



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

China: Muslims (including Uyghurs in Xinjiang)

Version 1.0

July 2021

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note - that is information in the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw - by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iii\) of the Immigration Rules](#) / Article 3 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iv\) of the Immigration Rules](#)
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 23 June 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by the state because the person is or is believed to be a Muslim.

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

Official – sensitive: Start of section

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Official – sensitive: End of section

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection.
- 2.2.3 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instructions on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and [Restricted Leave](#).

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

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2.3 Convention reason(s)

2.3.1 Religion, race, and/or perceived political opinion.

2.3.2 For further guidance on Convention reasons see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Risk

a. Religion in China

2.4.1 The Chinese constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion and guarantees freedom of religion for 'normal religious activities' but does not define what 'normal' means and what activities these include. It adds that religion may not be used to disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system (see [Constitution](#)). It should be noted that the constitution does not protect peoples rights in the same way it does in Western constitutional democracies. The authorities usually react aggressively towards those that try to use the Constitution to defend their rights.

2.4.2 The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is officially atheist and demands that any of its 90 million members who are found to hold religious beliefs are expelled (see [Religion in China](#)).

2.4.3 The government recognises 5 official religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism. Members of these 5 officially recognised religions must register with the government's Patriotic Religious Associations, which seek to regulate and monitor the activities of registered religious groups. Only registered religious groups are legally allowed to hold worship services. Registration is extremely difficult for groups seeking to follow their faith in ways not strictly controlled or governed by the authorities. Unregistered religious groups are illegal and risk having their activities restricted and their places of worship closed down (see [Religion in China](#) and [Legal Framework](#)).

2.4.4 Islamic groups must register with the Islamic Association of China (IAC). Registered religious groups must adhere to the Regulations on Religious Affairs (RRA). The RRA's give state-registered religious organisations the right to possess property, publish literature and train and approve clergy amongst other things. The IAC oversee Islamic groups and ensure they adhere to these requirements. The RRA's also require religious groups to 'integrate religious doctrines into Chinese culture' and to adapt to 'Chinese Cultural Traditions', a process which is often referred to as 'sinicization' (see [Legal Framework](#)).

2.4.5 There are approximately 22 million Muslims in China, of whom the 2 main groups are the Hui (also sometimes referred to as Chinese Muslims), who are largely based in China's north west regions; and the Uyghurs, largely based in the north western region of Xinjiang. Each number approximately 11 million. Other small Muslims groups include Uzbeks, Kazakhs and Tajiks who are scattered throughout various regions but are mainly found in the Xinjiang region (see [Muslims in China](#)).

2.4.6 For information on and analysis of Christians and other non-Christian religious groups see the specific [Country Policy and Information Note](#).

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b. Muslims outside of Xinjiang

2.4.7 Hui Muslims are scattered across China but reside primarily in the north west regions of Ningxia, Gansu, Yunnan and Qinghai, although perhaps a million live in Xinjiang (see [Muslims in China](#) and [State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang](#)).

2.4.8 Whilst the State has particularly targeted Muslims in Xinjiang (see section c), in recent years Hui Muslims also face increasing restrictions and pressure to 'sinicize'. This has resulted in the closure of registered mosques and the restyling of others to fit Sinicization; some restrictions on religious expression, such as observing Ramadan; and increasing restrictions on their ability to practice their faith freely. Outside Xinjiang, Hui individuals have been imprisoned for sharing religious materials online, protesting about the destruction of a mosque or taking part in the Hajj pilgrimage. Chinese legislation makes it illegal for under 18's to engage with certain religious activities in Xinjiang. This has had a knock on effect on neighbouring provinces, such as those with Hui populations (see [State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang](#)).

2.4.9 The state appears to see them as less of a threat and therefore, in general, they are less likely to face the same level of persecution as Muslims in Xinjiang. However, they may still be subject to state attention and restrictions. Each case should be judged on its individual circumstances.

2.4.10 Risk of persecution may increase where a person attends an unregistered Islamic religious group as these are illegal. If the religious group follows the state sanctioned version of their religion then religious practise may be possible. The onus will be on the person to show that how they observe and express their faith will bring them to the attention of the authorities and result in them facing treatment that amounts to persecution. Each case must, however, be considered on its facts.

2.4.11 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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c. Muslims in Xinjiang

2.4.12 In May 2014, China launched its 'Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism' (Strike Hard campaign) in the Xinjiang region. This campaign targets anyone who the state believe challenges state security, ethnic unity and social stability. This is particularly seen by the state as the Uyghur Muslims, but other Muslims living in the area may also be vulnerable to the campaign (see [Restrictions on Muslims](#)).

2.4.13 Whilst Islam is one of the 5 officially recognised religions in China, the government has increasingly cited concerns over the 'three evils' of 'separatism, extremism, and terrorism' as grounds to enact and enforce

restrictions on the religious and cultural practices of Uyghur Muslims (see [Restrictions on Muslims](#)).

- 2.4.14 Authorities view a wide range of behaviours in the region as being linked to 'extremist' activity including expressions of Muslim identity, including culture and language ([Restrictions on Muslims](#)).
- 2.4.15 Xinjiang has its own set of regulations - the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulations on De-esterification, brought in in 2017 and amended in 2018. These legal restrictions have been introduced to curtail Islamic identity. Outward signs of Muslim identity have been banned, including: the wearing of veils, growing of irregular beards, the use of Muslim religious names and religious matrimonial ceremonies. This has made it extremely difficult for Muslims in Xinjiang to freely practise their religion (see [Regulations](#) and [Restrictions on Muslims](#)).
- 2.4.16 Natural population growth has declined in Xinjiang, with reports of a campaign of mass sterilization in rural Uyghur regions. Some reports indicate a drop in birth-rates of nearly 50 percent in Xinjiang between 2017 and 2019. Reports also indicate that women of childbearing age, including those detained, are also forced to undergo birth control measures, such as Intrauterine Devices (IUD's) and sterilisations and in some cases forced to have abortions. In one data set having too many children is a common reason for detention in relation to Uyghur women. There are also reports of sexual violence and torture being used against Uyghur women in detention (see [Birth control and forced sterilisation](#) and [Torture and ill treatment in detention](#)).
- 2.4.17 There are widespread reports that authorities are highly suspicious of Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang who have family overseas or who have travelled overseas. All residents are reported to have to surrender their passports and face restrictions on overseas and internal travel (see [Families of those detained or abroad](#) and [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 2.4.18 Since the start of the Strike Hard campaign in 2014, the authorities have deployed sophisticated technology to track people. This includes CCTV surveillance, facial recognition cameras, telephone monitoring, home visits and checkpoints for Muslims throughout the region. They have also compulsorily collected biometric data (including DNA, fingerprints, iris scans and blood groups) of all residents aged 12–65. The authorities have used an 'Integrated Joint Operations Platform' app to store all this information and link it to the person's national identity card number and used these systems to pick out people with certain characteristics or behaviours they consider are a threat to the state. Government workers, usually Han Chinese, are also sent to live with Uyghur families to conduct surveillance and compile information, in an initiative that is referred to as the 'Pair Up and Become a Family' system (see [Surveillance](#)).
- 2.4.19 One source stated that, in 2017 and 2018, 230,000 people were sentenced to prison or other punishments in Xinjiang and that in 2017 courts in the Xinjiang region sentenced 10 times more defendants than the previous year

to prison terms of 5 years or longer (see [Detention and 're-education centres'](#)).

- 2.4.20 Since April 2017, the authorities in Xinjiang have reportedly detained (extra judicially) up to 1.8–2 million Uyghurs and other Muslims and forced them to undergo 'patriotic education' in re-education camps.. Chinese authorities have claimed that some 'trainees' at the re-education centres have 'graduated' but sources suggest that Uyghurs are now being transferred to factories, some of which are reported to be co-located with detention centres, to work in conditions of forced labour. There are also reports from family members that their relatives have died whilst in detention camps or from illness related to the conditions of detention shortly after release (see [Detention and 're-education centres'](#) and [Forced labour](#)).
- 2.4.21 Detention facilities within the Xinjiang province continue to be built and are across every populated area of the region. According to several sources, visiting foreign websites, maintaining ties with family abroad, applying for a passport, downloading WhatsApp or engaging in prayer are all offences which Muslims in the region have been detained for ([Detention and 're-education centres'](#)).
- 2.4.22 Detainees have reportedly been subjected to physical and psychological torture, sexual violence, solitary confinement, forced labour, forced birth control, and overcrowded conditions. Some Uyghur children – especially those whose families are detained – were sometimes moved to orphanages or forced to attend state run boarding schools (see [Birth control and forced sterilisation](#), [Detention and 're-education centres'](#), [Forced labour](#) and [Families of those detained](#)).
- 2.4.23 Muslims living in the Xinjiang region, particularly Uyghurs, are unable to practise their faith openly as it will likely be perceived as a support for independence. They face a real risk of ill-treatment which amounts to persecution. Each case must, however, be considered on its facts.
- 2.4.24 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state, they will not, in general, be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.5.2 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state and there is no safe part of the country where they would not be at risk from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.

- 2.6.2 Decision makers must give careful consideration to the relevance and reasonableness of internal relocation taking full account of the individual circumstances of the particular person.
- 2.6.3 For further information on internal relocation see country policy and information note on [China: Background including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).
- 2.6.4 For further guidance on internal relocation, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

Section 3 updated: 12 May 2021

3. Religion in China

3.1 Religious demography

- 3.1.1 The Central Intelligence Agency's world factbook stated that China had an estimated population of over 1.39 billion¹. Chinese government statistics record approximately 200 million registered religious believers² however Freedom House notes, in a special report, that 'China is home to over 350 million religious believers and hundreds of millions more who follow folk traditions. According to them government statistics exclude those who worship at unregistered temples or churches and believers under the age of 18, and many Chinese engage in a mixture of religious and folk practices. Official figures for Muslims [...] are based on ethnicity, embedding the assumption that all members of an ethnic group adhere to a particular religion.'³
- 3.1.2 Freedom House noted, in a special report, the Battle for China's Spirit, published February 2017, that there are 185-250 million Chinese Buddhists, 60-80 million Protestants, 21-23 million Muslims, 7-20 million Falun Gong practitioners, 12 million Catholics, 6-8 million Tibetan Buddhists, and hundreds of millions who follow various folk traditions. There were no figures for the amount of Taoists in China⁴.
- 3.1.3 The US State Department, 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom Report (USIRF) for China, published 12 May 2021: 'The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism...'⁵
- 3.1.4 The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), an independent nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher's Backgrounder on Religion in China, last updated on 25 September 2020, stated:
- 'The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is officially atheist. The party prohibits its nearly ninety million party members from holding religious beliefs, and it has demanded the expulsion of party members who belong to religious organizations. Officials have said that party membership and religious beliefs are incompatible, and they discourage families of CCP members from publicly participating in religious ceremonies. Although these regulations are not always strictly enforced, the party periodically takes steps to draw a clearer line on religion. In 2017, the party's official newspaper warned CCP members from putting faith in religion, calling it "spiritual anesthesia."⁶

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¹ CIA, '[World fact book, China- people and society](#)', updated 11 May 2021

² CFR, '[Religion in China](#)', last updated 25 September 2020

³ Freedom House, '[Special report- The Battle for China's Spirit](#)', February 2017

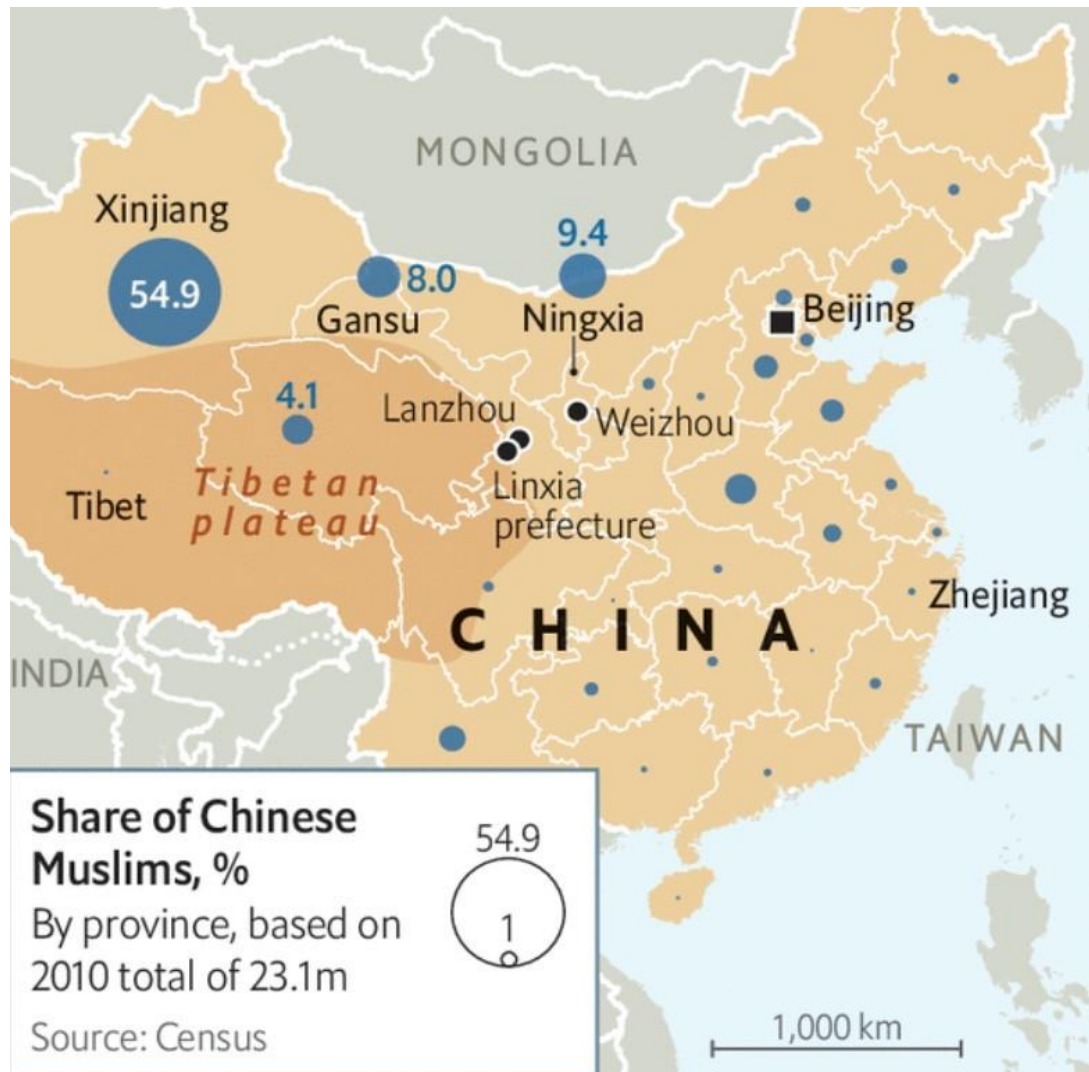
⁴ Freedom House, '[Special report- The Battle for China's Spirit](#)', February 2017

