

## **Dubai International Academy Model United Nations 2024**

**Committee:** The Human Rights Council

**Topic:** Measures to protect religious and ethnic minorities in China

**Student Officer:** Shams Khan

**Position:** Head Chair

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### **Introduction:**

China is well-known for its vast cultural diversity, comprising many religious and ethnic groups. These populations contribute a vibrant tapestry of cultures, dialects, and rituals to the country's identity. However, how these minority groups are treated in China has been a complicated and frequently contentious subject in recent years.

China's diverse ethnic and religious communities such as the Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Kazakhs have inhabited the region for centuries, with their own distinct languages, traditions, and ways of life. The Uyghurs, for example, are a Turkic ethnic group predominantly residing in the Xinjiang region. With a unique language and cultural heritage, they have faced challenges in maintaining their traditions and cultural practices. Similarly, Tibetans, known for their rich Buddhist heritage, have long sought to preserve their unique religious and cultural identity in the face of government restrictions. In the case of Uyghur Muslims, Beijing insists it has an ancient claim to Xinjiang – dating back to 206BC – and considers it an “inseparable part of the Chinese nation”. Uyghurs disagree, saying that borders in the region have been drawn and redrawn for centuries, depending on the dominant power, including the Mongols and the Turkic Karakhanid. Overseas Uyghurs also say that their religion, language and cultural practices clearly distinguish Xinjiang from the rest of China.

To understand the violations against religious and ethnic minority groups in China, it is essential to examine the historical background and context. The

Chinese government has a long history of controlling and suppressing religious and cultural practices that it perceives as a threat to its authority. The Communist Party of China, which came to power in 1949, implemented policies that aimed to eradicate religion and promote atheism. These policies led to the closure of temples, destruction of religious artifacts, and the persecution of religious practitioners.

Several countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and EU Nations have accused China of genocide of Uygher Muslims in Xinjiang. The allegations made against the People's Republic of China also include identity-based persecution, mass detention, surveillance, enforced sterilizations, forced labour, and forced assimilation.

### **Definition of Key terms:**

#### **Ethnic Minority Groups:**

Any group of persons which constitutes less than half of the population in the entire territory of a State whose members share common characteristics of culture, religion or language, or a combination of any of these.

#### **Han Chinese:**

The Han Chinese or Han people are an East Asian ethnic group native to China. The Han People make up about 92% of China's 1.4 billion population.

#### **Autonomous Regions:**

An area of a country that has a degree of autonomy, or has freedom from an external authority. It is also defined as a geographic area within a country or nation that possesses a certain degree of self-governance and administrative authority over its own affairs, distinct from the central or federal government of the country. The level of autonomy granted to an autonomous region can vary widely from one country to another and is typically outlined in a country's constitution or laws.

## **Xinjiang Autonomous Region:**

Xinjiang is home to the Uighur ethnic group and has been a center of controversy due to allegations of human rights abuses, including mass detentions of Uighurs in reeducation camps.

## **Uighurs:**

The Uighurs are a Turkic ethnic group predominantly residing in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in the western part of the People's Republic of China. They are one of China's 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities. The majority of Uighurs practise Islam, particularly Sunni Islam. Their Islamic faith and cultural traditions are integral parts of their identity.

Uighur culture and history dates all the way back to the 9th century. They dispersed all across Central Asia during the 13th century, where they actively participated in Silk Road trade routes. Their culture mingled with various other civilizations, including Chinese, Persian, and Arabic cultures. The Uighurs came under Mongol Control during the time of Genghis Khan, and later under Chinese control during the Ming and Qing Dynasty. In the 20th century, the Uighurs became a minority group in the Xinjiang region, where they have faced challenges related to cultural preservation, religious freedom, and autonomy. The region has seen various periods of unrest and tension between the Uighur population and the Chinese government.

Uighurs have faced various challenges in Xinjiang, including issues related to cultural preservation, religious freedom, and human rights. In recent years, there have been concerns and reports of human rights abuses, mass detentions, and forced assimilation campaigns by the Chinese government, which have drawn international attention and criticism.

## **Cultural Assimilation:**

When immigrant groups are encouraged to “adopt the culture, values, and social behaviors of their host nation.

**Sinicization:**

the act or process of making something more Chinese in character, or bringing something under Chinese influence.

**Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC):**

A paramilitary organisation and economic development group that plays a significant role in Xinjiang and has been criticised for its treatment of Uighurs. The XPCC has both military and civilian functions. It operates as a paramilitary organisation with its own armed forces, responsible for maintaining security and order in Xinjiang, especially in rural and remote areas. Simultaneously, it plays a significant role in economic development and resource utilization. The XPCC is directly under the authority of the central government in Beijing. This has led to controversy, as some view it as a tool of centralised control over Xinjiang and have raised concerns about its role in matters related to ethnic and cultural policies. International concern arose around the XPCC after reports suggested that some Uighurs were subjected to forced labour within the XPCC's industrial and agricultural facilities. The XPCC have also been accused of forming 'reeducation camps' across Xinjiang where Uighurs are forcibly detained and ethnically cleansed.

**Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):**

China's massive infrastructure and economic development project, which has implications for ethnic minority regions, especially in terms of economic development and cultural exchange.

**Forced Labour:**

All work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily. Forced labour is also known as labour exploitation and modern slavery. The best-known and confirmed examples of forced labour in history were in the

concentration camps of Nazi Germany, the Gulag Camps run by the Soviet Union and camps run by the Empire of Japan pre-World War II. A common thing in all of these examples is the society that they are run in; most societies where forced labour takes place are imperialistic and a recurrent ideology of religious, ethnic or social superiority runs in all of them.

### **Diaspora:**

A large group of people who share a cultural and regional origin but are living away from their traditional homeland.

### **Re-education camps:**

A camp or prison where ideological dissidents undergo reeducation or indoctrination.

## **Key issues and points to be discussed**

### **The Use of Re-education Camps:**

According to foreign researchers and western sources, between 80,000 and two million Uyghurs and other Muslims, including ethnic Kazakhs and Uzbeks, have been imprisoned in such reeducation camps since 2017. The Chinese government refers to these institutions as "vocational education and training centers;" Chinese officials have stated that they have not violated Uyghur rights and that the reeducation camps will be dissolved in 2019. However, using satellite imagery, individual testimony, and secret Chinese government records, international journalists and scholars have established a continuous system of mass imprisonment throughout the region of Xinjiang.

### **Country-wide surveillance:**

The Chinese government developed Skynet, a widespread monitoring system, in 2005. Skynet's existence was exposed by the government in 2013, by

which time the network had grown to include over 20 million cameras. Cameras were erected outside mosques in the Xinjiang area, temples in Tibet, and dissidents' homes, in addition to monitoring the general public. Ever since, the Chinese Ministry for Science and Technological Advancement has advanced in other fields like facial recognition technology, drones, robot police, and has control of online social media platforms to monitor its citizens.

The Uyghurs are among those classified as "focus personnel" by the Chinese government and are subjected to rigorous state surveillance. Before entering a supermarket, hotel, train station, highway station, or other public area, they must produce their ID cards and have their faces checked by cameras at a security station. In Xinjiang, the ratio of police personnel to population is higher than elsewhere. This stringent execution of security checks is in part a reaction to the separatist movement associated with Uyghurs in 2009, wherein more than 3000 Uyghur Muslims violently attacked and rioted against the Han People in Xinjiang, leading to hundreds dead and thousands left wounded.

### **Economic Disparities:**

Income inequality and economic disparity is not a rare instance when it comes to ethnic minorities anywhere in the world. For China, the World Bank estimates that "residual poverty" is concentrated in ethnic minority areas like Yunnan at a level of 48 percent. In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping vowed on national television that poverty would be 'eradicated' from China by 2020. Although a downward trend in poverty has been seen in highly-dense Han cities, this is not the case for regions that hold ethnic minority groups. The political ambition to eradicate poverty by improving the living standards of socially and economically underprivileged ethnic minority groups is at times accompanied by harsh measures such as forcible relocations, another way for local governments to acquire, develop, and sell land at a profit.

## Countries that are involved or have tried to be involved in the issue:

### **CHINA:**

In early 2017, China began an unprecedented crackdown against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Months prior to this crackdown, the then head of the Xinjiang Communist Party Political and Legal Affairs Commission, was quoted as saying that with the “powerful fist” of the Chinese government, “all separatist activities and all terrorists shall be smashed to pieces” in Xinjiang.

Chinese President Xi Jinping stated in 2017 that all religions in the country should have a Chinese orientation in accordance with his "Sinification" agenda. Scholars say the Uighurs' desire for a homeland and the ability to express their identity is at the heart of the strained relations, as is China's determination to impose total control - from how people worship to how many children they should have and what they should eat - fearful of jeopardizing not only the country's territorial integrity but also the Communist Party's dominance.

Although the Chinese constitution states that “all ethnic groups in China have the freedom and right to use and develop their own spoken and written languages,” the CCP has eliminated the use of minority languages in many schools across the country. In an attempt to increase national unity, Beijing recently released a revised blueprint for childhood development that denies the right of minority children to be taught in their native language.

