained that the “[e]xtent of arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim groups, pursuant to law and policy, in context of restrictions and deprivation more generally of fundamental rights enjoyed individually and collectively, may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.”<sup>4</sup>
3. Having considered witness testimonies, reports, and other evidence presented, the Uyghur Tribunal, an independent and unofficial people's tribunal, rendered its judgement in December 2021 that crimes against humanity directed by the Chinese government amounted to an act of genocide.<sup>5</sup> Executive or legislative bodies of several UN Member States have also reached the same, or similar, conclusions.<sup>6</sup>
4. The PRC has not upheld the commitments to which it has agreed in the previous UPR cycles. Since its last UPR in 2018, the Chinese government has sufficiently demonstrated that the grave concerns regarding its human rights practices are not without merit. Human rights violations against the Uyghur people and other predominantly Muslim Turkic peoples during this period intensified at an alarming rate, prompting further international scrutiny of the crimes against humanity in the region.

## OBSERVATIONS

5. The following is a non-exhaustive count of the gravest human rights abuses against the Uyghur people and other groups with a list of recommendations for the State under review.
6. **Mass Internment:** The arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim peoples in XUAR in mass internment camps continues unabated since at least 2017. Research based on satellite analysis revealed there were more than 380 detention centers across

XUAR in 2020.<sup>7</sup> It was observed that while makeshift detention centers within cities were closed or repurposed, larger detention centers were constructed outside the urban areas. Revealed in May 2022, the “Xinjiang Police Files” showed that more than 12 percent of Uyghur adults remained under detention in 2018.<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that at the height of the Chinese government’s “Strike Hard” campaign, up to and perhaps more than one million individuals were unjustly held in mass internment camps (“Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers” [VSETC] in official parlance), political re-education camps, detention centers, and prisons.<sup>9</sup> News organizations reported that almost 1 in every 25 in Konasheher county was sentenced to prison terms on terrorism-related charges.<sup>10</sup>

7. **Arbitrary detentions:** In its four most recent sessions, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has adopted four opinions on the arbitrary detention of 11 Uyghurs, including Naghmat Hamit, Tajinisa Yimin and Dilixiati Wulibaiyi (6/2023), Qurban Mamut, Ekpar Asat, Gulshan Abbas (88/2022), Yalqun Rozi (64/2022), and Abdurashid Tohti, Tajigul Qadir, Ametjan Abdurashid, and Mohamed Ali Abdurashid (6/2022), who represent only a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other peoples arbitrarily detained in China.
8. **Forced labor:** Since its last UPR, the PRC ratified two ILO Conventions on forced labor.<sup>11</sup> However, the PRC continues to maintain a forced labor system that involves coercing hundreds of thousands of former internment camp detainees to work within and outside of XUAR.<sup>12</sup> Scholar Adrian Zenz maintains that the scope and scale of forced labor in the PRC has increased, expanding to higher-skilled sectors.<sup>13</sup> China’s state-sponsored coercive labor system not only seeks to reap economic benefits, but is also geared towards the goal of assimilating and coercively integrating ethnic populations such as the Uyghurs.<sup>14</sup>
9. **Digital surveillance:** Government authorities in China employ highly advanced technological means to surveil, monitor, and control Uyghurs and other populations.<sup>15</sup> A system called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) acts as the comprehensive tool to collect extremely detailed personal information on a massive scale to predict behavior.<sup>16</sup> Advanced facial recognition technology working in tandem with surveillance camera networks is used to identify Uyghurs “based on their appearance” and log their movements for further analysis.<sup>17</sup>
10. **Forced kinship:** Under the homestay program “Becoming Family” matching Uyghur families with Han Chinese government workers since late 2017, over one million Chinese civil servants began to live in Uyghur households under government orders.<sup>18</sup> This program aims to monitor Uyghurs in their homes and assess their resistance to cultural assimilation efforts by the state.<sup>19</sup> Witness testimony has revealed cases of sexual abuse.<sup>20</sup>
11. **Suppression of religion:** Religion, and Islam in particular, has long been suppressed in the PRC.<sup>21</sup> However, the repression of Islam reached at new heights as the “Strike Hard” campaign intensified with an aim to “wash brains and cleanse hearts.”<sup>22</sup> The leaked “Aksu List” further demonstrated that the IJOP system flagged and led to the detention of thousands for everyday behavior that is nonviolent and lawful, as the types of “suspicious” behavior included, among

others, reading or reciting the Quran or teaching it to children, preaching, or listening to the preaching of the Quran without state permission, and growing a beard or wearing a headscarf.<sup>23</sup>