⁵ USSD, '[2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#)' (Executive summary), 12 May 2021

⁶ CFR, '[Religion in China](#)', last updated 25 September 2020

3.2 Muslims

3.2.1 The Economist produced a map in September 2019 which shows the distribution of Muslims throughout China⁷



3.2.2 Freedom House noted, in a special report on religion published in 2017, that: 'Approximately half of China's Muslims (10.5 to 11 million) are Hui, descendants of Arab and Persian traders who have assimilated into Chinese society and culture. Their physical appearance closely resembles that of the country's Han majority, and while parts of Ningxia, Gansu, and Yunnan Provinces have high concentrations of Hui, many have settled elsewhere in China. The second-largest contingent of Muslims are Uighurs, a Turkic minority of approximately 10 million people with its own language, customs, and Eurasian appearance that is largely concentrated in the north western region of Xinjiang. The country's remaining Muslims are members of various Central Asian ethnic groups— including Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Tajiks—or migrants from Middle Eastern or African countries who reside in Beijing and other major cities.'⁸

⁷ The Economist, '[China's repression of Islam is spreading beyond Xinjiang](#)', 28 September 2019

⁸ Freedom House, '[Special report- The Battle for China's Spirit](#)', February 2017

- 3.2.3 According to the undated China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (CFR) website there are approximately 26,500 Tajiks, over a million Kazaks and 14,800 Ozbeks (Uzbeks), who can all mostly be found within the Xinjiang region of China⁹. The majority of Muslims who reside outside of the Xinjiang area are Hui Muslims. The Hui are scattered throughout China but largely based in the Ningxia Autonomous Region and the Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces¹⁰.
- 3.2.4 The Foreign Policy Centre, an international affairs think tank based in the UK, stated in March 2019 that:
 ‘Unlike the Uighurs, who speak their own Turkic language, the Huis’ native language is Mandarin Chinese (with the occasional Persian or Arabic word thrown in). Nevertheless, while Huis are far more integrated into the dominant Han Chinese culture than Uighurs, centres of Hui culture can be found in China’s northwest regions, including in Xinjiang, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Province, the city of Xi’an in Shaanxi Province and Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province.¹¹
- 3.2.5 New Europe noted in an February 2020 article that: ‘Often referred to as the “Chinese Muslims,” the Hui are an ethnic group made up from more than 1,000 years of mixed marriages between Han Chinese and the Turkic tribes of western China and Mongolia as well as Persians.’¹²
- 3.2.6 The CFR backgrounder, last updated in September 2020, stated:
 ‘Muslims make up about 1.8 percent of China’s population, accounting for around twenty-two million people. China has ten predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, the largest of which is the Hui, an ethnic group closely related to the majority Han population and largely based in western China’s Ningxia Autonomous Region and the Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces. The Uighurs, a Turkic people who live primarily in the autonomous region of Xinjiang in northwest China, are also predominantly Muslim. There about eleven million Uighurs in this region, making up approximately half of its population. Officials in Xinjiang tightly control religious activity, while Muslims in the rest of the country enjoy greater religious freedom, In recent years, however, Hui Muslims in north western China have experienced an uptick in repression, including the imprisonment of religious leaders and forced closure of mosques.’¹³
- 3.2.7 Bitter Winter, an online magazine on religious liberty and human rights in China published by the Center for Studies on New Religions, headquartered in Italy, noted in their undated glossary entry on Hui Muslims that:
 ‘Recognized by the CCP and the government as an “ethnic” minority, they are in fact a religious group, which includes those Muslims who are ethnically Han Chinese and speak various forms of the Chinese language, unlike the Uyghurs and the Ethnic Kazakhs, who are also Muslim Chinese citizens but are not ethnically Chinese and speak languages other than

⁹ China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [‘About China- Ethnic’](#), undated

¹⁰ CFR, [‘Religion in China’](#), last updated 25 September 2020

¹¹ FPC, [‘Hui Muslims in China’s “Little Mecca”: Fusing Islamic and Han Practices’](#), 14 March 2019

¹² New Europe, [‘Xinjiang’s Hui minority have also been forced into camps...’](#), 13 February 2020

¹³ CFR, [‘Religion in China’](#), last updated 25 September 2020

Chinese. There are between eight and ten million Hui, distributed all over China, although prevalently in the north western part of the country. Hailed for decades by the CCP as the “good” Chinese Muslims, opposed to the “bad” Uyghurs, they have also been victims of the recent crackdown on religion and started organizing manifestations of protest.’¹⁴

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3.3 Xinjiang

3.3.1 The BBC Xinjiang territory profile from 2018 stated that:

‘Xinjiang, the largest region of China, is bordered by eight countries including the former Soviet Central Asian republics, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It experienced a brief period of independence in the 1940s, but China regained control after the Communists took power in 1949. Its full name is the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. It is home to the Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighur minority, who make up about eight million of its 19 million people. Rich in natural resources, its economic development has been accompanied by large-scale immigration of Han Chinese.’¹⁵

3.3.2 Xinjiang is inhabited by more than 40 different ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Uyghurs and the Han (Chinese)¹⁶. Human Rights Watch noted that the 2 biggest Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang are the Uyghurs (11 million) and the Kazakhs (1.6 million)¹⁷. In addition to Hui (Chinese Muslims), other groups include Mongolians, Khalkha, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tungusic-speaking Manchu and Sibos, Tajiks, Tatars, Russians, and Tahurs¹⁸.

3.3.3 History Today, a monthly history magazine based in London, noted in January 2020 that:

‘Xinjiang, in the far north-west of China, is almost three times the size of France: officially it is not a province but an “autonomous region” in deference to its non-Chinese population, the Uighurs – although the level of autonomy is minimal. Uighurs are not ethnically or culturally Chinese, but a Turkic people whose language is close to the Uzbek of nearby Uzbekistan and distantly related to the Turkish of Turkey. Often described as a minority, until recently they constituted the majority population of Xinjiang, which they regard as their homeland and refer to as Eastern Turkestan (Sharqi Turkestan). The approximately 11 million Uighurs in Xinjiang – just under half the total population – are historically and culturally Muslim, as are most other smaller ethnic groups of that region, the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and the Chinese-speaking Hui: that is immediately obvious from their dress, their food and their built environment.’¹⁹

3.3.4 New Europe, an EU affairs newspaper with headquarters in Belgium, noted in February 2020 that: ‘While largely based in inner China... the Hui are also

¹⁴ Bitter Winter, ‘[Glossary- Hui](#)’, undated

¹⁵ BBC News, ‘[Xinjiang territory profile](#)’, 12 October 2018

¹⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘[Xinjiang- autonomous region, China](#)’, undated

¹⁷ HRW, ‘[“Eradicating Ideological Viruses”-China’s Campaign of Repression...](#)’, September 2018

¹⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘[Xinjiang- autonomous region, China](#)’, undated

¹⁹ History Today, ‘[A Uighurs’ History of China](#)’, 1 January 2020

significant minority in Xinjiang, where over a million of them live alongside their fellow co-religionists, the Uyghurs.²⁰

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Section 4 updated: 12 May 2021

4. Legal framework

4.1 International conventions

- 4.1.1 The government has signed, but not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights²¹, which provides all individuals the right to “adopt a religion or belief” of their choice²².

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4.2 Constitution

- 4.2.1 Article 36 of the Constitution of China, states:

‘Citizens of the People’s Republic of China shall enjoy freedom of religious belief.

‘No state organ, social organization or individual shall coerce citizens to believe in or not to believe in any religion, nor shall they discriminate against citizens who believe in or do not believe in any religion.

‘The state shall protect normal religious activities. No one shall use religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the state’s education system.

‘Religious groups and religious affairs shall not be subject to control by foreign forces.’²³

- 4.2.2 The Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade October 2019 country report (‘DFAT Country Information Report’), based on a range of sources, stated:

‘According to China’s 2018 CPPFRB [China’s Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief] white paper, every citizen ‘enjoys the freedom to choose whether to believe in a religion; to believe in a certain religion or a denomination of the same religion; to change from a non-believer to a believer and vice versa. Believers and non-believers enjoy the same political, economic, social and cultural rights, and must not be treated differently because of a difference in belief. However, Article 36 of the Constitution also states that no one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the State. This is enforced by Chinese public security officials who monitor registered and unregistered religious groups.’²⁴

- 4.2.3 The 2019 USIRF report for China stated: ‘The constitution of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious

²⁰ New Europe, ‘[Xinjiang’s Hui minority have also been forced into camps...](#)’, 13 February 2020

²¹ OCHCR, ‘[Ratification Status for China](#)’ (5 October 1998)

²² OCHCR, ‘[International standards on freedom of religion or belief](#)’, 2020

²³ The State Council, ‘[Constitution of the People’s Republic of China](#)’, 20 November 2019

²⁴ DFAT, ‘[DFAT Country Information Report, People’s Republic of ...](#)’ (Para 3.38), 3 October 2019

belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” without defining “normal.”²⁵

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4.3 Regulation on Religious Affairs (RRA)

4.3.1 On 7 September 2017, China’s State Council released a revised version of the [Regulations for Religious Affairs](#) (Regulations), which took effect on 1 February 2018. The Standing Committee of the State Council adopted the Regulations on 14 June 2017²⁶.

4.3.2 On 1 February 2020 the [2019 Administrative Measures for Religious Groups](#) came into effect²⁷.

4.3.3 The 2019 DFAT report noted:

‘The 2018 RRAs “protect citizens’ freedom of religious belief, maintain religious and social harmony and regulate the management of religious affairs” and give state-registered religious organisations rights to possess property, publish literature, train, and approve clergy, collect donations, and proselytise within (but not outside) registered places of worship and in private settings (but not in public). Government subsidies are also available for the construction of state-sanctioned places of worship and religious schools.’²⁸

4.3.4 The DFAT report further added:

‘According to the State Council, the RRA also “curb and prevent illegal and extreme practices” and emphasise the need to prevent “extremism”, indicating they may target Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists. The RRAs: restrict religious education in schools; restrict the times and locations of religious celebrations; impose fines for organising illegal religious events or fundraising; detail procedures for approval and monitoring of religious training institutions and monitoring online religious activity; detail a requirement to report all donations over RMB 100,000 (AUD 20,750) [approx. £11,300]; prohibit registered religious organisations from distributing unapproved literature, associating with unregistered religious groups, and accepting foreign donations (previously permitted); and prohibit foreigners from proselytising. Parallel provisions in the Foreign NGO [Non-Government Organisations] Law also prohibit foreigners from donating funds to Chinese religious organisations, or raising funds on their behalf.’²⁹

4.3.5 The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), Annual Report, 2020, covering the events of 2020, published on 14 January 2021, stated:

‘On February 1, 2020, the National Religious Affairs Administration implemented the new Measures on the Administration of Religious Groups, a set of 41 articles that emphasizes the role of the government and Party in controlling the government-affiliated religious associations that manage the

²⁵ USSD, [‘2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: China’](#) (Section II), 12 May 2021

²⁶ LoC, [‘China: Revised Regulations on Religious Affairs’](#), 9 November 2017

²⁷ Bitter Winter, [‘English Translation of the 2019 Administrative Measures for...’](#), 15 January 2020

²⁸ DFAT, [‘DFAT Country Information Report, People’s Republic of ...’](#) (Para 3.41), 3 October 2019

²⁹ DFAT, [‘DFAT Country Information Report, People’s Republic of ...’](#) (Para 3.42), 3 October 2019

five officially registered religions recognized by the government... The 2020 Measures contain articles that emphasize that the management of religious groups, including legal registration, leadership appointments, major events, and discipline under law, is subordinate to the government and Party. They also specify that religious organizations must follow the Party's leadership and instruct leaders and lay believers to do so, accept the government's oversight, and publicize Party directives and policies. Experts criticized the Measures as further violations of religious freedom, including the rights to freedom of worship and to choose one's religious leaders without interference.