### **USA:**

The United States has been an avid supporter of Uyghur Muslims treatment by the Chinese government and has called out China multiple times on international forums. On January 19, 2021, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a determination that the atrocities against Muslim Uyghurs and other members of ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang constituted genocide and crimes against humanity. In June 2020, the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 became US law. More recently, President Joe Biden

expressed his solidarity for ethnic minorities in China and has called for an end to Chinese aggression towards ethnic groups.

### **UK:**

The United Kingdom, like many other countries, has expressed concern about the reports of human rights violations and ethnic minority issues in China. The UK government has publicly condemned China on multiple platforms and has, in coordination with other countries, imposed sanctions on Chinese officials and entities involved in human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Additionally, it has implemented export controls to prevent the export of goods that could potentially be used for repressive purposes.

### **CANADA:**

In July 2021, Canada led an international coalition calling on China to allow "meaningful and unfettered access" to investigate "credible reports" of widespread human rights violations against China's Muslim minority in Xinjiang province. Like many others, Canada too has placed sanctions on officials accused of human rights violations in Xinjiang. The Special Economic Measures (People's Republic of China) Regulations, or SEMA, impose a dealings prohibition, an effective asset freeze, on listed persons. The Regulations prohibit any person in Canada and any Canadian outside Canada from providing any financial related services related to dealing prohibited by these Regulations, with some exceptions. One entity and four individuals are sanctioned under SEMA for their roles in the mass arbitrary detention, torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, mass surveillance and forced labour of Uyghurs

### **PAKISTAN:**

Pakistan has a long and strong relationship with China. China is Pakistan's most important defence partner since the end of the Cold War. Beijing has also assisted Pakistan financially many times and both countries recently celebrated 10 years of the formation of the China-Pak Economic Corridor. On the issue of ethnic minority violations, Pakistan has backed China

on its initiative in Xinjiang against the Uyghurs and the Tibets. In 2021, former Prime Minister Imran Khan repeated his country’s support for the Chinese government regarding its policies in the Muslim-majority Xinjiang province, while also praising the country’s one-party system as offering a better model for societies compared with electoral democracy. China remains Pakistan’s closest neighbouring ally

### **EUROPEAN UNION (EU):**

The EU has raised its concerns during meetings held between China over ensuring human rights are maintained. In February 2023, the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue was held where both parties had an in-depth exchange of views on human rights developments both in the EU and in China.

### **Timeline of Events:**

| Date                 | Description of Event   |
|----------------------|--|
| 1st October 1949     | The People’s Republic of China was formed under the administration of Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party Mao Zedong.  |
| 1st October 1955     | Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is officially established, granting a degree of autonomy to the Uyghurs within the framework of the Chinese State.   |
| February 1958 - 1962 | The ‘Great Leap Forward’ was established and was an economic and social campaign led by Chairman Mao. A five year plan of forced agricultural collectivization and rural industrialisation resulted in 30 - 45 million deaths by starvation, execution, torture and forced labour. Around 60,000 - 200,000 Uyghurs fled to the Soviet Union from Xinjiang. |
| 1978-1980s           | China initiated economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping, leading to increased modernization and economic development. Xinjiang, like other regions, witnessed economic changes during this period.  |

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|                       | <p>However, it also saw growing ethnic tensions and concerns about religious and cultural practices, particularly among the Uyghur population.</p>  |
| 1980-1990             | <p><b>Bilingual Education Policy:</b> In the 1980s, China introduced a policy of bilingual education in Xinjiang, aiming to promote the use of Mandarin Chinese alongside the Uighur language. Some Uighurs saw this policy as an encroachment on their cultural identity.</p>  |
| 4th - 10th April 1990 | <p><b>Baren Township Riots:</b> Ethnic tensions between Uyghurs and Han Chinese led to 200-300 Uyghur men attempting to breach the gates of the local government in protest of Chinese Rule in Xinjiang. After the riots, the State responded with crackdowns and vigorous security measures against Uyghurs, but that didn't stop occasional sporadic protests and civil disobedience by Uyghurs in Xinjiang.</p>  |
| 1997 Gulja Incident   | <p>In Gulja (Yining), a city in northern Xinjiang, protests by Uighurs in 1997 escalated into violence. The Chinese government declared a state of emergency and used military force to suppress the protests.</p>  |
| May 2014              | <p>The Chinese government initiated a "Strike Hard" campaign against violent extremism, which some international observers saw as a precursor to more aggressive policies in Xinjiang. This campaign aimed to counter ethnic and religious tensions, as well as curb extremist activities in the region. It included measures targeting mobile phones, computers, and religious materials belonging to Uyghurs.<sup>[5]</sup> The government simultaneously announced a "people's war on terror" and local government introduced new restrictions that included the banning of long beards and the wearing of veils in public places.</p> |
| Early 2010's          | <p>Reports of mass detentions and restrictions on</p>   |