12. **Destruction of religious sites**: A survey of satellite imagery estimates that since 2017, around 8,500 or one-third of all mosques in XUAR have been demolished.<sup>24</sup> In some instances, authorities destroyed famous mosques, including Kashgar’s famous Grand Mosque built in 1540, and rebuilt a smaller version of the original buildings.<sup>25</sup> Another one-third was found to be damaged or altered in some way, while a further 30 percent of significant religious sites such as shrines and cemeteries were demolished.<sup>26</sup>
13. **Women’s rights**: Forced sterilization, forced birth control, and forced abortion practices implemented against Uyghur women and other ethnic peoples present an increasing risk of eradication of the Uyghur people. Researchers concluded that XUAR witnessed a nearly 50 percent drop in birth-rates over the three-year period from 2017 to 2019.<sup>27</sup> Government documents indicate that birth control violations are punishable by internment in re-education camps, while authorities conducted mass and systemic sterilization campaigns.<sup>28, 29</sup> The population “optimization” strategy pursued by the Chinese government aims to “end the dominance of the Uyghur ethnic group” in XUAR, resulting in disastrous consequences for the Uyghur people.<sup>30</sup> Witness accounts uncovered systematic rape in internment camps.<sup>31</sup> Since at least 2014, Chinese government has imposed forced marriages on Uyghur women, including through blackmail, coercion, and financial incentives to marry Han Chinese men.<sup>32</sup>
14. **Children’s rights**: Forcible separation and displacement of Uyghur children continues. Latest witness testimonies involve two Uyghur children forced into state boarding schools after their father was deported to Turkey and their mother was sentenced to 20 years in prison.<sup>33</sup> In late 2021, Chinese officials announced a so-called “Pomegranate Flower Plan” to match Uyghur children from XUAR with the Han Chinese children from China to foster “kinship” between children and make them “relatives.”<sup>34</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Arbitrary Detention, Enforced Disappearances, Torture, and Ill-Treatment:**

- Immediately abolish the so-called “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” in XUAR, including all programs aimed at controlling and monitoring Uyghurs and other Muslim and Turkic peoples.
- Immediately close all internment camps in XUAR, including the so-called “vocational education and training” and “reeducation” centers.
- Immediately cease arbitrary detention and release all persons held in internment camps or other detention facilities in XUAR without due process.
- Immediately confirm the whereabouts and status of arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared individuals, and ensure unrestricted access to family, as well as legal, medical, and religious services of their choice.

- Withdraw all charges against arbitrarily detained individuals and end all coercive or restrictive measures against them.
- Provide families of detained individuals with written and official reasons for their loved ones' detention and other official documentation related to their case.
- Provide former detainees and the families of victims of genocide, crimes against humanity, and other abuses full, effective, and transformative justice and reparations per international legal standards and best practices.

#### **Investigations and Accountability:**

- Launch an impartial and independent investigation on Party Secretary Chen Quanguo and other government officials and persons suspected or implicated in genocide, crimes against humanity, and other abusive practices in relation to the “Strike Hard” campaign and provide accountability.

#### **Rights to Communication and Movement:**

- Allow for unrestricted and unmonitored communication, including by digital means, for people in XUAR with family members and others, including those living overseas, except where restrictions can be seen as reasonable under international human rights law.
- Repeal or amend all laws, regulations, and measures that infringe upon the basic human rights of Uyghurs, and other predominantly Muslim and Turkic ethnic groups, specifically the right to leave and return to China without hindrance.

#### **Access and Transparency:**

- Grant unfettered access to XUAR, as requested by the OHCHR and UN Special Procedures and allow independent human rights investigators and journalists unrestricted access to all of XUAR.
- Cooperate substantively and effectively and with the UN human rights mechanisms and Special Procedures, and any other independent international human rights monitoring and investigative mechanisms.

#### **Surveillance and Privacy Rights:**

- Abolish the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) and erase all the compiled data.
- Terminate the mass collection of DNA and other personal data and biometrics of individuals without their free, prior, and informed consent, and destroy all data gathered.

#### **Forced Labor:**

- Immediately cease all use of forced labor in XUAR and elsewhere in China, including through the so-called “poverty alleviation” or “labor transfer” programs within or outside of XUAR.

#### **Freedom of Religion and Belief:**

- Ensure that everyone, including Muslims and all other religious communities are free to choose and observe their religion or beliefs, and to manifest these peacefully without fear of persecution.
- Halt any infringements of the rights of Uyghurs to live freely in accordance with their customs, culture, and religious practice, especially the “Becoming Family” program.
- Protect the cultural heritage, including the Uyghur language, and religious practices of Uyghurs by refraining from any actions that undermine their rights.

**Women:**

- End forced sterilization, forced abortion, and forced birth control practices implemented against Uyghur women and other ethnic peoples.
- End forced marriages of the Uyghur women to Han Chinese men.

**Children:**

- Stop the forcible separation and transfer of Uyghur children from their families.

**Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Overseas Communities:**

- Prevent all forms of harassment and intimidation against Uyghurs, and other predominantly Muslim and Turkic ethnic groups with ties to XUAR or China living overseas.
- End reprisals and other retaliatory measures against Uyghur human rights defenders and their families and loved ones, including those who engage in UN processes and other international human rights mechanisms.

**Legislation Reform:**

- Repeal or amend broadly defined provisions in the various national security laws, regulations, and measures, including the Anti-Espionage Law, National Security Law, Anti-terrorism Law, Foreign NGO Management Law, Cybersecurity Law, National Intelligence Law, as well as the Regulations on Religious Affairs, with international human rights law and standards.
- Amend relevant laws and regulations to require all Chinese companies to respect human rights throughout all business operations, regardless of where they operate.

## ENDNOTES

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