'... The new Measures also require that religious groups "persist in the direction of sinicization (zhongguohua) of religion" under the Party's leadership. The Party promotes the idea that "sinicization" means "integrating religious doctrines into Chinese culture," and guiding religions to adapt to "Chinese Cultural Traditions," as it says Buddhism has done in the past.'³⁰

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4.4 Registered religious groups

4.4.1 According to the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'Country of origin information report China' published in July 2020:

'... China's religious landscape is categorised into three markets, namely a "red", a "black" and a "grey" market. The "red" market refers to religious communities recognised by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and under party control. In this context, the colour "red" refers to the colour of the CCP's communist ideology...

'...The Chinese authorities recognise five religions in total: Buddhism, Catholicism, Taoism, Islam, and Protestantism. Each of these religions has its own Patriotic Religious Association (PRA). A PRA is a state-led coordinating entity responsible for monitoring the selection, education, further training and actions of members of the clergy of the religion concerned ... Muslims [come] under the Islamic Association of China (IAC). ...The religious communities represented by a PRA belong to the "red" market of China's religious landscape.'³¹

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4.5 Unregistered religious groups

4.5.1 DFAT stated 'Broadly speaking, religious practice in China is possible within state-sanctioned boundaries, as long as such practices do not challenge the interests or authority of the Chinese government. While practice of non-recognised faiths or by unregistered organisations is illegal and vulnerable to punitive official action, it is, to some degree, tolerated, especially in relation to traditional Chinese beliefs. Nevertheless, restrictions on religious organisations vary widely according to local conditions, and can be inconsistent or lack transparency, making it difficult to form general conclusions. Religious practice that the government perceives as

³⁰ CECC, '[Annual Report, 2020](#)' (p111-112), 14 January 2021

³¹ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, '[Country of origin information report China](#)', 1 July 2020

contravening broader ethnic, political or security policies is at high risk of adverse official attention.’³²

- 4.5.2 The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs ‘Country of origin information report China’ published in July 2020 noted that:

‘The China’s religious landscape is categorised into three markets, namely a “red”, a “black” and a “grey” market. ...Most faith communities in China belong to the “grey” market. These communities are not under the supervision of state religious bodies, as in the case of “red” religious communities, and according to the letter of the law, they are illegal. However, they are not viewed as Xie Jiao [evil cult], and as such, they are not persecuted like the movements in the “black” market.’³³

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Section 5 updated: 12 May 2021

5. State treatment of Muslims in the Xinjiang province

5.1 Regulations

- 5.1.1 An unofficial translation of the Xinjiang Regulations Against Extremism can be found on the [China law translate](#) website.

- 5.1.1 The Human Rights Watch report ‘Eradicating ideological viruses - China’s campaign of repression against Xinjiang’s Muslims’ published in September 2018 noted that:

‘Since May 2014, the Chinese government has waged what it calls the “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” in Xinjiang...

‘...The Xinjiang authorities have made foreign ties a punishable offense, targeting people with connections to an official list of “26 sensitive countries,” including Kazakhstan, Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia [the other countries included are Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Yemen]. People who have been to these countries, have families, or otherwise communicate with people there, have been interrogated, detained, and even tried and imprisoned.’³⁴

- 5.1.2 The World Uyghur Congress, an international organization of exiled Uyghur groups, noted on 31 May 2018 that:

‘On 1 April 2017, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulations on De-extremification came into force, after being adopted on March 29th by regional authorities. The measures built on other restrictive legislation passed by the Chinese authorities, including the XUAR Religious Affairs Regulations in 2015 and the XUAR Implementing Measures of the Counter-Terrorism Law of the People’s Republic of China in 2016.

‘These measures imposed very strict restrictions on Uyghur religious beliefs and practices, by formally codifying many repressive actions that the

³² DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report](#), [People’s Republic...](#)’ (Para 3.44-3.45), 3 October 2019

³³ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘[Country of origin information report China](#)’, 1 July 2020

³⁴ HRW, ‘[Eradicating ideological viruses](#)’, September 2018

Chinese government had imposed on the Uyghurs in the past. For instance, Article 9 of the Regulations prohibits the wearing of burqas or face covering and “spreading religious fanaticism through irregular beards or name selection”. Subsequent articles outline how the regulations should be implemented, included further checks, monitoring and deprivation of rights for Uyghurs.

‘While the regulations claim to be combating “extremism” the language of the regulations themselves are so vague that virtually any expression of religious sentiment or of dissent can be labelled as “extremist” activity. Rather than addressing the root causes of Uyghur frustration and respecting their basic rights, the regulations demonise the peaceful practice of Islam and formally codify repressive tactics in regional law.’³⁵

5.1.3 The 2019 DFAT report stated:

‘In 2017 and 2018, restrictions against certain practices were formalised in laws and regulations such as (but not limited to) the Xinjiang Regulations Against Extremism (2017; Amended 2018) (Xinjiang Regulations). These restrictions, which had been in place for some time, target practices such as: “generalising the concept of halal”, wearing full veils or masks, growing beards, using religious names for Muslim newborns, and marrying only in religious ceremonies (without formal marriage under law). It is also illegal under Chinese law for people under the age of 18 to attend prayer at mosques, and for government officials or students to fast during Ramadan, or to participate in private religious education.

‘Article 33 of the Xinjiang Regulations also notes “educational transformation institutions such as vocational skill education and training centres shall teach the national common language, laws and regulations, and vocational skills, and; centres should organize and carry out anti-extremist ideological education, psychological correction, and behaviour correction to transform the thinking of the trainees so as to help them return to society, and to their family”.’³⁶

5.1.4 The Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s (ASPI), an independent, non-partisan think tank, report ‘Cultural erasure- tracing the destruction of Uyghur and Islamic spaces in Xinjiang’, published on 24 September 2020 noted that: ‘... In 2017, the XUAR passed a comprehensive set of regulations to guide “deradicalisation” work across Xinjiang—a set of rules that was revised in October 2018 to retrospectively authorise the mass detention of Uyghurs in “re-education” camps.’³⁷

5.1.5 The US State Department, 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom Report (USIRF) for Xinjiang, stated:

‘Xinjiang has its own counterterrorism law and de-extremification laws that went into effect in 2016 and 2017, respectively, containing similar provisions to the national law regarding “religious extremism.” These laws ban the wearing of long beards, full-face coverings, religious dress, expanding halal practice beyond food, daily prayer, and “interfering” with family planning,

³⁵ World Uyghur Congress, [‘Issue 16: Regulations Of De-Extremification’](#), 31 May 2018

³⁶ DFAT, [‘DFAT Country Information Report, People’s Republic of ...’](#) (Para 3.53-4), 3 October 2019

³⁷ Australian Strategic Policy Institute, [‘Cultural Erasure’](#), 24 September 2020

weddings, funerals, or inheritance, among other provisions. The law limits the information that may be released to the public following an incident the government defines as a terror attack.

‘Regional regulations passed in 2018 to implement the national counterterrorism law permit the establishment of “vocational skill education training centers” (which the government also calls “education centers” and “education and transformation establishments”) to “carry out anti-extremist ideological education.” The regulations stipulate that “institutions such as vocational skill education training centers should carry out training sessions on the common national language, laws and regulations, and vocational skills, and carry out anti-extremist ideological education, and psychological and behavioral correction to promote thought transformation of trainees and help them return to the society and family.”

‘Regulations in Xinjiang’s capital, Urumqi, prohibit veils that cover the face, homeschooling children, and “abnormal beards.” A separate regulation bans the practice of religion in government buildings and the wearing of clothes associated with “religious extremism.” Neither “abnormal” nor “religious extremism” are defined in law. Similar regulations are in effect in other parts of Xinjiang.

‘...Xinjiang officials require minors to complete nine years of compulsory education before they may receive religious education outside of school. Xinjiang regulations also forbid minors from participating in religious activities and impose penalties on organizations and individuals who “organize, entice, or force” minors to participate in religious activities. A regulation in effect since 2016 further bans any form of religious activity in Xinjiang schools and stipulates parents or guardians who “organize, lure, or force minors into religious activities” may be stopped by anyone and reported to police. Xinjiang’s regional version of the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Law states children affected by ethnic separatism, extremism and terrorism, and/or committing offenses that seriously endanger society but do not warrant a criminal punishment may be sent to “specialized schools for correction” at the request of their parents, guardians, or school.’³⁸

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5.2 Restrictions on Muslims

5.2.1 The Human Rights Watch report ‘Eradicating ideological viruses- China’s campaign of repression against Xinjiang’s Muslims’ published in September 2018 noted that:

‘The Chinese authorities are hostile to many expressions of Uyghur identity, including religion, culture, language, and aspirations – including through peaceful transition – of independence.

‘Authorities enforce detailed and wide-ranging controls over daily life in Xinjiang to minimize, if not eradicate, these expressions. For example, the Chinese government has since the 1990s pushed for what it euphemistically calls “bilingual education” in Xinjiang, an approach that progressively prioritizes Mandarin while marginalizing the Uyghur language.

³⁸ USSD, [‘2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Xinjiang’](#), 12 May 2020

'Authorities restrict Uyghurs to a certain set of ideas and behaviors considered "normal" and patriotic. For example, they have banned baby names with religious connotations common in the Islamic world, such as Medina, because they encourage "excessive religious fervor." The government calls some of these "abnormal" thoughts or behaviors "the three [evil] forces" ("separatism, terrorism, and extremism"), and subjects those exhibiting them to corrections or punishments.

'...This Strike Hard Campaign has several stated objectives, but mainly targets anyone who "challenges ... state security, ethnic unity, and social stability," which are overly broad labels the government has long misused to punish peaceful activism and expression.'³⁹

5.2.2 Reporting on the increased restrictions during 2020 on some religious communities, Freedom House noted in its report, Freedom in the World 2021 – China:

'In Xinjiang, intrusive restrictions on the practice of Islam affect the wearing of religious attire, attendance at mosques, fasting during Ramadan, choice of baby names, and other basic forms of religious expression. Many categories of individuals are barred from certain activities; for example, children under 18 cannot enter mosques or receive religious instruction. In 2020, authorities in the region reportedly prohibited recipients of state benefits from performing daily prayers. Peaceful religious practices are routinely punished under charges of "religious extremism," resulting in detention, prison sentences, and indoctrination for many Uighur, Kazakh, and Hui Muslims.'⁴⁰

5.2.3 Radio Free Asia (RFA) noted in May 2020 that:

'Residents of the mostly Uyghur-populated Makit (in Chinese, Maigaiti) county in northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have been ordered to report anyone discovered to be fasting in observance of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, according to sources. For years, Uyghurs in the XUAR have been prohibited from fully observing Ramadan due to religious persecution and restrictions imposed by the Chinese government, which has in many cases banned Uyghur civil servants, students and teachers from fasting during the holy month. In certain areas of the region, access to mosques is more tightly controlled and restaurants are ordered to remain open, while Uyghur retirees are often forced to pledge ahead of Ramadan that they won't fast or pray to set an example for the wider community and to assume responsibility for ensuring others also refrain.'⁴¹

5.2.4 The US State Department, 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: China, 25 June 2020 (USSD TiP report, 2020), stated:

'The impact of formal discriminatory employment policies barring Uyghurs from jobs in many sectors—including in the annual cotton harvest—reportedly drives thousands of Uyghur farmers out of their communities in search of alternative work, placing them at higher risk of forced labor. The same is true of the government's targeted forced-displacement programs,

³⁹ HRW, '[Eradicating ideological viruses](#)', September 2018

⁴⁰ FH, '[Freedom in the World 2021- China](#)', 3 March 2021

⁴¹ RFA, '[Residents of Uyghur-Majority County in Xinjiang Ordered to Report...](#)', 14 May 2020

including the Bingtuan's construction of new settlements designated for ethnic Han internal migrants, which reportedly disperses Uyghur communities and disrupts their livelihoods.⁴²

5.2.5 According to the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'Country of origin information report China' published in July 2020:

'It is virtually impossible for Muslims in Xinjiang to freely practise their religion. Religious expressions such as the call to prayer or wearing a veil have been banned in public.

'...Xinjiang's counter-terrorism law has banned long beards, halal practices pertaining to matters other than food, Islamic aspects of family planning, weddings, funerals and inheritance. Minors are also not permitted to participate in religious activities and children may not be given Islamic names. The Arabic salutation of assalamu alaykum ('peace be upon you') has likewise been banned. There have been instances of government officials forcing Muslims to eat pork, drink alcohol and break their Ramadan fast.'⁴³

5.2.6 An August 2020 BuzzFeed News investigation into the internment camps in the Xinjiang stated that:

'The [Strike Hard...] campaign [against Muslim minorities] has done deep damage to many Muslim minority groups — but especially Uighurs, who are by far the most populous ethnic minority group in Xinjiang and do not have ties to any other country. The Chinese government has heavily penalized expressions of Turkic minority culture, from Kazakh- and Uighur-language education to the practice of Islam outside of state-controlled mosques. This, combined with forced sterilizations, has led some critics to say that the campaign qualifies as genocide under international law.'⁴⁴

5.2.7 The CFR report last updated in September 2020, stated:

'For decades, Chinese authorities have cracked down on Uighurs in Xinjiang, claiming the community holds extremist and separatist ideas. They point to occasional outbursts of violence against government workers and civilians in the region and have blamed the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a separatist group founded by militant Uighurs, for several terrorist attacks throughout China. Experts say most Uighurs do not support the violence, but many are frustrated by frequent discrimination and the influx of Han Chinese to the region, as they disproportionately benefit from economic opportunities.'⁴⁵

5.2.8 The ASPI report published on 24 September 2020 noted that:

'Alongside other coercive efforts to re-engineer Uyghur social and cultural life by transforming or eliminating Uyghurs' language, music, homes and even diets, the Chinese Government's policies are actively erasing and altering key elements of their tangible cultural heritage.