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|                     | <p>religious practices, particularly for Uighur Muslims, began to emerge in the early 2010s. The Chinese government was accused of detaining hundreds of thousands of Uighurs in "re-education" camps.</p>   |
| <p>August 2017</p>  | <p>The Chinese government is reported to have established a network of detention camps in Xinjiang. While the Chinese government initially denied their existence, mounting evidence and satellite imagery suggest the existence of a vast network of such camps where hundreds of thousands of Uighurs are held without trial.</p>      |
| <p>August 2018</p>  | <p>A United Nations panel raises concerns about the mass detention of Uighurs in "re-education" camps and calls for China to allow independent inspections.</p>  |
| <p>July 2019</p>    | <p>A group of 22 countries, including Japan and the United Kingdom, issues a statement condemning China's treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang. This marks a significant international response to the crisis.</p>   |
| <p>October 2019</p> | <p>The U.S. government blacklists Chinese tech companies, including Hikvision and Dahua, over their alleged involvement in the surveillance and repression of Uighurs.</p>   |
| <p>January 2020</p> | <p>The Chinese government acknowledges the existence of the camps but describes them as vocational training centers aimed at countering extremism. However, numerous reports and investigations reveal a much harsher reality, with allegations of torture, forced assimilation, and the suppression of Uighur culture and religion.</p> |
| <p>June 2020</p>    | <p>The U.S. Senate passes the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, which seeks to hold China accountable for human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The Act includes provisions for sanctions against Chinese officials responsible for the abuses.</p>   |

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| July 2020     | The UK sanctions Chinese officials responsible for the treatment of Uighurs. The Trump administration continues to impose sanctions on Chinese officials and entities.                        |
| March 2021    | The European Union sanctions Chinese officials over human rights abuses in Xinjiang, marking a rare instance of coordinated EU action on human rights against China.                          |
| June 2021     | The Group of Seven (G7) nations issue a joint statement expressing concern over human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The statement emphasizes the need for transparency and access to the region. |
| December 2021 | US President, Joe Biden, signed the Uygur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) in 2021.  |
| February 2023 | The EU and China hold discussions on humanitarian concerns and human rights enforcement in respective regions.  |

**Past International Actions:**

As of 2023, the United Nations does not have any official resolution against China’s aggression and harassment of ethnic minority groups. On Oct. 6 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Council rejected a resolution to hold a debate on China’s violations of human rights in Xinjiang. The vote was spurred by a meticulous report published five weeks earlier by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The resolution failed by 19 votes to 17, with 11 abstentions—represented the first formal attempt to hold China accountable for its massive and ongoing human rights abuses at the Human Rights Council since the body’s inception in 2006. Many of those who voted “no” were Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Somalia, Pakistan,

UAE and Qatar. Among the 11 countries that abstained were India, Malaysia and Ukraine.

Despite this, the international community has taken action against China in various ways. Fifty United Nations member countries issued a joint statement that condemned the Chinese government's persecution of Uyghurs. The United States has led a coalition of sanctions against Chinese Officials who have accusations of human rights violation. Punitive sanctions have been placed on Chinese companies and government agencies. Some are subject to two or more sanctions.

### **Possible Solutions:**

**Independent Investigations:** Demand independent, fair, and unhindered investigations into suspected human rights violations in Xinjiang and other ethnic minority-affected regions. Encourage China's authorities to allow international observers and human rights organizations access.

**Multilateral Strategy:** Collaborate with other countries and organizations to solve these issues as a single front. Joint declarations and coordinated actions can put further pressure on China to address the issues.

**Sanctions and export controls:** Continue to implement targeted sanctions, such as asset freezes and travel bans, on Chinese officials and businesses involved in human rights violations. These penalties can operate as a deterrence while also signaling international condemnation of the activities. Implement export controls to prohibit the sale of technologies and items that could be utilized for repressive objectives.

**Raise Public Awareness and Support:** Encourage media and public dialogue about China's human rights concerns, which can help keep worldwide attention on the issue and put pressure on the Chinese government to resolve it. Provide support and aid to Uighur and Tibetan populations, especially those in exile, in

order to maintain their cultural legacy and provide resources to impacted persons.