⁴² USSD, '[2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#)', 25 June 2020

⁴³ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, '[Country of origin information report China](#)', 1 July 2020

⁴⁴ BuzzFeed News, '[Part 1- China Secretly Built A Vast New Infrastructure To...](#)', 27 August 2020

⁴⁵ CFR, '[Religion in China](#)', last updated 25 September 2020

‘...In Xinjiang, officials have cracked down on “illegal” or “abnormal” religious practice among the Uyghurs and other Muslims since 2009, outlawing “illegal religious activities” as they tightened controls over Islamic education, worship, fasting and veiling. Islamic-sounding names were banned, and “extremist” religious materials (Qurans, prayer mats, CDs etc.) were confiscated and, in one case, appear to have been burned in public.

‘...Xinjiang officials now warn against the “Halal-isation” (清真泛化), “Muslim-isation” (穆斯林化), and “Arab-isation” (阿拉伯化) of religious practices in Xinjiang and seek to actively “rectify” any practices, products, symbols and architectural styles deemed out of keeping with “Chinese tradition”.⁴⁶

5.2.9 The September 2020 episode of the Janes podcast ‘The World of Intelligence’ interviewed Alison Killing, a geospatial analyst and architect, about her investigation into the camps in China where Uyghur Muslims are interned. The podcast host Terry Pattar, head of the Janes Intelligence Unit opined that since 2016 Muslims in Xinjiang have been subjected to a campaign, which the authorities refer to as re-education but is in fact internment. Alison King noted that it is in fact forced cultural assimilation and went on to say that 5 or 6 years ago the main focus was very heavy surveillance in Xinjiang, with the installation of a large number of CCTV cameras and multiple check points within towns causing people to pass through checkpoints to enter schools, petrol stations and shopping malls. There was also surveillance and monitoring of cultural activities, such as weddings, with the police attending to ensure there were no Islamic readings. Terry Patter went on to note that the Chinese government have issued propaganda to suggest that what is going on in Xinjiang is actually much more benign than has been otherwise reported⁴⁷.

5.2.10 The CECC Annual report 2020 noted that:

‘XUAR government and Party officials curtailed Muslim residents’ freedom to practice their religious beliefs by implementing restrictions on prayer, defacing and destroying mosques and cemeteries, and detaining individuals for practicing or possessing materials about Islam. As in previous reporting years, XUAR officials reportedly imposed controls on Muslims’ observance of Ramadan. Turkic Muslim residents of the XUAR faced restrictions on fasting and the exchange of Islamic greetings. Authorities reportedly forced some Muslim XUAR residents to eat during Ramadan instead of fasting as part of practicing their Islamic faith.⁴⁸

5.2.11 The Human Rights Watch report ‘Break their Lineage, Break their roots’ published in April 2021 stated:

‘Outside of the camps, a fundamental aspect of the government’s current treatment of Turkic Muslims is their forced assimilation into mainstream Han Chinese culture, and the government’s repeated attempts to hollow out Turkic Muslim culture. Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang are required to attend weekly, or even daily, Chinese flag-raising ceremonies, political indoctrination meetings and, at times, Chinese language classes. The

⁴⁶ Australian Strategic Policy Institute, ‘[Cultural Erasure](#)’, 24 September 2020

⁴⁷ Janes podcast, ‘[Alison Killing and her investigation that identified...](#)’ (21 mins), 23 September 2020

⁴⁸ CECC, ‘[Annual Report 2020](#)’ (pg 306), 14 January 2021

authorities have imposed punishments for refusal to watch state-run television programs or listen to state-run radio programs. Speaking or writing the Uyghur language is discouraged. Chinese authorities have banned the use of Uyghur and Kazakh language teaching materials, and state employees who use these languages are deemed “unpatriotic” and could be labeled a “two-faced person”—a charge that has resulted in the detention of hundreds of Turkic Muslim public figures, maybe more.⁴⁹

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5.3 Mosques and Islamic spaces

5.3.1 The ASPI report published on 24 September 2020 noted that:

‘Using satellite imagery, we estimate that approximately 16,000 mosques in Xinjiang (65% of the total) have been destroyed or damaged as a result of government policies, mostly since 2017. An estimated 8,500 have been demolished outright, and, for the most part, the land on which those razed mosques once sat remains vacant. A further 30% of important Islamic sacred sites (shrines, cemeteries and pilgrimage routes, including many protected under Chinese law) have been demolished across Xinjiang, mostly since 2017, and an additional 28% have been damaged or altered in some way.

‘...Our study of mosques in northern Xinjiang revealed a wave of renovations and reconstructions between 2012 and 2016, followed by a wave of demolitions from 2016 onwards. This sudden reversal coincided with significant national-level changes to religious policy and a crackdown on expressions of faith, suggesting a centrally driven policy directive rather than decisions by local officials.

‘...Tighter control over mosques and religious personnel is central to the plan to sinicise Islam in Xinjiang, as is the “rectifying” of places of religious worship. Wang Jingfu, head of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee in Kashgar city, told Radio Free Asia in 2016: “We launched the rectification campaign with the purpose of protecting the safety of the worshippers because all the mosques were too old. We demolished nearly 70% of mosques in the city because there were more than enough mosques, and some were unnecessary.”

‘Under the UFWD’s “four entrances campaign” (‘四进’清真寺活动), mosques across Xinjiang are required to hang the national flag; post copies of the Chinese Constitution, laws and regulations; uphold core socialist values; and reflect “excellent traditional Chinese culture”. Architecturally, this involves the removal of Arabic calligraphy, minarets, domes and star-and-crescent and other symbols deemed “foreign” and their replacement with traditional Chinese architectural elements.’⁵⁰

5.3.2 The CECC Annual Report for 2020 noted that:

‘Scholars and rights advocates have argued that authorities’ recent destruction of Uyghur cemeteries and shrines was designed to eradicate

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, [‘Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots’](#), 19 April 2021

⁵⁰ Australian Strategic Policy Institute, [‘Cultural Erasure’](#), 24 September 2020

Uyghurs' religious and cultural practices. 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. Researchers analyzing satellite imagery found that Chinese officials had destroyed more than 100 Uyghur cemeteries throughout the XUAR over the past several years. Notices issued by local governments regarding the destruction of individual cemeteries included justifications such as that new cemetery sites "saved space" and were "civilized," and that officials needed "to meet the demand of city planning and promote construction."⁵¹

- 5.3.3 The Human Rights Watch report 'Break their Lineage, Break their roots' published in April 2021 stated:

'Authorities have [...] destroyed numerous burial grounds where generations of Turkic Muslim families have been buried, which many view as an attempt to disconnect Turkic Muslims from their history and ancestry.

'...As noted, authorities have also targeted mosques for demolition. According to one estimate, some 16,000 mosques in Xinjiang have been damaged or destroyed since 2017, and about half of those have been demolished. Many of the remaining mosques have been desecrated in other ways, such as through the removal of crescents from atop the mosques or by installing framed copies of state policies on "de-extremification" or "ethnic unity" on their walls.'⁵²

- 5.3.4 The 2019 USIRF Xinjiang Report noted: 'The government continued to administer mosques and restrict access to houses of worship, requiring worshippers to apply for mosque entry permits.'⁵³

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5.4 Surveillance

- 5.4.1 The Human Rights Watch report 'China's Algorithms of Repression' published on 1 May 2019 noted that:

'Human Rights Watch finds that officials use the Integrated Joint Operations Platform [IJOP] app to fulfill three broad functions: collecting personal information, reporting on activities or circumstances deemed suspicious, and prompting investigations of people the system flags as problematic. Analysis of the IJOP app reveals that authorities are collecting massive amounts of personal information—from the color of a person's car to their height down to the precise centimeter—and feeding it into the IJOP central system, linking that data to the person's national identification card number. Our analysis also shows that Xinjiang authorities consider many forms of lawful, everyday, non-violent behavior—such as "not socializing with neighbors, often avoiding using the front door"—as suspicious. The app also labels the use of 51 network tools as suspicious, including many Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and encrypted communication tools, such as WhatsApp and Viber.

⁵¹ CECC, '[Annual Report 2020](#)' (pg 306), 14 January 2021

⁵² Human Rights Watch, '[Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots](#)', 19 April 2021

⁵³ USSD, '[2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Xinjiang](#)', 12 May 2020

‘...When the IJOP system detects irregularities or deviations from what it considers normal, such as when people are using a phone that is not registered to them, when they use more electricity than “normal,” or when they leave the area in which they are registered to live without police permission, the system flags these “micro-clues” to the authorities as suspicious and prompts an investigation. Another key element of IJOP system is the monitoring of personal relationships. Authorities seem to consider some of these relationships inherently suspicious. For example, the IJOP app instructs officers to investigate people who are related to people who have obtained a new phone number or who have foreign links.’⁵⁴

5.4.2 The CECC Annual Report for 2020 noted that:

‘During the Commission’s 2020 reporting year, authorities in the XUAR used surveillance technology, security checks, home inspections, and other methods to maintain control over Turkic and Muslim residents....

‘According to a collection of leaked Chinese government documents referred to as the China Cables, XUAR authorities have analyzed user-based information on the file-sharing application Zapya to identify residents to detain in mass internment camps. Zapya, or “Kuai Ya” in Chinese, which was developed by the Chinese company DewMobile Inc., has been popular among Muslims worldwide for allowing users to share Muslim religious content. Security personnel reportedly accused Uyghurs possessing the application of using it to “distribute extremist content.” Among the China Cables, a document regarding a centralized system known as the “Integrated Joint Operations Platform” called on authorities to use data stored in the system to investigate Uyghurs “one by one,” to find what it referred to as suspected terrorists. Shortly after officials issued this document, authorities reportedly began detaining Uyghurs who had downloaded Zapya.

‘During this reporting year, authorities continued to 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, in arrangements which left these families vulnerable to sexual violence and other types of abuse. In some cases, authorities have used information compiled by cadres and government workers to send members of their host families to mass internment camps.’⁵⁵

5.4.3 Several other sources also reported on the ‘Pair up and Become Family’ program which required families in the XUAR to host officials, referred to as ‘relatives’, in their homes and provide information about their lives and political views. Sources noted that as part of this programme visiting male ‘relatives’ often shared a bed with wives of those who were in internment camps. Reports suggested that families who refuse to take part in the

⁵⁴ HRW, [‘China’s Algorithms of Repression’](#), 1 May 2019

⁵⁵ CECC, [‘Annual Report 2020’](#) (pg 305), 14 January 2021

programme are subject to additional restrictions and may end up being detained^{56 57 58 59}.

5.4.4 The BBC News World service podcast 'The Inquiry' in an episode titled 'Why isn't the world doing more to help the Uighurs?' aired in July 2020 noted that there was intense surveillance outside of the camps which included facial recognition cameras and checkpoints every 200 metres⁶⁰.

5.4.5 The CFR backgrounder on 'China's Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang' last updated in January 2021 noted that:

'The Experts say Xinjiang has been turned into a surveillance state that relies on cutting-edge technology to monitor millions of people. Under Xinjiang's Communist Party leader, Chen, Xinjiang was placed under a grid-management system, as described in media reports, in which cities and villages were split into squares of about five hundred people. Each square has a police station that closely monitors inhabitants by regularly scanning their identification cards, taking their photographs and fingerprints, and searching their cell phones. In some cities, such as western Xinjiang's Kashgar, police checkpoints are found every one hundred yards or so, and facial-recognition cameras are everywhere. The government also collects and stores citizens' biometric data through a required program advertised as Physicals for All.'⁶¹

5.4.6 The Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights (RWCHR) and Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy March 2021 report, 'The Uyghur Genocide', concluded that:

'In May 2014, the Chinese Government announced a "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism" and a "People's War on Terror" in XUAR. [...] That same year, XUAR authorities in Uyghur-majority prefectures began building these physical walls and surveillance nets en masse, installing thousands of high-definition cameras, connected to centralized high-tech command locations, throughout villages, mosques, and key intersections. Between 2016 and 2018, individual cities spent as much as \$46 million on these surveillance systems, with one county installing facial recognition cameras in each of its nearly one thousand mosques.'⁶²

5.4.7 Human Rights Watch's April 2021 report also documented:

'...the extensive and compulsory collection of their biometric data. Chinese authorities collect DNA samples, fingerprints, iris scans, and blood types from all Xinjiang residents between the ages of 12 and 65, in part through a medical examination program, "Physicals for All." Turkic Muslims' biometrics are collected without choice or informed consent. The biometric data of "focus personnel"—that is, those considered threatening to regime stability—and their family members are taken regardless of age. In addition, Chinese

⁵⁶ SupChina, '[Sealed doors and 'positive energy': COVID-19 in Xinjiang](#)', 4 March 2020

⁵⁷ RFA, '[Male Chinese 'Relatives' Assigned to Uyghur Homes Co-sleep With...](#)', 31 October 2021

⁵⁸ The Irish Times, '["Become family": China sends officials to stay with ...](#)', 17 December 2019

⁵⁹ BBC The Inquiry podcast, '[Why isn't the world doing more to help...](#)' (7 Mins), 30 July 2020

⁶⁰ BBC The Inquiry podcast, '[Why isn't the world doing more to help...](#)' (7 Mins), 30 July 2020

⁶¹ CFR, '[China's Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang](#)', last updated 19 January 2021

⁶² RWCHR and Newlines, '[The Uyghur Genocide](#)', 8 March 2021

authorities have also collected voice samples from Turkic Muslims during passport application processes and at police checkpoints. [...] All of this data can be linked in police databases to the person's identification number, which in turn is linked to any of their additional biometric and personal information on file.

'The Xinjiang authorities have also put in place networks of automated sensory systems throughout the region, which include CCTV cameras with facial recognition, automated license plate recognition, and infrared capabilities; WiFi sniffers that collect identifying addresses of networked devices; and security checkpoints and visitors' management systems that gather identifying information. Kitchen knives in Xinjiang are tracked by QR codes that include the owner's ID number, photo, ethnicity, and address, and vehicles are subject to mandatory location trackers.'

5.4.8 The same report stated:

'Although the Chinese government uses mass surveillance throughout the country, its monitoring and tracking of Turkic Muslims is particularly invasive in Xinjiang. The government encourages people to inform on each other and deploys government officials to monitor Turkic Muslims. For example, under the "ten households, one unit" policy, groups of 10 households are held responsible for monitoring one another, facing collective punishment for infractions by any one household. Much of this information is fed into the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), which aggregates data about individuals, flags to officials those whom it deems potentially threatening, and determines who should be rounded up by police, investigated, and sent to political re-education camps or other detention facilities.

'...Former detainees are released to even harsher conditions of mass surveillance. In addition to the modes of surveillance detailed above, former detainees and their relatives are frequently monitored by local officials who regularly assess and record their moods and behavior along metrics such as whether their thoughts are "stable"; whether they can "recognize their mistakes"; and whether they have a "sincere attitude of regret." Some receive daily visits from local cadres and are obligated to sign in every morning and attend roll-call in the evenings.'⁶³

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5.5 Birth control and forced sterilisation

5.5.1 Dr Adrian Zenz, a German scholar's, report 'Sterilizations, IUDs, And Mandatory Birth Control: The CCP's Campaign To Suppress Uyghur Birth-rates In Xinjiang', published by the Jamestown Foundation in June 2020 noted that:

'Natural population growth in Xinjiang has declined dramatically; growth rates fell by 84 percent in the two largest Uyghur prefectures between 2015 and 2018 and declined further in 2019. For 2020, one Uyghur region set an unprecedented near-zero population growth target: a mere 1.05 per mille, compared to an already low 11.45 per mille in 2018. This was intended to be achieved through "family planning work."

⁶³ Human Rights Watch, '[Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots](#)', 19 April 2021

‘Government documents bluntly mandate that birth control violations are punishable by extrajudicial internment in “training” camps. This confirms evidence from the leaked “Karakax List” document, wherein such violations were the most common reason for internment ([Journal of Political Risk, February 2020](#)).

‘Documents from 2019 reveal plans for a campaign of mass female sterilization in rural Uyghur regions... This campaign likely aims to sterilize rural minority women with three or more children, as well as some with two children—equivalent to at least 20 percent of all childbearing-age women. Budget figures indicate that this project had sufficient funding for performing hundreds of thousands of tubal ligation sterilization procedures in 2019 and 2020, with least one region receiving additional central government funding. In 2018, a Uyghur prefecture openly set a goal of leading its rural populations to accept widespread sterilization surgery.

‘By 2019, Xinjiang planned to subject at least 80 percent of women of childbearing age in the rural southern four minority prefectures to intrusive birth prevention surgeries (IUDs or sterilizations), with actual shares likely being much higher. In 2018, 80 percent of all new IUD placements in China were performed in Xinjiang, despite the fact that the region only makes up 1.8 percent of the nation’s population.’⁶⁴

5.5.2 Associated Press news reported in June 2020 that:

‘While individual women have spoken out before about forced birth control, the practice is far more widespread and systematic than previously known, according to an AP investigation based on government statistics, state documents and interviews with 30 ex-detainees, family members and a former detention camp instructor. The campaign over the past four years in the far west region of Xinjiang is leading to what some experts are calling a form of “demographic genocide.”

‘The state regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks, and forces intrauterine devices, sterilization and even abortion on hundreds of thousands, the interviews and data show. Even while the use of IUDs and sterilization has fallen nationwide, it is rising sharply in Xinjiang.

‘The population control measures are backed by mass detention both as a threat and as a punishment for failure to comply. Having too many children is a major reason people are sent to detention camps, the AP found, with the parents of three or more ripped away from their families unless they can pay huge fines. Police raid homes, terrifying parents as they search for hidden children.

‘... Once in the detention camps, women are subjected to forced IUDs and what appear to be pregnancy prevention shots, according to former detainees. They are also made to attend lectures on how many children they should have.

‘Seven former detainees told the AP that they were force-fed birth control pills or injected with fluids, often with no explanation. Many felt dizzy, tired or ill, and women stopped getting their periods. After being released and

⁶⁴ The Jamestown Foundation-Dr Adrian Zenz, [‘Sterilizations, IUDs, And...’](#) (page 2-3), June 2020

leaving China, some went to get medical check-ups and found they were sterile.

'It's unclear what former detainees were injected with, but Xinjiang hospital slides obtained by the AP show that pregnancy prevention injections, sometimes with the hormonal medication Depo-Provera, are a common family planning measure. Side effects can include headaches and dizziness.

'...Some women have even reported forced abortions.'⁶⁵

5.5.3 The Human Rights Watch report from April 2021 stated: '... While the number of sterilization procedures in the rest of China plummeted following the 2016 abolition of the country's longstanding one-child policy, sterilizations surged in Xinjiang in 2017 and 2018, despite Turkic Muslim communities' traditional reticence toward such procedures. Turkic Muslim women have also reported threats of internment for refusal to undergo these "free" medical services.'⁶⁶

5.5.4 The ASPI report 'Family De-planning: The Coercive Campaign to Drive Down Indigenous Birth-rates in Xinjiang', published in May 2021 noted that:

'In the past, the Chinese government sought to incentivize fewer births among the indigenous population of southern Xinjiang by offering cash inducements. In 2006, the XUAR government announced the "fewer births, faster prosperity" (少生快富) reward scheme.

'Minority women with two or fewer births who were willing to undergo "long-term contraceptive measures" (IUD insertion or tubal ligation) were entitled to a single-time cash payment of 3000 RMB (US\$460).

'In 2017, the Chinese government's approach to birth control among minority nationalities shifted from "reward and encourage" towards a more coercive and intrusive policing of reproductive processes. Cash rewards were now supplemented with hefty fines, disciplinary punishment, internment or the threat of internment for any "illegal births."

'As a part of "mass supervision," cash rewards are now handed out for informing on a neighbour or colleague. In Aksu City, for example, 5000 RMB (US\$772) was offered for verified reports of illegal births and 2000 RMB (US\$309) for exposing any fraud, underreporting, false reporting or concealment of illegal births by family-planning officials in 2019.

'... Xinjiang witnessed a nearly 50 percent drop in birth-rates over the three-year period from 2017 to 2019.'⁶⁷

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5.6 Detention and 're-education centres'

5.6.1 The New York Times, in a report of August 2019 that:

'Courts in Xinjiang — where largely Muslim minorities, including Uighurs and Kazakhs, make up more than half of the population — sentenced a total of 230,000 people to prison or other punishments in 2017 and 2018,

⁶⁵ AP News, '[China cuts Uighur births with IUDs, abortion, sterilization](#)', 29 June 2020

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, '[Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots](#)', April 2021

⁶⁷ ASPI, '[Family De-planning: The Coercive Campaign to Drive Down...](#)', 12 May 2021

significantly more than in any other period on record in decades for the region. During 2017 alone, Xinjiang courts sentenced almost 87,000 defendants, 10 times more than the previous year, to prison terms of five years or longer. Arrests increased eightfold; prosecutions fivefold... Arrests, the critics said, are often based on flimsy or exaggerated charges, and trials are perfunctory, with guilty judgments overwhelmingly likely. Once sentenced, prisoners face potential abuses and hard labor in overcrowded, isolated facilities[...] The wave of arrests, prosecutions and sentences, however, points to an enormous upswell in imprisonment.⁶⁸

- 5.6.2 In March 2020, the ASPI in a report ‘Uyghurs for sale- “Re-education”, forced labour and surveillance beyond Xinjiang’ reported that:

‘Since 2017, more than a million Uyghurs and members of other Turkic Muslim minorities have disappeared into a vast network of “re-education camps” in the far west region of Xinjiang, in what some experts call a systematic, government-led program of cultural genocide. Inside the camps, detainees are subjected to political indoctrination, forced to renounce their religion and culture and, in some instances, reportedly subjected to torture. In the name of combating “religious extremism”, Chinese authorities have been actively remoulding the Muslim population in the image of China’s Han ethnic majority.’⁶⁹

- 5.6.3 The BBC News World service podcast ‘The Inquiry’ in their July 2020 episode noted that the purpose of the detention camps is to indoctrinate Uighurs and other Turkic ethnic minorities. The indoctrination includes beatings, starvations and overcrowded conditions. The podcast stated that those detained in re-education centres range in age from 14 to 85 and are forced to learn party propaganda and sing Chinese red songs [songs which praise the communist party] which can be difficult for elderly Uighurs who do not speak Chinese. Various actions carry the risk of detention such as resisting attempts to have contraceptive devices fitted, giving your child a traditional Muslim name or having a beard that’s considered too long, although there are no set rules for what someone has to do to end up in detention. Those whom the Chinese authorities claim to have graduated from re-education centres end up in forced labour factories in mainland China⁷⁰.

- 5.6.4 An August 2020 BuzzFeed News investigation into the internment camps in the Xinjiang stated that:

‘...BuzzFeed News identified more than 260 structures built since 2017 and bearing the hallmarks of fortified detention compounds. There is at least one in nearly every county in the far-west region of Xinjiang... The new facilities are scattered across every populated area of the region, and several are large enough to accommodate 10,000 prisoners at a minimum, based on their size and architectural features.

‘...With at least tens of thousands of detainees crowded into government buildings repurposed as camps by the end of 2017, the government began

⁶⁸ The New York Times, [‘China’s Prisons Swell After Deluge of Arrests Engulfs...’](#), 19 January 2021

⁶⁹ ASPI, [‘Uyghurs for sale: “Re-education”, forced labour and surveillance ...’](#), March 2020

⁷⁰ BBC, The Inquiry podcast, [‘Why isn’t the world doing more to help...’](#) (5 mins), 30 July 2020

building the largest new facilities in the spring of 2018. Several were complete by October 2018, with further facilities built through 2019 and construction of a handful more continuing even now.

‘...The government has said its camps are schools and vocational training centers where detainees are “deradicalized.” The government’s own internal documentation about its policies in Xinjiang has used the term “concentration,” or 集中, to describe “educational schools.”

‘The government claims that its campaign combats extremism in the region. But most who end up in these facilities are not extremists of any sort.

‘Downloading WhatsApp, which is banned in China, maintaining ties with family abroad, engaging in prayer, and visiting a foreign website are all offenses for which Muslims have been sent to camps, according to previously leaked documents and interviews with former detainees. Because the government does not consider internment camps to be part of the criminal justice system and none of these behaviors are crimes under Chinese law, no detainees have been formally arrested or charged with a crime, let alone seen a day in court. The compounds BuzzFeed News identified likely include extrajudicial internment camps — which hold people who are not suspected of any crime — as well as prisons. Both types of facilities have security features that closely resemble each other. Xinjiang’s prison population has grown massively during the government’s campaign: In 2017, the region had 21% of all arrests in China, despite making up less than 2% of the national population — an eightfold increase from the year before, according to a New York Times analysis of government data. Because China’s Communist Party–controlled courts have a more than 99% conviction rate, the overwhelming majority of those arrests likely resulted in convictions.’⁷¹

- 5.6.5 The CFR report, last updated in September 2020, stated: ‘...Chinese officials deny human rights abuses in the region. They maintain that the re-education camps have two purposes: to teach Mandarin, Chinese laws, and vocational skills, and to prevent citizens from being influenced by extremist ideas. Beijing has resisted international pressure to allow outside investigators to freely travel in Xinjiang.’⁷²
- 5.6.6 The September 2020 Janes podcast episode featuring Alison Killing’s investigation into the internment camps in Xinjiang noted that it has been estimated by the UN and others that there are of upwards of 1 million people being detained in Xinjiang out of a population of around 11 million. In the past few years there has been a change in the internment camps from makeshift camps to a more permanent infrastructure. As well as people being interned there has also been those who have been detained in education camps. There has also been a sharp increase in those arrested and charged with other crimes in Xinjiang of whom 99% are convicted. People who are convicted of crimes would end up prison rather than internment camps although there is no meaningful distance between

⁷¹ BuzzFeed News, [‘China Secretly Built A Vast New Infrastructure To...’](#) (part 1), 27 August 2020

⁷² CFR, [‘Religion in China’](#), last updated 25 September 2020

internment camps and the prisons, with no distinguishing features between the 2, and very similar security features⁷³.

5.6.7 The Australian Strategic Policy Institute [ASPI] noted in their report 'Documenting Xinjiang's detention system', published on 24 September 2020 that:

'ASPI researchers have identified and mapped over 380 sites in the detention network across Xinjiang, counting only re-education camps, detention centres and prisons that were newly built or significantly expanded since 2017.

'The findings of this research contradict Chinese officials' claims that all "trainees" from so-called vocational training centres had "graduated" by late 2019. Instead, available evidence suggests that many extrajudicial detainees in Xinjiang's vast "re-education" network are now being formally charged and locked up in higher security facilities, including newly built or expanded prisons, or sent to walled factory compounds for coerced labour assignments.

'...At least 61 detention sites have seen new construction and expansion work between July 2019 and July 2020. This includes at least 14 facilities still under construction in 2020, according to the latest satellite imagery available. Of these, about 50% are higher security facilities, which may suggest a shift in usage from the lower-security, "re-education centres" toward higher-security prison-style facilities. At the same time, according to satellite data we have examined, at least 70 facilities appear to have been de-securitized by the removal of internal fencing or perimeter walls. This includes 8 camps that show signs of decommissioning, and it is possible they have been closed. 90% of de-securitized camps are lower security facilities.

'...It is clear that a large number of towns and cities in Xinjiang have quite extensive centres for day learning or "community correction". These non-residential facilities are very different from the sites meant to house detainees but can still be considered part of the "re-education" network, as they require residents to visit for day-classes on regular occasions. It is possible that these facilities have mostly been retired after people have completed their syllabus. If that's the case, the buildings have probably been repurposed into other government official buildings or perhaps into real classrooms. These facilities are outside the scope of this dataset, but should be noted here as an element of Xinjiang's post-2017 "re-education" system.'⁷⁴

5.6.8 The BBC News report 'Xinjiang: China defends "education" camps' published in September 2020 noted that:

'Beijing has come under fire for a network of detention centres which mostly house Muslim minorities. But a new document says millions of workers have benefited from "education and vocational training". The US has likened the centres to concentration camps. It has placed sanctions on Chinese politicians allegedly involved and earlier this week blocked some exports it

⁷³ Janes podcast, '[Alison Killing and her investigation that identified...](#)' (23 mins), 23 September 2020

⁷⁴ ASPI, '[Documenting Xinjiang's detention system](#)', 24 September 2020

said had been made with "forced labour". A new Chinese government white paper, however, says "vocational training" is increasing job opportunities and combating poverty. "Xinjiang has built a large knowledge-based, skilled and innovative workforce that meets the requirements of the new era," the report reads. It says the training provided includes written and spoken Mandarin, labour skills and "knowledge of urban life". The report says people from rural areas have started their own businesses or got jobs in factories after receiving state support.

'China has long insisted that mass "vocational education and training" is necessary in far-western Xinjiang to counter terrorism and alleviate poverty. But human rights groups have said at least one million people have been incarcerated in camps which they describe as "re-education" centres. The Chinese report said that 1.3 million people had been through Xinjiang's "vocational training" scheme annually for six years. It's not clear how many of those "retrained" were sent to the specially built camps or if any of them went through the programme twice. But in total nearly eight million people out of a population of 22 million could have been through the programme, the new figures suggest.'⁷⁵

5.6.9 In its April 2021 report, Human Rights Watch stated:

'Detainees and their relatives interviewed by Human Rights Watch all reported that at no point did the authorities ever present them with a warrant, with evidence of a crime, or with any other documentation, nor were they ever informed of which authorities were responsible for their arrest. Lawyers told the Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) that defendants facing terrorism charges are not allowed to plead "not guilty," and tend to be quickly put on trial and sentenced to prison terms. CHRD has also documented that lawyers risk being dismissed from cases for attempting to protect their clients' due process rights, and has reported cases of other procedural abuses such as verdicts being prepared before the trials take place, or government officials rather than judges deciding sentences.'⁷⁶

5.6.10 The Xinjiang data project, developed by researchers at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's (ASPI) International Cyber Policy Centre in partnership with a range of global experts, have produced an [interactive map](#) which details detention facilities across the Xinjiang province.

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5.7 Torture and ill treatment in detention

5.7.1 An August 2020 BuzzFeed News investigation into the internment camps in the Xinjiang stated that: '...People detained in the camps told BuzzFeed News they were subjected to torture, hunger, overcrowding, solitary confinement, forced birth control, and a range of other abuses. They said they were put through brainwashing programs focusing on Communist Party propaganda and made to speak only in the Chinese language. Some former detainees said they were forced to labor without pay in factories.'⁷⁷

⁷⁵ BBC, '[Xinjiang: China defends "education" camps](#)', 17 September 2020

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, '[Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots](#)', 19 April 2021

⁷⁷ BuzzFeed News, '[China Secretly Built A Vast New Infrastructure To...](#)' (part 1), 27 August 2020

5.7.2 BBC News reported in February 2021 that: 'Women in China's "re-education" camps for Uighurs have been systematically raped, sexually abused, and tortured... First-hand accounts from inside the internment camps are rare, but several former detainees and a guard have told the BBC they experienced or saw evidence of an organised system of mass rape, sexual abuse and torture.'⁷⁸

5.7.3 The March 2021 RWHRC report stated:

'...Large numbers of Uyghur detainees have died or been killed under police or camp custody, and people who report such deaths can receive lengthy sentences. There is at least one confirmed report of mass deaths within an internment camp, and newly built crematoria in the region indicate that authorities may be concealing the overall number of deaths and torture within the camps. Elderly and prominent Uyghur religious figures, or detainees who succumb to the military-style routines, are particularly vulnerable to death or disappearance in detention, with a number of religious scholars dying shortly after taken into custody. The elderly also tend to be more susceptible than younger detainees to torture for failing to learn Chinese or requesting to use the toilet outside of designated times, while prominent Uyghurs have been selectively targeted in the mass detention drive, both in scope and scale of punishment, generally receiving 15 years to life in prison or being sentenced to death.

'... According to eyewitness accounts, detainees are held in overcrowded cells... Detainees are often denied food for failing to comply perfectly with the rules or deliberately given spoiled food for speaking Uyghur or failing to speak Chinese. As a result, detainees generally experience extreme weight loss within the camps.'⁷⁹

5.7.4 The USSD 2020 Country report on human rights practices, published March 2021, noted that:

'In Xinjiang there were reports of custodial deaths related to detentions in the internment camps. There were multiple reports from Uyghur family members who discovered their relatives had died while in internment camps or within weeks of their release.

'...Members of the minority Uyghur ethnic group reported systematic torture and other degrading treatment by law enforcement officers and officials working within the penal system and the internment camps. Survivors stated that authorities subjected individuals in custody to electric shock, waterboarding, beatings, rape, forced sterilization, forced prostitution, stress positions, forced administration of unknown medication, and cold cells

'There was no direct evidence of an involuntary or prisoner-based organ transplant system; however, activists and some organizations continued to accuse the government of forcibly harvesting organs from prisoners of conscience, including religious and spiritual adherents such as ... Muslim detainees in Xinjiang.

⁷⁸ BBC News, '[Their goal is to destroy everyone': Uighur camp detainees allege...](#)', 2 February 2021

⁷⁹ RWCHR and Newlines, '[The Uyghur Genocide](#)', 8 March 2021

'...Some Xinjiang internment camp survivors reported that they were subjected to coerced comprehensive health screenings including blood and DNA testing upon entering the internment camps. There were also reports from former detainees that authorities forced Uyghur detainees to undergo medical examinations of thoracic and abdominal organs. The government continues to claim that it had ended the long-standing practice of harvesting the organs of executed prisoners for use in transplants in 2015.'⁸⁰

5.7.5 The RWHRC and Newslines's March 2021 report stated:

'Uyghur detainees within the detention sites are systematically tortured, subjected to sexual violence, including rape, and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment, deprived of their basic human needs, and severely humiliated.

'...Common forms of torture in the camps include: forcing detainees to sit on small stools, shackling them to "tiger chairs," beds, walls, ceilings, or heavy fetters, or subjecting them to solitary confinement and food deprivation for prolonged periods of time. Detainees are also subjected to whippings and constant beatings by metal and electric prods or bare cords.

'...Former detainees have testified to systematic mass rape and other sexual abuse in the detention facilities. There are also accounts of gang rapes perpetrated by security officials, including references to masked men, the use of an electrified stick, "bite[s] all over your body," and a designated table (where there are reportedly no cameras) for "doing things."

'In addition to the well-documented serious bodily harm inflicted on Uyghurs, the mental harm suffered is so severe as to drive some to commit suicide, including from the threat of internment. Detainees are subjected to repeated daily routines of indoctrination, forced to watch CCP propaganda, chant Party slogans, set prayer mats on fire or eat pork, and are further punished by way of constant mock executions or solitary confinement. ...Suicides have become so pervasive that detainees must wear "suicide safe" uniforms and are denied access to materials susceptible to causing self-harm.'⁸¹

5.7.6 In an April 2021 report, Human Rights Watch stated:

'Human Rights Watch and others have reported on torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of detainees by the authorities in both political education camps and police detention facilities (看守所).

'...Some former detainees reported having been strapped to metal chairs, known as "tiger chairs," during police interrogations. Former detainees from political education camps and police detention facilities told Human Rights Watch about the use of physical and psychological punishments, ill-treatment of or lack of medical care for people particularly vulnerable to harsh detention conditions, and suicide attempts.'⁸²

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⁸⁰ USSD, ['2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China'](#) (Section 1A & C), 30 March 2021

⁸¹ RWCHR and Newslines, ['The Uyghur Genocide'](#), 8 March 2021

⁸² Human Rights Watch, ['Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots'](#), 19 April 2021

5.8 Forced labour

5.8.1 In March 2020, the ASPI report ‘Uyghurs for sale- “Re-education”, forced labour and surveillance beyond Xinjiang’ reported that:

‘The “re-education” campaign appears to be entering a new phase, as government officials now claim that all “trainees” have “graduated”. There is mounting evidence that many Uyghurs are now being forced to work in factories within Xinjiang. This report reveals that Chinese factories outside Xinjiang are also sourcing Uyghur workers under a revived, exploitative government-led labour transfer scheme. Some factories appear to be using Uyghur workers sent directly from “re-education camps”.

‘The ASPI has identified 27 factories in nine Chinese provinces that are using Uyghur labour transferred from Xinjiang since 2017. Those factories claim to be part of the supply chain of 83 well-known global brands. Between 2017 and 2019, we estimate that at least 80,000 Uyghurs were transferred out of Xinjiang and assigned to factories through labour transfer programs under a central government policy known as “Xinjiang Aid” (援疆).

‘...Chinese state media claims that participation in labour transfer programs is voluntary, and Chinese officials have denied any commercial use of forced labour from Xinjiang. However, Uyghur workers who have been able to leave China and speak out describe the constant fear of being sent back to a detention camp in Xinjiang or even a traditional prison while working at the factories.

‘In factories outside Xinjiang, there is evidence that their lives are far from free. Referred to as “surplus labour” or “poverty-stricken labour”, Uyghur workers are often transported across China in special segregated trains, and in most cases are returned home by the same method after their contracts end a year or more later.

‘Multiple sources suggest that in factories across China, many Uyghur workers lead a harsh, segregated life under so-called “military-style management”. Outside work hours, they attend factory-organised Mandarin language classes, participate in “patriotic education”, and are prevented from practising their religion. Every 50 Uyghur workers are assigned one government minder and are monitored by dedicated security personnel. They have little freedom of movement and live in carefully guarded dormitories, isolated from their families and children back in Xinjiang. There is also evidence that, at least in some factories, they are paid less than their Han counterparts, despite state media claims that they’re paid attractive wages.

‘The Chinese authorities and factory bosses manage Uyghur workers by “tracking” them both physically and electronically. One provincial government document describes a central database, developed by Xinjiang’s Human Resources and Social Affairs Department and maintained by a team of 100 specialists in Xinjiang, that records the medical, ideological and employment details of each labourer.

‘Chinese companies and government officials also pride themselves on being able to alter their Uyghur workers’ ideological outlook and transform

them into “modern” citizens, who, they say, become “more physically attractive” and learn to “take daily showers”. In some cases, local governments in Xinjiang send Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres to simultaneously surveil workers’ families back home in Xinjiang— a reminder to workers that any misbehaviour in the factory will have immediate consequences for their loved ones and further evidence that their participation in the program is far from voluntary.’⁸³

5.8.2 The 2019 DFAT report noted that:

‘DFAT is unable to verify claims that the government subjects many Uighurs in rural prefectures to forced labour (“hashar”). Media has reported that government officials in Hotan announced a new ban on hashar in 2017, despite the Party claiming compulsory labour had been banned in Xinjiang decades earlier. Media has also reported that Uighurs detained in re-education centres in Xinjiang have been taught “vocational skills”, including manufacturing in textiles, and are providing labour in nearby factories.’⁸⁴

5.8.3 The USSD TiP report, 2020, stated:

‘State-sponsored forced labor continued under the government’s mass detention and political indoctrination campaign against more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, and members of other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. The government expanded this campaign through the transfer of more than 80,000 detainees into forced labor in as many as 19 other provinces during the reporting period [April 2019 and March 2020], according to NGO estimates and media reports... Many detained individuals approved to “graduate” from these facilities were sent to external manufacturing sites in close proximity to the camps or in other provinces and subjected to forced labor, while others were transferred and potentially subjected to forced labor within a separate formal prison system ... Authorities also used the threat of internment to coerce members of some Muslim communities directly into forced labor in manufacturing.

‘The government also transferred thousands of these detainees, along with non-interned minority communities designated arbitrarily as “rural surplus labor,” to other areas within Xinjiang as part of a poverty alleviation program and exploited them in forced labor. Local governments and businesses received tax breaks and financial subsidies for establishing new manufacturing sites and accepting or transferring detainees for these purposes, and officials reportedly received promotions and other benefits for their role in the process. Nationwide, some school districts reportedly compelled ethnic Han students to participate in internship programs featuring forced labor indicators.

‘...Following “graduation” from these [internment camps] facilities, the government subjects many of these individuals to forced labor in adjacent or off-site factories producing garments, carpets, electronics, bedding, hair products, cleaning supplies, and other goods for domestic and international distribution. Coercive conditions reportedly include threats of physical violence, forcible drug intake, physical and sexual abuse, and torture.

⁸³ ASPI, [‘Uyghurs for sale: ‘Re-education’, forced labour and surveillance ...’](#), March 2020

⁸⁴ DFAT, [‘Country Information Report China’](#) (para 3.14), 3 October 2019

'...Authorities offer subsidies incentivizing Chinese companies to open factories in close proximity to the internment camps and to receive transferred detainees at satellite manufacturing sites in other provinces. Local governments receive additional funds for each inmate forced to work in these sites at a fraction of minimum wage or without any compensation. The government has transported tens of thousands of these individuals to other areas within Xinjiang and to other provinces for forced labor under the guise of poverty alleviation and industrial aid programs.

'Xinjiang authorities issued a notice in 2017 abolishing rural obligatory labor under the hashar system, in which thousands of Uyghur adults and children were reportedly subjected to forced labor in government infrastructure projects and agriculture each year. Despite this policy change, similar forms of state-sponsored forced labor continue in Xinjiang, including under the auspices of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (Bingtuan)—an economic and paramilitary organization with administrative control over several areas in the region. ...Uyghur adults and children are reportedly forced to pick cotton under direction of the Bingtuan.'⁸⁵

5.8.4 Several sources reported in September 2020 that the US House of Representatives had voted to ban imports from China's Xinjiang region. The US congress stated that products from the Xinjiang region were produced using forced labour. Some of the products were claimed to have been manufactured at a 'vocational centre' which US officials claimed was more like a 'concentration camp' where religious and ethnic minorities are subject to abuse and forced to work^{86 87 88}.

5.8.5 BBC News reported on 27 January 2021 that following several Western countries having imposed sanctions on China:

'Several major brands have expressed concern over allegations that members of the mostly Muslim Uighur minority group are being used as forced labour.

'Some companies' online shops are blocked and their stores have vanished from some digital maps...

'China initially targeted H&M and Nike but that has widened to include Burberry, Adidas and Converse, among others. While H&M's physical stores in China remain, it is no longer possible to hail a taxi to the shops using an app and consumers can't shop online. Instead China is championing local brands.'⁸⁹

5.8.6 Part 4 of a BuzzFeed News investigation, of January 2021, into the internment camps in the Xinjiang stated that:

'Forced labor has a long history in Xinjiang that predates the detention campaign. Some lower-security prisons were linked to farms, while many high-security prisons contained heavy industrial facilities, such as a smelting

⁸⁵ USSD, '[2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#)', 25 June 2020

⁸⁶ Al Arabiya, '[Republicans, Democrats in US Congress vote to ban imports...](#)', 22 September 2020

⁸⁷ The Guardian, '[Xinjiang: US to block Chinese 'forced labour' products as...](#)', 15 September 2020

⁸⁸ BBC News, '[Xinjiang: US to block some exports citing China's human rights...](#)', 15 September 2020

⁸⁹ BBC News, '[Xinjiang cotton: Western clothes brands vanish as backlash grows](#)', 27 March 2021

plant for lead and zinc, fertilizer plants, and coal and uranium mines. A few contained buildings for light manufacturing.

‘Factories started appearing in the makeshift camps of the early detention campaign in spring 2017. Often, they appeared as a single factory wedged onto the site wherever there was room, squashed between the existing buildings, or built on the sports field of a former school. At the same time, new and expanding high-security facilities also added factories, typically in larger numbers.

‘With the explosion of factory-building in 2018, new patterns emerged. The piecemeal addition of factory buildings on cramped existing sites continued. But the detention compounds on the edge of cities, which had more room, expanded to accommodate new factories that were typically arranged in a neat grid and often separated from the main compound — by a fence, or even a road with barbed wire walkways connecting the two. The factory area often had a separate entrance from the surrounding roads, allowing raw materials to be delivered and finished goods to be picked up without disturbing the wider camp.

‘While some of the new factories have been built in higher-security facilities, they are more often found in lower-security compounds, and they appear to be for light industry — manufacturing clothes rather than smelting zinc or mining. Much of the construction since 2017 has been concentrated in Xinjiang’s south and west: the regions with the highest numbers of Uyghur and Kazakh people.

‘Hotan prefecture, for instance, contains nearly a third of the factories built between the start of 2017 and the end of 2020. Two counties within it — Hotan and Lop — saw 1.9 million square feet and 1.8 million square feet of factories built there respectively during that time period.’⁹⁰

5.8.7 Uyghur Human Rights Project stated in a submission to UN CEDAW in January 2021:

‘The government of China has for years used a complex system of “labor export programs” which coercing unmarried Uyghur women to work in factories outside the Uyghur Region under the promise of higher wages. Simultaneously, the Chinese government has forcibly sent an estimated 80,000 Uyghur laborers to other parts of China in factories under conditions which strongly indicate forced labor. The government of China specifically targets young, rural, and unmarried Uyghur women as participants for many of its labor export programs. Since 2007, authorities have deployed a number of deceptive tactics to lure young Uyghur women away from their homes in the countryside and into forced-labor factories. By first targeting young Uyghur women aged 16-25 living in rural, economically depressed agricultural regions, authorities incentivize impoverished families with higher wages and relocation benefits working in far-away cities. After “accepting” these contract offers and relocating to factories in Eastern China, Uyghur women have been denied their expected wages and adequate living conditions upon arrival. One young Uyghur woman told researchers at the

⁹⁰ BuzzFeed News, [‘We Found The Factories Inside China’s Mass...’](#) (part 4), 4 January 2021

UHRP in 2008 that “We call this place a prison. I think that there is no difference between here and a prison.”⁹¹

5.8.8 The RWHRC and Newslines report of March 2021 found that:

‘The Government has also established a system of institutionalized long-term forced Uyghur labor within and outside the internment camps. Uyghur detainees are systematically transferred to cotton fields and factories adjacent to the camps or located hundreds of kilometers away in XUAR or in Eastern China. These forced labor programs can also be connected to internment, as satellite imagery has identified masses of people wearing identical uniforms transferred between the two sites. Forced labor factories have been verified on at least 135 of the XUAR detention sites. The construction of factories in XUAR parallels the rapid expansion of internment camps. An investigative report identified more than 21 million square feet of factory facilities within camp compounds as of December 2020.’⁹²

5.8.9 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) made a statement on 29 March 2021 outlining ‘serious concerns about the alleged detention and forced labour of Muslim Uyghurs in China, ... Several experts appointed by the Human Rights Council said they had received information that connected over 150 domestic Chinese and foreign domiciled companies to serious allegations of human rights abuses against Uyghur workers.’⁹³

5.8.10 The Xinjiang data project, developed by researchers at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s (ASPI) International Cyber Policy Centre in partnership with a range of global experts, have produced an [interactive map](#) which details detention facilities across the Xinjiang province.

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5.9 Families of those detained or abroad

5.9.1 Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany’s international broadcaster, noted in an article dated 11 July 2019 that: ‘Uighurs who fled to the US and Europe have told DW that Chinese authorities are trying to suppress the activism of the overseas Uighur community by going after family members still living in China. Activists said that their released family members were discouraging them from protesting against the internment program.’⁹⁴

5.9.2 The USSD TiP report, 2020 stated that there were reports that families of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims living abroad were threatened in order to force them into returning to China⁹⁵. The same report also noted that:

‘Authorities in some localities also subject the families of men arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang to forced labor in their absence. Contacts report families separated by this system are more likely to fall below the poverty line and are therefore at higher risk of sex trafficking and forced labor. Authorities are increasingly placing the young children of interned Muslims in Xinjiang in state-run boarding schools, orphanages, and “child welfare guidance

⁹¹ UHRP, [List of Issues submission to CEDAW](#), January 2021

⁹² RWCHR and Newslines, [The Uyghur Genocide](#), 8 March 2021

⁹³ UN OHCHR, China: [UN experts deeply concerned, ...](#), 29 March 2021

⁹⁴ DW, [‘How China intimidates Uighurs abroad by threatening their families’](#), 11 July 2019

⁹⁵ USSD, [‘2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: China’](#), 25 June 2020

centers,” and forcing them to participate in political indoctrination activities and report on their families’ religious activities. Authorities reportedly place older children among these groups in vocational schools, where some may be victims of forced labor.⁹⁶

5.9.3 Several sources reported that Muslim children, some of whom’s parents have been detained, were being separated from their families and forced into orphanages, welfare centres or forced to attend state run boarding schools⁹⁷⁹⁸⁹⁹¹⁰⁰¹⁰¹¹⁰². A March 2021 report by RWHRC noted that the number of children separated from their families in Xinjiang and placed in state run boarding schools in had increased by 76.9% and numbered 880,500¹⁰³.

5.9.4 The April 2021 Human Rights Watch report stated:

‘In many cases, relatives have had no news about the whereabouts or well-being of their detained family members. Some may receive notices when their relatives are transferred to a formal prison, if they ever are. One online platform that allows relatives of detainees and activists to compile accounts of disappearances had recorded over 11,500 testimonies as of December 2020. In many cases, family members or friends—especially those based abroad—are afraid even to seek information about those who are missing, fearing that international communication or provision of assistance to those seeking to locate detained persons will result in retaliation by the authorities. In some cases, the authorities have detained people while their children are away at school.’¹⁰⁴

5.9.5 The same report stated: ‘In addition to separations stemming from mass detention and placement of former detainees in jobs far from home, many families have been separated as a result of heightened restrictions on the movement of Turkic Muslims. The tightening of passport controls and border crossings have left some children stranded in Xinjiang unable to join their parents, who had gone abroad.’¹⁰⁵

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Section 6 updated: 12 May 2021

6. State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang

6.1.1 Business Insider, a business news website, reported in August 2019, that:

‘Authorities in Beijing have ordered at least 11 halal restaurants and food stalls to remove Arabic script and symbols associated with Islam, Reuters reported this week. "They said this is foreign culture and you should use more Chinese culture," one restaurant manager, who asked not to be

⁹⁶ USSD, [‘2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: China’](#), 25 June 2020

⁹⁷ HRW, [‘World Report 2020’](#), 14 January 2020

⁹⁸ The New York Times, [‘In China’s Crackdown on Muslims, Children Have ...’](#), 28 December 2019

⁹⁹ BBC, [‘China denies Muslim separation campaign in Xinjiang’](#), 7 July 2019

¹⁰⁰ Bitter Winter, [‘Now They Come for the Uyghur Children: Thousands Sent to ...’](#), 18 October 2020

¹⁰¹ CECC, [‘Annual Report 2020’](#) (pg 302), 14 January 2021

¹⁰² Human Rights Watch, [‘Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots’](#), 19 April 2021

¹⁰³ RWCHR and Newsline, [‘The Uyghur Genocide’](#), 8 March 2021

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, [‘Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots’](#), 19 April 2021

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch, [‘Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots’](#), 19 April 2021

identified, told the news agency. It's not clear if it issued the order to all halal stores in the city.

'...The majority-Muslim Hui ethnic group, who are scattered around China, also fear that the government will extend its crackdown to them. In the northern city of Yinchuan, home to the largest concentration of Hui Muslims in the country, authorities have banned the daily call to prayer because it apparently created noise pollution, the South China Morning Post reported last year. One unnamed imam in Linxia, central China, also told Agence France-Presse: "They want to secularize Muslims, to cut off Islam at the roots. These days, children are not allowed to believe in religion: Only in communism and the party."'¹⁰⁶

6.1.2 The New York Times reported in September 2019 that:

'In Ningxia, the provincial government banned public displays of Arabic script, even removing the word "halal" from the official seal it distributes to restaurants that follow Islamic customs for preparing food. The seals now use Chinese characters. That prohibition spread this summer to Beijing and elsewhere. The authorities in several provinces have stopped distributing halal certificates for food, dairy and wheat producers and restaurants. Chinese state media have described this as an effort to curb a "pan-halal tendency" in which Islamic standards are being applied, in the government's view, to too many types of foods or restaurants.

'Ningxia and Gansu have also banned the traditional call to prayer. Around historical mosques there, prayer times are now announced with a grating claxon. One imam in Ningxia's capital, Yinchuan, said the authorities had recently visited and warned him to make no public statements on religious matters. The authorities have also targeted the mosques themselves. In Gansu, construction workers in Gazhuang, a village near Linxia, descended on a mosque in April [2019], tearing off its golden dome. It has not yet reopened. Plainclothes policemen prevented two Times journalists from entering.

'In the southern province of Yunnan, where there have long been Hui communities, the authorities last December [2018] padlocked mosques in three small villages that had been run without official permission. There were protests and brief scuffles with the police, to no avail. The county issued a statement accusing the mosques of holding illegal religious activities and classes.'¹⁰⁷

6.1.3 NPR, an independent, non-profit media organisation, noted in an article from September 2019 that:

'The same restrictions that preceded the Xinjiang crackdown on Uighur Muslims are now appearing in Hui-dominated regions. NPR has learned that since April 2018, Hui mosques have been forcibly renovated or shuttered, schools demolished, and religious community leaders imprisoned. Hui who have traveled internationally are increasingly detained or sent to reeducation facilities in Xinjiang.

¹⁰⁶ Business Insider, '[Jailing Muslims, burning Bibles, and forcing monks to wave ...](#)', 3 August 2019

¹⁰⁷ The New York Times, '[A Crackdown on Islam Is Spreading Across China](#)', 21 September 2019

‘... All Hui-run nursery schools, child care centers and religious schools were forcibly closed in Ningxia and across Yunnan and Henan provinces, which are also home to a large number of Hui Muslims.

‘... For the Hui across China, mosques have become the major vehicle for Sinification. In April 2018, authorities began revoking the state-issued licenses given to imams who have residency outside the province in which they practice and from those who have studied abroad. In Ningxia, smaller mosques without licensed imams have been closed outright.

‘Ningxia sent senior leadership delegations to visit Xinjiang's detention camps last November and signed a counterterrorism cooperation agreement with Xinjiang a month later. Imams in Henan and Ningxia must now attend monthly training sessions that can last for days. There, imams told NPR, they are taught Communist ideology and state ethnic policy and discuss Xi Jinping's speeches. Imams must then pass an exam testing their ideological knowledge in order to renew their license each year, mirroring how the government issues licenses to imams in the Xinjiang region.

‘...The crackdown on China's Hui Muslims is in part driven by the government's fears that fundamentalist strains of Islam like Salafism and Wahhabism are filtering into China by way of Hui students who study in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and through private religious foundations on the Arabian Peninsula that have funded some Hui social enterprises and mosques. Signs of Saudi influence, including Arabic script, are being removed across China. Hui women in Henan and Ningxia provinces say they are no longer allowed to wear the head-to-toe black abaya customary to Saudi women, and Hui shops say they no longer stock Saudi-style clothes for men or women. Imams suspected of preaching Salafism are also promptly removed.’¹⁰⁸

6.1.4 The 2019 DFAT report stated that:

‘While non-Uighur Muslims in the rest of China have historically experienced greater religious freedom, the government backed China Islamic Association is reportedly developing a five-year plan to sinicise Islam, which media claims is mostly targeted at Hui Muslims. In November 2018, Chinese state media also reported local authorities in the Ningxia Autonomous Region had signed a “cooperation anti-terrorism agreement” with Xinjiang, to “learn from the latter’s experiences in promoting social stability”.

‘In August 2018, hundreds of ethnic Hui protested in Tongxin, Ningxia, following the demolition of the newly built, Islamic-style Weizhou Grand Mosque. The Weizhou Grand Mosque had originally been a Chinese styled building which was demolished during the Cultural Revolution. The Islamic-styled mosque was rebuilt with local government support, however was accused of contravening China’s policy of religious sinicisation. Restrictions on religious expression have led some Hui to fear increasing restrictions on their religious practice.

¹⁰⁸ NPR, [“Afraid We Will Become The Next Xinjiang”: China's Hui Muslims...](#), 26 September 2019

‘... DFAT assesses Uighur Muslims outside of Xinjiang face a high risk of official discrimination due to their religion and a moderate risk of societal discrimination.

‘DFAT assesses that non-Uighur Muslims in other parts of China have historically faced a low risk of official and societal discrimination (as they are more integrated and are not perceived to pursue an independence agenda); however, DFAT notes a trend of official discrimination towards all Muslims grew in 2018 and continues to do so in 2019.’¹⁰⁹

- 6.1.5 Bitter Winter reported that Islamic schools within mosques across China were being closed down in large numbers, with the provinces of Qinghai and Gansu and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in the northwest among the most targeted areas, with these areas being home to the majority of China’s ethnic Hui Muslims¹¹⁰. Bitter Winter also reported on the removal of Islamic symbols and writings on 70 Hui-run businesses in Chuxiong¹¹¹, the removal of Islamic symbols from Mosques in Shandong and Henan provinces¹¹² and the removal of domes and star-and-crescent symbols from mosques in Henan province¹¹³. Bitter Winter also noted that Uyghur Muslims outside of Xinjiang were restricted for observing Ramadan and in one particular school in Shandong Uyghur students were forced to eat pork dishes with Han students during Ramadan and were restricted from engaging in any religious activities¹¹⁴.
- 6.1.6 The 2019 USIRF report for China stated: ‘Sources told media that authorities in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in north-central China, home to a majority of Hui Muslims, prevented public calls to prayer and banned sales of the Quran. Authorities also prohibited news broadcasts from showing images of pedestrians wearing skull caps or veils.’¹¹⁵
- 6.1.7 The Human Rights Watch, World Report 2021, stated: ‘Muslims reported increasing restrictions on Islam. Authorities scrubbed Arabic script from mosques and halal restaurants and altered the architectural style of mosques and landmarks to make them look more “Chinese” across the country.’¹¹⁶
- 6.1.8 The CECC report of March 2021 stated:
‘Authorities outside of the XUAR have formally imprisoned Hui religious figures and detained Hui individuals for sharing materials related to the Quran online, criticizing restrictions on Islamic religious practices, buying Islamic books, performing the Hajj pilgrimage, traveling abroad, and resisting the destruction of a mosque. Hui Muslims outside of the XUAR whose identity documents were registered in the XUAR have also been sent to prison or re-education camps in the XUAR.

¹⁰⁹ DFAT, ‘[DFAT Country Information Report](#), People’s Republic ...’ (Para 3.57-60), 3 October 2019

¹¹⁰ Bitter Winter, ‘[CCP Cracks Down on Islamic Schools in Mosques](#)’, 12 February 2020

¹¹¹ Bitter Winter, ‘[Islamic Symbols Removed from 300+ Hui-Run Businesses in...](#)’, 28 June 2020

¹¹² Bitter Winter, ‘[“Sinicization” of the Hui by Removing Symbols](#)’, 10 May 2019

¹¹³ Bitter Winter, ‘[Rectification of Mosques in Henan Continued Amid the Pandemic](#)’, 26 May 2020

¹¹⁴ Bitter Winter, ‘[China’s Muslims Forced to Eat Pork During Ramadan](#)’, 15 May 2020

¹¹⁵ USSD, ‘[2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#)’, (section II), 12 May 2021

¹¹⁶ HRW, ‘[World Report 2021 – China](#)’, (Freedom of Religion), 13 January 2021

‘...Similar to the restriction and suppression of expressions of Islamic faith in the XUAR, officials in areas with large Hui populations have implemented policies and restrictions limiting Hui Muslims’ ability to practice their religion and culture. In locations throughout China, (including Beijing municipality, Gansu, Henan, Jilin, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Yunnan, and Zhejiang provinces, as well as the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region) officials have closed mosques, demolished or removed minarets, domes, and other Islamic features from mosques and placed surveillance cameras inside them, closed Islamic schools, and restricted Islamic preaching, clothing, Arabic script, halal food, and use of the Islamic financial system.

...The “sinicization” campaign has extended to Hui communities in the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province. Linxia is often described as China’s “Little Mecca,” and has a thriving Hui Muslim community with a majority Muslim population, a significant number of mosques, and visible displays of Muslim dress. However, as part of the “sinicization” campaign, authorities in Linxia and the surrounding villages have: demolished mosques; replaced Arabic-style minarets with Chinese-style ones; stopped restaurants from using the word “halal” in Arabic to reduce Arab influence; prohibited the Muslim call to prayer; and prevented children from attending Arabic or religious schooling.’¹¹⁷

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Section 7 updated: 12 May 2021

7. Freedom of movement

7.1 Internal movement and restrictions

7.1.1 The 2019 DFAT report stated that: ‘Dependent on the level of perceived threat and based on factors programmed into the IJOP (Integrated Joint Operations Platform) system, an individual’s freedom of movement can be restricted. Restrictions include detention in re-education centres, house arrest, not being allowed to leave a registered location, not being allowed to enter public spaces or not being allowed to leave China.’¹¹⁸

7.1.2 The USSD 2020 Country report on human rights practices, published March 2021, noted that:

‘Uyghurs faced draconian restrictions on movement within Xinjiang and outside the region. Although the use of “domestic passports” that called for local official approval before traveling to another area was discontinued in 2016, authorities still made identification checks for individuals entering or leaving cities and on public roads. In Xinjiang security officials operated checkpoints managing entry into public places, including markets and mosques, that required Uyghurs to scan their national identity card, undergo a facial recognition check, and put baggage through airport-style security screening. Such restrictions were not applied to Han Chinese in these areas.’¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ CECC, ‘[Hui Muslims and the “Xinjiang Model”](#)’, March 2021

¹¹⁸ DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report China](#)’ (para 3.16), 3 October 2019

¹¹⁹ USSD, ‘[2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China](#)’ (Section D), 30 March 2021

7.1.3 The report continued ‘Uyghurs, particularly those residing in Xinjiang, reported great difficulty in getting passport applications approved. They were frequently denied passports to travel abroad, particularly to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj, to other Muslim countries, or to Western countries for academic purposes. Since 2016 authorities ordered Xinjiang residents to turn in their passports or told residents no new passports were available.’¹²⁰

7.1.4 According to the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs ‘Country of origin information report China’ published in July 2020:

‘A dense network of checkpoints throughout the province of Xinjiang makes it impossible for residents to move around unobserved in most of the province. These checkpoints use facial recognition technology and identity checks. Some checkpoints are equipped with devices that can copy data from mobile phones so that they can be traced later. Furthermore, some checkpoints are directly linked with the IJOP app’s database. If the IJOP app has identified a user as suspicious, the system will send a notification when this user attempts to pass through a checkpoint. This user can then be questioned, stopped or arrested. HRW has reports of people who were unexpectedly informed that they were banned from leaving their place of residence or region, because they had been designated as suspicious without their knowledge.’¹²¹

7.1.5 For further information on internal relocation see the country policy and information note [China: background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).

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7.2 Restrictions of those outside of China

7.2.1 Various US department reports noted difficulties that Uyghurs living abroad faced with gaining entry to the country. The reports also noted that many Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims abroad had their passports confiscated, cancelled or were refused passport renewals as a means of encouraging them to return to Xinjiang. Some individuals reported that authorities threatened to detain family members in Xinjiang if they did not return to China^{122 123 124}.

7.2.2 The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs ‘Country of origin information report China’ published in July 2020 noted that:

‘Uighurs living outside China can be subjected to intimidation by the Chinese government and possibly by the Chinese embassy in their country of residence. Members of the Uighur diaspora report that the Chinese police hack their communications with relatives in Xinjiang, or contact them directly and ask them to collect information on individuals in the local Uighur community for the Chinese government. China appears to be identifying the Uighur diaspora in this way. Refusal to cooperate can lead to adverse

¹²⁰ USSD, [‘2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China’](#) (Section D), 30 March 2021

¹²¹ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [‘Country of origin information report China’](#), 1 July 2020

¹²² USSD, [‘2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China’](#) (Section D), 30 March 2021

¹²³ USSD, [‘2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Xinjiang’](#) (Section II), 12 May 2021

¹²⁴ USSD, [‘2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: China’](#), 25 June 2020

consequences for the relatives of the person involved in Xinjiang, such as being sent to a detention camp.¹²⁵

7.2.3 In its April 2021 report, Human Rights Watch stated ‘...Because Xinjiang authorities punish contact with those abroad, many Turkic Muslims report having lost contact with their relatives, including their young children, for months or even years. One consequence of government policies in the region, intentional or otherwise, has been the intergenerational separation of Turkic Muslims.’¹²⁶

7.2.4 The April 2021 Human Rights Watch report stated:

‘...Chinese authorities have tracked down hundreds of Turkic Muslim asylum seekers around the world and forced them to return to repression and in some cases detention. In many cases, it is impossible to find out what has happened to returnees.’

‘The use of mass surveillance also extends beyond Xinjiang and into the Turkic Muslim diaspora outside China, as authorities pressure them to provide detailed information about themselves, including their address, phone number, and school or workplace. The government has also hacked into Turkic Muslims’ smartphones around the world by embedding malicious software in apps and software frequently used by Turkic Muslims, which can “remotely turn on a phone’s microphone, record calls or export photos, phone locations and conversations on chat apps.”¹²⁷

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¹²⁵ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘[Country of origin information report China](#)’, 1 July 2020

¹²⁶ Human Rights Watch, ‘[Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots](#)’, 19 April 2021

¹²⁷ Human Rights Watch, ‘[Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots](#)’, 19 April 2021

Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Religion in China
 - Religious demography
- Legal Framework
 - International Conventions
 - Constitution
 - Regulations on Religious Affairs (RRA)
 - Xinjiang regulations
- State attitude towards Muslims in the Xinjiang province
- State treatment of Muslims in the Xinjiang province
 - Restrictions on Muslims in Xinjiang
 - Surveillance
 - Birth control and forced sterilisation
 - Detention and re-education centers
 - Forced labour
- Societal treatment
- Freedom of movement

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **27 July 2021**

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

Changes from last version of this note

New CPIN on this topic, previously included in the non-Christian religious groups CPIN

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